First Voyage of the Apostle Thomas to India

Ancient Christianity in Bharuch and Taxila

Dr James Kurikilamkatt

200/-

G. T. Pandharipande

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Dedicated to my Beloved Parents

On the occasion of the
Golden Jubilee of their Marriage

PREFACE

Any historical investigation is an attempt to interpret the past. This interpretation is based on the sources that are at the disposal of the historian. Often these documents that form the data of research are fragmentary and the conclusions and reconstructions made from them may not always substitute the past event. At the same time it can lead us to valuable and useful insights that may inspire further research and studies. The history of the beginning of Christianity in India is so shrouded in obscurity and darkness that no studies seem to bring about any final conclusion. There has already been an ocean of studies regarding the mission of the apostle Thomas in India and none of these can claim to be conclusive and final. The present book also does not claim this conclusiveness. But at the same time it is an attempt to review the fragmentary evidence in a new perspective.

It has always been a great cause of concern for any Indian historian that he does not have at his disposal clear and definite contemporary proof to establish the historicity of any past event. What is offered to him are legends, myths and mythological stories. Very often these legends and myths get disproportioned importance and there are today even deliberate attempts to historicize myths. These attempts do more harm to history than intended. What we really need is a demythologisation in order to sift out history from myths. What I intend to do in this book is just a demythologisation of the story of Thomas as it is explained in the Acts of Judas Thomas.

The Acts of Judas Thomas, an apocryphal book of the third century AD, contains stories and fables of mythical character. The book narrates the story of the apostle Thomas and his mission in India. To consider it as mythical and reject it is foolhardy as it contains valuable historical data, though of fragmentary type. If one can knit together these fragments one may get precious data which can help a lot in writing the history of the beginning of

Christianity in India. It is this thought that really prompted me to take up this bold study. Without claiming to have proved anything definitively, I hope this book may open new horizons to the Indian Church historians.

Melampara **Dr James Kurikilamkatt**
25.05.2005.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

History of man is always guided by God, the beginning and end of all human history. The same guiding hand of God was at work in the history of the writing of this book also. It was just providence that prompted me to take this subject for my research and the same divine guidance was visible throughout all the years of my research. So it is with great pleasure that I present this book for public reading and evaluation. It comes to you as a result of years of research that I have done in various places. There are a lot of people who assisted me in various ways in completing this book. First of all I thank Dr Christopher Shelke who guided me in various stages and provided me profound insights. His fraternal care and timely interventions were always helpful to me. I am indebted also to Professor Dr Heinrich Pfeiffer of the same university for the valuable suggestions that he made after going through the whole work. I remember with gratitude Dr Joseph M. Benitez, the dean of the faculty of Church History in the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. I extend my sincere thanks to all my professors at the Catholic University of Paris and the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome. I remember with gratitude the librarians of various libraries in Paris, Rome, Munich, Calcutta and Delhi. Let me thank in a very special way the ATC Publications, Bangalore, for having brought to light this book in a very beautiful manner. Finally, let me thank all my friends and well wishers who always took a lot of interest in the progress of my research in its various stages.

FOREWORD

Knowledge about one's past always enthrals man. Understanding of one's past moorings really makes one feel proud of one's glorious past. Christianity of India, especially of North India, has always been considered as a later addition to the pantheon of Indian religions. But the realisation that Christian religion had been received by India as early as 43-44 AD really comes as a surprise and makes us think of the ancient heritage it had left on India. So far the arrival of St Thomas the apostle in South India in 52 AD and the consequent establishment of Christianity there was almost acknowledged as a historical event. Here, in this new book, the author establishes, with convincing and conclusive proofs, that the Apostle had come to India even before that date. But he holds that the place that the apostle first landed in India is not Kodungallur as has been traditionally believed, but Bharuch (Broach) on the West coast of India, in the present state of Gujarat.

The author treads very carefully on the not much travelled route of Indian history and historiography to come to his conclusions which seems to be reasonable and based on facts. There is a meticulous analysis of the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*, the only written source that speaks clearly about the mission of Thomas in India, undertaken by the author to verify the geographical and historical information contained in it. It is made clear that the Acts contains more than what it seems to contain. When the information in the Acts is compared and analysed in the light of the accounts given in the *Periplus of the Erithrean Sea*, a book which is almost contemporary to the visit of the Apostle to India, one gets the feeling that there is nothing to suspect what the author of the Acts seems to convey to his readers. The *Periplus* written by an unknown author gives a detailed description of sea routes to all the major cities of India in the first century AD. It is by following the routes detailed in this book that the itinerary of St Thomas to India is established. So the conclusions do not come from nowhere, they are based on scientific study.

Thomas might have set sail from Alexandria around 42 AD and reached the shores of Bharuch (which was known as Barygaza in that epoch) in 43 AD. After a brief stay there he should have directed his steps, via Ujjain (using the river Narbada and also the already existing land route) and Mathura (where the route joined the Grand Highway Taxila-Pataliputra built by the Mauryan emperors), to Taxila in the North, which today is part of Pakistan. He seems to have stayed there and preached the gospel and established Christian communities till 50 AD when the Kushan dynasty overran Taxila and destroyed the Indo-Parthian Empire whose king Gondophares had welcomed him. After the destruction of the city of Taxila he seems to have gone back either to Palestine or to Socotra and made a second voyage to India, to Cranganore in 52 AD and the St Thomas traditions of Malabar seems to endorse this conclusion. This is the whole argument of the author regarding the first voyage of the apostle Thomas to India.

Thus this book has made a great contribution to the advancement of the knowledge of the history of Christianity in India and it can convince even the sceptics about the mission of Thomas in North India as well in South India. It helps the Christians of North India as well as Pakistan to rediscover their lost national identity when their patriotism and belongingness to the country are questioned. With a history of almost two thousand years, Christianity in these countries are not foreign but is grown out of indigenous population.

I hope this book will open new horizons for the scholars and researchers who always wait for new insights into the Indian mission of Thomas. While recommending this book to the general public, I hope that as a new and bold step in the multitude of studies about the Indian mission of the apostle Thomas, the present book will be an inspiration and guide for further studies and researches.

Ujjain
05.04.2005.

Mar Sebastian Vadakel
Bishop of Ujjain.

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Analecta Bollandiana
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
AR	Asiatic Researches
ASIAR	Archaeological Survey of India Annual Report, Calcutta
ASIR	Archaeological Survey of India Report, Calcutta
Ath	Acts of Thomas
BJRL	Bulletin of John Rayland's Library
BO	Bibliotheca Orientalia
BMEP	Bulletin des Missions Etrangers de Paris, Hongkong
Cath	Catholicisme, hier, aujourd'hui et demain
CCSA	Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphum
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
DACL	Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie
DB	Dictionnaire de la Bible
DBS	Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément
DEOC	Dizionario Encicleopedico Orientale Cristiane
DHDE	Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastique
DSp	Dictionnaire de Spiritualité
DTC	Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique
EnBr	Encyclopaedia Britannica
EnCn	Encyclopaedia Universalis
ETJ	Ephrem's Theological Journal
GILRC	Goethal's Indian Library and Research Centre, Calcutta
IA	Indian Antiquary
ICHC	Indian Church History Classics
ICHR	Indian Church History Review
IDB	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
JA	Journal Asiatique
JAOS	Journal of American Oriental Society

JAS	Journal of Asiatic Society
JASB	Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal
JBBRAS	Journal Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society
JPRASBNS	Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, New Series
JRAS	Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica
ODWR	Oxford Dictionary of World Religions
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
PCHS	Pakistan Church History Series
Pd'Or	Parole d'Orient
Periplus	The Periplus of the Erithrean Sea written by an unknown author
PG	Patrologia Greca
PL	Patrologia Latina
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
QJMS	Quarterly Journal of Mythic Society Bangalore
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
SECA	Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha
ZKG	Zeitschrift der Kirchengeschichte

Table of Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgment ix

Forword xi

Abbreviations xiii

Table of Contents xv

General Introduction 1

Chapter one

History of Tradition and Traditions of History

1 **The Story: Acts of Thomas** 5

1.1 History and Story 7

1.1.1 Date of composition 7

1.1.2 Place of composition 10

1.1.3 Author 13

1.2 The Original language 15

2 **The Person: Thomas the Apostle** 18

2.1 Thomas in the writings of Church Fathers and early writers 18

2.2 The real name of Thomas 21

3 **The Place: India of Acts of Thomas and Traditions** 27

3.1 Origin of the term India 28

3.2 India of Classical period 29

3.3 India of the Acts of Thomas 35

Conclusion 40

Second Chapter

Scene and Setting of Traditions

1 **Port of disembarkation: Sandruk-Andrapolis** 41

1.1 Sandruk-Andrapolis = Barygaza 44

1.1.1 A great trade centre on the West Coast of India 46

1.1.2 The royal city of the Andhra Dynasty 54

1.1.3 Relation with the Indo-Scythians of North-West India 56
1.1.4 Jewish presence at Barygaza 62
1.1.5 Sandruk-Andrapolis = Barygaza: a critical appraisal 65
2 CITY OF THE 'KING OF INDIA' 67
2.1 KING GONDOPHARES AND HIS COUNTRY 68
2.1.1 A leap in to light: discovery of the coins of Gondophares 69
2.1.2 Takht -i -Bahi Inscriptions 74
2.2 TAXILA: THE CAPITAL OF GONDOPHARES 74
2.2.1 Geographical position and political history of Taxila 80
2.2.2 Historical remains of Taxila 83
2.2.3 Taxila and the Acts of Thomas 84
2.3 ST THOMAS AND GONDOPHARES 87
CONCLUSION 93

CHAPTER III
VERIFICATION OF TRADITION IN HISTORY

1. EARLY MISSIONARIES TO INDIA: FROM PANTENUS TO JORDANUS 95
1.1 THE INDIAN MISSION OF PANTENUS (189 A.D.) 96
1.2 THEOPHILOS, THE INDIAN 104
1.3 JORDANUS OF SEVERAC (1321) 108
2. ANCIENT CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES 109
2.1 CHRISTIANS AT BARYGAZA 109
2.2 TATTA NAGA FAKIRS 114
2.3 GAR THOMA 116
2.4 'REST OF THE INDIANS' 118
3. REFERENCES IN EARLY LITERATURE 121
3.1 BARDAISAN 121
3.2 DOCTRINE OF THE APOSTLES 122
3.4 THE CHRONIQUE DE SÉERT 124
3.5 THE BALRAAM AND JOSEPHAT 125
3.6 THE ACTS OF MARI 129
3.7 THE BHAVISHYAMAHAPURANA 131

4. BISHOPS AND BISHOPRICS IN INDIA 133
4.1 JOHN OF PERSIA 133
4.2 DIOCESE OF KASHGAR 136
4.3 OTHER DIOCESES 137
5. OTHER CHRISTIAN ANTIQUITIES OF NORTH INDIA 139
5.1 TAXILA CROSS AND OTHER CROSS SYMBOLS 139
5.2 THE CHURCH OF OUDAIPUR, SAGAR 142
5.3 OTHER TRADITIONS 144
CONCLUSION 148

CHAPTER FOUR
MERGING OF TRADITIONS AND HISTORY

1. ACTS OF THOMAS: HISTORY AND LEGENDS OR HISTORY OR LEGENDS 150
1.1. HISTORICITY OF THE ACTS OF THOMAS 150
1.2. AN INDIAN ORIGIN OF THE ACTS OF THOMAS 158
1.2.1. A Hindu Account of the Acts of Thomas 159
1.2.2. Mention of the Acts of Thomas in Indian Literature and Indian History 161
2. INDIAN HISTORY AND THOMAS TRADITIONS 165
2.1 HISTORIOGRAPHY IN INDIA 165
2.2 VALUE OF TRADITIONS IN INDIAN HISTORY 171
2.3 THOMAS TRADITIONS IN THE HISTORY OF INDIA 172
2.3.1 North Indian and South Indian Thomas Traditions 172
2.3.2 North Indian and South Indian Thomas Traditions: Compatibilities and Contradictions 175
3. DEMISE OF ANCIENT NORTH INDIAN CHRISTIANITY AND THE SURVIVAL OF TRADITIONS 179
3.1 DEMISE OF THE ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY IN NORTH INDIA 180
3.1.1 Invasions 180
Invasion of the Kushans 181
The Gupta Invasions 184
Muslim Invasions 186

3.1.2 Migration 188
Migration to South 189
Migration to the West 198
3.1.3 Lack of Royal Patronage 201
3.1.4 Lack of Proper Hierarchy 206
3.2 SURVIVAL OF TRADITIONS 206
CONCLUSION 208

GENERAL CONCLUSION 211
BIBLIOGRAPHY 222
INDEX OF PLACE NAMES 256
INDEX OF AUTHORS 260

General Introduction

St Thomas is acknowledged for centuries to centuries both by the Eastern and the Western Churches as the apostle of India. There exists two distinct traditions about his Indian mission. It was from the second half of the 19th century onwards that Historians began to take an active interest in the North Indian tradition about the mission of Thomas. There is a vibrant tradition in South India that Thomas reached the western coasts of Malabar in 52 AD. There is another one that connects the apostle with ancient North India. In the beginning critics pronounced a negative verdict on the question of the historicity of this mission. A. E. Medleycott, in 1905, came out with a thorough study of the question and vindicated the tradition[1]. Still it lacked convincing historical proofs from the Indian soil and it seemed that he was predisposed to accept everything as historical. Seven years later this historicity was strongly advocated by J. Dahlmann in a well developed thesis[2]. His thesis was altogether rejected by R. Garbe in a short treatise in his work Indien und das Christentum[3]. In 1926 Dr Farquahar presented a thesis in the Bulletin of John Ryland's Library, with convincing arguments[4]. But he did not go beyond speculation and hypothesis. In the later period the situation changed as the South Indian Christians of St Thomas began to take an active interest in learning the history of the establishment of their Church. All

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1 A. E. Medleycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, London, 1905.

2 J. Dahlmann, *Die Thomas Legende und die ältesten historischen Beziehungen des Christentums zum Fernen Osten*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1912.

3 R.Garbe, *Indien und das Christentum. Eine Untersuchung der religionsgeschichtlichen Zusammenhange*, Tübingen, 1914.

4 J. N. Farquahar, "The Apostle Thomas in North India", *Bulletin of John Ryland's Library* 10 (1926), 80-111.

efforts were since then consolidated on proving the historicity of the mission of Thomas in South India. At the time of the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, some of the regions that were supposed to have been evangelized by Thomas according to the North Indian tradition came under the new state of Pakistan, where the Muslim theocratic nation was created. There are only very rare remnants of the ancient Christianity now in Pakistan and Christianity there belongs to a very small minority and finds it really hard to survive amidst Muslim majority which very often turns out to be fundamental and antagonistic. Moreover, the present Christians of Pakistan are the results of the missionary efforts that followed in the late 17th and 18th centuries. They do not naturally have much interest in the ancient traditions. Thus the North Indian tradition of the mission of St Thomas is ignored by all. At the same time there is enough reason to think that the tradition is valid and based on historical events. So this work is an attempt to do justice to a long forgotten but much valid tradition of the Church concerning the mission of St Thomas in North India. It also proposes to continue from where Farquahar had left it.

We make use of literary, archaeological, numismatic, and epigraphic sources. The first literary source beyond doubt is the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, the apocryphal book supposed to be written in the first half of the third century A.D. We make use of three editions of the work. M.R JAMES (ed. & tr.), *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford, 1924, pp. 365-438; KLIJN A.F.J., *The Acts of Thomas, Introduction, Text and Commentary*, Leiden, 1962 and WRIGHT W. (ed. & tr.), *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, vol. II, London, 1871, pp. 146-298. Different versions and editions of the 'story of Thomas' in other languages such as Latin, Armenian,

Malayalam are also used. For the geography of the places the immediate reference is to be made to the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* written most probably around 60 A.D. W.H. SCHOFF (tr.& ed.), The *Periplus of the Eryhtrean Sea*, New York, 1912, is the translation which we are using. There are also occasional references to Strabo, Pliny and Ptolemy. We investigate the history of India and her different dynasties, with the help of the numismatic, epigraphic and archaeological sources, which are mainly obtained from the reports of the Department of the Archaeological Survey of India. For the archaeological findings of the places under discussion, the accounts of famous archaeologists John Marshall and Alexander Cunningham are made use of. The writings of the early authors and Church Fathers are also used for a study of the Thomas traditions. Various local traditions are also analysed to throw light on our study.

SCOPE AND METHOD

Our study includes the tradition of the mission of Thomas in India, as related in the *Acts of Judas Thomas*. So, naturally and logically the tradition about the book and the person of the apostle Thomas, the ancient geography and history of India, the ancient Christian presence in North India, all come under the scope of our present study. Our method is mainly expository and analytical. We have an exposition of the facts and traditions about the *Acts of Judas Thomas* and the Apostle Thomas.

The whole work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter shows an exposition and evaluation of the traditions about the *Acts of Thomas* and apostle Thomas. We try to study critically the *Acts of Thomas* to find out the date of its composition. We investigate whether the Judas of the *Acts of Thomas* and of the other Thomas literature is the same as the Thomas of the New Testament and also if this Thomas of the Bible is the same as the Thomas of different traditions. In this initial chapter we

also verify closely the India of the *Acts of Thomas* and various traditions. In the second chapter we will have a geographical study. It is an attempt to identify the places mentioned in the *Acts of Thomas*. We are mainly concerned with two places: our first concern is to find out the port of disembarkation of the Apostle in India and then to search for the city of the 'King of India'. In the third chapter we make an enquiry into the possible results of the mission of Thomas in North India. We have a detailed investigation of the Christian antiquities in the places connected with the Apostle. Finally, the fourth chapter is a historiographic analysis of the facts and fictions intended towards a merging of traditions and history. In this chapter we deal with the historicity of the *Acts of Thomas* and also propose its Indian origin, at least in a rudimentary form, basing ourselves on the occasional references to it in the historical documents of India and the Indian traits and characteristics deducible from the work itself. We will also examine the place of the Thomas traditions in the Indian History. And finally in the same chapter an attempt has been made to investigate the reasons for the demise of the ancient North Indian Christianity and the survival of the traditions.

LIMITS

Studies about the *Acts of Judas Thomas* have been numerous and we are not able to probe deep into that ocean of the literature. In the same way, there have been Nestorian Christian communities all over North and North West India at the latest from 7th century onwards. The studies about them are sure to come into conflict with our search for the original Thomasian Christian communities of North India. We are also not able to deal in detail with the South Indian Thomas traditions about the mission of Thomas in Malabar. But we will make occasional comparative references to them.

Chapter one

History of Tradition and Traditions of History

History and traditions are very often regarded as mutually contradicting. But they are not really contradictory, but complementary. There exists different traditions that speak about the mission of the apostle Thomas in India, and many regard them as mere legends, which offer us nothing of history. But, we very often forget that legends are born in history and that they are part of history. So also in a country like India where myths and mythologies are considered to be one of the sources of history[1], traditions hold a major part in the writing of it. In this book, we are mainly concerned with the traditions about the origin of the Christian Church in the ancient North India which included today's Pakistan and Afghanistan. These traditions are mainly about the person and acts of the apostle Thomas who is ever regarded as the apostle of India. They are enshrined mainly in the apocryphal book, the *Acts of Judas Thomas*. Therefore, in the first chapter we try to analyse these traditions in their historical background and see how far history is revealed and established by way of tradition.

1 The Story: Acts of Thomas

The *Acts of Judas Thomas*[2], one of the main apocryphal acts of the early Christian centuries, is the earliest written source

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1 V.A. Smith while speaking about the sources of the Indian History considers traditions as the primary source. V.A. Smith, *The Early History of India, From 600 B. C. to the Muhammadan Conquest Including the Invasion of Alexander* (Third edition), Delhi, 1999, 9. To this may be added the opinion of Pargiter: "Tradition ... is the only source since historical works are wanting and is not an untrustworthy guide. In ancient times men knew perfectly the difference between truth and falsehood, as abundant proverbs and sayings show. It was natural, therefore, that they should discriminate what was true and preserve it; and historical tradition must be considered in this light". F.E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, London, 1922, 9.

2 The *Acts of Judas Thomas* is the original name of the book in its syriac version. We call it for the sake of convenience *Acts of Thomas* and hereafter we will be using the abbreviation *Ath.*

that speaks about the predication of the Apostle Thomas in India. Of all the five important apocryphal acts[3], this is considered to be the one and the only ancient act which is passed on to the present generation in its entire form. Though many historians have discarded it as being full of imagination and romantic descriptions, one cannot simply neglect the historical allusions that it provides.[4] Legends and myths do not spring up from nowhere. They are usually invented to explain the origin and development of a particular community, society or system. In this sense, even if one holds that the *Ath* is full of myths and legends, one will have to accept some kind of historical nucleus in it, namely, the preaching of an early Christian missionary in India. So, the first chapter of this work in the first place is a presentation of the book *Acts of Judas Thomas* and then an attempt to verify the historical data regarding the apostle Thomas that have come down to us through centuries. The early apocryphal acts in general present before the readers beliefs and traditions of a Christian community as to how the Gospel had been proclaimed to them and how the particular apostle who first preached the Gospel to them became martyr for the sake of this Gospel. The *Acts of Thomas* is no exception to this principle. It may be considered as a collective endeavour of a believing community to explain how the faith in Jesus had been preached to them. Unfortunately this collective memory has been mutilated by the interpolations of the overzealous Gnostic groups.

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3 The five important apocryphal Acts are Acts of John, Paul, Peter, Thomas, and Mathew in the chronological order of their composition.

4 "Après tous, il n'est pas impossible que sous le développement luxuriant de la légende se cache quelque données traditionnelles relatives aux mission de l'Apôtre Thomas dans les Indes". E. AMMAN, « Apocryphes du Nouveau Testament », in VIGOUROUX, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, supplément I, col. 503. Numerous studies have already been done on this subject especially in the first quarter of this century. While some authors like Garbe altogether rejected any kind of historicity to the *Ath* and denied outright any Christian presence in India before the fourth century (R.GARBE,

1.1 HISTORY AND STORY

1.1.1 Date of composition

It is not always easy to determine the date of an early text. Historians and researchers can only assume it with the help of the data contained in the book and the references later authors have made to it. This is equally true with *Ath* also. There is no clear mention of the original date of composition in any of the manuscripts. Scholars have voiced several opinions concerning the date of composition of this work. Some hold it to be as early as second half of the second century of our era. Some others hold it to be of the late 3rd century A.D. A more reliable position seems to hold the first half of the third century as the most probable date of its composition. The substance of the book is said to be of great antiquity, and it seems that in its original form it was held in great esteem by the heretics of the first and second centuries.[5] The *Acts of Thomas* is spoken of as being in the hands of heretics by the writers of the fourth and fifth centuries. We see it mentioned in the writings of Epiphanes[6] (who records its use by Encraites), and Thuribus[7]. Augustine in three passages refers to this book in such a way

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Indien und die Christentum, Tubingen, 1914), authors like Medleycott, Dhalmann, Germann etc advocated the mission of the apostle Thomas in India. A.E. MEDLEYCOTT, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, London, 1905 ; J. DHALMANN, *Die Thomas-Legende und die ältesten historischen Beziehungen des Christentums zum fernen Osten im Lichte der indischen Altertumskunde*, Freiburg, 1912 ; W. GERMANN, *Die Kirche der Thomaschristens*, Gütersloh, 1877. To these may be added the work of M. RAE, *The Syrian Church in India*, London, 1892.

5 This opinion is held by M.R. Riddle in the Introductory Notice to the Apocrypha of New Testament in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, (ed.), A. ROBERTS and J. DONALDSON, Hendrickson, Massachusets, 1995, 357. But one wonders how could this work be in the hands of the heretics of the first and second centuries when we know that it was written probably in the third century. May be that there existed an early document describing the mission of Thomas to India. Many have suggested that the *Ath* was compiled from an already existing source to adapt it to the motives of the heretics.

6 *Adv.Haeres.* XLVII, 1, (PG XLI) col. 852.

7 *Epistelo ad Idac*, (PL LIV) col. 694.

as to show that he had seen it in writings similar to its present form[8]. Augustine informs us that the Manicheans had already by his time interpolated the story of Thomas. Ephrem the Syrian (306-373 AD) also mentions it. But we are not sure if it is of the *Ath* that he speaks. He tells that the disciples of Bardaisan wrote apocryphal books to propagate their doctrines.[9] As we have not so far come across any other apocryphal acts written originally in Syriac other than the *Acts of Thomas,* we may say that he spoke of it. The text of the *Ath* is mentioned in the travel diary of Egeria[10]. She writes of having visited the martyrium of the apostle Thomas at Edessa and having read some texts of St Thomas. The date of her visit is given as 19-21 April 384 AD[11]. The texts of Thomas mentioned by Egeria could either be the *Acts of Thomas* or the *Gospel of Thomas*. We cannot reasonably think that it is the latter; because, Egeria could very well have known that the reading of it was

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8 Augustine writes, "In the apocryphal books of the Manicheans, there is a collection of fables, published by some unknown authors under the name of the apostles. The books would no doubt have been sanctioned by the Church at the time of their publication, if holy and learned men then in life, and competent to determine the matter, had thought the contents to be true." Further he goes on to mention the story of the apostle and the servant who struck him on the cheek describing it as a purely Manichean invention. Then he continues, " It matters not whether the story is true or false. At any rate the Manicheans regard as genuine and authentic books which the canon of the Church rejects ..." *Contre Faustum*, XXII, 79; *Contra Adminant.*, XVII, 2 , (PL XLII) col. 452 and 758.

9 "Nam putant discipuli Bardezani quod haec a Bardezano magistro suo adiuventa fuerint; atque a ipsis omnino scriptas sunt praxes Autoon...". S. Ephrem Syri Commentarii in Epistolas D. Pauli – a Patribus Mekitharistis traslati, Venetiis, 1893, p. 119, quoted in A.F.G. KLIJN, *The Acts of Thomas, Introduction, Text, Commentary*, Leiden, 1962, 40.

10 Egeria was a pilgrim lady from Spain who visited the Holy Land probably in the 4th century A.D. She has left a travel diary in which she explains all the Churches and places she visited. EGÉRIE, *Journal de voyage,*, introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes, index et cartes par P. MARAVAL, *S.C.* 296, Paris, Cerf, 1982, p. 202. For an English translation see *Egeria : Diary of a pilgrimage*, (tr.) G. E. GINGRAS, New York, 1970.

11 EGÉRIE, *Journal de Voyage*, 202. But the date of her visit of the Church of Edessa is not that certain. Opinions differ from fifth century to as early as 384 AD.

condemned by Cyril of Jerusalem[12] attributing its composition to the Manicheans and she would have informed her writers of the presence of this Gnostic book in the holy place. Because of the same reason, it cannot be any of the other works of the so-called Thomas school[13]. These texts of Thomas could very well be the *Ath* that narrates the mission of Thomas to India and his martyrdom there[14]. And it is all the more reasonable to think that in the *martyrium,* where the relics of the apostle are kept and venerated, a document narrating his mission and martyrdom also is preserved. When we connect it with the mention of Ephrem about the apocryphal acts, we are almost forced to believe that the *Ath* in its original form existed even before Ephrem and that he never considered it to be heretical. But the heretics had begun to use it to their advantage and that is why Ephrem tells that the disciples of Bardaisan engaged themselves in writing apocryphal acts.

Origen speaks, in his *commentary on Genesis*[15], of Parthia as the field of mission of the apostle Thomas. If he had the *Ath* as the source of his knowledge for the mission of the apostle Thomas, he would have told that India not Parthia was the field of mission of the apostle Thomas. His *Commentary on the genesis* was written around 229-230 AD. So we have to assume that the *Ath* was written after this date.

If it were purely Manichean, the end of the third century might be the possible date because Mani died in 277 AD[16]. We

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12 The *Gospel of Thomas* was condemned too early in History (fourth century) and it was through these extant documents of condemnation that it was known to the world till its discovery in 1945 among the collections of Nag Hammadi.

13. It seems that there existed a Thomas School of literature at Edessa from the early period of the Church where a large number of literature sprang up in his name.

14 That the *Ath* or parts of it were kept in the holy place may be testimonial to the fact that the Syrian Church did not consider *Ath* heretic or Gnostic.

15 It is Eusebius who brings to our notice this reference of Origen. *Church history*, III, 1, 1-3.

16 Manichaeism is said to be a syncretic religion of Judeo-Christian and Indo-Iranian doctrines. Mani (216-276) was the founder of this religion and he considered himself to be the recipient and the owner of truth.

have no indication whatsoever of Mani having written such an apocryphal book. According to Erbetta, the Italian translator of the *Ath*, the references that Manicheans were using it does not in any way guarantee a Manichean origin of it[17]. The Gnosticism that we encounter in it is a pre- Manichean Gnosticism. As Ephrem says the disciples of Bardaisan involved themselves in writing apocryphal acts we can say that it was written some time after the death of Bardaisan in 227 AD. Bardaisan himself had never spoken of the *Ath* or of the mission of Thomas in India. In fact he seems to be silent about the presence of Christianity in India. At the same time, he mentions the presence of some Christians in Parthia and that may well mean the Christians in the Kushan empire[18]. Thus in all probability the *Ath* was written around 225-250 A.D.

1.1.2 Place of composition

Though it is difficult to determine precisely the place of composition of the *Ath*, authors seem to agree that it is written in a Syriac milieu[19]. It is generally agreed that the school of St Thomas[20] was localised at Edessa[21], a city in Northern

17 M. ERBETTA, *Gli Apocryphi del Nuovo Testamento*, vol. II, Marietti, 1966, 311.

18 The Kushan Empire was established by Kadphishes in the first century A.D. The Kushans overthrew the Indo-Scythians and established their supremacy over North India in the second half of the 1st century A.D. Kanishka was the greatest emperor of this dynasty. But the period of his reign is still a bone of contention among the historians.

19 " ... il est extrêmement difficile de préciser l'age et la partie de la rédaction actuelle. Tout indique que c'est dans le pays de langue syriaque qu'il faut chercher l'origine des *Actes de Thomas* ». E. AMMAN, « Apocryphes du Nouveau Testament », col. 503.

20 By the school of St Thomas we mean the whole literary tradition that revolves around the Apostle Thomas. There are many books attributed to him- *The Gospel of Thomas, Book of Thomas the Contender, Acts of Thomas, Infancy Gospel of Thomas, Apocalypse of Thomas.* All these works are believed to have come from an ascetic, pre-Manichean Christianity of Osrhoene (Eastern Syria between Edessa and Messene).

21 Edessa (in Syriac Ûrhây, in Arabic ar-Ruhâ) is today located at Urfa in modern Turkey. The city was founded by Selucos I in ῑ̄Ī A.D. Cf. E.G. FARRUGIA, ed., *Dizionario Encyclopedico Dell'Oriente Cristiano*, Roma, 2001, 26.

Mesopotamia where the apostle Thomas is held in high esteem and venerated. Several points have been suggested in favour of this localisation.[22]

- Mesopotamia is part of the geographical area traditionally associated with the wanderings of the saint especially according to the *Ath*. The young prince who is a protagonist in *Hymn of the Pearl* sets out from this general region.
- The *Ath* was transmitted in the syriac language as well as Greek: for technical reasons most specialists hold that syriac must have been the original language of its composition.
- At least by the end of the fourth century, the Church of Edessa had as a relic the bones of St Thomas; they were seen there by Egeria, a Christian lady from Spain, on 19 April 384, and mentioned in her travel diary, which survives to this day. She mentions also as having seen the *Ath* kept in the Church so as to furnish the pilgrims the history of St Thomas the Apostle.
- The ethos of the texts suggests a region where a Syrian form of Christianity was present, and certain details such as references to wandering ascetics anticipate the character of monastic life that was peculiarly Syrian and Mesopotamian in following centuries.
- The model of twin-ship between a divine being and wandering missionary, which is found in Thomas scripture, profoundly influenced the founder of the Manichean world religion, who lived in Mesopotamia in the third century A.D..

22 B. LAYTON, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, New York, 1987, 361.

Moreover, Edessa was the centre of Syrian Christianity and it claimed also the apostolic tradition of St Thomas. The story of the correspondence between Jesus and King Agbar reveals this claim to the ancientness and apostolicity of the church of Edessa. According to this story, King Agbar of Edessa, having heard of the miracles of Jesus, sent a letter to the Lord inviting Him to his country and imploring Him to heal him of a deadly disease that he had been suffering from since many years. Jesus seems to have replied to this letter promising to send one of his disciples to cure him. The tradition continues to tell that St Thomas sent Thaddeus to Edessa to cure the King from his disease as Jesus had promised him in his letter. Thus Edessa has the distinction of being the first great city to become Christian and the story of King Agbar testifies to it. Eusebius speaks of this first evangelization of Edessa in his *Church History*[23] where he mentions the correspondence between Jesus and the King and he gives the exact translation of these letters. Moreover, Edessa had the mark of distinction of possessing the body of the apostle Thomas that had been brought from India[24]. Thus we can see that the Thomas tradition was always prominent at Edessa. But at the same time, the Syrian tradition had always upheld the Indian

23 *Eccl. Hist.* I, XIII, (PG XX) col. 120. "Quoi qu'il en soit de l'historicité des détails transmis par Eusèbe, il est clair qu'il circulait, au début du IV siècle, une composition syriaque qu'eut en mains l'auteur de l'Histoire Ecclésiastique ». E. AMMAN, « Apocryphes du Nouveau Testament », col. 510.

24 Brought to Edessa from India by a brother according to the *Ath.* Ephrem mentions in his *Caramina Nisibena* 42, 1-4 the translation of the body of the Apostle from India. We read there the lamentations of the Satan thus; "the Apostle whom I slew in India is before me in Edessa". According to Yousif this is the only authentic witness in Ephrem regarding the evangelization of India by Thomas. "To realize the importance of this work it is necessary to remember that this hymn was written in Edessa where Ephrem lived some time after 363 till his death in 373. The text, on the authenticity of which there can be no doubt, gives us the contemporary living tradition in Edessa on the relics of the Apostle and on his mission to India". See P. YOUSIF, "The Apostle Thomas in the Witness of Ephrem of Nisisbis", C. PAYNGOT, (ed.), *Homage to Mar Kariattil,Pioneer Malabar Ecumenist,* Mar Thoma Yogam, Rome, 1987, 79.

apostolate of St Thomas. So we need not feel astonished if a book written in Edessa deals with the mission of their apostle in another country. It also reveals to us that at the time of the composition of this apocryphal book, a certain tradition either written or oral of the mission of the apostle Thomas in India existed in and around Edessa. According to Klijn the *Ath* was written in a Jewish-Christian environment and at a time in which one cannot yet speak of a very well established Church.[25] Thus all these elements held together, we are enabled to believe that the *Ath* was written in Edessa sometime between 230 and 250 A.D..

1.1.3 Author

The question about the author of *Ath* still remains unanswered. As we have seen right above, the references of its use by Manicheans do not prove a Manichean origin of it. In the introduction to the *Acts of Thomas* of the Henneck-Schneemelcher edition we read thus,

> The Acts belong to the collection of Apocryphal acts whose author is said, from the fifth century on, to have been Leucius Charinus; a tradition which seems to be of Manichean origin; and may indeed hold good not for the composition but for the collecting together of these Acts[26].

We know that our *Acts* have been written well before the origin of the Manicheans. We may have to accept the statement of Ephrem concerning the disciples of Bardaisan that they are writing the apocryphal acts. See what L. Moraldi writes about the author of the *Ath*,

> He was not a refined Gnostic, he was not a Manichean (had died in 277) and not even a pure and simple follower of Bardesane (m.227); he is between the one and the other,

25 A.F.J. KLIJN, *Acts of Thomas*, 19-33.

26 E. HENNECK and W. SCHNEEMELHER, *New Testament Apocrypha*, translated from German by R.M. WILSON, Philadelpha, 1965, 427.

> and he was under the influence of Tazian (died at the end of the second century); ... although is not sure that these words refer to our work, S. Ephrem attests that the disciples of Bardaisan wrote Acts of Apostles; since the Acts of Thomas was written in Syria and there is no information about Acts in the same country, it cannot be denied that this father of the Church refers really to our Acts[27].

Thus we are in a position only to say by whom it was not written rather than by whom it was written. Some authors have opted for Bardaisan himself whereas others like Ephrem and Augustine attribute it to the disciples of Bardaisan. We may conclude that *Ath* in its original form was written in a very early period, as a manual of instructions for visitors to the shrine of the martyr whose remains had been brought to Edessa from India during the third century, in a wooden case by a Jewish Christian of Edessa[28]. That the body of Thomas was brought from India to Edessa is well attested by Ephrem who wrote from Edessa itself. The tradition regarding the evangelization of Parthia by Thomas was prevalent in the early times as attested by the writings of Clement and Origen. Northwest India was a part of the Parthian Empire of Gondophares in the first century. So it is logical that the author narrates the mission of Thomas to the North India. As Moraldi puts it,

> Si può pensare che il autore fosse interessato anzitutto a narrare l'apostolato di Tommaso nell'India occidentale dove il Cristianesimo è testimoniato fin dagli anni 295-300 e si comprende così il nome del re Gondaphoro nonché le diversità tra la prima e la seconda parte degli Atti[29].

The Gnostics, to propagate their principles, might have utilized this well-known source of the apostolate of Thomas in India to their advantage and the lament of Ephrem may be a reaction to this. But if our assumption that it was written first

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27 M. ERBETTA, *Gli Apocrypho del Nuovo Testamento*, 311.

28 ST GREGORY OF TOURS, *Libri Miraculorum* I, 32, (PL LXXI) col.733.

29 L. MORALDI, *Tutti gli Atti*, 311. Translation is by the auhtor.

as a manual for the pilgrims to the shrine of Thomas, it must have been written in an orthodox sense by an orthodox Christian of Edessa. And the texts that Egeria mentions in her journal must have been this prototype. But the *Ath* that we have in our possession is one that was manipulated by the Gnostics incorporating the various hymns to propagate their ideologies.

1.2 THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

There are different opinions among the scholars regarding the original language in which the *Ath* was first written. Many say it was syriac, whereas there is section of authors who hold the Greek as the original language. After analysing the various versions of the *Ath*, Klijn makes the following observation. It was originally composed in Syriac language and was translated into Greek several times. The early Syriac version was lost and the present Syriac version is a retranslation of the Greek. The contents of the book show that the Greek version goes back to a stage of the syriac version earlier than known from the syriac version available in the manuscripts. Though there are some deviations in the Syriac and Greek versions they do not differ much.[30]

M. R. James writes in the introduction of his edition of the *Acts* that there is a consensus of opinion among Syriac scholars that the Greek text of the *Ath* is a version from Syriac. He clarifies further that certain hymns occur in the Syriac which were undoubtedly composed in that language: most notable is the *Hymn of the Soul* which is not relevant to the context. It has been ascribed to Bardaisan the famous Syrian heretic. Only one Greek MS. of the *Acts* (the Vallicellian, at Rome, Bonnet's MS. U, of the eleventh century) contains it; it is paraphrased by Nicetas of Thessalonica in his Greek rechauffe of the *Acts*[31].

30 A.F.J. KLIJN, *Acts of Thomas*, 1-16.

31 M.R. JAMES, *The Apocryphal New Testament being the Apocryphal Gospel, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses with other writings and fragments newly translated*, Oxford, 1926.

Amman writes in his article on the apocryphal acts of the New Testament in *Dictionnaire de la Bible*,

> Les remarques de Macke, de Lipsius, et surtout de Burkitt semblent bien avoir démontre que le grec n'est pas l'original et que le récit a été compose originairement en syriaque[32].

The Syriac provenance of the work is deduced from various facts. It manifests various features of early Syrian Christianity such as the descent of Christ to Sheol (c.10), Christ as the Bridegroom and Incarnation as "putting on the body". It was the phrase 'put on the body' rather than 'put on the flesh', which was to become a standard term for the process of incarnation in the Syrian Christianity. In the earliest Syriac baptismal liturgy we find the pre-baptismal anointing traces of which can be seen in the *Acts of Thomas* (chapters 25-27, 132-133). The idea of the Holy Spirit as a mother, quite common in early Syrian theology and literature, occurs in the *Odes of Solomon*[33] and in the writings of Aphraates[34] and Ephrem. The *Ath* knows a Trinity, which consists of Father, Mother and Son, the Mother assuming the place of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the ascetic trends of Syriac Spirituality, are found in the *Ath*[35]. F. C. Burkitt[36] deduces this Syriac provenance from the following facts: mistranslations of syriac phrases into Greek (he quotes some nine of them), the name Judas Thomas and evidences from geography and proper names.

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32 E. AMMAN, « Apocryphes du Nouveau Testament », col. 510.

33 *Odes of Solomon* is a collection of forty-two short hymns in Syriac linked to the Psalms. Their date must be earlier than the time of Lactantius (3rd-4th centuries) who quotes them, but unorthodox imagery and indirect reference to Christ make them difficult to place. J. BOWKER, *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, Oxford, 1997, 912.

34 Aphraates was the earliest of the Syriac Church Fathers. He was a bishop in Persia during the persecution of Shapur II (310-379). His twenty-three *Demonstrations*, dated between 337 and 345, give a survey of the Christian faith. See John BOWKER, *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, 80.

35 S. BROCK, *Spirituality in the Syriac Tradition*, Kottayam 1989, 50-51.

36 F. C. BURKITT, "Original language of the Acts of Thomas", *JTS* 1(1900), 280.

The name 'Judas Thomas' of the apostle also would stand for a Syriac origin. The designation of the apostle Thomas as Judas Thomas is a feature mostly prevalent in Syriac provenance and Syriac literature. As H.J.W. Drijvers writes, "(the name Judas Thomas) is a phenomenon characteristic of and restricted to early syriac literature, occurring in the *Vetus Syria*, in the *Acts of Thomas*, in Ephrem Syrus, in the *Doctrine of Addai* and in Eusebius, where the Bishop of Caesaria gives a Greek translation of essential parts of the Agbar correspondence and Agbar legend"[37]. Farquahar, quoting six ancient sources, concludes thus, "these quotations make it clear that, at least from 140 all Edessen Christians called their Apostle 'Judas Thomas'"[38]. Burkitt assumes correctly that the Older Syriac Church was well aware that this name Thomas was an epithet[39]. So they used to add his real name before Thomas. The consideration of the apostle Thomas as the twin of Jesus also calls for a Syrian origin. There are many occasions in the *Ath* where the apostle is seen and described as the twin of the Lord. It was always in the works of the Syriac tradition that this twin-ship of Thomas is upheld. See how Moraldi writes on the issue of the original language of the *Ath*,

> Il testo originale degli *Atti di Tommaso* fu scritto in lingua siriaca; il testo giunto fino à noi non è l'originale, gli è tuttavia più vicino di tutte le versione; il testo fu tradotto in Greco più volte e dal Greco dipendono alcune antiche versioni, altre dal Siriaco; la versione Greca risala à un testo siriaco anteriore à quello à noi noto dai mss; perciò il

37 H. J.W. DRIJVERS, *East of Antioch. Studies in Early Syriac Literature*, London, 1984, 158.

38 J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The Apostle Thomas in North India*, BJRL, vol. X (1926) (This work is reproduced entirely in G. MENACHERY, *The Nazranis*, Ollur, 1998, and the instances we quote in this work are from this collection) . But we are not sure about the date (140 A.D.) he gives, because the date of the Sinai text given by scholars is the late second century.

39 F.C. BURKITT, " The Original Language of the Acts of Thomas", *JTS* 1 (1900), 288.

testo Greco non corrisponda pienamente al nostro testo siriaco"[40].

Thus what we understand from these observations is that the original language of the *Ath* was Syriac and from Syriac it was translated into Greek. Then at a later date it was retranslated into Syriac.

2 THE PERSON: THOMAS THE APOSTLE

We have so far seen the different traditions of the *Ath*. Now we come to the person itself of this apostle in the different literary stories and Church traditions. We are here confronted with a personality who is supposed to have different names and who had been held high in Syrian tradition as an apostle par excellence. In the traditions and early writings, besides the canonical scriptures, we have Thomas as the name of a central figure. But when we come to the early Syriac literature we have other names such as Judas, Jude, Judas Thomas. So our main task in this section would be to reconcile all these names.

2.1 THOMAS IN THE WRITINGS OF CHURCH FATHERS AND EARLY WRITERS

What does history speak about the Apostle Thomas? How was he known in history? A quick survey of the historical references about Thomas will bring to our notice that this apostle of Christ was known and spoken about all through the centuries. The great volume of literature that has been written about him and about the Churches that he is supposed to have established in Asia bears witness to the prominent place he held in history. A vast region of the world has been described by tradition as his field of mission. It seems that there existed a Thomas School of literature at Edessa from the early period of the Church where a large number of literature sprang up in

40 L. MORALDI, *Gli Atti apocryphi*, 397.

his name. All attributed to the Gnostic circle, these pieces of literature are nothing but ample testimonies to the position that he held in the ancient Church especially that of the Syrian East. The fact that they have survived even to our days, in spite of the heretic prefixes added to them, very well discloses the reverence and love this apostle evoked in the hearts of the Christians all over the world.

Now let us make a quick perusal of the historical references that we have of St Thomas the apostle in various literature all through the centuries. That he is a figure well attested in history will be established from these references that we have of him for centuries. Apart from the Bible we do not have any references of him in the first century. But when Churches began to be established on a national basis and the names of the apostles began to be added to them, the name of Thomas came to be mentioned with India or Parthia. And from that time onwards Thomas was always considered to be the Apostle of India. The following chart includes almost all the Fathers of the Church and early Christian writers who have spoken of Thomas connecting him with India.

2c.	Didascalia	Thomas evangelized India and the bordering countries. He wrote letters from India.
170	Heracleon	Thomas died a natural death.
210	Clemetine Recognitions	Thomas evangelized the Parthians.
251	Origen	Thomas evangelized the Parthians.
269	Hypolitus	He evangelised India and Parthia.
340	Eusebius	He evengelised Parthia.
373	Ephrem	Thomas was martyred in India; his relics are part in India and part at Edessa.

387	Gaudentius	Thomas died among the Indians.
389	Gregory of Nyssa	Thomas evangelised Mesopotamia.
389	Greogry of Naziansus	He evangelised India.
397	Ambrose	Thomas was martyred.
400	Asterius	Thomas was martyred.
407	John Chrysostom	Locality of the grave of Thomas was known to him.
410	Rufinus	Thomas evengelised Parthia; his relics are at Edessa.
420	Jerome	Thomas was in India.
431	Paulinos of Nola	Thomas was allotted India.
443	Sozomen	There is a church of Thomas at Edessa.
445	Socrates	Mentions the Church at Edessa.
594	Gregory of Tours	Thomas was martyred in India; relics were translated to Edessa; There existed then a famous church in India at the place where the body of the apostle was once buried.
636	Isidore of Sevilla	Thomas received India as Peter received Rome. He was martyred at Calamina in India.

All these references make it clear that the tradition about the mission of Thomas in India was in circulation both among the Western and Eastern Fathers of the Church. From the third century onwards it had become an undeniable and incontrovertible tradition and belief in the Christian world that Thomas preached in India. And these Fathers and early writers had no doubt that the Thomas they speak about was the apostle who declared for the first time in history that his master was the Lord and God. We may infer from these testimonies of the Fathers a special feature. There is a group of writers who speak about the mission of the apostle to Parthia and another group

who says that the field of mission of the apostle is India. We may classify these under two different traditions: Alexandrian and Edessan. It is Origen who for the first time speaks of Parthia as the mission field of the apostle. All those who were under the Alexandrian tradition followed suit[41]. But the Edessan tradition connects the mission of Thomas with India. This India means also the South India. The tradition in the *Ath* might be considered in connection with this Edesian story of which Ephrem is the chief protagonist. But in any case, we know from the ancient history of India that the North western parts of India had formed part of the Parthian Empire in the first century of our era.

2.2 THE REAL NAME OF THOMAS

The name Thomas comes from the Aramaic word *toma*, which means twin that the Greeks transcribed as Thomas and translated as Didymos[42] . There is evidence in the earliest Syriac Christian texts that the Church of Edessa called the twin apostle "Judas Thomas"[43]. In the fourth gospel the name of Thomas is three times followed by the Greek name Didymus, obviously the name by which he was known by Greek-speaking Christians[44]. "Thomas" in Aramaic and Hebrew seems to be an epithet meaning simply "twin", not a personal name[45] . The expression *Τομασ ο λεγεμενοσ Διδψμοσ* added to the name

41 See E.R. HAMBEY, "St Thomas and India", *The Clergy Monthly*, 16 (1952), 366.

42 W.F. ARNDT and F.W. GINGRICH, *Greek English lexicon of the New Testament and the Early Christian Literature*, Cambridge, 1957, 191.

43 "The theory was early formed, perhaps, in the Syriac speaking Churches, that Thomas was the twin of Jesus himself, and was to be identified with Judas". C.K. BARRETT, *The Gospel According to St John*, London, 1956, 327. These earliest Syrian texts include the works of Thomas literature, the Doctrine of the Apostles, the correspondence between Jesus and King Agbar etc. All these texts give the apostle's name as Judas Thomas.

44 E.P. BLAIR, " Thomas", *Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, 62.

45 "Although ancient literature refers to him simply as Thomas, the central component of the apostle's name is Jude (or Judas, for the two names are different English

Thomas in the gospel of John (11:16; 20:24; 21:25) is a clear indication that the author was quite aware that 'Thomas' was not a proper name but only meant twin[46]. There is hardly any evidence of its use as a proper name in pre-Christian Greek, Aramaic or Hebrew. The name Thomas is not original Greek and it must be considered as one of the many foreign words taken over by the Greek speaking Church from the Aramaic speaking Church.

In John 14:22 the Greek text reads *Judas, not Iscariot*; but the earliest Syriac version, viz., the Sinai Palimpsest (Syr^{r})[47], reads instead of these three words simply, "Thomas." How are we to explain the variation? We do not know if the author of the Gospel was thinking of Thomas at this particular point; for he invariably refers to him as "Thomas" or "Thomas who is called Didymus," and to have called him "Judas" in a single instance would have seriously confused his readers. But the translator of the Syr^{r} had been trained under the influence of Edessa, and had therefore known all his life that the twin's name was Judas; and, concluding that he was the Judas referred to in John 14:22, he took the simplest way of indicating the Apostle by calling him "Thomas"[48]. The Sinai Palimpsest is the earliest of all Syriac Christian extant texts. Thus in the earliest piece of literature in which we hear the voice of

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translations of the same Greek form)". B. LAYTON, *The Gnostic Scripture*, London, 1987, 359.

46 In the Story of Abdias we read: " La fede evangelica narra che il beato Tomaso con gli altri discepoli fu scelto all'ufficio dell'apostolato e fu chiamato dal Signore Didimo, che vuol dire gemello". L. MORALDI, *Gli Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento*, Torino, 1971,1577. So according to this story the surname Didymus was given to this apostle by Jesus himself as Simon was given the name Peter. But we do not have any reference to this in the Bible or in any other tradition.

47 One of the oldest Syriac versions of the four Gospels. It was a Palimpsest manuscript which Mrs Agnes Smith Lewis discovered in the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai in 1892. B.M. METZGER, *The Text of the New Testament, its transmission, corruption and restoration*, Oxford, 1868, 69.

