Chapter - 1
INTRODUCTION

Kerala has the largest Christian population among all the Indian states. This is the only state where a clearly marked Christian theatre exists. Therefore, if one wants to understand the nature and the development of the Christian performance tradition, one necessarily should go to the historicity of the advent of Christianity itself. The advent of Christianity in Kerala can be understood broadly in two ways: The first one is derived from the legends and the oral traditions; the second one is based on the historical writings.

It is very interesting to note that the Kerala Christian groups owe their existence to the European advent. No imperial state ever stayed for long in the Kerala territories like the British. Even the British has little influence over these territories, especially in the realm of Christian missionary activity. It is the Roman Catholics and the Syrian Orthodox traditions that prevailed dominantly in the lands of Kerala, though neither of them ever played the role of colonizers in India. In this context, it is interesting to note that the early European powers such as the Papal State or the Syrian Orthodox Church spread their religious ideology in Kerala not for political reasons but for religious expansion.

Later, European powers such as the Dutch, the British, the French etc. were interested in expanding the territories for political gains and to form them as part of their colonial possessions. The Roman Catholicism and the Orthodox churches never craved for possession of territories on the Indian soil. This makes a distinction of Kerala Christianity from that of the other Christian missionary movements in India. Hence, the Christianity in Kerala as such is not a colonial entrepreneurship but a part of ecumenical faith that was pursued by the catholic and orthodox churches. Though, the protestant movements aroused in parts of India as a by-product of the European colonial power could not penetrate the indigenous system of worship. The Protestants remained a distinct group from the native faiths. Contrary to this, Kerala Christian tradition amalgamated, agglomerated several indigenous practises and beliefs. The rites of passage, the order of worship, the mode of votive offerings are all intermixed and are allowed to stay within the Christian system of belief of the natives.
The intermixture of the natives with the western religious dogmas is strategically interwoven even at the realm of performance traditions to enlarge on the one hand, the base of Christian conversion and on the other, to sustain the already converted ones in the faith. In this sense advent of Christianity in Kerala is unique and quite different from the other parts of the country. The colonization preceded the Christian advent where as in Kerala Christianity was never a colonial enterprise but on the contrary, prevailed during the pre-colonial phases of history.

Likewise, the Kerala Christian performance tradition also dates back to the pre-colonial era. Later, the advent of the European missionary contributed towards the growth of the Kerala Christianity as well as the Christian performance tradition. This Christian performance tradition which comprises various semi-theatrical and theatrical genres with a large number of performing troupes spread all over the country and holds an important position in the cultural milieu of Kerala. The impact of this tradition with its transformation and continuity through the ages attracted the attention of the scholars to probe into the phenomenon of cultural continuum.

The European Missionary Interface of Kerala

Kerala has been the meeting place of the East and the West for long, by virtue of its geographically strategic location as the land lying in the West Coast, bordering the Arabian Sea. The Greek, the Roman, the Jew, the Syrian, the Arab, the Chinese, the Portu-
guese, the Dutch, the French, the English and a host of others had established relations with Kerala through the ages either as traders, travellers, adventures, bu
crats, historians, or religious missionaries. There has been a continuous intermixture of cultures, a continuous process of give and take. In this land a section of people believe and often claim that St.Thomas, the apostle of Jesus came and baptised their ancestors into Christianity.¹ They believe that they are really the descendants of those early christians, who according to the legend were once Namboodiri Brahmins (the upper caste) and there are seven churches believed to be ordained by the apostle.² They retained this legends effectively by making it a part of a living tradition through the oral and performing cultural traditions which includes written and unwritten songs and stories. This traditions allowed them to retain their upper caste status, or in a way, this performances legitimised their dominant status in the social milieu of ancient Kerala. The most famous
among these are the ceremonial songs presented and performed at the marriages and the customary feasts. Another prominent one among the *paaTTu* tradition is the *Ramban paaTTu*. This is claimed to have been originally composed by the first disciple of the apostle in Malabar, supposed to be 'Niranathu Maliyekkal Thoma Ramban', in its present design, it is possibly a 16th century reinterpretation by one 'Thomas Ramban' who belonged to the same Maliyekkal family and the 48th in the hereditary line of priests. The above details about the authorship, were stated in the text itself. The Maliyekkal family house is still existing in *Niranam*. Today, these verses are known as the 'Mar Thoma Geetam'. The Syrian Christians have preferred to rely on the traditions handed through generations, which have now crystallised into the collective memory of a community. The cultural experience of time varies, and the St. Thomas Christians notate time from the coming of *St. Thomas* to *Muziris* or *Kodungallur* in the first century of Christian era. This will make one assume the part played by those living traditions behind legitimising the perhaps and probables of a 'legendary' history.

