



Holger Kersten: *"It is simply of vital importance to find again the path to the sources, to the eternal and central truths of Christ's message, which has been shaken almost beyond recognition by the profane ambitions of more or less secular institutions arrogating to themselves a religious authority. This is an attempt to open a way to a new future, firmly founded in the true spiritual and religious sources of the past".*

Thus begins Holger Kersten's book "Jesus Lived in India". This German book is a thorough, methodical and authoritative examination of the evidence of Christ's life beyond the Middle East before the Crucifixion and in India and elsewhere after it.

This article is a summary of Kersten's exhaustive research into Christ's travels after the Crucifixion, his arrival in India with the Mother Mary and finally his death and entombment in Kashmir. Kersten notes the many parallels of Christ's teachings with other religious and cultural traditions and suggests that at least some of these figures may have been one and the same personality. It is not possible, Kersten asserts, to disprove that Christ went to India. The current information documenting Christ's life is restricted to the gospels and the work of Church theologians. One can hardly trust these sources to be objective considering their obvious interest in maintaining the authority of their Church and its grip on the masses.

The Russian scholar, Nicolai Notovich, was the first to suggest that Christ may have gone to India. In 1887, Notovich, a Russian scholar and Orientalist, arrived in Kashmir during one of several journeys to the Orient. At the Zojila pass Notovich was a guest in a Buddhist monastery, where a monk told him of the bhodisattva saint called "Issa". Notovich was stunned by the remarkable parallels of Issa's teachings and martyrdom with that of Christ's life, teachings and crucifixion.

For about sixteen years, Christ travelled through Turkey, Persia, Western Europe and possibly England. He finally arrived with Mary to a place near Kashmir, where she died. After many years in Kashmir, teaching to an appreciative population, who venerated him as a great prophet, reformer and saint, he died and was buried in a tomb in Kashmir itself.

The first step in Christ's trail after the Crucifixion is found in the Persian scholar F. Mohammed's historical work "Jami-ut-tuwarik" which tells of Christ's arrival in the kingdom of Nisibis, by royal invitation. (Nisibis is today known as Nusaybin in Turkey) . This is reiterated in the Imam Abu Jafar Muhammed's "Tafsi-Ibn-i-Jamir at-tubri." Kersten found that in both Turkey and Persia there are ancient stories of a saint called "Yuz Asaf" ("Leader of the Healed"), whose behaviour, miracles and teachings are remarkably similar to that of Christ.

The many Islamic and Hindu historical works recording local history and legends of kings, noblemen and saints of the areas thought to be travelled by Jesus also give evidence of a Christ like man; the Koran, for example, refers to Christ as "Issar". Further east, the Kurdish tribes of Eastern Anatolia have several stories describing Christ's stay in Eastern Turkey after his resurrection. These traditional legends have been ignored by the theological community.

Kersten also suggests that prior to Christ's mission in the Middle East, he may have been exposed to Buddhist teachings in Egypt. After his birth in Bethlehem, his family fled to Egypt to avoid Herod's persecution. Surprisingly some scholars now acknowledge that Buddhist schools probably existed in Alexandria long before the Christian era.

More clues are drawn from the Apocrypha. These are texts said to have been written by the Apostles but which are not officially accepted by the Church. Indeed, the Church regards them as heresy since a substantial amount of the Apocrypha directly contradicts Church dogma and theology. The Apocryphal 'Acts of Thomas', for example, tell how Christ met Thomas several times after the Crucifixion. In fact they tell us how Christ sent Thomas to teach his spirituality in India.

This is corroborated by evidence found in the form of stone inscriptions at Fatehpur Sikri, near the Taj Mahal, in Northern India. They include "Agrapha", which are sayings of Christ that don't exist in the mainstream Bible. Their grammatical form is most similar to that of the Apocryphal gospel of Thomas. This is but one example giving credibility to the idea that texts not recognised by the Church hold important clues about Christ's true life and his teachings.

In tracing Christ's movements to India and beyond, Kersten also discovered that many of his teachings, which have been gradually edited out of the modern Bible were originally Eastern in nature. Principles such as karma and re-incarnation, for example, were common knowledge then, and seem to have been reaffirmed by Christ. Imagine the implications that this discovery holds for Western Christianity and its churches, who have kept Christ in their doctrinal top pockets and have constrained the entire Western culture within the narrow teachings of blind faith, organised religion and original sin!

Further clues are cited from The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas, and the Gospel of Thomas which are of Syrian origin and have been dated to the 4th Century AD, or possibly earlier. They are Gnostic Scriptures and despite the evidence indicating their authenticity, they are not given credence by mainstream theologians. In these texts Thomas tells of Christ's appearance in Andrapolis, Paphlagonia (today known as in the extreme north of Anatolia) as a guest of the King of Andrappa. There he met with Thomas who had arrived separately. It is at Andrapolis that Christ entreated Thomas to go to India to begin spreading his teachings. It seems that Christ and Mary then moved along the West coast of Turkey, proof of this could be an old stopping place for travellers called the "Home of Mary", found along the ancient silk route. From here Christ could easily have entered Europe via France.

He may have even travelled as far as the British Isles, for in England there is an ancient oak tree called the "Hallowed Tree" which (says local legend) was planted by Christ himself.

