

## THE JOURNEY OF CHRISTIANITY TO INDIA IN LATE ANTIQUITY

How did Christianity make its remarkable voyage from the Roman Mediterranean to the Indian subcontinent? By examining the social networks that connected the ancient and late antique Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, central Asia, and Iran, this book contemplates the social relations that made such movement possible. It also analyzes how the narrative tradition regarding the apostle Judas Thomas, which originated in Upper Mesopotamia and accredited him with evangelizing India, traveled among the social networks of an interconnected late antique world. In this way, the book probes how the Thomas narrative shaped Mediterranean Christian beliefs regarding coreligionists in central Asia and India, impacted local Christian cultures, took shape in a variety of languages, and experienced transformation as it traveled from the Mediterranean to India and back again.

NATHANAEL J. ANDRADE is an associate professor in the Department of History at Binghamton University (SUNY). His previous book was *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World* (Cambridge, 2013).

# THE JOURNEY OF CHRISTIANITY TO INDIA IN LATE ANTIQUITY

*Networks and the Movement of Culture*

NATHANAEL J. ANDRADE

*Binghamton University (SUNY)*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-108-40955-1 — The Journey of Christianity to India in Late Antiquity  
 Nathanael J. Andrade  
 Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

**CAMBRIDGE**  
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India  
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.  
 It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of  
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
 Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108409551](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108409551)  
 DOI: 10.1017/9781108296953

© Nathanael J. Andrade 2018

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
 no reproduction of any part may take place without the written  
 permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2018  
 First paperback edition 2021

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data*

NAMES: Andrade, Nathanael J., author.

TITLE: The journey of Christianity to India in late antiquity : networks and the movement of  
 culture / Nathanael J. Andrade, State University of New York, Binghamton.

DESCRIPTION: New York : Cambridge University Press, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references  
 and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2017051167 | ISBN 9781108419123

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Missions – India – History. | Church history – Primitive and early church,  
 ca. 30-600. | Acts of Thomas. | Thomas, Apostle, Saint, active 1st century.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC BV3265.3 .A53 2018 | DDC 275.4/01-dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017051167>

ISBN 978-1-108-41912-3 Hardback  
 ISBN 978-1-108-40955-1 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or  
 accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in  
 this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,  
 or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

## Contents

<i>List of Maps</i>	page vii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xv
Introduction	I
PART I THE ACTS OF THOMAS	25
1 The <i>Acts of Thomas</i> and Its Impact	27
PART II CHRISTIANITY, NETWORKS, AND THE RED SEA	67
2 Early Christianity and Its Many Indias: Complexities of the Sources	69
3 The Roman Egyptian Network, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean	94
PART III CHRISTIANITY, NETWORKS, AND THE MIDDLE EAST	137
4 The Movement of Christianity into Sasanian Persia: Perspectives and Sources	139
5 Social Connectivity between the Roman Levant, Persian Gulf, and Central Asia	164
6 The Late Antique Impact of the <i>Acts of Thomas</i> and Christian Communities in India	207
Conclusion	233

<i>Appendix 1: Beginning of Syriac Acts of Thomas (Wright's Text)</i>	238
<i>Appendix 2: Beginning of Greek Acts of Thomas (Bonnet's Text)</i>	240
<i>Bibliography</i>	242
<i>Index</i>	292

## *Maps*

- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| 1 Trade routes of Afro-Eurasia.                  | <i>page</i> 17 |
| 2 Trade routes and monsoons of the Indian Ocean. | 70             |
| 3 Trade and communication routes of Asia.        | 71             |

## Preface

This book examines how the religion of Christianity traveled from the Mediterranean to India. As such, it may seem obvious what one means by “Christianity” at a glance. But the term itself can be quite vexing. Several factors make it so. First, what defines “religion” (and thus Christian religion) and whether it existed among various premodern societies are increasingly issues of debate.<sup>1</sup> While acknowledging the complications and possibilities for anachronism, I will nonetheless employ terms like “religion,” “religious culture,” and “Christianity” (with its religious implications) throughout this work. Whatever problems they may raise, they do serve the present purpose of defining the type of culture (or cultures) whose movement this book aims to trace.

