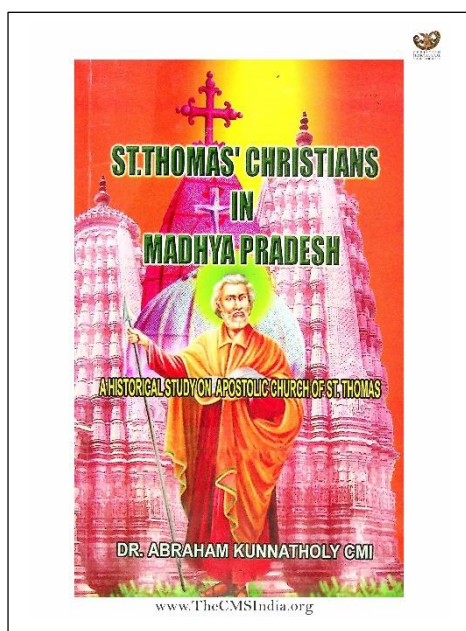
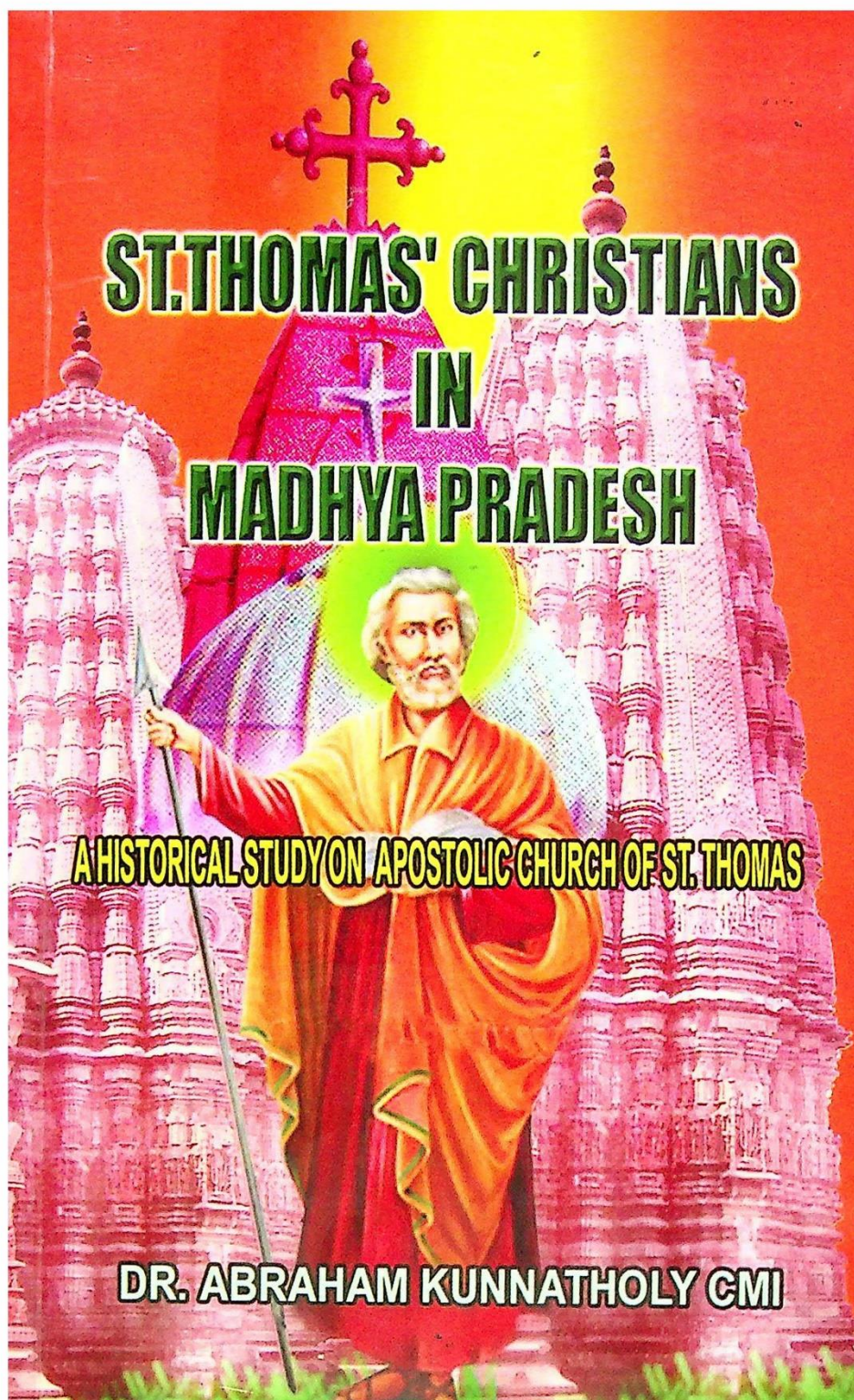


