

  
**THE HARP**  
A Review of Syriac, Oriental and Ecumenical Studies

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# THE HARP

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## APHRAHAT

(Demonstration IV, On Prayer)

Purity of Heart constitutes prayer more than do all the prayers that are uttered out aloud, and silence united to a mind that is sincere is better than the loud voice of someone crying out.

My beloved, give me now your heart and your thought, and hear about the power of pure prayer; see how our righteous forefathers excelled in their prayer before God, and how it served them as a pure offering. For it was through prayer that offerings were accepted, and it was prayer again that averted the Flood from Noah; prayer has healed barrenness, prayer has overthrown armies, prayer has revealed mysteries, prayer has divided the sea, prayer made a passage through the Jordan, it held back the sun, it made the moon stand still, it destroyed the unclean, it caused fire to descend. Prayer closed up the heaven, prayer raised up from the pit, rescued from the fire, and saved from the sea. The power of prayer, like the power of pure fasting, is very great; and, just as I explained and told you in the previous chapter about fasting, I shall not refrain from telling you here about prayer.

*The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, pp. 5-6

## **Editorial**

In the last two issues of the Harp (No. 30 & 31) we published some of the papers presented in the 8<sup>th</sup> World Syriac Conference held in SEERI during Sept. 2014.

In this issue (No. 32), we are happy to publish some more papers presented in the 8<sup>th</sup> World Syriac Conference, together with a few scholarly papers submitted by learned authors. In the ensuing issue also, we will publish the remaining papers presented in the conference.

We hope that those who did not get the opportunity to participate in the last conference will be greatly benefitted by the presentations published in this volume. Let this issue be a valuable addition to their collection of the Harp.

## His Glory Within Us

The Creator still works to design thing that can add to your glory. He has made you in his image so that you might make the invisible Creator present on earth, in your person; he has made you his ambassador, so that the vast empire of the world might have the Lord's representative. Then in his mercy God assumed the body that he made for you, because he wanted to be truly visible in a man, where before he was only seen in humans as an image. Now he would truly become human, whereas before men and women were only his symbol.

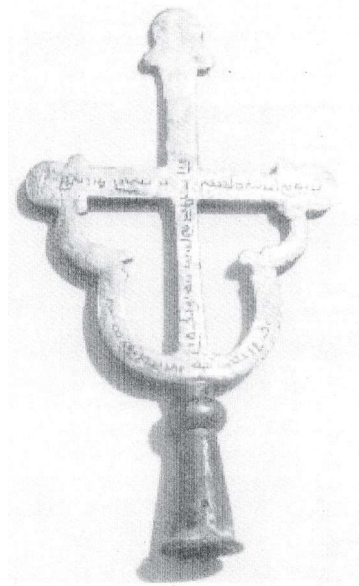
And so, Christ is born, so that through his birth he might restore our nature. He became a child, was fed, and grew so that he might inaugurate the age that would remain perfect forever, as he created and intended it to be. He supports humanity so that humanity might no longer fail. And the creature he had formed from the earth he now makes heavenly; and what he had given a human soul he now enlivens with a heavenly spirit. In this way, he fully raised humanity to God, and took out of him all sin, all death, all suffering, all pain, and everything earthly, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever, for all the ages of eternity. Amen.

Peter Chrysologus, *Prayer and Devotion*



*Martin Thomas Antony & Mathew Mailaparampil*

**The Pahlavi inscribed Processional Cross of Herat, Afghanistan and the Pahlavi Crosses of South India: A Comparative Study of Religio-Cultural traditions of the Churches of India and Parthia.**



**Introduction**

A Pahlavi inscribed processional cross conceivably dated from the 8th century AD was found recently from Herat in Afghanistan. This cross has similarities with the Pahlavi inscribed

granite Crosses of South India and other crosses of Church of the East (East Syriac Church) in China. It bears Pahlavi inscriptions which proclaims a theological formula to defend the accusations made by the then growing new religion of Islam in the region. This processional cross witnesses the importance of liturgical processions prevalent in the East Syriac tradition.

### **Herat**

Herat is the third largest city of Afghanistan and is the capital of the province of Herat. It is situated in the valley of river Hari. During the time of Achaemenid Empire 550-330 BC the area was called 'Haraiva' in Persian<sup>1</sup> It is situated in 'Khurasan', north west region of modern Afghanistan. 'Khurasan' or 'Khorasan' is a historical region comprising a vast area of north eastern Iran, Southern Turkmenistan and Northern Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> Prior to the Sasanian rule, the region of 'Khorasan' was called 'Parthia'<sup>3</sup> and was the homeland of the Parthian Emperors. 'Khorasan' comprises the cities of Balkh and Herat now in Afghanistan, Mashhad and Nisapur now in north eastern Iran, Merv and Nisa now in southern Turkmenistan, and Bukhara and Samarkand now in Uzbekistan.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Wikipedia article Herat, Afghanistan, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herat> accessed on 14 December 2014

2 Encyclopedia Britannica article Khorasan, accessed on 25 April 2015. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/316850/Khorasan>.

3 Robert Guiseppi, Ed. A History of the Parthians, The International History Project. <http://history-world.org/parthians.htm>

4 Wikipedia article Greater Khorasan accessed on 25 April 2015. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater\\_Khorasan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Khorasan).

## **Christianity in Herat and Central Asia**

Christianity penetrated in to central Asia in the very early period itself. Bardaisan in AD 196 commented about Christians in Gilan, the southwest of Caspian and Bactria, the kingdom between Hindukush and Oxus (Amu Darya).<sup>5</sup> In AD 549, the Hephthalites in the Bactria requested Patriarch Mar Aba I to consecrate a Bishop for them and an anonymous Syriac Chronicle describes Mar Elias, the Metropolitan of Merv converting an entire nomadic population to Christianity by a miracle in AD 644.<sup>6</sup>

Herat was a Metropolitan Province of the Church of the East. It was mentioned as a 'hyparchy' in the Synod of the Church of the East in AD 585. Herat had a Bishop since AD 424.<sup>7</sup> Synodicum Orientale mentions that three of the four cities of Khurasan; Herat, Merv and Nisapur (Abrasaht), were

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5 Alphons Mingana, Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the far east, a new document, Bulletin of John Rylands Library, Manchester, Vol 9, July 1925, no 2, p 308.

6 Pier Giorgio Borbone, Some Aspects of Turco- Mongol Christianity in the light of Literacy and Epigraphic Syriac sources, Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies, Vol 19, No 2 2005 p 7 citing P Bedjan, Ed. Historie de mar Aba, in Historie de Mar Jaballaha, de trois autres patriarches, d'un prete et de deux laiques nestoriens, paris 1895, pp 266-269 A Christian Priest arrived at the court of the Persian sovereign, Khusraw I Anushirwan, as an envoy from the Hephthalites, with the request to Mar Aba to order him Bishop before his people.

7 Christopher Buck, The Universality of the Church of the East: How Persian was Persian Christianity, The Journal of Assyrian Academic Society, 10.1: 1996, p67.

Alphons Mingana, Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East, , a new document, Bulletin of John Rylands Library, Manchester, Vol 9, July 1925, no 2. p 298.

represented by Bishops in AD 424.<sup>8</sup> Herat was elevated as a Metropolitan province of the Church of the East in the Synod of Isho Yahb in AD 585.<sup>9</sup> Synodicum Orientale mentions a Bishop Yasdoi in the synod of Dadisho in AD 424, Bishop Gabriel in Synod of Akak in AD 486, Bishop Yasdad attended the synod of Babai in AD 497, another Bishop Gabriel in the synod of Isho Yahb in AD 585. Besides, a Bishop John from Abiward or Baward in the north west of Khurasan attended the synod of Joseph in AD 554, Bishop David from Abrashahr, a district in Khurasan in the synod of Dadisho in AD 424, Bishop Yohannis also from Abrashahr in the synod of Babai in AD 497, Bishop Habib from Bushanj, a town west of Herat in the synod of Isho Yahb in AD 585, Bishop Gabriel from Kadistan near Herat and another Gabriel from Badishi or Badhgis, a district north of Herat in the synod of Isho Yahb in AD 585.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Christianity was well established in the area with numerous Bishops attending various ecclesiastical synods showing vigorous activity of the East Syriac Church in the area.

