



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 Zoji-la 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 Nilme 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 Lost Years of Jesus: The Life of Saint Issa

Translation by Notovitch The Best of the Sons of Men

Ancient scrolls reveal that Jesus spent seventeen years in India and Tibet

From age thirteen to age twenty-nine, he was both a student and teacher of Buddhist and Hindu holy men

The story of his journey from Jerusalem to Benares was recorded by Brahman historians

Today they still know him and love him as St. Issa. Their 'buddha'

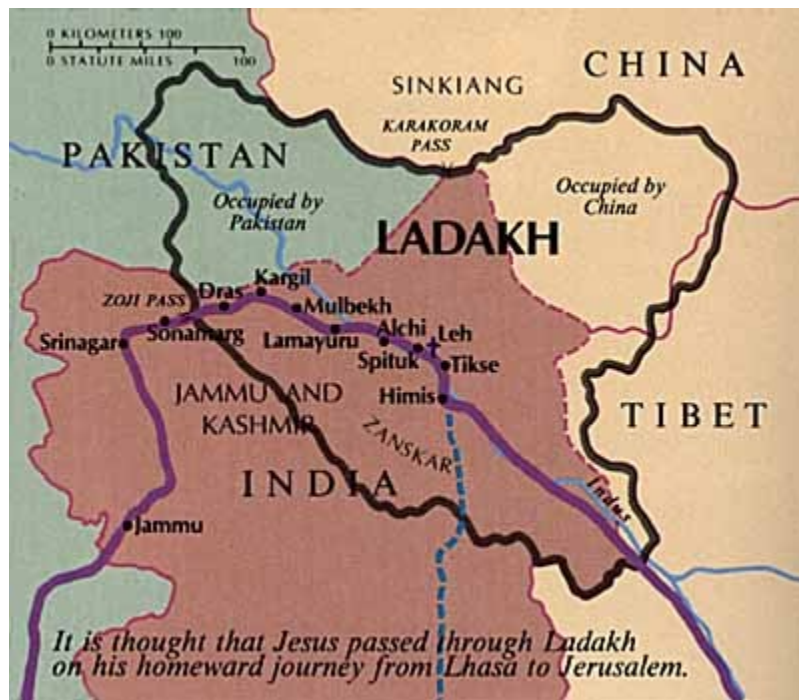
In 1894 Nicolas Notovitch published a book called *The Unknown Life of Christ*. He was a Russian doctor who journeyed extensively throughout Afghanistan, India, and Tibet. Notovitch journeyed through the lovely passes of Bolan, over the Punjab, down into the arid rocky land of Ladak, and into the majestic Vale of Kashmir of the Himalayas. During one of his journeys he was visiting Leh, the capital of Ladak, near where the buddhist convent Himis is. He had an accident that resulted in his leg being broken. This gave him the unscheduled opportunity to stay awhile at the Himis convent.

Notovitch learned, while he was there, that there existed ancient records of the life of Jesus Christ. In the course of his visit at the great convent, he located a Tibetan translation of the legend and carefully noted in his carnet de voyage over two hundred verses from the curious document known as "The Life of St. Issa."

He was shown two large yellowed volumes containing the biography of St. Issa. Notovitch enlisted a member of his party to translate the Tibetan volumes while he carefully noted each verse in the back pages of his journal.

When he returned to the western world there was much controversy as to the authenticity of the document. He was accused of creating a hoax and was ridiculed as an imposter. In his defense he encouraged a scientific expedition to prove the original tibetan documents existed.

One of his skeptics was Swami Abhedananda. Abhedananda journeyed into the arctic region of the Himalayas, determined to find a copy of the Himis manuscript or to expose the fraud. His book of travels, entitled *Kashmir O Tibetti*, tells of a visit to the Himis gonpa and includes a Bengali translation of two hundred twenty-four verses essentially the same as the Notovitch text. Abhedananda was thereby convinced of the authenticity of the Issa legend.



Map of Jesus's eastern travels
Source: Summit University Press

In 1925, another Russian named Nicholas Roerich arrived at Himis. Roerich, was a philosopher and a distinguished scientist. He apparently saw the same documents as Notovitch and Abhedananda. And he recorded in his own travel diary the same legend of St. Issa. Speaking of Issa, Roerich quotes legends which have the estimated antiquity of many centuries.

... He passed his time in several ancient cities of India such as Benares. All loved him because Issa dwelt in peace with Vaishas and Shudras whom he instructed and helped. But the Brahmins and Kshatriyas told him that Brahma forbade those to approach who were created out of his womb and feet. The Vaishas were allowed to listen to the Vedas only on holidays and the Shudras were forbidden not only to be present at the reading of the Vedas, but could not even look at them.

