

Dänisch-Hallesche Mission

Propagation of the Gospel in the East

Propagation of the Gospel in the East: Being a Farther Account of the Success Of The Danish Missionaries, Sent to the East-Indies, For The Conversion Of The Heathens in Malabar

Böhm, Anton Wilhelm

London, 1714

The Tenth Question.

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ly in Company with the *holy Prophets*, who have their *Habitations* there.

I have my self conversed with some that were above a *Hundred* Years old, and as yet of a sound and perfect Understanding. However, the *Malabarians* fare no better in this respect than other Nations do in the Universe; since Abundance both of young and middle-aged People are daily cut off in the very Bloom and Strength of their Years.

The Tenth Question.

The Palm-Leaves, or Books you have sent to Europe, are they writ with Pen and Ink, or are they engraven with an Iron Pencil? And can you your selves write in this manner?

Answer: The *Malabarians* do not know how to handle Pen and Ink, but they take the *Palm-Leaf* in the Left, and an Iron Stile or Pencil in the right Hand, and write with it as fast as we do with Pen and Paper: Yet it requireth a great deal of Patience and Exercise, to write with so heavy a Pencil every Day, and from Morning to Night, and to hold the *Palm-Leaf* in the left Hand, without laying or resting the same on any thing at all.

On their left Thumb they have a pretty long Nail with a Nook cut in it. To this they fasten the sharp End of the Pencil, whilst the upper-end is held by the Fingers of the right Hand; the *Olie*, or *Palm-Leaf*, they hold with the four Fingers of the left-Hand, and putting the Thumb, which supports the Pencil,

cil, on the Top of the Leaf, they move it forwards till a Line is finished, after which, they take back the Leaf, and begin another. I can write indeed in the same manner, as the *Malabarians* do; but since I have no great Occasion for it, (whilst I can dictate every thing to a *Malabarick* Writer,) I have made no extraordinary Proficiency in this Piece of Curiosity. However, I do not question, but I should be as nimble a Writer as a *Malabarian*, if I did but handle my Leaf and Pencil for a whole Week together, in order to use my Fingers to this Exercise.

The Letters on the Palm-Leaves look black, and the Leaves themselves yellowish: The Cause of which is, a sort of Oil mixed with *Saffron*, *Tinder*, and other Ingredients of a blackening Nature. This Oil rendereth both the Book durable, and the Writing legible, when without it, all would appear white, and the Reading prove very difficult to those that were not well-acquainted with it. This blackish Colour is also a great Comfort to the Eye; and truly, had it not been by this Means, the constant Perusal of so many *Malabarick* Writings would have long since impaired my Sight.

The Eleventh Question.

Do you make use of such Books among the Malabarians, and can they read this sort of written Leaves?

Answer: This Way of writing Books, has been in use among the *Malabarians* for some
Thou