At the next stage from 4th century A.D, as attested by Kerala tradition, there were waves of Christian migration from Persia to Kerala. The arrival of *Thomas of cana* with seventy-two families and clergy including a bishop considerably influenced the native *christians*. The contents of the *Thomas cana copper plates (A.D.345-?)* and *Tarisappally copper plates (9th century)* reveals the socio economic implications of Persian Christian migration to Kerala. This East-Syrian connection helped the native *christians* to develop into trading class. These colonists were from the lands where the chaldean civilization flourished. This connection paved the way for heirarchical and sacramental dependence of Kerala christians on chaldean church. Finally, when Christianity struck its deep root in the land of Kerala, “the characteristic form it took was the result of a protracted interaction between the Malabar cultural milieu and the chaldean ecclesiastical system. A harmonious blend of these two factors became a reality in the secular as well as in the ecclesiastical life of Christian community. Hence, the christians of St.Thomas could easily be integrated into the social and religious fabric of the country.” There are many others who view this colonisation quite differently. They believe that this particular Syrian invasion was an obstacle in the long run. Because, it restricted the natural growth of the Indian Christian into authentic Indian church with an Indian pattern of thought, worship and life style. This is true to some extent since, the East-Syrian invasion made Indian
christians borrow Persian theology, worship forms, laws, customs and practices. They were constrained to lead a life not in one world but in two worlds at the same time by making an assimilation of the geographical, political and socio-cultural environment of India and the ecclesiastical world of the East-Syrian church. This was to an extent an artificial and unnatural kind of life. This was the early state of Christian performance tradition, one can consider this as a first phase, which is ancient and traditional with its art forms (especially the dance tradition, which include the genres like māṟṟaṁkaḷi, vaṭṭaḻaḷi, and paricamuttuṟaḷi) having Indian form and spirit with an oriental way of performance structure. These traditions have undergone drastic transformations and acculturation and have survived to the present date.

On May 14th, 1498 Vasco da Gama, the famous Portuguese navigator, landed at Kappad near Calicut on the Malabar Coast. The most conspicuous stage of missionary enterprise started with the arrival of Portuguese. The Christianity they found in Kerala was lacking in well-defined dogmas and practices that ensured Christian exclusiveness. They came with the doctrines and practices completely shaped in militancy in the West. They wished to bring the Indian church into complete uniformity with the Western church. This in turn helped them in expanding their temporal as well as economic domains. As a result, the Latinisation/Westernisation of the ‘Marthoma Nazranikal’ (St. Thomas christians) and the vigorous conversion policy enacted by the Romish missionaries began in this country. Moreover India came under the Padroado jurisdiction attained by the Portuguese from the Pope. This resulted in the emergence of a new social group (latin christians) along the sea-coast from Cochin to Rameshwaram.

This nascent church under the leadership of Western missionaries developed its own identity independent of St. Thomas christians. They were forbidden by the missionaries from practising Hindu rituals and participating in the temple arts of Kerala, which were intended for spreading the Hindu legends and myths. The vaccum thus created in the cultural life of Kerala christians was filled by the newly invented customs, and performances. These are similar to the Western European Christian sacred and secular traditions, customs and practices which were popular in Europe after the Renaissance. Moreover the establishment of Christenedom in Europe adopted a number of cultural practices from its predecessors i.e., the Greek and Roman civilizations. So, the religious
observances and courtly manners of the christenedom resembled the practices of early Roman civilization. This enlightenment in the cultural sphere of Europe during the Post-Renaissance Scenario was also reflected in and influenced the various missionary activities in Kerala. It can be seen in the beginning stages of printing, art, architecture, music and other performing arts. Among these, the theatrical representations or the liturgical dramas established by the missionaries in the Kerala churches were working either as a part of the conversion machinery or as a counterpart to the native art forms. This is the second phase or the medieval phase of Christian performance tradition.

The sever latinization adapted by the Westerner's caused the (dislikness) of the St. Thomas Christians. They started objecting to the latinizing policies and looked down upon the synod of Diamper (1599) and the synod of Angamaly (1603) as encroachments by the Western colonialists on their religious and social life. This resulted in a series of conflicts that culminated in the "Koonan Kurisu" oath of 1653 where the leaders of native Christians Solemnly swore that they would never be under the Paulists (Jesuits). This further resulted in the initial schisms in the Christian community of Kerala and separated the Marthoma nazranikal into Puthankoottukar and the Pazhaya Koottukar. This also paved the way for the Rome's intervention into the internal matters of Kerala Christians. Thus began the exercise of 'Propaganda' Jurisdiction side by side with the 'Padroado' in Malabar. The conflicts of these two colonial religious enterprises further aggravated the disorientations inside the religio-socio fabric of Kerala Christians.

Towards the end of the first half of the 17th century, the Portuguese lost their political supremacy in India and the Dutch who expelled them objected to the free exercise of the padroado jurisdiction. During the Dutch period (1663-1795) the Western missionary activities continued at a slow pace. The Propaganda went ahead with its policy of direct evangelization and established many vicariates apostolics. These became dioceses or archdioceses only in 1886-7, when the Indian heirarchy was constituted. The Dutch let in a few protestant missionaries and later, the British opened the gates for the in flow of protestant missionary activity in Kerala. The activities of London Missionary Society (LMS) in Southern Kerala, Church Missionary Society (CMS) in central Kerala and the Basel Mission in North Malabar brought in fresh waves of christianisation in Kerala during the nineteenth century and in the first half of twentieth Century. This varied form
of Kerala Christianity boast a host of performance genres which upholds its identity. This genres had undergone transformations due to the cultural interventions through the ages.

