

CHAPTER 22

UNKNOWN LIFE OF JESUS

It is a curious fact that the Canonical Gospels, after mentioning the birth of Jesus, and the incidents connected with it, skip over some ten years of his life, and then narrate his visit with his parents to the Temple at Jerusalem. He was then, we are told, only twelve years old. The Gospels then suddenly introduce him at his thirtieth year and are absolutely silent about the intervening period covering eighteen or more years. They tell us nothing about his youth, his habits, his education or occupation. Luke alone says:

And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was *in the desert* till the day of his showing unto Israel.¹

The words *in the desert* indicate that Jesus was neither in his *own land* nor in Judaea. A little later, Luke, after referring to the visit of Jesus to the Temple at Jerusalem, and just before mentioning his baptism by John, says:

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men.²

It is obvious, therefore, that between the two incidents the evangelists lose the thread of the terrestrial life of Jesus. Thus the twenty-nine formative years are passed over in silence which is broken once only and that in but a few brief verses of Luke. But certain material to fill this gap has been furnished by Nicholas Notovitch, a Russian traveller, who visited the Far East after the Turkish War (1877-1878). He went across the Caucasus to Persia and, finally, in 1887, he reached India through Afghanistan. He also went to Kashmir, "the Valley of Eternal Bliss" as he calls it. He was wandering about, without any plan, from one place to another. He decided to return to Russia through Central Asia and, therefore, took the route through Ladakh. At this place he visited the Buddhist monastery at Himis, and learnt from the Chief Lama that the library attached to the monastery contained some very ancient memoirs relating to the life of *Issa* (Jesus). He was curious but not interested and left the monastery without even looking at them. He had gone only a little distance when he had an accidental fall and broke one of his legs. He was carried back to the monastery and had to stay there for some time. During this time, merely to get over the monotony of the place, he asked for and the Chief Lama agreed to lend him the manuscript and an interpreter was also provided by the Lama. Notovitch was thus able to get a translation of the manuscript.

On his return to Russia, Notovitch showed his Notes to Mgr. Platon, the Metropolitan of Kiev, who tried to dissuade Notovitch from publishing them. He went to Rome. A Cardinal at the Vatican — Notovitch does not give his name — offered to pay a sum of money sufficient to repay his expenses and to recompense him for the time and energy spent in collecting the material. Notovitch rejected this offer, for with

1. Luke, 2 : 40.

2. Luke, 2 : 52.

it was a condition that his Notes should not be printed. Notovitch then left for Paris and saw Cardinal Rotelli. He too was opposed to the Notes being made public and was very precise in his views. According to Notovitch the Cardinal had said:

The Church suffers already too much from the new current of atheistic ideas, and you will but give a new food to the calumniators and detractors of the evangelic doctrine. I tell you this in the interest of all Christian Churches.¹

Notovitch ultimately published his Notes in 1890 from New York and called his work the *Life of Saint Issa*. It forms a part of his work which he called: *The Unknown Life of Jesus*.

The scrolls which were translated to Notovitch, he tells us, were written in the Tibetan language, and some of them were translations from the chronicles in Pali, the originals of which were kept in a Convent at Mount Marbour, near Lassa.

The *Life of Saint Issa* records that “*Issa* descended from poor parents.” He grew to be a meditative youth, his mind was far above anything corporeal and he was thirsty for knowledge. The narrative goes on:

The modest house of his industrious parents became a meeting-place of the rich and illustrious who were anxious to have as a son-in-law the young *Issa*...²

Then *Issa* secretly absented himself from his father’s house, left Jerusalem, and in a train of merchants turned towards Sindh.³

In *Jame’-ut-Tawarikh* it is recorded that:

Jesus was thirteen years old when he left for the far eastern countries.⁴

The *Life of Saint Issa* further records:

In his fourteenth year young *Issa*, the Blessed One, came this side of the Sindh and settled among Aryas, in the country beloved of God.⁵

Jesus began, we are told, to frequent the Jain Temples and studied their cult. He then went to *Sholabeth* (Ceylon) and from there to Jagannath:

He spent six years in Djagguernat, in Radjagriha, in Benares, and in other holy cities (See illustration, page 352). The common people loved *Issa*...⁶

Jesus, the narrative states, learnt at these places the use of herbs, medicine and mathematics: he studied the religious doctrines of the Brahmans and held philosophical discussions with them. Jesus, however, condemned the Brahmans openly and:

1. *The Life of Saint Issa*, 13.

2. *Ibid.*, 4 : 6.

3. *Ibid.*, 11-12. It might be mentioned that in those days the trade route between Egypt and India passed through Jerusalem, Syria, etc.

4. Faqir Muhammad, *Jame-ut-Tawarikh*, 2 : 81, See also Maithai Charan Gupta, *Bharta Bharati*. Stanza, 68.

5. *The Life of Saint Issa*, 5 : 1.

6. *Ibid.*, 5 : 5.

The white priests and the warriors who had learnt of *Issa's* discourses with the *Sudras*, resolved upon his death, and sent their servants to slay him.¹

Jesus, on hearing of this plot, left by night for Nepal, and stayed there for many years. He then decided to return to Judaea and took the mountainous route.² He passed through Kashmir and Afghanistan and stopped in Persia.³ On his return journey he had preached against human sacrifice and other evil practices. In Persia he almost caused an upheaval, and had to quit the country after sometime, and thereafter "protected by the Lord, our God, Saint *Issa* continued on his way without accident" and reached "safe and sound in the land of Israel."⁴

Notovitch knew that he was giving some details of the life of Jesus which had hitherto remained an unexplained mystery. He was equally alive to the fact that the Church would repudiate his book as a fabrication of his brain. He, therefore, challenged the Christian world, and said:

I wish to add that before criticizing my communications, the Societies of the *Savans* can, without much expense, equip a scientific expedition having for its mission the study of these manuscripts in the place where I discovered them, and so may easily verify their historic value.⁵

But Notovitch never imagined that Christians would go to the extreme length of denying his very existence and styling his book as the creation of an American atheist who had never left America.⁶ To this false allegation there is simple answer. Sir Francis Younghusband, who was the Resident of the British Crown to the Court of the Maharaja of Kashmir, mentions his meeting M. Notovitch when Younghusband was about to cross the Zojila Pass into Kashmir. Notovitch, Younghusband tells us, was on his way to Skardu from Kashmir and they spent a night together in camp.⁷ Mrs. Harvey had, long before Notovitch went to Himis, made a bare reference to this manuscript.⁸ But Lady Merrick actually took up Notovitch's challenge and went to Himis. She records:

In Leh is the legend of Christ who is called *Issa*, and the monastery at Himis holds precious documents fifteen hundred years old which tell of the days that He passed in Leh where he was joyously received and where He preached. There is also the tradition of the Biblical flood. And they have a national epic of which only a few manuscripts exist. Almost every village recites its own version of the story, for there are yet village bards in the land and they tell of His sons to be Kings of Earth and of the mission of His youngest Son to earth.⁹

1. *The Life of Saint Issa*, 6 : 1.

2. *Ibid.*, 6 : 5.

3. *Ibid.*, 8 : 1.

4. *Ibid.*, 8 : 24.

5. *Ibid.*, Ch. 15.

6. Rev. George Buckwell, *Christ and Buddha*, 367.

7. Sir Francis Younghusband, *The Heart of a Continent*, 217 (1896).

8. Mrs. Harvey, *The Adventures of a Lady in Tartary, China and Kashmir* 2 : 136 (1854).

9. Lady Henrietta S. Merrick, *In the World's Attic*, 215 (1931).

Thus Lady Merrick was not only compelled to support Notovitch but she carried the matter further and gave greater details. She tells us that *Issa*, because of his descent, was described as a prince and was somehow connected with Sholabeth (Ceylon).

I have already dealt with the events and the circumstances which led up to the crucifixion, the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus. I now revert to the question: What became of Jesus, if he did not die on the cross?