There was presence of Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch since the first half of seventh century<sup>11</sup>. There was also presence of Armenian Christian community in Herat during the fifth century.<sup>12</sup>

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8 Erica Hunter, Church of the East in Central Asia, Bulletin of John Rylands Library, Manchester, vol 78.3:1996.p121

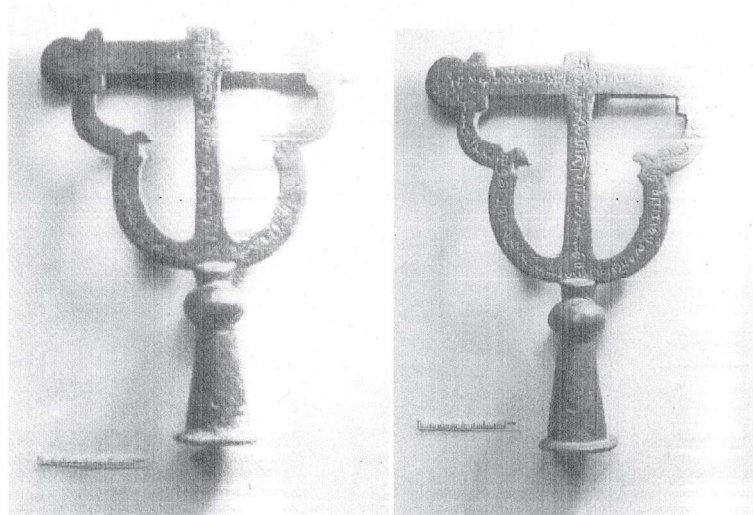
9 Erica Hunter, Opus cit p 134.

10 A Mingana, opus cit , p319

11 Erica Hunter, opus cit. p 142

12 Philippe Gignoux, Une Croix de procession de Herat inscrite en pehlevi, Le Museon, 07/2001; 114(3):pp291-304

## **Processional Cross of Herat**



Philippe Gignoux, a French epigraphist and historian reported about a bronze processional cross with Pahlavi inscriptions found in Herat.<sup>13</sup> The upper vertical arm was broken and missing leaving the lower three arms and a base with an inverted cup with holes to fix a wooden pole or a stand using nails. It measures 18.3 x 14.1 cm. There are two curved ornamental plates connecting the lower arm to the two lateral arms with an indentation in the middle making it a 'w' shape. Inscriptions in Pahlavi are seen on these ornamental curved plates and also on the arms of the cross, on both faces. It was possible to reconstruct the shape and length of the missing arm with high probability by comparing it with the two horizontal arms. The original size is estimated to be 24.3 x 14.1 cm.

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13 Philippe Gignoux, Une Croix de procession de Herat inscrite en pehlevi, *Le Museon*, 07/2001; 114(3):pp291-304

It appears that this was a processional cross, based on the fact that this cross was supposed to be fixed on a pole. If it was an altar cross, there would not be inscriptions on both faces. There is nothing in the inscriptions to suggest that this was a pastoral cross. This is remarkable evidence pointing towards the presence of an ancient Christian community in Herat.

### **The design**

The design of this cross agrees with many of the ancient East Syriac rock crosses found in India and China. The arms of the cross end with a flowery design with three rounded buds as seen in the Pahlavi inscribed Saint Thomas Crosses of India. The lotus arrangement and the steps in the Saint Thomas Crosses of South India are not seen in the Herat cross. As the top vertical arm is missing, we are not clear about any descending dove on the top.

### **The Inscriptions**

The inscriptions are in the Middle Persian language with some Syriac words in Pahlavi script. The Pahlavi inscribed crosses of South India also bear Pahlavi inscriptions with definite Syriac logograms.<sup>14</sup> These denote the strong Persian connection and the East Syriac background. The Pahlavi script of this cross resembles the text used in the sixth century Pahlavi Psalter found in Turfan in the Xinjiang-Uighur region of China. Philippe Gignoux thinks this inscription most probably dates to a time between 6th and 8th centuries AD.<sup>15</sup> The inscriptions talk about a certain

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14 Shailanand Hemraj, Pahlavi Text and Imagery Context of the Persian Cross in South India Part I, *Asian Journal of Religious studies*, 60/1, Jan-Feb 2015, pp 15-31.

15 Philippe Gignoux, Une Croix de procession de Herat inscrite en pehlevi, *Le Museon*, 07/2001; 114(3):pp291-304

‘Mare’ of the Church of Herat in the year 507 or 517 entrusted the community to a Saint or Holy (Karisise) and a theological formula that there are no three gods but only one and a wish for the prosperity for the Church.

As the Cross has a missing piece and inscriptions are on both faces, the reading was difficult. Gignoux considered the starting point was the vertical arm, then the horizontal arm from right to left sides. The following is the translation of Philippe Gignoux<sup>16</sup>

### Front side

*.....(missing part) bagdag son of Nisem-burzar that (sees/write) too. Mare son of NN, who (is) of the Church of Herat, who gave this (same) flock to Karisise the Holy ... in the year 507/517*

16 Philippe Gignoux Une Croix de procession de Herat inscrite en pehlevi, Le Museon, 07/2001; 114(3):pp291-304

Front side. Vertically: (top to bottom)

Characters : [... missing part...] bdk ZY nšyymybwrclj BRE ZY nyšydc

Reading : ...] **badagiNiðem-burzar pus î nîðçd-iz**

Front side Horizontally right arm: (scroll from right to left):

Characters: m'lydy ZY gn'ly / yn'ly ZY MN knyšyZY hlydyMNW

Front side horizontally left arm (scroll from right to left)

Characters : ZNH ty 'ywlmyh L ZY klssdy

p'ky ZY ZYh'iky ZLN (yn) P (W) N ŠNTdyk 5 (100) 7/17

Reading : **Mârç î NN î azkaniðHarç(y) kçdâdçnçw-ramîhō Karisîç î pâk î padsâl(îg) 507/517**

Front side translation in French : ... badag, fils de Niðem-burzar, qui (voit/écrit) aussi. Mârç, fils de NN, qui (est) de l'église de Hérat, qui a donné ce (même) troupeau à Karisîç le saint, ..., en l'année 507/517

**Back side**

.....(*missing part*) (*We believe that ?*) *in heaven there are not three Gods/Creators, and on earth that wealth and happiness be the hosts to the Church of my good teaching.*

In all probability, this Cross belonged to the Church of the East and is connected to the local Persian heritage. The usage of Late Middle Persian writing on an object of Christian worship shows that the local East Syriac Christian community was proudly Persian and bilingual- using East Syriac and Pahlavi. The Church of the East had several Bishops of Persian extract and with very Persian names in this region. It has been pointed out that the theological formula regarding the non-existence of three gods most probably is a rebuttal to accusations made by proponents of the newly growing religion of Islam.<sup>17</sup>

The date on the inscription could not be the Christian Era because 507/517 AD does not comply with the style of writing and notations used by the Churches of the Syriac tradition. It is

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Back side vertically top to bottom :

Characters:- [... Missing part...] PWN 'sm'nc L'3'prydgI PWN

Reading :-...**pad âsmân-iznçšçâfrîdgar pad**

Back side horizontally right arm scroll from right to left:

Characters:- zmykclywyhplšh 'y YHWWN myyhm (') n

Back side horizontally left arm scroll from right to left:

Charactes:- 'L knšyyZYmhw 'mwk

Reading:- **zamîg-izrcwîhfraðîh ç bav[çd] mehmânô kanið  
î-m hu-ammôg**

Translation in French : [Nous croyons que?] dans le ciel il n'y a pas trois dieux/créateurs, et sur la terre que la richesse et le bonheur soient le hôtes de l'église de mon bon enseignement.

