

soul belonging to that body would bear the sin and the punishment of their death. And that is why they burn their dead!

Now I have told you about a great part of the people of the great Province of Maabar and their customs; but I have still other things to tell of this same Province of Maabar, so I will speak of a city thereof which is called Cail.

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NOTE 1.—The form of the word *Abraiaman*, *-main* or *-min*, by which Marco here and previously denotes the Brahmans, probably represents an incorrect Arabic plural, such as *Abráhamín*; the correct Arabic form is *Baráhimah*.

What is said here of the Brahmans coming from “*Lar*, a province west of St. Thomas’s,” of their having a special King, etc., is all very obscure, and that I suspect through erroneous notions.

LAR-DESA, “The Country of Lár,” properly *Lát-desá*, was an early name for the territory of Guzerat and the northern Konkan, embracing *Saimur* (the modern Chaul, as I believe), Tana, and Baroch. It appears in Ptolemy in the form *Laríke*. The sea to the west of that coast was in the early Mahomedan times called the Sea of Lár, and the language spoken on its shores is called by Mas’udi *Lári*. Abulfeda’s authority, Ibn Said, speaks of Lár and Guzerat as identical. That position would certainly be very ill described as lying west of Madras. The kingdom most nearly answering to that description in Polo’s age would be that of the Bellál Rajas of Dwara Samudra, which corresponded in a general way to modern Mysore. (*Mas’udi*, I. 330, 381; II. 85; *Gildem.* 185; *Elliot*, I. 66.)

That Polo’s ideas on this subject were incorrect seems clear from his conception of the Brahmans as a class of *merchants*. Occasionally they may have acted as such, and especially as agents; but the only case I can find of Brahmans as a class adopting trade is that of the Konkani Brahmans, and they are said to have taken this step when expelled from Goa, which was their chief seat, by the Portuguese. Marsden supposes that there has been confusion between Brahmans and Banyans; and, as Guzerat or Lár was the country from which the latter chiefly came, there is much probability in this.

The high virtues ascribed to the Brahmans and Indian merchants were perhaps in part matter of tradition, come down from the stories of Palladius and the like; but the eulogy is so constant among mediæval travellers that it must have had a solid foundation. In fact it would not be difficult to trace a chain of similar testimony from ancient times down to our own. Arrian says no Indian was ever accused of falsehood. Hiuen Tsang ascribes to the people of India eminent uprightness, honesty, and disinterestedness. Friar Jordanus (*circa* 1330) says the people of Lesser India (Sind and Western India) were true in speech and eminent in justice; and we may also refer to the high character given to the Hindus by Abul Fazl. After 150 years of European trade indeed we find a sad deterioration. Padre Vincenzo (1672) speaks of fraud as greatly prevalent among the Hindu traders. It was then commonly said at Surat that it took three Jews to make a Chinaman, and three Chinamen to make a Banyan. Yet Pallas, in the last century, noticing the Banyan colony at Astrakhan, says its members were notable for an upright dealing that made them greatly preferable to Armenians. And that wise and admirable public servant, the late Sir William Sleeman, in our own time, has said that he knew no class of men in the world more strictly honourable than the mercantile classes of India.