48 J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The Apostle Thomas in North India*, 316.

Christian Edessa, we have explicit evidence that the Church had a special interest in Thomas and believed that his personal name was Judas. In the same passage in the fourth Gospel, the Curetonian Syriac text (Syr^{c})[49], which is believed by scholars to be about fifty years later than the Sinai Palimpsest, reads "Judas Thomas"[50]. *The Doctrine of Addai*, the original text of which was probably written about A.D. 200, calls the twin Judas Thomas[51]. This work is completely independent of the *Ath.* The *Doctrine of the Apostles*, a syriac document of the third century also calls him Judas Thomas[52]. Eusebius, when telling the story of Addai, who was also called Thaddeus, writes, "to these epistles (i.e. Syriac mss. in Edessa) there was added the following account in the Syriac language, *after the ascension of Jesus, Judas, who was also called Thomas, sent them Thaddeus, an apostle, one of the Seventy*"[53]. Ephrem the Syrian, the greatest Christian scholar of the Syriac-speaking lands in the fourth century, in one of his numerous metrical works, quotes John 20:24, and instead of Thomas reads Judas Thomas.[54]

Thus it is clear that at least from the close of the second century all Edessan Christians called their Apostle "Judas

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49 The second of the oldest Syriac versions of the Gospels, a parchment manuscript now in British Museum, written in a clear and beautiful Estrangela hand; it was edited by William Cureton in 1858. B.M. METZGER, *The Text of the New Testament*, 69. Though these two are copied in and about 4th or 5th centuries respectively, "the form of the text which they preserve dates from the close of the second or the beginning of the third century".

50 J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The apostle Thomas in North India*, 318.

51 Stories and legends belonging to the 3rd century A.D. which narrates the evangelisation of Edessa by Addai, one of the 72 disciples of Jesus. See *DEOC*, 10.

52 W. CURETON (tr. & ed.), *Ancient Syriac Documents, Related to the Earliest Establishment of Christianity in Edessa and the Neighbouring countries, from the Year after Our Lord's Ascension to the Beginning of the Fourth Century*, London, 1864, 32- 34.

53 EUSEBIUS, *H. E.* I, 13, 11.

54 All these arguments are taken from the article J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The Apostle Thomas in North India*, 320.

Thomas." Nowhere else in early Christian circles is his personal name known as Judas. A careful analysis of the use of the name 'Judas Thomas' in various Syrian texts suggests that, in addition to Judas Iscariot, there was a disciple of Jesus whose actual name was 'Judas'. In order to differentiate him from Judas Iscariot, the nick name 'Thomas' or 'twin' was appended to Judas probably at an early date. The presence of the disciple's actual name in Jn 14:22 probably suggests that the Johannine author or redactor was familiar with the early tradition that there was an apostle named Judas.

We may speak of a two-staged development of the name of Thomas in John: an earliest stage when the disciple was known by his actual name 'Judas', and a later stage where the disciple was beginning to be known by his epithet 'twin' or 'Thomas'. This indicates that the Johannine author was familiar with the early Syrian Thomasian traditions and had some type of eontact with the Thomasian community. A similar type of development in the name of Thomas is manifest in the *Ath*. In the oldest known Syriac texts of the *Ath*, of which only a fragmentary manuscript of the 5th or 6th century is in existence, the leading character is called Judas, but this was later altered to Thomas[55]. Both the Greek and Syriac texts say that Judas is the twin, *toma* of Jesus. This means that in places where in Syriac an apostle with the name *ihuda toma* is referred the second word has to be taken as an epithet. The epithet was also understood as a proper name at an early date. This seems to be certain in cases where a Syriac text with such a name has been translated into Greek. In these instances the translation is like

55 A.F.J. KLIJN, *The Gospel According to St John*, vol. I, New York, 1968, 152. « Il faut noter qu'en quelques endroits une main tardive a corrige L en substituant Thomas a Judas, sans doute pour en harmoniser le texte a l'usage préfère par le correcteur ». « Actes de Thomas », P.H. POIRIER and Y. TISSOT in *Ecrits apocryphes chrétiens* I, 1331.

Iudas o kai Thomas[56]. In the *Ath* we notice the occurrence of three names, Judas, Judas Thomas, and Thomas. In the list of the apostles given at the beginning of the *Ath* he is simply Thomas as it is in the synoptic Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. In ordinary narrative of the story of the *Ath* he is Judas. But when the author speaks about the deal between Jesus and Haban and sealing the bill, his name becomes Judas Thomas[57]. Thus the author's preference for Judas indicates that he deemed it his proper name and thus his legal name, while Thomas was the epithet given by the Lord to the disciple who most resembled him in appearance and asceticism[58]. And by using all these three names for the same person in the same text the author of the *Ath* seems to tell that these are the names of one and the same person and his readers are well aware of it.

So we have to say that the Thomasian community knew the name of the apostle was Judas from whom author of the Johannine tradition got it. How could they know this original name? They could have known it only from the apostle himself. Farquahar would suggest that a letter containing the double name, written by the Apostle himself, and sent by him to the Church in Edessa, is the one natural and sufficient explanation[59]. To support this suggestion there is mention in the third century *Doctrine of the Apostles* that Thomas might have sent letters from India and these letters had been read in the liturgical services[60].

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56 "To these epistles there was added the following account in the Syriac language. "After the ascension of Jesus, *Judas, who was also called Thomas*, sent to him Thaddeus, an apostle, one of the Seventy. When he was come he lodged with Tobias, the son of Tobias". EUSEBIUS, *H. E.* I, 13, 11.

57 *Ath* 1.

58 J.J. GUNTHER, "The meaning and origin of the name Judas Thomas", 124.

59 J.N. FARQUAHAR, "The Apostle Thomas in North India", 318.

60 "After the death of the apostles there were guides and rulers in the Churches, and whatever the Apostles had committed to them, and they have received from them, they taught to the multitudes all the times of their lives. They again at their deaths

The 'Thomas' of the synoptic Gospels and the 'Thomas Didymos' of John and the 'Judas Thomas' of the Syriac tradition becomes Thomas the apostle of India in the Fathers of the Church and early Christian writers. It is almost the unanimous opinion of the Fathers that Thomas preached the Gospel in India and suffered martyrdom there. The table we have made in one of the previous pages clarifies how the Fathers have understood Thomas to be the Apostle of India. This Thomas cannot be none other than the Judas Thomas of the Syrian literature, as all these literature narrates the mission of Judas Thomas in India.

A careful study of the various Thomas literature and the writings about Thomas will bring to our notice an uninterrupted continuity from the Thomasian community to the later authors. Even the Johannine tradition has its links and liaison with the Thomasian Syrian Christianity[61]. The *Gospel of Thomas* is the first of those Thomasian literary tradition and in it Thomas is represented as a mere recipient and guarantor of Jesus' secret sayings. But when we come to the *Book of Thomas*, Thomas slowly becomes the interlocutor of the dialogue, but he is not yet the central character. In the *Acts of Thomas* the apostle holds the central stage. Similarly, the trajectory of literary genres conveying the Judas Thomas tradition moves from a collection of sayings to a dialogue and to a romance.

We may also notice that the Thomas tradition developed on two tracks: On one, Thomas the Wanderer is the legendary founder of churches, any distinctive doctrine being secondary

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also committed and delivered to their disciples after everything which they had received from the apostles.... Also what James had written from Jerusalem, and Simon from the city of Rome, and John from Ephesus, and Mark from the Great Alexandria, and Andrew from Phrygia, and Luke from Macedonia, and *Judas Thomas from India*.... That these epistles of an Apostle might be received and read in the Churches, in every place, like those triumphs of their Acts which Luke wrote, are read..."W. CURETON (tr. & ed.), *Ancient Syriac Documents,* 32- 34.

61 R. SCHNACKENBERG, *The Gospel According to St John*, vol. I, New York, 1968,152.

to the prestige his apostolic name conferred on ecclesiastical organizations and to the political advantage of having a founder different from the one favoured in the Roman world[62]; on the other track, that of Thomas the Knower (the tradition that disappeared for sixteen centuries), it is the mystical message, delivered through Thomas as the words of an inspired sage, that predominates. Perhaps the two roads started from the same point in the early years. But in the line of tradition as Thomas the knower there is no mention of the mission of Thomas in different countries. In the same way in the tradition of Thomas as the founder of the Churches there is no mention of any doctrinal aspects. Thus both of them seems to have grown and developed independently. Thomas as seeker of knowledge must have originated in Mesopotamia. But Thomas, the founder of the Churches, might have had its origin in India.

3 THE PLACE: INDIA OF ACTS OF THOMAS AND TRADITIONS

So far we have seen the different traditions about the mission of Thomas in India. We have postulated that the hero of the *Ath* and the hero of the popular traditions is Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus who is surnamed Didimos in the Gospel according to John. Now what remains to be seen in this first chapter is whether the India of the *Ath* and other written stories represents the actual India. There is an opinion among the writers that in the early centuries of our era the term India had signified different countries. Or in other words, when ancient authors speak of India, we are not sure to which country they refer. There seems to be confusion among these writers when they use the term India. The theme of our present work

62 This fact we may particularly notice in respect to the Nestorian Church. Their claim to apostolicity from Thomas may be rightly called an attempt to distinguish themselves from the Church of the West which claims their origin from the apostle Peter.

is the mission of Thomas to India and therefore we have to verify in the first place whether the India that the *Ath* speaks of is the actual India of our times. First of all we must remember that we are dealing with a time when India as a geographical unit was far vaster than its present outlines.

3.1 ORIGIN OF THE TERM INDIA

In the early classical literature of the West, India was usually thought to be a country lying between two great rivers Indus and Ganges. The name India comes from the name of the river that marks the western boundary of the country, the Indus. In Greek the country is known as Ἰνδια The Greeks talked of the Indus and the Indians. In Hebrew it is *hoddu*. The Aramaic is *henda*. The Syriac is *Hendo*. In Latin it is *India*. The Persian is *Hind*. This name India is derived from Indus, the river. The Sanskrit word for this river is *Sindhu* and this word means sea. Hindu names reaching the West generally drop the *s* and substitute *h* in Persian mouths. The Persians softened the initial *s* to *h*. Thus the avesta word is Hindu. The Ionians having no aspirate made the word into Ινδος and the Indians were called Ινδοι. The word reached Greece through Persia. So *Sindhu* became *hindu* in the Persian writings[63]. And when it reached the Greeks it became *Indus* and the country became India. The ancient Indians knew their sub-continent as *Jambudvipa* (the continent of the Jambu tree) or *Bharatavarsha*, the land of the sons of Bharata, a legendary emperor)[64]. The original Indian term had always been *Bharatvarsha*, the land

63 See RAWLINSON, *Intercourse Between India and the Western World from the Earliest Times to the Fall of Rome*, Cambridge, 1916, 20.

64 Indian cosmology describes the earth as a flat disc of enormous size. In its centre was mount Meru, around which sun, moon, and stars revolved. Around Meru were four continents separated from the central peak by oceans, and named according to the great trees which stood on their shores opposite Meru. The southern continent, on which human beings dwell, had a jumbu (rose-apple) as its distinctive tree, and it was therefore called *Jambudvipa*. The southern zone of this sub-continent, separated from the rest by the Himalayas, "the land of the sons of Bharata", or India. See A.L. BASHAN, *The Wonder That was India*, New Delhi, 2000 (1954), 488- 589.

of *Bharata*. It is probable that the Persian and Mesopotamian writers gave to the region east of the river Hindus the name Hind which later became India by taking away the initial H as in Greek language[65]. Later, with the Muslim invasion of the country, India came to be known as Hindustan.

3.2 INDIA OF CLASSICAL PERIOD

There is a wide spread opinion among scholars that the ancient people had a distorted image of India and that they had no accurate knowledge where India lied[66]. It is true to a certain extent. But at the same time India was not *a terra ignota* in the western world. All the classical writers mention India and they show that they were well aware of the country, its people and its richness. India is mentioned in Homer[67] and Herodotes. Herodotus speaks of the conquest of some parts of India by Darius I[68]. He also mentions the Indians in the Persian army. In the Bible there is mention that king Solomon got gold, silver, apes and peacocks from India[69]. The campaign of Alexander

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65 See A. DHILE, " Concept of India in Hellenistic and Roman literature", in *Antike und Orient, Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Heidelberg, Carlwinter- Universitätsverlag, 1984, 89-97.

66 Numerous fabulous stories about India were widespread in the West – these stories about curious tales of plants, animals and men of India. Indians did not suffer from headaches, toothaches, sores or ulcers. Their span of life was imagined to be 120-200 years. See Ktesias the Knidian, *Ancient India* (tr. and ed.) by J.W. MCCCRINDLE, Calcutta-London, 1882, 8-81.

67 It is said that Homer's "righteous Ethiopians of the East" meant Indians. There are references to India in both *Odessey* and *Illiad*. Cf. K. MAZUMDAR, *Early Hindu India*, New Delhi, 1981, 30.

68 According to Herodotus Sind was annexed by Darius. "A great part of Asia was explored under the direction of Darius. He being desirous to know in what part the Indus, which is the second river that produces crocodiles, discharges itself into sea, sent in ships.... They accordingly setting out from the city of Caspartyrus and the country of Pactyice sailed down the rivers towards the east and sunrise to the sea.... After these persons had sailed down, Darius subdued the Indians and frequented this sea". HERODOTUS, *Histories*, 4, 44.

69 I Kings 9:26 – 10:22. The place Ophir mentioned here is supposed to be in India. This place, called Ophir in Hebrew, Swfeira or Swfara in Greek, has been identified with Sopara, a port 36 miles from Bombay, in India. (A. L. BASHAN, *The Wonder that was India*, 230. Mazumdar tells that the form of the word suggests that "*Ophir*

the great to India had really opened new and enduring relations between India and the West. A great army of Macedonians and Greeks made a major campaign of nearly two years in North-Western India, and the staff included several scientifically and literally oriented men[70]. This campaign of Alexander the Great and the successive accounts of his companions about the fabulous wealth of India had opened the eyes of the West towards India[71].

There were people who had acquired a great knowledge about India. The author of the *Periplus*[72], Ptolemy[73], Strabo[74],

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= *Sophira* or *Sophara* was Sanskrit, Sauvara – a sea-board tract between Sindh and Gujarat. The mention of Barygaza, modern Broach, Sanskrit Bhrigu-kachcha, in the same commercial period suggests that these western parts of India were in direct commercial contact with the west". K. MAZUMDAR, *Early Hindu India*, 33. Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian, had already in the first century A.D., written that Swfara lies in India. See *Jewish Antiquities* 8, H.J. TACKERAY and R. MARCUS, eds, London, 1966, 164. In addition, it is said that the Indian names for apes and peacocks are used in the Hebrew Bible. Apes in Hebrew is "kop"; in Sanskrit and old Malayalam it is "kapi". The name for peacock in ancient Tamil is "tokei", and in Hebrew Bible it is "tuki". K. MAZUMDAR, *Early Hindu India*, 33.

70 In B.C. 326 Alexander the Great with his army crossed the river Indus, the eastern boundary of the Persian empire, and entered India. He defeated many petty chiefs and kings of the neighbouring localities and tactically defeated the powerful Poros. But though Alexander wanted to conquer the vast extent of the country he had to be content with the conquest of Punjab as the weird and tired troops refused to advance more. Cf. V.A. SMITH, *Early History of India*, 109-110.

71 These well informed writers gave to the western world a conception of India approximating the truth on points of such importance as her relative position to other countries and her physical features. But, unfortunately not a single volume of this early literature about Alexander's campaign has been preserved wholly intact, we have to content ourselves with fragments.

72 *Periplus of the Erythrean* sea is an ancient account of the sea voyage to India and the neighbouring countries. It is written by an unknown author and the date is not definitely known, but is placed some time between AD 60 and 80. The Erithrean sea is to the author, the whole of Red sea and the present Indian Ocean. This is perhaps the first integral account of the sea voyage to the Indian subcontinent from the coasts of Arabia. It is the first record of organised trading with the nations of the East, in vessels built and commanded by subjects of western world. The book is originally written in Greek. Many translations and editions have been so far published. In our work we follow the English translation edited by Wilfred H. SCHOFF, *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, Travel and trade in the Indian Ocean by a Merchant of the First Century*, Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1995. Some other important editions and translations are: W. VINCENT, *The Commerce and Navigation of the*

Pliny[75] had studied this region very well and their information about India was almost accurate. The Greco-Roman concept of India seems to be far more accurate than what we have hitherto believed[76]. The classical authors knew India and the places in the region well. But it may be noted at the same time that this knowledge was perhaps restricted to merchants, navigators and other specialists. Even moderately well informed Greeks and Romans had only vague notions about India[77]. When they refer to it, it is not at all certain whether they mean India proper, Persia, Arabia Felix or Ethiopia. We may note here that the ancient geographer had a completely different picture of the world, and according to his maps, India, Persia, Arabia Felix and Ethiopia[78] all looked more or less due east of the Roman Empire. This will become clear when we see the map of the world according to the geographical description of Strabo.

Ancients in the Indian Ocean, 2 vols, London, Cadell and Davies, 1807. Vol. II is *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* ; J.W. McCRINDLE, *The Commerce and Navigation of the Erythrean Sea*, Calcutta, 1879.

73 The Goegraphy of Ptolemy was published around 170 A.D.

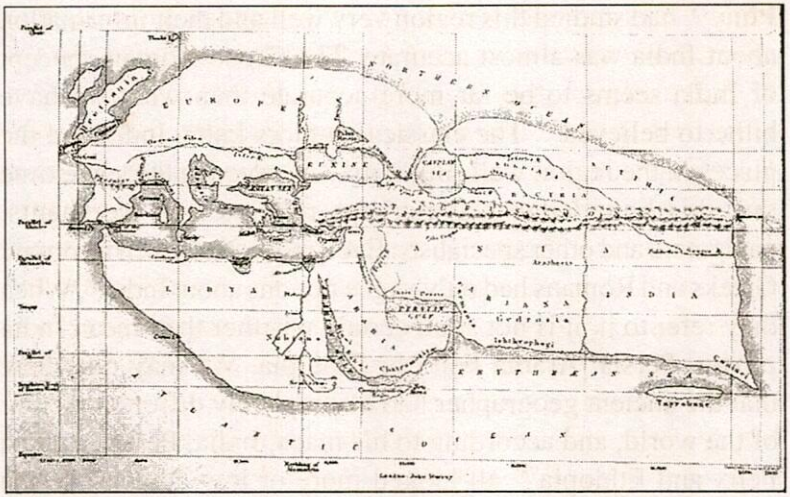
74 The description of the geography of India can be read in J.W. McCRINDLE, *Ancient India described in Classical Literature*, Westminster, 1901. See also *Geography of Strabo*, literally translated with notes by H.C. HAMILTON and W. FALCONES, London, 1857.

75 Pliny's natural History is believed to have been published in A.D. 77.

76 A.C. PERUMALIL, *The Apostles of India*, Patna, 1971. Rooney gives a map of India in which he tries to explain the India as known to the Greek and Roman world. See J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, Rawalpindi, 1984, 13. This maps depends on the information provided by Perumalil.

77 Cf. J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, 13.

78 It will be interesting to note how Reinaud has tried to explain this discrepancy of the terms. "On a vu que certains articles de commerce, tells que l'ivoire, étaient communs a l'Ethiopie et a l'Inde. Ajoutez à cette circonstance qu'avec le temps, ainsi qu'on le verra dans le paragraphe suivante, les Romains, au lieu de continuer a s'approvisionner dans l'Inde même, trouvèrent plus commode d'aller acheter les produits de l'Inde dans les ports de l'Abyssinie ; il arriva de la que le nom de l'Inde se confondit avec celui de l'Ethiopie". M. REINAUD, *Relations politiques de l'Empire romain avec l'Asie orientale*, Osnabruck, 1966, 176.



So there may be a general confusion when the Greek and Roman writers speak of India that we may not be sure of which country they speak[79]. But at the same time we cannot say that they had no clear idea of India. There had been well travelled trade routes to India and frequent embassies had been sent from India to Rome. Again the vast quantity of Roman coins discovered in India, especially in South India, makes it clear that there had been a Roman colony stationed there[80] and there had been a temple dedicated to emperor Augustus at Kodungallur.

But at the same time we have to maintain that the oriental writers in general do not share this confusion. While the term

79 "A difficult point with which a student of Indian history should be acquainted in his researches in the writings of the early authors is the elasticity of the term "India", and the confusion made through it between the real India of our day and the countries situated on both shores of the red sea, viz. those of the Ethiopians and the Himyarites. Many mistakes done by some ecclesiastical writers of the West can be traced to this confusion". A. MINGANA, "Early Spread of Christianity in India", *BJRL*, 443.

80 At Arickamedu in Tamil Nadu extensive excavations had been made and a Roman trade centre had been unearthed. See R.E.M. WHEELER, "Arikamedu: an Indo-Roman trading station on the East coast of India", *Ancient India. Bulletin of the Archaeological survey of India*, vol..2 (1946).

India always applied to India proper, the countries to designate which some western writers have used the term, had always their distinctive names. Thus Ethiopia, known to the Western world by that name, was to the oriental and in the Bible Kush; Abyssinia unknown and unnamed before Augustus, when it came to be first known to the Greek and Romans as Auxum while to the neighbouring Arabs it was Habesh; Southern Arabia known in the Bible as Saba or Sheba and later to the Orientals as Yemen, was known to the Romans and Greeks as the land of Homoritae[81] . But India, because of its name derived from the great river forming its western boundary, the Hindus, whence Indus, has ever retained her name unchanged among all nations. It was in consequence impossible to designate India by any other name. When the oriental writers spoke about India they were sure which country they had in mind. If at times a western writer wrongly applied the name India, this was not the case with the Orientals, such as Arabs, Syrians, Persians, and Mesopotamians generally. They were by commerce too closely connected with India long before the rise of the Roman Empire, not to know exactly to which country the name applied. Every oriental writer is aware of this settled use of the name India in the East[82].

In the classical writings we read different concepts of India. It speaks of Major India, and Minor India. There is also a third India. In another distinction we see superior and inferior India. There is also a mention of ulterior and citerior India. Appellations of Major India and Minor India have been variously explained. The India major could be the big Indian Peninsula and the minor the Indus Basin in contact and

81 But at the same time there are some confusions even among the Oriental writers regarding the Indians. See A. MINGANA, "The Early spread of Christianity", 443-445. But this confusion of which Mingana speaks is not concerned with the country, but the 'Indians' as a race.

82 A.E. MEDLEYCOTT, " Letter to the editor", 166.

sometimes in war with Iranians. William Logan holds the view that India major extended from Malabar indefinitely eastwards. India minor embraced the Western coasts of India as far as, but not inclusively Malabar and probably Sind and possibly the Mekran Coast. India tertia was Zanzibar in Africa[83]. Megasthenes defined the boundaries of India thus :

> India, which is in shape quadrilateral, has its eastern as well as its southern side bounded by the great sea, but on the northern side it is divided by Mount Hemdos from that part of Skythia which is inhabited by those Skythians who are called the Sakai, while the fourth or western side is bounded by the river called Indus, which is perhaps the largest of all rivers in the world after the Nile[84].

Pliny defines the boundaries of India in the following way:

> Where the chain of Hemodus rises, the communities are settled, and the nations of India, which begin there, adjoin not only the eastern sea, but also the southern, which we have already mentioned under the name of the Indian Ocean. That part which faces the east runs in a straight line to the bend where the Indian Ocean begins, and measures 1875 miles. Then from this bend to the north up to the river Indus, which forms the western boundary of India, the distance as given by Eratosthenes, is 2475 miles.[85]

Arrian defines the Indian boundaries in the following way:

> Now the countries which lie to the east of the Indus I take to be India proper, and the people who inhabit them to be Indians. The northern boundaries of India so defined are formed by mount Tauros, though the range does not retain that name in these parts... On the west the boundaries of

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83 W. LOGAN, *Malabar*, vol.1, Delhi, 1989, 202.

84 J.W. MCCRINDLE, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, 30.

85 *Natural History*, 6, 17, 21.

> India are marked by the river Indus all the way to the great ocean into which it pours its waters, which it does by two mouths ... . On the south west, again and on the south, India is bounded by the great ocean just mentioned, which also forms its boundary on the East.[86]

All these make the river Indus the beginning of India. India proper begins with Indus; that is clear for all classical writers. Beyond that there seems to be some confusions among them. From the time of Alexander the Great this conception of India as the country beyond Indus was prevalent in the West. But the actual extent of India was perhaps conjectural and often made from hearsay.

3.3 INDIA OF THE ACTS OF THOMAS

In the first act of the *Ath* the author tells us of the destination of the apostle Thomas. It is India. But is it the actual India that is meant here? This is the question that we have to answer before we enter upon any further thesis on the mission of Thomas. In the beginning of the *Ath* we have this information that while all the apostles were at Jerusalem[87], they cast lots to decide upon the territories that they should evangelise[88].

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86 ARRIAN, *Indica*, 1, 2. J.W. MCCRINDLE, *Ancient India as described by Megasthnes and Ariran*, 181-182.

87 The author also gives a list of the Apostles who were present at Jerusalem. The list correspond exactly to that of the sinaitic syriac version of the Bible. It may be that the author simply supposes a gathering of the Apostles at Jerusalem to decide upon continuing the mission of Jesus so as to render credibility to the account that he is going to narrate in the successive pages.

88 This idea of the division of the world among the Apostles may go back to the New Testament (cf. Mt 28, 19; Acts 1, 8). According to Lipsius, what he calls "Die Legende von der Apostelteilung" may go back to the second century. (A.R. LIPSIUS, *Apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden*, vol. I, Amsterdam, 1976, 11-34). But there is no way to determine whether there existed a fixed tradition in all the apocryphal acts similar to the one we find in the *Acts of Thomas*. (The beginnings of the Apocryphal acts of Peter, John and Andrew are lost). Kaestli writes, " L'existence d'une tradition ancienne et cohérente sur la répartition des champs de mission ne trouve aucun appui dans les Actes apocryphes". J.D. KAESTLI, " Les scènes d'attribution des champs de mission et de départ de l'apôtre dans les Actes apocryphes", in F. BOVON et al., *Les Actes apocryphes des Apôtres*, Genève, 1981, 264.

According to the lot, Thomas received India. He did not want to go to India, as it was the land of barbarians. Then there comes a man, a merchant of the king of India named Gondophares. The word India is used at least three times there. Again we see the word in the next act when the apostle had left the first city and it is described that the king and the people heard about the mission of the Apostle in the city of India and they all went and joined the apostle there.

Let us make an effort to understand what could the Syrian authors in the third century A.D. mean when they write 'India'. Could they mean something else other than the present India? "Pliny informs us that many indeed do not reckon the Indus to be the western boundary of India, but include in that term also four Satrapies on the side of the river, which, in the language of modern geography, correspond to Beloochistan, Kandahar, Herat and Kabul"[89]. It may be added that it is in this sense of 'India west of Indus' that the name is used in Bible; and it is in this sense that St Thomas' India is to be understood"[90]. We read in the *Ath* that Haban was sent by Gondophares, king of India. The merchant came from the East[91]. To an author writing in Persia, the region behind the river Indus lay in the East. This eastern part of the Indus formed also part of Persian Empire. For many authors the whole region east of the river Indus was India.

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89 The countries mentioned by Pliny are Gedrosia, Arachotae, Arii, and Paropamisadae. J.W. MCCRINDLE, *Ancient India described by Megasthanes and Arrian*, 151-152.

90 M. RAE, *The Syrian Church*. 58. In this quotation, we think, a better reading would be India of the Acts of Thomas.

91 Did he come from the East or did Thomas meet the merchant in the East? "Le texte est d'ailleurs curieux, car on attendrait plutôt "de la région du Midi (here the text is « dans le région du midi »), mais on relèvera que le grec précise au même endroit, 3 lignes plus loin, que le Seigneur voit le marchand se promener «sur l'agora a midi », alors que le syriaque dit simplement 'sur le route'" . « Actes de Thomas », by P.H. POIRIER et Yves TISSOT in *Ecrits apocryphes chrétiens* I, Edition publie sous la direction de F. BOVON et P. GEOLTRAIN, index établie par S. J. VOICU, Gallimard, Paris, 1997, 1325.

Let us make a comparative study of the different versions of the story of Thomas to understand how the various authors of diverse traditions have framed the accounts. In the Syriac and Greek versions of the *Ath* Thomas went to the king of India Gondophares and on the way he disembarked in a royal port and after making there some conversions made his way towards the city of India. In the Armenian version we read, "hardly had Jesus heard this, then a merchant happened to be there; he came from India and his name was Abenes: the king of the India Gundaphor had sent him and had prescribed him to bring him a carpenter and a skilled stonecutter."[92] This is almost like the Syriac and Greek versions. The merchant came from India and the king of India, Gondophares, had sent him. The first port they disembarked was, in one of the stories, Sandrok and Senkhrokh[93]. In another version of the story, it is simply told; "when they crossed over to the other side they entered a city"[94]. This 'crossing over to the other side' surely implies a city in India. In the Latin version of the story of Thomas *De Miraculis* we read, *Igitur cum Saepe a Domino commoneretur, ut diximus, beatus Thomas ut partes citeriores Indiae visitaret*[95] . Here according to this author, Thomas is asked to visit the regions of citerior India. The Latin text says *partes citeriores Indiae,* which means the citerior parts of India and not the citerior India in the sense of another India. Here it is clear that Thomas is asked to visit the citerior parts of India. It consists of the present Gujarat coasts of Western India. Then about the voyage and the arrival at the first city of India the author writes thus, *Quod cum negotiator fecisset, apprehensum sanctum Thomas deduxit ad nauem suam et ascendetes mense*

92 D.L. LELOIR, *Ecrits apocryphes*, 598.

93 D.L. LELOIR, *Ecrits apocryphes*, 598.

94 D.L. LELOIR, *Ecrits apocryphes*, 550.

95 J. ANDRE and A. FILLIOZAT, *L'Inde vue de Rome*, 207.

tertio in Indiam citeriorem erecti sunt[96]. It just tells that they arrived in the citerior India in the third month[97]. Now let us go further. Of the Apostle's going away from the citerior India we read, *Et requirentes beatum apostolum non invenerunt, iam enim cum negotiatore ad* ***ulteriores Indiae partes*** *processerat...*[98]. Here also we note the expression *ulteriores Indiae partes,* the ulterior regions of India. Thus the author of the *De Miraculis* tells us that the first city was in the citerior parts of India and the second city was then in the ulterior parts of India. Again in the story of Abdias about going to this city of India we read: "In fact he had proceeded with the merchant towards far away region of India"[99]. So according to Abdias who recalls the story from memory the apostle had gone to the farther regions of India.

Sylvian Levy writes:

> It is plain that superior India means the most remote part of India. We may compare the expressions Germania superior, Maesia superior, in which the word Superior marks province situated furthest up in going up the course of a river. In the same way, India superior should designate the upper basin of the Indus (of course in India), in opposition to the lower course of the river, where there was India citerior, with prima Indiae civitas and India ulterior with the kingdom of Gondophares[100].

And the French author of the collection *L'Inde vue de Rome* comments on a passage that speaks about ulterior India:

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96 J. ANDRE and A. FILLIOZAT *L'Inde vue de Rome*, 207.

97 According to *De Miraculis*, the Apostle and the merchant begin their journey from Cesaria. From Cesaria they "crossed over to the other side" and reached the citerior parts of India.

98 J. ANDRE and A. FILLIOZAT *L'Inde vue de Rome*, p. 207.

99 L. MORALDI, *Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento*, p. 1581.

100 S. LEVY, "Notes sur les Indo-Scythians", Extracted and rendered into English by W. R. PHILIPPS, *I. A.* XXXIII (1904), p. 14.

> India designated here as "ulterior" is in relation to India said etymologically by its appearance to the basin of the Sindhu or Undue and making part today of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Punjab. It was traditional, since Eratosthenus in all cases, (Strabon 15,1,11) to make Indus the western limit of India (cfr as Pline, 6,56; Arrien, 2,1) and it is this India delimited by Eratosthenus that is called here "ulterior." The northern limit is, for all authors, the chain of mountains variously named. The oriental is oceanic and corresponds to the Gulf of Bengal[101].

Therefore, it becomes clear that the ulterior India is that part of India that borders on the west the river Indus and it includes Afghanistan, Pakistan and Punjab. And the historical and archaeological studies have proved that it is in this part of India that the city of the 'king of India', Gondophares was situated. So, if Thomas was sent by the Lord to the city of the 'king of India', Gondophares, it must have been this North West region of India that the author of the *Ath* must have meant when he wrote that the apostle went to India.

As we have said earlier, in the literature of the late antiquity of 3rd and 4th centuries of our era one is likely to discover different concepts of India. In literary texts (not in scientific), which belong to classical tradition, India is usually thought of as the country of two big rivers – Indus and Ganges. This India does not include areas south of Vindhyas. In the writings of Parthian or Sassanian origin it comprehends only the regions of the Indus and its tributaries, as it was considered in Greece before Alexander's invasion. This India is considered as an Iranian India, for Parthian dynasties founded some little kingdoms in this region[102]. This India must be the India of the *Ath*.

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101 J. ANDRE and J. FILLIOZAT, *L'Inde vue de Rome*, 394. The translation is by the author.

102 See A. DHILE, "The concept of India", 89.

CONCLUSION

In short what we have tried in this chapter is to see whether *Ath*, traditions, and the early literature speak of the same person when they speak about Thomas, Judas and Judas Thomas. Thomas, which means Didymos or twin, cannot be the original name of a person. He should have a proper name of his own, though the gospels do not tell us anything about it. A search for his original name took us to the Syriac tradition and there we saw the apostle called Judas or Judas Thomas. The Syriac tradition knew that the apostle's real name was Judas. And it is this Judas who is the main character in all the Thomas romances of the Syriac tradition. This Judas is the Thomas of the New Testament and of the popular traditions in India and outside. All these give him some kind of historical authenticity. And in this chapter we have also seen that the India in question in all the traditions and literature is not an imaginary country, but the India proper. Thus we come to the conclusion that Thomas of the Gospels who is Judas of *Ath* and Thomas of tradition is the apostle of India. This conclusion will justify us in our pursuit of the historical and geographical data of the visit of the apostle Thomas to India.

Second Chapter

Scene and Setting of Traditions

The *Acts of Judas Thomas,* as we have seen in the previous chapter, deals with the missionary journey of the apostle Thomas to India. We have seen that the Judas of the *Ath* could be none other than the apostle Thomas surnamed Didymus in the Gospel according to St John. We have also made it clear that the Thomas of whom tradition speaks in different stories and legends also is the same personality. India of the time as meant by *Ath* is really represented by the present India, but including in it also Pakistan and Afghanistan. Thus we came to the conclusion that the *Ath* narrates the missionary journey of the apostle to India. Our next endeavour would logically be to see how far the story of the *Ath* is in tune with historical facts. But, before entering upon historical data we will try to situate the story of the *Ath* in its true geographical milieu. As history is always unravelled *hic et nunc,* or as it has always a *sitz-im-Leben*, we cannot ignore the geographical milieu in which the story of the *Ath* is evolving itself. The *Ath* speaks of two places - one on the way to the 'King of India' and the other the 'city of the king of India'. In this chapter we make an attempt to identify these two places.

1 Port of disembarkation: Sandruk-Andrapolis[1]

According to the story of the *Ath,* it must have been from Jerusalem that Thomas set sail for India; the narration begins with the coming together of the apostles and Haban meeting Jesus there. But it is difficult to accept the statement

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1 The two words Sandruk and Andrapolis are used together to show that they mean the same place, but used in two different traditions, namely Syriac and Greek respectively.

of the *Ath* that they set sail from Jerusalem[2]. Jerusalem was no port and there was no route leading to India from the vicinity of it[3]. Then why does the author give such a prologue to the story of Thomas? The motive of the author in writing the story was neither historical nor geographical, but catechetical. So it might be that he wanted to exhort his readers that the mission of the apostles began from the Holy City.

The opinion of Farquahar that the journey began at Alexandria seems to be credible[4]. The most probable place where Haban could have gone as the trade commissioner of the king Gondophares of India is Alexandria. There are various factors that help us to come to such a conclusion. There were a large number of Indians in Alexandria. The trade route by sea to India began from there. It had become by the time of Emperor Augustus the second greatest city of the Roman Empire. Almost one third of the population of Alexandria were Jews. And Farquahar suggests that Thomas might have laboured for a considerable time in Alexandria. The opinion of Rae is more reasonable in this respect. He gives the route in this way; "from Jerusalem they would go down to Caesarea and take ship at the port of Alexandria from which the route to India in those days was well-defined as the overland route of P&O Company from London to Bombay"[5]. It becomes clearer in the light of the opening passage in the *De Miraculis* according to which when the Apostle Thomas was in Caesarea the Lord asked him to go to India. Rooney makes the following conclusion about the sea routes to India :

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2 *Ath* I, 1.

3 The classical trade route to India began from Alexandria. E.H. WARMIMGTON, *The Commerce between Roman Empire and India*, New Delhi, 1995 (London, 1928), 52. See also, L.P. VAN DEN BOSCH, "India and the Apostolate of Thomas", in J.N. BRENNER (ed.), *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, 129.

4 J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The Apostle Thomas in North India*, 317.

5 M.RAE, *The Syrian Church in India*, Edinburgh-London, 1892, 56.

> If he (a traveller) started at Alexandria he could sail down the Nile by Memphis as far as Koptos, thence by land to Berenice, through the Arabian Sea to Okelis, Aden or Kana, and thence to Patiala, Barygaza, or Muziris[6].

Alexandria was at that time a place quite frequented by Indians. It is said that Ptolemy perhaps got his surprising knowledge about India from the Indians residing at Alexandria. Pliny in 77 A.D. and Dion Chrisostom in 100 A.D. speak about the Indians living at Alexandria. In this sense there is no wonder if the author of the *Ath* supposed that Haban met Thomas at Alexandria and they set sail to India from there.

If Thomas began his journey from Alexandria, which would be the first port that he disembarked in India? According to the Greek version of the *Ath*, the port of disembarkation is Andrapolis. But the Syriac version calls it Sandruck mahosa. In the Latin it is spoken of in different ways: Andranopolis, or Adrianopolis[7]. It is of course influenced by the Greek version. In the Armenian version we see it mentioned as Snadruk. According to the Malayalam version of the story, *Rambanpattu,* it is Maliamkara[8]. The *Margamkalipattu* of the same language also locates it at Maliamkara. The story goes like this: having set forth from Jerusalem, the apostle and Haban, aided by favourable winds,[9] reached quickly the shores of Sandruck-

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6 J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the dark,* 26.

7 The Latin version is not really a translation of Greek or Syriac. It may be said to be a summary of the Acts. There are two versions of the story in Latin: *De Miraculis Beati Apostoli Thomas* and *De Passio Beati Apostoli Thomas.*

8 Maliamkara is a locality very near to the present Kodungallur or Cranganore in Kerala. It was known in the early days as Muziris.

9 There may be an allusion here to the Hippolytus' Wind, the so-called monsoon wind the discovery of which facilitated a great lot the voyage to India. Many dates of its discovery have been suggested – from 40 A.D. to 100 A.D. But we think it may be a result of various attempts to come to the coasts of India and these attempts might have spanned many decades. The author of the *Ath* is sure to have been aware of it as it was discovered not long ago in his time and people must have been speaking of it.

Andrapolis. At their arrival, a marriage feast of the King's daughter was going on in the royal port city and they both went in to take part in it. Thomas worked miracles and the royal couple, later the king too, were converted and then Thomas went to another part of the country. Later on, the royal couple, the king and some of their followers joined the apostle in the new place..

Our primary task is to identify this particular place where the apostle first landed in India. What could be the possible place of this marriage feast, at least as the author of the *Ath* intended it to be? There are differences of opinions concerning this. Some authors have tried to locate this according to the etymological significations of the word. Thus come Karachi that was called 'Indrapattana' and Barygaza, the city of Andra (Andrapolis). Some others have tried to follow the route geographically and set the place on the way to India. Thus, for example, Farquahar places it somewhere near Egypt[10]. M. Rae too holds the same opinion[11]. Many hold the opinion that it is Socotra an island in Arabian Sea, the erstwhile Erythrean Sea. But if one carefully follows the *Ath*, there is one city that emerges as the possible port of disembarkation: Barygaza.

1.1 SANDRUK-ANDRAPOLIS = BARYGAZA

The *Ath* does not furnish us much information which would help us to identify the port of disembarkation. But

10 "Andrapolis, the chief city of the Andrapolite Nome, was a large town in the delta on the left bank of the Nile. The modern town on the site is called Chabur or Shaboor. If Thomas had been preaching for sometime in Alexandria, he might quite well have friends in Andrapolis". J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The Apostle Thomas in North India*, 317. This opinion of Farquahar is contradicted in the story of the *Ath.* If the apostle had friends there, how could he be a total stranger in the place, as we read in the *Ath.*

11 "Andrapolis was the capital of the Nomos Andropolites. Whether its chief Magistrate was entitled to the rank of *Basileos* we do not know. But even if he was not a king, our author would be sure to make him one, as it seems to have been a first principle with him that Thomas should always have kings as the nursing fathers of his church". M. RAE, *Syrian Christians of India*, 365.

from the story we are able to infer the following elements concerning this first city.

a) It was a great trade centre of India where ships from the West reached very often. This we assume from the fact that they had taken a ship to come to India and considering the nature of the voyage and the swiftness of the journey we infer that it must have been a well travelled-route.

b) It was a royal city to which the name Andrapolis or Sandruk was some how attributed. We say it was attributed, because so far we have not discovered any place in India or outside which in any epoch of history ever had this name.

c) It had some kind of relation to the city of 'the king of India', Gondophares. This is inferred from the statement in the *Ath* that the people of Andrapolis got the message that the apostle was preaching in the city of India and they together with the king and the royal couple went and joined him.

d) There was a Jewish presence in the city or at least Jewish girls were present in the royal palace. There was a Jewish flute girl at the banquet story of the *Ath.*

e) There should have been a forest in the vicinity of it, which would explain the presence of a lion by the royal palace.

There is just one city that fulfils all these above mentioned elements and it is Barygaza, the great port city described in the *Periplus* as the most important trade port of India. Besides etymological similarities, there exist geographical, historical and linguistic evidences in favour of such an opinion. The reasons for postulating such an opinion is derived from the following facts.

a) Its strategic position at the West Coast of India as great port of trade to where commodities from the inland from even as far as China were brought down to be shipped to the Western world.

b) The name Andrapolis in Greek which means city of Andhra, Barygaza being the royal city and port of the Andhra dynasty of the Satakarni Kings, whence may come the term Sandruck or Sandruck *mahosa* which means the city of Sandruk.

c) Its relation with the Indo-Parthian dynasty of North West India.

d) The presence of the Jewish flute girl at the banquet; Barygaza is the only place mentioned in the *Periplus* where girls of Jewish origin were brought to India as gifts for the Kings.

1.1.1 A great trade centre on the West Coast of India

The author of the *Periplus* has devoted a great length of his volume to describe the port city of Barygaza and its neighbouring places. From this we can gauge the importance this port held at his time and its popularity. The author seems to have gone there personally, because his description is so vivid and minute[12]. This city is identified today with the present Broach in Gujarat state in western India, north of Bombay. The name Barygaza seems to have been derived from the Prakrit[13]

12 "This is, if the boast may be allowed, the peculiar pre-eminence of the work : it belongs to this author alone, as far as I have discovered, to give the true direction of this western coast of the Peninsula and to state, in direct terms, its tendency to the South, while Ptolemy stretches out the whole angle to a straight line, and places the gulf of Cambay almost in the same latitude as the Cape of Comorin", W. VINCENT, *The Commerce and the Navigation of the Ancient in the Indian Ocean*, 2 vols, vol.2, *The Periplus of the Erithrean Sea*, New Delhi, Asia Educational Services, 1998 (London, 1807), 411. See also M. D'ANVILLE, *Antiquité Géographique de l'Inde, et des plusieurs autres contrées de la Haute Asie*, Paris, 1775, 88.

13 Prakrit was the earlier form of the Sanskrit.

Bharukachha, which was a corruption of the Sanskrit *Bhrugukshêtra* or *Bhrugukachha* which means "the plain of Bhrigu" who was a local hero[14]. According to the local legends, the city was originally founded by this sage Bhrigu and so was called Bhragapor or Bhrigu's city. "To their patron saint the people of the town owed a lasting gratitude, for, by the exercise of his power, he induced the waters of Narbada to leave their old bed about two miles to the south and come to flow close to the new settlement"[15]. Barygaza may also signify, as Vincent puts it, "the water of wealth, from *Bari* –water and *Gaza* – wealth, riches, treasure". So, for the Greek authors, this city was a real port of wealth[16]. And this coastal region held this position for many centuries till it had to give way to the neighbouring port of Surat. Vincent makes the following comment:

> When the Europeans first reached India, Surat was the principal seat of commerce in the North, as Calicut on the south; and the merchants of Gujarat were the richest and the most active traders in India. Surat is not more than forty or fifty miles from Broach, and Broach is the Barygaza of *Periplus*.... If I could find anything in history to countenance the idea of the Hindoos being seamen in any age I should place them in this province[17].

We have the following references to this great port city in the early Indian literature :

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14 SCHOFF, *Periplus,* 180. Bhrigu "in Hindu mythology, a divine seer, son of Brahma (or of Varuna, or of Indra, or of Prajapati), and eponymous ancestor of the Bhrigu or Bhargava clan". J. BOWKER, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions,* 145. McCrindle has made this observation, "in the name Barygaza given to it by Ptolemy, we have a Greek corruption of *Bhrigukshetra* (territory of Bhrigu) or *Bhrigukachcha* (the tongue land of Bhrigu)". J.W. MCCRINDLE, "Anonymi [Arriani ut Fertur] Periplus Maris Erytherai", *IA,* April 1879, 107-151.

15 *Bombay Gazetteer,* 552.

16 W. VINCENT, *The Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients,* 395.

17 W. VINCENT, *The Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients,* 404.

The *Brhatsamhita* (XIV.II) and *Yoginitantra* (2.4) refer to it. It is also mentioned in the Mathura Buddhist image inscription of Huviska. A grant of the Gujara king Jayabhatta IV also makes mention of this town. The *Bhagavatapurana* (VIII, 18,12) places it on the northern bank of the river Narbada. In the early Buddhist literature as well as in the early centuries of Christian era *Bhrugukachha* was an important seat of sea going trade and commerce. The *Sussondi Jataka* refers to the journey of the minstrel Sagga from Benares to *Bhrugukachha*, which was a seaport town (*pattana gama*) from which ships sailed for different countries (*Jataka* III, p. 188 ff)[18].

The *Periplus* begins the description of this great port in these words: "Beyond the gulf of Baraca[19] is that of Barygaza and the coast of the country of Ariaca[20], which is the beginning of the Kingdom of Nambanus and of all India"[21]. We make a special note here of the expression 'the kingdom of Nambanus', because it is going to help us a lot in deciding the date of the composition of the *Periplus* and also in deciding which Kingdom the author of the *Ath* might have thought of as coming into contact with the first Christian missionary to India. A little later *Periplus* tells again, "... the native fishermen in the king's service, stationed at the very entrance in well-mannered large boats called *trappaga* and *Cotymba* go up the coast as far as Syrastrene, from which they pilot vessels to Barygaza"[22]. This

18 B.C. LAW, *Historical Geography of Ancient India*, Delhi, Munshi Ram Manoharlal, 1984, 278.

19 The Gulf of Baraca is the modern Gulf of Cutch. See SCHOFF, *The Periplus*, 174.

20 According to Schoff this word in the text is very uncertain. SCHOFF, *Periplus*, 174-175.

21 *Periplus* 41,

22 *Periplus*, 40. This reference to royal fishermen piloting incoming and outgoing ships sheds, according to Gokhale, interesting light on the administration of the port city of Broach. This reference is well in tune with the prescriptions of Kautilya in his *Arthasasthra*, when he speaks about the port administration, where guidelines for the port administration are detailed. "Kautilya in his *Arthasasthra* has an officer called the 'Commissioner of Ports' who was responsible for fixing regulations which

particular sentence reveals how well developed the port management of this city was and accounts for the great amount of the foreign trade it enjoyed. Barygaza had been linked to a number of trade routes which connected it with the whole of India.

> Six major market areas served Broach during the period under review. The first and the foremost was Central Asia-Taxila. Well-travelled caravan routes connected Taxila with the Central Asiatic trade marts from Kashagar to Kandahar. Taxila was connected to Mathura and Pataliputra by a grand route first noticed by Megasthanes, the Seleucid envoy to the court of Chandragupta Maurya. It was constructed in eight stages: from Pushkalavati to Taxila, from Taxila across the Indus to Jhelum, from Jhelum to the Beas, from Beas to the Sutlej, from Sutlej to Jamuna and from Jamuna, via Delhi region to the Ganga. From the Ganga it went to Kanauj and then to Prayag and Pataliputra. A network of roads connected Pataliputra with cities such as Savatthi, Kosambi, Champa, Tamaralipti, Varanasi, Mathura, and Vidhisha. A well-marked route connected Mathura with Ujjaini. From South came routes linking Tamil Nadu and parts of Andhra Pradesh with Paithan from where other routes passed through Central India to Mathura and beyond[23].

All these references clarify how Barygaza had been connected to all parts of India. Products of interior land were

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had to be followed by another officer called 'Controller of Shipping'. The Controller of Shipping should look after activities concerning sea voyages and ferries at the mouth of rivers as well as ferries over natural lakes, artificial lakes and rivers in the *Sthaniya* and other towns. The Controller of Shipping had to rescue boats that had gone out of their course or are tossed about by gale, like a father. .... And he should send these (boats) on, as commissioned, at times suitable, for voyage from the port. Finally the Controller of Shipping should keep in use big boats in charge of a captain, a pilot, a manipulator of the cutter and ropes and a bailer of water, on big rivers that have to be ferried on even in winter and summer; on small rivers following only in the rainy season". B.G.GOKHALE, "Bharukachha / Barygaza" in G. POLLET (ed.), *India and the ancient world*, OLA 25, Leuven, 1987, 74. For more details see M. CHANDRA, *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India*, New Delhi, 1977.

23 B.G. GOKHALE, "Barukachcha", 67.

brought to this port for trade by land or by the great river Narbada. So, it was the most important port as far as the whole India was concerned.

> To Barygaza was directed large quantities of Indian and Chinese products, some of which were sent from China and central Asia through Kabul Poclais, so as to join other supplies at the great centres Minnagara and Ozene[24]. Barygaza received by way of Tagara wares brought by an old Andhra route across India from the East Coast[25].

Barygaza was, beyond doubt, the most important port of India in the first centuries before and after Christ. That it was historically very important is proved by the coins and drachmas discovered from this port city. At the time of the *Periplus* Greek coins and drachmas were in circulation in the city[26]. There had been sent from Barygaza a mission to the Roman Empire and it is said that the Sramana who burnt himself at Athens came from Barygaza[27].

Warmington quoting Pliny distinguishes four different stages in the evolution of the discovery and use of sea routes to India for trade purposes by the ancient Greeks and Romans:

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24 Ozene is the modern Ujjain, the chief city of Malwa in Central India. The Sanskrit form is Ujjaini, "victorious". The parkrit is Ujjeni, from which the Greek is derived. Ujjian is also one of the seven sacred cities of India. In earlier times it was known as Avanti, seat of one of the four great powers mentioned in the Buddhist literature.

25 E.H. WARMINGTON, *The Commerce between Roman Empire and India*, 56. See also W. ROBERTSON, *An Historical Disquisition*, 61-62.

26 *Periplus* 47.

27 We read in Strabo about this interesting character. "Eight naked servants, with girdles round their waists, and fragrant with perfumes, presented the gifts which were brought. The presents were a Hermes, i.e. a man, born without arms, whom I have seen, large snakes, a serpent ten cubits in length, and a parrot larger than a vulture. They were accompanied by a person, it is said, who burnt himself to death at Athens. For as everything hitherto had succeeded with him, he thought it necessary to depart, lest some unexpected calamity should happen to him by continuing to live. With a smile, therefore, naked, anointed, and with a girdle round his waist, he leaped upon the pyre. On his tomb stone was this inscription: Zarmanochegas, an Indian, a native of Barogaza, having immortalised himself according to the custom of the country, here lies". *Geography of Strabo*, literally translated with notes by H.C. HAMILTON and W. FALCONES, London, 1857, 119.