17 Christelle Jullien, Chrétiens d'Iran entre hagiographie et histoire. Avec une nouvelle proposition sur la croix de Hérat, *Studia Iranica*. Cahier 43, p175-192, 2011.



too early for the Seleucid Era which began in 311/312 BC. While it is possible that it could be the Sasanian Yazdegerd III Era which began in 632 AD, it would place the cross in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. However, the writing is from a period closer to the Pahlavi Psaltar and not later. Most probably, it is the Bactrian Era which began in 233 AD as this region is near Bactria. That places the date on the cross to 740/750 AD.<sup>18</sup> This time period coincides with the great East-Syriac Christian expansion into central Asia and China.

### **Processional Crosses with inscriptions**

Glanville Downey, who was an Associate Professor of Byzantine Literature in the Harvard University at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC comments that many of the ancient religious antiquities seen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art are inscribed with the donor's names and some pious phrases and vows. He gives an example of a Processional silver cross of 'Antioch treasure' of the sixth century, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art<sup>19</sup>. This cross has Greek inscriptions on both sides. The back side has the words "For Herodotus and Komitas, sons of Pantaleon" meaning this cross was presented for the salvation of the souls of Herodotus and Komitas. On the front, inscribed "Holy God, Holy Mighty one, Holy immortal one, have mercy upon us" the hymn of Trisagion<sup>20</sup>. This is most appropriate to read on a cross in the front of a procession.

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18 Philippe Gignoux, Une Croix de procession de Hérat inscrite en pehlevi, *Le Muséon*, Vol 114, Issue 3-4, p291-304, 2001

19 Glanville Downey, A Processional Cross, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, New series, vol 12, No 9, May 1954, pp 276-280.

20 This is the 'Khandisa Alaha' hymn in Syriac widely sung in the Saint Thomas Christian Churches in Kerala before the vernacularisation of the Liturgy in the 1960s.

Another example of such a prayer formula inscribed is on a large 58 cm processional cross excavated from 'Divrigi' near the village of 'Opsikom' in Istanbul in AD 1969 with Armenian inscription "In gratitude.....offers to his/her intercessor, Saint George CAGINCOM". This Cross was dated as of AD 547.<sup>21</sup>

Two other crosses reported in the collection of George Ortiz in Geneva, one of them is 21.8 x 16.1 cm with a bust of Christ in the central medallion with inscriptions in Greek on both sides and another one without any inscriptions. The cross with inscriptions is made of two sheets of silver laid over an iron core. The inscription at the back of the cross, on the top arm says - "Holy Holy Holy Lord of Hosts, Heaven and earth are filled with thy glory", on the bottom arm "Hosanna in the highest Blessed is he that cometh in the name (of the Lord)", on the left arm "Lord of" and on the right arm "Blessed". On the front upper arm, written "Jesus", bottom arm "Christ Lord, help Thy servant Georgios", and left and right arms "victory".<sup>22</sup>

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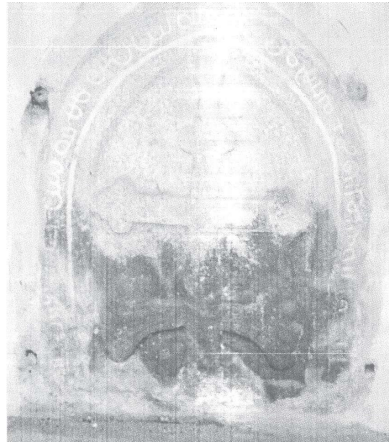
21 Erica Cruikshank Dodd, *Three Early Byzantine Silver Crosses*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 41, *Studies on Art and Archeology in Honor of ErnstKitzinger on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (1987), pp. 165-179. Published by: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1291555>

22 Erica Cruikshank Dodd, *Three Early Byzantine Silver Crosses*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 41, *Studies on Art and Archaeology in Honour of Ernst Kitzinger on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (1987), pp. 167, Published by: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1291555>

Another Cross in Toledo Museum of Art with inscription in Greek, on the back reads “Have mercy on us son of God” and on the front reads “He who has crucified for us”.<sup>23</sup>

These inscriptions on the back are understood in terms of a procession as people following the cross can read a prayer or a liturgical formula. In the late 6th and 7th centuries, cross was the single most powerful symbol in the church evocative of the triumph over death, the life everlasting.<sup>24</sup>

### **Pahlavi Inscribed Crosses of Malabar, South India**



23 Erica Cruikshank Dodd, *Three Early Byzantine Silver Crosses*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 41, *Studies on Art and Archaeology in Honour of Ernst Kitzinger on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (1987), pp. 169, Published by: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1291555>

24 Erica Cruikshank Dodd, *Three Early Byzantine Silver Crosses*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 41, *Studies on Art and Archaeology in Honor of Ernst Kitzinger on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (1987), pp. 167, Published by: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1291555>

The Pahlavi inscribed granite crosses of South India parallels the same theme. These crosses were altar crosses rather than processional crosses. These are probably sculptured in South India by migrant Persian Christians who escaped persecution in Persia. The inscription seems to be a prayer for the person who erected it as deciphered by many eminent scholars. A new interpretation published recently by a linguist and an epigraphic-palaeographic researcher in the University of Allahabad, Shilanand Hemraj is as follows. **“My Lord is the Mishihā and life giver, who be praised for ever because of salvation. Indeed the Lord suffered crucifixion to redeem us.”**<sup>25</sup>

The inscription is in Pahlavi which denotes that this prayer was intended for Persian speaking Christians, probably migrant Persian Christians who escaped persecution. It is clear that the Christians of Saint Thomas tradition in India are a mix of Persian or Middle eastern immigrant Christians and native Christians who probably intermarried with each other<sup>26</sup>. Later, the local Christians copied these crosses and placed them in the altars. The inscriptions were copied without knowing what it meant. Studies by C P T Winkworth showed that all these inscriptions are copies of an original, based on the finding that many letters are upside down and a word as mirror image due to copying by using rubbings or estampages from the original put in the wrong way in the copy.<sup>27</sup>

25 Shailanand Hemraj, Pahlavi Text and Imagery Context of the Persian Cross in South India Part I, *Asian Journal of Religious studies*, 60/1, Jan- Feb 2015, p20.

26 We have tradition of Muthalalis of Kollam and letters of Patriarch Timothy regarding such marriages.

27 C P T WINKWORTH, *A new interpretation of the Pahlavi Cross inscriptions of South India*, *The Journal of Theological studies*, April 1929, cited by T K Joseph, *Ed Kerala Society Papers series 3* p159-166

One of the Pahlavi inscribed crosses at Kottayam bears a Syriac inscription also which confirms that Syriac was a prominent language used at that time.

