

Living to Tell The Tale-The Knanaya Christians of Kerala

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LIVING TO TELL THE TALE- THE KNANAYA CHRISTIANS OF KERALA

In the first week of August, Kottayam town witnessed a protest rally by approximately 600 former members of the Knanaya Christians. The rally vouched for the restoration of the erstwhile Knanaya identity of the participants, who by way of marrying outside the Knanaya circle, got excommunicated from the community.

What is it about the Knanaya Community that people who have been ousted from it, refuse to part with their Knanaya identity? Who can give them their Knanaya Identity back? What is the nature of this identity?

Belonging to a Jewish-Christian Ancestry, the Knanaya Christians of Kerala are believed to have reached the port of Kodungaloor (Kerala), in 345 CE, under the leadership of Thomas of Cana. This group, also known as 'Thekkumbaggar' (Southists) claims to have been practising strict endogamy since the time of their arrival. 'Thekkumbaggar' has been opposed to the 'Vadakkumbaggar' (Northists) who were the native Christians of that time, for whose ecclesiastical and spiritual uplift, it is believed that the Knanayas migrated from South Mesopotamia. However, the Southists did not involve in marriage relations with the Northists.

The Knanaya Christians today, number up to around 2,50,000 people. Within the Knanaya Christians, there are two groups that follow different churches-one

follows the Catholic rite and the other, the Jacobite rite. This division dates back to the Coonen Kurush Satyam of 1653, when the Syrian Christians of Kerala, revolted against the Portuguese efforts to bring the Syrian Christians under the Catholic rite. Amongst the Southists, one group moved towards the Jacobite group, whereas the other stayed with the Catholic Church. These two groups within the community, however, intermarry. But this necessarily involves the conversion of the bride to the groom's faith. The Knanaya Christians strictly prohibit marrying outside the community. This would mean, that any Knanaya, who marries outside the Knanaya fold is immediately understood to be excommunicated from the community. As a community, it does not encourage conversion. Abraham Kuruvilla, a member of the Knanaya Committee avers that 'Knanaya' is something that is inherited only through birth and that there is a need to distinguish between religion/faith and community, when one tries to understand the Knanaya Christians. In short, Knanayas or The Kna people are a community, that practise Christianity. In this context, Fr. James Thodathil, in 'Antiquity and Identity of the Southists' argues thus:

"...the community has affinity with the church in its spiritual relationship and in all other areas except in the case of marriage"

One of my interview respondents put the same idea in an interesting manner:

"We (Knanayas) are neither Jews nor Christians. If we marry a Jew, we are excommunicated; if we marry a Christian also, we are excommunicated!"

This is a study which was undertaken to understand the Knanaya Community and its marriage practises through the narratives of its own people. Stretching over a period of one month between end May, 2011 and early July 2011, the fieldwork for this study was conducted in 4 places-Kottayam, Ernakulum, Kadathuruthy and Kalliserry. In the course of my study, I visited 4 Churches, 2 weddings, 1 wedding eve function, 1 Wake Function, 1 Holy Mass and The World Youth Day Celebrations of the Knanaya Catholic Youth League. In total, 27 interviews were conducted, of which 4 were priests, ten were youth and the rest were married people.

In this paper, I would like to present the finds of my study. Central to this paper, would be the issue of the Knanaya Identity and how it gets regulated through marriage practises. While for some, marriage reiterates their Knanaya Identity; for others, it leads to a relinquishing of their Knanaya identity.

The report has been organised into three parts:

The first part intends to familiarise the reader to the main themes in the history of the community through its folksongs. The Oral Tradition is important to this study, because, devoid of a written history, the community lends credence to its beliefs from its folksongs. Moreover, Knanaya identity is reaffirmed through these folksongs.

