

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.

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THE JOURNEY OF CHRISTIANITY TO INDIA IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Networks and the Movement of Culture

NATHANAEL J. ANDRADE

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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.¹ 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.² Even religions that have been deemed beyond the boundaries of Christianity in

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

² 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.³

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.⁴ 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

³ 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.

⁴ See, for example, BeDuhn, “Mani and Crystallization.”

Preface

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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.⁵ 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.

⁵ 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/. The various place names for sites (when known) in the Indian Ocean can be synthesized by consulting the scholarly literature cited in this book.

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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 hatréeenne*. 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 *Orientalis 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 greci 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

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<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>

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