In order to understand the identity of Kerala Christians one should go through intricate sub-divisions in the Kerala Christian community. That is, between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the catholic church of Malabar was divided into Syrian Catholics, Latin Catholics and Jacobites. This divisions were made considering their liturgical language and adherence to the ritual patterns. Earlier it was the dissident group at the time of koonan kurisu gave birth to the jacobites but later Protestant missionary influence promoted further fission in the 19th and early 20th centuries and created some major sects like marthomite church, syro-malankara church and the syrian orthodox church. Besides this there exists many minor ones with a few adherents situated indifferent localities and also many distinct protestant groups. The following table will give an idea of the church groups of Kerala.

**Table-1:** Church Groups of Kerala (% of Christian Population) [1961]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group [Church]</th>
<th>Head of the Church</th>
<th>% out of Christian Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Catholic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Syrian Catholic</td>
<td>Pope</td>
<td>a. 33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Syro Malankara</td>
<td></td>
<td>b. 3.2 59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Latin Catholic</td>
<td></td>
<td>c. 22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Orthodox</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Syrian Orthodox</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Marthomite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Chaldean</td>
<td>Nestorian</td>
<td>Patriarch of Babylon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Protestant</td>
<td>a. Church of South India</td>
<td>Moderator of C.S.I. Madras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Other Churches</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Along with the propaganda's promotion of indigenous vocations, as part of the direct evangelization, some of the performance traditions were used as a means of proselytization by the propagators of Christianity. This genres like CaviTTunaTakam with its western thematic affinity and the native idiomatic assimilation becomes one of the true example for the 'Western ambivalence'. Which, on the one hand suspected the native Christians of superstition, (practically, this attitude was against any sort of Indianisation or Integration of Christianity with the Indian culture), and on the other, created the art forms by integrating their themes with the native performance tradition. This ambivalence, which is the backbone of hybridization, made these genres survive through the ages by undergoing further hybridizations, which results in the creation and amalgamation of new forms. Later this hybrid varieties becomes the part of the modern phase of Kerala Christian performance tradition. An indepth analysis of this forms will bring out the nuances of the 'colonial modernity' introduced by the Christian missionaries and the Kerala Christian identity.

**Literature Survey**

The literature survey comprises of three broad categories of works: the first category of works are related to Christian art forms and literature in India in general and Kerala in particular. The second category deals with the theatrical works which include works on performance studies and theater productions. The third category includes ideological and theoretical works in cultural studies which encompase the concepts such as orientalism, postcolonialism, new ethnography. These books are included in the literature survey to spell out the stand taken by the researcher both for interpreting and presenting the data. Only a few works as an example in literature survey is added in this section which follow the chronological order in the presentation.

*First category:*

The works in this category are treated with giving importance to the authors. Because all of them are filled with the subjective renditions of its authors. The material is presented with a view to make some distinction between the present thesis and the works already done, especially on CavaTTunaTakam.
In the book 'Malayala sahityavum kristiyanikalum', P.J. Thomas writes about the work done by missionaries and the early Christian community for the development of Kerala culture. In the introductory chapters he deals with the various folksongs and dances of Kerala Christians especially St. Thomas Christians. This collection of songs practiced by the early Syrian Christians during their marriage ceremony is interesting. Those rituals show varieties of conventions practiced by the Syrian Christian community. His account on *CavittunaaTakam* is based on the opinions of V.S Andrews. He firmly believed that *CavittunaaTakam* evolved as a counter part to *Kathakali*. His chapter on *CavittunaaTakam* mostly deals with the descriptions of the lyrical quality of the verses in those plays.

Sabeena Raphy authored the first book about *CavittunaaTakam*—‘dramatic opera’ of Kerala Christians. She belonged to the family of patrons of this splendid, the then popular theatrical form. The book was published in Malayalam. She gave more importance to the historical and literary aspects of this form. Even though she discuss about basic steps and hand gestures, her study was not at all theatrical. She was interested in finding out the historical evolution of *CavittunaaTakam*. She considers it as a Christian counter part to *Kathakali* (a dance drama of Kerala). She was trying to establish an Indian root to this performing art form. She was interested in the native aspects of this theatre and applied *Natya, Nrtta, Nrtya* concepts based on Natyasastra (A treatise on Indian dramaturgy) as parameters to analyze *CavittunaaTakam* performance. Even though this theater has undergone a drastic transition by 1970’s she neglected it. She merely mentioned the change occured in the literary aspects of the plays.