For example, it is believed that when Thomas of Cana, along with the 72 families ,priests and deacons, landed in Kodungaloor,the-then King , Cheramal Perumal

welcomed him with inscribed copper-plates and 72 Grants. But the copper-plates were last recorded to have been seen by the Portuguese in the 17th century and it has been lost, ever since. However, the legacy of the copper-plates and the 72 grants still live on mainly through the folksongs and also through their rituals. Being a Knanaya, is therefore, to be a part of the covenant that bestowed upon them these honours and privileges. It is only with the arrival of the Portuguese in Kerala that written documents about Thomas of Cana and his people started surfacing. In the appendix, I have attached Chapter 5 from the Portuguese Traveller Diogo De Couto's 'The Asia', written in 1611 CE, which makes a mention of 'Thome Cananeo' and his people. Diogo De Couto has also produced a Portuguese translation of the copper plate inscription. This is a widely quoted source document by the Knanayas themselves. The original work was in Portuguese. I procured a translation of the document during fieldwork.

The second part of the report would deal with my interactions with the people of the community. Much of what I have learnt about the community, is based on these interactions. Some of my interview respondents gave me books written by the Knanayas themselves about their community.

Through these interactions, I got familiarised with a number of ideas relating to the marriage practises of the community; some of which challenge the givens of the community. The third section is a concluding section which has concluding remarks on the study.

Part 1- Oral Tradition and Consciousness

The Knanaya Community , the descendents of Thomas of Cana, a merchant, who set sail to Kodungaloor along with Bishop Joseph , 72 families from 7 tribes, priests and deacons in 345 CE for the spiritual and ecclesiastical support of the St. Thomas Church of India. Although their date of arrival has been contested by historians, the Knanayas, through an inventive mix of folksong, language and numerology, peg their date of arrival at 345 CE, which I present below. The song 'Innu Nee Njangale' ('Today You Have Forsaken Us Lord) is the fodder on which the date is pegged. Presented below is the English translation of the song sourced from 'Symposium On Knanites' 1986.

Innu Nee Njangale

Have you forsaken us to-day oh Lord?

To-day we have none behind us to support us;

We have neither city nor language;

Our beauty will lie only in our ornaments;

Your jurisdiction must be extended to our abode.

(The Lord's Response)

As occasion demands, good abuns (=bishops)

I shall send you within twelve years.

The seventy-two families of seven clans,

You must go united.

My Children, go in joy.

With Jacket, veil, rosary and cloth for the head,

Chain, wristlet, and beautiful cross,

And good provision got together,

They went in a multitude some distance with umbrellas

Then when they reached sea-shore to go on board,

Friends, masters and relatives all

Embrace one another kindly.

Tears are on the chest, and it is wet;

None is witness but God.

My children, shall we meet again after you go to India?

Remember us always, that relationship may not be surrendered,

Always bear the ten and the seven in mind;

Do not turn away (from faith)

By the grace of God,

The three ships sail side by side.

(another tune)

By the will of the triune God St. Thomas (is) in Mylapore

Without mishaps we arrived in Cranganore.

In the land of the Malabar King our reputation today

Must be fittingly recognised by the monarch.

At the sight of the king the heart was gladdened

To clear the way for the heirs of St. Thomas

I found you today not transgressing the commandments.

They offered presents of coins and good gems.

Give us according to our presents, and write in the presence of witnesses.

We were given enough religious privileges;

The Malabar monarch that day engraves on a copper plate.

The King went and saw the land and gave it away

In the year of Soval after the birth of the Lord,

The honoured Kinayi Thomman received the copper plate document.

Based on ‘Paralperu’, a way of linking numbers to letters, the following table has been produced for the sounds in Malayalam

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
ക - ka	ഖ - kha	ഗ - ga	ഘ - gha	ങ - ña	ച - ca	ഛ - cha	ജ - ja	ഝ - jha	ഞ - ña
ട - ta	ത - tha	ഡ - da	ഢ - dha	ണ - ña	ത - ta	ഥ - tha	ദ - da	ധ - dha	ന - na
പ - pa	ഫ - pha	ബ - ba	ഭ - bha	മ - ma	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
യ - ya	ര - ra	ല - la	വ - va	ശ - śa	ഷ - ṣa	സ - sa	ഹ - ha	ള - ḷa	ള - ḷa / ര - ra

The word ‘**Soval**’ (*In the year Soval after the birth of the Lord*) in the second last line of the song, indicates time. Since ‘Soval’ is followed by ‘after the birth of the Lord’ it is meant to indicate the Christian Era.