Glanville Downey reports of a Marble Cross excavated from Hebdomon near Istanbul designed to stand in the open air with inscription of Trisagion hymn, with the four phrases occupies on each arm of the cross as read from the top to bottom and left to right with a spectator's point of view of the order in which the Greek orthodox person makes his sign of Cross. On the back of the Cross, a dedication by the Emperor Leo I (457-474) This Cross is now in the Museum of Istanbul.<sup>28</sup>

### **Pahlavi and Church of the East**

Pahlavi denotes a particular written form of various Middle Iranian languages that uses an Aramaic-derived script with Aramaic/Syriac logograms<sup>29</sup>. Pahlavi was the court language of the Sasanian Empire. Pahlavi was commonly used by Persian Christians, especially the East Syrians. The Christians of Mesopotamia were originally Jewish people and other local Aramaic/ Syriac speakers. But in the east of Tigris, the Persian Christians were mostly Zoroastrian converts who retained Middle Iranian languages such as Middle Persian and Sogdian. The first generation of these Christians retained their Persian names. Later

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Read more: <http://www.nasrani.net/2014/02/15/alengad-sliva-neglected-jewel-ancient-christian-settlement-alengad-ancient-christian-artefact-malabar/#ixzz3ZlkVreFJ>

28 Glanville Downey, A Processional Cross, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, New series, vol 12, No 9, May 1954, p280

29 Wikipedia article Pahlavi Scripts, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pahlavi\\_scripts#CITEREFGeigerKuhn2002](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pahlavi_scripts#CITEREFGeigerKuhn2002) accessed on 14 May 2015

generations changed their names into Christian appellations formed by the compounds of faith.<sup>30</sup>

Chronicles of Seert mentions about a Ma'na, a student of the School of Edessa translated many Syriac works into Pahlavi and in AD 470, another Ma'na of the same school wrote religious discourses, canticles and hymns to be sung and recited in the Persian Christian churches in Persia.<sup>31</sup>

Even Certain ecclesiastical canons like that of Simon, the Metropolitan of Rev Ardashir (d 670 AD) were originally composed in Pahlavi and later translated into Syriac by a Monk from Beth Katraye.<sup>32</sup> This confirms that the official language of the Church of the East was Syriac and hence the local documents had to be translated into Syriac.

It appears that the Sasanians promoted Pahlavi over Syriac and hence the Church in Persia started using Pahlavi also, probably for para liturgical uses. Even when Pahlavi canticles and hymns were found, no such manuscript of a liturgical text in Pahlavi has ever been found anywhere in the ecclesiastical area of jurisdiction of the Church of the East. There is no evidence so far to confirm that the whole liturgy was translated into Pahlavi. We can see usage of Syriac language widespread in inscriptions in central

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30 A Mingana, Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the far east, a new document, Bulletin of John Rylands Library, Manchester, Vol 9, July 1925, no 2 p300.

31 A Mingana, Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the far east, a new document, Bulletin of John Rylands Library, Manchester, Vol 9, July 1925, no 2 p300

32 E Saachu, Syrische Rechtsbücher III 1914 p 209 A Mingana Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the far east, a new document, Bulletin of John Rylands Library, Manchester, Vol 9, July 1925, no 2 p 300-301

Asia and China where the Christianity was brought from Persia. This means the Persian Christians and Missionaries used both Pahlavi and Syriac, but Syriac remained as the liturgical and universal language.

Even the more liberal Western Churches considered translating the liturgy to a language other than Latin only after 1960s, how can we even think of more conservative and traditional Syriac churches adopting vernacularisation at a very early period?

Pahlavi usage was prominent in South Persia. Christianity spread to Central Asia and China through Persia, but most of the inscriptions found in Central Asia and China are in Syriac. Widespread presence of ancient Syriac inscriptions and manuscripts found in central Asia and China confirms the prominent usage of Syriac language in the area.<sup>33</sup> There are local Chinese, Pahlavi and Sogdian inscriptions also. In Malabar, South Indian State of Kerala, Syriac and local language- '*vattezhuthu*' (early Malayalam) - inscriptions are commonly seen in the Christian context but the series of Persian Crosses bear Pahlavi inscriptions.

Almost half of the manuscripts in '*Turfan collection*' are in Syriac language. These are dated 11-14 th century AD by different scholars. There are some manuscripts in local scripts like Sogdian, Uighur Turkic and Pahlavi. Many of the Sogdian, Uighur Turkic and Middle Persian manuscripts are written in Syriac script. Many of the Turfan collection of Christian manuscripts are bilingual, with Syriac liturgical text with rubric

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33 NIU Ruji, Xinjiang University North west minority research centre Xinjiang University, Urumbqi, 830046, Nestorian inscriptions in Syriac script found on silk road in China.

instructions to the Priests in Sogdian. Almost all of the liturgical texts are in Syriac.<sup>34</sup> In a certain document dated AD 1253, found from Inner Mongolia in the 1980s, a cross and a short quotation of Psalm 34 in Syriac characters and language with the remaining text in Uighur alphabet in memory of the dead.<sup>35</sup> Thus we can assume that even in 13-14 th century Syriac was still the liturgical language with local language used for giving instructions in liturgical texts and for para liturgical texts.

Thus, it is evident that in South Persia, Central Asia, China and India, even when Pahlavi, Chinese and Early Malayalam- '*vattezhuthu*' are used in Christian inscriptions and Christian manuscripts, in all these areas, Syriac was also used widespread. This shows that Syriac was the common link language because of the liturgical use.

We have to assume that in all these areas, Syriac was used as the liturgical language but local languages were used in documents, manuscripts and up to certain para liturgical usage like Pahlavi canticles and hymns used by Persian speaking migrants.

Even when different languages were used, knowledge in Syriac was a universal necessity in the Church of the East. The illustrious Monk Markose, the Chinese born Patriarch of East Syriac Church in AD 1281 confessed on the occasion of his selection to the Patriarchal position: "I am lacking in education

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34 Mark Dickens, Scribal Practices in the Turfan Christian Community, *Journal of Canadian Society for Syriac studies*, 13, (2013) p5

35 Pier Giorgio Borbone, Some Aspects of Turco Mongol Christianity in the light of Literary and Epigraphic Syriac Sources, *JAAS* vol 19, no 2 2005 p 17.



and church doctrine. I am not even acquainted with your Syriac language which is a matter of universal necessity<sup>36</sup>.

### **The Syriac Church of the East- the continuation of the Judeo Christian movement of the Apostles**

The Church of the East was the direct continuation of the Judeo Christian movement of the Apostles of Jesus. Jesus and His disciples spoke Aramaic, pronunciation of which is well preserved in the East Syriac dialect. This fact is evidenced by the preservation of many East Syriac words in the Bible written in Greek transliterated - as 'Amen', 'Maran Atha', 'Thal itha cum' - Little Girl, get up (Mark 5:41), Eph' pha-tha' - be opened (Mark 7:34), 'E'li E'li Le-ma sa-back'thani' - My God, My God, why have you forsaken me (Mathew 27:46) 'Martha' the sister of Lazar and Mary (Luke 10:38-42, John 11:1, 19-24,30,39 )<sup>37</sup>

Early Christianity developed in Syriac Aramaic. When the Churches in Jerusalem and Antioch became Hellenised and adopted Greek as their religio-cultural language, the Syriac Churches continued Syriac as their religio-cultural language. Even

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36 James A Montgomery, The History of Yaballaha III Nestorian patriarch and of his Vicar Bar Sauma, Columbia University Press, 1927, p 44 .