Chummar Choondal was a pioneer in the field of Christian folklore. His study of Christian theatre, mainly of *CavittunaaTakam* was based on the folkloristic methodology. Through a broad description of the performance as an event, he goes through various aspects of the genre. He discusses the family traditions of *Asans* and various sociological aspects of the theatre. He gave more importance to the Western elements of this particular form and tries to compare it with opera in certain aspects. He also made an attempt to establish the intercultural qualities by comparing *CavittunaaTakam* with *Terukoothu* (a folk theater form of Tamilnadu) and *Nadagam* of Srilanka. Moreover he collected the details regarding the themes of various plays like *Karalman*, *Jenova*, *Karalman*, *Jenova*,...
Braseena which were popular dramas in the early era of CaviTTunaaTakam. His study of CaviTTunaaTakam was more based on ethnographic data blending anthropological and sociological perspectives. However his study lacks a theatrical approach and precision. The description of the conventions, the production and training process lacks analysis. Simultaneous glorification of the Western influences and the logocentric comments leads the reader into confusion.

Francis Peter Barboza worked on the subject titled 'Christianity in Indian dances' for his doctoral degree. He compiled and collected details regarding the dance forms which were exclusively practised by the Christians and the Christian themes depicted in other Indian dance forms. He gave more importance to South Indian dance forms especially the forms in Kerala and Goa. His rich experience in Bharathanatyam helped him to a large extent to work on certain Christian themes in this classical dance format and also to propagate this through various performances. He developed certain mudras (hand gestures) for Jesus, Mother Mary, resurrection - according to the themes in the frame work of the classical Bharathanatyam structure. His analysis of audience response based on his own performances added further support to his newly created mudras.

In the first two introductory chapters, he deals with dance in the Christian scriptures and the importance of dance in the Christian community. In the third chapter, 'Dance in the life of church', he makes a brief survey of the development of 'sacred dance' in various parts of the world with the respective church history.

Fourth chapter deals with the dance forms of the Christians in Kerala. This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, the author discusses maaRgamkaLi - one of the ancient art forms practiced by the Syrian Christians in general and Knaanaaaya Christians (A sect of endogamous Syrian Christians) in particular. Second part includes paricamuttukaLi (a dance form in which dancers use sword and shield, the shield is called parica in Malayalam). Here he discusses the difference between the paricamuttukaLi of Syrian, Latin and orthodox Jacobite Christians. In the third part he describes CavaTTunaTakam. He compiled the opinions of various earlier authors on CaviTTunaaTakam and briefly introduces the form and its nature of performance. Most of his opinions were taken from Chummar Choondal's observations. The author describes the choreographic pattern with the help of line drawings, which is the only novel idea he introduces in
this account. For maaRgamkaLi and paricamuttukaLi the line drawings of the simples form will be very helpful for a better understanding of the steps and movement patterns. But in the case of CaviTTunaaTakam the basic steps and patterns differ according to the place and style (tradition) of Asans (masters). The combinations selected by the author were not enough to explain the intricacies of the beautiful movement patterns of CaviTTunaaTakam.

In the final chapters Barboza describes the Christian dance forms in Goa and especially the Christian themes adopted or used in the already existing traditions of Indian dance, specially South Indian and North Indian tribal dances. The concluding chapter deals with some of the contemporary attempts made by some organizations, which incorporated Christian themes in the classical and folk performances.

All together the above mentioned works fall short of theatrical analysis of the Christian performance tradition instead of that the four authors mainly describes the art forms by providing information. In order to understand a performance, one must consider it as an aesthetic mode of communication (with a target audience), which is integrally related to a particular event (context) with culture-specific and cross-culturally variable characteristics (idioms). In other words, one should develop a performance centered praxis of text making.

Second Category:

This category comprises of works from the 'theatre studies' including its two major components. They are: (1) Theatre history, (2) performance theory. In view of keeping the specific nature of the present work, the first one is further divided in to two sections like: (A) Theatre history of Kerala, (B) Mediveal Theatre of Western Europe. The second, (2) conglomerates various perspectives in the performance theory. Owing to the elaborate nature of this category this session clings to make some precise comments.

(A). The early accounts on the theatre history of Kerala was part of the Malayalam literary history. These early works based on the printed dramatic literature constructed the theatre history. Some of the theatre scholars like: G. Sankarapillai, C.J. Thomas, Kattumadam Narayanan, Madavoor Bhasi, N.N. Pillai etc., came up with their works
by giving priority to the various theatre productions of Kerala. Except some passing comments none of the above works considered the Christian theatre productions and the important part played by the CaviTTunaaTakam genre in the evolutionary stages of malayalam drama stage. The remarks made by some of the western scholars on Kerala theatre especially on CaviTTunaaTakam performance, can be taken as an excellent example for the ‘western/imperial gaze’ upon the 'exotic' oriental phenomena.

At this juncture the present thesis tries to explore the nuances and details regarding the Christian theatre productions of the early sangeetha natakam stage from the biographies, and the later stage from the play bills, notices, the accounts on the troupes and also using the interview based field work.

(B). The peripheral similarity of the Christian themes for the dramatic representations in the Medieval Europe and the Kerala demanded a literature survey. This inturn brought to light a host of details connecting the similar patterning of both the traditions. The accounts by O.B. Hardison and Karl Young explained the early liturgical ritualistic performances and its nature and function. The works by E.K. Chambers, Richard Axton gives a clear picture of the part played by the secular themese along with the sacred in flourishing the medieval stage. The books by Glynne Wickham reveals the various historical stages of this tradition and the writings of A.C. Cawley and William Tydeman make one understand the methods of processional as well as the fixed staging of the medieval productions. All together the above mentioned works along with a number of others enlightened and enriched the present thesis.