I have mentioned that after his supposed resurrection Jesus did everything possible to assure his disciples that he was still alive in the same corporeal body in which he had been put on the cross. They wondered, doubted and “believed him not.” Jesus had, therefore, two alternatives before him: to resume his preaching in Judaea and run the risk of facing another ordeal, or to leave the country and preach his Gospel to the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, whose whereabouts he then knew, and thus fulfil his real mission. Had he remained in Judaea he would most probably have been betrayed again by one of his disciples for perhaps lesser price than the thirty pieces of silver accepted by Judas Iscariot. It is true that Judas had by then killed himself; but there was Peter, and the like of him, whom Jesus himself had to stigmatize as “Satan”¹ and as “an offence unto him”² and also had to describe him as one “of little faith” and who, to save his skin, not only denied Jesus but also did not hesitate to curse him.³ It was because he could not trust his disciples that during his ministry he had to wander hither and thither,⁴ and that not openly,⁵ to break his preachings, now and again, and to disguise himself and go in hiding.⁶ I have already referred to his secret trips⁷ to the mountains, where, on very rare occasions, some of his disciples visited him *privately*.⁸ To avoid publicity regarding his movements he invariably charged people that they should “tell no man” about his *works*.⁹ Even after his supposed resurrection he had to appear in disguise, for we are told that he appeared in *another form* unto two of them on the road to Emmaus.¹⁰ And even Mary Magdalene could not recognise him.

Why had Jesus to take all these precautions? This is a question which is not difficult to answer. The Jews, during Jesus’ ministry, wanted to “slay him”¹¹ and had “sought to take him,”¹² and they “would have taken him,”¹³ but on each occasion he had escaped out of their hands.¹⁴ He was all along aware of this impending danger, and on more occasions than one he had asked the Jews: “Why go ye about to kill me?”¹⁵ And to avoid being caught he had even to leave Judaea.

He would not walk in Jewry because the Jews sought to kill him¹⁶

1. Matt., 16 : 23.

2. Ibid.

3. Matt., 26 : 74

4. Mark, 5 : 1, 7 : 24, 31; 8 : 27, are only a few instances picked out at random from one of the Gospels.

5. John., 11 : 54.

6. John, 8 : 36.

7. John, 7 : 50.

8. Mark, 6 : 32.

9. Matt., 8 : 4, 9 : 30. Mark, 1 : 44, 5 : 43, 7 : 36, 8 : 26; 9 : 9: Luke, 8 : 56, 9 : 21., etc.

10. Mark., 16 : 12.

11. John., 5 : 16.

12. John., 7 : 30.

13. John., 7 : 44.

14. John., 10 : 39.

15. John., 7 : 19.

16. John., 7 : 1.

Jesus was after all a human being and the constant danger of betrayal and death must have played on his mind. Just before his arrest he had disclosed the real state of his mind and given vent to his innermost feelings, for he had said:

My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death.¹

His supplication to the Almighty, on Gethsemane, exhibited this very condition of his perturbed mind. He had prayed:

Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee. Take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt.²

Luke further tells us that Jesus

being in agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.³

I have already given my reasons for stating that such an earnest prayer from the heart of a Prophet of God could not have remained unheard or unaccepted by God.

Without repeating the story of the Passion, I may mention that the day after his supposed resurrection he was rescued from the tomb by Joseph Arimathaea and some other members of the Essenes order. The Eye-Witness, whom I have already quoted, says:

In the evening of the same day came Nicodemus to our brotherhood and brought us the information that Joseph Arimathaea had been arrested, and that they (the Jews) attributed to him criminal purpose in that he had been in secret association with Jesus.⁴

It is not difficult to visualize the feelings of Jesus on getting this news. Forsaken by his family as a man *beside himself*, denied and *cursed* by his disciples, like Peter, the so-called Rock of the Church, and to whom Jesus is said to have entrusted the keys of heaven, persecuted, tortured and tormented, both physically and mentally, Jesus must have realized that, simply because of him, even his secret and sincere friends, helpers and well-wishers, were being exposed to the fury of the Jews. He knew himself to be a hunted man. No one can describe the condition of his mind more aptly and appropriately than he did himself. He said:

The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.⁵

I think I ought to mention here, though perhaps it is a slight digression, that Jesus had during his ministry in Palestine time and again, in parables and otherwise, given warnings to his disciples of his departure to a far-off country. He compared himself with a man going on a far journey to another country,⁶ and to a bridegroom who had

1. Mark, 14 : 34.

2. Mark., 14 : 36. cf. Matt., 26 : 39; Luke, 22 : 42.

3. Luke, 22 : 44.

4. *The Crucifixion by an Eye-Witness*, 109.

5. Matt., 8 : 20. cf. Luke, 9 : 58.

6. Mark. 13 : 34.

been taken away.¹ And on another occasion he was more explicit, for he said:

I go my way, and ye *shall* seek me, and ye shall die in your sins; whither I go you cannot come.²

And to his disciples he had said:

Little children, yet a while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and as I said to the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come, so now I say to you.³

It has been urged that Jesus was only referring to his intended departure to the celestial regions. But, if this were so, his disciples, he is alleged to have predicted, would sit in heaven on twelve thrones beside him. Consequently, the reference of Jesus to his disciples seeking him becomes devoid of sense. Again, if Jesus had been taken up to heaven in the presence and to the knowledge of his disciples, as the evangelists would have us believe, no question of the Jews seeking Jesus on this earth could ever have arisen. And why should he say, "*Ye cannot come*" to his disciples who, as I have already mentioned, he knew would be with him. Again, to say that he was speaking of heaven is to concede that his disciples and followers would never enter that blissful abode. No, Jesus was not speaking of any other journey except to a far off country in this world. And why should we speculate as to what Jesus really meant when we know what the Jews understood him to say. John records:

Then said the Jews among themselves, whither will he go, that we shall not find him: Will he go unto the *dispersed* among the Gentiles and lead the Gentiles.⁴

In any case Jesus has himself made his position absolutely clear:

And he said unto the disciples: The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And *they* shall say to you: See here; or see there: go not after them, nor follow them... And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.⁵

The preceding two verses show that *they* refer to the Pharisees, who had questioned Jesus about the coming of the Kingdom of God. If *they* had to address or mislead the disciples, it could only be on this earth. Therefore, Jesus was clearly warning his disciples not to search for him among them in Palestine. To make the position absolutely clear Jesus compared himself with Noah, who had preached to his people, had been rejected and taken in the deluge to Mount Ararat,⁶ a place far beyond the scenes of his

1. Matt., 9 : 15.

2. John, 8 : 21.

3. John., 13 : 33.

4. John, 7 : 35.

5. Luke, 17 : 22-23, 26 cf. Matt., 24 : 37-39.

6. Gen. 8 : 4. It is interesting to note that the Church took the Mountains of Ararat to be Mount Nasis. But the Holy Quran gave the

name of the place as Judi. In order to prove that the Holy Qur-an was wrong and, therefore, not the word of God, a Papal Commission was appointed to locate the *Mountains of Ararat*. The Commission after a thorough investigation reported that "these mountains were the Assyrian 'Urardu', the country round Lake Van, in Armenia; and they were locally known as

action. By his comparison with Noah, Jesus tried to indicate to his disciples that he too, like Noah, would have to undertake a journey to a far off country, and that his disciples should not search for him after he had gone away. In somewhat similar circumstances Jesus had referred to the history of Prophet Jonah.¹ Jonah, after the whale had vomited him out, had to take a long journey and go to Nineveh.² Thus Jesus had, by referring to Jonah's case, foretold of his departure to another part of the world. While cursing Jerusalem, Jesus foretold of his departure from it to a far off country. He said:

Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following *for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.* O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thee, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate and verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me, *until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord.*³

It is hardly necessary for me to point out that the words in italics are subsequent Christian forgeries and the additional phrase: *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*, and whereby Jesus is alleged to have prophesied his second advent, was merely copied *verbatim* from the Psalms.⁴ Jesus, however, did predict that Jerusalem would be made desolate because of his departure and that his journey would compel him to walk for a considerable length of time.