Second, it is not always easy to distinguish between Christianity and Judaism as two stable and separate religions. Scholars vary in their perspectives regarding when they became distinct, and even then, some have argued that certain Jews were in practice Christians and certain Christians were in practice Jews throughout antiquity. Further difficulties are posed by the widely recognized premises that Christianity and Judaism are blanket terms for multiple, distinct strands of Christian or Jewish belief, practice, and culture. Ancient Jews and Christians often differed regarding what the normative practices or beliefs that constituted the proper bases of their religion were. Given that Christianity and Judaism were characterized by multiplicity and underwent internal transformations, it has been difficult to create universal criteria by which to define or classify them.<sup>2</sup> Even religions that have been deemed beyond the boundaries of Christianity in

<sup>1</sup> For example, Nongbri, *Before Religion*; Barton and Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion*; Boyarin, *Border Lines*; BeDuhn, “Mani and Crystallization.”

<sup>2</sup> For the challenges of defining Judaism, Christianity, and their divergences and intersections, see, for instance, Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*; Boyarin, *Border Lines*; Becker and Reed, *Ways That Never Parted*; Shanks, *Partings*; and King, “Which Early Christianity?” This list is by no means comprehensive.

the past have therefore received reevaluation as forms of Christianity. Manichaeism has increasingly been recognized as one such form, even if it may be best to conceive of it as an eclectic and cosmopolitan religion that interwove Christian, Zoroastrian, Jain, and Buddhist religious strands.<sup>3</sup>

When this book uses the term “Christianity,” it is in the most inclusive sense possible. The term integrates the various religious communities that scholars have typically labeled “Judaeo-Christian,” “baptist,” or Manichaean to distinguish them from what have arbitrarily been defined as more “normative” forms of Christianity. But this is primarily for the purpose of making it easier for readers to navigate general trends in the movement of Christian cultural strands over vast distances. When this book makes references to “baptists,” “Judaeo-Christians,” and Manichaeans, it is not with the intent of taking a particular position on whether they were or were not Christians. Recognizing how porous and unstable religious boundaries were, it simply stresses how such figures too embodied, carried, and moved threads of what can be defined as Christian culture. Similarly, when this book employs the phrasing “Christian culture,” it is not to imply that a single, monolithic Christianity or Christian culture inhabited ancient Afro-Eurasia. One can speak of many “Christianities” or “Christian cultures.” But for purposes of clarity, references to Christianity or “Christian” denote any practice, cultural life, or person within a vast and diverse array that can be qualified as Christian in context. Christian culture was very heterogeneous indeed; Christians assumed many shapes and sizes. Such points are relevant to the second consideration.

This book examines sources depicting the movement of Christianity to India, and it includes Manichaeism as a religion that both shaped and intersected with the categorical frame of Christianity.<sup>4</sup> As such, it analyzes the early movement of Manichaeism and the sources that describe it. But it does not recount the entire history of its movement throughout Afro-Eurasia. It instead explores how it traveled on the first legs of its journey to the Roman empire and central Asia from its lower Mesopotamian regional

<sup>3</sup> Scholars have traditionally construed Manichaeism as a religion entirely distinct from Christianity, but it has more recently been conceived of as a culturally pluralistic strand of Christianity that earned a reputation for heterodoxy over late antiquity. See, for example, BeDuhn and Mirecki, *Frontiers of Faith*, in which BeDuhn and Mirecki, “Placing the *Acts of Archelaus*”; Van Oort, *Augustine and Manichaean Christianity*; BeDuhn, “Not to Depart from Christ”; and Pederson, “Manichaean Self-Designations in the Western Tradition.” But more recently, see BeDuhn, “Mani and Crystallization”; and De Jong, “*Cologne Mani Codex*,” 132–34 for critiques of premises that Manichaeism was a form of Christianity or derived from any dominant religious strand. Other works on Manichaeism are referenced in this book as appropriate.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, BeDuhn, “Mani and Crystallization.”



origins. This is in part because the study of Manichaeism has increasingly constituted its own unique field of analysis, and the nature of its movement throughout Eurasia and north Africa, attested by sources in a dazzling array of languages, has received the examination of specialists. But it is also due to the fact that such a study of Manichaeism would extend beyond the geographic and chronological parameters of this study.