(a) From the time of Alexander and Nearchos' voyage to the time of Tiberius' reign - merchants set sail from Arabia Eudamenon, follow round all the Gulfs coasted along Arabia, and then along the Asiatic Coasts Caramania and Gedrosia to the Indus and southwards and return the same way (Pliny VI, 100 and *Periplus* 57).

(b) Between Tiberius' and end of Gauis' reign (A.D. 40 - 41) – start from Arabia Eudamenon or Cane, until after Ras Fartak (Syagros), the Arabian coast receded, where upon they sailed across the sea to Patala on the Indus.

(c) Between roughly A.D. 41-50 – men not desiring to take only the voyage to the Indus began coasting or sailing from the ruins of Arabia Eudamenon or from Cane as far as Ras Fartak as before and then taking "a shorter and safer voyage" across, so as to strike the Indian coast at Sigerus (Meliziagra in *Periplus*, Melizegiris in Ptolemy, either Jaigarh or Rajpur) whence they could proceed north or south at will[28]. Presumably men started to sail direct to Barygaza also during this time, returning the same way and calling, if they wished, at Socotra or Moscha (*Periplus* 31and 32).

(d) About 50 A.D. – after leaving Ocelis, the ruins of Arabia Eudamenon, Cane or Cape Guardafui, in July, they could be throwing the ships' head off the wind with a constant pull on the rudder and shift of the yard, thus sailing in an arc or a circle, go across to Malabar marts in forty days (*Periplus* 57; Pliny VI, 101)[29].

According to this theory, the third stage (between 41-50 A.D.) in the discovery of sea route to India took the voyager to the coasts Barygaza. And Warmington continues when speaking about the flourishing trade the Indians had with foreign countries,

> Thus Indians of north-western districts, with Barygaza as the chief port, sent large timber-ships to Apologos and

28 Warmingtom is of the opinion that the first attempt at this route was made in 42 AD (Pliny VI, 101). See E.H. WARMINGTON, *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India*, 64.

29 E.H. WARMINGTON, *The Commerce between Roman Empire and India*, 45-

> Ommana, and other ships to the marts of Somali and even to Adulis, and well-manned boats (trappaga and cotymba) went up the coast, piloted foreign ships to the mouth of Nerbudda, and towed them up the river to Barygaza, whereas at the Indus mouths ships unloaded at Barbaricon on to river-vessels[30].

It is in the same period that the apostle Thomas is said to have visited Gondophares at Taxila, where among the ruins discovered, people point also to the palace of the said king[31]. Thus the ship that took the apostle to India during this period might have landed at Barygaza. The fact that there were well travelled routes to Taxila from Barygaza both by land and by sea (the author of the *Periplus* has made his journey in this route by sea) makes this proposition all the more viable and valid.

Does this fact that Barygaza was an important port of India in the early centuries of our era credit it with the name of Andraplois ? It is true that the *Ath* does not give us many indications to really situate the place it calls Sandruck-Andrapolis. In the Armenian version of the story of Thomas we read like this, «*Quand ils eurent traversé (furent passé de l'autre cote de) la mer et furent parvenus à la (une) ville ils entendirent la son de la trompette (et de la joie) et de l'allégresse* »[32]. Here we do not see the name of the city mentioned. But later at the end of the first book of the first act the author tells that the name of the city was Sendhrokh. But the indication is clear. They had crossed the sea to enter this city. The correct translation would be they had passed over to the other side of the sea[33]. This really takes us to the description

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30 E.H. WARMINGTON, *The Commerce between Roman Empire and India,* 65.

31 J.ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark land,* 38.

32 D.L. LELOIR, *Ecrits apocryphes sur les apôtres,* 550

33 Crossing over to India was considered to be a long journey. The travellers normally began from Kane and the journey to the coasts took at least three months. But with the discovery of the Hippolytus' wind (in the first century A.D. most probably before 50 A.D.) the duration was reduced to forty days.

of Pliny ('a shorter and safer voyage across'). And taking into consideration the fact that their destination was India, this city should have been in India. In the story of Abdias we read thus:

> They arrived at length on the coast of India, and in the first city they entered, they were present at the marriage of the King's daughter. St Thomas preached the Gospel, and performed many wonderful miracles, which effected numerous conversions and amongst others that of the king; and the newly married couple also received Baptism. A long time afterwards the princess, who had been named Pelagiana, took the holy veil, and suffered martyrdom. The Husband, called Denis, was consecrated Bishop of the town[34].

What we note here, besides the divergence from the other versions of the story, is the expression 'the first city of India'. In *De Miraculis* also we see the same expression 'civitatis primae Indiae'[35]. It is this first city of India or the city of first India that we locate at Barygaza. Hosten is of the opinion that the division of India into three Indias allows us to translate in two ways part of this sentence we see in *De Miraculis*, which refers to the Deacon-king "the apostle called his deacon, him who had been king of the first city of India (civitatis primae Indiae) where the apostle had been invited to the marriage", and "... him who had been king of the city of the first India where the apostle had been invited to the marriage[36]". He says, "there, then was Sandruck, the first city of India, the first city of citerior India, the first city of the first India"[37]. And we say this first city of first India was Barygaza or Broach.

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34 L. MORALDI, *Tutti gli Apocrifi*, 653-657.

35 This can also mean the city of first India they entered.

36 H. HOSTEN, *Works of Hosten*, vol.18, fol. 63. The Deacon King is the one who had joined the apostle at the city of India and who was later ordained deacon by the apostle.

37 But here Hosten means to say Cranganore. But we find all his arguments are valid more for Barygaza than for Cranganore.

1.1.2 The royal city of the Andhra Dynasty

The Greek term Ανδραπολισ means the *πολισ* or city of Andhra, if we consider it in its etymological sense. In the same way the Syriac *Sandrok Mahosa* means the city of Sandrok. If so, how can Barygaza, a city in the Gujarat coast, north of Konkan, be called Andrapolis or Sandrok mahosa? There are no etymological similarities to be noted. So we may have to search in the geographical and political situation of this place. The historical period under consideration should be the second quarter of the first century A.D. In this period this famous port belonged to the Andhra kings. Let us get back to *Periplus*, which is almost contemporary to the apostle Thomas' arrival in India. There it is written, 'the kingdom of Nambanus'. Who was this Nambanus? Lots of discussions had been made on this subject. Schoff[38] identifies this Nambanus[39] with Nahapana, the founder of the *Saka* era of AD 78[40]. Smith also has the same opinion[41]. These *Sakas* were known as western Kshatrapas[42] or Andhra Kings. *Periplus* mentions two other kings also: Elder Saraganus and Sandares. As to the identity of these Kings, Wilson writes, "I think, it can hardly be doubted that the reference is here to the Andhra dynasty, and the name of Saraganus must be identified with the well-known title Sri Satakarni or Svatakarna"[43]. At the heights of its power the sway of the Andhra Kings extended from the Telugu country proper

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38 SCHOFF, *Periplus*, 175.

39 The name in the Greek text is Mambarus, which all translators agree should be read as Nambanus.

40 Here we have to admit that this date for the Saka era is not universally accepted. Nor do all accept Nahapana as the founder of Saka era. For details see G. YAZDANI (ed.), *The Early History of Decan*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1960, 103-104.

41 V.A. SMITH, *Early History*, 210.

42 M. COMMISARIAT, *A History of Gujarat*, vol. I, Bombay, 1938, xxxi.

43 C.R. WILSON, " Proposed identification of the name of an Andhra king in *Periplus*", *IA* 1904, 272-273.

right across India to Nasik and beyond, where they ruled as "Lords of the West" or Western *Kshatrapas*[44]. The Andhra Kings are enumerated in the *Puranas*[45], which, together with the coinage, afford almost the only information concerning them[46]. A dynastic name, borne by many of these monarchs, was Satakarni...[47] ". So we can say that at the time of the composition of the *Periplus* (around 60 A.D.), Satakarni kings of the Andhra Dynasty were having a prominent role in the Western Coast of India. These Andhra kings were still having their influence in these places at the time or at the time immediately before, when the *Acts of Judas Thomas* was composed. The Andhra dynasty came to an end in 225 A.D., and, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the *Ath* might have been composed some where around this period. So it is possible that the author of the *Ath* had this city of the Satakarni kings in his mind when he wrote of the Sandruck or Andrapolis.

It was customary for the Greek and Roman writers to name a place after the dynastic names of the ruling people. So we have in the Greek version of the *Ath* the name Ανδραπολισ. "*In Andrapolis konnte man daher mit einiger Berechtigung eine Beziehung für Barygaza als 'Stadt der Andhra' vermuten, da es nichts ungehwohnliches in der griechisch - römischer Literatur jener Zeit ist, die Stadt kursweg nach dem Namen der regierenden Dynastie zu nennen*"[48]. Thus in the Greek version of the *Ath* we see the place named after Roman geography as city of Andhra or Andrapolis whereas the Syriac

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44 ZACHARIAS, "The Church of Ss Thomas and Bartholomew in Malabar", *Pax* 86 (1928), 148.

45 Puranas are "any of a class of Sanskrit verse text which contain mythological accounts of ancient days. Puranas are considered smriti or non-Vedic Hindu They are probably compiled between 500 and 1500 AD, although they contain much earlier material from the *ithihasa* (epics) and other sources". J. BOWKER (ed.), *ODWR*, 775.

46 V.A. SMITH, *Early History*, 215.

47 SCHOFF, *Periplus*, 198.

48 J. DHALMANN, *Die Legende*, 65

version takes the name after the king ruling in the place at the time and thus we have Sandruck mahosa – might be, city of Satakarni[49]. Therefore the city of Andhra and the city of Satakarnis signify one and the same place, Barygaza, which at the time when the apostle Thomas is supposed to have come to India and also at the time when the *Ath* was composed, found itself under the rule of the Andhra kingdom or the Satakarnis.

Thus all the said arguments confirm that the *Ανδραπολισ* of the Greek and *Sandruk Mahosa* of the Syriac mean one and the same place and this place could be Βαρψγαζα of the Greek and Bharukachcha of the Sanskrit.

1.1.3 Relation with the Indo-Scythians of North-West India

The third reason for holding Barygaza as the Sandruk-Andrapolis of the *Ath* is the fact that it had been in contact with the Indo-Scythian Kingdom of North West India. At the time of the *Periplus,* the power of the Indo-Scythians had extended even as far as Gujarat. We have already seen that there had been extensive trade relation between the two kingdoms. The trade might have been done both by sea and by land. The great royal highway connecting Taxila and Pataliputra, two great centres of trade and civilisation in India, had a branch to Barygaza from Mathura via Ujjain[50]. Wares could be brought down to Braygaza by this route or by the great river Narbada. That there was also a sea route connecting these regions also is clear from the description of the *Periplus*

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49 *"Die griechische Version bewahrte den auch bei den römischen Geographen vorkommenden Namen Andra in Andraplolis, 'Stadt der Andra', wahrend die syrische Redaction bloß den Namen des dort residierenden Königs Satakarni in der Verstummelung Sandruk als Bezeichnung für 'Stadt der Satakarni' festhält".* J. DHALMANN, 65.

50 Usually all the great centres of trade were on the banks of great rivers. Pataliputra is the present Patna on the Ganges, the capital of the state of Bihar. It was also a great centre of learning and culture.

where it is said that the author came down to Barygaza from Minnagara via Baeones[51] by sea.

At the time of the *Periplus,* or even that of the *Ath,* these regions were not possibly inaccessible to each other. There are indications that the whole Rann of Cutch region of today, called by *Periplus* as the Gulf of Einrion[52] was engulfed by sea in earlier dates. This area was and is still always prone to earth quakes. Strabbo in his Geography mentions it as a region prone to quakes[53].

> It appears probable from what he (Aristoboulos) has stated that India is also liable to earthquakes as it becomes porous from the excess of moisture and opens into fissures, when even the course of the river is altered. He says that when he was sent on some business, he saw a tract of land deserted which contained more than a thousand cities with their villages, for the Indus, having forsaken its proper channels, turned itself into another on the left, much deeper, into which it burst like a cataract, so that it no longer watered the country on the right, from which it receded, for this had been raised by the inundations not only above the level of the new channel but even above that of the new inundations[54].

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51 This Baeones could be, as Schoff says, Piram Island opposite the mouth of Narbada. SCHOFF, *Periplus,*181. Vincent had earlier preferred the island of Diu. "Baeones is Diu; Diu is the Avi Caman of Al Edrissi, because he reckons one day and a half's sail from Cambay to Avi Camman, and two from Avi Camman to Indus". W. VINCENT, *The Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients in the Indian Ocean,* 384. The location of Diu just on the way to Broach to make it more probable.

52 *Periplus* 40.

53 The great earthquake that devastated these regions of Gujarat very recently (in January 2001) only confirms our surmise. Even the great migration from Cutch and Gujarat to Java which led to the establishment of Buddhist kingdoms there might have been due to these earthquakes than, as it is usually thought, because of the hostile Aryan invasion. These Buddhist kingdoms survive in Java even today in the tremendous temples of Boroboedor and Brambanan. "The conversion of a navigable bay into a salt desert, and the diversion of the rivers that watered it, must have spelled ruin and starvation to multitudes of its agricultural and seafaring inhabitants, who would have been forced to migrate on a scale unusual in history", SCHOFF, *Periplus,* 174.

54 J.W. MCCRINDLE, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature,* 25.

At the time of *Periplus* it seems to have been "open water, although shallow, with a clear opening into the ocean below the Indus delta, and with a branch of the Indus running into it"[55]. This saline plain was certainly at one time flooded by sea, as shown by the abundance of salt and by the remains of vessels dug up near the neighbouring villages. Within historical times it was probably a scene of active sea trade; even in modern times the port of Mandavi, on the southern coast of Cutch, carries on a direct trade with Zanzibar, in small vessels averaging 50 tons, of less than 10 feet draught. Schoff remarks,

> The whole area was probably raised by some great earthquake. The upheaval is too regular to have occurred by ordinary causes. At the time of the *Periplus* it seems to have been open water, although shoal, with a clear opening into the ocean below the Indus delta, and with a branch of the Indus running into it. Now the Indus delta is pushed very much farther south, and the scour of the tides has carried its alluvium along the coast, almost blocking up the Rann; while the branch that watered it no longer flows in that direction[56].

It seems that the river Indus had a tributary that almost flowed into the Cutch region. Geological studies in the Gulf of Cambay point out that from the geological formation of the country bordering on the Rann, it appeared that the drainage of the Punjab once flowed into it:

> The rapid silting up of the Gulf of Cambay gives particular interest to an inquiry into the geological conditions which probably shaped it in remote ages .... Many considerations point to the existence in former ages of some large river flowing down from the north, and falling into the Indian Ocean somewhere in the position of the present Gulf of Cambay: and it is not improbable that that river may have been the Indus. It may have been that the original course of

55 W.H. SCHOFF, *Periplus*, 174.

56 W.H. SCHOFF, *Periplus*, 173-174.

the Indus from the Punjab was in a more south-easterly direction than that of the present day[57].

So the whole Cutch region of today was a navigable bay and it was easy for voyagers to come to the ports of the Western India. This indicates that these two regions at river Narbada and river Indus were easily accessible to a voyager desiring to go from one to the other. And we know that the invaders from the early centuries had reached the Deccan from Kabul and Multan and above by coming down the Indus. In Medieval times Muhammad of Ghazni had made his first inroads into Gujarat by this way. The early Sakas, of whom the Andhra kings were but a branch, have used the same route. And curiously enough, as Vincent remarks, there seems to be a general connection between this province of Gujarat and Sind, for "Paolina remarks the language is the same from Surat to Tatta"[58]. This helps us to think that these two regions of India, the citerior and ulterior, were connected geographically and commercially and for the apostle and his companion to go to the Indus delta from the delta of Narmada was not very difficult. The *Ath* gives us this particular information that as the inhabitants of the first city of India were mourning over the departure of the apostle from their midst, they got news that Thomas was preaching in India - and this must be understood as Sind as we have seen it earlier in the first chapter - they also went and joined him. This shows that these two regions were having some kind of communication and perhaps a constant contact between them could be thought of. The author of the *Ath* must have had a good knowledge of these places when he composed his work. At the time of his writing the book, far

57 A. ROGERS, "A few remarks on the Geology of the country surrounding the Gulf of Cambay in Western India", *Quarterly Journal of Geological Society of London*, 26 (1870), p118-124. He was perhaps among the earliest observers of the geology of the Gulf of Cambay (close to Lothal) in Gujarat coast.

58 W. VINCENT, *The Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients*, p. 385, note 22.

greater information concerning these regions were surely at his disposal than we have of them at present. But as his primary purpose of composing the book was catechetical and not historical, he might not have thought of giving much concern to historical, geographical and political precision.

Now the rulers of this region were, as we have already seen, the Andhra kings or the Western Kshatrapas. It seems that they had a kind of subordination to the Indo-Parthian Kings. "The earliest foreign ruler in the west whose name has been preserved was the Satrap Bhumaka Kshaharata, who struck coins with Parthian affinities, and may be presumed to have been subordinate to one or other of the Indo-Parthian kings, perhaps Gondophares"[59]. Though the exact date of his reign is not known, it may be assumed to be approximately at the middle of the first century A.D., or possibly a somewhat earlier period[60]. The next important king in this line whose name is recorded in history is Nahapana, who may or may not have been the immediate successor of Bhumaka. The period of his rule may be placed approximately between AD 60 and 90[61]. We may well assume that he must have been dead before the composition of the *Periplus*. Yazdani makes the following comment on the mention of the name of Nahapana in the *Periplus* (... beginning of the kingdom of Nambanus):

> At the time of the work, viz. A.D. 60, Nahapana was already dead; but the kingdom itself came to be called after this king who had become so famous. In view of the proved fact that long after his time his successors continued his legends on the coins, there is no wonder that the author of the *Periplus* came to know that land as the 'kingdom of Nambanus'[62].

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59 V.A. SMITH, *Early History*, 209.

60 V.A. SMITH, *Early History*, 209.

61 G. YAZDANI, (ed.), *The Early History of the Deccan*, Parts I-VI, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1960, 103.

62 G. YAZDANI, (ed.), *The Early History of the Deccan*, 103.

His name indicates a Persian origin. At first he held the title of *Satrap*[63], but later he assumed the title the Great Satrap (*Mahakshatrapa*) and he was also known by the Indian title of *Raja*. His dominions comprised a large area, extending from Southern Rajputana to Nasik and Poona districts in the Western Ghats, and including the peninsula of Saurastra or Kathiawar. His titles of *Satrap* and *Mahasatrap* indicate subordination to a northern power, most probably the Kushans.[64] His coins always bear the symbol of arrow and thunderbolt and which connect him with the Parthians. All the Saka kings in India had this particular symbol which showed their subordination to the Parthians. Gondophares the great Indo-Parthian king also had this symbol. When the Kushans overthrew the Kingdom of the Indo-Parthians, not long after the death of Gondophares (51A.D.), we may assume that the Kshatrapas in west continued to be subordinated to the Kushans. Thus there seems to have been historical and political relation between the rulers of the Sind region and those of the Narbada region. This affinity calls for the constant communication between these two regions as we have postulated a little while ago. The *Periplus* furnishes us with this particular information that the coins of Alexander and Meneander were still circulating in Barygaza.

Therefore it seems that there existed historical, political, geographical and linguistic relation between the two regions, the Indus delta and the delta of Narmada, in our case between Taxila and Barygaza. If such relations existed, there should have been regular contacts between them, and in this case there would be nothing unbelievable or absurd in saying that the apostle Thomas first landed at Barygaza and from there

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63 Satrap is the Hellenised form of the Persian term for the Governor of a province, khshathrapavan, as used by Achaemenids. This title was widely used by the Saka kings. The Sanskrit form was ksatrapa. The governors of higher status were known as mahaksatrapa. *E B*, 353.

64 For a detailed study of the Andhra kings see V.A. SMITH, *Early History*, 206-218.

journeyed to the kingdom of Gondophares, as the author of the *Ath* seems to make us believe. And the description that he was in company with a man who knew the country and its trade routes very well, Haban, the *rajavaidehika* of King Gondophares, gives more credit to our theory.

1.1.4 Jewish presence at Barygaza

Our next point of discussion is the presence of a Jewish girl at the banquet in which the apostle and Haban took part. The legend of the marriage feast is described in different ways in different editions and versions of our story. In the *Ath* we read that the hand of the cupbearer was brought to the banquet hall by a dog after it had been torn off by a lion. On seeing it, the flute girl, who was of Jewish origin, fell at the feet of the apostle, for she alone had understood the apostle forewarning the incident when this cupbearer slapped him on his cheeks. According to the *Ath,* it is the Jewish girl who had been first converted by the apostle to his faith[65]. She was instrumental in converting the king and other people. At the end of the first act we see her weeping over the departure of the apostle without taking her with him[66].

Now our question is, how come a Jewish girl in this port city of India? To find an answer, let us first see if it were possible for the Jews to be present at the west coast of India in the first century A.D. It was possible considering the following facts – the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem, the establishment of *pax romana*, the pre-eminence of the port of Barygaza as an international trade centre and the identity of the Jews as great commercial people. So there may be nothing astonishing about

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65 In fact the apostles were all first sent to preach among the Jews. Here there may be an echo of this traditional belief. The apostle to India also might have followed the routes in India where there were supposed to considerable Jewish presence. The Jews were primarily business people and if they were already present in India in the first century AD, it is quite natural to suppose that they were also present in the port city of Barygaza.

66 *Ath* I, 16.

this girl at the banquet in the palace of one of the Andhra kings[67]. Slave girls were taken to India by the western traders as gifts to the native kings. Among the lists of imports to Barygaza described in the *Periplus*, we read among others, as gifts for the king, costly vessels of silver, singing boys, fine wine and *beautiful maidens for the harem*[68]. And it is to be specially noted that it was only to Barygaza these girls were taken. No other place is mentioned by *Periplus* as receiving girls for the harem. According to *Periplus* these girls came from Persia[69]. Strabo also testifies to this presence of Jewish girls at the palace of the kings of Gujarat[70].

It is believed that Jews were present in the West coast of India from the time of diaspora, though we do not have evidence to prove it. But Jews known as *Bene Israel*[71], were present at many of the places at this coast and they are still to be found in one or two settlements[72]. We do not have the exact date of their arrival in India. There are many traditions about the origin of these *Bene Israel* of the Konkan region. Their customs and traditions point to a very ancient origin[73]. It is a belief among

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67 " ... if Habshis are still found in Janjira, little surprise need be felt if a Hebrew slave girl is described as living at the court of those Andhra kings", ZACHARIAS, *The Indian Christians of Saint Thomas and Bartholmoeo*, 148.

68 SCHOFF, *Periplus*, 49.

69 SCHOFF, *Periplus*, 49.

70 Strabbo 82, 18. "La rencontre, pour être surprenante, n'en est pas moins conforme aux vraisemblables. Les jeunes musiciennes d'origine occidentale étaient aux témoignage de Strabon un article d'importation assure de plaire dans l'Inde ; elles ne s'y distinguaient pas professionnellement des *jeunes filles bien faites destinées a la débauche* que les trafiquants grecs offraient, avec des instrument des musiques, aux rois des ports du Guzerate", S. LEVY, "Notes sur les Ind-Scyhtians", *J A*, 58-61.

71 The word means Sons of Israel.

72 At present these people are settled at Thana near Bombay. They number about 5000 people all others having returned to Israel and migrated to English speaking countries. Various studies had been done on these Jews of the Western coasts of India. The following works are quite useful : J.I. BENJAMIN, *The Bene Israel of India*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1984; K. NATHAN, *Studies in Indian Jewish Identity*, New Delhi, 1995; K.H.SAMUEL, *History of Bene Israel*, Jerusalem, 1937 (This book was written in 1897 and was published only in 1937); S. SAMUEL, *Bene Israel of Maharashtra State*, Bombay, 1963.

73 « D'après eux, leur arrivé en Inde remonte à des temps très reculés, soit avant la destruction du second Temple. Leur bateau aurait fait naufrage tous près d'une petite

these Jews that they came to India before the destruction of the second temple. It is assumed from the fact that they were ignorant of many Jewish events and practices, knew nothing of the Hanukkah festival and the ninth of Ab fast[74]. They were equally ignorant of the Jewish events between 200 and 300 A.D. They are supposed to belong to the tribes of Asher and Zebulon, who were from the time of King Solomon the navigators of the Jewish people. The mariners who used to visit India were once shipwrecked on the Indian coasts not very far from Ophir[75]. This Ophir, as we have seen in the first chapter, is the present Surat not very far from Bombay. And Surat is close to Broach (Barygaza).

Added evidence to the possible likelihood of the marriage feast having taken place at Barygaza is the mention of a vast forest area just near to this port city on the right side of the river Narbada. In the *Historical Geography of Ancient India* we read, " there was a forest in this sea port town called Korinta. It was on the banks of Narmada. Jina Suvrata visited it for instructing Jita satru who was then engaged in horse sacrifice"[76]. If we take into consideration this large forest just near to the royal palace at least one of the legendary elements of the story of the marriage feast will vanish into thin air. Other wise one is quite logical in asking from where comes this lion in to the vicinity of a royal palace.

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localité, Navgaon. Ce village est localisé près de deux petits îlots rocheux, Henry et Kenery (non loin de l'ancien port de Cheul). A l'exception de sept hommes et sept femmes, tous les passagers auraient péri et les livres de prières ainsi que le rouleaux de la Torah auraient disparu, emportés par les flots. Les naufragés auraient été enterrés par les survivants sous deux petits monticules de terre qu'aujourd'hui encore les Bene Israël considèrent comme le premier cimetière juif de Konkan ». M. ZETLAOUI, *Shalom India Histoire des communautés juives en Inde*, Imago, Paris, 2001, 210.

74 When the existence of a Jewish community in India first attracted public attention in the 18th century, the group still adhered to such characteristic Jewish practises as circumcision, observance of the Sabbath, certain dietary laws, and celebration of some important major festivals such as Rosh Hoshana (New Year), Yom Kipur (Day of Atonement), Pesah (Passover), and Purim (Feast of Lots). *E B*, Macropedia I, 973.

75 M. ZETLAOUI, *Shalom India. Histoire des communautés juives en Inde*, 212.

76 B.C. LAW, *Historical Geography*, 279.

1.1.5 Sandruk-Andrapolis = Barygaza: a critical appraisal

Now let us clarify better our arguments with the help of a comparative table. We have enumerated in two columns the references of Sandruk in *Ath* and Barygaza in classical literature.

Table I. Sandruk and Barygaza

Sandruk or Andrapolis in *Ath*	Barygaza in the Classical literature
A great trade centre to which ships from the west very often came.	The most important trade centre of the early centuries at the West Coast of India, in the present state of Gujarat. All commodities of the inland were directed to it for trade with the West from 42-50 A.D.
A royal and port city to which the name Andrapolis or Sandruk was attributed.	It was the royal port city of the Andhra Kings, who had the dynastic title *Satakarnis.*
Had some kind of communication with the King of India – Gondophares.	It had maintained trade relations with the regions of Indus and was dynastically subordinated to the kingdom of Indo-Parthians of whom Gondophares was the greatest.
There was a Jewish slave girl at the royal banquet.	This was the only place mentioned in the *Periplus* as having received Jewish slave girls as gifts for the king. Jews were present in the Konkan coast from early times.
There was perhaps a forest near the royal palace, which accounted for the presence of a lion near the royal palace.	Near this port city there was a large forest called Corintha.

A close examination of the chart reveals to us how closer both the accounts do come. All these make us believe that the author of the *Ath* had a first hand knowledge of the place where he places the first landing of the apostle in India. He does not describe it in detail; he does not make mention of the surroundings of the royal palace; but he seems to be sure about the historical, geographical and political situations of the palace. The reason for this vagueness may be explained, as we have already said, in the intention of the author, to instruct the readers in the Christian teachings, as he believed them to be. So, there was no place in his writings for historical and geographical accuracies.

Thus we come to the conclusion that, as the "Andhra Kingdom extended from the Telugu country proper right across India to Nasik and beyond, where Andhra Kings ruled as 'Lords of the West', one of whom was famous as Maecaenas[77] of ancient Maharasthra literature"[78], Andrapolis and its description in the *Ath* fits perfectly such a place as Barygaza. Our proposition, Barygaza as the Sandruck Andrapolis of the *Ath,* is well supported by internal and external evidences. Both internal and external evidences, which we have unearthed in this part of our study, help us to reach a conclusion that the first city of India or the city of the first India where the apostle is said to have made his first Indian convert is the port city of Barygaza as mentioned in *Periplus* and Strabbo or the modern Broach on the West coast of India in the present state of Gujarat. But do we have additional evidences, namely, the presence of Christians in this city or around it? We will deal with this question in the next chapter.

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77 This Maecaenas was a well-known figure in the early Indian literature. See V.A. SMITH, *Early History*, 208.

78 ZACHARIAS, *The Churches of Sts Thomas and Barthalomew*, 148.

2 CITY OF THE 'KING OF INDIA'

From Barygaza Thomas and his companion made their way, most probably by land route[79], to 'the city of the king of India', their destination. To which direction did the apostle and Haban go from the port of Barygaza? Where did this king of India live? Was he a legendary character as Prester John of the late medieval centuries[80]? From the *Ath* we merely know that the name of the king to whom the apostle was sent by Jesus was Gudnaphar[81]. Where in India ruled this Gudnaphar, the 'king of India'? 'Of India' cannot mean the whole of India. In the first chapter we have seen that for the Persian and Syriac writers of the third century A.D, India meant the North Western regions of India[82]. So, this 'king of India' of the *Ath* should be searched only in this part of India.

We cannot get much help from the *Ath* itself, as it does not furnish us with any indication as to which direction the apostle and Habban directed their steps. But from the story we

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79 "Von dieser Seestadt aus trat er auf dem Landwege die weiterreise an den Hof des parthischen Fürften an". J. DHALMANN, *Die Thomas Legende,* 51.

80 Prester John was a legendary figure said to have ruled in a royal city in India. He was a Christian king and there was a letter circulated in the West in his name. It contained the prosperity of his kingdom. "In 1165 a letter from 'Prester (i.e. presbyter) John', who ruled from the 'tower of Babel to the sunrise', began to circulate. It was an obvious fabrication of western origin, but was wishfully believed at a time of ebbing Christian fortunes in the Holy Land. In the 13th century a more exact knowledge of the Mongols, e.g. from the Franciscan missionaries, made it clear that there could be no such Christian prince in Asia. The idea, however, persisted and accordingly Presrer John was relocated in India, or – as the latest form of the legend – Ethiopia". J. BOWKER, *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions,* 767. The letter had aroused the curiosity of the western minds and the extensive voyages and adventures in the direction of India we see in the late medieval centuries were all results of this curiosity. The Arrival of Vasco-da- Gama in 1498 at Calicut, Kerala, India, must also have attributed to this curiosity.

81 We write Gudnapahr here to do justice to the *Ath.* The name of the king in history is Gondophares. We wiil follow this spelling all throughout our work, but for this initial part where we are immediately concerned with the content of *Ath.*

82 It may be curious that Philostrogius in the Life of Appollonius of Tyana also calls the king of Taxila as the king of India.

know that Haban had been sent by king Gudnaphar of India to bring a carpenter to build a palace for him. So, logic dictates to us that they should have gone to the king Gudnaphar. But in which direction had they gone? We are in the dark. But we have a small piece of information in the story. We are told, at the end of the first act, that the newly married couple, together with the king and many people, joined the apostle in the new place as the news of him preaching in the city of India reached them[83]. So we conclude that it was a place that had kept some kind of communication, may be by means of the traders, with the city of Sandruk-Andrapolis, which we hold to be Barygaza. We have already seen how Barygaza had been maintaining commercial, geographic, political and historical relations with the countries of the Indus region. Moreover, the actual king of Barygaza was a contemporary of and a subordinate to Gondophares, the Indo-Scythian king of North West India. There did not exist such a communication with the southern regions of India. So our enquiry takes us to the Indus delta, to the kingdom of Gondophares.

2.1 KING GONDOPHARES AND HIS COUNTRY

Gudnaphar, had sent Haban to fetch an expert architect to construct a palace for him[84]. Thus the final destination of

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83 *Ath*, I,

84 In the Malayalam *margamkalipattu* we see the King wishing to build a temple like that of King Solomon of Jerusalem and sending Haban to fetch an architect. According to a version of the story which describes the pictures on the stained window glasses at the Cathedral of Tours in France (11th century) the king wanted to build a palace similar to those of the Romans. "Mon maître m'envoie pour que je lui amène des ouvrières experts dans l'art de bâtir, afin de faire construire des édifices semblables à ceux des Romains". J. MARCHAND, (membre de la Société Archéologique de Touraine), *Verrières du Chœur de l'Eglise métropolitaine de Tours Cathédrale*, Venve Didion, Paris, 1849, 72. And when we understand it in this way that Gondophares wanted to build a palace in the style of the Romans we can understand the need of sending his trade commissioner to the West to get an architect. Otherwise India at that time had no shortage of architects. See also GERMANN, *Die Kirche der Thomaschristen*, Gutterglon, 1877, 26.

the apostle was, as far as the story of the *Ath* was concerned, 'the king of India', Gudnaphar. History knew nothing of this king in India, but for the *Ath,* till recent times. He was spoken of only in connection with the apostle Thomas. But he should have been a historical person. Otherwise the author of the *Ath* writing in the first half of the third century A.D., basing himself on the Indian subcontinent of the first century A.D., would not have thought of this name. Now we know that this king is a historical person as numismatic, epigraphic and archaeological studies have brought forth immense amount of evidence for the existence of this king in the North Western province of India. Till the second half of the 19th century the name remained a mystery, perpetuated only by the mention in the *Ath.*

2.1.1 A leap in to light: discovery of the coins of Gondophares

Archaeologists unearthed in the mid nineteenth century great lot of history concerning the northwestern regions of India. It was the great numismatic discoveries that helped the historians to re-write or rather to write the history of these regions of the first centuries before and after Christ. A great number of coins were discovered all bearing the name of Gondophares, but in varied forms. In one side of the coins there were inscriptions in Greek and on the reverse side they were in *kharoshti*[85]. It all began in 1834 when some coins were

85 "Eine Münze mit parthischem Königstzpus trägt nur eine griechische Inschrift mit dem Namen Undopheres (der erste Buchstabe wohl wie asperiertes Ypsilon auszusprechen); die übrigen tragen auf der Bildseite eine griechische Legende (Undopherres, Undopherros, Gondophares, Gondopharos, Dondophares, Gondoapharos), auf der Rückseite eine indische in Karoschti-Schrift (die Genetiv-Form von Guduphara,Gudapharna, Gundaphara, Gundapharna). A. VÄTH, *Der Hl. Thomas der Apostel indiens*, Aachen, 1925, 25. Kharoshti was the form of writing in the North West India. It could be the Prakrit, the ancient form of Sanskrit. For more details see, A.L. BASHAM, *The Wonder that was India*, Delhi, 1998 (New edition), 397. This work deals extensively with the ancient Indian culture, civilisation, languages and kingdoms.

unearthed from Kabul province by Masson[86]. The credit of first drawing the attention of scholars to the connection between the coins of Gondophares and the *Acts of Thomas* goes to Reinaud in 1848[87]. From the special characteristics of the Greek letters of the legends on the coins it is assumed that the coins belonged to the first half of the first century A.D. These coins have been found in successive years from a large area such as Kabul, Kandahar, Seistan, and Western and Southern Punjab. All the coins bore the title *Αυτοχρατοῦ* which was normally used by the Parthian emperors from whom it might have been adopted by the Roman emperors. Coins not only of Gondophares but of his family members were also discovered[88]. Different specimens of these coins are preserved in different

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86 MEDLEYCOTT, 3. Many useful accounts regarding these excavations can be found. Here are a few of them. First of these works may be H.H. WILSON, *Ariana Antiqua, Antiquities and Coins of Afghanistan*, London, 1871. C.J. RODRIGUES, *Coin Collecting in Northern India*, Allahabad, 1894 ; E. THOMAS, *Essays on Indian Antiquities of late Sir James Prinsep*, 1858; For detailed study of the coins the following books are useful. V.A.SMITH, *Catalogue of Coins of Indian Museum*, Oxford, 1906 ; E.J. RAPSON, *Indian Coins*, Strassburg, 1897 ; *Catalogue of Coins of Andhra Dynasty*, British Museum, London, 1908 These deal with the coins of the Andhra kings only); A. CUNNINGHAM, *Coins of Indo-Scythians, Sakas and Kushanas*, London, 1888. P. GARDNER, *Catalogue of the Coins of Greek and Scythian kings of India*, ; A. CUNNINGHAM, "Coins of Indian Buddhist Satraps with Greek Inscriptions", *JASB*, 1854.

87 REINAUD, *Mémoire géographique, historique et scientifique sur l'Inde (Mémoires de l'Institut National de France*, vol. XVIII, II, 1849. "Now the Acts of the life of St Thomas which are extant both in Greek and Latin mentioned a king named Gondophares. According to these Acts of St Thomas, being at Jerusalem, embarked at the nearest port, and arrived at the coast of the Peninsula of Hindostan. Thence he travelled into the interior, and visited a king named Gondaphores who embraced Christianity; and after that he went to another province of India and received the crown of martyrdom. It will be seen that this narrative is in no way compatible with that transmitted by tradition, and indicated also by archaeological monuments". This translation of the French text is from E. KENNET, *St Thomas the Apostle of India*, Madras, 1882, 20.

88 "There were other types all much worn out and very poor, showing that they enjoyed extensive circulation. The name of the King is Gondophares. His nephew was Abdagases. A relative of his was Sasan and another relative was Orthagnes. Others who were probably related to him were Sanabares and Pakores". C.J. RODRIGUES, *Coins Collecting in North India*, Allahabad, 1894, 27.

museums and libraries of the world, such as British Museum, Bibliotheque Nationale de Paris, Berlin Museum, Lahore Museum and National Museum, Calcutta. All of them speak clearly of a historical person who held different kinds of titles and who considered himself worthy and powerful enough to issue coins in his name. They speak of a king Gondophares or names similar to it, who was known to be or who claimed the title *autocratos* or the king of king as the *kharoshti* inscription means. A closer analysis of the *kharoshti* legends of the coins brings to our notice a gradual evolution of the titles adopted by the king. We can list at least nine different types of legends in these coins. We make a list of them.

Maharaja Gondopharasa

Tradasa devavradasa

Apratihatassa devavratasa

Maharaja tratarasa Gondopharasa

Mahadramiasa apratihatasa Gudupharnasa

Maharaja rajarajasa mahatasa Gudupharasa

Maharaja rajadhiraja tratarasa devavratasa Gudupharnasa

Maharaja rajaraja mahatadramia devavrata Gudupharnasa

Maharaja rajadhiraja mahatadhramikasa apratihatasa devahatasa Gondopharnasa

We notice here nine different titles attributed to one and the same king, which is written in a slightly different manner, namely Guduphara, Gondopharna, Gundopharana etc. The various titles may be reconstructed as follows: maharaja, rajaraja, rajadhiraja, tratara, apratihata, devavrata, mahadramia, mahatadramita, devahata.

Various conclusions may be derived from an analysis of these titles of the king as we see them on the coins.

i) These coins belong to a wide range of time, as these titles cannot be adopted by the same person in a short period of time.

ii) They belong to the same person who assumed different titles in different occasions of his reign.

iii) The king named in the coins had made numerous conquests and these titles were assumed after those conquests which he considered made him worthy of them.

iv) The coins were put into circulation to commemorate the victories of the king. All these make Gondophares a great king who had made extensive conquests and established a great empire of his own in the North West India which included modern Punjab, Pakistan and Afghanistan.[89]

These coins unmistakably reveal a hidden history of India. When they are studied together with other coins of the same type, we are enabled to construct the early history of India in a better and more comprehensible manner. What is more important to our study is the fact that Gondophares, the hero of the *Ath*, so far known only through the story of the apostle Thomas, is learned to have really existed in history. His reign becomes a historical reality clearing the mist of doubts and curiosities of centuries. The study of the coins showed that he might have ruled in the first half of the first century after Christ. This is calculated from different criterions. First is the peculiar type of Greek characters used on the coins, especially sigma, omicron, epsilon, and omega[90].

These particularities of the coins help us to date them between the years 10 and 40 AD[91]. They were minted during

89 We will speak of these conquests in our next chapter.

90 See J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, 32.

91 L. BACHHOFER, "On Greeks and Sakas in India", *JAOS*, 1941, 223. "From a study of the coins themselves it was inferred that they were struck about 40 or 50 A.D.. ... What is so probable than as Thomas, in obedience to the Saviour's last parting words, should come to India by that route? The coins of Gondophares are found in

the first half of the first century AD. The title *autocratos* also helps us to date the coins around this period. This was a title adopted by the Roman emperor Augustus, but is first seen on the Indo-Persian coins in B.C. 76. The "contention is that the Augustan title took its origin in India and the cultural route by which it reached Rome was through the Indo-Bactrian kingdoms"[92]. We may also note that all the Indian kings of that time always preferred to use these titles. About these titles adopted by the Indo-Parthians the following observation is made by Banerjee :

> The Western Punjab seems to have formed an integral part of the Parthian dominion for a few years. But during the trouble which ensured upon the death of Mithridates I, about 136 B.C., a chieftain named Maues made himself king of Taxila (120B.C.) and enjoyed practical, if not nominal, independence and assumed the title "Great king of Kings" (*Basileos basileon megalon*)"[93].

Thus these coins bring to light the life of the king who was described, by popular traditions, in connection with the mission of the apostle Thomas.

> The evidence is entirely numismatic and its bearing may be summarised as follows: The numerous varieties of coins of this monarch, copied as they are from so many previous issues, show that he ruled over a very extensive dominion;

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the Northern Punjab, but there is one type which seems to be found only near Kandahar. They are very numerous, and this argues that Gondophares reigned a long time. If the king of this name who reigned in Kandahar is the same as the one who reigned in Peshawar valley, his kingdom was extensive... Here we have a group of , with not only a family likeness, but with a monogram of unvarying form on the coins of the different kings, all telling us something about the king who murdered an apostle of Jesus Christ". C.J. RODRIGUES, *Coin collecting in Northern India*, Allahabad, 1894, 27. Here the last part of the citation is born out of the ignorance or the misunderstanding of the *Ath*, we think. Because, according to *Ath*, it was not Gondophares but Mazdai who murdered the apostle.

92 J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the dark*, 36.

93 G.N. BANERJEE, *Hellenism in Ancient India*, New Delhi. Mittal Publications, 1995, 140.

> and the fact that these varieties are imitated from the currencies both of the family of Vonones and the family of Maues, leads us to the conclusion that he ruled over both the earlier kingdoms of the Pahlavas and the Sakas[94].

Thus the argument so far is clear. There was mentioned the name of an Indian king in the narrative of the story of the apostle Thomas in all its versions and this king was known only in connection with the apostle till the discovery of the coins bearing his name in 1834 and the subsequent findings in the north western parts of India. Now we know that there existed a king named Gondophares in India and he was an Indo-Parthian, which explains his Iranian name, who had his capital at Taxila and who ruled over a vast domain from 21- 51 A.D.

2.1.2 *Takht -i -Bahi* Inscriptions

The inscriptions of Takht-i-Bahi are yet another important document connected with Gondophares. It was discovered at a place called Takht-i–Bahi, a little North East to Peshawar, in 1872 by a certain Dr Bellow and donated to the Lahore museum. The discovery of the inscription is detailed in the Trubner's Records of June, 1873:

> The inscription if not the stone, was discovered by Dr Leitner, who after many useless attempts, finally and after much labour succeeded in restoring the whole of the inscription. Dr Bellow had discovered a stone on which only IX was visible, and had abandoned it at Hoti Murdan, in Dr Johnson's compound. Several years afterwards, in 1870, he authorised Dr Leitner to take away anything he might have left at Hoti Murdan. Dr Leitner, after personal inspection, got the stone carried down to Lahore by bullock-cart, and there got the inscription both lithographed and photographed.... The discovery of the stone therefore belongs

94 E.J. RAPSON, *Ancient India, from the earliest times to the first century A.D.*, 145.

to Dr Bellow and that of the inscription to Dr Leitner[95].

It is thought to be a memorial stone used perhaps as a corner stone for some building. Dr Cunningham, after studying the inscription on this stone carefully gives the following transcription of it[96]. The initial numbers stand for the lines of the inscriptions.

Table VII. *Takhti bahi* inscription 1

1. Maharayasa Gudupharasa vasha 20+4+2
2. Sam : satimae 100+3 vesakhasa masasa divase
3. 4 Imana
4. Parvata
5. E Naspapa
6. Pitu puyae

He gives the following rendering to this complicated reading of the inscriptions.

> In the 26th year of the great king Guduphara, in the samvat year three and one hundred (repeated in figures 100 + 3), in the month of Vaisakh, on the 4th day for his own religious interest and the religious merit of his mother and father[97].

We have in this inscription the name of a king and the reigning year of this king in connection to another year. Here we note for that the name of the King is the same as that of the coins.

Here below is another transcription, made by Senart, a French man, of this same inscription. It differs a little bit from the earlier one, but the essense is the same.

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95 *I A*, II, 1873, 242

96 "I have repeatedly examined it in different lights and have made numerous impressions of it, from which, with the aid of a large photograph, I have prepared the accompanying copy", A. CUNNINGHAM, *Archaeological Survey of India Reports*, 1872-73, vol. 5, 58.

97 A. CUNNINGHAM, *Archaeological Survey of India Reports*, 1872-73, vol. 5, 59-60.

Table viii *Takht - i – Bahi* inscription 2

1. Maharayasa gudupharasa vasha 20.4.1.1.
2. Sambadhae ticatamae 100.3 vecakhassa masasa divasae
3. Pamcamae 5 .... Pade ....misa goyanasa
4. Pa.a aya dha . nasa pa .... Miraboyanasa
5. E. nakapasa puyae madu
6. Pidupuyae

He reads the whole passage in this way,

L'an 26 du grand roi Gudupharas, 103 du comput continu, le cinquième jour du mois Vaiçakha ... en l'honneur de ... en l'honneur de ses père et mère[98].

Now let us try to analyse these renderings in a better way, adding another reading offered by a scholar called Dawson.

Table IX. Different readings of *Tahkti Bahi* inscription

Senart	Cunningham	Dawson
L'an 26 du grand roi Gudupharas, 103 du comput continu, le cinquième jour du mois Vaiçakha ... en l'honneur de ... en l'honneur de ses père et mère.	In the 26th year of the great king Guduphara, in the samvat year three and one hundred 100+3, in the month of Vaisakh, on the 4th day.	In the 26 twenty-sixth year of the great king Gudupharasa, on the 7, seventh day of the month of vaisakha[99].

A comparative study of these readings makes one thing clear: in spite of the apparent differences in the renderings, all of them agree on the basics. This agreement is more on the dates inscribed on the stone. The inscription speaks of two

98 M.E. SENART, " Notes d'epigraphie indienne", *J A*, vol. 15, 1890, 118-119.

99 J. DAWSON, *Trubner's Record*, June, 1871.

dates: one, the reigning year of the king and the other the actual year of the then era (*Samvat*). All agree that 26th year of Gondophares' reign and the 103rd year of the *Samvat* is one and the same. This stone might have been erected as a sign of thanksgiving for some favours received, by a pious Buddhist[100]. The date in which he wrote was the 103rd year of the *samvat,* and it was the 26th year of reign of the great king Gondophares. This showed that the king Gondophares really had a long tenure and at the time of writing this inscription he had been ruling since 26 years. This *Samvat* is the *Vikrama era*[101] which began in 57 BC. Cunningham writes,

> I have already assumed that the *samvat* of Kanishka, Huvishka and Vasu-Deva, is the same as the present *Vikrama samvat* of India, as the dates of their inscriptions, if referred to this era, corresponds exactly with the known dates which have been ascertained from other sources[102].

The *samvat* 103 is A.D. 46 and according to the inscription A.D. 46 was the 26th year of the reign of

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100 A. CUNNINGHAM, *ASIR*, 59.

101 Prinsep writes about the vikrama era, "The principal era to which the luni-solar system is exclusively adapted is that of Vikramaditya, called Samvat, or vulgarly sambat. The prince from whom it is named was of the Tuas dynasty, and is supposed to have reigned at Ujjain 135 years before Salivahana, the rival founder of the Saka era, south of the Narbada river. The samvat era commenced when 3044 years of the Kali-yug had expired ; ie 57 yearsB.C., so that if any year, say 4925, of the Kali-yug be proposed, and the last expired year of Vikramaditya be required, subtract 3044 there from, and the result, 1881, is the year sought. To convert Samvat into Christian years, subtract 57; unless they are less than 58, in which case, deduct the amount from 58 and the result will be the date B.C.", E. THOMAS, *Essays on Indian Antiquities of the late James Prinsep*, vol. II, London, 1858, 157. "The Vikrama-Samvat era was started in B.C 57-6 to denote an important historical landmark in India of the first century B.C. and it came to be latterly called also 'Vikrama-Sakabdam', while the Saka era proper of 78 AD was particularised as the "Salivahana-Sakabdam'. The *Christusamhita*, a Samscrit epic composed by Mill and Vidyabushan in 1834, has the following verses where the Vikrama era has been used to date a biblical pre-Christian event – the appearance of Gabriel to Mary. *When fifty years of Vikrama Saka (era) had passed, Gabriel, the divine messenger, who had been sent by God appeared to Mary and said".* A.S. R. AYYAR, Martyrdom of St Thomas the Apostle", *J P A S B*, N S, vol. XXI,1926, 521-522.

102 A. CUNNINGHAM, *A.S.I.R.*, 60.

Gondophares and accordingly he might have begun to rule in 21 A.D.

But we have to accept that there had been great criticism of this interpretation of the inscription. Perumalil had strongly objected to it and argued at great length that the inscription has nothing to do with Gondophares[103]. But as Rooney comments, his objections are not really convincing as his own reading of the inscriptions[104]. And he fails equally to give a satisfactory alternative reading and explanation to the whole inscription.

2.2 TAXILA: THE CAPITAL OF GONDOPHARES

Gondophares is supposed to have held his sway over a large region in the north-western parts of India, which included the present Afghanistan, Pakistan and Punjab. As the coins were scattered around a large area and the legends of the coins very often call him *maharaja rajadhiraja*[105], he must have had a very extensive kingdom. From the coins it is assumed that the Indo-Parthian dynasty succeeded that of Vonones in Kandahar and Seistan. At one period they seem to have extended their territories eastwards into the Western Punjab and Sind, which at an earlier date, formed the kingdom of Maues[106].

The capital of the Indo-Scythians kings was Taxila, an ancient city of north-western India, which was from the 5th century B.C. a meeting place of Indian, Iranian, and Greek

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103 A.C. PERUMALIL, *The Apostles of India*, 68.

104 J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, 38.

105 This usual title of the kings in India means, great king, king of kings. "The numerous varieties of the coinage of this monarch, copied as they are from so many previous issues, show that he ruled over a very extensive dominion; and the fact that these varieties are imitated from the currencies both of the family of Vonones and the family of Mues, leads us to the conclusion that he ruled over both the earlier kingdoms of the Pahlavas and the Sakas", E.J. RAPSON, *Ancient India from the earliest times to the First century A.D.*, Cambridge, 1914, 145.

106 E. J. RAPSON, *Indian coins*, Strassburg, 1897, 15.

cultural influences and the remains of it had been unearthed and today lie scattered around almost six square kilometres, some thirty kilometres away from Rawalpindi in Pakistan. But Gondophares seems to have held court at Kabul and Peshwar also. Thomas might have met Gondophares at Taxila, at the archaeological site today known as Sirkap. Taxila, known in History as *Takshasila*, was a famous city of classical times, a great centre of Buddhist learning and a meeting place of three great trade routes[107]. Taxila was visited by Apollonius of Tyana some time around the same period, if the story told by Philostratus is credible[108]. The story, though it is fictitious, seems to have some kind of credibility in the light of the archaeological discoveries at Taxila[109].