Thus Jesus gave repeated warnings and indications of his intended journey to a far-off land, the land in which, during his previous journey, he had come across the Lost Ten Tribes, the land where alone he could fulfil his mission: "to seek and save that which is lost."

Mountains of Judi." They also noted that the spot in question was covered by a "Monastery of the Ark" and that from this place some parts of the Ark had been removed to Rome under order of Emperor Constantine. Dummelow in his *Commentary on the Holy Bible* (p.15) and Peake in his *Commentary on the Bible* (p. 149) say that the Ark had rested in Armenia. Sale noted that "it was one of the mountains which divide

Armenia on the south from Mesopotamia." The Holy Quran according to these researches, therefore, proved to be correct and not the Church.

1. Matt., 12 : 39-40.

2. Jonah, 3 : 3.

3. Luke, 13 : 33-35, cf. Matt., 23 : 37-39.

4. Ps., 118 : 26.



Ghar-i-Sour (Mount Thour)
(See Page 253).



Thomas at Julian in Taxila. (See page 377).



St. Thomas' Cathedral, Maelapore. The Chapel under Dome at east end contains the tomb of St. Judas Thomas. (See page 370).



St. Thomas' Mount, Madras with the Church at the top. (See page 370).

CHAPTER 23

ST. JUDAS THOMAS

John translates the Aramaic name or surname *Thomas* meaning *twin*, by the Greek equivalent *Didymus*,¹ which is the same as *Thoma* in Syriac, *The'om* in the Nestorian dialect, and *Tau'am* in Arabic. In the Arabic literature *Thomas* is invariably referred to as *Ba'dad*. *Ba'dad* means twins who suck from the two breasts of their mother. According to the rules of Arabic Grammar whenever two *dals* (d) occur together, the first *dal* (d) is changed into *ta* (t) if it is controlled by a *kasra* and into *ba* (b) if it is governed by a *fatha*. Thus *ba'dad* would, in this case, become *ba'bad* and would in this form also mean a twin.²

Thomas was given this distinctive name by John because he was the twin brother of Jesus. He was so similar in appearance to him that Jesus was sometimes mistaken by strangers for Thomas. These facts, as I will show later, can be gathered from *Acta Thomae*.

The Gospel of John gives Thomas in a characteristic light: full of love and devotion for Jesus; anxious to follow him anywhere³ and ready to die with him.⁴ Thomas is depicted as playing a conspicuous part in the anxieties and questions which followed the resurrection, and, being incredulous of it, insisting on ascertaining things for himself.⁵ He was at Jerusalem, with Mary, the mother of Jesus, when the resurrection is supposed to have taken place,⁶ and with her he followed Jesus to the sea of Tiberias,⁷ and, as I will show later, was also with him at Damascus, Magdonia (Nisibis)⁸ in Mesopotamia and Taxila (now in Pakistan).⁹ He then went with Jesus to Kashmir through Murree and was there with him at the time of his death.¹⁰ He then retraced his steps to Taxila (See illustration, page 361) and proceeded to Kerala (S. India). He was killed and buried at Milapore (Madras).

Acta Thomae was written in the beginning of the second century of the Christian Era by one Leucius, the author of several Apocryphal Acts. He based it on certain letters of Thomas himself and on information received from an embassy from Southern India which passed through Edessa on its way to Jerusalem and Rome. Though it was referred to and quoted much earlier, yet it was not reproduced as a whole till Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamia, collected it in 368 C.E. It was published by Thilla in 1823 and subsequently by Tischendorf in 1851. It was translated from the Syriac into English by Dr. W. Wright in 1871,¹¹ and into German by Max Bonnet from Leipzig in 1883. It was included by Dr. Cureton in his *Ancient Syriac Documents* in 1884,¹² and it also formed a part of the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*¹³ which was published from Edinburgh.

1. John, 20, 24.

2. *Lisan-ul-Arab*, Vol. 4, 48.

3. John, 14 : 5.

4. John, 11 : 16.

5. John, 20 : 25.

6. Acts, 1 : 13-14.

7. John, 21 : 1-2.

8. *Rauza-tus-Safa*, Vol. 1, 124; see also Dr. Cureton's

Ancient Syriac Documents, Vol 22, 141.

9. *Acta Thomae*-Ante Nicene Library, Vol. 20, 46.

10. Shaikh Al-Said us Sadiq, *Kamal-ud-Din*, 359.

11. Dr. Wright *The Apocryphal Acts of Apostles*, Vol. 2.

12. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, 14, 16.

13. *Ibid.*, Vol. 20.

Acta Thomae was accepted and read, as was the Gospel of Thomas, along with the other Canonical and Apocryphal literature, in all the Churches up to the Decree of Pope Gelasius (495 C.E.) when it was condemned as heretical. It was, at a very early date, adapted for devotional purposes by certain important Christian sects.¹ It is read and accepted, in slightly modified form, even to-day, in the Assyrian Churches. It was condemned by the Romanish Church because it denied the virgin birth and son of God theories and established the physical presence of Jesus at Taxila long after the supposed resurrection. It was for some such reasons that the early Christian Fathers alleged that Thomas was not the twin brother of Jesus but of Lysias and that their parents were Diophanes and Rhoa of Antioch. But this was incompatible with the early associations of Thomas with Jesus both at Nazareth and Jerusalem. In the *Clementine Homilies* an effort was made to show that Thomas was in fact the twin brother of Eleazar.² Later, the *Apostolic Constitution* omitted the name of Thomas from the list of the apostles.³

But in spite of these dishonest efforts of the early Christian Fathers there is sufficient material to hold that Jesus and Judas (Thomas) were twin brothers. *Acta Thomae* is called in Syriac: *The Acts of Judas Thomas, i.e.,; of Judas, the Twin*, and throughout the book he is called Judas and not Thomas. It is stated therein that he was a twin brother of the Lord.⁴ Matthew⁵ and Mark⁶ also describe Judas as one of the brothers of Jesus and these statements led to the widespread tradition that the Apostle Thomas was the twin brother of Jesus.⁷ Eusebius gives the name of the apostle as Judas Thomas⁸ and identifies him with Judas of James, i.e., a brother, not son, of James, who was admittedly a brother of Jesus.⁹ Ephrem Syrus also spoke of the apostle as Judas Thomas.¹⁰

With a view to belittle the value of *Acta Thomae* it has been alleged that Thomas was the apostle to Edessa (Parthia) and had died there without going to India and that to his memory a great Church was built there and that his remains lie beneath it. It was further alleged that Bartholomew, and not Thomas, had gone to India. How is it, if Bartholomew had in fact gone to India, that he left no trace at all of his having done so. Again, it has often been conveniently overlooked that the Patriarchal See of Edessa extended to and covered the territories of Greater India which covered the Parthian empire¹¹ and the territories now comprising Pakistan and Bharat. It can, therefore, be said that the Churches of Edessa and Greater India were inter-connected. Thus we hear of Edessa controlling the Churches in Parthia and India. The appointment in 383 C.E. of Marutha, an Indian Bishop of Suphara on the western coast of India, to Meyafirum in Mesopotamia supports this view. In a case¹² decided in 1877 one of the issues was: Whether consecration of a Bishop by the Patriarch of Antioch or by some Bishop duly

1. Bishop A. E. Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, Preface, 10.

2. *Hom. Clem.*, 2 . 1.

3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, 14.

4. Thilo, *Acta Thomae*. 94.

5. Matt., 13 : 55.

6. Mark. 6 : 3.

7. *Ency. Biblica*, Col. 5058. See also *Hasting's*

Dictionary of the Bible., Vol. 4, 753.

