

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

Extract of another Letter, relating to some Diseases incident to the
Malabarians: Likewise of some Remedies they commonly use against them.

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from Heathenism, by no other Mark than the Language in which the Office of the *Mass* is usually celebrated.

Dated in the *East-Indies*, on
the Coast of *Coromandel*,
at *Tranquebar*, August
27. 1709.

Bartholomew Ziegenbalg.

EXTRACT of another Letter, relating to some Diseases incident to the Malabarians: Likewise of some Remedies they commonly use against them.

The First Question.

W HICH are the reigning Diseases among the Malabarians?

Answer: The most dangerous Diseases are,
(1.) A Lameness of all the Limbs. (2.) Stoppage of the Wind-pipe, whereby many strong and healthy People are often carried off very suddenly.
(3.) Agues, which are likewise very dangerous in these Parts. Many other Diseases are common on this Coast, of which some are incurable, and others cause a sudden Death; whose several Names I cannot tell you in *High-Dutch*. The Natives call them, (4) *Polawei*, which

which causeth first a great Swelling on th
Back, and then breaks out into many Ulcers.
(5.) *Shumasckasham*, which almost quite taketh
away Peoples Breath. (6.) *Kannakirendi*, is a
consuming Cancer. (7.) *Magodaramikkum*, is
attended with an uncommon Swelling in all
the Joints and Limbs, &c.

I remember I once had in my Hands a long
Catalogue of all the Kinds of Diseases, toge-
ther with their Names, presented me by a
Malabarick Physician. They have strange No-
tions concerning the *Winds* in humane Bodies:
They have writ whole Books upon this Sub-
ject, and maintain that there are no less than
Ten Cardinal-Winds in the Body, which they
afterwards subdivide again into *Seventy* more,
according to their several Corners from which
they blow: These, say they, when they stand
fair and move regularly, will keep the Body
in Health; but when they come to be put out
of Order, they produce various Diseases and
Illnesses. All this they pretend to demon-
strate, by 'comparing the Winds of the Body
with those of the World: And truly, they
can frame long Discourses about *Microcosm*
and *Macrocosm*, the *little* and the *great* World,
and their mutual Order and Harmony.

The Second Question.

*Do the Malabarians purposely apply themselves
to the Study of Physick?*

Answer: *Ars Medica*, or the Art of Phy-
sick, is had by the *Malabarians* in great Vogue
and

and Esteem, and exalted above all other Arts and Sciences. Those that do professedly study it, take the greatest Pains imaginable to search into the Secrets of Nature. There are extant many useful Composures on the *Art of Physick*, some whereof I have read with Pleasure and Satisfaction, and often wished to be at Leisure to translate but one into *High-Dutch* for your Perusal. I do not question our Physicians in *Europe* would wonder at the Performance of our *Malabar* Doctors here. But hitherto my Ministerial Functions have not permitted me to effect it.

Our *Europeans* or *Blacks* that are settled in *India*, do for the most part consult the black Physicians upon any emergent Occasion: And it must be supposed, they are best acquainted with the Quality of the Air, and the Nature of the Food and Climate. They often perform very successful Cures: But whilst a *European* is under their Hands, they absolutely restrain him from eating any thing but such Victuals as are prepared after the Manner of the Country, as do undoubtedly best agree with their physical Prescriptions.

The Third Question.

What Species or Ingredients do they use to make up their Medicines?

Answer: The *Ingredients* they use in their Physical Compositions are quite different from what we apply in *Europe*. I own, I never have seen as yet, any Medicine prepared in
India,

India, which look'd as our Compositions do in *Europe* ; except perhaps it was something made up of such Drugs as the Apothecary-shop of the *East-India* Company here does afford.

Their usual Prescriptions are *Oils, Powders, and Potions*. But those that are the most skillful and noted Physicians among them, have always recourse to *Chymical* Preparations, particularly in high and dangerous Distempers: But then they seldom make use of any Spirits or Liquids, but generally of *Stones* made up of *Pearls, Gold, and other Metals*, and prepared in such a manner, that, upon Occasion, one may scrape off a Doze for the Use of the Patient. The Colour of such a Stone is commonly red and white. I have taken my self part of such a Stone, and have found effectual Help by it. I had once a Mind to have purchased such a Physical Stone or Compound, but it would have stood me in *Three-score Rix-dollars*. In the Kingdom of *Ceylon*, a Stone is found in *Hogs*, which is called *Lepes de Porco*, and said to be of an extraordinary Virtue for curing all manner of Distempers.

Our black Physicians here do give out, that Medicines prepared in *Europe*, and transported to *India*, have not that Power and Efficacy here, which perhaps they may have in those Places where they have been prepared.