The study of the performance theory by the 'outsider theorists' (Erving Goffman and Victor Turner) and the insider theorists' (Richard Schechner and Peggy Phelan) according to the Schechnerian terms, helped the thesis to understand the underlying layer's of meaning behind the term performance. Goffman with his definition of performance as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" related the term into an aesthetic extension of every day life with our own repeated behavioural patterns. Victor Turner on the other hand made the metaphorical expansion of the theme with his influential idea that, social conflicts are structured like dramas; they occur in four phases or “acts”, moving from breach, to crisis, to redress, ending in (either) reintegration or schism. Both these
concepts reinstates their 'outsider' status as one who is not involved in the process of performance. The other two, that is Peggy Phelan with her understanding of the “performance's only life in the present i.e., performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance”. Performance “becomes itself through disappearance” sees this phenomena from the 'spectator' stand point.28 But Schechner puts the idea, “performance are always actually performed" favours the repeated behaviour, and his contention that "restored (or twice-behaved) behaviour is the main characteristic of performance” upholds his performer stand point.29 This stand point makes these theorists as very much ‘insiders’. On the one hand the study of the performance theory convinced the researcher that a complete definition of the term performance is a semantic impossibility. On the other this theory encouraged the present work to envisage the concept of performance with all its nuances inorder to build up the concept Kerala Christian performance tradition.

*Third Category:*

As already mentioned, this category purely deals with the theoretical works which helped to formulate a substantial paradigm to analyse the historical development of Christian performance tradition of Kerala, with keeping in mind the vigorous debates concerning the relation of 'theory' to 'history'. Owing to the great impact made by Edward Said and Johannes Fabian in the cultural studies, this section gives a little priority to two works by them.30 The section also comprises accounts on the post-colonial discourse's and theories on ideology.

Edward Said in his process of the "unlearning of the inherent dominative mode" contributes certain ideas to redefine the established notions about orient by the Western intelligentsia. Orientalism describes the ways of cultural domination of the West taken place step by step and the spheres in which they were prominent.

Edward Said begins with the various myths (created) about the orient like, (i) Orient as a European invention which possesses exotic beings, haunting memories and landscape. (ii) Orient as the "other" to define Europe. (iii) Orient as a carrier etc.. Then he explains how these myths got established or the ways through which "European culture was able
to manage and even produce the orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-enlightenment period”. This directly leads us to think about the relationship between accident and orient, as a relationship of power, of domination of varying degrees of complex hegemony. Throughout this book Said was trying to study this uneven exchange of power in political, intellectual, cultural and moral realms of the knowledge. Innumerable works followed after the publication of this book to find out the real facts about the Western dominated cultural and political “fact” as called as orientalism. This proves the credibility of Said's proposed theories through this work.

Said comments about his book “for students of literature and criticism orientalism offers a marvelous instance of the interrelations between society, history and textuality; moreover, the cultural role played by the Orient in the West connects Orientalism with ideology, politics and logic of power, matters of relevance . . . . . . For the general reader, this study deals with matters that always compel attention. All of them connected not only with Western conceptions and treatments of the other but also with the singularly important role played by Western culture”. This itself justifies the need for taking this book to formulate a theoretical frame.

In 1985 the anthropologist Johannes Fabian, working in the Shaba province of Zaire, first encountered the saying *Le pouvoir est mange entire* (“Power is eaten whole”). It simplications - for the several charismatic religious movements Fabian was examining and for the culture of Luba peoples - continued to intergue him, and on a visit the following year he mentioned the saying to a company of popular actors: “I was overwhelmed by their eagerness to explain “Power is eaten whole” to me and to themself. Spontaneously they decided that it would be just the right topic for their next play. On the spot they began planning - first suggestions for a plot were made, problems of translating the French term *pouvoir* were debated, several actors cited sayings and customs from their home country - in short I have trigred an ethnographic brain storm” (Fabian p3).

“*Power* and performance" should be read by every researcher in the field of drama; for Fabian not only illustrates how the performance of *Le pouvoir Se mange entire* was created, rehearsed, and performed by the troupe. "Theatral *Mufwankolo’* (the play examines various issues of power through a series of conflicts between villagers and their
chief) but also reminds us that much of what ethnographers study as “culture” is performance. Power and performance contains both rehearsal and performance version of the text of *Le pouvoir Se mange entire* in Swahili and in English translation. This excellent work proves the possibilities of “New ethnography”.

Said's orientalism initiated a colonial discourse analysis which aims at the study of the discursive operations of the concept colonialism, showing the intimate connection between the language and forms of knowledge developed for the study of cultures and the history of colonialism and imperialism. In other words the diverse ideological practices of colonialism, underlying in the concepts and representations of a large number of 'texts' across a range of 'disciplines' were subjected into a thorough analysis. This in turn produced plenty of 'theories' or 'works' which can be clubbed under the title post-colonial theory.

