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Tagebuch von Johann Ernst Geister und Johann Zacharias Kiernander.

**Geister, Johann Ernst
Kiernander, Johann Zacharias**

Cuddalore, 01.01.1740-29.12.1740

8. März 1740

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strong suspicions that the Romish Priest was at the bottom of this affair, — because it was Lent now, and last year I had a dispute about that Season. But as I obtained my End, I saw no Reason to enquire any further.

March.

16th I went in the Evening to the Pagoda at Tripptalore and found an opportunity to talk with a few People, but as I came there pretty late, I was obliged to leave of very soon. In my Journal I have chiefly inserted those Discourses, which in a manner might be called formal, when I talked to them in a publick place before a number of People. But besides these there is hardly a day — without an opportunity to talk something useful to one or other though it should be only as by the way. Because I walk two or three times in a week within and without Suddalore, and find occasion to speak here and there. Besides I am visited now and then by Bramines and other Malabars. But in the most confident and various way I talk with the old man who Teaches me the Language, because in reading with him the Books, that are full of enormous falsehoods, I take hold of these opportunities to discover to him the horrid contradictions of their authors. About this time I read in one of their Chronicles an Enconium of an Idol which all of them worship and represent with an Elephants head. The Author praises amongst other things his God for having now and then — the 3 Sorts of madness, which are incident to Elephants: and this was described in a lively though very nauseous manner, The Author expressing in a lofty — way how an unclean humour run down from both his Ears &c. Being strangely surprized at this I asked the old man how they could ascribe madness to what they call a Deity and how they could worship such a one. He was a little startled, but recollected himself and told me that this must be understood in a mythical sense. I was quite struck with that and could not forbear saying with an Emotion: what a downright miserable & blinded perverted people are You? It is not enough to represent your Gods as committing all manner of Debaucheries, Vices, & Crimes which the worst of men commit but you must bring in the Brutes too, and praise your Gods for being subject to brutish madness. The old man seemed to be moved very much and in a manner disturbed, though I cannot say if he was convicted or if he was angry. Though the reading of these Books is a very tedious Business — yet I find it necessary for two Reasons, 1. because I can learn the Language so much the better. 2. Because I discover all their Science and knowledge, and therefore when I discourse with them they cannot reply that I am not acquainted with their Learning. This is their common Evasion, whenever

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an European asks something or forms an objection, that they say: we have so many valuable Books, containing all manner of knowledge, & if you had read them you would judge quite otherwise of us. I

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13- Having finished the Portuguese School the verbal explanation of the Catechism I proceeded to the Scripture Sentences. The Children advance now pretty well in understanding the Portuguese language though it does not go on without difficulties, of which the chiefest is that the natives of these parts are not used to meditate deliberate and reason on a subject, but what they learn is merely by memory.

22- Going again to Trippaploze & coming near the Pagoda I found the Head-Bandaram before his house on the Royal or large bench, he asked me to sit down, & as soon as we begun to talk a good number of people came about us. I asked some questions about their Geography, Chronology &c. and objected chiefly against their strange way of reckoning the time which was not by decades, centuries, or millenaries, but always by Millions, their Chronologie being divided in 4 Periods each containing near or above a Million of years and all their particular Histories are thrown in one or other of these Periods without determinating the year. I told him that as every thing happeneth in a particular Year Month or Day, it was proper that History Writers should mention the particular time. Here I made a Digression acquainting him, that the history, that was preserved amongst the Europeans was wrote in such a way that Geography & Chronology was taken care of with all possible exactness and nicety I enlarged here a little against the prejudice & ill opinion, they have of the Europeans, assuring him that they were exceeding carefull to find and preserve truth & that the Malabars were in the Wrong when they pretended to judge of the Europeans whose books they had never Read nor enquired after their knowledge and Learning, of which they should find an account if they had a desire to converse with me. He answered only in General that his Countrymen had not been so careful as to preserve such particulars. After some discourse on this Subject I asked him if they had original Copies of their chiefest Books because I found such a great difference, that of the Copies now extant, not one agreed with the other. He answered that they had originals. Qu: where are they? Are they to be had in this or any other neighbouring place? Answer: we do not much care to know where they are, it is enough to know, that they are. When I saw him brought to that extremity, I did not insist further, but turned the Discourse on another Subject, & after having

talked