Returning to the word, ‘Soval’ itself, breaking it up into its sounds,

ശ

‘So’ of ‘soval’ corresponds to ^{śa} (5)

വ

‘Va’ of ‘soval’ corresponds to ^{va} (4)

ല

‘La’ of ‘soval’ corresponds to ^{la} (3)

Reading the numerals associated with the sounds from right to left, 345 is generated. It is through this mix of folksong, language and numerology that the Knanayas affirm that they touched upon the shores of Kodungalloor in 345CE.

Moreover, this song presents the theme of the Migration and the heartbreak associated with it. In response to the anguish of the migrants, the Lord's reassurance entailed an injunction- an injunction against forfeiting of relationships.

“My children, shall we meet again after you go to India?”

Remember us always, that relationship may not be surrendered,

Always bear the ten and the seven in mind”

The ten and the seven correspond respectively to the Ten Commandments and the seven sacraments. The injunction, in popular discourse is taken as one of the reasons for the practise of endogamy. So, when one of the respondents said the following

‘Endogamy was something that we were told to practise as we left the shores of our home for a foreign land’ (“ഞങ്ങളോട് പറഞ്ഞുവിട്ട ഒരു കാര്യം ആണ്”), such an articulation finds itself testified in the folklore culture of the community. It is also believed that prior to the departure from their homeland, the migrants had gone to pray at the tomb of Ezra. It is also in keeping

with Ezra's injunctions post-Babylonian Exile, that the community follows the practise of endogamy.

Turning over to the recent history of the Knanaya Community, a few surprises throw up. The Malankara Jacobite Syrian Knanaya Committee, the first organisational structure of the community was established in the year 1882. The very term 'Knanaya', indicating the 'Thekkumbaggar' was officially used for the first time at the formation of this committee. However, during the time of the formation of the committee, dissent was registered by Fr. Pulimootil Abraham Kathanar, over the adoption of the title 'Knanaya'. He claimed that the name is supposed to flag the migrants from Cana in Galilee (The place where Jesus is believed to have turned water into wine); whereas the name that is slated for approval, gives the impression of the migrants being the "cursed" people of Canaan (following the story in the bible about the Canaanite woman). He was not given a response. The term 'Knanaya' was subsequently accepted by all Thekkumbaggar, irrespective of the church they belonged to. It was maintained that the members of this group are the descendants of Thomas of Cana, the merchant who revived the fortunes of the St. Thomas Church in India. The uniformity of this founder theory was however thwarted when the Kottayam Eparchy (Knanaya Catholics) introduced the term 'Kinanaya' as a substitute for Knanaya (based on the folk song 'Munnam Malankara' that address the founder as Tomman Kinan and a study conducted by Fr Jacob Kollaparambil) and identified the founder as Thomas Kinayi, a merchant from Kynai in Persia. For Malankara

Jacobite Knanaya Christians, the place Edessa stands tall in their recounting of the Knanaya history. According to them, Bishop Joseph, who accompanied Thomas of Cana and the migrants, is believed to hail from Edessa. Therefore, for a number of respondents, Edessa was the place from where the migration proceeded, while for others it was Cana.

Part 2 –The Narratives

Ambu was in her First year of Pre-Degree (equivalent to class 11) at St. Teresa's College, Cochin, when her engagement was announced. Following a three year engagement period, she got married when she was in the second year of her degree programme. When asked about the reason for a long engagement period, Ambu, now a mother of two, responded by saying that it is a done thing in the community 'to book' people in advance. Uma, a 24 year old master's student, is currently in her second year of her three-year engagement period.

When asked about the reason behind the incidence of long engagement periods to an elderly couple, the wife quickly responded by saying-“That's because we do not have enough people”. The husband, by a wave of his hand, asked his wife to stop talking. He explained that sometimes it so happens that the bride-to-be or the groom-to-be could be in the process of studying while the match is made. He remarked that it is only wise to hold up the wedding till their education is completed.