The contribution of colonial-discourse analysis is that it provides a significant framework for that 'other' work by emphasizing that all perspectives on colonialism share and have to deal with a common discursive medium which was also that of colonialism itself. The language used to enact, enforce, describe or analyse colonialism is not transparent, innocent, a historical or simply instrumental. Colonial discourse analysis can therefore look at the wide variety of texts of colonialism as something more than mere documentation or 'evidence', and also emphasize the ways in which colonialism involved not just as a military or economic activity, but permeated forms of knowledge, which, if unchallenged, may continue to be the very ones through which we try to understand colonialism itself. Homi K. Bhabha's works become important at this juncture. By challenging certain totalizing concepts of Said, Bhabha emphasised the 'ambivalence' underlying in the western hegemonic practices. With the help of psychoanalysis Bhabha questioned the 'authority' of the dominant discourse when placed in a colonial context. This questioning further revealed the multilayered identity or the 'irresistible hybridity' of the cultural practices in the colonial context, which in turn clarify the hybridized cultural identity of the post-colonial phase.

In search of the meaning and definition of the term 'ideology' will definitely lead one to the works of J.B. Thompson. His works with its precise nature of the selection of articles and arrangement will help the scholars to understand the historical development
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of the concept, the various ideological practises and the analysis of the ideology through 'depth heremenutics'. Thompson's compilation of Martin Seliger's theory of ideology as a belief system and the Paul Ricoeur's theory of interpretation used for the analysis of the concept helped the present thesis to formulate a methodology of interpretation.

The Importance of the Study

The main focus of the study is to understand how theatre as a genre internalizes the native idioms with the western ideologies and survive as a distinct genre by itself. The mechanics of internalization results in cultural continuum and produces certain metaphors which are capable of becoming identities in the process of theatrical production. In a way theatre upholds the identity of the community and inturn serves as a strategy to demarcate its cultural frontiers. However, these identities are not static and keep changing due to generic continuum. The cultural influences play a vital role in producing generic continuum and give rise to pluralistic meanings to the identity of the community.

The performance genres of any given period, in turn, produce and influence new ones and simultaneously imbibe the cultural and contextual transformations. The theatrical forms like CaviTTunaaTakam and muuvaracunaTakam can be considered as the base for the neo-colonial, multi-cultural interactions in the realm of theatre.

The cultural continuum of the Kerala christian performance tradition from the pre-colonial era is worth understanding— how alien ideologies got internalized through a process of acculturation and produced, in turn, hybridized forms of expressions for its identity. This multi-cultural nature and the basic characteristic form of syncretism which prevail in the Christian performance tradition demand a study of this hybrid variety using 'cultural hybridity' as a theoretical paradigm. This hybridity which evolved out of the cultural synthesis is nothing but the heterogeneous, diverse and polyphonic identity of the modern society.

What Is Christian Theatre?

It is very difficult to confine the concept of Christian theatre within the frame work of a definition. It has undergone a drastic change through the ages. So it is better to find
out the components of Christian theatre and justify the concept. The components are:

(i) the plays written and produced by the Christians,
(ii) the plays patronized, propagated and entertained by the Christians,
(iii) the plays based on Christian, biblical themes as well as on the socio-political status of Christian community.
(iv) theatre practices inside and outside the church: the rituals, ceremonies, festivals, competitions and church's own Professional and Amateur itinerary groups.
(v) the technical theatre with the costume and make-up representing the western Christian vestment types idiomatised as markers.
(vi) the plays with the semiotical signification of the Christian ideological paradigms and metaphorical representation through the signs of cross marks, kneeling postures and conventional blessings.

Aims and Objectives

I. To identify the presence of Christian theatre as a genre by itself in the cultural realm of the Kerala Christian community. The theatre specialists ignored the Kerala Christian performance tradition as a subject of study and hence the ambivalence of the art form is not focussed. Even the academic circles, except mentioning the existence of Kerala Christian theatre, also ignored the implicacies of the modes of expression of the community through the art form.

II. To understand how an art form can become a vehicle of communication and how it represents the communities which have the art form. In this sense, the Kerala Christian performance tradition is not just an object of reality, but that reality exists in the representations through the ages. Thus theatre become a mode of representation rather than a mere piece of entertainment.

III. To analyse how theatre can become a product of 'hybridity' and represent pluralistic identities that exist within a cultural system it represents. Theatre as a marker of
identity persists through the ages with the potential of polyphonic representations. To demonstrate this particular aspect, CaviTTunaaTakam and muuvacunaTakam of the Kerala Christian performance tradition are conceived as objects of study.

Methodology

The basic methodology followed in this work is the performance and the ethnographic method. Since Christian theatre is conceived as an identity of the community, the above mentioned dual method is essential. Performance method is conceived not only as a method for collecting data but also as a point of interpretation. The data is interpreted both from the performances as well the audience points of view by applying this method. The ethnographic method is vividly used to study the members of the community vis-a-vis the sponsors of the tradition. Through this method, the Christian ideology and idioms are brought to light in order to understand their relative positions in a given time frame. This methodology also helps in understanding the potential of the performance tradition to adopt itself to changing times. For this reason, the 'focussed interviews' instead of structured interview,\textsuperscript{31} are made use along with observation as a method. Partly, post-modern ethnographic view point is also taken in this study by not placing the researcher above the informant but putting the informant on a parallel footing. The object of the study thus becomes a subject of confidence and so places the informant as a 'specialist' in the study. Through this alone, the polyphonic nature of the Christian performance tradition can be understood and becomes a source of identity of the community to which it belongs. Partly due to this stand point, the researcher in this thesis resorted to 'the thick description' which Geertz and other post-modern ethnologists employed to bring to focus the nuances of representation.