Place names can be vexing too. Given the trans-regional and, indeed, trans-imperial nature of this work, it is not unusual to encounter cities, sites, and regions that bear different names in diverse languages. This tendency is amplified by the fact that vast empires governed by different language groups rose, underwent consolidation, and receded, often leaving a legacy of place names if nothing else. Classical Babylonia, for instance, could be represented by different terms in Greek, Aramaic, or Iranian languages. It is noteworthy that for the connected territories between the Levant and China, scholars have been assembling a polyglot database of place names.<sup>5</sup> This work will often (but not always) use Greek names or terms for sites in the Middle East, Red Sea, or Indian Ocean, for the following reasons. First, many of the sources cited in this work were composed in Latin or Greek, and even if many sources are in Syriac too, they sometimes represent a tradition informed by Greek precursors. Second, with the obvious exception of Indian Ocean and east African locations, many regions treated in this work were at some point governed by successor empires of Alexander the Great or by the Roman empire, in which Greek toponyms proliferated. Third, many names of ports in coastal India are known primarily from Greek or Latin texts. Muziris and Barbarikon are some key examples. The use of Greek and Latin toponyms will not be universal, however, and certain occasions justify using other languages. In direct quotations of ancient sources in Syriac or Asian languages, the toponym typically will be cited according to the language used. In Chapter 4, the consolidation of Christianity in Sasanian Persia is examined through the prism of Syriac texts. Aramaic or Iranian toponyms will thus be rendered as they normally appear in Syriac sources.

<sup>5</sup> Lieu and Mikkelsen, "Places and Peoples," with Lieu, "Da Qin." See *Serica*: [bighistoryinstitute.org/pubstatic/research/centres\\_and\\_groups/ancient\\_cultures\\_research\\_centre/research/cultural\\_ex\\_silkroad/serica/](http://bighistoryinstitute.org/pubstatic/research/centres_and_groups/ancient_cultures_research_centre/research/cultural_ex_silkroad/serica/). The various place names for sites (when known) in the Indian Ocean can be synthesized by consulting the scholarly literature cited in this book.

## *Acknowledgments*

The research and composition of this book have been a rewarding odyssey. I cannot thank enough people, and I cannot thank many people enough. But here I will try, however insufficient it may be. The Department of History at the University of Oregon and its faculty were marvelous in their support for much of the book's research and writing. The Department of History at Binghamton University (SUNY) helped me bring it to a satisfying close. At crucial junctures, an Andrew Mellon Foundation Fellowship for Assistant Professors at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton (2012–2013) and a Solmsen Fellowship at the Institute for Research in the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin (2015–2016) provided me with immense resources, wonderful colleagues, and a priceless commodity: time. I do not think that I could have completed the book without them. A Loeb Classical Library Foundation Fellowship generously supported my research travel overseas. With a Faculty Research Award from the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation at the University of Oregon, and a Brush Fellowship from the History Department, I did a great deal of research, writing, and travel. The Institute for African Studies at Columbia University also deserves mention and gratitude for extending to me an affiliation that also made much of my research possible.

The gratitude that I owe others is limitless. Many drafts of chapters have been circulated. Numerous presentations have been given. A host of conversations has enriched me. So I have many people to thank for their advice and input. David Potter and Emma Dench deserve special mention for years of unwavering support for all my research endeavors. Raymond Van Dam has long inspired my deepest reflections on late antiquity. Michael Sharp imparted invaluable contributions to the project at every critical stage and in every conceivable form. Sarah Starkey, Rogini Rajendiran, and Jay Boggis enabled me to bring it to a successful close. I cannot imagine having finished the book without them. The anonymous