St. Thomas Christians in Madhya Pradesh



Call Number	RR-1394
Title	St. Thoms Christians in Madhya Pradesh
Topic	St. Thoms Christians in Madhya Pradesh (A Historical Study on Apostolic Church of ST. Thomas)
Author	Dr. Abraham Kunnatholy ,CMI.
Publisher/Year	Asian Trading Corporation 2007
ISBN	81-70-86-419-4
Printed at	National Printing Press, Bangalore
Total Pages	247
Language	English
Copyright	Author/Publisher
Contributor	
Key Words	#StThoms ChristiansinMadhyaPradesh Stthomaschristians #Madhyapradhesh #NAtionalprintingpress # DRAbrahamKunnatholycmi #AsianTradingCorporation #SyroMalabarchurch
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**ST. THOMAS' CHRISTIANS IN
MADHYA PRADESH**

**A HISTORICAL STUDY ON
APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS**

**A STUDY FOR WHICH Ph.D WAS AWARDED TO THE
AUTHOR BY DR H.S. GOUR VISHWAVIDYALAYA**

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A HISTORICAL STUDY ON APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS
(ENGLISH)

First Published in May, 2007.

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Suggestions are welcome:

Fr. Abraham Kunnatholy CMI
CMI House, 59, Govind Garden,
Govindpura, Bhopal 23.
M.P. India.
kunnatholy@hotmail.com

Published by
Asian Trading Corporation
P.O. BOX 8444, Bangalore.
India

Printed at: National Printing Press, Bangalore - 95
Ph: 25710658

Price: Rs. 250/-

Out Side India: €9.00 / \$10.00

ISBN : 81-7086 - 419-4

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS	vii
FOREWORD	xiii
PREFACE	xvii
NOTE ON ABBREVIATION	xxii
INTRODUCTION	1

CHAPTER I

SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1.1	The Origin of Syro-Malabar Church	3
1.1.1	The Indian Situation at the Beginning of the S.M Church	3
1.1.2	Origin of S.M Church: Source Analysis	4
1.1.3	St. Thomas and His Followers in the Tradition and Legends	5
1.1.3.1	In Other Documentary Sources	10
1.1.3.2	In Numismatic Sources	12
1.1.3.3	In Local Literary Sources	13
1.1.4	Comments on Indian Apostolate of St. Thomas	14
1.1.5	St. Barthelomew and the Indian Church	18
1.2	Growth of the Syro-Malabar Church	19
1.2.1	The History of The South-Indian S.M. Church	20
1.2.1.1	From 52 A.D-345 A.D	20
1.2.1.2	From 345 A.D-1500 A.D	23
1.2.1.3	From 1500 A.D-1599 A.D	25
1.2.1.4	From 1599 A.D-1887 A.D	32
1.2.1.5	From 1887 A.D-1923 A.D	39
1.2.1.6	From 1923 A.D-2000 A.D	40
1.3	Social Life of St. Thomas Christians	42