Sources of the Study

Major sources of the study include:

1) Various kinds of Christian performances and the behavioral patterns of the community. 2) The oral tradition including legends, myths, beliefs, rituals and folk speeches. 3) The archival and non-archival literature on the Christian community and the performance tradition.
Chapter-1: Introduction

Brief Chapterisation

This thesis consists of seven chapters,

I. Introduction:

This chapter deals with a brief introduction to the advent of Christianity and the various phases through which it has passed. A detailed survey of Literature on the art form as well the performance theories and the post-modern theoretical positions are carried out. The aims and the objectives of the thesis as well as the methodology adapted in the study is also explained in this introductory chapter.

II. Phases of Christian Performance Tradition: A Theoretical Paradigm

This chapter has two sections. The first section deals with the theoretical position as well as the conceptual frame of the study. Recent debates on expressive forms of culture and their interpretations is highlighted in this section. The second section deals with the Christian performance tradition from its inception to the present day. Broadly, three phases are identified in the Christian performance tradition, keeping in view theatre as a variable parameter.

III. The Origin and Development of CaviTTunaaTakam

This chapter deals with the evolution and the development of CaviTTunaaTakam as a theatrical form. The importance of CaviTTunaaTakam as an identity to the community which it represents is vividly explained.

IV. CaviTTunaaTakam: Text, Texture and Textuality

This chapter treats text as a centrifocal object of study to the performance. It studies how the text manifests itself in the performance and imparts together new meanings to both the performer and the audience. This textual dynamics is viewed in this chapter as the source of continuity of the art form. To illustrate this idea, the chapter is divided into three sections. Each of them separately deals with the text, the texture and the textuality, and their inter-relationships in context of the performance.
V. Theatrical Aspects of *CaviTTunaaTakam*

This chapter focusses on the issues related to theatre and the production process. The back stage events which are vital but often undermined are exclusively dealt in with in this chapter to show how these elements determine the performance itself. *CaviTTunaaTakam* is taken as an example for this study. The theatrical elements are broadly divided into three segments in this chapter. They are: (a) The performance process, (b) The performance, (c) The theatrical issues.

VI. *muuvaracunaaTakam*: A Christian Performance Metaphor

In this chapter, moovarasunatakam, an important genre within the Christian theatre tradition, is conceived as the core of the tradition which represents the community and its relation to other communities. In this sense, *muuvaracunaaTakam* becomes a metaphor for Christian theatre and that metaphor is rhetorically expressed through annual cyclical play productions which inturn produce a space for the community to which it authoritatively cling to. The idioms with ideological overtones expressed in the art form are brought to light in this chapter.

VII. Conclusions

The conclusions are broadly drawn based on the study on Kerala Christian performance tradition. It is found that the Kerala Christian performance tradition is not homogenous but a product of hybridity and hence is ambivalent in nature. The long sojourn of Kerala Christian performance tradition right from its inception to the present day speaks about the vibrant and the dynamic stature of theatre as it conveys plural meanings and multi-ethnic identities. In this sense, theatre functions not just as a reflection of the society but represents the society, what it thinks and how it reacts to a given socio-economic milieu.
Notes


   'From the Syriac-write up by Mar Gabriel (a persian bishop who lived in Kerala 1705 • • •). 'The antiquity of the Syrian Christians and historical events relating to them'. 'Fifty two years after the birth of Messiah (i.e., in AD52), the holy Apostle Thomas arrived at Mailapore on the coast of Coromandel preaching the Gospel and founding churches there. Passing from thence to Malabar, the holy man landed on the island of Maliankarre (situated between cranganore and paroer), preached and taught and built churches in that island, having finished his works in this part and ordained two priests, returned to the land of pandies'.

2. The Seven Churches believed to be ordained by St. Thomas are (in the present names) Palayoor, Kodumgalloor, Kottekavu (Parur), Kokkamangalan, Niranam (Thrikpaleswaram), Kollom/Quilon and Nilaikkal (Chayal). Among this except Kollam and Nilaikkal the others were famous Namboodiri Villages of Kerala.

3. A.M. Mundadan, *Traditions of the St. Thomas Christians*. (Bangalore: Dhar-maram College, 1970) 60. Some historians say that the RambanpaaTTu is closely influenced by the Acts of Thomas. The RambanpaaTTu or which is in other way locally known as purathanapattu (literaly means the ancient songs) consists of the episodes which narrates the Apostles coming into Kerala, his missionary works leading to the conversions and the explicit listing of the miracles he performed in Malabar, hist organising of the churches, ordaining of the priests and the conse-cration of a bishop who was a member of Royal formily of kodumgalloor till the martyrdom at Mylapore. A.F.J. Klijn, ed., *The Acts of Thomas* (Leiden: E.J. Bill, 1961) is an apocryphal work, believed to have been written around the 3rd Century A.D. in Syriac.


