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Tagebuch von Johann Ernst Geister.

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8. I began to continue to write the Latin signification to a very large and compleat Malabar Dictionary, which was first begun by the Missionaries at Tranquerbar, then continued and much augmented by M^r. Sartorius, & afterwards revised & augmented again at Tranquerbar, so that one copy now requires half a ream of paper. One copy being designed for M^r. Sartorius, the Malabar words were wrote in Tranquerbar, & M^r. Sartorius was to write the Latin to it, and make additions. In this he made a good progress, till by his death it was broke of. I resolved therefore to continue this as much as I could spare time from other Business, and so went on for a while, till I found that at present it would hinder me not only in my other Business, but would prejudice my health & chiefly my eyes which in this hot Climate are soon affected by much reading and writing. Therefore I left of again, though with a Resolution, to begin again as soon as possible.
20. I was visited more than once about this time by Bramines from Dewanapatnam and we talked of sciences & learning. They boasted in the usual way of their great skill and knowledge, against which I made now and then an exception, and mentioned something of the learning of the Europeans, not forgetting to tell them, that we esteemed our Ancestors and Predecessors as much as the Indians could theirs, but that notwithstanding all this our modern Scholars not contented with what was found out already, endeavoured every day to go further, when on the contrary the Indians without any meditation examination or enquiry adhered superstitiously to what was left them by their forefathers. As I knew that they value themselves chiefly on their pretended knowledge of Astronomy, Moons Age, Eclipses &c. I took an opportunity to tell them, how the European Astronomers had made such a great progress in this kind of knowledge by Telescopes and other excellent Instruments, which the Indians never made use of, nor did so much as the old Chaldeans, Arabians and Greeks, who constantly made Observations; but that they work'd their Almanacks only by Tables, which they had from their forefathers, and that many times their Tables were very insufficient. I asked them, if they knew the Eclipses for several years to come, which they answered in the Negative. Upon which I told them, that our Astronomers made their Calculations for a great many future Years, and that I had a book with me (Times Telescope) which gave an Account of those things for a number of years. They were mightily puzzled at this, so that they did not talk so high any more, and it happened to be divulged amongst the Bramines of this place, that I could tell the Moons Age, Eclipses &c. as well as any of them. In my conversation with the Bramines I choose this method to remove one great impediment, viz. their high Opinion, which they have of themselves, and the mean thoughts they have of the Europeans, whom they believe quite ignorant, and almost brutified. When I can convince them first, that the Europeans are skilled at least as well as they, and even a good deal better, it may under Gods blessing open me the way, and make them desirous for Christian Religion. Before I have removed this Impediment, I cannot have Confidence enough to talk with them on purpose of Religion. Though in conferring with them I always avoid all manner of disputing, not insisting upon Refutations, but only proposing what I can say of our ways and methods, and if I find them not inclined to fall in with my opinion, I break off, telling them, that when I have perfected myself more in the Language, I hope to have an opportunity to talk of the same thing again and perhaps to represent it in a stronger light and with more proper Expressions than now.
28. I received four Portuguese New Testaments from M^r. Schube at Madras, which were given by the Rev^d. M^r. Wynch, who was at Fort St. Davids some time ago and was desired to spare me a few out of the Church Library at Madras.
- March.
1. I did all what could be done to go on in the building, which went on a little slow for want of Materials & Labourers.

1739.
March 15.

As I wanted a Recreation for my body, having had much business all this while, I resolved to go to Porto novo (which is about 5 leagues from hence) to visit and acquaint myself with the Dutch Gentlemen there. The Dutch having a great Power in East-India, and having been particularly kind to the Protestant Mission, the Protestant Missionaries have always taken care to cultivate a friendship with them. I set out from Cuddalore near three of the Clock in the afternoon and arrived there after seven in the Evening. The Chief M^r. Dornieux and the other Gentlemen received and entertained me very kindly, and I was desired, to christen three children, one of whom was a Grandson of the said M^r. Dornieux.

16. Being resolved not to stay long from home, I set out from Porto novo the next day and arrived at Cuddalore after 10 at night.

With the End of this Month Salomo, who had assisted me hitherto in the Malabar Language insisted very much upon his being dismissed, pretending several Reasons. Though I promised to comply with his desires, he assented himself at last, before I gave my final Resolution, and I found afterwards, that he had committed several irregularities, in borrowing Money and the like, of which he dreaded the Consequences.

30. To my great Joy and Satisfaction M^r. Walther came here from Tranquerbar to stay for some days with me. His design was 1.) to acquaint himself with me 2.) to see, if either in Porto novo or here he could discover something of the ¹⁰⁰⁰ Pagodas which were lost some Months ago not far from hence. As I hitherto by letters and otherwise had done all what I could to find out something of it, I was ready again to do any thing, which could be done that way. The Governour M^r. Hubbard in particular had interposed his authority and done several things to discover the Theft, which however proved ineffectual. Some other Means being proposed upon new suspicions, his worship gave the necessary Orders for a new Examination in this place (because the Man who lost the Money, is an Inhabitant of Fort St. David's) and a handsome Reward was promised to one in this place, who seemed the most likely Man to find the thing out. Yet this last effort had no more effect, than the former. In the Mean time I was very careful to make the best advantage of M^r. Walther's company, who has been long in the Country and is very well skilled in languages and sciences. I profited so much by his conversation, that I found Reason to thank God for his providence in this particular.

April.

With the End of the last month I had an opportunity to be acquainted with an Inhabitant of this place, Pothani by name, who has kept for several years a publick School, but finding himself by his Age unfit for such a laborious work has given it up to one of his Relations. Upon enquiry I found, that he was very well skilled in the Language, and had a little learning according to the Country way, therefore I resolved to take him into my service, to assist me in the language, in which I was likely to advance now faster, because this Man doth not understand any European Language, so that I am obliged to talk nothing but Malabar with him. But this was not the only design, because I thought, that some time or other, if providence should open the way, this Man might be brought over to christianity. Because he being constantly with me, the innate dislike which these people have against the Europeans, will wear out, & I can watch proper opportunities to talk nearer and more confidently to him, when probably he will disclose himself with greater freedom, and give me an opportunity to acquaint him with the excellency and necessity of the christian Religion.