8. Euse., H. E. I., 13: 10.

9. Gal., 1 : 19.

10. F.C. Burkett, *Text and Studies*, Vol. 7, 24.

11. The Parthian Empire extended from the Euphrates to the Indus and from the Indian Ocean to the Caspian Sea.

12. Dionysus Joseph Vs. Mar Athanasius Thomas.

authorized by that Patriarch was necessary? The decision of the Supreme Court of Travancore (Chief Justice Ormsby and Mr. Justice Sitarama Iyer) was that it was necessary. In the course of their judgement the Hon'ble Judges also came to the conclusion that the Church of Malabar was founded by St. Thomas, the Apostle, during the latter half of the first century of the Christian Era and that though independent in certain respects, it was connected with the Church at Edessa and since 325 C.E. it had been within the Patriarchal See of Antioch. The Supreme Court, therefore, upheld the decree whereby the plaintiff, who had been consecrated by the Patriarch of Antioch, was held to be entitled to the management of the properties attached to the Church.

I may mention here that Edessa (now called Urfa) was the capital of a Christian principality,¹ and Antioch, only a few miles away, was the Greek capital of Syria.² Max Muller establishes that Pahlavi was spoken at Edessa and it is not mere coincidence that Pahlavi inscriptions are found in the Churches of S. India.

It is now no longer contested that the bones of Thomas had in fact been taken from Madras to Edessa in 163 C.E. and Bishop Hystasp the Pontiff, built a Church at their place of burial³ and that he had also ordained the feast of St. Thomas.⁴ This is also admitted by Rufinus who went to Syria in 371 C.E.

The most ancient traditions, originating with *Acta Thomae*, connect Thomas with Edessa and make him the evangelist of Parthia and India.⁵ Pantaenius was sent to India in 189 C.E. by Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria. He found that the Church was already established by an Apostle. Neander⁶ and, later, Collins⁷ mention this visit of Pantaenius and establish that the Apostle referred to was Thomas. Hippoclytus, Bishop of Portus who is one of the earliest Christian historians, was more exact. While writing of Thomas he said:

And Thomas preached to the Parthians, Medes, Persians, Bacterians, Indians, Hyrcaneans and was thrust with a spear at Calamania,⁸ the city of India, and was buried there.⁹

Fabricius cited St. Ambrose as an authority for saying that Thomas was an Apostle to India. Origen,¹⁰ Rufinus,¹¹ Socrates¹² make Parthia the scene of his labours. To this India is added by Ephrem, Gregory Nazianzen — he even mentions King Gondaphares¹³ — Ambrose, Jerome and Sophromius, Gregory of Torus, the parent of Frankish history, has transmitted to us the narrative of the martyrdom of Thomas in India. The collection of

1. A. & L. Heilperin, *A Complete Geographical Dictionary of the World*, 1889.

2. Murray's *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 43.

3. Prof. A. N. Farquhar, *The Apostle Thomas in India*, 21.

4. F. C. Burkett, *Early Christian History*, 30.

5. *Acta Thomae* from an old Syriac Text, 4, 182. See also Euse. H. E. 3. 1.

6. Neander, *Church History*, Vol. 1. 114.

7. Rev. Richard Collins in *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 4, 154 (1875).

8. Sir William Hunter in his *Indian Empire* (p. 213) mentions that Calamania was the ancient name of the Malabar Coast.

9. S.D.F. Salmund, *The Writings of Hippoclytus*, Vol. 3. 131. See also the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Vol. 4, 130-132.

10. Origen, *Cel.* 2. 4, 15.

11. *Recognitions*, 9, 29.

12. H.E.I. 19.

13. Rawlinson—*The Sixth Oriental Monarchy*, 132.

Assemani is particularly valuable for introducing and quoting copiously many Syrian writers. He tells us that St. Thomas was the apostle in Mesopotamia and India and mentions a place called "the House of St. Thomas in the City of Maelapore."¹ He also quotes a letter in which a Nestorian Patriarch mentions the complaint that the sacerdotal succession has been interrupted in India and should be resumed.

In the time of King Alfred it was believed that Thomas had preached and died in India. He had sent an embassy under the leadership of the Bishop of Sherbourn to the shrine of St. Thomas in India.² The Grecian traveller Cosmos, travelled extensively in the Christian world of his time. He gives details of his visit to India in 522 C.E. He found Christians of St. Thomas in S. India and Ceylon and also mentions that he came across Christians in N. W. India. He states that their Bishops were consecrated by the Nestorian Patriarch of Antioch.³ Marco Polo writing about 1294 C.E. also mentions the martyrdom of St. Thomas near Madras.⁴ Niccolo, Count of Venice (1436 C.E.), and Friar Vincenzo Maria (1670 C.E.) spoke of the various tablets to be found in S. India as the relics of St. Thomas.⁵ To the same effect were the observations of Dr. A. C. Burnell.⁶ Dr. Cureton in his *Teachings of the Apostles* says:

India received the Apostle's ordination to the priesthood from Judas Thomas, who was guide and ruler in the Church which he had built there and in which he also ministered.⁷

But let us turn to local traditions of the place. The Christians of S. India call themselves, "The Christians of St. Thomas" and owe allegiance to the Nestorian branch of the Assyrian Church and for this reason are styled *Surianees*. They have always claimed St. Thomas to be the founder of their Church and they honour him as their Patron Saint.⁸ In honour of their founder they call their ecclesiastical chiefs or bishops *Mar Thomas* even though their personal name may be Abraham or Joseph.⁹ Thus we hear of a presbyter who came in 345 C.E. from Jerusalem but was so named on his taking up his duties in S. India.¹⁰ They even had gold coins of the value of about seven rupees called as *Thomae*.¹¹

The original faith of these Nestorian Christians is interesting. The Christians of St. Thomas did not believe in invocation of saints and did not have guardian angels. They knew nothing of Confirmation, nor of Purgatory. They owned only two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which were solemnized without holy water, bread or wine.¹²

1. Assemani, *Bibliothica Orientalics*, 3 : 1, 590.

2. Sharon Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxon*, Vol. 2, 145-146.

3. Cosmos, *Topographica Christiana*, 2 : 178-179.

4. *Ibid.*, 2 : 353.

5. Friar Vincenzo Maria *Viggio All India Orientale*, 135.

6. Dr. A. C. Burnell, *Some Pahlavi Inscriptions in India (Indian Antiquary)*, Vol. 3 : 308.

7. Dr. Cureton—*The Teachings of the Apostles*, 314, See also *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*,

Vol. 20 : 6.

8. *Ency. Brit.*, *Act Thomas*, Vol. 23 : 309.

9. F. Wrede, *An Account of the St. Thomae Christians on the Coast of Malabar*, 363.

10. W. Grose, *A Voyage to the East Indies*, Vol. 1. 2.

11. John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia*, 116.

12. W.R. Phillip, *The Thirty-four Conferences between the Danish Missionaries and the Malabar Brahmans (Christians) in the East Indies*, 15.

No instrumental music was used in their services which were conducted in Syriac.¹ Their churches were devoid of images or pictures and according to Gibbon when the Portuguese presented them with an image of Mary they exclaimed in protest: "We are Christians, not idolaters."² They had no monks, friars or nuns and did not acknowledge the Pope to be the head of the universal Church. They did not believe Jesus to be the son of God, nor did they accept his virgin birth.³ On the contrary, they deliberately removed the adoration of Mary from their *Breviaries* and St. Thomas was accepted as the twin brother of Jesus.⁴ Their ministers were allowed to marry. The details of their faith can be gathered from the proceedings of the Synod of Diamper, near Cochin, which was presided over by the Romanish Archbishop Manzes. The Decree of this Synod introduced images in their Church,⁵ compelled them to abjure their faith, to surrender all their religious writing⁶ and to believe that "Mary, the mother of God, was always, before, on and after the birth of the Son of God a most pious virgin and that when her life on this earth came to a close she was bodily carried up into heaven."⁷ On their refusal to do so the South Indian Christians for the first time learnt of and faced the Holy Inquisition and their clergy were condemned to death.⁸

Before considering in some detail the narrative as given in *Acta Thomae*, it would, I think, be advantageous to refer to the *Beni Israel* to be found on the western coast of India between Bombay and Cochin and even in Ceylon.⁹ According to their traditions, their ancestors had left Jerusalem after the second desecration of the Temple and reached these lands in about 280 B.C.E.,¹⁰ but some continued to come through North India up to 175 B.C.E.¹¹ Dr. Wilson came to the conclusion that they were the direct lineal descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel.¹² It is recorded that a little later King Airvi gave them liberty to settle through their leader Isappu (Joseph) Habban.¹³ That some of them had come from N.W. India and Kashmir was established by Buchanan. He questioned them as to the whereabouts of the other descendants of the Lost Tribes. "And they recounted the names of many other colonies in North India."¹⁴

Buchanan secured some manuscripts from them. He says:

One of them is an old copy of the Book of Moses, written on a roll of leather. The skin was sewed together and the roll is 48 feet in length. It is in some

1. George Milne Rae, *The Syrian Church in India*, 112.

2. Gibbon, *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 6, 52.

3. W. R. Phillip *The Thirty-four Conferences, between the Danish Missionaries and the Malabar Brahmins (Christians) in the East Indies*, 15.