Issa said that man had filled the temples with his abominations. In order to pay homage to metals and stones, man sacrificed his fellows in whom dwells a spark of the Supreme Spirit. Man demeans those who labor by the sweat of their brows, in order to gain the good will of the sluggard who sits at the lavishly set board. But they who deprive their brothers of the common blessing shall be themselves stripped of it.

Vaishas and Shudras were struck with astonishment and asked what they could perform. Issa bade them "Worship not the idols. Do not consider yourself first. Do not

humiliate your neighbor. Help the poor. Sustain the feeble. Do evil to no one. Do not covet that which you do not possess and which is possessed by others."

Many, learning of such words, decided to kill Issa. But Issa, forewarned, departed from this place by night.

Afterward, Issa went into Nepal and into the Himalayan mountains

"Well, perform for us a miracle," demanded the servitors of the Temple. Then Issa replied to them: "Miracles made their appearance from the very day when the world was created. He who cannot behold them is deprived of the greatest gift of life. But woe to you, enemies of men, woe unto you, if you await that He should attest his power by miracle."

Issa taught that men should not strive to behold the Eternal Spirit with one's own eyes but to feel it with the heart, and to become a pure and worthy soul....

"Not only shall you not make human offerings, but you must not slaughter animals, because all is given for the use of man. Do not steal the goods of others, because that would be usurpation from your near one. Do not cheat, that you may in turn not be cheated

"Beware, ye, who divert men from the true path and who fill the people with superstitions and prejudices, who blind the vision of the seeing ones, and who preach subservience to material things. "...

Then Pilate, ruler of Jerusalem, gave orders to lay hands upon the preacher Issa and to deliver him to the judges, without however, arousing the displeasure of the people.

But Issa taught: "Do not seek straight paths in darkness, possessed by fear. But gather force and support each other. He who supports his neighbor strengthens himself

"I tried to revive the laws of Moses in the hearts of the people. And I say unto you that you do not understand their true meaning because they do not teach revenge but forgiveness. But the meaning of these laws is distorted."

Then the ruler sent to Issa his disguised servants that they should watch his actions and report to him about his words to the people.

"Thou just man, "said the disguised servant of the ruler of Jerusalem approaching Issa, "Teach us, should we fulfill the will of Caesar or await the approaching deliverance?"

But Issa, recognizing the disguised servants, said, "I did not foretell unto you that you would be delivered from Caesar; but I said that the soul which was immersed in sin would be delivered from sin."

At this time, an old woman approached the crowd, but was pushed back. Then Issa said, "Reverence Woman, mother of the universe,' in her lies the truth of creation. She is the foundation of all that is good and beautiful. She is the source of life and death. Upon her depends the existence of man, because she is the sustenance of his labors. She gives birth to you in travail, she watches over your growth. Bless her. Honor her. Defend her. Love your wives and honor them, because tomorrow they shall be mothers, and later-progenitors of a whole race. Their love ennobles man, soothes the embittered heart and tames the beast. Wife and mother-they are the adornments of the universe."

"As light divides itself from darkness, so does woman possess the gift to divide in man good intent from the thought of evil. Your best thoughts must belong to woman. Gather from them your moral strength, which you must possess to sustain your near ones. Do not humiliate her, for therein you will humiliate yourselves. And all which you will do to mother, to wife, to widow or to another woman in sorrow-that shall you also do for the Spirit."

So taught Issa; but the ruler Pilate ordered one of his servants to make accusation against him.

Said Issa: "Not far hence is the time when by the Highest Will the people will become purified and united into one family."

And then turning to the ruler, he said, "Why demean thy dignity and teach thy subordinates to live in deceit when even without this thou couldst also have had the means of accusing an innocent one?"

From another version of the legend, Roerich quotes fragments of thought and evidence of the miraculous.

Near Lhasa was a temple of teaching with a wealth of manuscripts. Jesus was to acquaint himself with them. Meng-ste, a great sage of all the East, was in this temple.

Finally Jesus reached a mountain pass and in the chief city of Ladak, Leh, he was joyously accepted by monks and people of the lower class And Jesus taught in the monasteries and in the bazaars (the market places); wherever the simple people gathered--there he taught.

Not far from this place lived a woman whose son had died and she brought him to Jesus. And in the presence of a multitude, Jesus laid his hand on the child, and the child rose healed. And many brought their children and Jesus laid his hands upon them, healing them.

Among the Ladakis, Jesus passed many days, teaching them. And they loved him and when the time of his departure came they sorrowed as children.