

tain part of Ethiopia, begging him to go or to send preachers thither, for they had had no preachers since the time of St. Matthew the Evangelist, etc., (see below at the end of John's second letter this fragment in full).¹

This is a singular circumstance, and difficult to elucidate, even supposing that the deputation consisted only of some whom accident or trade had brought to such a centre of attraction as Cambalec. For even this is so improbable that I think we may adopt the suggestion of Professor Kunstmann that this fragment is really only the end of John's second letter from Cambalec, from which it had been accidentally separated. The date, which is absent in the second letter, fits in perfectly, and as it will be seen that in the end of that letter the writer was recurring to his experiences in Southern India, we should then see that he is speaking of the Ethiopian party as having visited him in that country, and not in China.² There is an old legend that St. Matthew preached in Ethiopia, which is referred to Nubia by Ludolf, as the Abyssinians have no tradition of his visiting them.³ On the whole, however, perhaps no place to which the name of Ethiopia could be applied is more likely to have been the country of these people than Socotra, an island in which the traces of a debased Christianity still faintly lingered in the 17th century.⁴

¹ Wadding under 1307, § vi.

² Kunstmann in Phillips and Görres, Bd. 37, p. 236.

³ The monk Burchard in the middle of the thirteenth century also speaks of *Æthiopia quæ hodie Nubia dicitur* as the field of St. Matthew's preaching.

⁴ This is suggested by Assemani (p. 516).

The Christianity of the people of Socotra is mentioned by the Arab voyagers edited by Renaudot and again by Reinaud. That work alleges that Socotra was colonised with Greeks by Alexander the Great in order to promote the cultivation of the Socotrine aloes, and that after the advent of our Lord, when the other Greeks had embraced Christianity, these colonists also adopted it, and had retained the profession till that day (the ninth century). Edrisi tells the same story. Marco Polo tells us that the people of Socotra, though greatly addicted to incantations, were baptised Christians and had an Archbishop subject to a patriarch at Bagdad. The next notice of the subject that I am aware of is found among the curious extracts given by Quétif from a MS. in the Colbertian library, of which some account will be given further on. The author, writing about 1330, seems to speak of Socotra in the following extract:—"As