*Acknowledgments*

xiii

referees provided vital guidance for new conceptualization and rewriting; I thank them for their thoughtfulness and insight. Angelos Chaniotis, Susan Friedman, Ariel Lewin, A. E. T. McLaughlin, Ali Akhtar, Hamish Cameron, Edward Watts, Rubina Raja, Katell Berthelot, Joseph Reed, Jennifer Baird, and Ted Kaizer gave me the opportunities to present my work at various stages. Glen Bowersock, Susan Ashbrook Harvey, Christopher Jones, Stephen Shoemaker, Steven Sidebotham, Jeremy Simmons, Roberta Tomber, and Joel Walker enriched me with their conversations and correspondence. The staff of the IAS (Princeton), IRH (Wisconsin–Madison), and the History Departments of the University of Oregon and Binghamton University (SUNY) deserve special mention: Marian Zelazny, Maria Tuya, Terrie Bramley, Ann Harris, Megan Falater, Hari Jost, Daniel Kim, Martina Armstrong, Kathleen Brenner, Sharon Fipps, Nicholas Mahlum, Colleen Marshall, Keith Limbach, and Kathleen Fedorchak exceeded every need. There is a long list of people who have shaped my work and narrative: Derick Alexandre, Alexander Angelov, Sean Anthony, Jonathan Arnold, Bryan Averbuch, Lindsay Braun, Howard Brown, Sam Caldis, Elizabeth Casteen, Giuseppe Castellano, John Chaffee, Aquila Chase, Rob Chenault, John-Henry Clay, Kathleen Coleman, Patricia Crone, Edward Dabrowa, Davaleena Das, Arnab Dey, Nicola di Cosmo, Sean Dry, Jennifer Finn, Gil Gambash, Patrick Geary, David Graf, Max Harris, Heather DeHaan, Jeremy Hutton, Young Kim, Dimitri Krallis, Derek Kreuger, Stephen Lambert, Meg Leja, Vincent Lloyd, David Luebke, Rachel Mairs, Randall McGowen, Richard McKenney, Jonathan McLaughlin, Ian Mladjov, Ian Moyer, Jason Neelis, John Nicols, Lynn Nyhart, Elizabeth Platte, Ruben Post, Talia Prussen, Xiaoyan Qi, Joe Ricker, Rubina Raja, Samuele Rocca, Emily Rush, Ortal-Paz Saar, Adam Schor, Kent Schull, Andreas Schwab, Jared Secord, Eivind Seland, Paul Taylor, Sarah Trevisan, Peter Van Alfen, Ute Wartenberg, Leigh Ann Wheeler, Elsbeth van der Wilt, Bob Wolensky, Lisa Wolverton, George Wright, and Marta Żuchowska. As always, my parents, brothers, and extended family were ceaseless in their help, and they handled parts of the manuscript too. I owe special heartfelt thanks to my wife Jinny, my mother Marcia, and my father Paul in this respect.

Many parts of Chapter 5 appeared in *Mediterraneo Antico*. Substantial portions of Chapter 3 were published in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*. With the kind permission of the journals' editors and the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, such material has been reproduced.

The book is dedicated to my son Oliver, whose patience and playful smile have helped me weather long hours of work. I hope that he can someday understand why I have done it. I also wish to remember my grandfather Joseph and my aunt Jennifer. Treasuring the best of the apostolic teachings, they could not witness the book's completion.

## Abbreviations

<i>AB</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année épigraphique</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AMSS</i>	<i>Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum Syriace</i> . Ed. Paul Bedjan. 7 vols. Paris and Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1890–1897
<i>BNJ</i>	<i>Brill's New Jacoby</i> . Ed. Ian Worthington (Leiden: Brill: 2007–). See also <i>FGrH</i>
<i>CCSL</i>	Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina
<i>CSCO</i>	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
<i>CSEL</i>	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
<i>CIIP</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae</i>
<i>CIS</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i> (1881–)
<i>CRAI</i>	<i>Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
<i>FGrH</i>	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (including <i>BNJ</i> ). Ed. Felix Jacoby et al. Leiden: Brill, 1923–
<i>GCS</i>	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>IGSK 65</i>	<i>Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien</i> . Vol. 65: <i>Iscrizioni dello estremo oriente greco: un repertorio</i> . Ed. Filippo Canali de Rossi. Bonn: Habelt, 2004
<i>IGLS 17.1</i>	<i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie</i> , Vol. 17, fasc. 1: <i>Palmyre</i> . Ed. J.-B. Yon. Beirut: IFPO, 2012
<i>IHatra</i>	<i>Inventaire des inscriptions hatréennes</i> . Ed. Basile Aggoula. Paris: Geuthner, 1991; Klaus Beyer, <i>Die aramäischen Inschriften aus Assur, Hatra und dem übrigen Ostmesopotamien: (datiert 44 v. Chr. bis 238 n. Chr.)</i> . Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998;

