

Constantinople. "The Roman coins found in Madura are supposed by Mr. Sewell to point to something more than mere commercial relations. The company of Romans that lived in Madura possessed, according to Mr. Tracy, the right of minting coins which indicates some political power." The temple of Augustus and the Roman garrison at Cranganore no doubt point to the same conclusion. Kodungalur must have once been a Roman colony.

"About B. C. 14, Drusus the younger brother of Tiberius had command of an army in Gaul, and in order to secure more fully the allegiance of the northern tribes who, after a fashion, acknowledged the sway of Augustus, hit upon the device of building a temple for the worship of the image of the Emperor. May we not conjecture, with some show of reason, that it was for a similar purpose that the Romans set up a temple of Augustus at Kodungalore? But in the dearth of historical data it would be idle to speculate; as yet we have no evidence of any Roman conquests in South India on the western Coast". *

The Early Missionaries. (A. D. 345—A. D. 825.) The next event concerning Kerala is dated 345 A. D. Thomas Cana (Kona Thoma), merchant and missionary, visited the Malabar Coast in that year. He brought to Cranganore a colony of four hundred Christians from Bagdad, Nineveh and Jerusalem. He found a Cheraman Perumal ruling in the kingdom on whose death the country was divided among his descendants. A manuscript volume in the British Museum dated 1604 A. D. gives information about Thomas Cana from a grant made to him by a Cheraman Perumal which is quoted here in a subsequent chapter (Religion).

In 522 A. D., Cosmos Indicopleustes visited the Malabar Coast. His writings are of great historical value to us, for he is the first traveller who mentions the Syrian Christians. He wrote, "In the island of Taprobane (Ceylon) there is a church of Christians, and clerks and faithful. Likewise at *Male* where the pepper grows; and in the town of Kalliana there is also a bishop consecrated in Persia".

The Nestorian Patriarch Jesuhabus who died in 660 A. D., makes special mention of Quilon in his letter to the Simon, Metropolitan of Persia. "India which extends from the coast of the kingdom of Persia to Colon, a distance of more than 1,200 *Parasangs*, § deprived of a regular ministry, but Persia itself is left in darkness".

In 744 A. D. (the date fixed by Dr. Burnell), King Vira Raghava made a grant to Iravi Korttan, a Christian of Cranganore, making over to him the territory of Manigramam and giving him the rank of merchant.

* Mr. Padmanabha Menon's "Malabar as known to the Ancients."

§ A Persian measure of length, containing 30 stadia, equal to 3½ miles.

The copper plate which is in old Tamil character with some *Grantha* characters intermixed, is preserved in the Kottayam Seminary. The accuracy of the date 744 A. D., is very doubtful. *

In 822 A. D., two Nestorian Persian Bishops, Mar Sapor and Mar Peroz settled in Quilon with a large following.

Two years later (824 A. D.), the Malabar Era began, and was called after Quilon, which was undoubtedly the premier city of Malabar (including Travancore and Cochin). Shungoony Menon says that the era was founded by Koda Marthanda Varma, King of the South. Mr. Logan seems to think that the era was founded in commemoration of the independence of the chiefs of Malabar from the sway of the Perumal or of the religious revolution created by Sri Sankaracharya. Professor Sundaram Pillai surmises that the era may be merely an adaptation of the *Saptarsha* or *Sastra Samvatsara* era of the north. The era begins on the first Chingam or the middle of August for the southern portion of Malabar and on the first Kanni or the middle of September for the northern portion.

"In the same year King Sthanu Ravi Gupta anxious to secure the pecuniary assistance from the Christian merchants in his efforts to repel an invasion of Malabar by the Rahuakas, granted the copper plate known as the second charter. In this, the King gave permission to Mar Sapor to transfer to the Tarasa church and community at Quilon, a piece of land near the city with the hereditament usual at the time of several families of low caste slaves attached to the soil." †

Trade with China. The trade with China, which had very much decreased in the previous centuries, revived with great vigour in the eighth century. According to the records of the Tang Dynasty (618 A. D. to 913 A. D.), Quilon was their chief settlement and they gave it the name of 'Mahlai'. Several were the embassies sent by the Malabar Kings to the Celestial Emperor. The King of Quilon and the neighbouring districts is referred to in these records as *Benati* or *Venad*, the name by which Travancore is designated even to day. This Chinese trade decreased again about 900 A. D., and was not revived till the 13th century.

The Early Mahomedans. It was probably in the beginning of the 8th century that the Moslems of Arabia superseded the Greeks in their trade with the west coast of India. Their first arrival is closely mixed up with the tradition of Cheraman Perumal and his conversion. This last of

* Mr. Venkayya assigns the grant to the 14th century A. D., on palaeographical grounds. — Indian Antiquary vol. IV. page 293. Dr. Keilhorn accepts Venkayya's conclusion and fixes the date of the grant to the 15th March 1320 A. D. — Ind. Ant. vol. VI. page 83.

† The Syrian Church in India — Milne Rae.