4. Their *Breviaries* were republished in 1886 at Mosul by the Dominican Fathers Press.

5. Rev. Claudius Buchanan, *Christian Researches in India*, 375.

6. Michael Geddes, *History of the Church of Malabar*; 152-156.

7. Rev. Claudius Buchanan, *Christian Researches*

in India, 141.

8. *Ibid.*, 385.

9. Kehamkhar, *Beni Israel of India*, 657.

10. Rev. Claudius Buchanan, *Christian Researches in India*, 220.

11. Prof. Gratez, *History of the Jews*, Vol. 6 : 11, See also *Milman's History of the Jews*, Vol. 1 : 442.

12. Dr. Wilson. *Lands of the Bible*, Vol. 2 : 667-679. See also Israel Joseph Benjamen—*Eight Years in Asia and Africa*, 134.

13. Dr. A.C. Burnel, *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 229.

14. Rev. Claudius Buchanan, *Christian Researches in India*, 224.

places worn out and the holes had been sewed up with pieces of parchment. *It was brought from Cashmere.* The Cabul Jews, who travelled into the interior of China, say that in some synagogues the law is still written in a roll of leather made of goat's skin dyed red.¹

Musaeus, the Bishop of Aduli, found, in the fourth century of the Christian Era, many churches and synagogues in N. W. India and particularly at Sirhind and he learnt of their connection with the Beni Israel of the Western coast of India.² I have already referred to the Kashmir tradition that some of them had drifted to the Malabar coast.³

The life of Thomas as given in *Acta Thomae* begins by telling us that at the division of the field of work among the Apostles, Parthia fell to the lot of Thomas and he had to work in that part of India which was within the Parthian Empire.⁴ Thomas objected: "How can I, being a Hebrew man, go among the Indians?" It is next stated that Jesus and Thomas together arrived at Magdonia, which is another name for Nisibis.⁵ Abbanes (Abbanes or Habban) an emissary, some say nephew, of Gondaphares, reached there and requested the King of Magdonia to send an artificer to build a palace after the Roman style. Jesus knew that Thomas was a mason and a carpenter. Jesus was at that time preaching to the King of Magdonia and on his suggestion Thomas was sent to India. Thomas left by land for a Mesopotamian port, and then travelling by sea reached the mouth of the Indus. He went up the river to place called Attock. Abbanes presented Thomas to Gondaphares. This was about 48-49 C.E. Thomas built the palace in six months. The fact that Jesus joined Thomas is not stated in so many words, but it is recorded that both attended the marriage feast of Abbanes (Abdagases), the son of Gad, who was a brother of Gondaphares,⁶ and:

Thomas after the ceremonies left the place. The bridegroom lifted the curtain which separated him from his bride. He saw Thomas, as he supposed, conversing with her. Then he asked in surprise: "How canst thou be found here. Did I not see thee go out before all?" And the Lord answered: "I am not Thomas, but his brother."⁷

This incident establishes that Jesus was physically at Taxila at a time when he is supposed by Christians to have been in heaven. It also shows that in appearance he was so like Thomas that Abbanes mistook him for Thomas.

No wonder *Acta Thomae* was condemned by the Church and excluded from the Canon.

1. Rev. Claudius Buchanan, *Christian Researches in India*, 229. (Italics are mine).

2. Capt. E. Wilfred *Christian Religion in India*, 70.

3. Pandit Anand Kaul *The Kashmiri Pandits*, 19.

4. According to the Anglo-Saxon Life of Thomas, which is ascribed to Elfaric, Jesus himself appeared to Thomas and commanded him to go to India, but *Acta Thomae* is silent on the point.

5. Dr. Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents*, Vol. 22 : 141. See also F.C. Burkett *Early Christians Outside the Roman Empire*, 155.

6. Prof. J.W. Farquhar, *The Apostle Thomas in India*, John Reyland's Library Bulletin, Vol. 12 : 1.

7. *Acta Thomae, Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Vol. 20. 46. See also Sir V. A. Smith's *The Early History of India*, 219.

It is next stated that before proceeding to S. India, Thomas went to another kingdom, but this kingdom is not specified. It is an historical fact that in about 50 C.E. the Kushans broke through the Hindu Kush and crossed the Indus. The precise date is not known, but according to an inscription recovered from Taxila, Gondaphares was ruling in 46 C.E. While another shows that Kushans were supreme there in 60 C.E. It may, therefore, be said that about 50 C.E. is a safe date to fix concerning the Kushan invasion. With this danger the population at Taxila must have broken up and preaching must also have become an impossibility. Both the brothers, therefore, left with Mary towards the adjoining hills. Unfortunately, Mary died on the way and was buried there. This place began to be known by her name and is now known as Murree. Originally, it was called *Mari*¹ (a name by which *Mary* is called by Afghans, Jews and Kashmiris). Her tomb (See illustration, page 371) is next to the Defence Tower (See illustration, page 371) at a place in Murree called Pindi Point, which indicates the direction from which they had come. This tomb lies in the Jewish direction of graves—East to West. Local residents point out the tomb as *Mai Mari da Asthan*, the resting place of Mother Mary. This Defence Tower was built in 1898. Since this was, in those days, a strategical point, the Garrison Engineer, Capt. Richardson by name, wanted to demolish the tomb. His object was to prevent people, who used to make their offerings there, from coming near the Defence Tower. He tried to do so but Government had to intervene because of the protests of the local people. Capt. Richardson met with a serious accident and died: and the local people connected it with his “evil intentions about the tomb.” In 1950 I got this tomb repaired (See illustration, page 372) through the M.E.S. after obtaining permission of the Garrison Engineer, Mr. Shamshad Hussain.

The two brothers then proceeded to the “other kingdom”—Kashmir. Jesus died there and Thomas, referred to as *Ba'bad*, buried him according to the Jewish style²—East to West.

Thomas must have learnt from Jesus about the Beni Israel of Malabar and Ceylon, for Jesus had moved among them during his first visit to India.³ Thomas must have also heard the Kashmiri tradition that some of them had drifted to the Malabar coast.⁴ Thomas, therefore, retraced his steps and reached the mouth of Indus. On his arrival there he was told that no ships were sailing for South India because of a war waged by King Mazdai against a neighbouring ruler but that an Alexandrian ship was ready to sail and that it would call at Socotra.⁵ (Gulf of Aden). Thomas accepted the arrangement and sailed for Socotra.⁶ Thus we hear of his preachings in Abyssinia. From there he proceeded to India and landed at Kerala, an island in the lagoon near Crangonore and whose chief port was Muiziris. The date is given as “1780 years.”⁷ Christians of St. Thomas, however, give this

1. Kashmir Postal Rules, *Punjab Gazette* No. 673 (1869).

2. Shaikh Al Said As Sadiq, *Kamal-ud-Din*, 357.

3. *Ubi. Sup.*, 339.

4. Pandit Anand Kaul, *The Kashmiri Pandits*, 21.

5. The sea routes from Northern and Southern India to Arabia and Egypt joined at Socotra which lay

off the African coast just outside the Gulf of Aden.