*List of Abbreviations*

- Roberto Bertolino, *Manuel d'épigraphie hatréenne*. Paris: Geuthner, 2008
- JAOS *Journal of the American Oriental Society*  
 JECS *Journal of Early Christian Studies*  
 JHS *Journal of Hellenic Studies*  
 JRS *Journal of Roman Studies*  
 JThS *Journal of Theological Studies*  
 JWH *Journal of World History*  
 OCP *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*  
 ODB *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Ed. Alexander Kazhdan. 3 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991
- OGIS *Orientis graeci inscriptiones selectae*. Ed. Wilhelm Dittenberger. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1903–1905
- O. Kell.* *Greek Ostraka from Kellis*. Ed. K. A. Worp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004
- O. Petr.* *Greek Ostraca in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and Various Other Collections*. Ed. Jon Gavin Tait and Claire Préaux. 3 vols. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1930–1964; *Ostraca graeci e bilingui del Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology*. Ed. Maria Serena Funghi, Gabriella Messeri, and Cornelia Römer. 3 vols. Florence: Gonnelli
- P. Cair. Isid.* *The Archive of Aurelius Isidorus in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, and the University of Michigan*. Ed. A. E. R. Boak and H. C. Youtie. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960
- P. Col.* *Fourth Century Documents from Karanis*. Ed. Roger Bagnall and Naphtali Lewis. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979; and *Columbia Papyri*. Vol. 8. Ed. Roger Bagnall, T. T. Renner, and K. A. Worp. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990
- P. Dura* *The Excavations at Dura Europos, Final Report*, Vol. 5, Pt. 1. *The Parchments and Papyri*. Ed. C. Bradford Welles, Robert Fink, and J. Frank Gilliam. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959
- P. Harr.* *The Rendel Harris Papyri of Woodbrooke College, Birmingham*, Vol. 1. Ed. J. E. Powell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936

*List of Abbreviations*

xvii

<i>P. Lond.</i>	<i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum.</i> Ed. F. G. Kenyon et al. 7 vols. London: British Museum, 1893–1974
<i>P. Oxf.</i>	<i>Some Oxford Papyri.</i> Ed. E. P. Wegener. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1942–1948
<i>P. Oxy.</i>	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> (1898–)
<i>P. Panop. Beatty</i>	<i>Papyri from Panopolis in the Chester Beatty Library.</i> Ed. T. C. Skeat. Dublin: Hodges and Figgis, 1964
<i>P. Rylands</i>	<i>Catalogue of the Greek and Latin Papyri in the John Rylands Library, Manchester.</i> Ed. A. S. Hunt et al. 4 vols. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1911–1952
<i>P. Sakaon</i>	<i>The Archive of Aurelius Sakaon: Papers of an Egyptian Farmer in the Last Century of Theadelphia.</i> Ed. G. M. Parássoglou. Bonn: Habelt, 1978
<i>PAT</i>	<i>Palmyrene Aramaic Texts.</i> Ed. Delbert Hillers and Eleonora Cussini. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i>
<i>SB</i>	<i>Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten.</i> Strasbourg: Trübner, 1915–
<i>SC</i>	Sources chrétiennes
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
<i>TEAD</i>	<i>The Excavations at Dura-Europos: Preliminary Reports.</i> New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1929–1952; <i>The Excavations at Dura Europos: Final Reports.</i> New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946–
<i>TLG</i>	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Graecae</i> (2001–)
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>