There is a palpable tension within the community about the question of numbers. On the one hand, there is the weight of tradition which does not allow them to marry outside the community, and on the other, there is the question of finding a suitable match.

There have been instances when girls were left with no choice but marry outside the community for the lack of good matches. Similarly, the cousin of one of my respondents had to marry outside the community because she was too tall for the existing men in the community. Such a scenario can be an occasion for heartbreak, as it entails leaving behind the cushioned comfort of the community that you grew up in. Anu, a mother of two, exclaims that since the community is very small, everyone in the community is close-knit and the spirit of belonging thrives. The common jitteriness associated with marriages-idea of starting new relationships at a new place, new family, is largely absent in Knanaya Community. Anu claimed that she never felt like a stranger in her husband's house. In fact, from the start, she was very much a part of her husband's family.

Cyril, a 25 year old Knanaya man, whom I met at the World Youth celebrations, shared an interesting anecdote. During his school days in Neeriakadu, Cyril took extra computer classes, for which he had to travel to a different town. One day as he was waiting for his bus back home, an old man, whom he had never seen before, came up to him and asked him a number of questions (where he is from, what he is doing in the town, whether he is travelling alone) and towards the end , he asked him if he was a Knanaya. Stunned out of his wits, Cyril answered in the

affirmative. For Cyril, the old man's care and concern, is the cornerstone of Knanaya identity. Prof. Remani Tharayil, Retired Principal of B.C.M College, Kottayam, was of the opinion that a Kna person can always identify another Kna person, despite not having met before. Almost all my respondents have expressed the same opinion. When asked to explain how such a deduction could be made, most of them responded by saying that it is something that could not be explained. Knanayas find it difficult to part with this sense of belongingness and community even when they are not in Kerala. Prof. Tharayil informed me of how the Knanaya Catholics in USA have associations which meet regularly and within the ambit of the associations, dating is encouraged between Knanaya boys and girls.

The questions of personal freedom, with respect to marriage, are hardly raised. Out of the ten youth respondents, only one wanted the endogamy rule to be removed, believing that it is a question of personal choice and that the community should not interfere in matters such as this. All of my other youth respondents were very positive about the endogamy rule, although they did express concerns for some of their fellow mates who were in distress with respect to finding adequate matches. Anjitha, a nurse, who is waiting for a job to materialise abroad, remarked thus- "Being a Knanaya is a blessing I received at birth. If it's possible, I want to be born as a Knanaya in my next life too". To this, the Vicar of St. Mary's Knanaya Church, Mamangalam, added an interesting dimension. He recalled having heard of a group of youngsters agitating against the initiation of talks related to the status of the endogamy rule, at a Bishop Synod two years ago. A group of youngsters had

apparently written letters to the synod, stating that any change in the endogamy rule or any reforms to that effect would be met with their committing suicide. This happened along the sidelines of the synod and was not given much publicity.

A discussion titled 'Knanaya People: Where Are We Going?' (Knanayakkar Engottu?) that appeared in 'Karunikan' (Vol.8.No.01 January 2011) a theological magazine released by the Knanaya Catholics, give some interesting insights into the issue of endogamy. There were 8 participants in total-7 members of the Knanaya Community and 1 man who married outside the community. Initial arguments surfaced about how critical the issue of people marrying outside the community was. According to one of the participants, only a very small minority of the community marries outside the fold and therefore, it is not an issue that needs to be given attention to. But another participant adduces to an estimate of ten percent of people from the community moving out of the community, which, by sheer numbers, is a cause for concern. The non-knanaya participant (Knanaya man who married a non-knanaya Christian woman) expresses his displeasure at having being declined permission to conduct the baptism of his children at his parish church. For him, it was a heart rending experience. In the event of marrying outside the community, the name of the person who has moved away from the community would be struck out of the parish registry. The concerned member would eventually join another parish. He further argued that the idea of maintaining 'Purity of Blood' should give way to maintaining 'Purity of faith' following which

anyone who accepts Christ and the Christian way of life could join the Knanaya Community.