6. Prof. J.N. Farquhar, *The Apostle St. Thomas in India*, 8.

7. Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, Vol. 2, 391.

8. Capt. Wilfred, *Christian Religion in India in Asiatic Researches*, Vol. 10, 83.

date as the 4481st year of Creation. According to the Brahmanical tradition it was 1885 years after the Epic War of *Ramayana*⁸—between Rama and Ravana.

Thomas preached to the people on the western coast, established seven Churches and appointed two presbyters. He then went to the city of Andra in the district of Andra.¹ Thereafter he went to Maelapore on the eastern coast and was successful in converting Queen Tertia. This enraged King Mazdai and excited the jealousy of the Brahmans. They incited the people to kill Thomas and four soldiers pierced his body with spears.

Such being the account of the life of St. Thomas as given in *Acta Thomae*, the question now arises whether there is any truth in this Apocryphal version. It seems not unreasonable to say that, after eliminating the miraculous elements and doctrinal vagaries, there does remain a good deal of historical and geographical data which corroborates the version. The traditional association of Thomas with historical personalities and geographical places as they then existed, are in no way at variance with the chronology of the reign of the kings mentioned therein. I will enumerate some of the most salient features.

1. The tradition of the Christians of St. Thomas that St. Thomas did come to South India in the latter half of the first century of the Christian Era and was killed and buried there, supports the version of *Acta Thomae*. Within an ambit of seven to eight miles of Fort St. George (Madras) stand three magnificent ancient Cathedrals which mark places connected with the martyrdom of Thomas. In one of these there is a trap door which gives access to the tomb of Thomas (See illustration, page 362). From this dark underground chamber many a handful of dust is carried off by the faithful to cure diseases. In another, a portion of the spear with which the body of Thomas was pierced is even now preserved. In this Church certain inscriptions in Pahlavi are still to be found. In the third Cathedral a bust of St. Thomas is exhibited. This figure represents him as raising his right hand in benediction. In his left hand he holds a carpenter's square, associating him with the occupation of his father, Joseph, the Carpenter.

2. The mention of King Gondaphares, and his brother, Gad, who belonged to the Parthian Dynasty and ruled in Taxila during 25-50 C.E. is very significant. In Takhti-Bhai an inscription has been recovered which refers to Gad, the brother of Gondaphares.² Another inscription from this very place establishes that Gondaphares ruled there in about 47 C.E.³ A pedestal has also been found at Palati Dehri near Charsada which mentions the name of Gad in connection with certain ceremonies.⁴

3. The mention of Abbanees (Abbagases), the son of Gad, who, in fact, succeeded Gondaphares for a very short period.⁵

4. The invasion of Kushans at about that time.

1. This city has often been confused with Andrapolis, on the Nile, and has formed the basis for challenging the authenticity of *Acta Thomae*, but the reference was really to the *City of Andra*.

2. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. 2. 288.

3. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India* for 1902-3, p. 167.

4. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 2, 60 (1873).

5. Sir V. A. Smith, *The Early History of India*, 217.



Tomb of Mary before repairs. (See page 369).



Defence Tower, Murree, with Tomb of Mary. (See page 369).



Tomb of Mary, Murree, after repairs. (see page 369).



(Courtesy Archaeological Dept. Pakistan)

The full figure on the left is of the “foreigner” who is also included on the right in the group of statues excavated at Taxila. They date back to the beginning of the Second Century of the Christian era. (See page 377).



(Courtesy Archaeological Dept. Pakistan)

The figure on the left is of a “foreign” bearded man and according to the researches and conclusions of the Archaeological Departments of India and Pakistan, it dates back to the beginning of the Second Century of the Christian era. This person, it is obvious, must have come to Taxila before this period. The photograph of a Kashmiri butcher on the right was taken in Srinagar in September 1947. It appeared in the first edition (1952) of my book on page 334. My object then was to show the peculiarly shaped chopper used by butchers of Kashmir and Palestine of old. Little did I know then that it would become of great significance in ten years time. The two men look exactly alike to almost the minutest details. These photographs will baffle ethnologists. They can now “trace back” the features and appearance of a man in Srinagar in 1947 C.E. with those of another man who came to Taxila from Palestine about two thousand years ago. There is no explanation. I can see none except that they belong to the one and same Semitic stock and both are the Children of Israel. (See page 377).

5. King Mazdai who was ruling in S. India at about that time and was involved in a war with a neighbouring ruler.

6. The visit of Thomas to Magdonia (Nisibis) is corroborated by an entirely independent source *Rauza-tus-Safa*.¹

7. The tomb of Mary at Murree (*Mari*).

8. The presence of Thomas at the death of Jesus in Kashmir as stated in *Kamal-ud-din*¹ and *Ain-ul-Hayat*.³

9. The names of places in S. India which are mentioned in connection with his activities there.



The Tomb re-built, when the television tower replaced the Defence Tower.
(See page 369).

1. *Rauza-tus-Safa*, Vol. 1, ff. 132-133.

2. *Kamal-ud-din*, 359.

3. *Ain-ul-Hayat*, Vol. 2, Ch. 2, 177-178.

FURTHER MATERIAL ON CHAPTER 23

JESUS AND ST. JUDAS THOMAS AT TAXILA

At the time of writing this chapter I had not known that any material in support of the facts stated therein could be gathered from the Archaeological excavations at Taxila. Mrs. Pat Groves of Vancouver (Canada) has drawn my attention to a statue in a "Group in front of Cell 29," which was excavated in Julian site at Taxila in 1913. Sir John Marshall, late Director-General, Archaeological Department of India, describing this statue says that "the dress and bearded head of a peculiarly distinctive type clearly prove him to be a foreigner." I then read two works of Sir John Marshall: *A Guide to Taxila*¹ and *Taxila*.² I also read *Five Thousand Years of Pakistan*³ by Sir R.E.M. Wheeler, late Archaeological Adviser to Government of Pakistan. All these books have made a reference to the visit of St. Judas Thomas, the Apostle, to the Court of King Gondaphares at Taxila in 40 C.E. It is also given in some details by Prof. E. J. Rapson in his *History of India*⁴ and by R. B. Whitehead in his *Catalogue of Coins in the Punjab Museum at Lahore*.⁵

When I looked at the photographs of this unique figure as given in the first mentioned two books (Plates 23 and 139, Sculptures 181 and 181a) I was so surprised by its resemblance and similarity—the broad cheeks, the beard, the moustaches and other facial peculiarities—to the conventional likeness of Jesus as drawn by Holman Hunt and other famous Western Artists that I could not help thinking that I had after all struck against the missing proof. I then went to Taxila to see the actual figure in the Archaeological Museum at that place. All the figures in the group are shown bare-footed except that the central large figure (without head) appears to be with sandals and this particular bearded figure had boots, rather of uncommon shape, with laces or latches. The peaked cap, is definitely of a Syrian shepherd or a nomadic traveller. It is probably made of white woollen cloth with soft wool or fur at the rolled end. The tunic to knees is in fact a short uniform of Roman soldiers often worn in those days in Syria. The trousers with buttons in place of lacings, the ornamental belt also clearly indicate that the figure is neither of an Indian nor of a Parthian, but rather of a Syrian. All these clothes show a peculiar combination of East and West which could only have taken place in the Middle East under the Roman influence, and Syria was within the Roman Empire in those days. It may be a mixture of Syrian and Kushan types, whose trade in the Mediterranean, in the time of Augustus, brought with it Greek and Roman influence. But all these considerations must be brushed aside as we are here dealing with a man of Semitic origin. The peculiarly pointed beard, trimmed at the sides (the Jews were ordained: "Ye shall not... mar the corners of thy beard,"⁶

1. Sir John Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila*, Delhi, Govt. of India Publications, 1936, pp. 15, 138.