37 A Practical Grammar for Syriac Aramaic, Dr Thomas Kalayil CMI p 1-2

J P M Van Der Ploeg O P D S Th., D S Scr. Professor of Old Testament exegesis, Hebrew and Syriac at Nijmegen University, Introduction to the book Thomas Arayathinal, M.O.L., Aramaic Grammar, Mannanam 1957pp i-iii,

His Grace the Most Rev. Joseph Cardinal Parecattil, the late Archbishop of Ernakulam, Sathyadeepam, Vol 31, No 27, FEB 26, 1958.

in Rome, there is evidence that the Christian liturgy was celebrated in the very early period in Syriac. An early second century document recently unearthed from the base of the Palatine hill in Rome reveals the dissatisfaction among many Christians in adopting Latin instead of Aramaic Syriac in the celebration of Holy Mass.<sup>38</sup>

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38 <http://www.eyeforthetiber.com/2014/08/07/report-some-2nd-century-roman-christians-hated-latin-mass-because-it-was-said-in-the-vernacular/> accessed on 13 May 2015. This document was part of a letter written by an anonymous frustrated Christian to a friend in response to an angry letter about the expanding use of vernacular in Masses in Rome. An excerpt of the letter has been translated by the Office of *Linguistic Studies* of the Catholic Church and has been transcribed below.

*Dearest Brother,*

*Greetings be upon you, and upon you be greetings. May the peace and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom all good things come, bless you and your home. From your dispatch, I have learned the unsettling news that many of our brethren in Rome are irritated that some are beginning to use vernacular during the Lord's Supper. I myself, in common with many others, was full of sorrow when your dispatch arrived with the unsettling news that the holiness and beauty of Aramaic has been usurped by Latin; for you have given me sad news that this new vernacular Mass is doing much dishonour to the traditions that have been passed down to us by the Lord and the apostles themselves. I, therefore, must admonish you to stay clear from those that uphold such scandal to the Supper of the Lord, and in all due diligence must inform you that this new order of the Lord's Supper is an abomination at best. Though your private letter to me contained a somewhat slight expression of your angst, I can assure you that it gave me pleasure that you were grieved, for, by grievance you have proven yourself to the Lord. More importantly, you have proven yourself a true Christian, more Christian than Sixtus, for there is nothing in which I habitually find greater satisfaction and true holiness than in bitterness*

The Church of the East was founded by Jesus himself by His promise to the Edessan King Abgar the Ukkama that I will send my disciples to Edessa to heal you and give life to you and those with you, once I have been taken up after finishing what I have been sent for.<sup>39</sup> On the day of Pentecost, people from Mesopotamia and Parthia were present in Jerusalem: “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and those who dwell in Mesopotamia, Jews and Cappadocians and those from Pontius and Asia Minor: And those from the region of Phrygia and of Pamphyli and of Egypt and of the regions of Libya near Cyrene, and those who have come from Rome, both Jews and proselytes. And those from Crete, and Arabians, behold we hear them speak in our own tongues of the wonderful works of God”.<sup>40</sup>

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*and hostility. I am overjoyed that you propose to write a letter to Sixtus in all capital letter and with an abundance of exclamation marks. I also write to inform you that in response to this news, I propose now to make bishop of you, as well as Alexander, Aurelius, and our beloved Lucias, whose minds I trust are in accord with our own. This, I shall do without the permission of Sixtus. For he, it seems, has fallen in to grave sin when he gave ear to a number of Jews to assist in reforming the Lord's Supper during his meeting last month with fellow bishops in his territory. I shall end this letter by telling you that our new "society" shall ever and always pretentiously look down upon those that...*

39 Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1, 13.cited by Samuel Moffett, *Christianity in Asia, Vol I Beginnings to 1500*, p 48

40 Acts of the Apostles, 2:09-13 The Holy Bible, The new revised standard version, Catholic Edition, Published by Thomas Nelson, for theological publications, India, Acts of the Apostles, 2:09-11.Holy Bible from the ancient Eastern Text, Geroge M Lamsa's translation from the Aramaic of the Peshitta.

The Church of Edessa was founded by Mar Addai (Addai is the Syriac version of the Greek name Thaddeus)<sup>41</sup> who was sent by Apostle Thomas. Church of Ctesiphon was founded by Mar Mari, a disciple of Mar Addai. Churches of Parthia and India were founded by Apostle Thomas himself. Thus, the Syriac Church of the East was founded by Apostle Thomas and his disciples and hence could be called as Thomasine Churches.

### **Iranian Christianity**

During the Parthian rule, the Christians of Persia (Parthian Empire) suffered harassments and persecutions but no systematic campaigns against them. But during the Sasanian period and later Islamic periods, there were organised persecutions.<sup>42</sup>

Christianity in Iran can be traced back from the visit of the three Parthian Priests (Magi) to infant Jesus.<sup>43</sup> Persian Christians claim that the Magi were the first ever Christians.<sup>44</sup> Saint John Chrysostom taught “The Incarnate Word on coming into the world gave to Persia, in the person of the *magi*, the first manifestations of His mercy and light so that the Jews themselves learn from the mouths of Persians of the birth of their Messiah.<sup>45</sup>

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41 David Wilmhurst, *The Martyred Church, A History of the Church of the East*, East and West Publishing Ltd 2011, p8

42 Michael Nazir-Ali, *Christianity in Iran, a brief survey*, *International Journal for the study of Christian Church*, vol 9, no 1, February 2009, p 32-33

43 Eliz Sanasarian (1998) *Babi bahais, Christians, and Jews in Iran*, *Iranian Studies*, 31:3-4, 615-624, DOI: 10.1080/00210869808701936

44 A Christian van Gorder, *Christianity in Persia and the status of non Muslims in Iran*, lexington Books, p24

45 A Christian van Gorder, *Christianity in Persia and the status of non Muslims in Iran*, lexington Books, p25

The early Christians in Persia might have been those fled from Roman empire due to persecution as early as AD 68 onwards and those came to Persia as missionaries to preach the Jewish communities in the Parthian Empire and their Jewish converts<sup>46</sup>. During the Sasanian era, Christians who supported the diaphysite thought fled to Persia due to persecution in the Roman Empire.<sup>47</sup>

Shapur I in the AD 250s reclaimed many of the old Achaemenid kingdom of Persia that was destroyed by Alexander the Great by war with the Roman Empire resulted in a large number of Roman prisoners deported to Persia and resettled them in Beth Aramaye, Maishan, Beth Huzae and Fars. Many of these were Christians. They spoke Greek and had different services than that of the Church of the East. They founded a Roman Church in exile and had Bishops from Antioch namely Demetrius, Ardaq, Andrew and so on. Chronicles of Seert also comments about two separate churches found in Rev Ardashir, the Church of the Romans where the services were in Greek and the Church of the Kirmanians (the Christian traders from Kirman resided in Rev Ardashir) where Syriac was used for the liturgy.<sup>48</sup>

In the third century, Zoroastrian priest Kartir initiated persecution of other religions. The Kaba-ye Zardusht inscriptions of Kartir in AD 285 speaks of striking down the Nasraye and Kristiane communities along with the Manichaens, Budhists, Jews and Brahmins to put Zoroastrianism beyond challenge in the

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46 A Christian van Gorder, Christianity in Persia and the status of non Muslims in Iran, lexington Books, p25

47 A Christian van Gorder, Christianity in Persia and the status of non Muslims in Iran, lexington Books p30

48 David Wilmhurst opus cit p11-12

Empire.<sup>49</sup> The Nasraye were the Syriac speaking Judeo Christian community of the East Syriac Church and the Kristiane were the Greek speaking Christians who were deported from the Roman Provinces to Persian Empire during the war.