Running parallel to this man's anxiety is that of a 22 year old boy who was born to a Knanaya father and a non-Knanaya mother. An active member of his dad's erstwhile parish, he feels incomplete being what he calls, a 'Half Kna'. He longs to be a part of the shared history that makes the claim to 72 Grants being bestowed by Cheraman Perumal on arrival. He thoroughly enjoys being with his knanaya friends, and he claims that it is on the insistence of his Knanaya friends that he moved to a school near the parish church. He feels that his life would have been more complete if he were a 'full Kna'. But he is also aware that it is not in his control to change the rules of the community.

Moving along a different trajectory is the case of Sarah. Married to a Hindu, she is nonchalant at being excommunicated from the community. She contended that she did not face any opposition from the community and since she was not a regular at church, it did not affect her much. She understood what being excommunicated meant-her children would not be baptised at her erstwhile parish and the parish would not bury her in its premise, once her time comes. But, according to Fr. Jacob Vellian,

“The born Knanaya marrying a non-knanaya does not lose his or her Knanaity”

(Knanite Community History and Culture)

From this, it can be deduced that once you are a Knanaya nothing can take away your 'Knanaity'. Sundeep Thamarapally, Managing Director, Knanaya Nazareth Research Centre, infers from Fr. Vellian's statement that 'Knanaity' is equivalent to a birth right and no occasion can take one's 'Knanaity' away. Sundeep treads on cautious waters as he comments that one cannot make much of a statement such as the one above if one does not understand what 'Knanaity' is. During the interview, Sundeep read out the first few lines from the Constitution of The Malankara Syrian Knanaya Samudayam, which lends itself to an official understanding of who a Knanaya is. This understanding of the group is based on the idea of the Knanayas deriving their identity from the fact of having come from Cana. Since this Knanaya identity is inherited through birth, it can be argued that, under no circumstances can a man or woman born to Knanaya parents be disrobed of his or her Knanaity. But the practise of ex-communication with its attendant psychological and social issues cannot be reconciled with the conclusion that has been arrived at currently. A Knanaya who marries a non-knanaya is no longer seen and perceived as a Knanaya by himself and by the rest of the members of the community. Apart from this, the concerned individual's name will be struck off from the church register. A Knanaya who marries a non-knanaya Christian usually joins the parish of the non-Knanaya spouse.

Interestingly, the Constitution under article 49 (B) permits any person of Knanaya descent who belong to any other denomination of the Christian Church, to join the Knanaya Community by proving his 'Knanaity' and subsequently through an

application to the concerned parish. This article is fraught with ambiguities. Based on the constitution, since 'Knanaity' is identical to Knanaya Descent, a man of Knanaya descent, no matter what the status of one's religious faith is, should belong to the Knanaya community. If that is the case, then a person of Knanaya descent, irrespective of which 'Christian denomination' he or she belongs to, will belong to the Knanaya Community. Here, what is the need to limit the question of faith to other Christian denominations only? For example, one wonders what the status of a man of Knanaya descent is, if he decides to get converted to a faith outside Christianity?

This is a contradiction in the constitution, which on the one hand, is based on the understanding of Knanaya being transmitted through birth, while on the other, insists on proof of 'Knanaity' in the event of a man of Knanaya descent being a part of another 'sabha' ('Sabha' is the Malayalam word used in the constitution which means 'denomination of Christian Church'. It also means society). Within the recesses of this contradiction, lie the lived experiences of the people of the community. For, in practise, a man/woman of Knanaya descent who marries a Non Knanaya has the right to return to the Knanaya fold whenever he/she renounces his non- knanaya kin. Sarah, therefore, can still be understood as a Knanaya, if she renounces all her links with her existing non-knanaya family members, i.e., her husband and children.