2. Sir John Marshall, *Taxila*, 3 Vols. Cambridge, University Press, 1951, Vol. 1 : p. 62, 83.

3. Sir Mortimer Wheeler, *Five Thousand Years of Pakistan*, London, India and Pakistan Society, 1951, p. 42.

4. Prof. E. J. Rapson, *History of India*, Cambridge, University Press, 1922, Vol. 5 : 678-680.

5. R. B. Whitehead, *Catalogue of Coins in the Punjab Museum at Lahore*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1914, Vol. 1 : 94.

6. Lev., 19 : 27.

shows that the man was a Jew. Besides, the figure has definite and distinctive Jewish features.

The tablet in front of the group reads: "The man with the peaked cap is the donor of the Group." It must mean that the man was prominent enough and well to do to be able to pay for the entire group. It may be that he had been handsomely paid for building the palace and he could afford to do so. In any case this man, a Jew, must have been very holy and important and accepted and respected to have been placed next to Buddha (as some Archaeologists think) or King Gondaphares. It may be that this group had been set up to commemorate the building of a palace by St. Judas Thomas for King Gondaphares. A "Mahal" site has been partly excavated at Sirkap, Taxila, and Wheeler referring to this "Mahal" says that "here, it may be, the Parthian King Gondaphares received the Church evangelist St. Thomas."

It is hardly open to doubt that this figure is that of Jesus or St. Judas Thomas, the Apostle, because we otherwise know that one of them was often mistaken for the other. *Acta Thomae* was written in the Second Century of the Christian era. It was condemned as heretical by a Decree of Gelasius in 495 C.E. but it is read even today in the Assyrian Churches. In it we are told:

Thomas after the ceremonies left the palace. The bridegroom (Abdagases) lifted the curtain which separated him from his bride. He saw Thomas, as he supposed, conversing with her. Then he asked in surprise: "How Canst thou be found here? Did I not see thee go out before all? And the *Lord* answered: "I am not Thomas, but his brother."¹

This proves conclusively the presence of Jesus and St. Judas Thomas at Taxila at this historical marriage in 49 C.E.

The fact that this figure was found in Julian monastery, Taxila, (See illustration, page 361) can be of no effect because statues of persons other than Buddhists have also been excavated from such monasteries. The builder of a palace or any other important person could have been shown in a monastery, particularly if he was the donor of the group. On such an occasion he would be accompanied by one or more members of the royal family. The period of Julian monastery is traced back to the beginning of the Second Century of the Christian era. The "foreigner" in the group must have been in existence before this period. The visit of Jesus and St. Judas Thomas to the Court of King Gondaphares at Taxila was in fact before this period i.e., during 48-50 C.E.

The central figure, as already mentioned, is without head, and the two arms and hands are also missing. They had been, it is said, removed or broken up during the Hun invasion. It stands in a group of stucco sculptures which is no doubt very unique both in its realistic modelling and composition as well as in the peculiarities of the persons assembled in the group. I have already described the "foreigner." The central

1. *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 25 Vols. 1869, Vol.20 : 46.

figure is in a flowing dress. Above it on both the corners are, said to be, figures of Avalokitesvara and Bodhisattva Maitreya. But the usual nectar jar in the left hand is missing. They may be the angels or devas only. On the right hand below is a monk dressed in Sanghati with one shoulder bare and he may be the steward of the monastery. In between the central figure and the “foreigner” is a smaller figure with similar clothes except for a *Mukhat* and some other ornaments. It may be, as surmised by some Archaeologists, that the figure is that of the wife of the “foreigner,” but the figure may be of a prince or princess who had, as was usual in those days, accompanied a respected guest or the builder of the palace to a Buddhist Vihara.

But this large figure has some peculiarities. From the shoulders, falling to the sides, it has a toga, like the ‘*Abba* of the Arabs, a mantle or a sleeveless gown, which was used from very ancient times by the Royalty in particular and the nobility in general. It has also undergarments and sandles. Some Archaeologists think that this large figure is of Buddha and they base their opinion only on the dress of this statue. These conjectures, I venture to think, are unjustified. This figure is without any ornaments and they are, therefore, correct in asserting that it is not that of Bodhisattva Maitreya. To agree with them in this matter one has only to look at a statue of this personage in the Peshawar Museum, Sculpture No. 1866 (Plate V) in *A guide to The Peshawar Museum*¹ by M. A. Shakur or at Sculpture No. 2345 in the Gandhara Hall of the Lahore Museum. But this large figure, I venture to suggest, is not even of Buddha, because its dress is not of a hermit, and Buddha was always dressed as a hermit and is so portrayed in all his statues available to us. The large figure, it is true, has a very large halo behind its head. But it is almost cut in half and is not in the centre, but rather more to the right side, which seems unnatural. It is too large to be of any significance and in any case it appears to be a later addition and is perhaps the result of a defective moulding.

The *Mahayana*, the *Great Vehicle*, of the Buddhists, we must not forget, were keen and anxious to exhibit Buddha in the best possible manner. Whenever Buddha was made to appear in a group, all persons surrounding him were depicted as adoring or worshipping him. The angels or the devas, the Aryan gods—Brahama, Indra and Vishnu, and even the Kings and Queens were one and all shown as worshipping or paying homage and respect to him. Buddha was also made the pivot of all the mythical fables which were prevalent in or preceeding their times. Thus the mother of Buddha, admittedly a married woman, was shown as giving birth to Buddha from her ribs, as she was somehow believed to be a virgin and all those present in the group were shown as adoring and receiving him. Similarly, the Resurrection of Buddha from the dead was picturised and he was shown as coming out of a coffin, although coffins were unknown to India in his time, and the idea had been borrowed from the Indo-Greeks or the Scythians of a later period in Indian history.

1. M. A. Shakur, *A Guide to the Peshawar Museum*, N.W.F.P. Government Publications; 1954.

The only statue of Buddha, in a standing position, with the "crystal urna" and in which he is dressed somewhat like that of the large statue in question is to be found in the Peshawar Museum (Sculpture No. 1420). There is another similar statue, Sculpture No. 2, in the Gandhara Hall of the Lahore Museum. The heads in both these statues are present but neither of them is wearing a toga, nor the undergarments nor the sandles. The ornaments and the sandles, as far as I am aware, were worn by Bodhisattva Maitreya and not by Buddha. The statue alleged to be of Buddha by Sir John Marshall in Plate 106 in the third volume of *Taxila* appears certainly to be with a toga but here again the head is missing and we cannot be definite about it.

It may be that, in this case also, history is repeating itself. It is not unknown that prominent Archaeologists of India wrongly asserted, for a considerable time, that certain type of statues were of a very early period. But then Dr. W. W. Tarn had, in his *Greeks in Bactria and India*, demonstrated and proved that those statues in fact belonged to a much later period. His views were not, however, accepted without a good deal of hesitation and controversy. In the case of this large statue also a superficial view of the dress based on certain preconceived ideas has been taken as sufficient to convert those who are already convinced that the statue is that of Buddha himself. The missing head has unfortunately complicated matters and provided them with a scope for their conjectural speculations about the dress. The large figure does not demonstrate any of the usually known positions or poses of Buddha. This figure is neither in the *Shiksha Mudra* (the blessing pose) nor the *Abhaya Mudra* (the defensive pose) nor the *Dharma Chakra Mudra* (the reasoning or preaching pose). It cannot be in the Dhyana - sometimes known as the Samadhi-Mudra (the meditation - sitting with clasped hands pose). The hands also are unfortunately missing. So the well known positions or poses of Buddha can be of little or no help in identifying this large figure with that of Buddha. They also ignore another important factor. No one in this group, including the two angels or devas, is worshipping, adoring or paying homage or respect to this large figure. The "wife" of the "foreigner" is also not doing so. The folded hands may be a sign of respect to the "foreigner." The angels, or devas, shown on the top on either side, are neither showering flowers nor are they blessing it. The figure itself is with a toga, which should not be confused with the clothes next to the skin, usually worn by Buddha. The presence of the undergarments, and the sandles are also not without significance. All these peculiarities should be satisfactorily explained on a rational basis, or it must be conceded that the large figure is of some one else, at the most in the dress of Buddha, but not of Buddha himself.