After a century, the Acts of the martyrs present a different story in which many of the Christian victims of Shapur II had Iranian names that they were Zoroastrian converts to Christianity. This means by the beginning of 4th century, there were Iranian (Persian) speaking Christians too in Persia.<sup>50</sup> Thus, by the early fifth century, Persian Empire had a Christian community that included Syrians, Greeks and Persians.<sup>51</sup>

Church of the East spread along the Silk Road to Bactria in the early centuries itself. Metropolitan provinces of Merv and Herat of Khurasan in the fifth century are evidence of spread of missionary activity along the Silk Road to the east. The Khurasan area was a hub of the missionary activities directed towards east. An anonymous Chronicle written in AD 680 in Syriac mentions about Metropolitan Elias of Merv actively involved in converting many people like Turks and other nationals. It describes an encounter of the Metropolitan with a Chieftain in that location while travelling, the Metropolitan dispelled a storm by sign of

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49 David Wilmhurst, opus cit p 12

50 Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar W Winkler, *The Church of the East, a Concise History*, Routledge Curzon London and New York, p165.

51 Joel Thomas walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*, University of California press, 2006, p102

Cross resulting in the Chieftain and the community converted to Christianity en masse.<sup>52</sup>

History of Mar Aba mentions consecration of a Hephthalite Bishop in AD 549. The location of this See could be the Bishopric of Badghis-Qadistan represented in the Synod of Isho Yahb in AD 585. This could have resulted in elevation of Herat as a Metropolitan See as Herat was traditionally associated with regions of Pusang, Badghis and Qadistan.<sup>53</sup>

### **Church of Fars and Church of India -Maritime Trade links**

India and South Persia had strong trade links. The Sassanids overthrowing the Parthians in AD 225 set ready for trans oceanic trade with India by setting up ports like Rew Ardashir,(Rishahr on the Bushire Penninsula), Astarabadh Ardashir (formelry Charax) Bahman Ardashir (Forat of maisan), Wahasht Ardashir, Kujaran Ardashir (on the Iranian Coast), and Batn Ardashir on the Arabian coast. It was the Christian merchants who operated this trade. Chronicles of Seert mentions that Sassanid ruler Yasdigird I (399-421 AD) sent the East Syriac Catholicos Mar Ahai to Fars to investigate the piracy of ships returning from India and Ceylon. This denotes that the merchants involved were Christians.<sup>54</sup>

This Maritime trade caused a strong connection with Indian Church and the Church of Fars. On the coasts of the Arabian Gulf, there were many Monasteries as spiritual hub for these merchant missionaries.

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52 Earica Hunter, opus cit, p133.

53 Erica Hunter, opus cit p 134

54 P Malekkandathil, Sassanids and Maritime trade of India during early medieval period - Maritime India: Trade religion and polity in the indian ocean p3

Kharg Island was such a hub where Archaeological excavations revealed a monastery and about 60 Christian tombs of the period 250 CE - confirms the strong presence of Christians in the area.<sup>55</sup> Archaeological studies at Sir Bani- Yas, Marawah islands off Abu Dhabi, Failaka and Akaz islands off Kuwait are other strong evidence for the Maritime Trade - Missionary links on the Arabian coast.<sup>56</sup>

### **Processional Crosses**

Processional crosses are crosses used in processions in the ceremonies of worship. They are used in processions in the Liturgy. In certain traditions, it is a privilege of the Bishops to use a processional cross in Liturgy. They are used outside the church also for processions. One of the earliest specific references to the custom of using crosses in processions can be found in a hymn in the honour of cross by Venantius Fortunatus of the sixth century<sup>57</sup>

Processional crosses were associated with relics. In the monastery of Theodore of Sykion, there is a sixth century

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55 Christopher Buch opus cit 59.

56 Joseph Elders, The lost churches of the Arabian Gulf: recent discoveries on the islands of Sir Bani Yas and Marawah, Abu Dhabi Emirate, United Arab Emirates, Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies, Vol. 31, Papers from the thirty-fourth meeting of the Seminar for Arabian Studies held in London, 20-22 July 2000 (2001), pp. 47-57 Published by: Archaeopress, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41223670> Accessed: 04-05-2015 10:45 UTC

57 Glanville Downey, A Processional Cross, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, New Series, Vol. 12, No. 9 (May, 1954), pp.276-280



processional cross that contains relics of the true cross<sup>58</sup>. The Monstrance used widely in the Roman Catholic Church is a variant form of a plain Cross with a capsule in the centre to place venerable relics and later the Holy Eucharist for adoration. The Monstrance has a basic design of a plain cross with radiant spikes from the centre forming a circle.

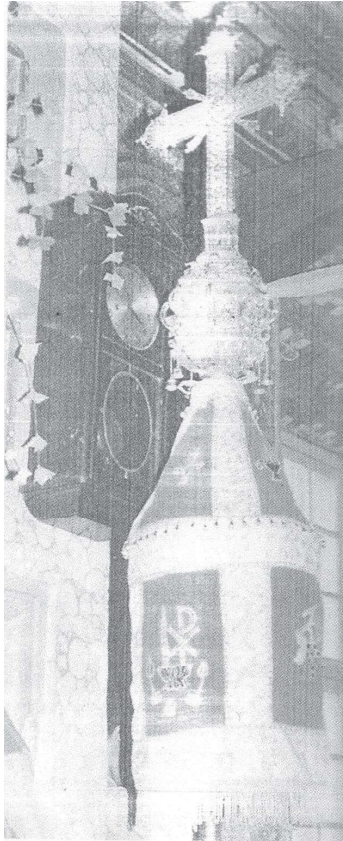
### **Processional Crosses in Malabar**

The Processional crosses were common among the Saint Thomas Christians of India also. They are part of the paraphernalia of the public processions in the Christian Churches in Kerala along with ornamental umbrellas and so on. They are usually plain crosses not crucifixes, with a stand which is decorated with a beautiful veil.<sup>59</sup>

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58 John A Cotsonis, Byzantine Figural processional Crosses, Catalogue of an exhibition at Dumbarton oaks 23 September 1994 through 29 January 1995, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine collection publication no 10, p 28

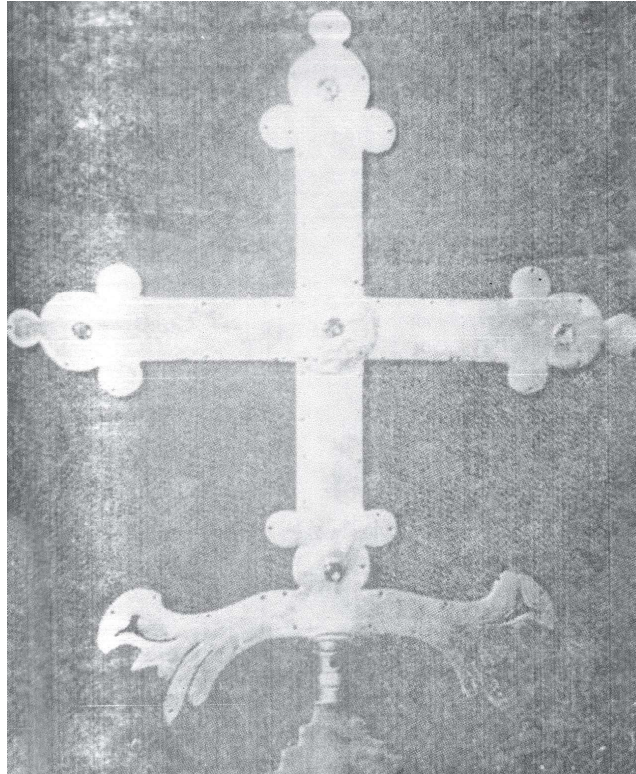
59 Charles Payngott C M I, The Cross, its place in the Hudra and its sign in baptism and Eucharist, Doctoral dissertation submitted to Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, Facultas Scientiarum Ecclesiasticarum orientalium Roma 1971 Directed by Rev Alphons Raes S J , p 67-68



The Saint Thomas Christians used processional crosses in the liturgy. One such ancient processional cross has been documented in the history of Saint Thomas Christians - the processional Cross of the ancient Church at Muttuchira, Kerala.