The historical findings show that we have to believe the story of the *Ath.* If the author of the *Ath* based his story in a far away country and included in it the name of a King long before dead and gone, there should have been some elements that gave credibility to his story. That the apostle had been to the country of Gondophares, must have been known to his readers by some other documents either written or oral. Moreover there had been coins which carried the name of Gad, the brother of the King. All these show that the author of the *Ath* is telling us a true story and that Thomas must have been to Taxila in one of his missionary journeys. Gondophares and Gad had been historical personalities and Taxila had been very famous in those days.

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107 Its prosperity in ancient times resulted from its position at the junction of three great trade routes: one from Eastern India described by a Greek writer, Megasthenes, as the "Royal High way," the second from western Asia, and the third from Kashmir and Central Asia. When these routes ceased to be important the city sank into insignificance and was finally destroyed by the Huns in the 5th century A.D.. *E.B.*, 1082.

108 Apollonius is said to have visited Taxila on his way to the Himalayas in search of the Brahman philosophers around the year 19 A.D. Though the narrative is full of legends and fabulous descriptions scholars like Marshall and Cunningham say that Apollonius must have personally visited Taxila, for the descriptions in the book very well tally with the archaeological findings on the site.

109 J. MARSHALL, "Excavations at Taxila", *ASIAR* 1912-13, Calcutta, 1916, 1.

2.2.1 Geographical position and political history of Taxila[110]

Taxila, the great city of ancient Gandhara, situates itself at 33° 40′ N and 72° 50′ East[111]. Today the remains of this great city are situated immediately to the East and North East of Sarai-Kala, a junction on the railway, twenty miles north west of Rawalpindi, in Pakistan[112]. The valley in which they lie is watered by Haro river. Within the valley and within five kilometres of each other are the remains of three distinct cities. The southern most and the oldest of these occupies an elevated plateau, known locally as the Bhir Mound. Others are known as Sirkap and Sirsukh[113]. The Pali form of the name was *Taksasila*. This term might mean the rock of the Thakkas. *Sila* in Sankrit is rock. So the original meaning may be to hew or cut rocks. It may also mean the rock of Takshaka, the great Naga king[114]. The classical writers are unanimous in their accounts of the size and wealth of Taxila. Arrian describes it as " a large and wealthy city, and the most populous between Indus and Hydapsus"[115]. Strabbo also declares it to be a large city, and adds, that the neighbouring country was crowded with inhabitants, and very fertile. "Between Indus and Hydapsus is Taxila, a large city and governed by good laws. The surrounding country is thickly populated and extremely fertile as the mountains here begin to subside into plains"[116]. These accounts

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110 The following works are useful for a detailed study of the historical city of Taxila. A.H. DHANI, *The Historical City of Taxila*, Tokyo, 1986; S.R. DAR, *Taxila and the Western World*, Lahore; J. MARSHALL, *Taxila*, 3 vols, London.

111 N.N. BHATTACHARYA, *The Geographical Dictionary; Ancient and Early medieval India*, Delhi, 1991, 285.

112 J. MARSHALL, "Excavations at Taxila", *A S I Annual Report* 1912-13, Calcutta, 1916, 1.

113 N.N. BHATTACHARYA, *The Geographical Dictionary; Ancient and Early Medieval India*, 285.

114 J.W., MCCRINDLE, *Ancient India Described in Classical Literature*, 22.

115 Quoted by A. CUNNINGHAM, *The Ancient Geography*, 106.

116 J.W. MCCRINDLE *Ancient India as Described in the Classical Literaure*, 22.

agree exactly with the position and size of the ancient city near Shah-Dheri, the ruins of which are spread over several square miles. Panini and Patanjali mention this city in the A*stadhyaya* (4.3.93) and in the *Mahabhasya* (1.3.1.4.3.93) respectively[117]. It occurs in the Kalinga rock edict I. Pliny calls it a famous city and states that it was situated on a level plain at the foot of the hills. It figures prominently in the Buddhist and Jain stories[118].

Taxila was founded according to the Indian epic Ramayana, by Bharata, younger brother of Rama, an incarnation of the Hindu God Vishnu. The city was named after Bharata's son, Taksa, its first ruler. The Indian epic Mahabharata was first recited, according to tradition at Taxila at the great snake sacrifice of the king Janamejaya, one of the heroes of the story[119]. Alexander the Great had been there in the fourth century B.C[120]. At the time of Macedonian invasion in 326 B.C. Taxila was a very rich and flourishing city and it was ruled by Ambi (Omphis) who is generally called by his dynastic title Taxiles. He surrendered himself and his kingdom unreservedly to the great conqueror. "At the time of Alexander's accession the wealth of Taxila is said to have amounted to 36 kotis, or 360 millions of some unnamed coin, which, even if it was the silver tangka, or sixpence, would have amounted to nine crores of rupees. It is probable that the coin intended by the Indian writer was a gold one, in which case the wealth of this city would have amounted to about 9 or 100 millions of pounds"[121].

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117 B.C. LAW, *Historical Geography of India*, Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1984, 129-130.

118 B.C. LAW, *Historical Geography of India*, 129-130.

119 See "Taxila", *E.B.*, 1083.

120 The Indian expedition of Alexander lasted for three years, from May 327 B.C when he crossed the Hindukush, to May 324 B.C., when he entered Susa. V.A. SMITH, *Eearly History*, 110. His conquest of Taxila might have taken place in October 326 B.C.

121 A. CUNNINGHAM, *Geography of Ancient India*, n106.

After the break-up of Alexander's vast empire, a series of invaders had taken over the region around Taxila. About eighty years after his time, Taxila was taken by the great Asoka who made it his residence while he held the vice-royalty of Punjab. Mauryan emperors of India added the northwestern territories to their empire in the third century B.C. Asoka (273-232 B.C.) was the greatest of these emperors[122].

Indo-Greeks succeeded the Mauryans early in the second century B.C. They carried traces of the blood of Alexander's troops. Just before the end of the 3rd century B.C. the descendants of the Maurya kings seem to have come into contact with the Bactrian Greeks and in the early part of the following century Taxila must have formed part of the Indian dominions of Eukratides. Some of these veterans had settled in colonies farther to the northwest, mixed with local populations, and produced a people who retained vestiges of Hellenistic civilization. They built some cities on the usual Greek plan of a grid, minted coins with Greek inscriptions, kept their Greek names, and produced, in considerably debased form, artefacts on the Greek model.

Then it was wrested by the Indo-Scythians, of whom Gondophares was the greatest. Indo-Parthians—Gondophares' people—drove the Sakas further south in the first half of the first century A.D. From the hands of Indo-scythians it passed over to the Kushans when they ultimately overthrew the last Indo-Greek kingdom of India[123].

2.2.2 Historical remains of Taxila

The historical remains of Taxila were unearthed after extensive archaeological excavations beginning from mid 19th

122 It was the Maurayan empire who for the first time brought under one rule the whole region of India.

123 The exact date of the Kushan invasion is not known. But it must have taken place sometime after the death of Gondophares (51A.D.).

century, and today they lie scattered in an area of six square kilometres, twenty kilometres away from Rawalpindi and Peshwar in Pakistan. The ruins of this great capital, which was one of the most ancient cities in India, lie at a distance of three day's journey to the east of Indus in the neighbourhood of a town called Kala-ka-Sarai[124]. They are scattered over a wide space extending about three miles from North to South, and two miles from East to West[125]. Marshall describes the exact location of the site in these words,

> The remains of Taxila are situated immediately to the East and North East of Saraikala, a junction on the railway twenty miles North West of Rawalpindi. The valley in which they lie is a singularly pleasant one, well-watered by the Haro river and its tributaries, and protected by a girdle of its hills – on the east and north by the Snow Mountains of Kashmir, on the south and west by the well-known Margalla range and other lower eminences[126].

Cunningham describes it as follows,

> The ruins of the ancient city near Shah-dheri, which I propose to identify with Taxila, are scattered over a wide space extending about 3 miles from north to south and 2 miles from east to west. The remains of many stupas and monasteries extend for several miles further on all sides, but the actual ruins of the city are confined within the limits above mentioned[127].

There are three sites at present; Bhir mound, Sirkap and Sirkush. Bhir mound covers the ancient city where Panini taught, Alexander was entertained and Asoka reigned as viceroy. It is situated at the left of the Tamra nala[128]. Sirkap

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124 J.W. MCCRINDLE, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature*, 33.

125 J,W. MCCRINDLE, *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature*, 33.

126 J. MARSHALL, "Excavations at Taxila", *ASIAR 1912-13*, Calcutta, 1916, 1.

127 A. CUNNINGHAM, *The Ancient Geography of India*, 111.

128 "Sur la rive gauche du Tamra nâla, Bhir Mound est la grosse bourgade assez fruste dont l'aspect sale et désordonné coqua Alexandre". F. TISSOT, "Taxila", *En Un*, 83.

was founded by the Bactrien or the Indo-Greek kings in the second century. B.C.. The Indo-Scythians or Indo-Parthians in the first century A.D. enlarged it, developed it and held it for centuries. This was the capital city of Gondophares and he might have encountered Apollonius of Tyana and St Thomas in this city[129]. The third city of Taxila, which extends to the north of the two other cities is dated in the second century A.D. and is built by the Kushans.

2.2.3 Taxila and the Acts of Thomas

The foregone study about Gondophares and his empire makes it clear that Taxila was the centre of affairs at the period in discussion. In the first part of this chapter while dealing with the royal city of Barygaza we had already seen that the two cities or at least the two regions had maintained political and commercial relations between them. So the route to Taxila from Barygaza was not quite strange for the Trade Commissioner of Gondophares who was accompanying the apostle. And when we think of the other apostles, who had also made their first destinations great centres of learning and culture, it is no wonder that the apostle to India selected the greatest centre of learning and civilisation of that epoch, Taxila, as his destination in India. As we have already seen Taxila at that time had really enjoyed the position of being a great centre of learning, with the Buddhist University and Jain centres of learning; it was a real meeting point of different trade routes and thus a cosmopolitan city where different cultures and civilisations met together.

There are many circumstantial internal evidences in the *Ath* itself to assume that the author had Taxila in his mind when

129 "Les rues ont large et bordées de boutiques. Les maisons spacieuses possèdent un certain confort. Des temples et des stupas s'élèvent dans la ville. ... Ailleurs on distingue, dans le ruines arasées, un palais aux pièces plus vastes qui rappelle les dispositions des palais iraniens, et sur la colline, derrière la citadelle, on imagine les vestiges du palais où, selon la légende, Gondophares reçut Thomas l'Incrédule". F. TISSOT, "Taxila", 83.

he wrote about the kingdom of Gudnaphar. The apostle met the king in the royal palace, which according to the *Ath* was well inside the city walls[130]. This we know from the fact that the apostle was taken out of the city walls by the king so that he might see the place where the king wished the palace to be built. Thus the author of the *Acts* seems to have known that the palace of the King was inside the wall. And as Farquahar points out it might not be accidental that the archaeologists have unearthed a palace inside the city wall[131]. Today the visitor to the archaeological site of this old and splendid city can see the remains of it and as Rooney remarks, if the guide knows that you are a Christian he will be eloquent to speak about the meeting of the apostle with the king and he will even point out to you the exact place where the apostle stood[132]. The description also gives us the impression that there was a river flowing outside the city walls[133]. And today the Tamra Nâla flows outside the city of Sirkap[134].

Another important hint we get from the *Ath* is the king going to another place after giving the apostle a large sum of money necessary for the construction of the palace[135]. Gondophares, the great king of kings, had at least three capitals at the height of his reign. In the *Ath* we see the King going away to another place to return only after many months, perhaps even years.

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130 *Ath*, II, 1

131 Sir John Marshall in the reports of his excavations at Taxila describes this palace inside the city walls in vivid terms. See J. MARSHALL, "Excavations at Taxila", A.S.I. Annual Report, 1912-13, Calcutta, 1916, 8.

132 J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the dark*, 35.

133 "It was a meadow and there was plenty of water in it". *Ath* II, 18.

134 "Through the midst of the ruins runs a small stream, the Tabra-Nâla, which is manifestly the river called variously in different mss of the Pseudo-Kallisthenes the Tiberoboam, Boroam, Baroam, Tiberiopatamus, Tibernabon. The nabon of the last name is evidently, an error made in transcription for nâlon, the Greek form of Indian word nâla which means a rivulet". J.W. MCCRINDLE, *Ancient India as described in Ancient Literature*, 22.

135 *Ath*, II, 18.

Again when Thomas is asked to begin the work immediately he replies that he can begin only in the winter[136]. And we know that the voyage to the Indian coasts was with the help of the monsoon winds. A ship that would leave the Arabian coasts in the month of July[137] with the help of the monsoon winds would touch the western coasts of India in August, at the earliest[138]. And in India the winter begins only in December or earlier in November. And only in North India there is this difference of seasons.

If the story did not have a historical background and if the readers of the book knew that Thomas had gone to some places other than those mentioned in the *Ath,* how could the author of the *Ath* believe that any credibility would be given to his story? The following chart will make it clear how far the account of the *Ath* comes close to the actual Taxila.

Acts of Thomas	Indian History
A city in India or in the citerior India	A city in North West India, the capital of the Indo-Greeks and Indo-Parthians.
There was a river outside the city gate	The Tamra nala flows outside the gates of Sirkap
The royal palace was inside the city gates	Archaeologists discovered the remains of a palace inside the city walls.
It was one of the capitals of the king	Gondophares had three capitals: Taxila, Heart and Kabul
There was either a sea-route or a land route from here leading to Andrapolis (Barygaza)	There existed a land route connecting the Great Royal Highway of Taxila-Pataliputra via Ujjain. There was also a sea route as clear from the *Periplus*.

136 *Ath*, II, 18. Moraldi makes the following comment, "costruire durante l'inverno era giudicato un cattivo affare, ma Tommaso scelto questo periodo forze per aiutare i bisognosi, forze perché l'inverno era il periodo della preparazione al Battesimo, o forze tutto ha un significato simbolico profondo: l'inverno è il periodo della rinunzie

Thus as we have seen in the case of Barygaza, it seems that the author of the *Ath* had clearly in mind the vision of the city in India to which he sent the apostle. It was a place with which he was familiar, but which he did not care to describe in great detail.

2.3 ST THOMAS AND GONDOPHARES

These findings, taken together with the coins discovered, make Gondophares a really historical person, a great king who had begun to rule in 21 AD and had still been reigning in 46 AD. So, now comes the most important question. Is he the same king mentioned in the *Ath* as the king of India? He was the king of India in the sense that he had ruled over the large area of land beyond the Indus to which the Syrian and Persian writers very often gave the name India or Hindu. We have already seen that for these writers, especially the ecclesiastical writers of the third and fourth centuries, India meant only the present north West India. So when the author of the *Ath* wrote of the King of India, he must have normally meant the king that ruled over these parts of India. The actual king on the throne at the time under consideration was Gondophares, known as *maharaja rajadhiraja*, the great king, and the king who is lord over the kings. And when the story was composed, the Kushans were ruling these parts of India as Lords of India[139]. The fact that, in spite of it the author got the name correctly shows that Gondophares was a well-known name even after more than 200 years in a region where all the glories of his kingdom were destroyed by the very same people who were ruling the country now, namely the Kushans.

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e del dolore che prepara alla gioia pasquale". L. MORALDI, *Gli Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento*, 334.

137 Schoff in his commentary on the Periplus holds this view.

138 It was around this time that the discovery of Hipolytus' wind, which considerably shortened the duration of the sea voyage to India, was discovered.

139 Kushan empire was established in India by Kadphises I in about 50 A.D.

The inscription of Takht-i-Bahi dated 46 AD makes Gondophares a real contemporary of St Thomas[140]. And the readings of the coins would ascribe his death in 51 A.D. or even later. The visit of the apostle might have taken place in all probability in the same period. The Malabar tradition about the apostle makes him land at Cranganore at the Malabar Coast in 52 A.D. So both the traditions do not contradict themselves as far as the date of the arrival of the apostle in the proper region is concerned. Again, the visit should have taken place before the Kushan invasion that laid to dust the wealthy city of Taxila just after the death of Gondophares most probably around 51 A.D.[141] The crucifixion and the death of Jesus might have taken place in 29-30 A.D. Thomas must have laboured in and around Jerusalem and Alexandria and in Persia also for a considerable period of time before embarking for India. The whole journey to India from Alexandria might take, in the normal circumstances, at least six months[142]. His stay at Barygaza and the voyage from there also must have taken one year. From all these we may calculate that the visit might have taken place sometime around 44-45 A.D.

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140 "An inquiry of considerable interest has been raised with reference to the name preserved on the coins, so long veiled from European intelligence, in virtue of the almost literal identity it bears to the designation of the king mentioned, in certain old Church legends, as the ruling Potentate of India at the period of the mission of St Thomas the apostle. The coincidence in the appellations is certainly remarkable, though there is a defect in the primary authority for the statement, a difficulty in regard to the correspondence of the site of the kingdom, and a doubt as to the needful accordance of the epochs of the legendary and the numismatically certified monarchs, the latter of whom seems to belong to a date prior to our era; but, for the reconcilement of this last obstacle, there is a fairly open margin afforded by the successional coins, which in themselves suggest the question as to whether the name of Gondophares was not posthumously elevated into the rank of a dynastic title". E. THOMAS, *Essays on Indian Antiquities of Late Sir James Prinsep*, 214.

141 The Kushan invasion is said to have dealt with the vital blow to the nascent Christianity at Taxila. We will speak of it later in the third chapter of our dissertation.

142 Warmington calculates the possible duration of sea voyage in the first century A.D, from Alexandria to the Indian coasts in the following way.

Alexandria – Coptos (up Nile by boat with wind) ..... 12 days

Coptos – Berenice (by camel) .....12 days

There should have been some kind of relation between the first Christian missionaries in India and this said king. If the author in the third century, at a time when people still possibly spoke about the apostles or of the people who might have seen and spoken with the apostles, decided to make an Indian king the hero of his story and made him the contemporary of the apostle Thomas, it should have been with sufficient reason. At Edessa, the traditions about their apostle should have been quite widespread, a hypothesis which is all the more strengthened by the tradition that the body of the apostle Thomas was kept in the Church at Edessa after being brought from India to which Eprhem gives his testimony[143]. Under this circumstance the author of the *Ath* could not simply invent his story and his heroes. He should have had facts before him and he based himself on these facts. The king Gunduphara of the *Ath*, then, could be none other than the Gondophares of the Indian coins, which most probably were still to be seen in the regions at the time of composing the story[144]. If the historians today make use of the coins and inscriptions to write the history of this king, we can equally hold that the same coins and inscriptions were available to the scrutiny of the writers, and in better conditions, in the first half of the third century or even before. And they should have been more legible and

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Berenice (mid-summer) - Ocelis or Cane (evidently with delay) ...30 days

Ocelis – Muziris with monsoon (perhaps with delays) ..... 40 days. Here the time is calculated to the voyage to Muziris. Voyage from Cane to Barygaza would also be the same or even shorter duration. E.H. Warmington, *The Commerce between Roman Empire and India*, 50.

143 From Ephrem we hear for the first time that the relics of the apostle Thomas are brought to Edessa from India. See Ephrem, *Caramina Nisibana*,42, 1-4. The pilgrim Egeria also bears testimony to the presence of the relics at Edessa.

144 "Ainsi tout devient a savoir si le premier rédacteur de la légende de St Thomas n'a pu connaître que par cette légende même le nom du roi Gondophar. Soit. Veut-on dire qu'une donnée historique dont, au XIXème siècle, ils ne subsistent plus guère de traces écrites, n'en avait pu laisser au III ou IV siècle et qu'en l'absence de document écrit cette donnée devait avoir disparu des lors de la mémoire des hommes", H. LECLERQ, « Inde », *D A C L*, Paris, 1926, vol. 13, col. 522.

comprehensible at that time. There should have been at his disposal so many other documents other than the coins to base his story around the said king. So there is nothing legendary or mythical in the story of the *Ath* as far as the name of the king is concerned.

But even if we accept that Gondophares of Taxila is the king of the *Ath*, what should have been the reason for the author to make him the hero of his story. Had there been any Christian presence in this region at the time of composing the story that prompted the author to justify its origin? We may think, in answer to this question, of the remark of Bardaisan of the Christians in Parthia. There had been Christians in these regions of India, as well as at Baryagaza and the adjoining regions in the first centuries of the Christian era. This presence of the Christians must have been a reason for the author to connect these places with the story of Thomas. (We will examine in detail the presence of Christianity in these regions and of the Christian antiquities in the next chapter). That the apostle was well received by the king is clear from the very fact that he was allowed to stay in the city for such a long time. On the contrary, we read in the story of Apollonius that he and his companion had been granted initially permission to stay only for three days and later when the king was pleased with his guests they received an extended permission. From the story of Apollonius we understand that foreigners were not allowed to stay longer in the city or at the least inside the city walls, according to the law of the country[145]. But Thomas had been allowed to stay long and preach his religion and it shows the religious tolerance the city enjoyed from the king. The fact that Taxila was a meeting place of different religions makes our belief still

145 Charpentier makes the following observation about this particular custom. "Personally I am at a loss to find out any Hindu authority for such a statement. Still, there may of course, have existed, some sort of time-restriction as strangers were apparently kept under close control, though they were provided in other ways". J. CHARPENTIER, *The Indian Voyages of Apollonius of Tyana*, Uppasala, 1934, 50.

stronger. There had been temples of Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Hindus at Taxila. So under this circumstance it would not have been difficult for the apostle to find a welcoming friend in Gondophares in the city and to receive freedom of travel and speech.

There is still another point to be considered. The brother of Gondophares, called Gad in the *Ath*, is also a historical person and coins bearing his name had been unearthed[146]. In the coins his name is Abadgases[147]. The Kharoshti legends on his coins read like this:

Maharajasa avadagasasa tradatasa.

Gandaphara bhrat putrasa maharajasa tradatasa Avadagasasa.

Let us quote Herzfeld:

> In the Saka empire, not the own son, but the son of the sister, was the successor, an institution indicating female inheritance and queer forms of marriage, as in the ancient Elam. The highest dignity after the king had the title 'the king's brother', that is, brother-in-law, consort of the king's sister, and father of the heir to the throne. He had the right to coinage. In the *Ath* the first to be evangelised is the king's brother, Gad, Guda of the coins[148].

In the light of this assertion we understand better why the brother of the king is an important character in the story of the *Ath*. This heir to the throne appears in another apocryphal book closely connected to the *Ath*, the *Transitu Mariae*[149]. Here

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146 This discovery of the coins of Gad was published in the *Examiner*, vol. LVII, no. 30, July 28, Bombay, 1906. Cunningham gives a few specimens of the coins of Gad in A. CUNNINGHAM, *Coins of the Indo-Scythians, Sakas and Kushanas*, London, 1888, 62-63.

147 The name Abadgades is said to be the genitive form of Gad. His name occurs also on a pedestal and an intaglio coming from the North West Frontier Province. H. HERAS, *The Two Apostle of India*, 7. The discovery is recorded in the *ASIAR* 1902-3, 167.

148 E.E. HERZFELD, *Archaeological History of Iran*, London, 1935, 64.

the name given is Abdanes, a short form of Abdagases as it appears on the coins. This apocryphal book, classified according to Levy "parmi les productions les plus anciennes du Christianisme"[150], reports briefly an episode surprisingly full of exactitudes. St Thomas while in India was informed of the demise of the mother of Jesus and was taken miraculously by the angels to Jerusalem. There he describes to the other apostles about his mission to the king of India,

> I went about the country of India and by the grace of Christ, proclaimed the gospel; the son of the sister of the king, called Abdanes, was about to be converted when the Spirit of the Lord spoke to me....[151]

This apocryphal book clearly states that Abdanes was the son of the sister of the king. And we have seen that in the Saka Empire the son of the sister was the heir to the throne and he was called brother of the king. He was about to be baptised by the apostle. In the story of the *Ath* we see that the king and

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149 *Transitu Mariae* is an apocryphal book dealing with the dormition of Mary and Thomas is depicted in the same way as in the episode (which accords him the title 'doubting Thomas')in the Gospel of John. As the story goes, the Holy Spirit informs the apostles, each in their proper mission fields, of the immanent departure of Mary, mother of Jesus, from this earth and bids them to come to her. After their arrival the apostles narrate their experiences in various countries of the world. The document belong to the 5th century A.D. Cf. "La dormizione della santa Madre di Dio, libro di S. Giovanni, il teologo" and "Transito in Syriaco", in ERBETTA, (ed.), *Gli Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento,*Casali, 1981.

150 S. LEVY, " Notes sur les Indo-Scythians", 34.

151 See the Italian translation of the text: "Poi rispose Tommaso: - Anch'io, avevo attraversato il paese degli Indi e per grazia di Cristo, la predicazione si era affermata, tanto che anche il figlio della sorella del re, di nome Labdano, stava per ricevere da me la confermazione nel suo palazzo, quando improvvisamente lo Spirito Santo mi disse: ..." *I Vangeli apocrifi*, a cura di Macello Crateri, con un saggio di Geno Pampaloni, . In another version of the same story words of Thomas is described in the following way, "allora il beato Tommaso si mise a raccontare loro che egli stava cantando messa in India (infatti era ancora rivestito degli abiti sacerdotali) quando, senza sapere che era volontà di Dio, venne trasportato sul monti degli Ulivi e vide ascendere in cielo il santissimo corpo della beata Maria e la pregò di dargli la sua benedizione, ed essa esaudì la sua preghiera e gli gettò la fascia, da cui era cinta". *I Vangeli apocrifi*, a cura di M. CRATERI, 171.

his brother were converted and baptised by the apostle. But, historically speaking, though we have proofs to show that the apostle was in Taxila we have nothing to prove that Gondophares became Christian, as it is said in the *Ath.* We have so far discovered no Christian symbols except some cross symbols, of which we are not sure of the Christian origin, from Taxila and around[152].

Thus we conclude with Charpentier,

> A Christian missionary belonging to the disciples of our Lord himself and called by the tradition St Thomas may have found his way, in the company of a merchant from the Punjab or from Kabul, to the realm of Gondophernes, a ruler of Iranian origin who between 19 and 45 A.D. was the overlord of North Western India and Afghanistan. .... That he converted Gondophernes and his house is, of course, a pious legend; but judging from the religious tolerance of that time, witnessed by the coins of the Kushanas and the ruins of Taxila, Gondophares may well have tolerated and even encouraged his missionary zeal[153]. Therefore we can, with sufficient reasons, say that the king mentioned in the *Ath* is the Indo-Parthian king Gondophares and it was to his capital at Taxila that St Thomas the apostle came, as we read in the *Ath.*

CONCLUSION

Our examination of the historical documents makes Gondophares a historical person. Our study of the *Ath* in comparison with geographical actualities places before us the possibility that the apostle might have visited Barygaza in the present Gujarat and Taxila which was the capital of Gondophares. Our account is in many ways coherent with

152 For example there is a Christian relic discovered at Taxila which is now called the Taxila cross. J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, 42- 44.

153 J. CHARPENTIER, "St Thomas the Apostle and India", 42.

historical, geographical and political realities of the time. So, it can be stated now that the visit of the apostle Thomas to North India remains a viable historical hypothesis. But can we stretch this hypothesis to a historically proven fact? It remains a hypothesis till we will have clearly dealt with the history of the two monarchical dynasties with which our hypothesis is concerned and till we will have discovered the remnants of ancient Christianity in those parts of India. Thus we are taken to our third chapter, namely verification of traditions in history.

Chapter III

Verification of Traditions in History

Where do traditions come in uniformity with the realities of the present times? Or in which or in what ways do the traditions become integrated into actual historical realities? We have so far analysed the various geographical and historical milieu in which the traditions of Thomas and about Thomas were acculturated in the soil of India. We have seen that the places mentioned in the tradition really belong to India, but including Pakistan and some parts of Afghanistan, and the personages, if not all, characterised in the tradition are really traceable in the history of India. Thus, our hypothesis about the North Indian mission of Thomas gets respectability and credibility. Yet there remains a lot to be verified before we can hold the hypothesis as a historically proven fact. As for the South Indian tradition about Thomas, we have a strong Christian community, which claims him as its Apostle, to substantiate it. Do there exist, or did there ever exist at any time in history, any such community anywhere in these places of North and North West India that can prove the veracity of the tradition? This chapter takes us to an investigation to find out whether these traditions have any historically provable and proven results in the form of communities that really bear his name or at least trace back their memories to the Apostle in any way.

1. Early missionaries to India: from Pantenus to Jordanus

We begin our inquiry with a study of the early missionaries to India. The first Christian missionary to India, as the tradition holds it, was the Apostle Thomas. But we are not yet sure of the historical viability of the tradition. Yet, we are sure about the possibility of some other early Christian

missions to India in the early centuries of our era. So, our first attempt in this chapter would be to find out what impression they give about the Christian presence in India at the time of their visit. We begin our survey with the story of the Alexandrian Pantenus.

1.1 THE INDIAN MISSION OF PANTENUS (189 A.D.)

Pantenus was a stoic philosopher who later became the head of the Alexandrian school of philosophy. He was also the master of Origen and Clement of Alexandria. Origen describes him as the first Christian who has fully availed himself of the stores of true learning and philosophy[1]. He is said to have come to India on mission in 189 A.D. The bishop of Alexandria, Demetrius, sent him to India at the request of the native Christians.

There are two early references to the mission of Pantenus in India: one is from the Church historian Eusebius[2] and the other is from the Church Father Jerome[3]. Jerome writes that Pantenus was sent to India by the Bishop of Alexandria, at the request of the Christians in India[4]. According to Eusebius, Pantenus is supposed to have discovered Christians in India who had in their possession a Hebrew Gospel of St Matthew, brought to them by St Bartholomew[5]. Jerome adds to this statement of Eusebius that Pantenus was sent to the India of the Brahmins. There are differences of opinions among historians whether it is the present India that Pantenus visited.

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1 Quoted by E.A. GORDON, *Asian Christology and Mahayana, A Reprint of the Century Old "Indian Church History" by Thomas Yeats, and a Further Investigation of the Religion of the Orient as Influenced by the Apostle of the Hindus and the Chinese*, Tokyo, 1921, 115.

2 EUSEBIUS, *Church History* V, 10. This translation is from the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 1, 224-225.

3 JEROME, *De Viris Illustribus* 36 (PL 23), col. 683.

4 JEROME, *De Viris Illustribus* 36 (PL 23), col. 683.

5 JEROME, *De Viris Illustribus* 36 (PL 23), col. 683.

Authors like Mingana, Medleycott etc reject this Indian mission of Pantenus. They are of the opinion that Pantenus never visited India and the land he is supposed to have gone is Arabia Felix or some other place. Harnack is of the opinion that the land so mentioned is Arabia or the Kingdom of the Auximites. But at the same time he holds that the field of mission of Thomas, as is explained in the *Acts of Thomas*, is the North Western parts of India. Stuart writes,

> The statement by Clement, derived presumably from Pantenus, that the Brahmins were those who obey the commandments of Buddha whom they honour as a god is quite conclusive. Where else than in India proper could a traveller from the West have got information that would cause him to join Brahmins and Buddhists together in this way? ... At the date when Pantenus is said to have visited India, Brahmins and Sramans, as the Buddhist ascetics were called, were working together in closest harmony ... . The fact that Pantenus associates Brahmins with Buddhists so correctly describes the condition of things then existing that it stamps his account as that of an eye witness[6].

This particular situation was very well visible only in North India under the Kushan kings (c. 50-225 AD). It was during the Kushan period of Indian history that Buddhism developed under the title Mahayana and Buddha began to be considered as a god[7]. At the same time Hinduism was also on the ascendancy. Under these political circumstances it is not inconceivable that the small minority of Christians found it hard to survive and they appealed for help from Alexandria.

Hosten suggests that Pantenus' journey to India must be reckoned as an established historical event[8]. The grounds for his assertion is the astonishing knowledge of Brahmanism and

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6 J. STUART, *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise*, 106-107.

7 J. KEAY, *India, a History*, London, 2001, 114.

8 H. HOSTEN, *Works of Hosten*, vol. 17, 206.

Buddhism shown by Clement of Alexandria, disciple of Pantenus. It is surprising that Clement is the only one of his time who shows himself so interested and so well-informed of the Indian religions. He must have had at his disposal account from first hand sources. In other words, for his great knowledge on Indian matters he was indebted to his master Pantenus[9]. Only in North India both systems of religion could have been studied accurately. Politically the emperors were doing everything to protect (or rather to get the protection of) Buddhism, the religion which was at the time creating waves in the whole country. Asoka was the greatest propagator of *Dharma* and later Kanishka tried to surpass the zeal of the former in supporting the religion. The Kushans were tolerant to all religions though they gave outright support to Budhhism. Later the Andhra kings also were no less tolerant to both the religious systems. Pantenus' missionary effort might have thus carried him to North India. German conjectures that Pantenus brought to Alexandria the knowledge of St Thomas' preaching in North West Frontier lands and that Origen, on the strength of this information, allotted Parthia to St Thomas[10]. This may well also be the reason why Clement attributes a natural death to Thomas. As his master was in North India he had not heard of the martyrdom of Thomas in South.

Here we may have to say something about this tradition of the Indian mission of Bartholomew[11]. There are just a few references that speak about this mission. The field of mission assigned to him in India by tradition is Kalliana, near Bombay[12]. But was Bartholomew really in India? The apocryphal book

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9 See A. VÄTH, *Der Heilige Thomas, der Apostel Indiens*, 74-75.

10 W. GERMAN, *Die Kirche der Thomaschristen*, 51.

11 This question about Bartholomew is well studied by J. PERUMALIL, *Apostles of India*. We can also see another study, though not much documented and entirely dependent on the former in J. HERAS, *The Two Apostles of India*,

12 See A.C. PERUMALIL, *The Apostles of India*, 71-92.

Martyrdom of Bartholomew assigns him Arabia for his mission field[13]. Abdias begins the story of Bartholomew with the statement that there are three Indias and Barthlomew went to India. But he does not tell to which of the Indias Bartholomew had gone[14]. Hosten suggests that in a vast country like India, it is not impossible that two Apostles did their missionary work[15]. But, it is a wild conjecture and a running away from the real issue. There is another suggestion that Bartholomew worked in South India[16]. But this also is not substantiated with credible facts. For the time being we see the Thomas tradition at the West coast of India is rivalled by the Bartholomian tradition. Can we reconcile these two?

Only Eusebius speaks about the mission of Bartholomew in India and that too just in connection with the visit of Pantenus and the finding of a Hebrew Gospel among the Christians of India[17]. This particular passage of Eusebius calls for close observation. To understand him better let us divide this passage into two. We will notice four statements in the first part: Pantenus is said to have gone to India; he discovered that

13 "Il aurait évangélisé: 1. la Lycaonie et Phrygie, d'après les Actes de Philippe, et d'après de Pseudo-Chrysostom (PG LIX, col. 495), 2. Le pays du Pont et du Bosphore, après le martyre de Barthélemy, passion conservée en latin et en grec, où le début qui parle de l'Inde est falsifié, 3. Les Indes, par quoi on entend, soit les Indes orientales, où il aurait apporté l'évangile araméenne de St Matthieu, d'après d'une information fait remonter à Pantène ». *Cath.*, I, col. 1270.

14 L. MORALDI, *Atti degli Apostoli*, 644.

15 H. HOSTEN, *Works of Hosten*, vol. 17, 206.

16 ZACHARIAS, "The Churches of Bartholomew and Thomas". Very recently Dhile also seems to hold this opinion. See A. DHILE, "Neues zur Thomas-Tradition", *Antike und Orient*, 66-67.

17 "The name of Bartholomew nowhere occurs, either in tradition or Church Histroy, except in that one passage of Eusebius, and a passage in Socrates, which is manifestly a mere echo of it. There is how ever an apocryphal account called the Martyrdom of Bartholomew, of much later date and which coincides in a great measure with what Pseudo-Abdias says of him: but its placing his sphere in India may be simply again a mere echo of Eusebius' passage which is under consideration." R. COLLINS, "Manicheans on the Malabar Coast", *IA* (1875), 317.

Christianity had been preached there before him; there were already Christians in India; and there was in their possession a Gospel of Mathew written in Hebrew characters. In the second part we see three more statements: Bartholomew had preached to them; he left them the Gospel of Mathew in Hebrew; and they preserved the gospel till the arrival of Pantenus. These two passages are connected with the conjunction "for". So the second part is just an explanation of the first and Eusebius might be giving his own explanation to the event. For Eusebius, the field of the mission of Thomas was undoubtedly Parthia, because he had heard thus from Origen. Thus he could not have imagined of Thomas on the Western coasts of India. But to explain the presence of the Hebrew Gospel that Pantenus had seen in India he had to bring in another apostle to this part of India and Bartholomew, as he was the Apostle of Arabia which was very often confused with India in those days, suited well to his purpose. When we connect it with our findings in the last chapter, we discover that there is nothing astonishing in the fact that there were Christians in India at the time of the visit of Pantenus. Thomas had already been there. So, would there be some reason in the indigenous suggestion that Pantenus himself might have misunderstood the local Christians who told him of Mar Thoma as their apostle and he in his ignorance of Syriac took it as Bartholamai[18]?

Let us come back to Pantenus. The historians of the Christians of St Thomas are always enthusiastic to illustrate that Pantenus visited Malabar and it is there that he found the Christianity and the Hebrew Gospel. There is little reason to hold such an opinion. If Pantenus had really been in South

18 It may be possible considering the fact that both Tholmai and Thoma would be almost similar to a stranger to the local languages. Bartholmai est un patrynome 'fils de Tholmai', dérive de l'araméen 'Tholmai' dans l'Ancient Testament (Num. XIII, 23) et 'Tholmaios' dans Josèphe (Antiquité judaique XX, 1,1) », *Cath.*, vol. 1, col. 1269.

India, his disciple Origen would not have allotted Parthia to St Thomas. Clement of Alexandria would not have spoken of a natural death of the Apostle Thomas, because they should have really heard from their master about the martyrdom of the Apostle in South India. Except for the Greek and Syriac versions of the *Acts of Thomas,* all other traditions about Thomas speak of his martyrdom in South India. In the *Acts of Thomas* itself the narration of the martyrdom may be considered as a later addition. As Pantenus was only in North India, he might have heard only of the mission of the Apostle in that part of India and his disciples drew from the information that their master furnished to them[19]. Another reason to place the arrival of Pantenus not in Malabar is linguistic. Pantenus spoke Greek and there is no proof to say that Greek was spoken or used in Malabar at the time when he visited India though there had been Greek merchants at the coast of Malabar[20]. In North India, on the contrary, we are sure that Greek was used at least in the royal courts as is clear from the coins of the Kushan kings. Kanishka's coins bear Greek legends both in script and language[21]. Thus we may conclude that Pantenus was not in South India. Then he must have been in North West India. Germann after considering all the pros and cons of the issue came to the conclusion that Pantenus, using the monsoon winds, came to the Gujarat Coast and from there made his way to

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19 "The source of Origen's information is also plain. The Christians of Alexandria met Haban and they realised that he was a Parthian Jew and also Trade Commissioner of the great Parthian king Gudnaphar, but they did not understand the complicated political situation in the East, nor had they realised that Haban actually resided in India. Thus Thomas sailed away with Haban to the East; but when at a later date the Alexandrian Christians were asked where Thomas had gone, they very naturally answered, " to Parthia". J.N. FARQUAHAR, *St Thomas in North India,* 319. We think of it as wildly romantic suggestion and we have no clear proof to say that Haban was a historical person, and that he was a Parthian Jew.

20 Voyage between Cranganore and Alexandria had been quite frequent at this time. But the bulk of the trade had been done through intermediaries. P. MALEKANDATHIL, "St Thomas Christians and the Indian Ocean", *ETJ,* October 2001, 183.

21 V.A. SMITH, *Early History of India,* 266.

North West India, crossed the Indus and returned to Alexandria via the Persian Empire[22].

So, it is most probable that Pantenus was in India and it was the north west India that he visited. "It would be far more natural to suggest that Pantenus went by land to Afghanistan and North western India, and that there he found some Christian communities who possessed a phalavi translation of the Gospel of Mathew in Armaic script, part of which he brought home with him"[23]. Jerome has added to Eusebius that it is in response to the appeal of the local Christians that Pantenus was sent to India. From where did these Christians come in 189 AD in this part of India, if an apostle had not visited them? It may be answered that they are the results of missionary enterprise by the visiting Syrian Christians traders. Then why did they, in time of disaster, not look to the Syrians for help?

Does the fact the Christians of India asked help from the Church of Alexandria tell us anything? We have seen in the second chapter that the port of embarkation of the apostle could be Alexandria. In that case Christians in India knew that their Apostle came to them from Alexandria and naturally at a time of disaster they would have looked at the church of that place for assistance. In the later history of the Alexandrian church, we meet an Indian priest going to the Patriarch Simon I (689-701) to get a bishop for his Church[24]. Though he had not succeeded in his endeavour, this particular incident throws light

22 W. GERMANN, *Die Kirche der Thomaschristen*, 64.

23 J. CHARPENTIER, "St Thomas the Apostle of India", 43.

24 In the 7th century an Indian priest reached Alexandria and requested the Coptic Patriarch Simon I (689-701) to ordain a bishop for the Indians. The Patriarch replied that he needed the order of the Amir, the governor of Egypt. But the Indian, as persuaded by some Gaianites and Phantaisiasts (a monophysite sect in Alexandria) approached their bishop Theodore. He readily ordained a man from Maryut bishop and two other priests and sent them to India. After twenty days' journey, they were caught by the guards and sent to Caliph Abd al Malik. The Indian priest escaped and returned to Egypt. The others had their hands and feet cut off by the order of the Caliph. Caliph sent orders to Abd ali Azis, the Amir to punish Patriarch Simon

on the condition of the Church in India. We know that by the 7th century the Indian Church had come definitely under the jurisdiction of the Persian church and the bishops from that Church were looking after the spiritual affairs of the Christians of India[25]. Under such circumstances how could a priest from India go in search of a bishop to Alexandria? Can we see in this particular incident a dissent against the Persian jurisdiction and could it be out of a conviction that the Christians of India were more related to the Alexandrian Church, from where came the apostle of India and later Pantenus, than to the Persian Church[26]? It seems that we have reason to hold such an opinion[27].

What we can conclude from the above arguments is this: Pantenus was in North West India. The Christians whom he had found there could have been the descendants of the fruits of the labours of the apostle Thomas. But, that this gospel was brought there by the apostle Bartholomew does not seem to be reliable. Nor could it have been brought by Thomas. Christians of India could have got it from their fellow Christians either in Persia or at Alexandria, for it was said that there were many Indians at Alexandria in the first century AD. In any case, we

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for sending information of the affairs of Egypt to India. But knowing the truth from the Indian priest, the Amir ordered the priest to be imprisoned and bishop Theodore to be crucified. Yet, on intervention by Patriarch Simon, bishop Tyeodore and the Indian priest escaped punishment. B. EVETTES, (tr. and ed.), *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, PO, vol. V, 36-42.

25 India had been made metropolitan by Patriarch Iso Yab III. W.G. YOUNG, *Patriarch, Shah and Caliph*, Rawalpindi, 1974, 98.

26 It may also be argued that this priest might have gone to Alexandria only by chance as he had found no ship going to Persia. In that case, was it necessary at all to go to Persia to get a bishop? Christians of India really had bishops from Persia as is clear from the account of Cosmas as we will see a little later in this chapter.

27 There is a parallel situation in the 17th century history of the Christians of Malabar, the Christians of St Thomas. At that time priests and laymen from Malabar used to go to the East Syrian Church to get bishops, as they did not like those who came from Europe. The Christians of Malabar being sure of their relations to the East Syrian Church, could not stand the Latin Bishops and were ready to risk anything to get bishops from the East Syrian Church.

hear in the late 19th century an echo of this reference to the Gospel of Mathew in a protestant mission report which speaks about a particular community that carries some Christian elements and the members of which claim to be the descendants of the first converts of Thomas.

1. 2 Theophilos, the Indian

Now we come to another early missionary to India. He is Theophilos the Indian, whose story is told by Philostrogius[28]. Photius, patriarch of Constantinople from 853, summarizes or quotes from the now lost Ecclesiastical history of the Arian Philostorgius who lived 354-425 AD. He says that Constantius, the Arian emperor (AD 357-361) sent ambassadors to those who were formerly called Sabeenes, but are now known as Homerites. As to the territory, which they inhabited, he says that it is called by the Greeks, 'Happy Arabia', or the Yemen. Constantius was determined to conciliate the king of those people by giving magnificent presents and words of gentle persuasion. He also asked for a license to build Churches for the use of the Romans who came thither by sea, and of the inhabitants of the country who wished to embrace the Christian faith. At the head of the embassy was placed Theophilos the Indian. He had been sent when very young as a hostage from Divaeans to the Romans, when Constantine was at the head of the empire. The island called Divus was a portion of their territory, and the inhabitants of it were called Indians. When Theophilos had dedicated the Churches, and adorned them with such decorations as he could, he crossed over to the island of Divus, which as we have already said was his native island. From there he made his way to the other districts of India and corrected many disorders among the inhabitants. For they listened to the Gospel in a sitting posture and had many other

28 PG 65, col. 481-489.

customs that were contrary to the law of God[29]. Cap. Wilford writes about Theophilus:

> The former Arian Bishop was a native of Divus, now Diu in Gujarat, and he was remarkably black that he was surnamed Blackmoor. His Hindu name was probably Deo Pal, perfectly synonymous with Theophilus in Greek.[30]

We know that this is a wild conjecture to say that his Indian name was Deo Pal, though it is in tune with the corresponding Greek. We may hold, in all probability, that his native land was Diu, a small island on the Gujarat coast of India. Le Clerq in an article argued in strong words that Theophilos could not be from Diu in Gujarat[31]. But his opposition seems to be born out of a misunderstanding of the text. The name given by Photius is Divus and it may mean any island. Consequently Tisserant has opted for the Maldives as the native place of Theophilus. There are authors who hold that it was Socotra. But the suggestion that he crossed over to his native place may indicate that the place was in India, and it was to Yemen that he was sent as an ambassador.

What is interesting for us is to know that whether Theophilus was in the actual India. Many have suggested that with the story of Theophilos we have a clear picture of an indigenous Church in India. Mingana considers it as an important and trustworthy account[32]. For Tisserant it is an

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29 We have taken this paragraph from A.M. MUNDANDAN, *History of Christianity in India,* vol. 1, 118.

30 Cap. F. WILFORD, "Origin and decline of Christian religion in India", *A.R,* vol. X, 1808, 71-72.

31 "L'opinion qui fait de Dibus la petite île de Diu située à la pointe du Guzerate est inadmissible parce qu'un rocher d'une lieu de long sur un quart de lieu de large n'a pu être le séjour d'un peuple que le récit de Philostroge, nous représente comme ayant être considérable ». Le CLERQUE, "Inde", *DACL,* XIII, col. 518.

32 "A much more important and trustworthy account is that of Theophilos the Indian, the head of a mission which the emperor Constantius equipped and sent about 354 to the Sabeans, of South Arabia, to Abyssinia, to Ceylon and to India". A. MINGANA, *The Early Spread of Christianity in Ancient India,* 458.

affirmation against the Mesopotamian relation of India[33]. A contemporary author declares that we enter safe ground with Theophilos[34]. From Theophilus we know that there were resident congregations, Church services were held regularly at which gospels were read, and that there was a ministering clergy, "all going to show beyond any reasonable doubt that the Christian community in India in 354 AD was an indigenous community"[35]. He met with a Christian community that was having some practices which were against the Christian law. One of theses practices mentioned is that they listen to the Gospel in a sitting posture. This is a true Indian style of listening to the reading. The practice of all Indian religions from the very early times was hearing the reading in a sitting posture. This custom is really Indian and it cannot come from other places[36]. This particular custom demands a further explanation of the relation between the church of India and the Persian Church. The faithful were already asked to stand up for the reading of the Gospel in the Apostolic Constitutions (lib. Ii, cap. 57). There is a resonant accusation against the Alexandrian Church in the writings of Zozomen.

> It is interesting to note that the practice of sitting while the Gospel was being read, which is specially singled out for reproof, was also made a matter of reproach against the Alexandrian Church. Says Zozoman, 'among the Alexandrians prevailed this new and unbecoming custom, that while the Gospel was being read the bishop did not

33 E. TISSERANT, "Syro-Malabare (Eglise)", col. 3092.

34 W. BAUM, "Syrian Christian community and its contacts to Europe and Mediterranean area before the arrival of the Portuguese", *Ephrem's Theological Journal* (March 2001), 74.

35 "The propensity to squat which the incident indicates would only be applicable to an indigenous, and would not be applied to a foreign congregation". L. BROWN, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas*, 67.

36 "The propensity to squat which the incident indicates would only be applicable to an indigenous, and would not apply to a foreign congregation". L. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas*, 67.

> rise, which I have neither seen nor heard done elsewhere'. In India it was evidently done that way. Is there in this common irregularity a trace of a relationship between the Church that sent Pantene forth, and the inchoate Church in the land to which he was sent?"[37]

So this question also is very important. Was there such a relation between the Church of Alexandria and the Church of India? If this is answered positively, it may even strengthen our belief that the port of embarkation of the Apostle was Alexandria and Haban had met the Apostle there. So we will have to hold that the Church in the North and west India were more related to the Alexandrian Church than to the Church of Persia.

Theophilus was in India and his native place was Diu or some other place in this part of India. That he was in the present India is all the more clear from the fact that Philostrogius clearly mentions the visit of Theophilus to Axum in Ethiopia on his way back[38]. Thus the Christians he found must have been near his native place, which had later become a Christian centre at the time of the Portugese occupation who had made it a bastion of their colonial power. Interestingly Barygaza comes geographically very close to Diu. This Diu, called Baones in the *Periplus* and other documents, had been a point of importance in the long trade route between Barygaza and the West and Baryagza and the Indus delta[39]. There fore, we assume that it was the Christian community of Barygaza that Theophilus had visited. This Christian community was deeply rooted in the local tradition and culture. It was not an outfit of the Persian Church nor was it influenced by that Church. It was clearly

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37 J.N. OGLIVIE, "*The Apostles of India*", in *Nazanis*, p. 459.

38 W. BAUM, "Syrian Christian community and its contacts to Europe and the Mediterranean area before the arrival of the Portuguese", 74.

39 The *Periplus* marks it as an intermediary point between Pattala and Barygaza. *Periplus*, 42.

indigenous and carried indigenous customs and traditions. This suggests that the Church in that place was ancient enough to have its own traditions and customs. It must be the same church that almost two hundred years ago was fortified by the visit of Pantenus. Thus the link with the Church of Alexandria which began with the arrival of Thomas from the port city continued till Theophilos. This relation is still resonant in the story of the Indian priest who went to Alenxandria in the 7th century to get a bishop for his country, story which we have already seen.

1. 3 Jordanus of Severac (1321)

The next great missionary to India is Jordanus of Severac, the great Dominican preacher, who was appointed the first Latin Bishop of India. He was appointed, it is said, as the bishop of Quilon or Kollam in Kerala, a place he never reached. Sent by the Pope, then residing at Avignon, Jordanus and his band of missionaries preached their way through Persia, departed from Hormuz, landed at Diu off the north coast of Bombay and thence sailed to Thana in 1321[40]. At that time he had the chance to see the fury of Islam at its peak in that part of India.