In his travels through Persia (today's Iran) Christ became known as Yuz Asaf (leader of the Healed). We know this because a Kashmiri historical document confirms that Isa (the Koranic name for Christ) was in fact also known as Yuz Asaf. The Jami - uf - Tamarik, Volume II, tells that Yuz Asaf visited Masslige, where he attended the grave of Shem, Noah's son. There are various other accounts such as Agha Mustafa's "Awhali Shahaii-i-paras" that tell of Yuz Asaf's travels and teachings all over Persia. It seems that Yuz Asaf blessed Afghanistan and Pakistan with his presence also.

There are for example two plains in Eastern Afghanistan near Gazni and Galalabad, bearing the name of the prophet Yuz Asaf. Again in the Apocryphal Acts of Thomas, Thomas says that he and Christ attended the Court of King Gundafor of Taxila (now Pakistan), in about 47AD, and that eventually both the King and his brother accepted Christ's teachings. Kersten claims that there are more than twenty one historical documents that bear witness to the existence of Jesus in Kashmir, where he was known also as Yuz Asaf and Issa. For example the Bhavishyat Mahapurana (volume 9 verses 17-32) contains an account of Issa-Masih (Jesus the Messiah). It describes Christ's arrival in the Kashmir region of India and his encounter with King Shalivahana, who ruled the Kushan area (39-50AD), and who entertained Christ as a guest for some time.

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The historian Mullah Nadini (1413) also recounts a story of Yuz Asaf who was a contemporary to King Gopadatta, and confirms that he also used the name Issar, ie. Jesus. There is also much historical truth in the towns and villages of Northern India to prove that Jesus and his mother Mary spent time in the area. For instance, at the border of a small town called Mari, there is nearby a mountain called Pindi Point, upon which is an old tomb called Mai Mari da Asthan or "The final resting place of Mary".

The tomb is said to be very old and local Muslims venerate it as the grave of Issa's (ie Christ's) Mother. The tomb itself is oriented East-West consistent with the Jewish tradition, despite the fact it is within a Muslim area. Assuming its antiquity, such a tomb could not be Hindu either since the Hindus contemporary to Christ cremated their dead and scattered their ashes as do Hindus today.

Following Christ's trail into Kashmir, 40km south of Srinagar, between the villages of Naugam and Nilnige is a meadow called Yuz-Marg (the meadow of Yuz Asaf, ie. Jesus). Then there is the sacred building called Aish Muqam, 60km south east of Srinagar and 12km from Bij Bihara. "Aish" says Kersten is derived from "Issa" and "Muqam" place of rest or repose. Within the Aish Muqam is a sacred relic called the 'Moses Rod' or the 'Jesus Rod', which local legend says, belonged to Moses himself.

Christ is said to also have held it, perhaps to confirm his Mosaic heritage. Above the town of Srinagar is a temple known as "The Throne of Solomon", which dates back to at least 1000BC, which King Gopadatta had restored at about the same time as Christ's advent. The restoration was done by a Persian architect who personally left four inscriptions on the side steps of the temple.

The third and fourth inscription read: "At this time Yuz Asaf announced his prophetic calling in Year 50 and 4" and "He is Jesus -- Prophet of the Sons of Israel"! Herein lies a powerful confirmation of Kersten's theory. Kersten suggests that Christ may have travelled to the South of India also, finally returning to Kashmir to die at the age of approximately 80 years. Christ's tomb, says Kersten, lies in Srinagar's old town in a building called Rozabal. "Rozabal" is an abbreviation of Rauza Bal, meaning "tomb of a prophet".

At the entrance there is an inscription explaining that Yuz Asaf is buried along with another Moslem saint. Both have gravestones which are oriented in North-South direction, according to Moslem tradition. However, through a small opening the true burial chamber can be seen, in which there is the Sarcophagus of Yuz Asaf in East-West (Jewish) orientation!

According to Professor Hassnain, who has studied this tomb, there are carved footprints on the grave stones and when closely examined, carved

images of a crucifix and a rosary. The footprints of Yuz Asaf have what appear to be scars represented on both feet, if one assumes that they are crucifixion scars, then their position is consistent with the scars shown in the Turin Shroud (left foot nailed over right).

Crucifixion was not practised in Asia, so it is quite possible that they were inflicted elsewhere, such as the Middle East. The tomb is called by some as "Hazrat Issa Sahib" or "Tomb of the Lord Master Jesus". Ancient records acknowledge the existence of the tomb as long ago as 112AD. The Grand Mufti, a prominent Muslim Cleric, himself has confirmed that Hazrat Isa Sahib is indeed the tomb of Yuz Asaf!

Thus Kersten deduces that the tomb of Jesus Christ Himself is in Kashmir! The implications of Kersten's discovery are monumental. Christ's life in India, after the crucifixion, challenges current Church teachings at their very foundation. The theology of Saint Paul, the major influence on modern Christianity, is empty fanaticism in the light of this discovery. Threatened also are the doctrines of obedience to the Church, original sin, salvation through blind faith and the non-existence of reincarnation, etc. Yet these ideas underlie the morality and ethics, (or lack of them), that govern the entire Western social structure, from the legal system to medical health care schemes. It is no wonder that the modern Churches and their secular interests refuse to consider such a proposition as Kersten's!

The Synopsis of "Jesus Lived In India" by Holger Kersten was written by Dr Ramesh Manocha & Anna Potts.

Back to Issue 7

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[Back to the KoR Homepage](#)