### **The Processional Cross of Muttuchira**

The ancient Church at Muttuchira in the South Indian State of Kerala is traditionally believed to be founded in the fifth century. A number of archaeological artefacts are found in this Church compound including the Pahlavi inscribed Persian Cross and the



historically important Lithic inscriptions of Muttuchira<sup>60</sup>. The discovery of the ancient Pahlavi inscribed Granite Cross during the renovation of the ancient Ruha D Kudisha Church on the eastern side of the open air rock cross in the present Church complex in AD 1923 caught attention of the archaeology department of the then Government of Travancore. This initiated

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60 M T Antony, Muttuchira Sliva and Lithic inscriptions- Landmark Monuments of Saint Thomas Christians of India, [www.nasrani.net](http://www.nasrani.net), <http://www.nasrani.net/muttuchira+church+sliva+lithic+inscriptions>

This has been accepted for publication in 'The Harp' vol 30, 2015.

detailed investigation and a bell metal cross with Silver covering was also found along with several archaeologically important objects. A local historian George P Murickel wrote on 02/12/1925 “Our brass cross has a close resemblance to the cross engraved on the oval stone (the Pahlavi inscribed granite cross)”.<sup>61</sup> Rev. Fr. Joseph Pedyekkal who was a Vicar in this Church reported to the investigators that the bell metal Cross reported by Mr Murickel was actually a Silver Cross with bell metal core, which was melted in AD 1919 to recover the Silver. Fr Pedyekkal also reported that this was used in processions.<sup>62</sup>

This cross is not seen today, but a picture of it has been published in the book *Christianity in India, a History in ecumenical perspective*, and Edited by Rev. Fr. H C Perumalil CMI and Rev E R Hambye S J, Prakasam Publications, Alleppy, India 1972<sup>63</sup>. This was a Processional Cross modelled on the famous Mailappore Cross and the series of Pahlavi inscribed Granite Crosses of South India, the Mar Thoma Sliva.

### **Other Similar Processional Crosses of East Syriac Church**

#### **Malacca Cross**

Sir Henry Yule reported in a manuscript about a copper Cross found in Malacca. “While digging in a property near

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61 Henry Hosten, *Antiquities of Sam Thome and Mailappore*, 1936, p 346

62 Mr T.K. Joseph, the Secretary of the Kerala Society founded modelled on the Royal Asiatic Society and a famous Historian, letter dated 03/10/1926 cited by H Hosten, *opus cit* p 346, also note foot note 2 p 346.

63 *Ancient Churches, Stone Crosses of Kerala-Saint Thomas Cross, Nazraney Sthambams, and other Persian Crosses*, <http://www.nasrani.net/2007/01/16/ancient-stone-crosses-of-kerala-saint-thomas-cross-nazraney-sthambams-persian-crosses/>

Malacca River belonging to Raya Mudaliyar. About 2 braccas down they found a ‘cross fleurie’ of copper in the ruins of an underground house of bricks like a hermitage. This was of the shape of the crosses of the knights of Calatrava, 3 palms breadth and length. It seems it is the cross of some of the Christians of Mailappore came with merchants of Coromandel to Malacca”.<sup>64</sup>

### **Iron Cross with Syriac and Chinese Inscriptions found in Mosul**

Alphonse Mingana, a famous orientalist and researcher who was a Reader in Syriac in the University of Manchester reported that he found an Iron Cross with Syriac and Chinese inscriptions in a private family at Mosul, Iraq. The Syriac words read ‘Sliba Zkha’ means the ‘Cross has conquered.’<sup>65</sup> As it has Chinese inscriptions, it might have originated in China and might have been imported to Iraq by some Missionaries or pilgrims. The words ‘Cross has conquered’ may denote a processional hymn.

### **Iron Cross with Chinese Inscriptions**

An iron Cross was found in China in the province of Kiangsee with inscriptions on it from which we can assume that it belong to AD 239.<sup>66</sup> The inscriptions on it was in Chinese language which reads as “ Four seas rejoice over peace, iron road splendours a cross, Ten thousand folks for grace yearn, a

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64 H. Hosten, opus cit, p 552

65 A Mingana, The early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the far east, A new document, p 431-42.

66 John Kesson, of the British Museum, Cross and the Dragonor the fortunes of Christianity in China with notices of the Christian Missions and Missionaries and some accounts of the Chinese secret societies, Smith, Elder and Co Cornhill, AD 1854 p 10

thousand autumns incensed by golden urn”. This may or may not be of any Christian significance, but if we see this information together with the report of Arnobius in “Adverses Gentes” mentions about Seres (China) as among the nations reached by the Gospels<sup>67</sup> and the Malabar tradition that Apostle Thomas went to China from India, one has to consider that this could be the earliest Christian artefact in the far east.

### **Cross found in ruins of an East Syriac Monastery in Samarkand- Uzbekistan with Syriac, Sogdian and Chinese inscriptions**

East Sogdian Archaeological Expedition of the Academies of Sciences of Ukraine and Uzbekistan found ruins of a Medieval Christian monastery in the Urgut area of Samarkand, today’s Uzbekistan, in the foothills of Zerafshan mountain ranges. In the mountain cave, they found Sogdian, Syriac and Chinese inscriptions. Arabic Chronicles give hints of a monastery in the region by 9th century AD, but archaeological evidence from even 7th century was found in the site. One important finding was an iron Cross found on the steps directed to an altar supposed to be a processional cross used in liturgies.<sup>68</sup>

### **Processional Crosses: Church of the East and Thomas Christian tradition**

The East Syriac Church always had a tradition of honouring Cross. Narsai (399-502 AD) wrote “the altar stands crowned with beauty and splendour and upon it is the gospel of life and the adorable wood (the Cross)”. Gabriel Qatraya and Abraham Bar Lipah also comments similarly that the altar of the East Syriac

67 Dale A Johnson, Searching for Jesus on the Silk Road, p 27

68 [http://old.ut.uz/eng/kaleidoscope/new\\_archeological\\_finding\\_discovered\\_in\\_samarkand.mgr](http://old.ut.uz/eng/kaleidoscope/new_archeological_finding_discovered_in_samarkand.mgr) accessed on 02 May 2015.

Churches adorned with the Cross and the Gospel also the image of Christ. According to John Bar Zo'bi, cross and the gospel on the altar represent the '*qnoma*' of Christ. Cross represent the image of the body of Christ and the gospel his soul.<sup>69</sup>

Gabriel Qatraya and Abraham Bar Lipah witnesses position of the Cross, the Gospel and the Image of Christ on the madbaha. The *onitsa* sung on the Friday following the feast of the cross states "Saviour, your church carries a heavenly treasure and riches. She takes refuge and fixes her trust in the mysteries and images that you entrusted to her, namely the great book of the gospel, the adorable wood of your cross and the glorious image of your humanity. The mysteries of her redemption are indeed exalted"<sup>70</sup>

Crosses are used in various liturgical processions inside and outside the churches of Saint Thomas Christians.

### **Cross in the procession in the Eucharistic liturgy**

In the ancient liturgy of the Saint Thomas Christians of Malabar, there are three specific occasions where a procession of Cross is celebrated.

1. Procession with the cross from the sanctuary during the *Onitsa d' Qanke*

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69 Charles Payngott CMI, *The Cross, its place in the Hudra and its sign in baptism and Eucharist*, Doctoral dissertation submitted to Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, Facultas Scientiarum Ecclesiasticarum orientalium Roma 1971 Directed by Rev Alphons Raes S J p 40-41

70 Paul Bedjan, III 304, line 2 f cited by Charles Payngott CMI *The Cross, its place in the Hudra and its sign in baptism and Eucharist*, Doctoral dissertation submitted to Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, Facultas Scientiarum Ecclesiasticarum orientalium Roma 1971 Directed by Rev Alphons Raes S J p 41 foot note 13

2. Procession of the cross with the gospel
3. Re-entry of the cross and the gospel in the sanctuary before the 'offertory'.