6. As referred by Gouvea, Thomas cana copper plates was in the hands of Mar Yakkobu. This refers to the rights granted to Cana Thoma and his family by the then ruler. See, Mundadan, *traditions* 170-3. Tarisappally copper plates are two in number's. They were kept in Kottayam and Devalokam archives, both were given to the Christians of Kollam by Ayyan of Venattu (A.D. 849-?). For a translation of this copper plates (in *malayalam Cheppedu* which means a proof for the sanction of certain rights), see Xavier, Koodapuzha, *Bharatha Sabha Charithram* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute, 1984) 152-165. The modern interpretation of this copper plates also explains the improved *socio-economic* status of Thomas Christians see Varier and Gurukkal, *Kerala Charithram*. (Kottayam: Current Books, 1991) 109-111.


9. According to Mundadan, What is really involved here is the understanding of the doctrine *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the church there is no salvation) by the Portuguese and St. Thomas Christians respectively. 'The Portuguese come from the west where a rigid interpretation of the dictum had prevailed for a long time and had become acute in the 16th century in the context of the antiprotestant counter-reformation spirit'.

Apart from that the session IV decree XVII (about the Doctrine of holy sacrament of Baptism) and the Session IX (on the Reformation of manners) shows the measures taken by the Portuguese in the synod of Diamper in order to maintain Christian exclusiveness. See in Scaria, Zacharia, *The Acts and Decrees of Synod of Diamper* (Edamattam): IICS, 1994.

10. By AD 16th and 17th centuries groups of Jesuits, Augustinians, Dominicans and other missionaries came to the coastal Kerala along with the famous navigators like Gama, Cabral etc., under the patronage of Portugal. See Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Charithram* (Kottayam: NBS, 1969) 264-266.
11. ‘Padroado’, was given by Pope Alexander VIth in June 1st 1497 by Ineffabilis record in order to avoid the constant fights in between Spain and Portugal over the colonial and missionary expansion. According to ‘Padroado’, Portugal is entitled to look after the missionary enterprise in the East and Spain is to do the same in the West. India comes under the Eastern provinces, see Moraes George Mark, *A History of Christianity in India, Vol. 1* (Bombay: 1964) 124; also in Xavier Koodapuzha *Thirusabha Charithram* 846.

12. The decree IV of the session IX of the synod of Diamper 1599, which prohibits the Christians from participating in the *Onam* celebration and the decree IV in Session III, condemns the heathen practices, said to be held by the Christians shows the Portuguese extreme radical interpretation of the Christianity and their contempt towards the other religions. See Scaria, Zacharia, *The Acts and Decrees*.

13. First press from Europe to India was brought to Goa in 1576 and the next one to Vaippicota, Kerala in 1577. The first book was printed in 1579, at Vaippicotta in Tamil *lingua franca* of Kerala at the time. The letters were prepared by an expert, John Gonzalvez by name, a Jesuit missionary from Spain. A copy of this printed book “*Doctrina Christiana*” is kept in Sorborne University Library, Paris. See in P.J. Thomas *Malayala Sahithyam* 82. Images and paintings were first introduced into the Churches of Kerala by the missionaries between 16-17 centuries. Before that there was only the cross. The Roman bented arch supported by massive columns, the thin pointed arch and slim clustered columns of Gothic style, the Cuppola and other western styles of architecture were introduced in Churches of Kerala during this time. See John, F., Butler, *Christian art in India* (Madras: CLS, 1986) 24-39. The Latin Organ music of Kerala Churches is the innovation of missionaries during the Portuguese period. Before that the music (chanting of sermons) was in *Syriac*. For details see George, Menachery, ed., *The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia of India*, Vol. II, (Trichur: 1973).

14. The Synod of Angamaly under bishop Roz, S.J., who was the first latin bishop of the Malabar Church took some practical decisions and nullified certain ones made at Diamper. The text of the most solemn *Qurbana* (latin) was made at this, is still
kept in the manannam monastery. Based on the recommendations of this synod, Roz, also compiled a diocesan statute book.

15. The oath of "Koonan Kurisu" held at Mattancherry can be considered as a historic, recorded, resistance made by the native christians against the westernization. **Pazhayakoottukar** old division (Roman catholics) are the people who continued with the use of chaldean structure of liturgy. Puthankoottukar - new division (Jacobites) are the people who left the chaldean structure and accepted Antiokian methods.


24. The works are: O.B. Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages*; Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church 2 Vols.;* E.K. Chambers,
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The Early Medieval stage 2 vols.; Richard Axton, European Drama of the Early Middle ages; Glynne Wickham, Medieval Theatre; A.C. Cawley, ed. The Staging of Medieval Drama and William Tydeman, English Medieval Theatre. 1400-1500.


30. These works are, Said’s Orientalism and Fabian's Power on Performance.