The story of Jordanus and his confreres reveals the first Christian martyrs in India. All his four companions were killed by the Muslims at Thana while Jordanus himself was on a mission to Broach. On appraising the news, Jordanus returned to Thana and buried his confreres at the Church of St Thomas at Thana. He established Christian communities at Thana, Sopara and at Broach. At Thana he came across fifteen Nestorian Christian families and baptised thirty-five people. At Sopara he stayed two weeks in April 1321, instructed and baptised ninety persons and administered the Holy Eucharist to them. In six months at Broach he baptised hundred and fifteen persons.

40 It may be interesting to note that even in this medieval period the same old route is followed to come to India.

This story reveals the presence of a dying Christian community at Barygaza. These Christians to whom Jordanus was commissioned to minister must have been the vestiges of the mission of Thomas at Broach. We will discuss it presently under our next heading.

2. ANCIENT CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

In order that our hypothesis of the mission of Thomas in West and North West India be plausible, there should be or should have been Christians in these parts of the country. We have a strong Christian community in South India that holds firm to its tradition of Thomas as its Apostle to support the South India tradition of Thomas. Do there exist any such Christian community in North India to vindicate the claim of the North Indian tradition? Though we do not find any ancient Christianity at present in the Western and Northwestern parts of India there seems to be present some remnants of the Christian communities in all these regions with which the mission of Thomas was concerned. In this section of our dissertation we make a quick survey of these communities.

2. 1 Christians at Barygaza

The first place in India connected with the mission of Thomas as we have already seen is Barygaza, the present Broach in the state of Gujarat in western India. Thomas' missionary efforts should have left some kind of fruits of his efforts in this region. The story of Jordanus of Severac in 1321 A.D. brings to our notice the presence of an ancient Christian community in Barygaza. When Jordanus and his confreres were at Thana, near Bombay, they were received by a Nestorian Christian family into their house. There were some fifteen Nestorian Christian families at this time at Thana. These people told Jordanus that at Broach there were some Christians but they

were Christians only by name. The description of the story follows thus[41] :

> Four minor brothers with Brother Jordanus....went up on a vessel to gain Columbo (Coulam) but dragged by winds and the storm and also, thanks to the ruse of sailors that wanted to visit the church of St Thomas, they were, against their attempts and their will, drawn towards the city of Thana that is to three months of road of Tauriz. There were fifteen families of Christians, but nestorians. Two of them received the brothers in their home. They were at Thana since eight days when the Nestorians advised them to send one of them, to the city of Paroth (Baroach), where there were a lot of Christians, but Christians rather of name than of real faith, who lacked teachers capable of instructing them, were unaware of what they had to believe. Fathers should be able to, they said, to instruct them and to baptize them. Missionaries discussed among themselves and to the opinion of all, Brother Jordanus, who possessed the language of the country better than his mates, decided to go there. He took with him two Nestorian Christians, of whom one who perfectly knew the language of the Hindus, offered to serve him as interpreter. Having embarked at Thana, they arrived at Sopara where the apostle St Thomas had preached, and constructed a church that pagans had destroyed, but which the Christian had since rebuilt.

This incident has the following elements. There were fifteen Nestorian Christian families at Thana when Jordanus reached there. At Broach there were a lot of Christians, but Christians in name only. One of the Nestorians was well-versed in the language of the Indians and he offered to be interpreter to Jordanus at Broach. Who were these people who "were Christians only by name". There is no reason to believe that these people of Broach mentioned here were Nestorians. If they had been, those of Thana would have really looked after them.

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41 F. BALME,, *Le Venerable P. Jourdain de Severac*, 18-19.

Moreover, the Nestorians of Thana were themselves sorry for those people who were without capable teachers and they were only happy that Jordanus and his companions could do that. There is also a mention that their language was that of the Indians. It is said that among the Nestorians there was one who could perfectly speak the language of the Indians. This gives us an indication that these Nestorians of Thana were not originally Indians and they spoke some language other than those of the Indians. It could have been Syriac and Jordanus on his way to India had learnt Syriac. But the Christians of Broach whom they spoke about were Indians because they spoke the language of the Hindus. Thus it becomes clear that these said to be Christians of Broach were local Christians. They must have been the remnants of an ancient Christian community who lost all Christian connections. Jordanus himself speaks of them as those who consider 'Thomas the great to be Christ'.

> In this India there is a scattered people, one here, another there, who call themselves Christians, but are not so, nor have they baptism, nor do they know anything about faith. Nay, they believe St Thomas the great to be Christ[42].

This statement of the missionary speaks volumes about the characteristics of the so-called Christians. They were a scattered people and called themselves Christians. They believed Thomas to be Christ[43]. This really takes them back to the Apostle Thomas. Can we not assume that they may be descendants of the converts of Thomas at Barygaza? Jordanus at that time had no means to know and suggest that Thomas had ever been in that part of the country as he knew of only Christians of Malabar who were converted by the apostle. His final destination indeed was the Thomas Christians of Malabar to whom he was later appointed as the first Latin bishop of India by the Pope. If they had been fruits of the Nestorian

42 Jordanus, *Mirabilia Descripta. Wonders of the East*, H. YULE (tr.) London, 1983, 31.

43 It might mean that as they had no leaders and pastors they were denied the Christian teachings. But they knew that they were descendants of those converted by Thomas. See also S. SORGE, *L'India di S. Tomasso*, Bologna, 1983, 26.

missionary efforts, they would have carried some traits that would be recognizable to the Nestorians of Thana. It could be argued that Jordanus spoke such Christians of Malabar as Christians of St Thomas. However, the context and the content of the text shows very well that he spoke here of Lesser India and not of Malabar. That he wrote not of Malabar is clear from the following passage of the *Mirabilia.*

> In this the greater part of the people worship idols, although a great share of the sovereignty is in the hands of the Turkish Saracens, who came from Multan, and conquered and usurped dominions to themselves, not long since, and destroyed an infinity of idol temples, and likewise many Churches, of which they made mosques for Mahomet, taking possession of their endowments and property. It is grief to hear, it is woe to see[44].

The Turkish invaders under Mahmud of Ghazni had undertaken a series of invasions to India which resulted in great plunder and pillage. But they had never reached Malabar. On the contrary, it was the western coasts of India, more especially the Gujarat Coast, that had suffered greatly of the fury of the Turkish invasions. Yule, the translator of *Mirabilia*, comments,

> The allusion would seem to be to the conquest of the Carnatic and Malabar by the Generals of the Khilji sovereigns of Delhi, Ala-ud-Din und Mubarik (A.D. 1310-1319). The Khiljis were Turks by descent. Multan was at this time subject to Delhi. But perhaps, the " not long since" has a deeper import, and refers to the conquests and iconoclasms of the great Mahmud of Ghazni, 300 years before. Indeed he is speaking here of the Lesser India, i.e. of Sind, Gujarat and the Konkan, the scene of Mahmud's most memorable expeditions. Mahmud coming from Ghazni would come through Multan and indeed he took that city several times"[45].

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44 JORDANUS, *Wonders of the East*, 23.

45 JORDANUS, *Wonders of the East*, 23.

Thus we are sure that Jordan here speaks of the Christiana of Broach, and of the Lower Sind and these Christians were really local people. That the people of these regions were really Christian in spirit is clear from the following words of Jordannus.

> Let friars be getting ready to come, for there are three places I know where they might reap a great harvest and where they could live in common. One of them is Supera, where two friars might be stationed, a second in the district of Parocco (Broach) where two or three might abide; and the third in Columbum besides many other places that I am not acquainted with[46].

If Jordanus felt that he could reap a great harvest in these places there must have been some special conditions conducive to it. It may be that there were many people who lost their Christian faith and practice owing to the Muslim invasion but who really longed to be Christians. In the same way if he could bring about numerous baptisms in the short span of six months it must be due to the presence of Christian elements in the people[47].

Here we should speak a word about the Vasai Christians. It is a Christian community now existing on the Western coasts of India not very far from Bombay, in the present Latin diocese of Vasai. They are known as *samvadi Christi samaj*, who were originally Brahmans who are said to have descended from the banks of the river Narbada to these parts of India[48]. Their present history goes back to the Portuguese missionaries, but in

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46 JORDANUS, *Wonders of the East*, 24.

47 Analogically the same kind of situation may be traceable in the 16th century in Goa and Malabar where St Francis Xavier was able to baptise thousands of people within a short period of time.

48 For a detailed study of these Christians see F. CORREA, *Samavedi Christi Samaj* (Marathi), Mumbai, 1998. He explains them as descendants of the choir group or singing people. These people were originally from the banks of the Ganges. Afterwards they came down to the Narmada valley whence they later migrated further South to Godavari region. From there they reached Vasai and settled along the river *Vaitarani* which is as sacred as the Ganges for the local people.

practices and in traditions and customs they go back to much earlier times. There exist numerous evidence to show that they were descendants of an ancient Christianity whom the western missionaries baptised and gave western names. Can they be the descendants of the first Christian community of Barygaza?

2.2 Tatta Naga Fakirs

Another ancient community that draws our attention is a particular fakir community in Tatta and its environs in Sind in Pakistan. They were first noticed and studied by the protestant missionaries in the last quarter of the 19th century. In one of the protestant mission reports it is stated that there are some Fakirs both in northern and southern parts of Sindh, with their head quarters at Tatta, who profess themselves followers of *Thum Bhagat*, that is, of Thomas the Saint, practise a number of Christian rites, are in possession of a book which they call the Gospel of St Matthew[49].

This group has been investigated by the Rev. A. Trotter of the Church of Scotland mission. Trotter reports that they called themselves by an Aramaic name, *Bar Thoma*, that seems to mean "Son of Thomas", that they claim that they are descended from Christians baptised by St Thomas and that their group contained a secret society that owned books and relics to prove their contentions. No outsider has ever seen these archives and members of the secret society are about "as common as hen's teeth". Rev. Trotter says, "they are as hard to come by as the Indian lion"[50]. There is an apparent discrepancy in the accounts. For Trotter the term is *Bar Thoma*, Son of

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49 J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, 45. See also H. D'SOUZA, *In the Footsteps of St Thomas*, Madras, 1972, 15, where it is written, "it was at Thatta on the Indus river in Sindh, where he (Thomas) is still venerated as 'Thum Bhagat', that, according to tradition, St Thomas the Apostle worked for some time. These devotees still seem to practise some Christian rites and possess a book which might be the Gospel of St Mathew".

50 Quoted by J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, 45.

Thomas and for others it is *Thuma bhagat,* Thomas, the God. But in both ways a connection to the apostle Thomas is obvious.

Hosten makes the following comment:

> Comparing this letter and the fact above mentioned (that Pantenus found on the western coast of India Christians with a gospel of Matthew in Hebrew character which had been left to them by St Bartholomew) we might infer, either that both St Bartholomew and St Thomas carried with them the gospel of Matthew on their apostolic expedition to India, or perhaps that Pantenus landed in Sindh, and the people whom he found in possession of the gospel of Matthew were the forefathers of the very people who now claim to possess it[51]".

Here Hosten seems to take for granted that both Bartholomew and Thomas had visited India. But, even if we accept that they both had been to India, whether any of them could have really brought with them the said gospel is another question. However, there is something that may be of great interest to us. It proves that as late as AD 1321 there were Christian communities all over the west coast of India from Malabar up to Bombay and Gujarat. It is reported at this time, as we have already seen, by Jordanus, of the Order of preachers, that not so long before his time the Mohammedans had come down from Multan, and had destroyed an infinity of Hindu temples and converted many Christian Churches into Mosques "taking possession of their endowments and property" in Sindh and along the coast southwards towards Bombay[52]. "Many of these Christian Churches might still be recognisable by their architecture in the present day old mosques on the side of Multan and Sindh.... Tatta at the mouth of Indus, would have been from the older times a favourite resort for Christian merchants from Mesopotomia and Persia"[53]. We naturally ask

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51 H. HOSTEN "St Thomas in India or Tattah Nagar Fakirs", *Indian Athenaeum*, 1923, 1.

52 JORDANUS, *Mirabilia*, 24.

whether we can make any liaison between these people and the Christian community that Theophilus encountered in India in 354 AD and the Christians among whom Pantenus found the Aramaic gospel of Matthew in 189 AD. It is possible that all these references speak of the one and the same community that claims its origin from the apostle Thomas.

2. 3 Gar Thoma

There is a village near Taxila which seems to have some connections with the Apostle Thomas. This village close to Sirkap in the district of Islamabad is called *Gar Thoma.* Some local devotees of St Thomas, Muslims as well as Christians, explain the origin of the name as follows: there was a great disaster which fell on the whole of Northern Punjab and the only village which suffered no harm in this disaster was the one where St Thomas had stayed. To commemorate their deliverance, the villagers named the village *Karm Toma* (= the benevolence of Thomas). This name has become corrupted through the ages into *Gartoma* or *Garthoma*[54]. We have no way of verifying the tradition as it does not say in which year the disaster took place.

There may be some grains of truth in this description and explanation of the legend. It is known from history that this region was and is prone to earthquakes. We have seen how Strabbo described the whole region as prone to earthquakes. Quite recently in the year 2002 itself there had been two major earthquakes in the regions adjoining Taxila. Such a great disaster could have taken place at Taxila and the North West India and the historians speak of an earthquake that almost destroyed the city of Sirkap towards the end of the first century AD[55].

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53 H. HOSTEN, "St Thomas in India or Tattah Fakirs", 2.

54 J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, 39.

55 J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, 45

The term *gar toma* might possibly come from the Punjabi word *garang Toma* which would mean village of Thomas. In Hindi it could mean House of Thomas (*ghar* = House). Thus, whatever be the etymological origin of the word it has a connection with Thomas. Rooney observes,

> The writer confesses only a nodding acquaintance with Northern Indian languages, but admits to a considerable surprise at the philological aspects of the explanation. To make it historically acceptable as related to the time of St Thomas would require us to demonstrate that, in the first century AD Sirkap dwellers spoke a language similar to Urdu, Hindustani or Punjabi. Such a demonstration, if it were possible, would truly astound the world's students of linguistics[56].

In any case it may not be circumstantial that the name of Thomas is associated with a village with predominantly a Muslim population. The language spoken today in these parts is Urdu. It is not very difficult to prove that the people of Sirkap or Taxila spoke a language 'similar to Urdu, Hindustani or Punjabi'. All these languages are interrelated. The tradition itself seems to have an origin anterior to the development of the Urdu language. Urdu developed as a separate language only during the Moghul period in 12-13th centuries. It was the lingua franca of the Northern India. Both Hindi and Urdu are Indo-Aryan in origin. Whereas the former was derived from Prakrit, the latter accepted Persian vocabulary and grammatical constructions. The Sanskrit, the refined form of Prakrit, and the Persian are closely linked in vocabulary. If the tradition of this village is as old as the time of Thomas, the *karm Thoma* could be Aramaic also. Aramaic was the lingua franca of the North West India, where traders from different parts of the world crossed one another[57]. That Aramaic was spoken in this region

56 J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, 39.

57 B. VADAKEKARA, *Origin of India's St Thomas Christians*, 132.

is clear from the edicts of Asoka[58]. In the course of the excavations conducted at Taxila a fragment of an Aramaic inscription was unearthed, written in Hebrew characters, which happens to be one of the edicts of Asoka.[59] The famous King Priyadarsin, zealous for the propagation of dharma, had published one of his edicts in Aramaic for his Jewish subjects of the North West India[60]. The Kharoshti which could have been the official language of the North West India at the time of the visit of the apostle, is said to have originated from the Aramaic. The Aramaic word for village is *kapra* or *kaporna*. '*Karm Toma* could also mean the Sanskrit *karm* = work of Thomas. Thus whatever language is at the origin of the term, a connection to Thomas in the legend is undeniable. Since even the Muslim population of the region hold to the tradition, we have to accredit reliability to it[61].

2. 4 'Rest of the Indians'

Cosmos Indicopleustes, an Alexandrian who travelled extensively in the countries beyond the Red Sea between 520-525 AD, mentions various Christian communities that were really rooted in the soil of India in the sixth century AD. One of his entries about the Christians of India reads thus:

> And so likewise among the Bactrians and Huns and Persians, and *the rest of the Indians*, Persarmenians, Medes and

58 "It should be noted that it was at various sites in Afghanistan that inscriptions of Asoka in Aramaic and other languages were discovered ... Taxila, in Pakistan, was the site of the first Aramo-Indic inscription of this sort to be discovered. This inscription attests to the penetration of Aramaic into North West India". J.C. GREENFIELD, *Aramaic in the Achamemian Empire*, in *The Cambridge History of Iran* II, I. GERSEVITCH (ed.), Cambridge, 1985, 705.

59 For a description of the excavations and a study about the inscriptions see CARNET, "Aramaic Inscription from Taxila", *JAS* (1915), 340-342; COWLEY, "The First Aramaic Inscription from India", *JAS (1925), 342-347.*

60 H. HERAS, *The Two Apostles of India*, 8.

61 R. BOTTI, « A Taxila, in Pakistan, per venerare l'apostolo Tommaso », *La Cittadella* (November 3, 1966), 16.

> Elamites and throughout the whole land of Persia there is an infinite number of Churches with bishops and a vast multitude of Christian people, and they have many martyrs and recluses leading a monastic life. So also in Ethiopia, and in Axum, and in all country round about, among the Happy Arabians who are now-a-days called Homeritae, and all through Arabia ....[62]

Here we note very well that all the places that Cosmas mentions are in some way or other related to India and in many cases all these places were very often confused with India. So the expression 'rest of the Indians' deserves a special attention here. This passage and the mention of the rest of the Indians will make sense only in the light of other passages in which he makes mention of Christianity in India.

> Even in the island of Tapobrane in Inner India where the Indian sea is, there is a Church of Christians, with clergy and a congregation of believers, though I know not if there be any Christian further in that direction. And such also is the case in the land called Male, where the pepper grows. And in the place called Kalliana there is a bishop appointed from Persia, as well as in the island of Dioscoris, in the same Indian Sea[63].

The Island of Tapobrane is the present Sri Lanka. Male, where Pepper grows, is the Malabar and Kalliana is supposed to be Kalyan near Bombay[64], though some believe that it is Quilon (Kollam) in Kerala[65]. As to the Christians of Sri Lanka, Cosmas has a special entry, "the island has also a Church of Persian Christians who have settled there, and a presbyter who

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62 Cosmas INDICOPLEUSTES, *Topographie chrétienne* III (SC 141), W. Wolska-Conus (eds), Paris, 1968.

63 Cosmas INDICOLEUSTES, Topographie chrètienne, III, 65.

64 "Kalliana, doubtless, the emporium of Kalyana near Bombay, already mentioned as a trading centre by the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*". E.R. HAMBEY, "The Syrian Church in India", 378-379.

65 E. TISSERANT, "Syro.Malabare", col. 197. See also S. NEILL, *A History of Christianity in India*, 35-37.

is appointed from Persia, and a deacon and all the apparatus of public worship"[66]. Thus he clarifies that the Christianity in Sri Lanka had been a mercantile community of Persian Christians. But, the Christians of Malabar and Kalliana were local Christians but having bishops ordained in Persia. One might be tempted to concluded that Cosmas, himself a Nestorian, was trying to search out only the Nestorian connections of the Christianity that he found in India and the neighbouring countries.

It is true that Cosmas belongs to the early sixth century and does not come under the topic of our discussion. But the fact that he gives us an indication of the existence of a strong Christianity in those parts of India where Thomas had laboured, makes him worthy of our consideration. As Mingana observes, "Cosmas' text is important not only as regards the existence of Christian communities in Bombay, Malabar, and Ceylon, but also and especially by the addition of the significant sentence: and among the rest of the Indians."[67] What we observe here in a special way is the is the fact that the places in India mentioned by Cosmas are all connected with the mission of Thomas. Kaliana is near Bombay and this port city is not very far from Barygaza the place where Thomas landed first in India. When Cosmas speaks of the rest of the Indians, he might have meant those regions of India that he could not visit, but have heard about from the people. In fact his description of the Western coasts of India is trustworthy and it is doubtful whether he had travelled beyond that. Young states categorically that the rest of the Indians must be understood to refer to the people of North West India, that is, the people now in Pakistan[68]. The expression 'the rest of the Indians' when taken together with other countries mentioned by Cosmas, can only mean the north

66 Comas INDICOPLEUSTES, *Topographie chrètienne*, XI, 14.

67 A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, 462.

68 W.G. YOUNG, *Patriarch, Shah and Caliph*, 30.

western parts of India as he has already mentioned Malabar and the western coasts. So, there might have been Christian communities scattered in these parts of India around 523 AD. Were they all fruits of the labour of the Nestorain missionaries? One may not reply in the affirmative as in this period large scale missionary enterprise by the East Syrian Church had not yet fully developed. The origin of these Christians must go back to earlier periods.

3. REFERENCES IN EARLY LITERATURE

There are numerous references in the early literature to the existence of Christian communities in different parts of India. We may safely assume that even the *Ath* was written with a view to explain the existence of Christian communities in some parts of India. In this section we present a survey of the various authors who speak of Christian communities in India.

3.1 Bardaisan

The most important work of Bardaisan (154-222) is *the Book of the Laws* written about 196 AD[69]. In it he mentions the Christians of the world comparing their habits with those of the pagans. But though he speaks about the pagan customs of India, he does not refer to any Christian presence in that country. Mingana writes,

> After having discussed the habits of many pagan countries he compares them with those of the Christians, and in this connection he contrasts the habits of the Christian and pagan Parthians, Gilnians, Kushans, Persians, and Medes, but he

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69 This work is translated into English by H.W.J. DRIJVERS, *The Book of the Laws of the Countries, Dialogue of Fate of Bardaisan of Edessa*, Assen, 1965.

70 A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, 448. Charpentier comments on this passage of Mingana thus, "much has been made out of the silence of Bardaisan concerning Christianity in India, but I fail to see the weight of this argument". J. CHARPENTIER, "St Thomas the Apostle of India", 41.

> does not mention the Indians as having Christians among them, in spite of the fact that he had previously mentioned them in connection with their pagan habits[70].

However, he mentions the presence of Christians among the Kushans. We know that Kushan Empire comprised the erstwhile kingdom of Gondophares, which was devastated by the former. Therefore, this small Christian community before 200 A.D. in the Kushan empire can be the descendants of the Christians narrated in the *Ath*. Bardaisan refers also to the Christians of Parthia who live among pagans.

> Bardaisan in his *Book of Fate* speaks of Parthian Christians living among pagans, which might be a result of the destruction of the Indian Parthian Empire by the Kushan invaders about AD 50".[71]

If we read this sentence in liaison with the statement of Eusebius and others about the coming of Pantenus to India around 189 AD and finding Christians there, we may be able to think positively of the Christian presence in India in the late second century. These Christians must be the remnants of the converts of the apostle in the Kingdom of Gondophares.

3.2 Doctrine of the Apostles

It seems that the "author of the Doctrine of the Apostles, who flourished not much later than AD 250, was at least vaguely aware of the existence of a Christian community in India, endowed with priesthood"[72]. According to him, India and the adjoining countries received the Good News through Thomas. It appears that the author of the *Diadascalia* and that of the *Ath* had the same source about the mission of the Thomas. The former clearly believes in the mission to India and speaks of it as an established tradition in Edessa.

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71 E. RAPSON, *Cambridge History of India*, 580.

72 A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, 448.

> We may question the grounds of his assertion concerning an event that took place about one hundred and eighty years previously, but we are not at liberty to deny that his sentence implies the existence in India, at the time when he wrote, of a Christian church, known to him at least from hearsay. If at his time, the Church of India had ceased to exist, he owed it to his readers, who might have easily challenged his statement, to say a word to that effect. Since he did not write such a word, are we not allowed to affirm that they were perfectly satisfied that the church was still extant in their time[73]?

This shows that there was a Christian community in India already in the second century and the author of the *Doctrine of the Apostles* refers to it. It must have existed in the north western regions of India rather than in Malabar. Historically speaking, the Persian must have discovered the Christians of Malabar only after the sea trade with India, especially with Malabar, had been taken over by them after the foundation of the Sassanid empire by Ardashir in 224 AD. It was from the time of Shapur II (310-379), that the Persians sea trade with India really got a momentum. He drove out the Arabs from the sea and held complete monopoly over the seas of the west coasts of India[74]. Thus it is from this time onwards that we hear about the relation of the Persian church with the Christians of Malabar. The story of David bishop of Basra, might mark the beginning of this relation. We read of him in the *Chronique de Séert*:

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73 A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, 448-449. We think that the same argument will be applicable to the *Ath* also.

74 It may not be incidental that the tradition places the coming of Thomas of Cana to Malabar during this time. According to tradition, he reached Cranganore in 345 AD with seventy two Christian families and settled there. It was also the time when Shapur II unleashed the ruthless persecutions on Christians of Persia.

75 *Chronique de Séert, P.O.*, vol. IV, 236. "If a bishop from Persian Gulf visited Indian communities in the Indus region (North West India), the fact would not be so remarkable as to deserve special mention in a chronicle. But if the Persian Churches,

During the Patriarchate of Shahlupa and Papa, say about AD 295-300, Dudi (David), bishop of Basra, on the Persian Gulf, an eminent doctor, left his see and went to India, where he evangelised many people[75].

In the period before this maritime monopoly, the Persian connection to India was always through the land route and when the Persian writers spoke about India, it must be understood to mean the North West India[76]. Thus we are enabled to affirm that the Christians of India to whom the *Didascalia* makes reference belong to the North West India.

3.4 The Chronique de Séert

There are numerous references to India and the Indian church in the *Chronique de Séert*, though we are not sure which part of India they mean. First, there is reference to Manes sending his disciple Thomas to India to preach his religion[77]. In 470 AD, Mana of Riwardahsir translated the works of Diodore, Theodore, etc., and sent copies of them to the islands of the sea and to India[78]. Riwardashir was on the confines of Ancient India, bordering Afghanistan. So we may assume that

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learning of the destitution of the churches in South India, decided to send an emissary to their help, this would indeed indicate a new departure, which could have significance for the future, and which therefore might be thought of worthy of record". S. NEILL, *History of Christianity in India*, 41. Thus in the third century if a bishop of the Persian Church decided to quit his see and go to South India, it must have been an event. Before that period we do not see much relation between the Church of South India and Persia. It must be the beginning of a new relation between the two and was worthy of mention in the chronicle. Mingana also suggests that David must presumably have had his seat somewhere near the Malabar coast. A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, 448. But we do not know if the mention in the *Chroniques* makes us believe that he left his See in Persia to take up another in the Malabar Coast or he left it to do the work of evangelisation.

76 "Clearly there was some connection between Persia and India over the passes, and the writer of the Acts (of Thomas) will have had some knowledge of the presence of Christians in India at that early date". S. NEILL, *The Story of the Christian Church in India and Pakistan*, 17. The same suggestion must be applicable to the *Didascalia* also.

77 PO IV, 227.

78 PO VII, 117.

it was to the North West India that these copies were sent. The next reference to India in the *Chronique* is of the time of the Patriarchate of Mar Sasbrisho (596-604). His Patriarch presented perfumes and gifts received from India and China to Bishop Marutha, who was the ambassador of the Byzantine emperor Khosrau II[79].

Thus the *Chroniques de Séert* makes explicit mention about the relations of the Christians of India and Persia. But we are sure to which part of India they allude. They are most probably general in nature.

3.5 The Balraam and Josephat

The *Balraam and Josephat* which belongs to the medieval Christian literature seems to suggest the existence of Christians in India. Its authorship is traditionally attributed to St John Damascene (676-754). The real author could be John, a monk of St Saba[80]. It was composed at the monastery of St Saba, near Jerusalem, in the first half of the seventh century. Heroes of the story, Balraam and Josephat, are considered to be Christian saints. The legend could be summed up as the following:

The Apostle Thomas preached the Gospel among the Indians and he converted many to Christianity. Many churches were established in the country. King Abenner who turned hostile to the Christians persecuted them. When a son was born to the king, the astrologers who were gathered in the royal court prophesized that the child would embrace Christian faith. Troubled by the news, the king wanted to keep the child away from all that is Christian. A separate palace, where he lived in all prosperity and luxury, was built for him. A special tutor

79 PO XII, 497.

80 There are also other opinions concerning the authorship. "Certaines critiquent continuent à penser qu'il peut avoir un moins de couvent de S. Sabas au VIIéme siècle ». J. Van den GHEYN, « Barlaam et Josephat », *DTC*, col. 413.

was appointed. However, the prince came to know from his tutor the reason for his lonely life. At one time the king, being afflicted by the sorrow of his son, allowed him to go out. Seeing the sorrows and miseries of the world the prince was greatly upset. At this time there came a monk named Barlaam from the country of Senar to the country of Josephat. After having cajoled the tutor he got permission to visit the prince. Barlaam explained to the prince the doctrines of Christian faith. Josephat was converted. The king tried his best to reconvert his son, but all his pleas were of no avail. Finally the king arranged for a debate between the heads of his faith and those of the Christians in which the latter became victorious. So, the king decided to divide his kingdom and Josephat was made king of the new kingdom. Later on Abener renounced idolatry and accepted Christianity. Four years after his baptism the king died. A few years after the death of his father, Josephat abdicated and became a monk and lived in a hermitage with Barlaam.

The book begins with the evangelisation of India by the Apostle Thomas.

> One of the companies of Christ's twelve apostles, most holy Thomas, was sent out to the land of the Indians, preaching the Gospel of salvation. 'The Lord working with him, and confirming the word with signs following', the darkness of superstition was banished; and men were delivered from idolatrous sacrifices and abominations, and added to the true faith, and being thus transformed by the hands of the apostle, were made members of Christ's household by baptism, and waxing over with fresh increase, made advancement in the blameless faith and built churches in all their lands[81].

If an author of the medieval centuries wrote a legend which begins with the description of the mission of Thomas in

81 J. DAMASCENE, *Barlaam and Josephat*, with an English translation by G.R. WOODWARD and H. MATTINGLY, Harvard University Press, 1953, vii.

India, he should have had the awareness of the existence of Christians owing allegiance to the apostle Thomas in that country and he should have heard of the traditions concerning them. The author describes the Indians in these words,

> The country of the Indians, as it is called, is vast and populous, lying far beyond Egypt. On the side of Egypt it is washed by seas and navigable gulfs, but on the mainland it marches with borders of Persia, a land formerly darkened with gloom of idolatry, barbarous to the last degree, and wholly given up to unlawful practices[82].

Thus it is doubtful, from this description, if it is the present India which is meant here. The writer himself tells that the story was brought to him from India.

> I will no wise pass over the edifying story that hath come to me, that which devout men from the land of the inner Ethiopians, whom our tales calleth Indians, delivered unto me, translated from trustworthy sources[83].

Here the phrase is the 'land of the inner Indians whom our tale calleth Indians'. Is there an assumption that it is Ethiopia that is meant here? Or is there any special significance to the phrase, 'inner Ethiopians who are called Indians'? Is it that, as India was very often confused with Ethiopia, the latter is here confused with the former? In any case, as the translators of the work suggest, even if the story was brought from India, "it is highly probable that what he heard was simply a version of the life of Buddha, adapted by the Christians of the East to their own sense"[84].

The story of Barlaam and Josephat must have been originally composed in India, preferably in the North. There is an opinion that it was first composed in Afghanistan, "in a

82 J. DAMASCENE, *Barlaam and Iosaph*, 7.

83 J. DAMASCENE, *Barlaam and Iosaph*, 5.

84 J. DAMASCENE, *Barlaam and Iosaph*, 7.

language that is dead since a thousand years"[85]. Hosten suggests that the picture that it gives of Christianity in India may be correct in as much as that it traces its origin from St Thomas[86]. The evidence to be pointed out is the similarity with story of Buddha. The story progresses always in parallel with the account of Siddhartha who was concealed from the miseries and sorrows of the world to prevent him from becoming an ascetic as it was prophesied at his birth. What we hold today as the date of the composition of the story of Barlaam and Josephat is the date when it was most probably composed in the monastery of Saba in the seventh century. It was a period when missionaries from Persia began to come to India in large numbers. It was also the period when different stories from India were taken to Persia and translated into Pahlavi language. Thus was the case of *Calilagh and Damanagh*. It is said that Bud Periodotes translated this book from an Indian language.

> Bud or Buddas, the Peiodotes ... lived under Patriarch Ezechiel c. 570 AD, taking care of the Christians in Persia and the adjoining regions of India. It is said that he knew the Indian language from which he translated the book *Calilagh and Damnagh* into Syriac[87].

It was also the same period when *Panchatantra* was said to have been translated into Pahlavi[88]. It is even said that it was

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85 "Ainsi, dit M. Gaston Paris, ce livre écrit au VIéme siècle, par an inconnu, dans un coins de l'Afghanistan, en une langue qui est morte depuis mille ans, en se transformant plus ou oins, chez tous les peuples civilisés. Et les récits qu'il renferme ont enchanté – après les Bouddhistes – les chrétiens, les musulmans, et les juifs, c'est-à-dire la presque totalité de l'humanité pensante ». M. Gaston, *Poèmes et légendes du moyen age*, Paris, 1900, 194, quoted in J. Van DEN GHEYN, « Barlaam et Josephat », col. 415.

86 *Works of Hosten*, vol. 17, f. 193.

87 ASSEMANUS, *BO*, III, 1, 219-220."De l'Inde ces livres sont pénétrés en Perse et y ont été traduits en pehlevi, la langue officielle des Sassanides (226-641). Du pehlevi ils ont passé au syriaque ou ò l'arabe, et de là sont issues les versions hébraïques et grecques, qui ont ensuite donné naissance en diverses langues ». J. Van DEN GHEYN, « Barlaam et Josepaht », col. 413.

88 "One of the most famous Indian collection of fables, the *Panchatantra*, was translated into Pahlavi, or middle Persian, in the sixth century. Thence it was translated into

taken by a Christian to Persia. Historically this period was known as the golden age of Indian literature, under the constant royal patronage of the Gupta dynasty (300-650 AD). It was the period of the nine gems in the court of Chandragupta II. Under these circumstances, it is not unlikely that a popular story of the country as that of Buddha was adapted to a Christian story and found its way to Persia and from there to other parts of the world.

Numerous points can be enumerated to prove such an Indian provenance to the story of Barlaam and Josepaht. The ancient Arabic version of the text, of which numerous exemplars have been discovered, bears much similarity with the story of Buddha. The Georgian version is considered to be an intermediary between the Arabic and the Greek. It is assumed that the original Georgian text from which the Greek text was translated, had been a translation of the Syriac which owed its origin to the Pahlavi version, which most probably belonged to the sixth century. It was a time when Buddhism and Christianity were engaged in numerous proselytising efforts in Bactria and parts of North and North West India. Under these circumstances, it was quite possible that a Christian used this popular story of the Buddha for his own religious purposes and adapted it to his Christian circumstances.

3.6 The Acts of Mari

The author of the *Acts of Mari* (AD 520) says that Mari, after having preached to the Huzites and the Persians, "went to the southern countries, until the odour of St Thomas was wafted

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Syriac, and thence again, in the 8th century, into Arabic. In various versions it appeared in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, found its way all over Europe". A.L. BASHAM, *The Wonder that was India*, 450. "Aucune autre sorte d'écrits indiens n'est allée aussi loin et n'a exercé autant d'influence hors des frontières du pays. Le recueil de fables appelé *panchatantra*, histories dans lesquelles les animaux agissent et parlent comme des hommes, se lisaient au Bagdad, à Byzance, au Caire, et plus tard, en Europe ». L. SCHULBERG, *L'Inde classique*, 95.

to him"[89]. The author seems to say that Mari went as far as north western frontiers of India, and that traces of Thomas' work were found there. If Mari was the disciple of Addai (Thaddeus of Edessa), he would belong at the latest to the first half of the second century AD. So, it would mean that the results of the mission of Thomas in those parts of India were still visible at the time of the visit of Mari. It would also mean that there were Christians living in North West India at that time. Vadakekkara, leaning too much on the phrase "Southern countries", seems to suggest that South India is mentioned here[90]. But, a Persian writer, when he speaks of the countries and regions that lay beyond him, categorises them as southern countries, may not always specify the exact regions of South India. In the case of Mari, he was said to be in the country of the Huzites and from there he went down to the southern countries. So it can be only the ancient north west India.

> The Acts speak about the evangelisation of the Eastern countries by the disciples of Mari, a pupil of the Edessan Addai. Much that is found in there concerning the apostles or the apostolic times, is certainly legendary, but there is no reason for asserting that all an unknown author writes concerning contemporary things is false. No anonymous author would write absurd things which could not be believed by his contemporaries. What he writes, therefore, must have been in harmony with the mentality of his readers, and may in this light be taken as representing a tradition current in his days. After having preached in the country of the Huzites, says the Acts, Mari 'went down to the southern countries until the odour of Thomas the apostle was wafted to him'[91].

So it is almost sure that there were Christians in North West India in the first half of the second century AD. These

89 A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, 460-461.

90 B. VADAKEKKARA, *Origin of India's St Thomas Christians*, Delhi, 1995, 398.

91 A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, 461.

Christians could be the descendants of those converted by the Apostle Thomas.

3.7 The Bhavishyamahapurana

In one of the works of the classical Hindu literature there is a curious reference to the presence of Jesus at the country of an Indian king. The text is called *Bhavishya Mahapurana*. It narrates the meeting between Jesus and an Indian king called Salivahana. This text has been used differently for various purposes by different authors. Some put it forward as a proof for the sojourn of Jesus in India either during the private life or after the crucifixion[92]. Has this text some thing to do with the early Christian presence in these parts of India? This would be a question that interests the historians of the Church in India. The story runs as follows.

Salivahana, the grandson of Vikramajit came to power after having conquered the hoards of the Chinese, the Parthians, the Scythians, and the Bactrians. He established a frontier between the Aryans and the Mlechas (non-Hindus) and ordered the latter to retreat to the other side of the country. One day Salivahana went to the Himalayan countries. There, in the country of the Huns, the powerful king saw a man sitting on a small mount. He had clear skin and wore white clothes. The King asked the holy man who he was. The man replied, "people say that I am son of god, born of a virgin, priest of the non-believers, unceasingly seeking the truth"[93]. The king asked again

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92 That Jesus escaped from the cross and travelled as far as India and died at Kashmir where his tomb is still seen is a theory brought in by the Ahmadias of Pakistan. They "believe sincerely that Tomas was accompanied on his first journey to India by Jesus and Mary, that Mary died on the way and was buried at Murree, that Jesus lived in Kashmir to a ripe old age and his grave is at Sri Nagar". J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, 63.

93 Ko bhavanithi tham praha
Sahovaachamdanwitha:
Eshaputram cha maam vidhi
Kumare garbha sanbhavam
Aham Eesa Maseeha nama:" Bhavishyapurana, Pratisargaparva, III, 2, 23.

what his religion was. The holy man replied that he came from a country where there was no more truth and where injustice knew no limits. He appeared in the country of the non-believers as the Messiah. But the female demon *Ihamasi* of the Dasiu, manifested herself in terrible form and he was handed over to her. He explained to the king the meaning of the religion that he had brought to the non-believers. He was called Isa Masih. When the king heard all these words, he took the teacher of the non-believers and sent him out of the country without mercy[94].

The main figure of the story is Salivahana of the Sakyas, who could either be Nahapana or Gautamiputra Satakarni. Nahapana is the Andhra King considered to be the founder of Saka era in 78 AD[95]. Salivahana in the story is said to have conquered the Sakas, the Chinese, the Parthians, and the Bactrians. There is one king in the history of the Andhra kingdom who is accorded the title 'conqueror of the Sakas, the Chinese, the Parthians and the Bactrians'. He is Gautamiputra Satakarni who ruled most probably in the last part of the first century AD[96]. Some historians say that he was the immediate successor of Nahapana[97]. He took "pride calling himself the destroyer of the Sakas (Scythians), the Yavanas (the Greeks) and the Pahlavas (the Parthians)"[98]. He was one of the great kings who regained the supremacy of the family of the Satavahanas from the Sakas. Thus the king in the story seems to be historical. If a historical king is associated, by a Hindu puranic author, with the founder of Christianity, he must have

94 The story is taken from G. MESSADIÉ, *Jesus de Srinagar*, 360.

95 There is no conclusive proof to say for certain who began the Saka era. It could be Hala, Nahapana or even Kanishka who came to throne in c.78 AD. See J.F. Fleet, "Nahapana et l'ère Saka", *JRAS* (1916), 809-820.

96 R. THAPAR, *A History of India*, Harmondsworth, 1973, 101.

97 A. DANIELOU, *Historie de l'Inde*, 154. It is correct if accept the chronology given by Yazdani, which seems to be more accurate than the other ones, according to which Gautamiputra ruled from 62-86 AD. G. YAZDANI, *The Early History of Decan*, 107.

98 R.C. MAJUMDAR, *An Advanced History of India*, London, 1953, 115.

had some information that the Christians existed in those regions. We have seen in the second chapter that it is to the country of the Andhra kings that Thomas first came. Gautamiputra Satakarni was the greatest of the Andhras or the Satkarni kings. There were also some efforts to identify this Salivahana as a Christian emperor converted by Thomas, because it seemed that the name itself has something Christian in it. In such a sense, Salivahana is (*salib* = cross and *vahana* = the bearer) bearer of the cross[99]. But we do not rely much on this interpretation. It seems, however, that there are some connection between all these traditions and historical facts. Presence of Christians in the Northern and north western India might have been the immediate reason behind the narration of the story. The date of the composition of the story cannot be ascertained accurately. The dates proposed vary from 115 – 1140 AD.

4. BISHOPS AND BISHOPRICS IN INDIA

There are several early references to Bishops in India and the neighbouring regions in the early Christian centuries. The first bishop who came to India as far as we know from the existing documents is David of Basra. But, as we have already seen, though he was a bishop in Persia, we have no records to establish whether he had held any See in India. The second reference to a Bishop of India is found in the procedures of the Council of Nicaea (325).

4. 1 John of Persia

The first and to whom many references are made is the bishop John who was present at the Council of Nicaea (325) and who signed himself as the Bishop of Persia and Great India. We may have to understand the Great India in the same sense

99 Capt. WILFORD, "Vikramaditya and Salivahana", *AR* 9 (1807), 212.

as in the *Ath*, the whole of North Western parts of India. Mingana observes,

> In the signatures to the decrees of the Council of Nicaea, as reproduced by Cyzicenus, the same entry is found: '*Joannes persa, Ecclesis in tota Persia et Magna India*'. In 1908 I treated as a fable the presence in the Council of Nicea of this John the Persian, and for Persia I substituted Perrhe on Upper Euphrates. Against this view may be argued the fact that Eusebius of Caesarea was present at the council, and that in his *De Vita Constantini*, he actually makes mention of a bishop of Persia as present in the council ... The presence, therefore, in the Council of Nicaea of a bishop John, from numerous Sees of Persia of the beginning of the forth century, preferably Riwardashir, is not altogether impossible. Michael the Syrian expressly states in his history that this John the Persian attended the council of Nicaea[100].

We may note at the same time that not all authors agree that this India of John does really represent the present India. Michael the Indian himself, though he says that John was present at the council, holds this India to be Ethiopia or Arabia Felix. But, if all other references and mentions of India coming from the Persian side refer to the actual India, how can this alone prove otherwise?

> The provinces that lay between the Indus and the eastern frontier of Persia and between the Indian Ocean and the northern boundary of Afghanistan, were anciently comprehended under the name of India, and were sometimes spoken by the authors as if they were the whole of India, and it seems to me that, in the designation of John's diocese, the name India is used in accordance with the *usus loquendi* of the period. The subjects of the Sassanian kings would, without doubt, use the name most naturally and most frequently, if not exclusively, to denote that India which

100 A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, 495.

formed such a large and important part of their dominions. Bishop John was a Sassanian subject, and would most probably use the name in what may be called the Sassanian sense[101].

This seems to suggest that the Church was well established in India before the council of Nicaea. Rooney remarks, "we may note in passing that this indication makes nonsense of the theory that the initial establishment of the Church in India came only with Persian emigration resulting from persecutions of Shapur II"[102].

Was there actually a bishop in North West India at the time of the Council, and if there were one, would he be invited to the Council? We do not think so? If there had been a diocese, the church in that part of India would have been strong. We do not also have any evidence to hold such a view. It is possible that the 'Great India' may be an addition made by Gelasius who wrote the list in 475 AD[103]. It could either be considered as an attempt from the part of the Nestorian Church to lay jurisdictional claims over the Christians of North West India (or perhaps even the whole of India) or a mere supposition that the Christians of North West India, as the region once belonged to the Persian Empire, were represented in the council of Nicaea by the bishop of Persia. Or again, as Tisserant observes, Gelasius might have projected a situation of his time to the time of the council[104]. In any case it clearly proves that there were Christians in North West India at the time of the council of Nicaea (325 AD) and later in 475 AD when Gelasius wrote

101 M. RAE, *Syrian Church in India*, 82.

102 J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, 80. There is a strong opinion among some writers that the establishment of Christianity was the immediate result of the persecution of the Christians in Persia that began at the time of emperor Shapur II.

103 Gelasius CYZICENUS, *Historia Concilii Nicaeni*, lib. II, cap. 36, PG 85, col. 1342-1343.

104 E. TISSERANT, "Syro-Malabare", col. 3092.

this book[105]. It does not matter, whether the bishop resided in Persia and his diocese extended as far as 'greater India'.

4. 2 Diocese of Kashgar

Epiphanus, bishop of Constantia in Cyprus (315-402) tells that at the time of heretic Manes (280) there lived in Kashgar (Kashar) a man, eminent for his piety, named Marcellus, a man very remarkable for his works of Justice. He was in every respect a Christian[106]. Although Epiphanius does not clearly indicate the country in which Kashgar was situated, if we minutely examine the limits of Persia, Schythia and India, it becomes clear that the present Kashgar was the capital of the ancient kingdom of the same name. From this town there was a much-frequented grand road to Kashmir which is found on the old maps[107]. Epiphanes also tells us that Manes on his arrival at Kashgar, found bishops, presbyters and deacons, with a large body of orthodox Christians, who banished him for his heresy[108]. We may add here a sentence from the *Chronique de Séert* that under Sapur I (241-272), Manes sent Addai to Yemen, and Thomas to India to propagate his doctrines, but they returned saying that people did not want to hear their discourse[109]. In both these passages there is an aborted mission to India. This flourishing and active Christian community surely implies the introduction of Christianity at an earlier period, much anterior

105 "The writer is disposed to accept the report concerning John of Persia as indicative that by 325 AD there were Christian communities in Northern India and Pakistan. Whether these communities took their origin in St Thomas or in the later missionary activities from the Church in Persia is another matter entirely". J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, 84.

106 EPIPHANIUS, *Panarion of St Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, selected passages*, P.R. AMIDON (tr.), Oxford, 1990, 210.

107 O.C. FELIX, *Historical and Traditional records on Early Christianity in Northern UIndia*, Agra, 1908, 21.

108 EPIPHANIUS, *Panarion of St Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, selected passages*, Oxford, 1990, 210

109 *Chronique de Séert*, P.O. IV, 227.

to the year 272, and "the evidence adduced for the mission of the Apostle Thomas to this country remains, therefore, unimpaired by the supposition of the rival claims of a Thomas, the disciple of Manes, and must be valued by its own accumulated weight"[110]. The Abbe Renedaut says, "Kashgar, according to the ancient and modern geographers was the ordinary passage of those, who went to Turkestan and China"[111]. Consequently, before the year 280 AD, we meet, on the confines of India, an Orthodox Church of Christ with a bishop and priests[112]. Thus it is possible that the faithful of the diocese included also the Christians of North West India.

4.3 Other Dioceses

There are several references to other dioceses in North India. They come mainly from the chronicles of the East Syrian Church and they could well have been established by that church as a result of its missionary endeavours which led it up to the mainland China[113].

The Christians of North West India from the very early times onwards were under the Metropolitan of Fars, which was a province that was situated in the east of the Persian Gulf. Its metropolis was Riwardashir. "The word *Pares* is used in Syriac, both in the sense of Persia in general, and in that of the province of Fars in particular"[114]. But we have no evidence to say how and when this jurisdiction actually began. It may be that the Christians North West India had no hierarchical structure of their own and the Persian Church which had strengthened and nurtured them through the occasional visits of monks and

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110 E. KENNET, *Saint Thomas, the Apostle of India*, Madras, 1882, 22.

111 Qouted by O.C. FELIX, *Historical and Traditional Records*, 21.

112 O.C. FELIX, *Historical and Traditional Records*, 21.

113 There are references in the Chronicles of the East Syrian Church that India was raised to the state of Metropolitan. But all these references point to the post-Nestorian missionary era.

114 A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity*, 491.

merchants, had assumed the responsibility of looking after them and had included them in one of their ecclesiastical provinces. Another relation also could be possible. Christians in the kingdom of Gondophares, at the time of the Kushan invasion, might have fled to this part of Persia and joined the Christians there[115]. In this sense we can understand better the presence of bishop John at the council of Nicaea who signed himself as the bishop of Persia and Great India.

There was a bishop at Ardashir Pharid in 421. Young places this particular diocese in Baluchistan[116]. Chabot had earlier argued that Ardashir Pharid was to be identified with Paridene, mentioned by Ptolemy and located him in Baluchistan[117]. Mingana also places it in Baluchstan. According to him, it is mentioned in the Synod of Yad Alaha of 420 AD[118]. There was a bishop in Sijistan (Seistan, or Sistan or ancient Sakastan) of Modern Afghanistan in 424[119]. Bishops from Seistan, notably from Bist, Rukhort and Zarang were present at the synod of Aba in 544[120]. Thus we see that there were Christians more or less well-organised in the regions adjacent to the present North West India.

Hosten quotes from the Martyriology of St Ado, Bishop of Vienne (860-875) that India gave to Gaul a saintly bishop who is said to have died in 452 AD. "On 6th before the Ides of August (August 7) at Vienne, a town in Gaul, the birthday of St Severus, priest and confessor, who as his acts testify, being an Indian by birth ..."[121]. We could not verify this reference and are not in a position to clarify its reliability.

Thus we meet with references either to dioceses or to bishops in North West India and the regions adjacent to it. They

115 H. HERAS, *The Two Apostles of India*, 18.

116 G.W. YOUNG, *Patriarch, Shah and Caliph*, 39.

117 J.B. CHABOT, *Synodicone Orientale*, Paris, 1902, 276.

118 A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, 490.

119 A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia*, 26.

120 A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, 490.

121 H. HOSTEN, *Works of Hosten*, vol.17, 175.

unequivocally testify to the existence of Christians in those regions. But we do not think that Church in North India was ever organised under indigenous dioceses or Bishops, at least we do not have evidences to hold such a view.

5. OTHER CHRISTIAN ANTIQUITIES OF NORTH INDIA

There have been discovered many antique relics from different areas that can have some connection with the ancient Christianity in North West India. Let us see how far they could be considered as Christian antiquities.

5. 1 Taxila Cross and other cross symbols

There is a piece of evidence that is discovered in Taxila that might seem to suggest a Christian connection. It is a cross that was found at Taxila and now placed in the Anglican Cathedral at Lahore, where it is known as Taxila cross. Rooney says that at one time this cross was a very emotional issue in Christian circles in Pakistan. It was discovered in 1935 in a field near the site of the ancient city of Sirkap. A ploughman came across it near the spot where once stood the palace of King Gondophares. The cross is of black stone and about one and half inches in size. The upper arm of the cross is pierced; it was probably worn like a medal around the neck. The local zamindar gave it to Mrs C. King who then presented it to the Cathedral at Lahore[122].

Rooney quotes the *Pakistan Times*, which carried this report on 1 November 1970, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Church of Pakistan[123]:

> The united Church has taken as its symbol the Taxila Cross which dates back to the second century A.D. and was discovered from the old city of Sirkap some forty years ago.

122 J. ROONEY, *Shadows in Dark*, 42.

123 J. ROONEY, *Shadows in Dark*,43.

> The discovery of the Taxila cross and some other objects of the same date give clear indication of the Christian Church having been in this part of the world. .... Adopting the Taxila Cross as our symbol, we want to establish the fact that the Christian Church is not a recent addition to this country. Its heritage and past goes back to the early centuries of the Christian era.