### **Procession of the Cross from the sanctuary during the *Onitsa d' Qanke***

The earliest evidence available today is a manuscript kept at the Monastery of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) at Mannanam, Kerala, India which is the modified version of the ancient liturgical '*taksa*' (order) of Thomas Christians. The manuscript is the Latinised text of the ancient liturgy of Thomas Christians. At the end of the manuscript, there is a note stating that "the order of the '*Raza*' as arranged by Bishop Roz in the synod of 'Angamali' in the fourth year and fourth month of his reign (1603 AD)".

It has to be noted that due to the resistance of the 'Cathanaars' (Priests) of the undivided Saint Thomas Christians, the Portuguese Missionaries had to keep many of the traditions and rituals of the Holy Eucharistic liturgy untouched. Thus this confirms the longstanding practice of the Saint Thomas Christians with procession of Cross during the liturgy. Gabriel Qatraya also witnesses similar custom among the east Syriac Church.<sup>71</sup>

In the procession of the cross from the sanctuary during the *Onitsa d' Qanke*, the celebrant, deacons and the laity kisses the cross and then places the cross in the 'madbaha'. Gabriel Qatraya also describes the procession of the cross from the sanctuary to the bema among the East Syriac Church. Abraham Bar Lipah, Assemani and Van Unnik also describes about this procession. After the Kissing of the Cross, the Cross is placed in the 'bema'.

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71 Charles Payngott, opus cit pp 47-48, 52-54



### **Procession of Cross with the Book of Gospel**

Gabriel Qatraya and Abraham bar Lipah describes about the procession of cross along with the book of Gospel in the East Syriac Church. The procession of cross with the gospel is not described in the 'Rozian' order even when in Latin tradition, especially Braga tradition prevailed in Goa, a crucifix accompanies the book of Gospel. If the procession of cross was of Latin origin, Roz would have kept it in the order of *Raza*. Roz omitted this procession in order to suppress one of the Syriac traditions. Even though this was omitted in 'Rozian order', the custom continued in Malabar.<sup>72</sup> Priest takes the book of gospel, incense it and 'turgama' is sung. Then the Book of Gospel is taken to the nave for reading as a procession along with the Cross. As mentioned before, the Cross is the *Qnoma* of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Gospel the words of the Lord. Hence they can't be separated and goes together.

### **Re-entry of the cross and the gospel in the sanctuary before the 'offertory'**

The third procession of Cross is the re-entry of the Cross and Gospel into the sanctuary after the 'Karozhutha' as a procession.

### **Cross in the procession during the Onitsa d' Basalike of Ramsa**

Fr Charles Payngott explains quoting Gabriel Qatraya that the tradition of a procession of Cross in the celebration of *Ramsa* originated from the time of King Constantine who used to go to the church of evening prayers. There was a procession to honour the kings. As the word for King in Greek is Baseleus, the name

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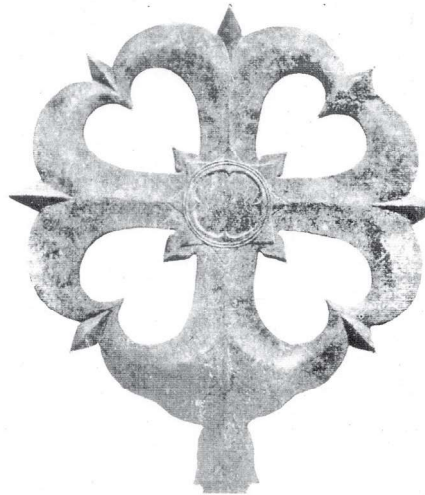
72 Charles Payngott, opus cit p60.

Onitsa d' Basalike came into existence. Later, Patriarch Isho Yahb changed it into a procession of Cross.

### **Processions outside the Church**

In all religious processions, a large processional cross is carried in the front. This is usually an ornamental cross with a veil on the base.<sup>73</sup>

### **The Iron Cross of Niranam**



The picture of this Cross has been published in the Saint Thomas Christian Encyclopedia- Thomapedia, Ed. Dr George Menacherry<sup>74</sup>. This is made of iron and was once a steeple cross of one of the earlier Churches of Niranam. This is a Persian Cross of a different design. This is an equilateral Cross modelled on the Granite Cross at Kottakkavu near Cranganore in Kerala. The

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73 Charles Payngott, opus cit p 67.

74 George Menacherry, Ed. Thomapedia, the Saint Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia of India, plate 4

four equal arms ends with a flowery pattern- two curved flowery petals on either side with a bud in the centre- fleury Cross. The curved floral petals on either sides of the ends of each arm meet with similar petals of the other arms of the Cross forming a circle with indentation in between the arms. This design of Cross is commonly seen on the open air rock crosses, granite beams, baptismal fonts and woodworks of the ancient Saint Thomas Christian Churches. The famous mural painting of Archdeacon George of Christ is seen holding a pastoral cross of similar design. This may have been the design of pastoral crosses of Saint Thomas Christians.



## **Conclusion**

Pahlavi was widely used by Persian Missionaries of the Church of the East who migrated to India, Central Asia and China. When Persian Christians migrated to other places due to persecution, they continued to use Pahlavi. These left archaeological artefacts in the form of inscriptions and manuscripts. The Pahlavi inscribed granite crosses of South India are one of the vestiges of the presence of Persian speaking Christian migrants in South India. There is evidence that later the local Christians copied these crosses with the Pahlavi inscriptions, even though they did not understand Pahlavi- evidenced by uneducated copying of Pahlavi inscriptions leading to letters upside down and words as mirror images on the copies. They might have considered these inscriptions as some important theological formulae or prayers.

Pahlavi inscribed processional cross found in Herat also denotes the possible religio- cultural practice of inscribing theological formulae and prayers dedicated to the donors on objects of veneration. This is an archaeological evidence of ancient East Syriac Christianity in Herat and Central Asia related to the Persian Church and a living example of the Missionary zeal of the Church of the East which was larger than even the Roman Church during the European Middle ages<sup>75</sup>, without official patronage of any Empire. It also shows the multi cultural, multi linguistic and multi ethnic nature of the East Syriac Church which had even an ethnic Chinese Patriarch (Jaballaha III) in the year 1281 AD. This confirms the Universality and the real Catholicity of the ancient Judeo- Christian Church of the East.

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75 Wilhem Baum, Dietmar Winkler, *The Church of the East, A concise History*, Routledge Curzon, 2003, preface.

**(Picture courtesy:** The different pictures of the Processional Cross of Herat have been taken from the paper-Philippe Gignoux, Une Croix de procession de Herat inscrite en pehlevi, Le Museon, 07/2001,; 114(3):pp291-304

Picture of the processional cross at Ollur and mural painting of Archdeacon George of Cross are taken from 'The Nazranis, Indian Church History Classics, Ed Prof. George Menacherry, South Asia Research Assistance Service, Ollur, Kerala.

Picture of processional cross of Muttuchira is taken from the book Christianity in India, a History in ecumenical perspective, Edited by Rev Fr H C Perumalil CMI and Rev E R Hambye S J, Prakasam Publications, Alleppy, India 1972

Picture of the iron cross of Niranam is taken from The Thomapedia, The Saint Thomas Christian Encyclopedia of India, Ed Prof. George Menacherry).

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