It should not, however, be overlooked that in Buddhist times it was not uncommon, nay it was considered to be virtuous and meritorious, for kings and people of high rank to appear in dresses like that of Buddha and to act and to do things which Buddha was supposed to have done. This was done with a view to please or appease a vast majority of the population which was Buddhist.

There is another aspect. No one can deny, or for that matter assert, that Gondaphares was not a Buddhist himself or that he did not have any inclination

towards Buddhism. He may have, for reasons already explained, adopted, for ceremonial occasions, the dress of Buddha and retained with it the toga, the undergarments and the sandals. The dress of the large figure can befit the theory of the Archaeologists on this basis only, because the dress is more kingly than that of a hermit. In fact it is not unlike some of the dresses in the Parthian coins which are preserved in the Museums of West Pakistan. I may for purposes of comparison refer to the *Historical Results* by H.T. Prinsep¹ in which a coin of 100 C.E. of Kanaska, "the King of Kings", is shown in a toga (coin 14 in Plate 20). Similarly illustrations of coins of the relevant period are given by Dr. Percy Gardener in his *Catalogue of Indian Coins in the British Museum*² and are also given by Chas. J. Rodgerson in his *Catalogue of Coins*.³ They show some similarities in the dresses of the period with the dress of the large figure.

In view of all these facts it can be said with certain amount of certainty that the large figure is that of King Gondaphares in the dress of Buddha, standing with Jesus or St. Judas Thomas. But for my purpose it is really immaterial whether the large figure is of Buddha or someone else in the dress of Buddha so long as it can be established that Jesus and St. Judas Thomas were at Taxila during the reign of King Gondaphares and which is really proved by *Acta Thomae* itself and this statue of a bearded Jew which was set up in Taxila about two thousand years ago.

These statues were excavated from a monastery named after an adjoining village called Jullian. No explanation is forthcoming regarding the origin of this name. It is not an Indian name and the village might have been named after Jullian of Nisibis (Iraq), who, according to a recorded tradition, had accompanied St. Judas Thomas to Taxila.

There is an inscription in the Taxila Museum which had been excavated from Sirkap, Taxila. It is broken, mutilated and incomplete. According to Sir John Marshall, it belonged to the first century of the Christian Era⁴, and formed part of an octagonal memorial pillar of white marble built into one of the walls of a house in "Block F." The inscription engraved on this pillar is in Aramaic, a dialect of Hebrew, which Jesus and his disciples spoke (See illustration, page 392). The existence of this inscription in Aramaic is of peculiar significance. But for the presence of Jesus and St Judas Thomas at Taxila it cannot be explained on any other hypothesis. No attempt has so far been made to explain it though soon after its discovery efforts were made to translate it. Transcriptions of the record were published by Dr. L.D. Barnet and Prof. A. Cowley in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*.⁵ The notes of the late F.C. Andreas, published by Dr. W.H. Winkler, created further complications. The incompleteness and mutilation of the inscription coupled with their preconceived ideas and lack of knowledge of the real background has made confusion worse confounded. They say that the inscription

1. H.T. Prinsep, *Historical Results*, London, W.H. Allen & Co., 1844.

2. Dr. Percy Gardener, *Catalogue of Indian Coins in the British Museum*, London, Longman Green & Co., 1886.

3. Chas. J. Rodgerson, *Catalogue of Coins*, Calcutta, Baptist Mission Press, 1895.

4. Sir Johan Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila*, 99.

5. 1915, p. 34.

refers to a high official named *Romadota* and that it also mentions two other names: *Naggaruda* and *Priyadarsia*. The rest of the translation is imaginative and, therefore, meaningless. They could not, I repeat for lack of proper knowledge, appreciate that these three words might have been descriptive and not proper names. They could not avail themselves of *Rehnumai Taxila* by Maulvi Muhammad Hamid Qureshi, Assistant Superintendent, Archaeological Survey of India, in which he mentions that the inscription referred to the construction of a Palace (Mahal) of Deodar and Ivory at Taxila.¹ The Western scholars have also overlooked the fact that *Naggaruda* literally means in Aramaic *carpentry*, *Romadota* is really *Rudradeva* (a son-god) and *Priyadarsia* stands for *Peridesia* (a foreigner). As admitted by Sir John Marshall the Western Scholars went on mere possibilities. They also ignored the fact that any pious and holy man in India in those days was invariably styled as a son-god or as a son of some other god.

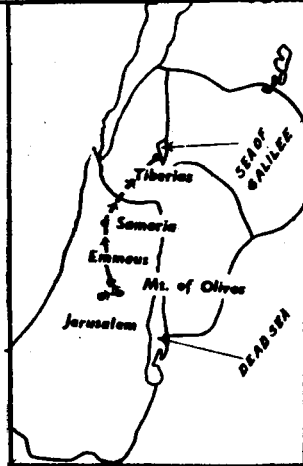
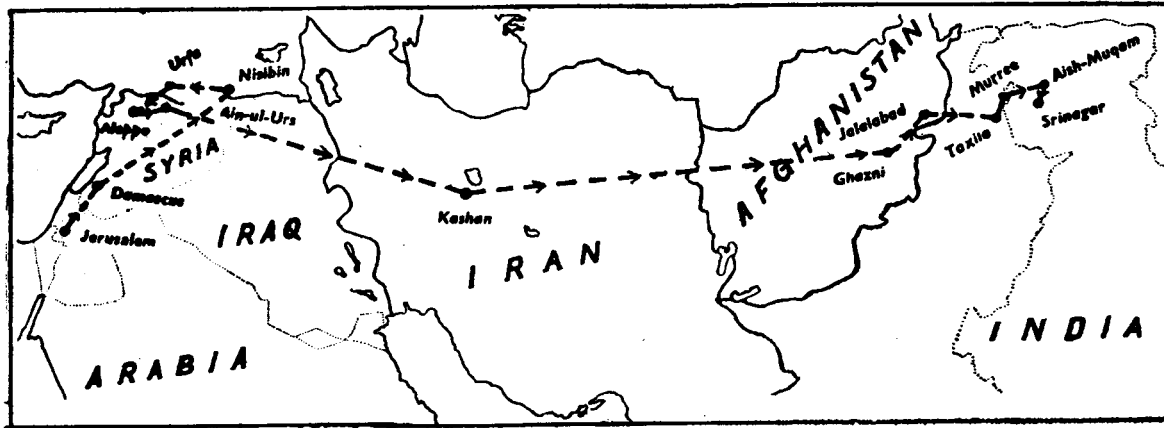
But if we put these facts together in their true perspective we are forced to look for and trace a foreigner in Taxila who was a carpenter, who was engaged in the construction of a Palace at Taxila, and who was associated with a pious and holy man who could be styled as *Rudradeva* (a son-god). St. Judas Thomas was, in fact, a foreigner, a carpenter, son of a carpenter, he did build a palace at Taxila, and was at Taxila with Jesus, a Prophet of God.

I may also mention that M. Sylvan Levi mentions another remarkable fact in his Notes which were translated by Mr. W.H. Phillipps and published in the *Indian Antiquary* in 1903.² His *Supplementary Notes* also appeared in it in 1904.³ He says that Vasudeva of Kashmir, a contemporary of Gondaphares, was mentioned in a slightly different form in *Acta Thomae*, and that he had come in contact with St. Judas Thomas in Kashmir. This lends support to *Ikmal-ud-Din* and *Ainul Hayat*, two very ancient Arabic books, which speak of the presence of the twin brother of Jesus in Srinagar at the time of the death of Jesus.

1. Maulvi Muhammad Hamid Qureshi, *Rahnumai Taxila*, Calcutta, Government of India Printing Press, 1924, p. 144.

2. Vol. 32, pp. 381-417

3. Vol. 33, p. 10



Map illustrating the second journey of Jesus to Kashmir.
 (See page 384).