

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 Eleventh Question.

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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

Thousand Years together. They have in all their Cities, Market-Towns, and Villages, settled Schools, wherein their Youth is taught to *Read* and to *Write*, though there are but few that attain to any Perfection, either in the one, or in the other. The Reason seems to be, because no less than *six* Years Study is required to make a Man perfect in both. There is, it may be, but one in a Thousand that can both read and write. And again: Among a Thousand that can read and write, you will find but very few arrived to such a Degree of Scholarship, as to perform it readily, and without Hesitation.

Their Women are not kept to School at all, and consequently remain ignorant in either, except a few of them, singled out to attend the Service of the Idols in their *Pagodes*. These are called for that Reason, *the Servants of the Gods*. They usually learn to *Read*, *Write*, and to *Sing*; and apply themselves to attain the learned *Malabarick*, or the Language of the *Bramans*. Many of these Girls are of good Parts, and quick of Apprehension. Much more could be said here of the Books of this Nation; but I refer the Reader to my *Bibliotheca Malabarica*, sent to *Europe* some time since, and dedicated to the Reverend D. *Lutkins*, at *Copenhagen*; wherein I have drawn up a pretty long *Catalogue* of their Books or Composures, and made some short *Annotations* concerning the *Contents* and *Authors* of them, and the Time wherein the Books were supposed to be writ.

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As for those *Arts* and *Sciences* that flourish in *Europe*, I can assure you, the *Malabarians* do not come behind in any Branch of Learning. They teach *Theology*, called by them, *Weda Sastirum*; their *Ethick* is called, *Grara Sastirum*; and their *Logick*, or Art of Arguing, *Dakka Sastirum*: Their *Oratory* is styled, *Saduria Sastirum*; and their *Poetry*, *Panschaletschina Sastirum*: Their *Philosophy*, taken in a large Sense, is termed, *Loga Sastirum*; and their *Physick* is expressed by *Pumi Sastirum*: They call *Geography*, by the Name of, *Puwana Sastirum*; and their knowledge in *Physick*, by that of *Waiddia Sastirum*: Their *Politicks* go under the Name of, *Nidi Sastirum*; and their *Mathematicks*, under that of, *Sodirishia Sastirum*: Their *Astronomy* is known by the Name of, *Natshettirum parkira Sastirum*; and their *Geomancy*, by that of *Samostrigei Sastirum*: *Musick* is called with them, *Párada Sastirum*; *Chymistry*, is noted by, *Rashamiddei*; and *Geometry* is named, *Kennida Sastirum*.

Thousands of such *Arts* and *Sciences* are in Vogue among their *Literati* or Scholars; but I forbear to specify more at present. More particularly (which is to be lamented!) are they acquainted with such *Arts* and *Mysteries* as spring up from Sin, and lead to Sin. It is astonishing to see what Masters of *Witchcraft* there are in this Nation.

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