When I was collecting material for my book *The Christians of St. Thomas and their Syriac Manuscripts*, I discovered in the library of the Catholic Syro-Malankara Bishop's house at Trivandrum (Kérala / India) a badly damaged manuscript with various texts and amongst them a Syriac one of the book of Judith. The large volume (29½ x 18½ cm.) had been partially eaten by worms, which had dug large holes in it, but fortunately the 33 pages of Judith (f. 123r - 129r) were intact. A colophon at the end of the text (f. 139r) indicates that it was copied in 1734 A.D., most probably by a Catholic priest or deacon, who does not mention his name. The text may be translated as follows:

This holy book was completed and finished in the days of the corporeal Cherub and bodily Seraf and angel in the flesh
Mar John Baptist Mary, Apostólica of all
Hindō and Gögün, of the order of the discalced Carmelites,
and in the days
of the government of Mar Antônís, Metropolitan
of all Hendō, of the order of the Jesuits. Our Lord
may make long their days, as Metušalāh.

Amen
I have written this in the holy church of Mar Thoma,
the blessed Apostle, which is called in Indian
Mattam, and is called the region of the north,
and of Nambudimar, king of Talapilly,
in the year 1734
of Christ our Lord.

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1 J.P.M. van der Ploeg, *The Christians of St. Thomas and their Syriac Manuscripts* (Bangalore / India, 1983, xvii + 301 pp.).
2 For a description of the manuscript, see *op. cit.*, 87-88.
The three names in lines 12 and 13 of the colophon are written in Malayālam Garshuni (Malayālam written in Syriac characters and some other ones). Metropolitan Mar Philexinos, formerly of Thozhiur, transcribed them for me. In January 1988 I was able to visit the place where the manuscript had been copied. The copyist must have worked in the presbytery of an old Syro-Malabar church, on the entrance arch of which is proudly painted that it was (first) built in 140 A.D. It is situated c. 13 km NNW of Trichur, a Roman Catholic Chaldean centre in the middle of Kerala. I took photographs of the manuscript, a copy of which I gave to the Peshitta Institute of Leyden University, which is publishing a critical edition of the Old Testament in Syriac. Because its text of Judith has not yet appeared, I did not make a definitive study of the text for this article. But I published a (not too bad) photographic edition of it, with a translation and some notes, in the Publications of the St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute. The director of the Institute is the Rev. Dr. Jacob Thekeparampil, who studied in Paris and in Germany. In this study we quote the pages and lines of the text, not the folios of the manuscript.

1. THE BOOK OF JUDITH

The newly found Syriac text of Judith is interesting for various reasons. It seems clear that it was brought to India by Catholic priests or monks, possibly by one of the monks of the Lebanon who were sent by the Roman Congregation of the Propaganda Fidei to Kérala (as I shall henceforth call the country, formally called by the Europeans “Málabar” — now only the name of a part of the Indian state of Kérala). We know that some Maronites were sent to South India in 1660. I suspect that it was these Maronites who invented the Malayālam Garshuni. In their country Arabic was written in Syriac characters, and they may have wanted this example to be followed, mutatis mutandis, in Kerala. As far as I can see, the book of Judith did not belong to the canon of the books of the Old Testament in the “Church of the East” (= the Nestorian Church). I did not find any other copy of it amongst the Syriac manuscripts, as I indicated at the beginning of this study. At the end, immediately after Judith, follow

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4 See my The Christians of St. Thomas, 243.