It is interesting to note how the life of the community takes its own shape with or without cognisance of the written word (here understood as the constitution). For a community that claims to have been in existence for 1666 years, its customs and traditions carry a certain weight. In the light of its long history which has been lived and which continues to be lived, if one tries to locate the importance of a document, such as the constitution, in the lives of its people, one gathers that many have lived their lives without even knowing that such a thing existed and many continue to live their lives oblivious to the existence of the constitution. Note that I am not arguing that such people should be condemned but I am trying to argue that it is possible that they do not feel the need to verify what has been practised because of the weight of the history/tradition behind their practises. But, juxtapose this with the restoration demands of those who have been excommunicated; in such a scenario, a document, such as the constitution, assumes an air of importance granted by the dictates of the workings of a judicial system in a modern democracy.

Based on the narratives of the people and an understanding of the Constitution of the Malankara Syrian Knanaya Samudayam, a case can be made for the re-examination of the Knanaya Identity or Knanaity. This would be of particular significance to not only those who have lost their Knanaya Identity through marriage, but also those who have converted to faiths, other than the Catholic and Jacobite Churches, thereby understood to have lost their Knanaya Identity. Such is the case of Veena, who got married to a Knanaya man, but got recently converted

to a newly founded protestant church. Veena thinks that she is no longer is a part of the Knanaya Community. For Veena, Knanaya was the faith that she left behind while accepting a new faith. Here, Abraham Kuruvilla's distinction between faith and community breaks down. This further strengthens the case for a re-examination of the Knanaya identity.

Living to Tell The Tale

The Knanaya Community is living a history, a history that has seen, known and lived all of 1666 years, beginning from 345 CE. To have survived as a community, all these years, is a feat in itself. Through its Oral Traditions, we saw that right from the time of the migration, the idea of sustaining and nurturing relationships within the community was placed at a high pedestal. This nurturance continues till date in the zealous upkeep of the practise of endogamy, which is further bolstered by the social and emotional consequences of ex-communication. However, a case has been made to re-examine the question of Knanaya Identity, based on the narratives and lived experiences of its people.

The rally that took place just weeks before the Centenary Celebrations of the Knanaya Catholic Diocese, saw participants with placards which read 'Do Justice To Us'. This flags the need to take a second look what the Knanaya Identity is about. Is it a question of 'community' as one of my respondents put it, or is it a question of faith? Moreover, how does one reconcile the idea of 'justice' with a

practise that claims to have been in existence since 345 CE? These could be some of the problems that could be addressed through subsequent studies. For the moment, it would be interesting to watch how the community resolves these issues- will it mould itself to the changes around it or continue to carry its shape intact for posterity?

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APPENDIX-A

The Asia by Diogo De Couto in Volume 12

CHAPTER V

Of most of the things that happened to these Christians: and prelates who had until this time: and kingdoms in which we live

After the death of the Apostle St. Thomas, all Christendom in these parts of Malabar, and Meliapor came under the command of the prelates sent by the bishops of Edessa until the arrival of the Nestorians of Babylon, who like swine infected all those parts with its heresies, and perverse doctrine. After the death of the saint more than

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three hundred years ago, there was in the kingdom of Vijayanagar great wars and famines, and so many earthquakes, and thin heaven, that is stated in their scriptures that near Meliapor, land rained and devastated local population, and because of that many of those lands were completely deserted, and the Christians were scattered to different parts, and many for lack of doctrine became in the kindness of their pasts. And today at the coast of Fishery Bipor there are many

who are descended from these people called Taridascal, the great Naique, which means, the caste of the ancient kings, because many of those who stayed there were of the blood of kings, whom the Holy Apostle converted as Christians, but the greater part of them settled in the woods and mountains, which are whom went to Jodamalla, which the natives call Xaber, which means old people, and others were scattered by the Malabar coast, where they founded temples, and even now they are hosted in the hills, after the Moors came in India for many vexations they did, whose Chief was always in Patana City, where the Holy Apostle landed for the first time in that City: this is now destroyed for all time by war.