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CHAPTER II

MADHYA PRADESH ON THE EVE OF S.M EXARCHATES

2.1	Madhya Pradesh: A Geographical Survey	48
2.1.1	Malwa Region	49
2.1.2	Bundelkhand Region	50
2.1.3	Baghelkhand Region	50
2.1.4	Gondwana or Vindhyaachal Region	50
2.1.5	Chhattisgarh Region	51
2.1.6	Niamar Region	51
2.2	Sociological Situation: A Survey	52
2.2.1	Hindus	52
2.2.2	Tribals	55
2.2.2.1	Gonds	55
2.2.2.2	Bhils	61
2.2.2.3	Oraons	62
2.2.3	Jains	64
2.2.4	Buddhists	65
2.2.5	Moslems	65
2.2.6	Scheduled Castes	67
2.2.7	Christians	68
2.2.7.1	Church of Udaipur and Other Links	72
2.3	Educational Situation: A Survey	85
2.4	Economical Situation: A Survey	87
2.5	Political Situation: A Survey	89

CHAPTER III

CREATION OF THE S.M EXARCHATES IN M.P

3.1	The Historical Prelude to the S.M Exarchates	91
3.2	Areas Where the S.M Exarchates were Established	93

3.2.1	Areas Coming Under the Exarchate of Sagar	94
3.2.2	Areas Coming Under the Exarchate of Satna	100
3.2.3	Areas Coming Under the Exarchate of Ujjain	106
3.2.4	Areas Coming Under the Exarchate of Jagdalpur	110
3.3	Establishment of S.M Exarchates	112
3.3.1	Sagar	112
3.3.2	Satna	114
3.3.3	Ujjain	114
3.3.4	Jagdalpur	115
3.4	Key Personalities behind the Creation of S.M Exarchates	115
3.4.1	Archbishop Eugene D'Souza	116
3.4.2	Bishop Oscar Severin	118
3.4.3	Eugene Cardinal Tisserant	118
3.4.4	Bishop Clemens Thottungal	119
3.4.5	Bishop Abraham Mattam	119
3.4.6	Bishop John Perumattam	121
3.4.7	Bishop Paulinos Jeerakath	122
3.4.8	Fr Maurus CMI	122
3.5	Pioneering Missionaries in the S.M Church of M.P	123
3.5.1	Fr Diego CMI	123
3.5.2	Fr Cassius CMI	123
3.5.3	Fr Vianney CMI	123
3.5.4	Fr Romuald CMI	124
3.5.5	Fr Christian CMI	124
3.5.6	Pioneers in the Exarchate of Sagar	124
3.5.6.1	Fr Papias Mampra CMI	124
3.5.6.2	Fr Paul Kozhippat CMI	125
3.5.6.3	Fr Simon Stock CMI	125

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3.5.6.4	Fr Antony Ettickal CMI	125
3.5.6.5	Fr Cassius CMI	126
3.5.6.6	Fr Gerald Padinjarepeedika CMI	126
3.5.6.7	Fr Prosper Komban CMI	126
3.5.6.8	Fr Raymond CMI	127
3.5.6.9	Fr Antony Chiramel CMI	127
3.5.6.10	Other Missionaries During the Exarchate Period	127
3.5.7	Pioneers in the Exarchate of Satna	128
3.5.7.1	Fr Augustine Vallooran V.C	128
3.5.7.2	Fr Thomas Kuzhippala V.C	128
3.5.7.3	Fr John Rathappilly V.C	129
3.5.7.4	Fr James Edavazhithara V.C	129
3.5.7.5	Other Missionaries During the Exarchate Period	129
3.5.8	Pioneers in the Exarchate of Ujjain	130
3.5.8.1	Frs Bernard & Eric Reckwardt	130
3.5.8.2	Fr Francis Kandathil MST	131
3.5.8.3	Fr Paul Naikarakudy MST	131
3.5.8.4	Fr Joseph Karikilamthadam MST	131
3.5.8.5	Fr George Kuzhikandam MST	132
3.5.8.6	Fr John Plackeel MST	132
3.5.8.7	Other Missionaries in the Exarchate Period	132
3.5.9	Pioneers in the Exarchate of Jagdalpur	133
3.5.9.1	Bishop Simon Stock Palathara CMI	133
3.5.9.2	Fr Papias CMI	133
3.5.9.3	Fr Thomas Vadaparambil CMI	133
3.5.9.4	Fr Abraham Thuruthimalil CMI	134
3.5.9.5	Fr Kurian Macheril CMI	134
3.5.9.6	Fr Michael Mundathanam CMI	135
3.5.9.7	Other Missionaries During the Exarchate Period	135