Very recently the Guardian carried it in one of its articles in these words.

> The Christians here will tell you that St Thomas – the doubting apostle of Jesus who famously refused to believe in the resurrection "until I have placed my hands to the holes left by the nails and wound left by the spear" – came to India from Palestine after the resurrection, and that he baptised their ancestors. Recently, archaeologists have also found a second-century cross at Taxila. The cross is now in the Anglican cathedral at Lahore[124].

But we are not sure of the Christian antiquity of this cross. It is said to be of the second century AD. Even if it is a Christian symbol, it tells us nothing about the mission of Thomas in those regions[125]. It would merely confirm that there were Christians in and around Taxila in the second century AD. There are also crosses on bricks at the Buddhist centre in Taxila. The shapes of these crosses corresponds to the one at St Thomas Church Mylapore[126]. One common characteristic of the crosses of South

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124 *The Guardian,* Tuesday, October, 2001. We have consulted the internet edition and hence cannot give the page number.

125 "Our desire to discover echoes of ourselves in the past should not be permitted to push us to accept relics like the Taxila cross simply because it would be very nice to do so. We are convinced that there were Christians in Pakistan in the very early part of our era, but the proof does not depend on the relic we discuss now. Even if we accept its Christian authenticity and even if it were correctly dated (which is still uncertain), nothing more is proved other than that somebody in Sirkap possessed a Christian symbol. It does not follow necessarily that he himself was a Christian". J. ROONEY, *Shadows in the Dark*, 44.

126 I. GILLNAN and H.J. KLIMKEIT, *Christians in Asia Before 1500*, pl. 30. The Mylapore cross was discovered by the Portuguese in the 16th century and now is called, in the Malabar Church, the St Thomas cross.

India and the Taxila cross is that they are more or less equilateral. However we can derive nothing from this, as there were cruciform symbols even in the pre-Christian period[127]. All we can say for the time being is that we have nothing to prove the antiquity of these crosses and till conclusive studies have been carried out, they remain in the field of hypothesis. At the same time, there may not be anything illogical in counting the cross as one of the antiquities of Sirkap, if it really belonged to the second century AD.

Hosten suggests that there are cross symbols on the coins discovered at Ujjain[128]. According to him some of these crosses are remarkably like plain Greek crosses. "We feel therefore less trepidation in comparing with our Indian Christian crosses certain other crosses or trees which appear on coins from Kosam and Avanti near Ujjain"[129]. Smith describes them as of about the second century B. C. Hosten however does not seem to accept this date. "As the types are however anonymous one might greatly question the date assigned to them"[130]. The coins have, on the obverse, in the centre a conventional railing and a cross with balls and the swastika. This so called 'Ujjain symbol' is by no means confined to coins from the city of Ujjain; it is also found on the coins of Eram, and Besnagar and of the Andhra dynasty. But we cannot prove the historical viability of this view because of the very fact that the symbol itself is liable to be questioned historically.

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127 Many cruciform ornaments dating from the 6th century B.C. can be found at Taxila and are today exposed at the museum of Taxila. Some of them also could be seen in the National Museum at Calcutta.

128 H. HOSTEN, *Works of Hosten,* vol. IX, fol. 136.

129 H. HOSTEN, *Works of Hosten,* vol. IX, fol. 137. Facsimiles of these coins can be seen in V.A. SMITH, *Catalogue of the Coins of Indian Museum*, Calcutta, vol. I, Oxford, 1906, plate XX, no. 60

130 H. HOSTEN, *Works of Hosten,* vol. IX, fol. 137.

We can only suggest that there could have been Christian settlements in and around Ujjain in the early centuries of our era. If there had been Christians in Broach, Surat and other parts of the Western India, it was possible that they were present also in Ujjian. But to attribute to them all that seems to be Christian would be too much from the point of view of a historian. However, we may accept the conclusion drawn by Hosten.

> The question, however, is which of the two symbols is older one, or whether both do not derive from an older symbol in Mesopotamia or Persia. If it were proved that the Kosam tree is older, we would have no objection to admit that the Indian Christians of Kalliana or the Indian Christians who established their settlement near Ujjain or in Ujjain itself adopted for their purpose a similar arrangement of triple buttons at the four extremities of the cross, the Christian tree of life[131].

5. 2 The Church of Udaipur, Sagar

In the last century in one of the 11th century temples of Udaipur in the present Sagar diocese, in the state of Madhya Pradesh in Central India, a particular inscription had been discovered which connects the temple to some Christian antiquities. But unfortunately this inscription is now lost.

At the XXII International Congress of the Orientalists in Rome in 1899, Baron Textor de Ravisi, member of the Asiatic Society of Paris and former governor of Karaikal, presented an exposé on the mural inscription discovered at Udaipur. Fr Burthey SJ of the Madurai mission had earlier deciphered the inscription which was in some form of pali language. The speech of Mr Textor was published in the Catholic Register of

131 H. HOSTEN, *Works of Hosten*, vol. IX, fol. 136-137.

Madras 1 October 1915 and in the Examiner, 27 November and 4 December 1915[132].

A part of the text of the inscription follows thus,

> Nine centuries had rolled by since the glory and mercy of the uncreated, the Divine Orient, the Man God, Christ descended on the earth and also that, after having laid down the weight of his mortality he entered upon the possession of his glory and after his holy apostle (St Thomas, Nadattigham Budhha) arrived among us, we should say, according to the era of Emperor Vikrama 1116 years, the new era, which ought to be given here together with the one which marks the nine centuries. But after this time he who carried upon his shoulders the cross – the conqueror of his enemies became our peace, one records 981 years. It was during this time that, all darkness being dispelled, and the sovereign power of the divine conqueror making art and virtue flourish. The divine orient was recognised as the master of all the sciences and the King of Kings[133].

We note here two dates belonging to two different eras, the Christian and the Vikrama era. We read that nine centuries have been passed after the death of Jesus and the arrival of his holy apostle in India. The year given is 1116 of the Vikrama era. It seems to be the era which began in 57 BC is mentioned here. Alberuni, had almost at the same time, remarked that the Vikrama era is used in the southern and western parts of India[134]. According to the calculations that we have already done in the previous chapter, it is 1059 AD. The inscription further says that it is 981 years since the divine orient had been recognised

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132 We got these information from A.D. MATTAM, *The Indian Church of S Thomas Christians and her Missionary Enterprise before the Sixteenth Century*, Kottayam, 1985, 27-28.

133 This translation is taken from A.D. MATTAM, *The Indian Church of S Thomas Christians and her Missionary Enterprise before the Sixteenth Century*, 28.

134 E.C. SACHAU, *Alberuni's India*, vol. II, London, 1910, 5.

as the king of kings. This might indicate the original date of the construction of the church. Thus when we deduct 981 from 1059 we come to the conclusion that the original church might have been built in 78 AD. If this is true, it would prove the existence of a Christian community in this part of the western India in the first century AD.

5. 3 Other traditions

Fr A. Kircher gives an itinerary of St Thomas, translated from the Syriac into Latin, which, Fr Roth sj of Agra, brought to Fr A. Kircher sj in Rome, according to which the apostle preached in Syria, Armenia, Mesopotomia, Soldania, Candahar, Cabul or Calabor, Gavorstan or Caphurstan, Lesser Gujarat between Lahore and Kashmir, Tibet, Bengal, the Decan and Mylapore[135]. There were Christians in these parts of India still in 17th century. These people who were called St Thomas Christians (*Christiani S. Thomae dicit*) had a custom impressing on their forehead a triple cross fashioned of red sandalwood, and they dip their children in water[136]. It could be argued that they were Nestorian Christians, but in that case how they are they called St Thomas Christians, and how could they be practising these Hindu custom of using red sandalwood?

There is another reference to these people in one of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* of early 18th century.

> On m'assure que dans les montagnes qui sépare la Perse de l'empire de Mogol, il y avaient des chrétiens qui s'imprimaient, avec un fer chaud, la figure de la croix sur le corps. Il y a bien de l'apparence que ces chrétiens ne le font de nom, et que tout leur christianisme ne consiste qu'en

135 A. KIRCHER, *China monumentis, qua sacris qua profanis, nec non variis naturae artis spectaculis, alairumque rerum memoriabilium argumentis illustrata*, Frankfurt am Main, 1666, 91.

136 A. KIRCHER, *China monumentis, qua sacris qua profanis, nec non variis naturae artis spectaculis, alairumque rerum memoriabilium argumentis illustrata*, 91.

> cette marque extérieure qui les distingue des gentils et des mahométans[137].

The missionary writes this while thinking of starting a new mission in this region. He thinks that the people in the regions adjoining Indus would be the starting point for a missionary enterprise in North West India, because he sees in them marks of Christianity even if they were 'Christians only by name'. Can we not think that these people had some distant relation with the ancient Christianity that flourished in those regions in the first few centuries of the Christian era?

Kircher mentions a council convoked at Mylapore by Thomas to which came bishops consecrated by him at Kandahar, Kabul, Kaphurstan and Lesser Gujarat[138]. He also refers to letters kept in the archives of Mylapore church[139]. What is interesting is that though the places mentioned above may well represent the route followed by Nestorian missionaries in the early Middle Ages, it is clearly visible that all the places that tradition assigns to Thomas as the fields of his mission are represented here.

There are many traditions that bring Jesus himself to North India. As evidence to it the authors who advocate this view point out the influence of Indian philosophy and religion on Christian teachings. They point out also a tomb of Jesus and even that of Mary his mother in Kashmir.

> About 400 kms south of Sri Nagar, between the villages of Naugam and Nilmag, the Yus Marg, the meadow of Jesus, is to be found on a vast plain. Here it is the Bene Israel, the children of Israel, who settled in the area after 722 BC an continued to live there as shepherds who have passed down

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137 "Du Père Diusse, missionnaire de Compagnie de Jésus, au Révérend Père Directeur des Missions Françaises de la Chine et des Indes Orientales, de la même compagnie, à Surate, le 28 jan 1701 », Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, vol. 10, 231.

138 A. KIRCHER, *China...illustrata*, Amstelodami, 1667, 91-92.

139 A. KIRCHER, *China .... Illustrata*, 91.

the reports, Jesus preached there. This author has given some proofs to state that the tomb of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is at Mari in Pakistan which is 70 km east of Taxila[140].

That there were Jews in Kashmir and North India may be true. But one may not easily accept that these Jews gave the name of Jesus to a particular place there. Only Christians would do that. At the same time we do not know from which date this name was in circulation. All these places mentioned in these traditions fall under the erstwhile kingdom of Gondophares. Even the presence of Jesus in India, as we have seen, is placed, by those who advocate this view, in the kingdom of Gondopahres. Are we not justified in concluding that there were Christians as the immediate reason of the traditions, in all these places?

There are numerous references to the church of India in the records of the East Syrian Church. But they all belong to the time after which the Indian Church was constituted a Metropolitan Church under the Patriarchate of Seleucia-Steciphon and do not fall under the realm of our investigation. But there is one reference from an Arab writer which deserves special attention. It is from Abu Salih, the Armenian[141]. He gives a fairly good description of India and the establishment of Christianity there by the apostle Thomas. The description seems to be very much similar to the one that we have seen in the Balraam and Josephat story. It is possible that the author is under the influence of this text. Abu Salih, after describing the church of Mylapore, where the tomb of the apostle is venerated and after having described the miracles done by the apostle there, mentions two more places where Christians are seen.

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140 V. W. DESHPANDE, *The Impact of Ancient Indian Thougth on Christianity*, New Delhi, 1996, 28. The author took this quotation from F. KERSTEN, *Jesus lived in Kashmir*, 188.

141 ABU SALIH, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries*, B.T.A. Evettes (ed.), Oxford, 1895.

The first is Kulam. "All the Christians who live there are Nestorians. There is here a church of the Lady and Pure Virgin Mary; and a church of the glorious saint and Martyr saint George"[142]. This seems to be city of Quilon, in Kerala, where a church of St. Thomas had been described by John Marignoly, who stayed there for fourteen months in 1347-48.

The second place mentioned is Fashur. "Here there are several churches; and all the Christians here are Nestorians; and that is the condition of the things here. It is from this palce that camphor comes ... In this town there is one church named after Our Lady, the Pure Virgin Mary"[143]. In the notes it is commented upon Fashur in this way, "so the word is written in the MS. I can only conjecture that it may be a clerical error for Mansur or Mansurah, a country in North West India at the mouth of the Indus"[144]. Mansur was a well-known city built by the local Muslim rulers close to the Hindu town of Bahmanabad, when it was the capital of the Lower Sind[145]. Thus, we know that in Lower Sind there had been several Churches in the 13th century. They were of course Nestorians. However, considering the fact that this region was one of the fields of the missionary activity of Thomas, could we not think that some remnants of the early Christians also were there?

We shall conclude this enquiry into the Christian antiquities of North India with these words of Hosten.

> The traces may have disappeared, especially in the kingdom of Gondophares. You may have found without realising.

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142 ABU SALIH, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries*, 300.

143 ABU SALIH, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries*, 300.

144 ABU SALIH, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries*, 300.

145 E.R. HAMBEY, "Some fresh documents on Medieval Christianity in India and further India", *ICHR* 3 (1963), 100.

> You may have realised without acknowledging, because an incredulous world would rise up in arms. You may have searched in the wrong directions. You may not have known of some places where to search. You may have been unwilling to help where others said something could be found, or not have helped as much as they wanted. . How much of what we have written you did not suspect: yet all of it was there all the time, for every one to discover[146].

CONCLUSION

We have thus tried to verify the traditions of the mission of the apostle Thomas to North India in their true historical milieu. We have seen that there are historical references to the existence of Christians in North and North West India from the second century onwards. The narrations about Pantenus, Theophilos the Indian, and Jordan of Severac reveal the presence of Christians in India throughout all the centuries. We met with a struggling Christianity in 189 AD, an indigenous Christianity in 354 AD, and an almost dead Christianity in 1321 AD in those parts of India where St Thomas had established the church. There are still relics and remnants of ancient Christianity in many parts of the country. Thus we are enabled to accord a historical credibility to the mission of Thomas to North India. We have thus, after our analysis in the last two chapters, that the mission of Thomas in North India is historically and geographically probable. But, can we hold it as a historical actuality? The efforts to find out an answer to these questions will take us to the next chapter where we will make a historiographic comparative study of the Thomas traditions in India and the historical actualities of the country.

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146 H. HOSTEN, "Notes and Essays on St Thomas", vol. 18, fol. 79.

Chapter Four

Merging of Traditions and History

History is about facts and dates. It is no fiction. When we say that something is historical, we mean that it has taken place in definite time and space[1]. We have so far located the places and identified the persons related to the Thomas traditions of North India. We have also ascertained the early existence of Christians in those regions of North India where Thomas carried out his missionary works. Thus we notice how history and traditions concur and cooperate with each other in establishing the mission of Thomas in North India as a historical probability. We are now in a position to consider the mission of Thomas in North India as a historical event. In this last chapter we shall deal further with this merger of traditions and history and see how far we are justified in establishing the historical actuality of the mission of the apostle Thomas in North India.

We shall do this in three phases. In the first place we shall examine if we are justified in using the *Ath* as the starting point for our study. In the second section we shall analyse the Thomas traditions of India. The last section is an attempt to verify the reasons for the total disappearance of the ancient Christianity from North India.

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1 "In order to be available for the purpose of history, events must be susceptible of arrangement in definite chronological order, and capable of being dated approximately, if not exactly. Facts to which dates cannot be assigned, although they be invaluable for the purpose of ethnology, philology, and other sciences, are of no use to historian." V.A. Smith, *Early History of India*, 27.

1. ACTS OF THOMAS: HISTORY AND LEGENDS OR HISTORY OR LEGENDS

1.1. HISTORICITY OF THE ACTS OF THOMAS

Doing history signifies always and everywhere to interpret the past[2]. Of the past we possess only fragments. Every reconstruction based on these fragments cannot always be objective. It is true that the conclusions and reconstructions made from these fragmentary evidence do not substitute the past event. The truth of such reconstructions depend on the subjectivity of the historian and the particular mode of his marshalling the sources[3]. So what is needed is a correct rapport with the sources to avoid too much of subjectivity. In this sense, there is always the need of studying the sources anew and bringing them under incessant scrutiny to deduce new information regarding the past.

The basic question that we have to answer in our work is whether we can accredit certain historicity to the events recounted in the *Ath,* because we cannot begin a historical study from a mere assumption. If we simply assumed that the *Ath* contained historical elements and based our study on this assumption the end result would be quite unfortunate. No historical study can be carried out on the basis of a mere hypothesis which is not substantiated by convincing evidence.

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2 "Il particolare rapporto che esiste fra lo storico e l'oggetto del suo studio (un oggetto non più esistente, da costruire in base alle testimonianze frammentarie che ne restano) e gli scopi stessi dell'attività storiografica (costruzione della memoria e dell'identità, legittimazione) escludono la possibilità di ritenere che il passato sia un dato preesistente alla sua ricostruzione, che il ruolo dello storico sia semplicemente quello di riportarlo alla luce, di narrarlo o descriverlo, presentando ordinatamente i dati ricavati dalle fonti". P. CARRAO & P. VIOLA, *Introduzione agli Studi di Storia*, Roma, 2002, 64.

3 "The historian lives at a certain time and in a certain society, which he or she cannot fail to reflect by holding views which are inevitably conditioned by the mentalities and attitudes of his or her age and place". M. GRANT, *Greek and Roman Historians*, London, 1995, 92.

So we are bound to answer the question whether the story of the *Ath* is built upon historical events. In other words, the basic question here is whether the tradition of the *Ath* represents a real historical event. In the previous pages we have been trying to reconstruct the past from the fragmentary evidence that we have today at our disposal. This attempt has brought out the probability that the *Ath* represents an event that really took place in a definite period of time.

There have been authors who denied any historicity to the story in the *Ath* because of the mere fact that it was apocryphal[4]. But being apocryphal does not mean that a book has nothing historical in it. Apocryphal means just that a book was not accepted as inspired and hence not worthy to be included amongst the canons of the Scripture. The canons of the Scripture do not say that the apocryphal acts do not contain any historical material. It is merely concerned with apostolicity and the inspirational character of a book.

The story of the *Ath* is geographically and politically based in India, though there are just passing remarks to places and persons in it. It seems that the author never cared for the details. They did not matter at all to his narration. Either he was ignorant of them or he did not care to describe them. If he had been ignorant, how could he introduce these names in his book? We will have to answer that he had found these names in some other documents[5]. He could not have simply invented these names since they belonged to the history of

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4 "Die Thomas-Akten sind, wie Untersuchungen gezeigt haben, ein höchst eigenartiges Dokument in der Religions- und Literaturgeschichte des christlichen Synkretismus. ... Diese Einigung war vorbereitet durch die Auflösung der christlichen Heilgeschichte in einen Zeitlosen Mythos, dessen Geschehen sich ständig wiederholt und nicht geschichtlich gebunden ist". G. BORNKAMM, *Mythos und Legende,* 121.

5 Farquahar postulated this theory in his article and corroborated it with a statement form the *Didascalia* according to which Thomas had written letters form India. J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The Apostle Thomas in North India*, 319.

India. If at all he had invented them, they should have been correct lest his readers disbelieve him. It is quite probable that the author did not want to describe the political and geographical situations of the places where the apostle of India did his missionary works. It was not his concern. He was only concerned with imparting to his readers the doctrines he held and the characters and places were, for him, just the media of transmission of the doctrines. But at the same time we cannot reject the historical ground he had carefully chosen.

All the apocryphal acts seem to have this carefully chosen historical background. Without such groundwork of historical truth the respective authors could not have possibly believed that their readers would accept what they wanted to say.

> In the same way with regard to the *Acts of Thomas*, while the main objects of the writer is to inculcate the doctrine of celibacy... he must have some historical groundwork to obtain credibility for his story; and there is the highest probability that the groundwork he studiously took was not only the correct name of the apostle, Judas Thomas, but as in the case of Pseudo-apostolic history of Christ, the correct mention of his sphere. The writer had nothing to gain in sending the apostle to India, but much to gain if the apostle whose name he forged was well known, at the time he wrote, as having been the apostle of India[6].

Thus we see that there is an apparent historicity in the narration of the *Ath.* Does it mean that we can take everything in the story as historical? We should not confuse possible history with historical facts. "It is plain that the story in all its details could have happened; but the question is did it happen"[7]?

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6 R. COLLINS, "Manicheans on the Malabar Coast", 314.

7 J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The Apostle Thomas in North India*, 318.

There have been various efforts to prove that the historicity of the story of the *Ath* can never be ascertained with certainty. There are authors who think that the historicity of the king mentioned in it does not guarantee the historicity of the mission of Thomas in India and hence does not prove the historicity of the *Ath*. "Although the existence of an Indian king of the name of Gudnaphav in the first century has been ascertained, all attempts to prove the story of Thomas' missionary work in India as a historical fact have failed so far"[8]. It is true that if we go searching for the historicity of the mission of Thomas on stones and parchments, the attempt will be a failure. The sojourn of a foreigner, of a newly founded religion, in a country of Buddhists and Hindus was not an important event to be depicted on stones or pillars as that of the edicts of Asoka. Christianity in North India did not receive royal favours as in later Chinese history for great monuments to be erected[9] or as in the history of the St Thomas Christians of Malabar to keep those records on copperplates[10].

Those who argue against the historicity of the *Ath* hold that an apparent chronological coincidence between the reign of Gondophares and a possible mission of the apostle Thomas to India, offers no solid basis for presuming that such a mission in fact took place[11]. Klijn writes, "... we are not allowed to draw any conclusion about the historicity of these Acts starting with this name. Gudnaphar, the mightiest king of Parthian dynasty, was obviously well-known in the West

8 J. QUASTEN, *Patrology*, 139.

9 A great monument at Si-ngan-Fou was erected in 781 A.D. to commemorate the beginning of Christianity in China.

10 The Christians of Malabar had been awarded various privileges by subsequent kings of Kerala and many of these privileges were written on copper plates.

11 B. VADAKEKARA, *Origin of India's St Thomas Christians*, 232.

as shown by the tradition that he was one of the three kings"[12]. But Klijn had, for this statement, based himself on the unsuccessful theory of Lohuizen de Leeuw according to which the period of Gondophares had to be drawn back to the end of the 1st century B.C[13].

Again, there is an argument that even if Gondophares is proved to be historical, it does not necessarily prove that the apostle visited the kingdom of Gondophares, though the names of the two occur alongside in the *Ath*[14]. Neill writes, "the historical coincidence is very remarkable; but it is important not to build on it a structure heavier than it will bear"[15]. According to him, the author of the *Ath* could have had some vague notion of the kingship of Gondophares, and might have used it in creating the historical ambience for the mission of the apostle in India. As Gondophares' kingdom was extensive and the kingship long, no wonder that the author knew at least the name of Gondophares. But, we are forced to ask whether such a vague awareness about the name of a king in India would have been enough for the author of the *Ath* to write the story with such historical and

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12 A.F.J. KLIJN, *The Acts of Thomas,* p. 160. Gondophares was also represented, in the western tradition, as one of the three kings who visited the child Jesus at Bethlehem. In this tradition he is called Gaspar. E.E. HERZFELD, *Archaeological History of Iran,* 63.

13 VAN LOHUIZEN DE LEEUW, *The Scythian period. An approach to the History, Art, Epigraphy of North India from the First Century B.C. to the Third Century A.D.,* Leiden, 1949. The theory was put forward by her in early 20th century. But she was alone to hold such a view and no body ever gave any attention to her in later years. Her theory itself seems to be based on unreal hypothesis and goes against accepted chronological order. "It has also been shown that no evidence has been discovered of such revolutionary character as to disturb and upset the old and established chronology of the Scythians and the Parthians despite the appearance of Dr Van Lohuizen de Leeuw's *The Scythian period in Indian history*. Her conclusions which are demonstrably erroneous, have failed to find acceptance at the hands of scholars who can speak with authority on the subject, both in India and abroad". G.M. MORAES, *History of Christianity in India,* 292.

14 B. VADAKEKARA, *Origin of India's St Thomas Christians,* 233.

15 S. NEILL, *History of Christianity in India,* 28.

geographical accuracy that has been brought out in our study[16]. It is true that he does not describe in great detail the historical circumstances, but he was sure to be aware of the details. Historical evidences abound in the localities to prove the basic assumptions of the author to be true.

Even those who refuse to accept the Indian apostolate of Thomas must acknowledge that their scepticism rests mainly on a general disposition to discredit any ancient story which is not proved to the hilt, rather than any strong positive grounds for disputing it[17]. A close regard on the opinions of those who reject the story of the *Ath* and consequently the mission of Thomas in India will make it clear that most of them have not made any considerable effort to study the issue in all its details. They just assumed that the *Ath* contains no historical data[18]. But the study we have done in the

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16 "Gar in eigentlichen Sinne 'historisierend' nannten sie ihn so. Waren des Thomas hauptsächliche Hörer (und Arbeitgeber) ja zunächst wohl auch tatsächlich Parther. Die Autoren, die über Thomas berichteten, waren aber Kirchengeschichtlicher des 2. bis 5. Jahrhunderts und schreiben aus ihren Quellen. Das die von Thomas bereisten Regionen mittlerweile zum Reich der im Westen damals völlig unbekannten Kushanen gehörten oder wieder unter der Leitung stets wechselnder einheimischer Dynasten standen, war ihnen ihren Lesern nicht nur uninteressant, sondern, wie gesagt, weitgehend einfach unbekannt. Parthien und parthische König dagegen waren dem Westen ein Begriff, auch die Ausdehnung, di die parthische Einfußsparer bis zum ersten Hälfte des ersten Jahrhunderts sogar über das Industal hinaus erfahren hatte". H. WALDMANN, *Das Christentum in Indien und der Königsweg der Apostel in Edessa, Indien und Rom*, Tübingen, 1996, 12.

17 Zaleski makes this observation, "They begin their researches either by denying the tradition or else by affecting to ignore it as of no importance, and are acting like travellers, who take another route than that pointed out by their guide, and wonder why they do fail to reach the inn". L.M. ZALESKI, *The Apostle St Thomas in India*, 33.

18 "It seems that the first to formally deny the tradition was Basnage, who is refuted by Assemani. La Croze, in his History of Christianity in India dismisses in a summarily manner. Tillement, under the impression that the whole body of Thomas was at Edessa, rejects the Mylapore tradition, suggesting that one Thomas, follower of Manes, was at the back of the fable. Assemani too, accepting the apostolate and martyrdom in India, regard the relics preserved in India as a Nestorian fabrication for the same reason apparently. Protestant writers of the more extreme type (Hough, Kaye, M. Rae, Smith etc) reject the story". We found this quotation in *The Examiner*, a catholic magazine from Bombay in an article that reviewed the book of Medleycott which was published in 1905. *The Examiner*, Dec. 9, 1905, 524.

preceding chapters have made it clear that the author of the *Ath* was sure about the places and persons that he had made use of in the book[19]. The numismatic and archaeological discoveries of the last century, that we have analysed in the second chapter, have altered the interpretation that had been given to the *Ath*. Unless we read the *Ath* in relation with the ancient geography and history of India, we will never be able to comprehend the full import of the story. And it was one aspect that had so far been neglected by all studies about the Thomas tradition of India.

Thus our conclusion that the mission of Thomas in North India is a historical probability accords certain historicity to the story of the *Ath* also[20]. We do not mean to say that the events and persons narrated in the *Ath* are historical in the full sense of the expression[21]. We mean to say that it is historical in the sense that it was composed on a historical date and in a historical place and had based its story on historical places, persons and events. The *Ath* was composed between the years 225–250 A.D. and the place of composition was Edessa. The historical places in it are Barygaza the present Braoch in Gujarat in India and Takshasila, the present Taxila in Pakistan and the historical persons were Thomas the apostle of Jesus, Gondophares, the Indo-Parthian king who had ruled from 20-50 A.D. and his brother Abadgasses, who had succeeded him. The author of the *Ath* knew that there were Christians in Barygaza and around that place as well as in Taxila and their surrondings. He knew these were well-known

19 Our analysis in the second chapter made it clear that the author had in mind the port city of Barygaza in the present Gujarat and Taxila in Pakistan.

20 "Apres tout il n'est pas impossible que sous le développement luxuriant de la légende se cache quelques données traditionnelles relatives aux mission de l'apôtre Thomas dans le Inde". E. AMMAN, "Apocryphes du Nouveau Testament", col. 503.

21 "The Acts of Thomas, which exists in Syriac, Greek and Latin versions, is apparently based on a kernel of historical facts". H.G. RAWLINSON, "Early Contacts between India and Europe", in A.L. BASHAM (ed.), *A Cultural History of India*, Delhi, 1994, 432.

trade centres and the talks about them would have been current among the people of his time[22]. The Satakarni dynasty of Deccan had just ended its rule in the western India (225 A.D.) when he wrote it[23]. The power of the Kushan Empire, who put an end to the dynastic rule of Gondophares, had only begun to crumble at the time[24]. The body of the apostle had just been brought from India and it was being venerated with great fervour in the city of Edessa, which had always looked upon Thomas as its apostle. This translation of the body must have happened before the composition of the *Ath.* Farquahar suggests that the removal of the body of Thomas from India took place in 165 A.D[25]. According to Hosten the latest date of the translation could be 225 A.D, because, "it took place, according to the *Passio*, during the reign of Alexander Severus (222 – 235)"[26]. This presence of the relics of Thomas by itself could prove strongly the historicity of the *Ath.* When the people of Edessa venerated the apostle Thomas in such a devoted way, if the author of the *Ath* placed the apostolate of the saint in a far away country it should have been with sufficient reason. All the geographical and historical accounts about India written in the first and second centuries A.D. must have been in circulation at Edessa also in this period. Above all, the author of the *Ath* should have had strong reasons to suppose that his readers would

22 The knowledge of these centres must have been really in circulation at Edessa as Taxila was on the silk route that led to China. Barygaza was still the great port of the western coast of India and the Persian Empire had by this time taken over the maritime trade from the Greeks and the Romans.

23 We have seen that the *Ath* was written between 225 and 250 A.D. The Andhra dynasty came to an end in 225 A.D though the Sakas or the Western Satraps continued for more than a century.

24 The Kushan Empire had fallen almost at the same time as the Andhras. V.A. SMITH, *Early History of India*, 251.

25 J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The Apostle Thomas in South India*, 327.

26 H. HOSTEN, *Works of Hosten*, vol. 19, fol. 158.

believe him when he wrote that Thomas had gone to India. So, in this way, we guarantee historical veracity and validity of the story of the *Ath.*

1.2. AN INDIAN ORIGIN OF THE ACTS OF THOMAS

So far we have discerned much 'Indianness' in the story and contents of the *Ath.* Besides these, there are some typically Indian customs which are depicted in it. "Despite the lack of specificity in the book about places and climates, the general context represented is that of India"[27]. Medleycott has drawn out many elements which are really Indian from the story[28]. Zaleski, who himself was in India for several years, writes,

> To one who has spent his life in India, the legend of St Thomas possesses a local colour, a particular Indian flavour, all happens in an Indian surrounding, so that every detail seems not likely, but real and true. One clearly understands that the legend has originated in India, and is based on local traditions[29].

Thus there is a question that has to be answered at this point of our sudy. Can we think of an Indian origin of the *Ath*? There seem to exist many elements to suppose an Indian origin of it, if not in its entire form, but as a prototype and source for the present document.

We have seen in the first chapter how it is possible that a written document from India be available at Edessa which would possibly have been used by the author of the *Ath*[30]. We have also observed how Egeria gives witness to the existence

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27 B. VADAKEKKARA, *Origin of India's St Thomas Christians*, 168.

28 Bullock-carts and palanquins are used for travels, people take bath before eating, people prostrate themselves on the ground as a sign of respect, young married couples are blessed. A.L. MEDLEYCOTT, *India and the apostle Thomas*, 277-281.

29 L.M. ZALESKI, *Apostle Thomas in India*, 97.

30 J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The Apostle Thomas in North India*, 318.

of the texts of Thomas in the Martyrium of the church of Edessa. There have been early contacts between the Christians of India and Persia. Many fables and legends from India had been taken from India to Persia. Thus it was possible that a story describing the mission of the apostle in India had found its way to Persia.

1.2.1. A Hindu Account of the Acts of Thomas

In the sixth meeting of the Indian Historical Records Commission held at Madras in January 1924, Mr P. J. Thomas submitted a paper on a Hindu tradition on St Thomas[31]. M. Rae had earlier made this comment on this Tamil version of the *Ath.*

> A curious travesty of the Acts was found in a Tamil manuscript now in the Mackenzie collection. This manuscript is a translation from Latin by Nanapracasa Pillai, a native Christian, who was probably trained by the Jesuits at Pondichery, in whose library he most likely found the Latin Ms ... According to this travesty St Thomas first landed at the capital of the king of Malabar, then went to Mylapore, at that time ruled by Candapa raja (meant to be the Tamil equivalent of Gandapha-rasa or Gondopharnes)[32].

We do not know how much of what Rae says is true. He in fact never admitted that the apostle visited South India. So his opinion that this Tamil manuscript is a translation from the Latin text of the *Ath* is surely a wild conjecture. If it had been a translation from the Latin version how can one account for the differences between them? Mr P.J. Thomas gives various reasons to reject the view of Rae. After presenting the story which differed very much in contents from the *Ath* he argues as follows,

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31 P. J. THOMAS, "A Hindu Tradition on St Thomas", *Indian Historical Records Commission, Proceedings and Meetings* 6 (1924), 121-129, in *St Thomas Varia* in GILRC, Calcutta, 6-7.

32 M. RAE, *The Syrian Church in India*, 363.

> It will, of course, be argued that the Hindu account given above originated from the Acta itself. Those who argue with Milne Rae will naturally hold this view. But a comparison of the two accounts will show that there is little in common between them. The dream vision and the palace building story, which form the very core of the Acta, do not occur in the Hindu account. On the contrary it is more likely that the Edessan author of the Acta got the story of St Thomas and of the Indian king from the original Indian tradition, of which the Hindu account above quoted is but a fragment. Because after all the events narrated in the Acta are said to have happened in India, and information on them must, of course, have come from that country. Usually such traditions were spread abroad by travelling traders. Besides, we know of many embassies of Indian kings to the Roman emperor in the early centuries of the Christian era; and we further know that Bardaisan, the reputed author of the Acta has himself done a work on India (Hypomnemata Indica) from information gathered from Indian ambassadors passing through Edessa on their way to Rome[33].

Though we are not in a position to accept the reasons for his postulation, the postulation itself is worthy to be considered. This Tamil story is quite different from the *Ath.* No story or portions from this Tamil story is seen in the *Ath.* As Mr Thomas rightly observes, the palace building and the dream vision are the key points in the *Ath.* But they are absent in this Tamil version. Instead, other stories like that of a huge wood which the apostle carried alone from a river and with which he built the church of Mylapore are narrated. This we do not find in any accepted version of the *Ath.* Thus it seems that the story quoted by Mr Thomas must just be a fragment of the original that could have existed somewhere in India. It is all the more possible considering the mention

33 P. J. THOMAS, "A Hindu Tradition on St Thomas", 6-7.

of the existence of the copies of the *Ath* in the library of Kanchipuram of which we will presently speak. This Kanchipuram was in the Vijayanagar kingdom in which Mylapore was also included. Thus the conclusion that if the *Ath* cannot possibly have any historical value except to affirm that the Indian tradition of St Thomas is one of hoary antiquity, the tradition itself must have been derived from India; and the original must be sought in the country, seems to be reasonable[34].

1.2.2. Mention of the Acts of Thomas in Indian Literature and Indian History

There are clear references in the writings of the missionaries from India to the existence of a manuscript copy of the *Ath* in India. The first reference is to a copy of the *Ath* preserved on copper plates. In 1598, Father Simon de Sa, Rector of St John's college, San Thomé (Mylapore), wrote that on visiting the king of Vijaynagar[35] at the capital of Chandragiri he had asked the king to allow the missionaries to copy the Acts of St Thomas the Apostle which were preserved on copper plates at Kanchipuram. The missionaries had known from the ancient Christians that the *Ath* in the Indian language was kept in the library. Fr Simon assured the king that they wanted nothing from the Acts except the story of the life and activity of St Thomas. "If I can get that, all

34 P. J. THOMAS, "A Hindu Tradition on St Thomas", 6-7.

35 Vijayanagar had been the paramount power in South India from the early fifteenth century and it comprised the regions today known as Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and parts of Andhra Pradesh. But at the time of this letter the kingdom had already disintegrated. The kingdom of Vijayanagr itself was destroyed in the battle with the Sultans of Bijapur and Golconda at Thalikotta in January 1565. J. KEAY, *India, a History*, 307.The king mentioned here is Venkata II of Aravidu dynasty. He was quite favourable to the Jesuit missionaries. He "assured them of land, and allowed them to build Churches anywhere they wished, and specifically at Chandragiri". J. CORREA-ALFONSO, *The Jesuits in India 1542 –1773*, Anand, 1997, 116.

the Christian kings, and the emperors, and the supreme Pontiff will be intensely pleased. To my petition he answered that he would diligently enquire about these writings and would give them to us"[36].

We do not know if the wish of Fr Simon was ever fulfilled. In the tumults of historical events his desire also might have perished[37]. Nonetheless it is very important to note that the existence of the text of the *Ath,* that too in an Indian language, in one of the libraries of India is stated explicitly. Is it the Hindu account of the *Ath* mentioned above which is suggested here? We cannot say anything. We do not have any proof in our hands to make such a statement as nobody has seen the document. However we cannot reject the possibility of its existence.

The information about the existence of this copy of the *Ath* in the same library reappears almost after two centuries. This time the reference is from one of the letters of the Jesuit missionaries from India[38]. It is asserted that among the books of the Academy of the Brahmins of Kanchipuram, there were very ancient books of history, in which there was a mention of St Thomas, of his martyrdom, and of the place of his burial. The letter states that the Brahmins themselves spoke of its existence and they were ready at that time to hand it over to the Christian missionaries in exchange for a large sum of money that the missionaries were never been able to procure.

> On assure que parmi les livres dont l'académie des Brahmanes de Cangivoram est dépositaire, il y en a d'historie

36 J. HAY, *De rebus japonicis, indicis et pervanis epistolae recentiores,* Antverpiae, 1605, 766.

37 The Jesuit mission of Chandragiri was begun in 1599. But, Fr Simon de Sa was not there among the pioneers. Venkata II transferred his capital from Chandragiri to Vellore in 1606. The mission in the Vijayanagar kingdom was closed down in 1611 never to be revived. J. CORREA-ALFONSO, *The Jesuits in India 1542 – 1773,* 116-117.

38 *Les lettres édifiantes et curieuses,* vol. 14.

> fort anciens, où il est parlé de Saint Thomas, de son martyre, et du lieu de sa sépulcre. Ce sont les Brahmans qui l'ont dit, et qui le sont offerts à les communiquer, moyennant des sommes, que les missionnaires n'ont jamais été en état de leur donner. Peut-être même que depuis le vénérable Père de Nobilis, il n'y a en personne assez habile dans le sanskrit, pour examiner les choses par soi-même[39].

This statement of the missionary shows that the text of the *Ath* still existed in the 18th century in the library of Kanchipuram which was a great city of the Vijayanagar kingdom. We may have to accord some sort of credibility to what the missionary says in the light of his further statements that the missionaries had not the necessary resources and that there was no one well-versed in Sanskrit after the death of De Nobili. The missionaries, especially the Jesuits, had tried to minutely register everything that they had heard and had seen in India. This particular letter of the missionary bears witness to the existence of the Sanskrit text of the *Ath* in a library at Kanchipuram. It becomes all the more a probable when we understand that there was a Christian appointed as the chief minister in the Vijayanagar kingdom in the 15th century[40].

These two references make an explicit affirmation of the existence of the text of the *Ath* in India and in the language of the Indians. Whether it is the *Ath* itself or some other texts, we cannot say anything at all. The only version of the manuscript copy of the *Ath* in India, as far as we now know, is the Syriac manuscript at Trichur. In any case it is important to note that the above references belong to two distinct centuries, the first to the 16th century and the other to the

39 *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, vol. 14, 73.

40 *Journey of Abd-er-Razzak*, in R.H. MAJOR, *India in the fifteenth century*, London, 1857, 40-41.

18th century. This shows that the tradition about it has always persisted.

There is another aspect that deserves special comment in this regard. Kanchipuram falls in the possible itinerary of the Christians of North India on their way to the Malabar Coast. There is a tradition that the Christians of North India, faced with danger of extinction migrated to the South to join their brothers of faith. The migrating Christians could have brought down some books concerning the mission of Thomas among their forefathers. Kanchipuram was also the most important city of the Pallava kings of South India, and in fact they were known as the Pallavas of Kanchi, who ruled from 4th to 9th centuries A.D. We do not know if there had been any ethnic relation between the early Pahlavas of the North and West and these Pallavas of the South.

> The name Pallava resembles Pahlava so closely that most writers have been disposed to favour the hypothesis that Pallavas and Pahlavas were identical, and that consequently the Southern Pallava dynasty of Kanchi should be considered as ultimately of Persian origin[41].

But various researches have produced no supportive evidences to prove this hypothesis and now the opinion is that the Pallavas were most likely an indigenous tribe. But at the same time history is of proof that the Pallavas were constant enemies of the Tamil states of South India. Smith conjectures that they were a predatory, blackmailing clan or tribe, like the Marathas of the eighteenth century[42]. He also makes this assumption that the Pallava power rose from the ruins of the Andhra dynasty[43]. They began to rule since the fourth century A.D.

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41 V.A. SMITH, *Early History of India*, 469.

42 V.A. SMITH, *Early History of India*, 470.

43 V.A. SMITH, *Early History of India*, 471. We see this comment in John Keay, "The Pahlavas/Parthians quickly disappeared from the Indian scene. They would be

Thus the existence of the text of the *Ath* in an Indian language in the library of Kanchipuram seems to be a probability. We hope in future some research would demonstrate that this probability is a reality.

2. INDIAN HISTORY AND THOMAS TRADITIONS

Western historians have always maintained a sceptical attitude to the history of India. This scepticism was mainly born out of a belief that Indian history is a mix of myths and legends. It is true to a certain extent. But to a people who always liked to tell their history through myths and legends, traditions were an important source of history. A person who sets out to describe some particular events in the history of India can never explain away the traditions concerning these events. We shall now try to analyse the special features of Indian historiography in general and the place of the Thomas traditions in the history of India.

2.1 HISTORIOGRAPHY IN INDIA

Though the accusation that the Indians are a people devoid of any sense of history has always been prevalent, there seems to have been some kind of sense of history among the Indians. The Vedas and the puranas contain some history and historical trends. The Buddhist and Jain stories and traditions also reveal some historical aspects of India. The first and perhaps the only great historian of India was Kalhana who wrote the *Rajatarangini*[44]. He held that the first requisite

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resurrected only once, and much later, as the doubtful antecedents of the Pallavas of Kanchipuram, a distinguished dynasty but one separated from the Parthians by three centuries and the breadth of the entire sub-continent". J. KEAY, *India, a History*, London, 2001, 110.

44 The *Rajatarangini* was a chronicle of the events in the Kashmir region and it was written in the twelfth century A.D. It is translated into English by M.A. STEIN, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini, a Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir*, translated with an introduction, commentary and appendices, Constable, 1900.

for a true historian was to keep a detached mind, free from bias and prejudice. A historian, like a judge, he says, must discard love (*raga*) and hatred (*dvesha*) while recounting the events of the past, and he adds that such a writer alone deserves praise[45]. Thus we know that such a sense of history and historiography was prevalent in India. But out of this sense of history did not come out many outstanding works of history. That is a baffling paradox to all present historians.

> As a matter of fact various theories put forward to explain the absence of history in India fail to take note of the fact that the problem that we have to solve is not the lack of historical writers, of which we have a fair number of specimens, but the absence of finished products like the *Rajatharangini*. None of the extant theories can sufficiently explain this phenomenon. The obvious fact remains that India lacked neither historical materials nor historical chronicles, and even the popular demand for, or interest in, historical knowledge was not altogether absent, but still no other first-rate writer like Kalhana appeared in this branch of literature. This fact seems to be more an accident than the result of any definite cause or causes[46].

Even the Rajatarangini chronicled only the events of Kashmir and it did not care for the history of the whole India. In fact there exists no historical document that tries to depict the ancient history of the whole country. The political division of the country into small and large kingdoms must be the main reason for this absence.

In a country like India where myths and history are very often intermingled, the first requisite of a true historian is to free history from myths and legends. However this demythologization does not mean doing away with myths.

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45 Quoted by R.C MAJUMDAR, *History in Ancient India,* in R. S. MURTY (ed.), *Readings in Indian History, Politics and Philosophy,* 26.

46 R.C MAJUMDAR, *History of Ancient India,* 26.

What is essential is a rational and scientific explanation of the myths. Myths and legends are not fables; they are honest attempts to give an explanation to some existing phenomenon. Because myths present extraordinary events without trying to justify them, people have sometimes assumed that they are simply improvable and false stories and thus have made the word myth a synonym for fable. What is needed today is a conscious effort to liberate history from the legends and myths. To do this a historian has to free himself both from the past and the present.

> The function of the historian is neither to love the past nor to emancipate himself from the past, but to master and understand it as the key to understand the present. Great history is written precisely when the historian's vision of the past is illuminated by insight into the problems of the past. ... Learning from history is never a one-way process. To learn about the present in the light of the past also means to learn about the past in the light of the present. The function of history is to promote a profounder understanding of both past and present through the interrelation between them[47].

But, it seems that Indian historiography was and is not really free from this slavery of the times. The colonial historiography in India sought to establish a racial superiority of the West, thereby justifying the British conquests and victories in India. "The aim of colonial historiography was, by and large, to justify the British rule and dominance over India. For this purpose, the colonizers tended to paint the darkest picture of the country and its past"[48]. The Aryan invasion theory, even when it is considered to be true and based on undeniable proofs, was also seen as a part of this[49].

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47 E.H. CARR, *What is History*, London, 1962, 20, quoted in D.D. KOSAMBI, *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, Delhi, 1970, 168.

48 F. WILFRED, "Whose Nation? Whose History?", *Jeevadhara* 32 (2002), 62-63.

49 The Aryans are said to have migrated in1500 B.C to India from Central Asia. These semi-nomadic pastors inhabited the Gangetic valley by 1000 B.C. They exercised

> The bulk of the early writings on India authored by the colonial administrators and ideologues were intertwined with the interests of the colonial rule. One of its aims was to de-legitimise the pre-colonial, even if colonial strategies of domination were not within an element of appropriation of the 'native' past. The racial explanation of the British conquest of India and the debilities of Indian character, which the colonial historiography so eloquently narrated, are with the same intent. The Indians lost out to the Europeans, it is argued, not because of the technological superiority of the latter, but because of the racial inferiority of the former[50].

Now a section of the present Indian historiography which is called national historiography goes just the other way. It seeks to rewrite the ancient history of India through a historic explanation of myths, legends, epics and Vedas. It eulogises the Indian past to such an extent that the legends and myths contained in the epics get unprecedented historical proportions. But history is not legend nor is legend history.

The Christian historiography in India may also be seen in the light of colonial historiography. In the height of the colonial power in India, all the histories of the church in India and abroad, with the exception of one or two, sought to decry and destabilise the apostolic claims of the church in India, whether in the South or in the North. The ones who advocated the apostolicity of the Indian Church were quite

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a profound influence on the life of the Indians. Most of the languages spoken by the Indians today are derived from the Sanskrit which itself is a contribution of the Aryans. See J. HAYWOOD, *Atlante storico illustrato*, Köln, 2000, 56. For a reasonable and trustworthy reading of this Aryan occupation of India the following work is quite useful. B. SERGENT, *Genèse de l'Inde*, Paris, 1997. According to him this process of installation of the Aryans in the Gangetic valley is recorded in the Vedas itself. "Que les Indo-Ârya soient arrivés en Inde par le nord-ouest, qu'ils aient ensuite progressé vers l'est, le long du Gange jusqu'à son delta, puis qu'ils aient entamé, au sud, une conquête du Dekkan qui sera plurimillénaire, ce sont bien les textes qui nous le font nettement savoir. En effet, les plus anciens ne connaissent de l'Inde que ses régions nord-ouest (Pendjab et Sind principalement), et plus ils sont récents plus leur horizon s'élargit". B. SERGENT, *Genèse de l'Inde*, 239-240.

50 K.N. PANIKKAR, "Alternative historiographies", *Jeevadhara* 32 (2002), 7.

familiar with the historic and social background of India. At the times when Christian faith and religion was considered to be the best and the sole guarantee of salvation and when it was considered to be a contribution of the West, there was an effort to undermine the legitimacy of the historical origin of the apostolic Church in India. It suited well for the designs of the colonialists as it was in the case of the political history of India, to say that it was the Westerners that tried to save India from the darkness of idolatry. This tendency was obvious more especially among the protestant writers. Garbe would do away with any proof regarding the apostolicity of the Church of India even without trying to give a thought to it.

Thus, for these historians, Christianity began in India with the presumed arrival of the people from the West. They hold that the run away Christians of the Persian Empire brought their faith and the Thomas tradition to India. The lamentable part of it was that these scholars never thought of giving a try at the history of India and the Indians before the fourth century to see if there were Christians in India. They just assumed that Christians and Christianity simply did not exist in ancient India. The reference in all the Church history manuals to the Church in India as an offshoot of the Nestorian Church may be seen in this light[51].

There were authors like Hough, who, even while accepting the possibility of the existence of Christianity in India, could not accept that an apostle crossed over to India.

> There is a satisfactory evidence indeed that it (the Christian faith) was carried to India at a very early period; but,

51 In fact almost all the Church history book and articles in Encyclopaedias and Dictionaries the early Christians in India as the result of the Nestorian missionary enterprise. The traditions to the contrary are dealt away with as myths and legends. Richard Garbe took it for granted that there were no Christians before the persecutions of Christians in the Persian Empire and the subsequent migration of Christians to India. R. GARBE, *Indien und die Christentum,* 147.

considering the tedious mode of communication with that country, and the ancients' limited knowledge of its inhabitants until towards the close of the first century, it is not probable that any of the Apostles of our Lord embarked on such a voyage[52].

We know, from our study in the previous chapters, that the knowledge about India among the peoples of the West was not as limited as this author thought nor was the mode of communication so tedious when almost hundred and twenty ships carried their trade goods from the ports of India to Alexandria every year[53]. It seems that ancient India was better known to the ancient authors than she is known to many of the present day writers. Therefore, the argument that India of Thomas was not the present India does not hold the ground, when confronted with the real facts. Moreover there is no further evidence to show that the apostle had ever been in those other countries proposed by these writers as his possible mission fields.

Our aim in this work is to free the history of the Church in India from the myths and legends. Any treatise on the history of the Church in India always begins with the 'legend of the mission of Thomas'. Was the mission a legend? We have now come to the conclusion that it was not a mere legend. There is real history behind the legend. Thus, it is clear that all those who denied an Indian mission of Thomas had not really taken pains to learn ancient Indian history and the modes of trade between ancient India and the rest of the world. It seems that they were taken up by a belief that the Indian apostolate of Thomas was simply something that cannot be proved. It was neither a legend nor a myth, but a fact explained and narrated with the help of legends.

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52 HOUGH, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. I, 30.

53 P. MALEKANDATHIL, "St Thomas Christians and the Indian Ocean", *ETJ*, October 2001, 183.

2.2 VALUE OF TRADITIONS IN INDIAN HISTORY

"Carrying the heritage from the past into the present, tradition is ubiquitous in the human community, both in primitive and modern times alike"[54]. Tradition is, in fact, so widespread and so all-embracing a phenomenon that studying it can become an enterprise without boundaries. In India, where historical materials are lacking, traditions tend to aid the historians a lot. As Pragiter observes they are not untrustworthy guide when historical works are wanting[55]. A tradition as embodied in literature is of great use to historians.