And after many years a ship landed to that port of Patana, in which came an Armenian Christian called

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Thomé Cananeo, a very rich man, and approached the king and gave an account of himself, and he gave him the place of Patana to retire with his men who brought their wives and afterwards, the same king gave them the ground of Cranganore, [the] place where is now our fortress, where Thomé built his Church and today is the day of invocation of the same Apostle, and then made two more: the Oracle of our Lady, and one of S. Cyriaco Martyr. And because the donation of these grounds, which were granted to him by the King. It is a notable fact and declare worthy things, many I feel that was profitable to reproduce here verbatim, according to folders found in copper, which I cite in my seventh decade, which

disappeared from the Factory of Cochin, and from them I infer that this was a Christian King, whose name was Cocurangon.

Copies of the donations that were made by the King of Malabar to Thomé Cananeo

May Cocurangon be prosperous, and have long life, and live a hundred thousand years, divine servant of gods, strong, real, full of good works, reasoning, powerful

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over all the earth, happy, conquering, glorious, prosperous in the ministry of gods rightly. In Malabar's city of the great idol, ruling him in the period of Mercury in the seventh day of the month of March before the full moon, the same King Cocurangon, being in Cornelur [Kodungallur] arrived Cananeo Thome, a leading man in a ship with determination to see the farthest land of the East; and the people seeing him get there, gave message to the King, who sent him to go before him, spoke with him amicably, and gave him his own name, calling him henceforth Cocurangon Cananeo, and the king granted him the city of Patana for all time to come. And being this king was in his great prosperity, was one day gone to hunt, and ordered his men to surround the forest, taking with him Cananeo Thomé, and the king talked with a great astrologer who advised him that all that forest, that was great [vast], be given to the Cananeo, which he did, and he commanded to be cleared soon. This was the same year, on which they landed on the eleventh day of

the month of April. And in this jungle, the Cananeo ordered the construction of a Church, where the King laid the foundation stone, and so he founded there a large City, and gave the king many and very rich gifts,

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whereupon the King granted him more [privileges such as] seven modes of musical instruments, and all the honors made to the same king. And he granted him more power in their wedding to the women can make sounds with the finger in their mouth just as the wives of the kings only could do. He also conceded a distinguished status to him and his people and all the more, the right to collect taxes over his people. Witnesses who signed on the plates are the following: Cadaxericandi, Cheracaru, Putanchate, Comese, caretaker of the king – Arcunden Coundem, of his Council, Amenate, Condem, Gerulem, captain of the field, Chiranmala Portato Resvoramem, Lord of the gangs of the Orientals in Malabar, and other many that I don't mention as I don't want to be prolix.

It was the coming of this man in almost 811 years of our Lord according to what is found in the Chaldean books of these Christians, and for many conjectures it seems to me that this one it is the ruler, that St. Antoninus writes in his history, that he sent every year a present of pepper to the Supreme Pontiff, because at that

time was very continued the Christians Europe who visited the tomb of the holy Apostle, and it was through them that Thomé Cananeo sent that gift to the Pope.

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so that the first church, the Holy Apostle did was in the place of Patana, which then was destroyed by many great wars that were at the time, and then the Thomé Cananeo restored it, as is told, and thence moved many times to Parur. And the second church that was done in Malabar, this Cananeo made it (as already said) and was at Cranganor, and for this the work those Christians placed him in the catalog of his saints, and prayed to him.

From the people that were with him proceeded the Christians of Diamper, Cortate and Cartute, who undoubtedly are chaste Armenians [Thekkumbhagor], and even their children because they brought their wives, and then those who proceeded they married in the land and became forever Malabari [Vadakkumbhagor]. The kingdoms in which they retain today the Christians of St. Thomas, are the following: In the Realm of Maleas (Ghats), Twenty-six leagues (145 Km) from the land of Madura (Thodupuzha, Kothamangalam or Muvattupuzha); in the neighbouring kingdom of Turubuli; in the kingdom of Maota; In the kingdom of Batimena (Venmony); in the kingdom of Porca (Purakad); in the kingdom of Travancor; in the kingdom of Diamper (Udayamperoor); in the kingdom of Pimenta or Pepper (Vadakkumkur); in the kingdom of Tetancutes (Thekkenkur);

in the kingdom of Paru (N Paravur); and lately in the kingdom of Cortute
(Kottayam).