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CHAPTER IV
GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF
S.M CHURCH IN M.P

4.1	Journey of Syro-Malabar Exarchates to Eparchy	136
4.1.1	Situation of the Exarchates at the Beginning	136
4.2	Growth of S.M Exarchates During the Exarchate Period	138
4.2.1	Growth of the Exarchate of Sagar	138
4.2.2	Growth of the Exarchate of Satna	143
4.2.3	Growth of the Exarchate of Ujjain	147
4.2.4	Growth of the Exarchate of Jagdalpur	151
4.3	Growth and Development of Individual Eparchies	154
4.3.1	Growth of the Eparchy of Sagar	154
4.3.2	Growth of the Eparchy of Satna	162
4.3.3	Growth of the Eparchy of Ujjain	166
4.3.4	Growth of the Eparchy of Jagdalpur	173
4.4	Major Activities, Special Thrusts and Personnel	177
CONCLUSION		180
GLOSSARY		181
BIBLIOGRAPHY		184
INDEX		212

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

For the last three and a half years I was working on this thesis. And today I feel gratified, for, the pain and struggle that I undertook, is rewarded in the form of this book. This volume is a tribute to the seekers of truth in its pristine form and to the lovers of humanity who spent their life for the people without counting the cost.

Though this study technically covers a period from 1968-2000, since St. Thomas Christians/members of Syro-Malabar Church hold that they had their origin from the preaching of St. Thomas in India in the first century I have to make a short analysis of their history here. The Church of St. Thomas has the alleged first century roots in M.P. This is a historical hypothesis yet to be studied. Though missionaries from the Syro-Malabar Church reached M.P in 1955, the official beginning took place only in 1968. So, here my effort is to study and collate the history of the present St. Thomas Church/Syro-Malabar Church, which is functioning in Madhya Pradesh, from 1968.

In the present study, I have devoted the first chapter to the analysis of the historical origin of the community. Here I have depended on various studies that are already made by the different scholars. I have tried to fill the lacuna in certain aspects which I felt could be more reasonable and logical. For example, most of the authors do not give much leverage to the north Indian apostolate of St. Thomas; even there are scholars who tried to locate Gondophores as a South Indian King. All these must have had its origin in the belief that St. Thomas preached only in south India. I have tried to bring a logical bridging of the gap of this kind of partisan reading of the history of this Church.

In the second chapter I have analysed the situation of M.P before the official arrival of Syro-Malabar Church in M.P; that covers the period from 1968-2000. When I studied the sociological situation under this, I have gone elaborately to look into the roots of M.P Christianity. Even though, the existence of the Church of St. Thomas in Madhya Pradesh in the first century, is a hypothetical one I have devoted a few pages for

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INTRODUCTION

Syro-Malabar Church, otherwise known as Church of St. Thomas Christians, is the community of Christian believers who were ever loyal to the Roman Pontiff, who claim their origin from the preaching of St. Thomas in India. A.M. Mundadan defines this group as follows; "There are in the tradition three elements which constitute the community of St. Thomas Christians: the people converted by the Apostle in Malabar, the immigrant Christians from Mylapore, and the Christians of Thomas of Cana, Mar Sapor, and Mar Prot, the preponderance of each element being differently estimated by different versions."¹