> The historian of the remote past of any nation must be content to rely much upon tradition as embodied in literature, and to acknowledge that the results of his researches, when based upon traditional materials, are inferior in certainty to those obtainable for periods of which the facts are attested by contemporary evidences[56].

Traditions are one of the main sources of Indian history. They cannot be disregarded nor discarded as having no value at all. Until recent past the people of India, generally, had no documented history of their own, except, as we have seen the *Rajatarangini*. They had only their traditions and it served them perfectly in the lack of historical records. For them tradition "signified a reality that differed substantially from what the peoples who have their own compiled histories intend by the same term. In India tradition and history are neither parallel nor convergent"[57]. The people of India, each clan and community, transmitted their history through their legends, narratives, customs, epics, etc. In this sense tradition is an

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54 D.A. KNIGHT, "Tradition History", ABD, vol. 4, 634.

55 F.E. PRAGITER, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, 9.

56 V.A. SMITH, *Early History of India*, 4.

57 B. VADAKEKKARA, *Origin of India's St Thomas Christians*, 4.

important source of the history of India. "The songs and poetry of a living community handed down from generation to generation sometimes strikes closer to the truth of ethnic and religious origin than manuscripts and mutilated inscriptions"[58]. The tradition stands by itself; and ought not to be lightly assumed that a tradition handed from ancient times in a living community which still exists is necessarily a worse historical witness than certain scanty and often vague statements in books written far away from India by men who evidently had little information at their disposal[59].

2.3 THOMAS TRADITIONS IN THE HISTORY OF INDIA

Today the Thomas traditions have become an integral part of the traditions of India. The arrival of Thomas in India has found its entry in the historical books of India ever since India became independent. It is taught in history classes all over the country. Can this acceptance of it as a historical fact be attributed only to the Indian mind that is ready to accept anything in the tradition as historical? In this section we shall enumerate the different Thomas traditions of India and the importance they have in composing a history of Christianity in India.

2.3.1 North Indian and South Indian Thomas Traditions

We have seen in our analysis in the last few chapters the main tenets of the North Indian tradition. What we name here as the North Indian tradition is none other than the tradition in the *Ath* as it is the only source of this tradition. Therefore in this section we shall see the main features of the South Indian traditions.

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58 S.M. MOFFET, *History of Christianity in Asia*, New York, 1998, 34.

59 C.B. FIRTH, *An Introduction to the Indian Church History*, Mysore, 1961, 13.

There exist a lot of traditions in South India about the mission of the apostle to Malabar and the Coromandel Coast. It recounts that the apostle reached the shores of Malabar at a place called Maliamkara, very near to modern Cranganore, the ancient Muziris. He established seven Churches in Kerala and went to the Coromandel region where he was martyred for the glory of God. The tradition also holds that Thomas had visited the Chinese and the Kushans. As we have already seen these traditions are enshrined in different legends, ballads, stories etc. One aspect that differentiates these traditions from the story of the *Ath* is the explicit mention of the places and localities with which the story of the tradition is concerned[60]. It knows the exact places where the apostles went and the exact names of the persons who were made priests, deacons and *Rambans* by the apostle. It says that the apostle Thomas landed at Cranganore[61] in 52 A.D., established seven Churches in the places known as Niranam, Palayur, Nilakkal, Kottakavu, Kokkamangalam, Kollam and Maliamkara[62]. These seven

60 "Tradition has remained consistent ever since and history knows no better document than consistent tradition. It states that St Thomas landed at Cranganore in the year A.D. 52 in search of the Jewish colonies along the coast and that he founded seven churches among them and among Brahmins. He arrived at Palayur, a village few miles from the sea, found there a temple surrounded by tanks, and in one of these he came upon Brahmans bathing; he performed a miracle, converted the whole temple clergy, who in turn converted the temple into a church. Now this is a perfectly consistent tradition, and it is not enough to read it in books, one must go to the spot to feel the whole force of it. Cranganore still exists: nearby stands the Jews' hill; the descendant of the Jewish colonies of Our Lord's time still live in a separate group along the coast, and I saw them and visited their synagogues; the descendants of the Jewish colonies of our Lord's time live in a separate community along the coast, and I saw them and visited their synagogues; and I went to Palayur, and saw the catholic church standing in the midst of old Hindu tanks, from which Hindu relics may be dragged any day; and I saw sculptures of Hindu gods and goddesses, and Hindu sacrificial stones embedded in the church walls; and today no Brahman traveller passing thorough Palayur accepts or gathers any food in the locality which every Hindu knows by the name of 'Cursed Place'. And last but no least, the Christians are there who are open to inspection". A. GILLE, *Christianity at home*, Calcutta, 1971, 14.

61 We have seen in the second chapter the importance of this city as a commercial port.

62 In fact the tradition speaks of seven and a half Churches. The half church is situated at Thiruvancodu, a small village near Cape Comerin bordering the present Tamil Nadu. The churches might mean seven communities rather than seven buildings.

places still exist and known as ancient Christian centres. They were all ancient Jewish colonies and were trade centres[63]. All except Nilakkal are situated on the coastal line. The tradition also knows the place of the martyrdom of the apostle. The apostle was martyred at a place called Chinnamala, near Mylapore, on the suburbs of the present Madras city, in 72 A.D. Various legends and myths, originated around the tomb of the apostle at Mylapore, perpetuated the tradition and inspired the Christians to flock to the tomb in pilgrimage and receive graces through the favour of the apostle. The pilgrimage is held annually till the present day.

Different stories and legends concerning the apostle and his mission also are part of this tradition. These stories have nothing in common with the stories in the *Ath*. There are some miracles described in connection with the building of a church at Mylapore. It is said that while Thomas was praying in his oratory, a very large log came floating in from the sea to a nearby place. The king assembled all his people to drag it from the sea, but they were unable to do so. The apostle went to the king and offered to carry it to the land on condition that he be allowed to build a church with it. The king consented. Thomas, having made a sign of the cross, tied his cincture to the log and easily carried it some twelve leagues and brought it to a place where stood the house of the high priest and friend of the king. There he began the construction of the church[64]. The same narration speaks that the high priest out of rage killed his son and complained to the king that Thomas had done the crime. The apostle to prove his innocence brought the child back to life and asked

63 It was the presence of the Jewish colonies that attracted the apostle Thomas to Malabar. See J. PUTHIAKUNNEL, "The Jewish colonies of India paved the way for St Thomas", in J. VELLIAN (ed.), *The Malabar Church*, Rome, 1970, 187-191.

64 G. SCHURHAMMER, *Francis Xavier*, 582.

him to tell the truth. The child promptly said that his father had been the culprit[65]. Thus Thomas was allowed to continue the construction of the Church[66]. In this way we see a distinctness and individuality in these traditions of South India about the mission of Thomas.

2.4.2 North Indian and South Indian Thomas Traditions: Compatibilities and Contradictions

The Thomas traditions in India are mainly two types: one that relates to the mission of Thomas in South India, mainly in Malabar and Coromandel regions and the other that brings the apostle to North West India. Both these traditions have been preserved intact to the present day. But both are really distinct and different from each other. Let us clarify it in the light of the following table.

Thomas Traditions of India-a comparative table

	South India	North India
Name of the Apostle	Mar Thoma Thoma Sliha Thoma Muthappan	Judas Judas Thomas
Itinerary	Kerala –seven churches China Kusaya Mylapore	Andrapolis King of India Another region of India
Modes of Mission	Baptising Erecting crosses Appointing preists, deacons and Rambans Working miracles	Preaching, healing and baptising Holy Eucharist Miracles Appointing deacons

65 G. SCHURHAMMER, *Francis Xavier*, 583.

66 Tradition also says that it was in this church built by himself that the apostle was buried.

Martyrdom	Plot by temple priests With a lance A single executioner Because of the destruction of the temple and its deity Buried in the church built by him	At the order of the king By the soldiers Pierced by lances Because of preaching abstinence to royal ladies Buried in the tomb of the king Body transferred to the west
Stories and legends	Made water drops to hang in the air Dragged a great log from the sea and built a church with it, all alone A boy killed by his father to trap the apostle is resuscitated and he accuses his father At the wedding feast the apostle heals the hand of the cup bearer Thomas is thrown into furnace and remains unhurt Thomas destroyed Kali temple and the deity in it.	At the marriage feast, the hand of the cupbearer torn away by a tiger is brought to the hall by a dog Healing of the possessed woman Resuscitation of the dead Speaking of donkeys Healing of the royal women

This table clarifies well the distinctness and individuality of each tradition. This individuality itself of the tradition argues for, according to Vadakkekara, the veracity and historicity of the tradition.

> The kernel of the tradition is very simple. It points straight at the person of the apostle Thomas as the one who converted to the Christian faith the progenitors of the community. The identity of the apostle is clear and forthright, and admits of no ambiguity or equivocation. The content of the tradition is clothed in legends, stories and probabilities, and there are different versions of the same episode, and the details of one version do not always coincide perfectly with those of another. But the nucleus of each version is built around one and the same pattern of events: the arrival and activities of

the apostle Thomas in South India, his establishment of a community, and his death and burial at Mylapore[67].

Though the mention in this passage is to the South Indian tradition, what the author tells can be equally true with regard to the other tradition also. The North Indian tradition also is sure about the apostle of whom it speaks. Stories and legends about the prodigies of the apostle abound in it also. Nevertheless they have no similarity with those of the South Indian tradition. They seem to be entirely two different sets of stories, but based on the same personality and taking place in entirely different regions of the same country.

At the same time one seems to be least aware of the other. There is no mention of the South Indian mission of the apostle in the North Indian tradition. The *Ath* just tells that the apostle had left the kingdom of Gondophares to go to another region of India and the description in the *Ath* would give the impression that the region was not very far from the kingdom of Gondophares. On the contrary in the South Indian tradition there are vague allusions to a North Indian mission in as much as they speak about Thomas going from Malabar to the Chinese and to the Kushanas. The tradition of Thomas going up to China was very much prevalent in Malabar when the Portuguese came to India. They have recorded these traditions[68]. The tradition speaks of Thomas going to the land of Kusaya[69]. This Kusaya could mean nothing else than the Kushan Empire. How could such a tradition come down to

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67 B. VADAKKEAKARA, *Origin of India's St Thomas Christians*, 124.

68 These Portuguese authors are Correa, Barros De Couto etc. See G. SCHURHAMMER, *Francis Xavier*, 580. According to Tubach this saying that Thomas went to China might have originated in the fifth century. See J. TUBACH, "Der Apostel Thomas in China. Die Herkunft einer Tradition", *ZKG* 108 (1997), 74.

69 The divine office for the use of the clergy of Malabar mentions this preaching of the apostle to the Kusayas.

the South, if Christians from North had not descended to the South?

A striking difference that we note between the two is the appellation of the apostle. While the *Ath* calls him either Judas or Judas Thomas, the name by which the whole Syriac tradition knew him[70], that name is totally unknown to the South Indian tradition. It knows the apostle only by the name of Thomas. This individuality of the South Indian tradition in calling the apostle as Thomas is very fundamental when we realize the fact that the whole tradition is built around the name and person of the apostle Thomas. It shows the least influence neither of the *Ath* nor of the East Syrian Church. "The total extraneousness of the St Thomas Christians to this unique appellation of the east Syriac Church, posits for their tradition an origin that is independent of both the *Acta Thomae* and the Syriac Church"[71].

Nor do both agree in their contents. There is not a single story in the South Indian tradition that is borrowed from the *Ath*. Nor is there one in the *Ath* which is taken from the South. But the ones in the *Ath* are embellished with great amount of romantic descriptions and catechetical homilies. The missionary methods of the apostle also is quite differently characterised in the two traditions. No king is converted in the South, while in the *Ath* the conversion begins with royal folk. In the *Ath* the apostle is often found in the company of the royal personages[72]. He is involved in intrigues, rivalries

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70 "In particular the name Judas Thomas or Didymus Judas Thomas, which is a combination of Judas not Iscariot (Jn 14:22) and Thomas called Didymus (Jn 20:24), is a phenomenon characteristic of and restricted to early Syriac literature, occurring in Vetus Syria, in the Acts of Thomas, in Ephrem Syrus, in the Doctrina Addai and in Eusebius, Church History I. 13, where the bishop of Caesarea gives a Greek translation of essential parts of the Abgar correspondence and Abgar legend". H.J.W. DRIJVERS, *East of Antioch. Studies in early Syriac literature*, London, 1984, 158.

71 B. VADAKKEAKARA, *Origin of India's St Thomas Christians*, 265.

72 "One of the more important aspects of the Acts is that wherever Thomas goes, he has royal or courtier disciples. We suggest that the statement in the Edessene

and festivities, all centred around royal palaces and the royalty. But, in the South it is the Brahmins who have the leading role in the narratives[73].

Thus it becomes very clear that the two traditions have different sources which are distinct in themselves and which are concerned with two different missions of the same apostle in two entirely different regions of the same country. This distinctness of each tradition is proof enough for the historicity of the mission of the apostle in North India.

3. DEMISE OF ANCIENT NORTH INDIAN CHRISTIANITY AND THE SURVIVAL OF TRADITIONS

If the establishment of Christianity in North India by the apostle Thomas was a historical actuality, how is it that there exists no Christian community that claims its origin from him? The total absence of Christians who claim to have descended from the converts of Thomas in North West India and especially at Taxila and Barygaza has given rise to various theories. At the same time it should be noted that even today the arrival of the apostle is celebrated at Taxila. On every 24th October, Christians from all over Pakistan gather there for a religious ceremony in honour of St Thomas the apostle[74]. This shows that there had been some tradition concerning this. Then what happened to those people whom the apostle had entrusted to the deacon Xantippos before departing for

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document, that he met king Gondophares and his brother suggested to the author the idea of making Thomas meet kings and courtiers everywhere". J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The Apostle Thomas in North India*, 21.

73 According to the traditions of Malabar the Namboodhiri Brahmans of Kerala get irritated at each action of the apostle. This irritation reached its climax when their temple itself was destroyed at the prayer of the apostle.

74 R. BOTTI, "A Taxila, in Pakistan per venerare l'apostolo Tomasso", *La Cittadella* (November 3, 1996), 16.

another region of India[75]? It is a question that really interests the historians.

3.1 DEMISE OF THE ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY IN NORTH INDIA

Why and how did the ancient Christianity in North India become extinct? We do not have definite answers to this question. There are only different possible hypotheses by way of explanation. One is that the nascent Christian community had been dealt with a fatal blow in the Kushan invasion and the community could not withstand the onslaught as it had not yet been well organised. A second hypothesis concerns with migration – migration to the south as well as to the west. Two more reasons could also be pointed out, namely, the lack of royal patronage and lack of proper local hierarchy.

3.1.1 Invasions

The first theory is that the Christian community founded by the apostle in the North West India was totally annihilated by the invading nomads. If the Christians had found favour from the Indo-Parthians, who were tolerant to all religions, the later invaders must have turned out to be the worst enemies.

The North West India had always been the invasion corridor of India. The invasion that began most probably with the so-called Aryan invasion had continued till the middle ages when the Muslim invaders flooded India. It was through the same way that the Persians under Darius I had found their way to India. Alexander led his victorious army to India through the same way. The same route and the same region witnessed a series of invasions and influx of foreign and nomadic tribes after the fall of the Mauryan Empire: the Indo-Greeks, the Sakas, the Indo-Parthians, the Kushans, and then the Huns. Later it was the turn of the Afghans to conquer

and subdue parts of India. Finally the Moguls, the followers of Babar, reached Northern India. "It is not strange therefore that as an effect of these successive onslaughts, the small community of Christians should have perished. They were first scattered, then remained isolated and finally vanished from the stage of history"[76].

Invasion of the Kushans

The first of these invasions which could seriously have affected the prospects of the nascent Christianity in North West India undoubtedly was that of the Kushans. We read in the *Ath* that Thomas left the kingdom of Gondophares to preach in another region of India. The author does not give any reason to this abrupt departure of the apostle from the region which he had chosen after much deliberation. The *Ath* simply narrates that the apostle left Taxila at the invitation of another king[77]. It seems to be so silly a reason for the apostle to leave so suddenly the place where he arrived so painstakingly.

> The reason given in the Acts for his abandonment of the Punjab is quite unhistorical. ... he arrived in Taxila with the king's merchant, was received by the king and had every opportunity to do the work of an apostle in a great province containing millions of people of varied races and religions. Yet, if we are to believe the Acts, he abandoned the splendid project, because he had been invited to go to another kingdom to heal two sick women[78].

It is true there is nothing historical in it. We do not know how the author could be ignorant of the fall of the king and his dynasty who welcomed the apostle to India. It is either that the author wanted to convey something else than

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75 *Ath* 67.

76 H. HERAS, *The two apostles of India*, 17.

77 *Ath* 62.

78 J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The apostle Thomas in South India*, 323.

historical accuracy or that the original document was so ancient that it had no mention of the fall of the kingdom[79]. That the author did not care for historical accuracy is clear form the whole narration of the story[80]. The second hypothesis also holds good when considered in the light of the possibility that the events concerning the mission of the apostle had been chronicled in the Indo-Parthian Empire and the first part of the *Ath* bears witness to it. But at the same time the author had to account for the South Indian mission of the apostle. He only knew that the apostle had gone to another kingdom. So he might have invented a reason for himself.

But the history of India could really give the reason for the departure of the apostle from North West India.

> If the Acts offers us only a silly story, history is able to tell us the real reason for his departure. At some date around 50 A.D., the Kushans (a people who had come westwards from China to the Oxus, and had then settled and prospered in Bactria) broke over the Hindu Kush, conquered the Kabul valley, and the whole province as far east as the Indus: and then, marching South, seized the provinces of Arachosia and Gedrosai, thus stripping Scytho-Parthian Empire of the western half of its territory. Thereafter, rallying their forces, they crossed the Indus, and the Punjab with its capital and the whole valley of the great river. The Parthian Empire was thus completely destroyed. ... Thus the Kushan war was the reason why Thomas abandoned his chosen field of work. Every one will recognize in that great upheaval sufficient reason for the change[81].

Though the exact date of the establishment of the Kushan Empire in India is not yet correctly known, we know

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79 Farquahar would argue in the latter way. J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The apostle Thomas in South India*, 323.

80 We have seen in our previous chapters how history was not an actual concern of the author.

81 J.N. FARQUAHAR, The apostle Thomas in South India, 323.

that the Indo-Parthian power had come to the end by 50 A.D. as only one more successor of Gondophares is mentioned on the coins[82]. The Kushans had occupied part of the Punjab by 45 A.D. The Kushan emperors were not as tolerant to all religions as the Indo-Parthians. They were giving outright support to Buddhism. Under such circumstances it was not easy for the small number of Christians to survive. The South Indian tradition about St Thomas corroborates well with the chronology of the Kushan invasion. According to it, the apostle reached the shores of Malabar in 52 A.D[83]. If the apostle had left the Punjab just after the death of Gondophares in 50 A.D. the year given by the South Indian tradition falls exactly in tune with historical actualities.

In this sense the statement of the *Ath* that the apostle had appointed a deacon for the church of North West India can also be correct[84]. Yet, it is natural that the small number of Christians could not find the means to survive under the ever widening hostile circumstances. Christianity as a growing religion had found favour with the emperors in the West, because it had quite a lot to offer to a people seeking spiritual needs[85]. But in India it was not the case. There had already

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82 Only the coins of Abdagases have so far been discovered.

83 We do not know how the tradition came to hold this particular date as the date of the arrival of the apostle at Cranganore. In Malabar there is a document with a Brahmin family which had emigrated from Palayur after many of the Brahmins were converted by Thomas. This document is called *Grandhavariyola* and is kept by Kalathur Mana. In this document it is written, "Kali year 3153 (52 A.D.) the foreigner Thomas Sanyasi came to our village (gramam), preached there, causing thereby pollution. We therefore came away from that village". E.R. HAMBEY, "Saint Thomas and India", 370. But we do not know how ancient is this particular document.

84 The *Ath* tells us that the apostle before leaving for another country called together the Christians and after exhorting them about the Christian virtues he appointed a certain man called Xantippos as deacon in charge of the newly formed Christianity. *Ath* 67.

85 As a matter fact there was no established religion except the Judiasm in the West. So those who were disappointed with that religion Christianity was an attraction. It would also offer them a way to escape from the emperor worship.

been great religions with millions of followers and with sacred scriptures and living practices[86]. As a Church Historian of India once remarked, "the apostle of the East was not preaching to a world seeking spiritual guidance, but to a people intent on teaching others a spiritual way of life. Besides, far removed from the main centres of early Christianity he had to work in practical isolation"[87]. Under the Kushan Emperors Buddhism was fast growing and Buddhist missionaries had been sent to South Eastern countries as early as 65 A.D[88]. This shows how eager and earnest were the Kushans to spread and propagate Buddhism. It was not easy for Christianity under these circumstances to find a conducive atmosphere for a sudden and organic growth. And the growth in strength of the Kushan Empire had cut off all relations with the Persian Empire from where Christians could have come to the aid of the new Christians of North West India. It was especially so when the two great religions, namely Hinduism and Buddhism, were vying with each other for the favour of the emperors and seeking for measures and means to outdo the other.

The Gupta Invasions

The most important dynasty that came to rule North India after the Kushans was the Gupta dynasty founded by Chandra Gupta I in 320 A.D. The history of the Guptas, especially that of Samudra Gupta (335–375A.D.), speaks of innumerable tales of bloody wars that were waged against all the neighbouring kings. "Samudra Gupta had no hesitation in acting on the principle that 'kingdom taking' is the business

86 Hinduisms had been the religion of India with established norms and doctrines and texts. Then in the 5th century B.C. came Buddhism and Jainism which were quite attractive to the Indian minds.

87 P. THOMAS, *Christians and Christianity in India and Pakistan*, London, 1954, 13.

88 J. KEAY, *India, a History*, 114.

of kings, and immediately after his accession to the throne plunged into war, which occupied many years of his unusually prolonged reign"[89]. His power reached from Assam to the borders of Punjab. In his great Allahabad inscription he is said to have "violently uprooted" no less than nine kings of North India and have annexed their kingdoms to his own[90].

His successor Chandra Gupta II led his victories to the Gujarat coasts and the Sakas of the West were conquered by him in 388 A.D. We do not know much about the religious policies of the Guptas. They were strong Hindus. Samudra Gupta is said to have performed horse-sacrifice. 100,000 cows were distributed as gifts, presumably to his Brahmin supporters.

> His coins reveal Vaishnavaite leanings but, as a world conqueror, he was seen not just as a devotee of Vishnu but as an emanation or incarnation of that deity. Universal dominion was his. Besides the Garuda symbol of Vishnu, some of his coins feature the one-umbrella of a *samrat*. Its welcome shade was seen to engulf the political landscape as he turned the *chakravartin*'s wheel of world-rule[91].

Thus we see that the earlier Guptas were real conquerors and conquerors who were really ruthless. North India remained a field of invasion even when foreigners were kept aside. Still, we do not say that we have any definite proof of any aggressive policy of the Guptas against people of other religions. On the contrary we have seen that an indigenous Christianity existed at the western coasts of India during their period. This was the Christianity visited by Theophilus, the

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89 V.A. SMITH, *Early History of India*, 281.

90 A.L. BASHAM, *The Wonder that was India*, 65. Keay suggests that the Allahabad inscription certainly refutes the idea that only foreigners have conquered India. J. KEAY, *India, a History*, 139. Samudra Gupta is rightly called Indian Napoleon. V.A. SMITH, *Early History of India*,283.

91 J. KEAY, *India, a History*, 139.

Indian in 354 A.D. After this particular event, we do not have any definite mention of Christianity in these parts of the country till the arrival of Jordanus in 1321 A.D. But he had discovered a Christianity which had already lost all its roots and tenets.

Muslim Invasions

One of the most important factors that could have dealt a fatal blow to Christianity in North India could have been the Muslim invasions. Though in many cases the narrations of these invasions seem to be much exaggerated, it is true that the scale of the invasions was so large that nothing in their way could have survived. The early invasions were not really for territorial annexation but for the purpose of looting.

These large scale Muslim conquests of India began with Mahmud of Ghazni. He belonged to a line of Turkish chieftains who had established a powerful kingdom at Ghazni in Afghanistan[92] and began to look covetously at the rich plains of India[93]. Between 1001 and 1027 Mahmud of Ghazni made seventeen great raids on India. The whole western half of the land felt the force of the Turkish invaders. "Palaces and temples were looted and desecrated, and enormous caravans of booty and slaves were taken back to Ghazni"[94]. He reached the lower Sind in 1030 A.D. in the last of his expeditions.

It is of these invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni, that Jordanus in his *Mirabilia* wrote:

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92 "La pénétration islamique qui commence au Xe siècle par les passes montagneuses du Nord-ouest est le fait de Turcs au passé nomade encore frais, récemment islamisés, et entrés au service des émirs sassanides d'Iran, avant de se saisir de Ghazni en 962, et de se tailler en Afghanistan contre leurs anciens maîtres un royaume indépendant". C. HURTIG, "Inde – Histoire", *EnUn*, 30.

93 A.L. BASHAM, *The Wonder that was India*, 72.

94 A.L. BASHAM, *The Wonder that was India*, 72. "Ces expéditions laissent des dynasties abattues, des populations massacres, les trésors vidés, un patrimoine artistique ravage". C. HURTIG, "Inde (Histoire)", 30.

> In this India the greater part of the people worship idols, although a great share of the sovereignty is in the hand of the Turkish Saracens, who came forth from Multan, and conquered and usurped dominions to themselves not long since, and destroyed an infinity of idol temples, and likewise many Churches, of which they made mosques for Mahomet, taking possession of their endowments and property. It's is grief to hear, it is woe to see[95].

Thus these invasions with the sole purpose of looting might not have left many valuables in the regions[96]. Thus it is reasonable to assume that Christianity also suffered much at the hands of these ruthless invaders.

In the later centuries Mahmud of Ghor[97] and his successors continued the same policy until the Mogul kingdom was established and it became the paramount power in India. Mahmud of Ghor conquered the Ghaznavid possessions in the Punjab and Sind and then turned his attention to the Hindu kingdoms. With the defeat of the great Rajput king Prithviraj in 1192 the Muslim power in India was established. Mahmud left his conquests to his generals, and Qutb-ud-din Aibak occupied Delhi and it was the beginning of the Delhi Sultanate which paved way for the great Mogul power[98]. This period of the Muslim invasion of India is ever

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95 JORDANUS, *Wonders of the East*, H. YULE (tr.), London, 1893, 31.

96 In fact Mahmud of Ghazni did not have much ambition in establishing a Muslim power in any of his Indian conquests. "Mahmud terrorised and plundered to sensational effect, but despite all those campaigns he acquired little territory. Only the Shahi lands in the Punjab were actually retained under Ghaznavid rule. Else where, and notably in Kashmir, central India and Gujarat, he made no attempt to secure his conquests or even to organise future tributes". J. KEAY, *India, a History*, 211.

97 Ghor had been another Turkish ruling house that supplanted the line of Ghaznis in Afghanistan in 1173 by Ghiyas-ud-din. Mahmud was his brother.

98 The Delhi Sulnate had been formally established by Qutb-ud-din, the general of Mahmud of Ghor, in 1206. The Mogul empire of India had its beginning in 1505 under Babur.

remembered in the history of India for their ruthless efforts at destroying the great Hindu heritages of the country[99].

So our natural conclusion would be this. If even the flourishing civilisations and powerful dynasties in North West India could not withstand the onslaughts of oft-repeated invasions, what else could be the fate of a nascent Christian community that had no political and hierarchical power to support it? A reasonable contrast could be drawn here with the history of the growth of Christianity in South India especially in Kerala in these periods. Kerala had enjoyed practical peace and tranquillity in these times under the rule of the Chera kings. None of the invasions we have so far mentioned ever reached the soil of Kerala[100]. Islam reached Kerala not as invaders but as friendly traders. This immunity from invasions coupled with the tolerance of the kings and the particular status the Christians of Malabar enjoyed in the social stratum[101], would explain the survival and growth of Christianity in Malabar in contrast to the demise and disappearance of it in North India.

3.1.2 Migration

The second reason for the disappearance of Christianity from North India could be that the Christians might have sought out friendly pastures and might have migrated to different places. This migration must have been opened to

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99 The iconoclastic tendencies of the Muslim invaders were so ruthless that nothing on their way could resist and survive. It could be reasonably said that the root cause of the communal problems in the present day India lies in these conquests.

100 This theoretical and practical isolation of Kerala had been clear from the time of Asoka onwards. Asoka had not or could not annex this region of the extreme south to his vast empire. The Guptas in their zenith of power had not reached Kerala. The Great Mughals also had not conquered the kingdoms there. Then the British Empire in India could not or did not bring it under their direct rule.

101 The converts of Malabar were said to be of the high class Brahmans. So they always enjoyed the caste privileges. The kings of Kerala had also given to the Christians many privileges in the society.

two directions: one westward and another southward. Farquahar with an apparent aim to synchronize the North Indian and South Indian traditions about St Thomas has made the apostle himself flee from the invasion of the Kushans[102]. When the empire of the Indo-Parthians was destroyed by the invaders, he says, the Apostle together with Haban, who was well-equipped with a geographical knowledge of India, journeyed to the South and crossing Kalyan reached the Malabar Coast[103].

Migration to South

There were Christians in the North West India from the very early centuries. In the *Ath* itself we have indication that Thomas had established a community there and appointed a certain Xanthippus the leader[104]. In the Latin version of the *Ath* it is clearly mentioned that this Xanthippus came from the city of India where Thomas had first preached. So the King of Barygaza is mentioned here. But we do not know in history any king who became Christian nor had there been any archeological discovery to that effect. But it is a fact historically probable that Thomas could not have stayed at Taxila for a long time because of the impending danger of the Kushan invasion. In this invasion of the Kushans which began from AD 50 onwards all the glories of Taxila, the city of Sirkap of the Indo-Parthians, were destroyed. The Indo-Parthian kingdom almost perished after Gondophares. So it

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102 J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The Apostle Thomas in South India*, 323.

103 And it is in this way that Farquahar explains the mission of the apostle Thomas in Malabar. J.N. FARQUAHAR, *The Apostle Thomas in South India*, p. 324. Following him Heras also explains the theory in this way. See H. HERAS, *Two Apostles of India*, 39-40.

104 Heras had tried to explain the un Indianness in this very name which is Greek. "Was this only perhaps a Greek translation of an Indian or Jewish name? Xanthippus means 'auburn' or yellow horse. His Indian name might then have been *Gaurasa*, auburn horse, which happens to be the name of a very ancient king named in the *Mahabharata*". H. HERAS, *The two Apostles of India*, 15.

is probable that the community founded by Thomas also could not last long in the original territory and they might have sought for other secure places[105]. The normal procedure seems to go down further south together with the migrant population fleeing from the onslaaght of the invasion. And the normal destination seems to be the Gujarat coast, which was ruled by the friendly Saka people. Moreover we read in the *Ath* that some converts of Barygaza had joined the apostle at Taxila[106] and they must have surely returned to their native territory when the dangers of extinction threatened them. So, our natural conclusion is that the Christians of Taxila came down to the coasts of Gujarat and joined the Christians already present there. The Christians of Barygaza thus must have been strengthened by the migrant population. But this is only a hypothesis to which we cannot assign any date. But this hypothesis is supported by social and political actualities.

The present Christians of Vasai may be considered to be the remnants of this migrant people[107]. They are said to have been once settlers in the Narmada valley[108]. It may be a considered one of the great cruelties of history that these Christians were to be destroyed totally at a later time in the onslaught of another merciless foreign invasion of the Gujarat Coast[109]! The St Thomas Christians of Goa may also be the descendants of these migrant Christians from North West India. When Francis Xavier reached Goa in 1542 the city was said to be full of Christians. Xavier himself has written about it to his superiors[110]. They were Christians who were

105 The tradition of the South Indian mission of the Apostle may have its echo here.

106 *Ath* 16.

107 Vasai (Bassein) is near Bombay on the western coast of India. It has been made a diocese very recently. F. CORREIA, *Samavedi Christisamaj,* 55.

108 F. CORREIA, *Samavedi Christisamaj*, 55.

109 We mean the Muslim invasion of which we have spoken in the preceding pages.

110 XAVIER, F., *Correspondances (1535 – 1552): Lettres et documents*, traduction intègrale, présentation, notes, et index de H. DIDIER, Paris, 1987, 262.

having great affection for St Thomas. Xavier had recommended these Christians to the Pope. All these Christians could not have been the fruits of the missionary efforts of the Portuguese, that too in such a short period of time[111]. Their devotion to St Thomas also would argue to the contrary. Can we not perceive among these Christians remnants of the ancient Christianity of St Thomas of the Gujarat coast especially at Broach and the Konkan coast?

The migration seems to have taken the Christians of North West India to the far South as far as Malabar Coast.

> There is no reason whatsoever to my mind why Christian relics and Christian doctrines and Christians themselves should not have formed part of the Pahalava power and accompanied them in their slow southward filtration from Sindh to Western India (where the Pahalavas were 'western Satraps' from 118 to 388 A.D.), and from there to Guntur, Conjivaram and Palghat. This southward movement of Christianity 'from the land of the Kushanas even to Southern India' as Elias Vartabed in his 5th century History has it, and this alone, seems to me to account for St Thomas Mountain, etc., near Madras, and for Pehlevi inscriptions and crosses found there and in Malabar. ... The existence of such Christian traces along the Pahalava trail makes it also understandable why there should have been subsequent flights of Christians from Sassanid persecution in Persia to Southern India: for only if coreligionists were settled there was it natural for them to look upon these lands as likely to provide a safe refuge[112].

Though we may not accept the whole of what this author writes, we find some agreeable suggestions in them. There is clear logic in his first assumption that Christians

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111 The Portuguese missionary efforts had just begun only in the second quarter of the 16th century. In fact Goa was taken from the Bijapur Sultanate by the Portuguese only in 1510. J. KEAY, *India, a History*, 306.

112 ZACHARIAS, *The churches of SS Thomas and Bartholomew*, 151-152.

also might have been a part of the Pahlava filtration towards the South. However it is only a possibility that has nothing to prove its probability let alone the historical actuality. Nevertheless, there seems to be some references to this migration from the North West India to Malabar. In a document of the 18th century in the Library of the Leiden University (Ms 1213) entitled, *Of the things that happened to the Syrians and their history*, there is a particular phrase that speaks about the coming of Christians from North India and joining those in Malabar[113].

> After his death India and Malabar was left without preacher and a leader, those except who had been made presbyters by the apostle Thomas. Now, after 92 years, India and Malabar was made a widow, deprived of priests and presbyters and there were only faithful of both sexes. However, at that time, there arose a magician, called Manikbosar, one of the infidels. ... On this account the rest of the faithful fled and found asylum in Malabar[114].

We know that the immediate reference here is to the migration of the Christians from Mylapore to Malabar, which, according to tradition, had strengthened the Christians of Malabar. But we think that the term 'India' used here has a wider significance. The words used are 'India' and Malabar. This statement implies that for a person from Malabar all the regions that lay beyond him formed India. The Ms 1214 of the Leiden University is a Malayalam manuscript of the same topic and there it is written *Hendu* and Malabar.

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113 This Leiden Ms 1213 was first published by J.P.N. LAND in *Anecdota Syriaca*, vol. I, Lugduni, 1862, 24-30 (Syriac text), 179–184 (Latin translation). S. GIAMIL reproduced it in *Genuine Relationis* ... Rome, 1902, 555 –564. H. HOSTEN published an English translation of it in the article, "Land's Anecdota Syriaca on the Syrians of Malabar", *IA*, vol. 56 (1927), 41-46, 81-88. The author of this manuscript is said to be a priest from Kerala, Fr Mathew Veticutel. J. KOLLAPARAMBIL, "Historical sources on Knanites", in J. VELLIAN (ed.), *Symposium on Knanites*, Kottayam, 1986, 41.

114 This translation is from H. HOSTEN, "Land's Anecdota Syriaca on the Syrians of Malabar", *IA*, vol. 56 (1927), 41-46, 81-88.

> In this way, many years after the death of Mar Thoma, and after the death also of the priests in Hindu and Malayalam, a sorcerer called Manikkavasakar, who was against the *marga* and baptism, reached Mailapore. He worked many magic there and asked people not to receive baptism. So many of the leaders of those who were already baptized believed in him and left the Christian faith. Therefore in order that those remained in the faith may not leave the faith and baptism those who had come from Hendu and settled in Malayalam and those who came from Hendu became united[115].

In this document those who were migrated from Hendu are mentioned. When somebody in Malabar speaks of those who had arrived from Hendu, what could he mean? We have already seen in the first chapter that the region of Hindu means the Indus delta which included the lower Sind also. Thus there is here an allusion to the Christians from the Sind region. The statement that those who had come from Hindu and settled in Malayalam and those who came from Hindu became united should have a greater significance. It refers to those who had earlier come from the Sind region and those who later came from Mylapore region. They had come down to South India, most probably in different times, but the first migration must have taken place as early as the second century. The tradition in South India was at least vaguely aware of the presence of Christians converted by Thomas in North West India. That is why the same document says a few lines above, "many years after the death of Mar Thoma, and after the death also of the priests in Hendu and Malayalam". The author of the document clearly makes a distinction between 'Hendu and Malayalam', in other words the North and South India. Though this particular document was written only in the 18th century, it clearly manifests a current tradition among the Christians of Malabar.

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115 We are indebted to Jacob Kollaparampil for this copy of the Ms 1214 of the Leiden University.

A particular element in the South Indian tradition that the apostle preached among the 'Sinaye and Kusaye' also would strengthen our hypothesis. That the apostle went to China was a tradition very current among the Christians of St Thomas when the Portuguese met them in the 16th century[116]. Many Portuguese accounts mention this. At the order of King John III of Portugal the church at Mylapore was rebuilt and witnesses were collected to get information about the tomb of Thomas[117]. Among the testimonies was one of a Syriac Abuna (bishop). Schurhammer quotes the witness of Abuna in these words.

> The apostle Thomas came here (from Socotra) to the city of Mailapore in the kingdom of Narsinga[118] and made a number of Christians. Some time after this he went to a city called Kambalia[119] in China where the king lived, and made many Christians there and built a church[120].

Francis Xavier also had noticed this tradition among the Christians of St Thomas. "Many say that the apostle St Thomas went to China and made many Christians there"[121]. The *Rambanpattu* which embodies the traditions of Malabar speaks clearly that Thomas went to China and preached the Gospel there during a period of four months[122]. The liturgy

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116 The first European to discover a new sea route to India was Vasco-da-Gama of Portugal who reached Calicut in Kerala in 1498. Catholic missionaries accompanied him in his second voyage to India in 1502. That was the beginning of a new relation between the Christians of South India and those of Europe.

117 The full text of this testimony is preserved in *Archivium Romanum Societatis Jesu*, Goa 31.

118 Kingdom of Narasinga is the kingdom of Vijayanagar.

119 Kambalia is said to be the capital of China, known at the time of the apostle as Yen, under the Mongols as Khanbalik, then Peking or Peiping. SCHURHAMER, *Francis Xavier*, p. 580.

120 G. SHURHAMMER, *Francis Xavier*, 579-580.

121 G. SHURHAMMER, *Francis Xavier*, 580

122 *Rambanpattu* 30-32, in B. THOMAS, *Marthomakristianikal*, 99.

of the St Thomas Christians of Malabar especially the Divine Office for the feast of the *Dukhrana*, the commemoration of Thomas, on July 3rd, has this special entry that Thomas taught the Sinaye (Chinese) and the Kusaye (Kushans)[123]. But in all these instances the 'Chinese' may not exactly mean the mainland China[124]. There exists no evidence to hold that Thomas had gone to China. The *Kusaye* in the above text probably means the Kushans. Bernard Thomas is of opinion that by Kusaye is meant the Ethiopians[125]. Kircher also translates this word into Ethiopians[126]. But this word indicates neither the Ethiopians nor the Abyssinians, but the Kushanas of North India. The use of 'Sinaye and Kusaye' together as if people related, besides the etymological similarity, makes this all the more probable. Therefore, this expression suggests the mission of Thomas in North India. Who else could have

123 "The sinaye and the Kusaye entered the true way (margam) through Marthoma. Because of him they believed in the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit ... Through Saint Thomas the kingdom of heaven came down among the people of China". *The divine office of the Syro-Malabar Church for July 3*, as quoted in B. THOMAS, *Marthomakristiankal*, 155. Hosten enumerates all the salient features of this liturgy of the church of Malabar and comes to the conclusion that in content and structure it is very ancient and perhaps even anterior to the *Ath.* "The Romo-Syrian Office of the Breviary for the feast of St Thomas on July 3 appears to me one that originated and developed in India itself. If that were so, it might embody still portions going back to St Thomas' death and the first anniversary of his martyrdom". H. HOSTEN, *Works of Hosten*, vol. 19, fol.158. Bernard also seems to argue for an early origin of this office of July 3. B. THOMAS, *Marthomakristiankal*, 155.

124 "Quoi qu'en aient dit les missionnaires du XVIIe siècle, il n'est pas probable que saint Thomas ait jamais prêche la foi en Chine. La bréviaire chaldéen porte bien que 'le royaume des cieux est descendu aux Chinois par le moyen de S. Thomas'; mais, à cette époque. Les confusions géographiques étaient si faciles, la Chine était si peu connue, qu'on est en droit de ne pas prendre le mot à lettre. Car, à aucune époque, un monument authentique n'est venu corroborer cette affirmation, qui semble n'être qu'une erreur ethnographique". A. THOMAS, *Historie de la Mission de Pékin : Depuis les origines jusqu'à l'arrivée des Lazaristes*, Paris, 1923, 43.

125 B. THOMAS, *Marthomakristiankal*, 155.

126 "In Breviario Chaldaeo Ecclesiae Malabaricae Divi Thomae, quod Gaza, id est, Thesaurus vocalur in officio D. Thomae Apostoli in secondo Nocturno, in una Lectionem sic habetur ad verbum: per Divum Thomam Sinae & Aethiopes conversi suntt ad veritatem". A. KIRCHER, *China .... Illustrate*, p. 57. But the Syriac words he quotes are Sinaya and Kusaya.

brought this tradition to Malabar if not the migrant Christians? The migrant Christians when settled in Malabar might have given a description of the rulers from whom they were fleeing, or their forefathers fled, namely the Kushans who were the actual Lords of a vast region which extended to the borders of China. We know from history that the Kushans actually came from China being chased by the Hun kings. Thus this tradition that Thomas went to China reflects a fusion of the Thomas traditions of the North and the South India. Those Christians form the West knew that Thomas had gone further north from the place of embarkation, which was on the western coasts. The region to which the apostle had gone was later known as the Kushan kingdom. The Christians of South, who were not well aware of the geography of the North, combined the story with their own traditions and the result was a combination of both.

Some authors are of the opinion that the division among the St Thomas Christians of Kerala into Northists and southists is due to this migration[127]. Traditionally this division is attributed to the arrival of Thomas of Cana, a Persian merchant, with 72 Christian families, most probably in 345 A.D[128]. The division into Northists and Southists sounds well

127 ZACHARIAS, *The Church of SS Thomas and Bartholomew,* 154-155.

128 According to traditions they reached Cranganore in 345 AD. The historical reason for their arrival is attributed to the persecution unleashed on Christians of Persia by Sapur II. According to the traditional belief in Malabar this Thomas was a merchant. Podipara explains this on a philological basis. "Qnanaya in Chaldean means merchant, and cana of merchant Thomas might be a corrupt term of Qnanaya". J. PODIPARA, *The Hierarchy of Syro-Malabar Church*, p. 40. Assemani is of opinion that this Thomas of Cana was a bishop and the date assigned by him for the arrival of this Thomas in Malabar is 800 A.D. J. S. ASSEMANI, *B O*, III, 2, p. 442-444. Kollaparampil puts forward this hypothesis about Thomas of Cana, "it can be reasonably deduced that, in the fourth century context of Babylonia it was quite possible that Thomas Kinayi and others who immigrated with him into Cranganore in 345 A.D. were Jewish Christians of a Davidic lineage as the tradition among the Southists would have it. I say it is possible considering the emigration in its Babylonian context". J. KOLLAPARAMBIL, *The Babylonian origin of the Southists among the St Thomas Christians* (OCA 241), Roma, 1992, 129. What ever be it, today it is a historical fact that there is an endogamous group among the Christians of Kerala which always tries to maintain the racial purity by not marrying from outside the group.

to suit this hypothesis. In Malayalam, the language of Kerala, the terms used are *Vadakkumpavar* (of the Northern Country) and *Thekkumpavar* (of the Southern country). The argument sounds very appealing, but we are not sure if we could alter the centuries old tradition to fit it in to our logic[129]. At the same time, that there is reason in the argument that only if coreligionists were settled in Kerala was it natural for the migrant Christians from Persia to look upon these lands as likely to provide a safe refuge[130]. Here, by coreligionists, it is meant the Pahlava Christians of the North West India. Vartabed had already in the 5th century AD had suggested the route of the migration of Persian Christianity: it came up to the country of the Kushans and from there reached the Western coasts as far as South India[131].

Traces can be drawn of this migration of Christians from the west to the south. But these traces may also belong to the Nestorian Christians established in this country during the great missionary enterprise of the 'Church on fire'. They also might have travelled to the South owing to the fury of the Muslims who could not tolerate any other religion than

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129 The centuries old tradition is that when Thomas of Cana reached Cranganore and with the permission of the king he built for his people 400 houses north of the city of Mahadevarpattana and 72 to the south and settled them thus. In course of time the local Christians of Kerala got mingled with those Christians of the northern part. And the Christians of the southern parts remained a separate community. But tradition does not explain why those of the north alone got mingled with the local Christians. Again there is another tradition that there was a later immigration from Persia to Kerala in the ninth century led by two bishops Mar Sapor and Mar Proth. This time they settled at Kollam (Quilon). There is suspicion that forces itself upon us. Why did not this new group of immigrants join those of the early group who remained separate? All these demand a further impartial study of these traditions. For a fairly detailed study of these traditions see B. THOMAS, *Marthomakristianikal*, 227-234.

130 ZACHARIAS, *The Church of SS Thomas and Bartholomew*, 154-155. Heras had suggested that these immigrant Christians came from Fars and there were among them the descendants of those Christians who reached Fars from North West India. H. HERAS, *The Two Apostles of India*, 20.

131 "Elle arriva jusqu'au pays de Couchuns et de-là s'étendit du cote du midi, aussi loin que les Indes". Quoted in W. GERMANN, *Die Thomaschristen*, 82.

their own[132]. But such a possibility does not weaken the probability of the earlier migration of the Christians through the same route. The later Christians could have used the same paths tread by their ancestors centuries ago. Thus all these arguments show that there could have been a Southward movement of Christians from North India and these Christians might have mingled with the local Christians of the South, which accounts for the mention of the apostolate of Thomas in North India and the presence of Christians there.

Migration to the West

There had been Christians and bishops in many regions around the North West India from very early times on wards[133]. So it is natural to think that the Christians of the Kushan kingdom, when threatened with annihilation sought out friendly fields among these Christians. But it is only a wide conjecture, though logical, until we have some proofs to show that it actually happened. The country of Gondophares was on the western boundaries of India. We have seen in the preceding chapter that there had been dioceses at Kashgar, Ardasirpharid etc. Heras suggests that some Parthian Jewish converts of St Thomas might have migrated to Persia to their

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132 There are said to be cross remnants in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh and Nilgris of Tamil Nadu. A report dated Dec. 4, 1874, T. Vanastavern, executive engineer, Department of Public Works, Madras Government, speaks of stone crosses of early Christian period found in the upper Godavari and Krishna districts. "The Christian remains are on the Nizam's side near Mungapeta in the jungles, and consists of several stone crosses; one some thirteen feeet high, and also a structure which on first appearance looks like a tomb; it is seven feet above the ground, about eight feet square, closed on three sides, open on one, and roofed in with an immense slab of stone. When I saw them I was pressed for time, and so did not examine them closely. I did not see any inscription, nor had I means to make any excavation. To fix the date of these crosses is rather a difficult matter. ... Christianity (the Syrian Church) was introduced to India in 400 A.D. These Churches remained in peace till the arrival of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century". "Notes on the antiquities found in parts of the Upper Godavari and Krishna districts", (from the proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department, 11 February 1875), *I A*, 4 (1875), 306.

133 A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, 489- 495.

brethren even during the life time of the apostle. He goes even to make the hypothesis that "this new Christian colony within Persia might have been the leaven which later on grew into a glorious Church, that gave numerous martyrs to the Lord"[134]. We cannot say anything about this hypothesis except that it is something to which no proof can be given.

But there is a slight suggestion among the Christians of Fars that there possibly might have been the original Indian converts of Thomas among them. Patriarch Timothy I (779-823 A.D.) had really hard times in bringing under the control of the Patriarchal see the recalcitrant Metropolitans of that part of ancient Persia that bordered on India proper, that is to say, those Metropolitans of Riwardashir who had under their jurisdiction the bishoprics of North West India and Baith Katraye.

It is said that at the time of this Timothy, the bishops of the province of Fars were wearing white garments like the secular priests, were eating meat, and marrying, and were not under the jurisdiction of the Catholicos of Seleucia. They used to say, 'we have been evangelized by the apostle Thomas and we have no share with the See of Mari'. Timothy, however, united them, and joined them to him. He ordained for them as Metropolitan a man named Simeon, and he ordered him not to eat meat, nor to marry, and to wear white garments made only of wool. He further permitted him to confirm the bishops whom he would ordain, without coming for such a confirmation to the Catholicos[135].

Assemani had taken the province of Fars to mean the whole of Persia[136]. But Mingana asks how it was possible

134 H. HERAS, *The two apostles of India*, 17.

135 Bar Hebraeus, translated by MINGANA, *Early spread of Christianity in India*, 467.

136 J. ASSEMANI, *B O*, III, 2, 422. In Bar Hebraeus the word is Pares. But Mingana translates it as Fars, since it cannot logically be Persia.

that all the bishops of Persia were married and were not under the jurisdiction of the Catholicos of Seleucia[137]. It was not the whole of Persia, but the Metropolitans of the province of Fars who were rising against the authority of Timothy, as they often did against his predecessors. We have an early reference from the 7th century that Iso Yab III (650-660 A.D.) already had trouble from these Christians of Fars. At that time the Metropolitan of Riwardashir wanted to usurp the power of the Patriarch in the ordination of bishops for India, and Baith Katraye[138]. Now during the time of Timothy I, they showed again this tendency of rebellion.

The point of the greatest interest is the authority or the argument on which they based their claim, namely that as they had been evangelized by Thomas the Apostle, why should they submit to the authority of a Patriarchal see which was only founded by a disciple. The point raised is very important, and the event having taken place not much later than 795 A.D., the passage would thus contain the earliest reference to the Christians of Fars and North West India, calling themselves Christians of St Thomas[139].

Now the question is whether this claim could be a mere excuse or be born out of a real tradition among them. Heras says, "we are inclined to believe the latter, owing to the fact that no protest against this alleged apostolic origin is afterwards heard of on the part of the Patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon"[140]. How could these Christians of Fars claim to

137 A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, 467.

138 Iso-Yab wrote to the Metroplitan of Riwarashir in these words, "As far as your district is concerned, from the time you showed recalcitrance against ecclesiastical canons, the Episcopal succession has been interrupted in India, and this country has since sat in darkness, far from the light of the divine teaching by means of rightful bishops: not only India that extends from the borders of the Persian Empire, to the country which is called Kalah, which is a distance of one thousand parasangs, but even in your own Fars". A. MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, 467.

139 A. MINGANA, *Early spread of Christianity in India*, 467.

140 H. HERAS, *The two apostles of India*, 18.

be the disciples of Thomas when the rest of the Persian Christians were the disciples of Mari? In this context we could possibly think of a connection with the ancient Christians of the North West India who could have migrated to the province of Fars which was on the borders of India. This migration of the Indian Christians must have retained a living tradition among them which emboldened them to make this claim. It should have been the same tradition that made them assert the right to ordain bishops for India. In any case, we know that the Metropolitan see of Fars was very ancient. It was probably raised to an Archbishopric by the Patriarch Issa (399-410) or by Yahb-Alaha (415-420)[141]. Therefore, it should have been a bishopric even before that date and Christians from India might have found their way to this ancient province of the Persian Empire bordering on India.

Here again the migration of the Persian Christians to Malabar, probably in 345 A.D., might have some echoes. Heras suggests that it was the presence of the Christians of St Thomas from the North West India at Fars that became a driving force for the Christians of Persia or Fars to migrate to Malabar at the time of persecutions[142]. Zacharias thinks that if coreligionists were not present in Malabar those Christians from Persia would not have presupposed that they would be well received in a far away country[143].

3.1.3 Lack of Royal Patronage

Another reason for the demise of the early Christianity in North India must be the lack of royal patronage. The Church had always and every where grown with the support of the royal or state power: in Rome, in Armenia, at Edessa, in the

141 A. MINGANA, *Early spread of Christianity in India*, 467.

142 H. HERAS, *The two apostles of India*, 18

143 ZACHARIAS, *The Church of SS Thomas and Bartholomew*, 154-155.

Persian Empire. When the royal patronage was not there she always suffered. If Constantine had not accepted the growing strength of Christianity and accorded to it his royal patronage and if Theodosius had not declared it the state religion, what would have been the fate of Christianity in the Roman Empire? Constantine accepted Christianity in 313 A.D and then onwards began to interfere in the affairs of the Church. He expected ideological support from it[144]. It is true that the Church had already become a force to be reckoned with when the Emperor accepted it. But it was this acceptance from the Emperor that made it such a success all over the Empire. When there had been doctrinal disputes and controversies, he took the initiative to settle it and convoked the councils and in some cases he himself proposed the formula of solution. The council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) had been convoked by him, that too even without consulting the Pope[145]. Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the state religion in 380 A.D[146]. It was the beginning of the great spread and growth of the religion all over the Empire.

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144 J. COMBY, D. MACCULLOCH, *How to read Church History*, vol. 2, 65.

145 "La decision de réunir un concile œcuménique qui inscrirait à son ordre du jour la controverse arienne et la date de Paques fut sans doute un acte personnel de Constantin. Il est très probable qu'il en eut lui-même l'idée, bien que quelques sources fassent allusions à des délibérations tenues avec ses conseilleurs ecclésiastiques. ... Des arguments divers et puissants démontrent que, pour décréter le concile de Nicée, Constantin ne consulta pas au préalable le siège de Rome, et moins encore ne sollicita sa permission". I.O. DE URBINA, *Historie des Conciles œcuméniques, vol. 1, Nicée et Constantinople*, Paris, 1963, 27. In the same way all the ecumenical councils held in the Orient were convoked by the emperors. This fact alone would argue in great volume how the influence of the state had affected the growth of the Church in the early centuries.

146 Thoedosius I by an imperial decree called the edict of Thessalonica in 380 A.D. made Christianity the state religion and thereby commanded his subjects to accept it. "It is our will that all the peoples who are ruled by the administration of Our Clemency shall practise that religion which the divine Peter the Apostle transmitted to the Romans, as the religion which he introduced makes clear even unto this day". *Theodosian code* XVI, 1, 2 as quoted in J. COMBY, D. MACCULLOCH, *How to Read Church History*, vol. 1, 73.

In the same way, if Clovis, who was regarded as the New Constantine, had not accepted Christianity by the end of the fifth century, what would have been the fate of Christianity in France[147]? It was the conversion of Clovis that made the Francs to become Christians. Armenia was the first country that had officially become Christian. It happened with the support of the king[148]. Beginning of an organised Church in Armenia is dated to 314, when Gregory the Illuminator was consecrated bishop of Armenia at Caesarea in Cappadocia, following the conversion of king Tiridates II (298-330). But when the Zoroastrian kings came to power, the Armenian Christians had to flee for their lives. The traditions about Edessa also speak the same thing[149]. The same could be spoken about the Christians of China also. The Nestorians had established the Church in China as early as the eighth century A.D. as is seen from the monument of

147 Clovis had been converted and baptised by St Remi, the bishop of Reims, probably in 495 A.D. "Le Dieu de Clotilde, invoqué au milieu d'une bataille douteuse, contre les Alamans, lui donna la victoire. Clovis n'éluda pas le vœu solennel qu'il avait formulé, en implorant son appui. Le spectacle de guérison miraculeuses au tombeau de saint Martin acheva le convaincre. Quand, instruit par les soins de l'évêque Remi, il eut reçu le baptême dans le baptistère de l'église cathédrale de Reims avec trois mille soldats de sa garde, le peuple catholique reconnut en lui l'homme providentiel, 'l'arbitre de ce temps' (selon l'expression de saint Avit), qui allait assurer en Occident le triomphe d'une civilisation nouvelle, et rendre désormais inutiles les appels à l'empereur de Byzance". P. de LABRIOLE et al. (eds), De al mort de Théodose à l'élection de Grégoire le Grand, in A. FLICHE and V. MARTIN, *Historie d l'Eglise depuis des origines jusqu'à nos jours*, vol. 4, Paris, 1948, 395.

148 "Christianity became the state religion c. 300 A.D., when the great apostle of Armenia St Gregory the Illuminator preached the Gospel there. This noble descendant of the royal family, who had been trained in Christian doctrine from childhood and was consecrated the bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocea, quickly won over king Tiridates II to Christianity, as well as a large portion of the population". J. KAFTADJIAN, "Armenian rite", *Cath Enc.*, vol. I, p. 834. "Arménie fut la première nation à adopter le Christianisme comme religion officielle, après sa conversion définitive par saint Grégoire l'Illuminator, vers 295". H. LEGRAND, "Eglise arménienne", *EnUn*, vol. 1, 1013.

149 We have seen in the first chapter the tradition about king Abgar and his conversion to Christianity. See p. 11 above.

Si-ngan-Fu[150]. As long as the emperor was in favour of the Christians, the church flourished there. Even in modern times in the communist countries like Vietnam and China the Church establishments are finding it very difficult to run the day to day affairs without the support of the state.

Later in the colonial centuries, the great impetus in the missionary enterprise of the Catholic Church was a result of the state sponsored propaganda of Christianity. In the efforts to give the peoples of the 'other world' civilisation and salvation, the power of the state was always behind[151]. Western missionaries came to India first accompanied by the Portuguese colonial power[152]. It was under the 'padroada' power that missionaries succeeded in gaining strength in the country[153]. It is the same about the missionaries that went to other countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America[154].

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150 The monument of Si-ngan-Fu was erected on 4 February 781 A.D and is today conserved at Chan-si, where it was transported on 2 October 1907. It was erected in commemoration of the establishment of the Nestorian Church in China. It was discovered in 1625 while digging for a foundation of a wall in the city of Sanxuen, which corresponds to Si-ngan-fou. P. PELLIOT, *Recherches Sur les Chrétiens d'Asie centrale et d'Extreme Orient, II, 1, La Stèle de Si-ngan-fou,* Paris, 1983, 9-11.

151 It is clear from the letter of Christopher Columbus who wrote after his first voyage to West Indies (America). "Your Highness, as a catholic princes, loyal to the holy Christian faith and propagators of it, enemies of the sect of Mohammed and of all idolatries and heresies, resolved to send me, Christopher Colombus, towards the so-called regions of the Indies, to survey princes and people, to see the disposition of the lands and all the rest, and to advise on the way in which one could convert these peoples to our holy faith". "Extracts from the logs and letters of Christopher Columbus", in J. COMBY, D. MACCULLOCH, *How to Read Church History*. vol. 2, 66.

152 Missionaries had been already there with Vasco-da-Gama in 1502 in his second voyage to India. See *Les Voyages de Vasco-da-Gama*, tr. & annot. by TEYSSER and presented by J. AUBIN, Paris, 1995, 255-256.

153 In the 15th century, in a series of crusade Bulls, the Holy Office granted the Portuguese sovereign temporal and spiritual jurisdiction over the lands that had been conquered and those that were to be still discovered. It was called the padroada power. J. COMBY, D. MACCULLOCH, *How to Read Church History*, vol. 2, 66.

154 This state sponsored colonisation and Christianisation had, it is said, three motives: 'gold, pepper and souls'. "All the motivations were inextricably mixed: 'gold, pepper and souls'. The discoveries, the conquerors and the missionaries too behaved in a way which would seem contradictory and scandalous to us. They set up crosses and massacred the Indians. In Mexico, Cortez had the Indian woman Marina baptized before he took her as his concubine. In Peru, Pizzaro demanded an enormous ransom from the Inca Atahualpa, baptized him and then had him strangled (1553)". J. COMBY, D. MACCULLOCH, *How to Read Church History*, vol. 2, 65.

In South India, Christianity was always favoured by the kings and rulers, which is clear from the various privileges accorded to them by the kings. The first of these privileges were accorded to Thomas of Cana and his followers who reached Cranganore in 345 A.D. It was followed by many more privileges which were accorded to the Christians with an eminent status in the society and the Christians of Kerala ever remained in this particular status and it accounted for the growth and survival of the Christians in Kerala[155].

But the situation was quite different in North India. When Christianity reached North India, it was a time when Buddhism was flourishing under royal patronage of the Kushans. The later kings were competing to give patronage either to Buddhism or Brahmanism[156]. In this competition it was natural and logical that the Christians found themselves alienated and left out. And Christianity might have been such a negligible minority to be discarded by all alike. It is all the more possible when its founder was himself a foreigner and did not remain with them for long. One always wonders what would have happened if Thomas had influenced India as Peter and Paul had influenced Rome and the West. "Gondophares came in touch with Christianity, and his actions probably influenced India in such a way as to involve its history in a darkness not yet dispelled. Had Thomas influenced India as Paul did Rome, what might not have happened"[157]?

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155 When the Portuguese arrived at Malabar the Christians were a class apart who enjoyed the privileges of a high caste. This special status could be attributed to the caste system as well as the special treatment and considerations given to the Christians as a mercantile community.

156 Kanishka, the greatest of the Kushans, was a strong Buddhist. His zeal for the propagation of that religion sought to surpass even that of the Great Asoka. He convened a council of the Buddhists. Under him Buddhism assumed a real status of religion under the title Mahayana and Buddha came to be adored as a god. V.A. SMITH, *Early History of India*, p. 266-267. But Vasudeva the last great king of the dynasty was a Vishnavite and supported the Hinduism. V.A. SMITH, *Early History of India*, 272.

157 C.J. RODGERS, *Coin collecting in Northern India*, 28.

3.1.4 Lack of Proper Hierarchy

No Church could flourish without a hierarchy to look into the needs of the faithful. We have seen in the third chapter that there was no such strong hierarchical organisation in North India. All the references that we have to an ecclesiastical hierarchy of India is in relation with the Persian Church or the Alexandrian Church. We read in the *Ath* that the apostle had appointed a deacon to whose care he entrusted the newly formed Christian community[158]. In the *Didascalia* also we have the reference that the apostle had established some kind of hierarchical structure in India. So these texts may show that there were Christians in India and they were subject to a certain type of authority. And the only reference we have of a bishop in ancient India is that of John of Persia who was present in the Council of Nicaea (325) and signed on behalf of the churches of Persia and greater India. But we have seen in our last chapter that this John could not be possibly a resident bishop of India[159]. The Christians of North West India, as they fell formerly under the Persian Satrapies and as they had a Pehlava connection, had been taken care of by the Church in the Persian Empire.

3.2 SURVIVAL OF TRADITIONS

It is an astonishing fact that even though the ancient Christianity founded by the apostle Thomas in North India disappeared completely, the traditions about them continue even today. There does not exist today in North India any Christian community that claims to have the ancestors, who were converted directly by the apostle Thomas. But at the

158 *Ath* 67.

159 "Before St Thomas reached South India, he preached in that part of the Parthian Empire which bordered on India and after baptising many people to guide them spiritually appointed bishops and priests. John of Persia who is said to have signed the canons of the Council of Nicaea in 325 is a successor of those bishops". B. THOMAS, *Marthomakristianikal*, 226.

same time we are sure that there were Christians in ancient India from the time of the apostle and a community with indigenous characters had really been formed.

The existence of these Christian communities must be the only reason for the survival of traditions about them. It is true that the existence of Christians in North India may be explained in the light of the Nestorian missionary enterprise of the mediaeval centuries[160]. It seems that they had reached almost all parts of India. But, can we rightly assume that they spread the tradition that the apostle Thomas evangelised these parts of India, as if they had no role in it? Even if they have done it, it must be because they could not overrun the already existing traditions.

This survival of traditions could be explained in the light of mainly two reasons. One is the migration of the traditions and the other is the integration of Christianity in the Indian soil. It is only natural to believe that the migrating Christians took their traditions also with them wherever they went. The mission of the apostle in North India was the living tradition that the Christians from North preserved for centuries and conveyed to their brethren in the South[161]. The South Indian tradition that speaks about the mission of the apostle among the *Sinaye* and *Kusaye* could, as we have already seen, be explained in this way. Even the prolonged and sustained missionary effort of the East Syrian Church,

160 For a summary of the possible result of this missionary effort of the East Syrian Church in India, see A.D. MATTAM, *The Indian Church of St Thomas Christians and her Missionary Enterprise before the Sixteenth century*. Kottayam, 1985. Though the author attributes these missionary works to the St Thomas Christians, it is quite unlikely.

161 We have already seen the possibility of the migration of Christians from North India to the South.

that had taken them to the mainland China and Tibet[162], could not alter this tradition of the local Christians about the apostle Thomas. In fact, we cannot really distinguish between the early Christians of Thomasian origin and the later Christians of the East Syrian origin. It seems that the missionaries strengthened the existing Christians in India by their missionary efforts. That may be the reason why the Thomas tradition survived to the modern day.

Another reason for the continuance of tradition could be that the ancient Christianity had been so well integrated in the soil of India that even after the disappearance of it, the natives continue to have memories of it and stories about it spread in the form of legends and traditions. The mention of Jesus in the Hindu puranas could be considered to be a result of this.

CONCLUSION

Our study in this final chapter takes us to the conclusion that we do not have much reason to suspect a personal missionary work of the apostle Thomas in North India. We have already seen in the previous chapters that such a mission of the apostle could be considered a historical actuality as both ancient Indian geography and history, both political and social, fall in tune with the narration in the *Ath.*

In this last chapter our attempt was threefold. First, to see whether our use of the *Ath* as a starting point for the

162 We have already spoken about the great monument discovered in China. Crosses have been discovered at Ladak which prove the missionary efforts of the East Syrian Church to the boundaries of India. "Il est exact du reste que les Chaldéens ont pénétré au Tibet proprement dit et y ont eu des chrétientés organisées. C'est ce que prouvent les croix rupestres chaldéennes de Dran-tse, près de Pang-kong, sur la piste caravanière qui conduit à Lha-sa et met en communication la Kachgarie, la Bactriane et les Indes avec le Tibet central. Elles sont accompagnées d'inscriptions en tibétain, en sogdien, en koutchéen et en chinois. On y lit le mot sogdien *Y(i)saw*, 'Jesus', et les dates en sogdien de l'année 210 de 'l'empire d'Arabes', c'est-à-dire 825 ou 834". P. PELLIOT, *Recherches sur les chrétiens d'Asie centrale et d'Extrême Orient*, Paris, 1973, 203.

investigation of the mission of Thomas in North India was justified, while many reject it as apocryphal and hence devoid of any historical value at all. In the light of the special place that Thomas literature had in Syriac Churches, the political, religious and social situations of Edessa, and the historical events of ancient India, we are able to give a certain degree of historicity to the events mentioned in the *Ath.* We do not mean that everything written in it is historical. It is historical in the sense that it was composed in a certain date or period and in a historical place and had based its story on historical places, persons and events.

In the second place we tried to compare the two Thomas traditions of India. Both show admirable individuality and distinctiveness. One seems to never interfere with the other. They stand as two distinct and individual entities, each having proper history and proper personalities. We come to the conclusion that these two traditions stand for two different missions of the same apostle in two entirely different regions of India, in two different periods of time, but following the right chronological order. In the same section we have also accounted for the scepticism of many an author towards these traditions of the Christians of India. The Unwillingness of these authors could be seen and understood in parallel with the colonial historiography which sought to justify the British colonial activities in India. Thus, for these historians who reject the mission of Thomas in India, Christianity is presumed to begin in India with the arrival of foreigners. There were no indigenous Christians in ancient India. Their argument that India of Thomas was not the present India does not hold ground, when confronted with the real facts. Moreover there is no evidence to show that the apostle had been to those alternative countries proposed by these writers as the possible mission field of the apostle.

The last question that we have answered was about the disappearance of ancient North Indian Christianity. We have enumerated mainly four reasons for this, namely, successive invasions, migrations, lack of royal patronage, and lack of hierarchy. North Indian Christianity from the time of its inception always struggled under hostile circumstances. First the Kushan invasion uprooted its bases and support. Then the internal dynastic struggles during the Gupta period might have further weakened it. Later, the fury of the Muslim invasions should have dealt the fatal blow to it. Church grew in different countries with the support and patronage of the kings and rulers. But in North India, Christians did not find such a royal patronage as there had already been two well established religions which were vying against each other to garner support of the royal power. Added to these factors was the lack of proper hierarchy to look into the needs of the faithful.

Though the ancient Christian community died out in North India, the traditions about them have survived to the present day. Even the prolonged and sustained missionary effort of the East Syrian Church, that must have taken them to the mainland China and Tibet, could not alter this tradition of the local Christians about the Apostle Thomas. It shows that the traditions were well rooted in North India. Thus, all these are evidences that really account for the presence of Christians in India who had their beginning from the mission of the apostle Thomas in North West India.

General Conclusion

Our goal at the outset of this research work was to verify if we could credit a historical validity to the popular tradition according to which the Apostle Thomas visited North India and established the Church there. The primary source at our disposal was the apocryphal book of the *Acts of Judas Thomas*. The book, being apocryphal, was considered to be containing very rare historical elements and consequently the mission of Thomas in India was either refuted or suspected by the historians of the Church. But, could such a story be written on mere fictitious grounds and could it be spread far and wide and could there be such traditions still extant in those parts of India with which the story was concerned? The tradition that Thomas preached in North India had existed even before the discovery of the coins and inscriptions, in the second half of the 19th century, of Gondophares, the king mentioned in the *Ath*. So this tradition was not the result of a recent event, the event confirmed the tradition. Thus we have to study the traditions in the context of the geography and history of India.

There exist some traditions and documents basing on which we are able to propose a hypothesis: The apostle Thomas in one of his missionary journeys would have reached North India and would have established the Church there. The supportive elements of this hypothesis are the following. 1. The apocryphal book of the *Ath* narrates the mission of Thomas in India. 2. A king named Gondophares seems to have ruled from Taxila, in the erstwhile North West India. 3. There exists even today some scattered people who claim to have some connection with the early converts of St Thomas. 4. St Thomas is always considered to be the apostle of India. 5. On 24 October every year the arrival of Thomas is celebrated in Taxila. Thus we are enabled to postulate the hypothesis. So, the first question would naturally be whether we are justified in proposing the

hypothesis. In other words, are the traditions and documents historically valid and trustworthy?

So, the first question we answer is whether *Ath* narrates the story of the apostle Thomas himself and whether the place of his mission is India itself. Thomas was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. The synoptic Gospels call him Thomas. In the Gospel according to John he is known as Thomas Didymos or Thomas who is called Twin. At one place in this Gospel he is called 'Judas not Iscariot'. Thus John gives the impression that he knew that Thomas was not the original name of the apostle and that this original name could be Judas. In the early Thomas literature, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, the *Book of Thomas the contender*, the *Acts of Thomas* etc, the apostle is called simply Judas or Judas Thomas. The Fathers of the Church and the early Thomas traditions of India call him Thomas. Thus the 'Thomas' of the synoptic Gospels and the 'Thomas Didymos' of John and the Judas or Judas Thomas of the Syriac tradition becomes Thomas the apostle of India in the Fathers of the Church and early Christian writers. This Thomas is also the central character in the Christian traditions of India. A comparative study of all these traditions makes it clear that all these speak of one and the same person and the real name of the apostle should have been Judas.

What does the *Ath* mean when it says that Judas Thomas went to India? Does it mean the present India? Contrary to the general belief that the ancient India remained unknown to the rest of the world, we see not only that she was widely known, but also that she had held extensive commercial and cultural relations with all the known civilizations of the then world. Ancient Greek writers speak of India and their references to India are quite objective. India was also mentioned in the Bible. It seems that Solomon had sent his ships to India to bring the materials necessary to build the temple. From the time of

Alexander's invasion, India and the Indian geography had become more familiar to the West. India had held extensive trade relations with the Greeks and the Romans. In all the ancient accounts about India one thing is clear; that India lies east of the Indus, the river to which the country owes its name. And we think it is in this sense that the India of the *Ath* is to be understood. In the writings of the Parthian or Sassanian origin of the third and fourth centuries A.D., India comprises only the regions of the Indus and its tributaries, as it was considered by the Greeks before Alexander's invasion of India in 326 B.C. This India is considered to be an Iranian India, for Parthian dynasties had founded some small kingdoms in this region. This India must be the India of the *Ath*. Therefore, when the author of the *Ath* writes that Thomas went to India, it must be understood in the sense that he went to the north western parts of India. Thus we are justified in the choice of the subject matter of our study and in the methods and sources we have chosen for it.

If the mission of the apostle was in North West India, which would be the places in India that *Ath* describes? The *Ath* makes Thomas to be present in two royal cities in India. The first city where the apostle landed in India is named in the *Ath* Andrapolis (Greek version) or Sandruk mahosa (Syriac version). *Andrapolis* in Greek means city of Andhra and *Sandruk mahosa* in Syriac means city of Sandruk. We assumed that it must be Barygaza, the great port city described in the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea,* written c. 60 A.D., as the most important trade port of India. This city was called *Bhaarukachcha* in Sanskrit. It is today called Broach (Bharuch) and is situated in the Gujarat state in Western India. Besides apparent etymological similarities between the terms, there exist geographical, political, and historical evidences in favour of such an opinion. It was the most important trade centre of the early centuries at the West Coast of India. All commodities of

the inland were directed to it for trade with the West between 42 and 50 A.D. It was the royal port city of the Andhra Kings, who had the dynastic title *Satakarnis*, whence must have come the names *Andrapolis* and *Sandrukmahosa* respectively. It had maintained trade relations with the regions of the Indus and was dynastically subordinated to the Indo-Parthian Kings of whom Gondophares was the greatest. This was the only place mentioned in the *Periplus* as having received Jewish slave girls as gifts for the king. The *Ath* narrates the story of a Jewish slave girl at the banquet in which Thomas took part. Jews were present in these regions at least from the first century A.D. Thus all evidences confirm that the port meant by the author of the *Ath* as the port of embarkation of the apostle in India was Barygaza.

According to the *Ath*, from Andrapolis Thomas went to the 'king of India', Gondophares. Historians had no idea who this king was except that his name was mentioned together with that of Thomas and it was considered to be a fictitious one till 1834 A.D. when coins bearing this name began to be unearthed from the regions what is known today as Afghanistan. Archaeological excavations then brought to light a lot of history hidden for centuries and Gondophares was known to be a great king of the Indo-Parthian dynasty, who ruled the whole of North West India, from 20-50 A.D. There was another discovery that clarified more the period of his reign. A stone was discovered at a place called Takht- i-Bahi, a little North East from Peshwar in Pakistan in 1872. So today it is known as Takt-i-Bahi inscription. The inscription reads thus: "*In the 26th year of the great king Guduphara, in the samvat year three and one hundred (repeated in figures 100 + 3), in the month of Vaisakh, on the 4th day for his own religious interest and the religious merit of his mother and father*". The inscription speaks of two dates: the reigning year of the king and the actual year of the then era (*Samvat*). All who have studied this inscription agree

that the 26th year of Gondophares' reign and the 103rd year of the *Samvat* is one and the same. This era mentioned here is the *Vikrama era* which began in 57 B.C. Thus the *samvat* 103 is calculated to be A.D. 46 which was the 26th year of the reign of Gondophares and accordingly he might have begun to rule in 20 A.D.

The capital of the Indo-Parthians was Taxila. It was a cosmopolitan city, centre of three great trade routes, meeting place of world's four great religious philosophies, namely Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism. It was the city of India's first grammarian, Panini. Aramaic was the lingua franca of the region from the time when Darius I conquered these regions in the 5th century B.C. Asoka, the great Mauryan Emperor, had published one of his edicts in the Aramaic and the kharoshti scripts of the coins of Gondophares had been derived from the Aramaic. The deltas of Indus and Narmada were connected by a sea route. There was a land route connecting Barygaza and Taxila via Ujjain and Mathura along the Great Highway Taxila- Pataliputra (the present Patna). So it was not impossible for the apostle to go from Barygaza to Taxila. Taxila was famous enough to be heard in the West and was surely known there as the city of India being ruled by a Parthian king. Internal evidences in the text of the *Ath* also show that Taxila must have been the city meant by the author.

Thus we are sure that the sitz-im-leben of the *Ath* is North West India and we are able to point out the places narrated in the story. The king recounted in it is really a historical figure and the date of his rule can be asserted with accuracy. Thus both internal and external evidences substantiate the assumption of the *Ath* that Thomas had preached in North India. However, the probability of his having arrived in these places does not confirm the establishment of the Church in North India by him. It remains a hypothesis until we discover some tangible results of the mission of Thomas in these parts of India.

An analysis of the ancient history of India clarifies that the author of the *Ath* had historical reasons to include Gondophares in the story of Thomas. This king, though most powerful of his dynasty, was just one among the numerous kings of various dynasties and tribes, who ruled in North West India in the first century A.D. If the author of the *Ath* wanted to associate Thomas with any other king he could have assumed the names of some more important and well-known names like Asoka or Kanishka. The fact, that the name Gondophares itself was preferred, shows that the author was concerned with historical accuracy in his writings. Thus we hold the mission of the apostle to India as a historical probability: an event that could have happened. But if it had actually taken place what happened to the people converted by him and their descendants? This question takes us to an inquiry into the existence of ancient Christianity in India.

There are references to the existence of Christians in North West India from the second century onwards. First of these references speak of the Christians met by Pantenus of Alexandria who is described by Eusebius and Jerome as missionary to India. The date of Pantenus' arrival in India is most probably 189 A.D. They say that when he reached India he came across Christians who had in possession the Gospel of St Mathew written in Hebrew characters, brought to India by St Bartholomew. Pantenus was in the North West India and he met there Christians who needed help from outside to protect themselves against the ever growing strength of Buddhism and Brahmanism. It must be Pantenus who brought to Alexandria the knowledge of the mission of Thomas in North West Frontier provinces of India on the strength of which Origen spoke of the mission of Thomas in Parthia. The next person who is recorded in history to have visited India is Theophilus the Indian who reached the country in 354 A.D. He encountered Christians who practised local customs and traditions. It must have been

the regions of the Gujarat Coast that is described as the place visited by Theophilos. What is more striking in the accounts of these two missionaries is a possible Alexandrian connection of the Christians in North India. This probable connection is further substantiated with the mention of the presence in the 7th century A.D. of an Indian priest in Alexandria, during the Patriarchate of Simon I (689- 701), in search of a bishop for India. This Alexandrian link could be a result of the knowledge that Thomas came to India from Alexandria. Again in 1321 A.D we meet at Barygaza Christians who had lost all Christian connections. This we know from the accounts of Jordanus of Severac, great Dominican missionary, who was appointed as the first Latin bishop of India. Thus we meet with a struggling Christianity in 189, an indigenous Christianity in 354, and an almost-dead Christianity in 1321 in those parts of India where Thomas had probably established the Church.

There are really some remnants of the ancient Christian communities in these parts of India. There is a particular community at Tatta, in Sind in Pakistan, who claims to be the descendants of those converted by St Thomas. The members of this community are said to have some Christian practises. But we have no way to verify it as they are very hard to be approached and the political tensions block our way to that part of the world. There is a village called *Garthoma* near Taxila. They say that it is so named in honour of St Thomas who saved the villagers from a natural calamity. All villages except this one where the apostle had stayed had been destroyed, according to tradition, in that catastrophe. So the villagers in gratitude named the village after St Thomas. Cosmas the Indian traveller (520-525 A.D.) mentions the presence of Christians in the 'rest of India', besides in Male and Kalliana. Male is Malabar and Kalliana is the present Kalyan near Bombay. This Kalliana is not far away from Braoch, the ancient Barygaza. And 'the rest of India' can be nothing but the North Western

regions of India. So we see that the Thomas tradition is handed over to the present days in living communities.

The mission of Thomas in India and the existence of the ancient Christianity in India are directly or indirectly mentioned or narrated by the authors like Bardaisan, Ephrem, Jerome, and in the books such as the *Didascalia*, the *Acts of Mari*, the *Barlaam and Josephat*, the *Bhavishyapurana* etc. We see also that there were bishops and bishoprics in India and the regions immediately bordering it. Bishop John of Persia and Greater India, the dioceses of Kashgar and Ardashirpharid are some of them.

All these elements enable us to establish the mission of the apostle Thomas in North India as an event that has tangible historical results in the country. So now the Ath can also be considered as a book having a historical nucleus, a fact which really adds weight to our findings. The *Ath* is historical in the sense that it was composed during a certain period and in a historical place and had based its story on historical places, persons and events. The historical places in it are Barygaza, the present Braoch (Bharuch) in Gujarat in India and Takshasila, the present Taxila in Pakistan and the historical persons were Thomas the Apostle of Jesus, Gondophares, the Indo-Parthian king who ruled from 20-50 A.D. and his brother Abadgasses. The rule of Gondophares in North West India, the arrival of Thomas in India and his establishment of the Church are the historical events in the *Ath*.

We see also that the *Ath* had, at least in its prototype, an Indian origin. This we assume first from the mention of Indian customs and traditions in the story. A comparative study of the different versions of the *Ath* also surely asks for a prototype which must have really influenced the established versions and editions of it. The similarities in the different versions and editions of the story of Thomas must be ascribed to an earlier version which might have been from India. We find occasional

references to the existence of the text of the *Ath* in the Sanskrit language in the library of Kanchipuram in South India. The references are seen in some 16th and 18th century letters of the Jesuit missionaries to India.

Then why do many historians adopt a sceptic attitude to the history of the mission of Thomas in India? Their scepticism can be understood in the light of the general attitude of the historians to the Indian history. Historians generally hold that Indian history is a mix of myths and legends. It is true to a certain extent. But to a people who always liked to tell their history through myths and legends, traditions were an important source of history. A person who sets out to study some particular events in the history of India can never explain away the traditions concerning these events. Even those who refuse to accept the Indian apostolate of Thomas must acknowledge that their scepticism rests mainly on a general disposition to discredit any ancient story which is not proved to the hilt, rather than any strong positive grounds for disputing it.

It is true and historical that there were Christians in those parts of North West India where the apostle had established the Church. But not much remains of the ancient Christianity can be seen today in these regions. Many reasons can be given to this. We suggest mainly four: invasions, migrations, lack of royal patronage, and lack of proper hierarchy. North West India had always been a region prone to invasions from foreign rulers. The last phase of these invasions saw the unleashing of the Muslim fury on the people of India beginning from 11th to 14th centuries. When the flourishing civilisations and powerful dynasties in North West India could not withstand the onslaughts of oft-repeated invasions, what else could be the fate of a nascent Christian community that had no political and hierarchical power to support it? There are proofs of migration of the Christians from the North to the South even from the second century. The main proof comes from Malabar itself. It

speaks about the Christians who came from *Hendu*, meaning the Indus delta. The tradition in Malabar that Thomas preached to Sinaye and Kusaye also prove the possibility of this migration. The ancient Christian community now seen at the West coast of India, in the present diocese of Vasai (Bassein) could be considered as the descendants of these early Christians. The Thomas Christians of Goa that St Francis Xavier encountered in 1542 could also be regarded in the same way. Migrations might also have taken place to the West where there had been Christian dioceses from the early centuries. The Church had in different countries grown with the support of the royal power: in Rome, in Armenia, at Edessa, in the Persian Empire. When the royal patronage was not there she always suffered. The same was true in India also. In South India Christianity was favoured by the kings and rulers, which is clear from the various privileges accorded to the Christians by the kings. We have investigated how South India was ever immune from foreign invasions and how the rulers of Malabar were ever tolerant of all religions. This tolerance and immunity from invasions coupled with the particular status the Christians of Malabar enjoyed in the social stratum, would explain the survival and growth of Christianity in Malabar. But in the North West India, the situation was different. The kings were competing among themselves to extend patronage either to Buddhism or to Brahmanism. In this competition the Christians found themselves alienated and forgotten. Again we have nothing to prove that there was a strong and solid local hierarchical organisation to look after the spiritual and temporal needs of the Christians of North West India. We find occasional references to some bishops and bishoprics in India, such as John Persia, Kashgar etc. But all of them refer to a foreign hierarchy. All these could be reasons which hastened the demise and disappearance of the ancient Christianity in North West India.

This study brings us to some final conclusions which are of great significance in the secular as well as the Church history of India.

St Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus, had in all probability preached the Gospel at Barygaza, the present Broach (Bharuch) in Western India and at Taxila now in Pakistan and established the Church in those parts of the ancient India. Christianity existed there since the first century A.D., but disappeared completely, owing to various factors such as persecutions, invasions, migrations etc, leaving just a few traces, by the end of the 14th century A.D.

Thus the North Indian tradition about the mission of Thomas in India is both valid and historical and needs to be considered seriously. In the same way the source of the present *Acts of Thomas* had very probably an Indian origin. Further researches are needed to search out the Indian copies of it which are said to have existed in the Library of Kanchipuram.

The Indian Church is as apostolic as the Churches founded by St Peter and St Paul and therefore deserves to be considered on the same echelon with the ancient apostolic Churches.

The traditions in the North and South India relate the history of the same apostle. Thus the Christians of India are joined by the same patrimony and bond of faith. And as Thomas is found to have established the Church both in North and South India he really deserves to be called the 'Apostle of India'.

Any writing of the history of the Church in India must begin with the arrival of the Apostle Thomas in North India c. 44-50 A.D. and more historical research has to be carried out to learn better about the traditions and actualities of the establishment of the Church in North India and her disappearance.

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Index of Place Names

A

Afghanistan
5, 39, 41, 70, 72, 78, 93,
102, 108, 118, 131, 139, 146, 150
186, 187, 224, 240, 251

Alexandria
26, 42, 43, 44, 88, 96, 97
98, 101, 102, 103, 107, 108, 170
231, 232, 238

Andhra
46, 49, 50, 54, 55, 56, 59, 60, 61, 63, 66, 70, 98, 132
133, 141, 157, 161, 164, 198
213, 227, 242

Andhra Pradesh 49, 161, 198,

Arabia Felix 31, 97, 134

Ardashir Pharid 138

Ardasirpharid 198

Ariaca

Armenia
144, 201, 203, 220, 228

B

Bactria 129, 182, 228, 230, 235

Baith Katraye 199

Baluchistan

Baones 107

Baraca 48

Barbaricon 52

Bardaisan 8, 10, 13, 14, 15

Bardaissan 9, 14, 240, 252

Barygaza
30, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49
50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 61, 62
63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 84, 87, 88, 89
93, 107, 109, 111, 114, 120, 156, 157
179, 189, 190, 213, 214, 215, 217
218, 221, 231

Basra 123, 124, 133,

Beloochistan 36

Bengal 144

Berlin 71, 222, 223, 225

Bijapur 161, 191

Bombay
29, 42, 46, 47, 54, 60, 63
64, 91, 108, 109, 113, 115, 119
120, 155, 190, 217, 228, 229
230, 231, 233, 234, 235, 236
239, 245, 246, 248, 250

Broach
30, 46, 47, 48, 49, 53, 57
64, 66, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113
142, 191, 213, 221, 231

C

Cabul 144

Caesarea 42, 134, 178, 203

Cana 123, 196, 197, 205

Candahar 144

Cane 51, 89

Champa 49

Chandragiri 161, 162

China
46, 50, 125, 137, 144, 145, 153
157, 177, 182, 194, 195, 196, 203
204, 208, 210, 233, 242, 243, 253
254, 255

Chinnamala 174

Conjivaram 191

Cranganore
43, 53, 88, 101, 123, 173
183, 196, 197, 205
Cutch 48, 57, 58, 59

D

Delhi 5, 28, 29, 30, 34, 42, 46
48, 49, 63, 69, 73, 80, 81
112, 130, 146, 156, 167, 187
228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233
234, 235, 242, 243, 248
Diu 57, 105, 107, 108

E

Edessa 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 89
121, 122, 130, 155, 156, 157
158, 159, 160, 201, 203, 209
220, 222, 240, 249, 252
Ethiopia
31, 33, 67, 107, 119, 127
134

F

Fars 137, 197, 199, 200, 201

G

Goa 113, 190, 191, 194, 220
Golconda 161
Gujarat
30, 37, 46, 47, 54, 56, 57
59, 66, 93, 101, 105, 109
112 115, 144, 156, 185, 187
190, 191, 213, 217, 218,
229, 231, 247
Guntur 191

H

Herat 36

J

Jaigarh 51
Jerusalem
9, 26, 35, 41, 42, 43, 62
63, 68, 70, 88, 92, 125, 230
234

K

Kabul
36, 50, 59, 70, 79, 93, 145
182
Kalyan 119, 189, 217
Kalyana 119, 245
Kanauj 49
Kanchi 164
Kanchipuram
161, 162, 163, 164
165, 219, 221
Kandahar
36, 49, 70, 73, 78, 145
Karnataka 161
Kashgar
136, 137, 198, 218, 220,
Kashmir
79, 83, 131, 136, 144, 145, 146
165, 166, 187, 235, 240, 253
Kerala
43, 67, 108, 147, 153, 173, 179,
188, 192, 194, 196, 197, 205
231, 238, 243, 247, 248, 251
Kokkamangalam 173
Kollam 108, 119, 173, 197
Kosambi 49, 167, 231
Kottakavu 173

L

Lahore
71, 74, 80, 139, 144, 229
230, 235

M

Madras
70, 114, 137, 143, 159, 174
191, 198, 230, 238, 239, 240, 243
247, 248, 255
Madurai 142
Mailapore 193, 194
Malabar
1, 4, 12, 34, 51, 55, 88, 99
100, 101, 103, 111, 112, 113
115, 119, 120, 121, 123, 124
140, 152, 153, 159, 164, 173
174, 175, 177, 179, 183, 188
189, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195,
196, 201, 205, 217, 219, 220
233, 236, 237, 238, 242, 244
245, 246, 248, 249, 251
Maldives 105
Maliamkara 43, 173
Mandavi 58
Mansur 147
Mathura 48, 49, 56, 215
Meliziagra 51
Mesopotamia
11, 20, 27, 142, 228
Muziris 43, 89, 173
Mylapore
140, 145, 146, 155, 159, 160
161, 174, 192, 193, 194, 240
242, 247

N

Nasik 55, 61, 66
Nicaea
133, 134, 135, 138, 202,
206, 244
Nilakkal 173, 174
Niranam 173

P

Pakistan
2, 5, 39, 41, 72, 78, 79, 83, 95
114, 118, 124, 131, 136, 139
140, 146, 156, 179, 184, 214
217, 218, 221, 232, 233, 235
237, 239, 245, 247
Palayur 173, 183,
Palghat 191
Paris 8, 36, 46, 64, 68, 71, 89,
119, 128, 138, 142, 168, 190
195, 202, 203, 204, 208, 222
223, 225, 227, 228, 230, 233
234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 243
244, 245, 249, 250, 251, 252
253, 254, 255
Parthia
9, 10, 14, 19, 20, 21, 90, 98, 100
101, 122, 216, 243
Pataliputra 49, 56, 215
Persia
16, 28, 31, 36, 88, 103, 107,
108, 115, 119, 120, 123, 124
125, 127, 128, 129, 133, 134
135, 136, 137, 138, 142, 159
191, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200
201, 206, 218, 220, 244
Peshwar 79, 83, 214

Prayag 49
Punjab
30, 39, 58, 59, 70, 72, 73,
78, 82, 93, 116, 181, 182
183, 185, 187

Q

Quilon 108, 119, 147, 197

R

Rajpur 51
Rawalpindi
31, 79, 80, 83, 103, 239,
246, 255
Riwarashir 200
Rome
12, 15, 20, 26, 28, 32, 37
38, 39, 73, 142, 144, 174,
192, 201, 202, 205, 220, 228
229,
234, 235, 236, 238, 239
243, 244, 245, 246,
248, 249 250, 251, 254,

S

Seistan 70, 78, 138
Seleucia 146, 199, 200
Seleucia-Ctesiphon 200
Sinai 17, 22, 23
Sinai Palimpsest 22
Sind 29, 34, 59, 61, 78, 112, 113
114, 147, 168, 186, 187, 193
217, 248
Sirkap
79, 80, 83, 116, 117, 139,
140, 141, 189
Smith 5, 22, 30
Socotra
44, 51, 105, 194, 241, 253
Socotraa
Sopara 29, 108, 110
Sri Nagar 131, 145
Surat 47, 59, 64, 142, 231

T

Takht-I-Bahl 74
Takshasila 79, 156, 218
Tamil Nadu
32, 49, 161, 173, 198
Tamralipti
Taxila 49, 52, 56, 61, 67, 73, 74
78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84
85, 86, 88, 90, 91, 93, 116
117, 118, 139, 140, 141, 156
157, 179, 181, 189, 190, 211,
215, 217, 218, 221, 229, 230
232, 235, 237, 239, 246, 251
Thalikotta 161
Thana
63, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112,
230, 239
Tibet 144, 208, 210, 242

U

Ujjain 50, 77, 141, 142, 215

V

Varanasi 49
Vasai 113, 190, 220
Vidhisha 49
Vienne 138, 239
Vijayanagar 161, 162, 163, 194

Index of Authors

A

Abu Salih 146, 147
Ambrose 20, 222
Amidon 136, 222, 252
Amman
6, 10, 12, 16, 156, 225, 249
Andre 37, 38, 39
Aphraates 16
Arndt 21
Arrian 34, 35, 36, 80, 232
Assemani 155, 196, 199, 236
Asterius 20
Aubin 204
Augustine 7, 8, 14
Ayyar 77, 236

B

Bachhofer 72, 228
Balme 110, 236
Banerjee 73, 228
Bar Hebraeus 199
Bardaisan
8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 90
121, 125, 126, 164, 231
Bardaissan 9, 14
Barrett 21
Basham
69, 129, 156, 185, 186, 228, 234
Bashan 28, 29
Baum 106, 107, 236
Benjamin 63, 228, 250
Bhattacharya 80, 229
Blair 21
Bornkamm 151, 225
Botti 118, 179, 237
Bovon 35, 36, 225, 243, 250
Bowker 16
Brock 16, 250
Burkitt 16, 17

C

Carnet 118, 229, 251
Carr 167, 251
Carrao & P. Viola 150
Chabot 138, 237, 251
Chandra 49, 184, 185, 229
Charpentier
90, 93, 102, 121, 229, 238
Clemetine Recognitions 19
Clerque 105
Collins 99, 152, 237, 238, 251
Comby 202, 204
Commisariat 54, 229
Correa 113, 161, 162, 177, 238
Correia 190
Cowley 118, 229
Crateri 92
Cunningham
3, 70, 75, 77, 79, 80, 81
83, 91, 229, 230
Cureton 23, 26, 222, 252
Cyril of Jerusalem 9
Cyzicenus 134, 135

D

D'Anville 231
D'Souza
Damascene 125, 126, 127

Danielou 132
Dawson 76
De Urbina 252
de Urbina 202
Deshpande 146, 230
Dhalmann 7, 55, 56, 67
Dhani 80
Dhile 29, 39, 99
Didascalia 19
Didier 190, 249
Didymus 21, 22
Doctrine of Addai 17, 23
Doctrine of the Apostles
21, 23, 25
Donaldson 7
Drijvers 17

E

Egeria 8, 11, 15
Encraites 7
Ephesus 26
Ephrem
8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, 21
Ephrem the Syrian 8
Epiphanes 7
Epiphanius 136, 222, 252
Erbetta 10, 14
Eusebius 9, 12, 17, 19, 23, 25
Evettes 103, 146, 240, 252, 254

F

Falcones 31, 50, 223, 231
Farquahar 17, 22, 23, 25
Felix
31, 97, 134, 136, 137, 240
Filliozat
37, 38, 39, 223, 228, 230
Firth 172, 240
Fleet 132, 230, 241
Fliche 203, 253

G

Garbe 6
Gardner 70, 230
Gaudentius 20
German 13, 98, 222
Germann 7
Gersevitch 118, 231
Giamil 192
Gille 173, 241
Gillnan 140
Gingras 8
Gingrich 21
Gokhale 48, 49, 231
Gordon 96, 241
Grant 150
Greenfield 118, 231, 241
Gregory of Nysa 20
Gregory of Tours 14, 20
Greogry of Naziansus 20
Gunther 25

H

Hambey 21
Hamilton 31, 50, 223, 231, 250
Hay 162, 242
Haywood 168, 231
Henneck 13
Heracleon 19
Heras
91, 98, 118, 138, 181, 189, 197
198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 243
Herodotus 29
Herzfeld 91, 154, 242, 253

Hosten
53, 97, 99, 115, 116, 128
138, 141, 142, 147, 148, 157
192, 195, 242, 247
Hough 155, 169, 170, 242
Hypolitus 19

I

Indicopleustes, Cosmos 118
Isidore of Sevilla 20

J

James 15, 26
Jerome 20
John 6, 16, 20, 21, 22, 24
26, 27, 35
John Chrysostom 20
John Damascene 125
Jordanus
95, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112
113, 115, 186, 187, 217, 223
238, 255

K

Kalhana 165, 166, 223
Keay
97, 161, 164, 165, 184, 185
187, 191, 231, 243
Kennet 70, 137, 243
Kircher 144, 145, 195, 243
Klijn 8, 13, 15, 24
Klimkeit 140
Knight 171
Kollaparambil 192, 196
Kollaparampil
193, 196, 243, 244
Kosambi 49, 167, 231, 256
Ktesias the Knidian 29, 232

L

La Croze 155
Labriole 203, 253
Land
8, 67, 192, 230, 237, 249, 250
Law 48, 64, 81, 231
Layton 11, 22, 253
Le Clerq 105
Leclerq 89
Legrand 203
Leloir 37, 52, 224
Leucius Charinus 13
Levy 38, 63, 92, 244
Lipsius 16, 35

M

MacCrindle 29
MacCulloch 202, 204
Macke 16
Major 33, 163, 232
Majumdar 132, 166, 232
Malekandathil 101, 170, 244
Mani 9
Manicheans 8, 10, 13
Maraval 8
Marchand 68, 244
Marcus 30, 223
Marshall 3, 79, 80, 83, 85, 232
Martin 203, 253
Mattam 143, 207, 244
Mattingly 126, 239, 252
Mazumdar 29, 30, 232
Medleycott 7, 33
Megasthenes 34, 79, 230
Menachery

17, 226, 240, 244, 245
Mesopotamia 11, 20, 27
Messadie 245, 253
Metzger 22, 23
Mingana
32, 33, 97, 105, 120, 121
122, 123, 124, 130, 134, 137
138, 198, 199, 200, 201, 245
Moffet 172
Moraes 154, 245
Moraldi 13, 14, 17, 18, 22, 38
Mundandan 105
Murty 166, 233

N

Nathan 63, 233
Neill 119, 124, 154, 245

O

Oglivie 107, 245
Origen 9, 19, 21

P

Panikkar 168, 233
Pargiter 5
Parthia 9, 10, 14, 19, 20, 21
Paulinos of Nola 20
Payngot 12
Pelliot 204, 208, 233, 245, 254
Perumalil 31, 78, 98, 245
Philipps 38, 233, 245
Philostrogius 67, 107, 223
Pliny 3, 34, 36, 43, 50, 51, 53
81, 223
Podipara 196, 246
Poirier
24, 36, 224, 225, 226, 246
Pollet 49, 231, 233
Pragiter 171
Puthiakunnel 174, 246

Q

Quasten 153

R

Rae 7, 36
Rapson
70, 74, 78, 122, 233, 234
Rawlinson 28, 156, 234
Reinaud 31, 70, 234
Riddle 7
Robertson 50, 234
Rogers 59, 234
Rooney
31, 42, 43, 52, 72, 73, 78
85, 93, 114, 116, 117, 131
135, 136, 139, 140, 239, 246
Rufinus 20

S

Sachau 143, 234
Samuel 63, 234
Schnackenberg 26
Schoff 3, 30, 47, 48, 54, 55, 57
58, 63, 87, 228
Schulberg 129
Schurhammer
174, 175, 177, 194, 246
Senart 75, 76
Sergent 168, 234
Shurhammer 194
Sinai Palimpsest 22
Smith 5, 22, 30
Smith, V. A. 235
Socrates 20
Sorge 111, 247

Sozomen 20
Stein 165, 223, 235
Strabbo 57, 63, 66, 80, 116
Strabo 3, 31, 50, 63, 223, 231
Stuart 97

T

Tackeray 30
Teysser 204
Thaddeus 12, 23, 25
Thapar 132, 235
Thomas 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27
35, 36, 37, 39, 40
Thuribus 7
Tissot 24, 36
Tubach 177

V

Vadakekara 117, 153
vadakekara 154
Vadakkeakara 177, 178
Vadakkekara 176
Van Lohuizen de Leeuw 154
Vellian
174, 192, 238, 244, 246, 248
Vigouroux 6
Vincent 46, 47, 57, 59, 228
Voicu 36

W

Waldmann 155, 249
Warmimgton 42
Warmington
50, 51, 52, 88, 89, 235
Wheeler 32, 235
Wilford 105, 133, 235, 249
Wilfred 30, 167, 235
Wilson 54, 70, 228, 236
wilson 13
Woodward 126, 239, 252

X

Xavier
113, 174, 175, 177, 190, 191
194, 220, 245, 246, 249

Y

Yazdani 54, 60, 132, 236
Young 103, 120, 138, 255
YOUSIF 12
Yule 111, 112, 187, 223, 255

Z

Zacharias
55, 63, 66, 99, 191, 196
197, 201
Zaleski 155, 158, 249
Zetlaoui 64, 236
Zozomen 106

About the Book

If St. Thomas reached Kodungallur in Kerala only in 52 AD, as the Malabar tradition about the Apostle's mission holds it, where was he preaching the message of the Gospel in the years preceding it? Can the tradition about the North Indian mission of St. Thomas have any historical value? This book tries to give a comprehensive answer to these questions. It also brings to our notice that the Christians of Pakistan and India can have the same apostolic patrimony of St. Thomas. As a new and bold attempt in the multitude of studies about the Indian mission of the apostle Thomas, the present book can inspire and guide students of history for further studies and research.

About the Author

James Kurikilamkatt, born at Nellikutty (Kannur Dt.) in Kerala, India, is a priest belonging to the Missionary Society of St. Thomas the Apostle (MST). He holds a licentiate in Sacred Theology from the Catholic Institute, Paris. He obtained a doctorate in Church History from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. At present he is Rector of Deepti College, the Minor Seminary of the Missionary Society of St. Thomas the Apostle. He is visiting professor at Ruhalaya Major Seminary, Ujjain and Sanatana MCBS Seminary, Thamarassery.

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