Hambye identifies the Thomas Christians differently. According to him they include Brahman and other high castes that were baptised by St. Thomas, immigrants from Persia and Syria, proselytes of Latin missionaries who preceded the Portuguese.² K.M. Panickar identifies them as "converts from high caste hindus, namboothiris, and nairs, though at a later period a considerable number of lower caste men seem also to have been converted".³ A.D. Mattam speaks of Thomas' Christians as follows; "By the [term] St. Thomas Christians are meant not only those who claim to be the descendants of the converts of St. Thomas, but also those who have been at different times brought to faith by the same or have become one with the same".⁴ Cardinal Tisserant another eminent historian on St. Thomas' Christians identifies, Christians who are members of Syro-Malabar Church as Christians of St. Thomas.⁵

Though the proposed Study covers a period from 1968-2000, since St. Thomas Christians/members of Syro-Malabar Church hold that they had their origin from the preaching of St. Thomas in India in the first

¹ Mundadan, *Traditions*, p.105.

² Hambye, *Syrian Church in India*, p.286.

³ Panickar K.M, *Malabar and Portuguese*, p. 21.

⁴ Mattam, *Indian Church of St. Thomas Christians & Her Missionary Enterprises Before 16th Century*, p.2.

⁵ Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity*, p.1.

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Chapter 1

SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1.1 The Origin of Syro-Malabar Church

1.1.1 Indian Situation at the Beginning of Syro-Malabar Church

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

Here my interest is to concentrate on the possible elements which would have helped St. Thomas to come to India in the first century A.D. The Macedonian empire in the 3rd century B.C had extended up to the Punjab. Even, prior to this, we see the Persian influence, in the north-west of India. However I would like to see only the period which is closer to the period of the origin of Christianity in detail.

After the death of Alexander the Great (323 BC) Chandra Gupta Maurya became stronger and tried to expel the Macedonians from the Punjab. And slowly North West India came under the sway of Mauryas and it remained under them up to 232 BC – till the death of Ashoka. After Ashoka the empire was broken into small kingdoms. At that situation the Bactrian Greeks invaded India under MENANDER. And he remained in power for a short period (180–160 BC).³ Following the Bactrians, Sythian Sakas and the Indo-Parthians ruled North-West India.

¹ Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. I, p.9.

² Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. I, pp.9-13.

³ Tripathi, *History of Ancient India*, p.178.

Chapter II

MADHYA PRADESH ON THE EVE OF THE CREATION OF THE S.M EXARCHATES

2.1 Madhya Pradesh: A Geographical Survey

The geography of a country plays an important role on the course of its history. The study of the geographical factors of M.P will tell us how they have influenced her political, social, and economic development through the ages. Madhya Pradesh makes her name apt by her very position in the map of India.

"The state of Madhya Pradesh lies between the latitudes 20° 52' 46" and 17° 46' 55" N and between longitudes 74° 1' 55" and 84° 23' 54" E. The tropic cancer passes through the state towards the north so that most of the state lies in the torrid zone with less than a fourth in the temperate zone."¹ Dr. Prameela Kumar has given the location differently. According to her it is 18°-26°.30 north and 74°-84°.30 east.² This seems to be more correct. In 1956 with the re-organization of states M.P also got her boundaries changed.³ It covers an area of 4,43,446 Sq kilometres. In the undivided Madhya Pradesh there were six natural regions and four transitional regions. The natural regions were Malwa, Bundelkhand, Bagelkhand, Gondwana, Chhatisgarh, and Nimar. The transitional regions were: a) the area around Gwalior and the area between Malwa and Bundelkhand, b) the area between Bundelkhand and Gondwana (Sarguja), c) the area between Malwa and Gondwana, d) and the area between Gondwana and Nimar (Hoshangabad and Nimar).

¹ Census Report 1961 (Madhya Pradesh) Vol. VIII, Part-1, p. 21.

² Prameela Kumar, *Madhya Pradesh: A Geographical Study*, p.1.

³ Prameela Kumar, *Madhya Pradesh: A Geographical Study*, p.1.



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