

# Geography in the *Acts of Thomas*

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THE APOCRYPHAL WORK known as the *Acts of Judas-Thomas* (Πράξεις Θωμά)<sup>1</sup> relates how the apostle was bought by Abbanes a merchant, who was the agent of king Goundaphoros, and taken to India. In the kingdom of Goundaphoros and later in the realm of king Misdaios the saint performed many miracles, before his martyrdom at the command of Misdaios. In the telling the story has much in common with ancient Greek novels:<sup>2</sup> the narrative is episodic, there is a tendency to emphasize the royal or noble character of the participants, and the latent erotic interest has not been entirely transformed into a strict encratism. The literary merit of the work is great; indeed it has been claimed that “les Actes de Thomas sont un produit—et un chef d’oeuvre—authentique de la littérature syriacque.”<sup>3</sup>

It is now usually agreed, at least among Syriac scholars, that the work was originally composed in Syriac, and the view is widespread, if it has not already hardened into an orthodoxy, that the *Acts* came into being in Edessa.<sup>4</sup> M. R. James,<sup>5</sup> it is true, followed Maximilian Bonnet (xx–xxii) in arguing that the *Acts* were composed in Greek and early turned into Syriac: “becoming scarce or wholly lost in Greek they were retranslated out of Syriac into Greek.” James argued thus because some of the Greek texts of the martyrdom are superior to the Syriac insofar as they place the great prayer of Thomas immediately before the apostle’s death. In Syriac versions the prayer is found some time before the martyrdom.<sup>6</sup> But the hypothesis of retranslation into Syriac is needlessly complicated; the superior ver-

<sup>1</sup> Greek text edited by M. Bonnet in *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* II.2 (Leipzig 1903) 91–288. Cf. F. Halkin, *BHG* II (Brussels 1957) 1801c and *Auctarium* (1969) 1807e.

<sup>2</sup> Rosa Söder, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und die romanhafte Literatur der Antike* (Stuttgart 1932), esp. 25–28 (on the travels of Thomas) and 194 (on the *Acts* as a series of originally distinct stories). A novelistic omen in the *Acts* is Charisios’ binding of his left sandal to his right foot: W. M. Calder III, *AJP* 103 (1982) 88f, on 206.2 Bonnet.

<sup>3</sup> P. Devos, *AnalBoll* 69 (1951) 123.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*<sup>2</sup> (London 1974) 1369–70.

<sup>5</sup> *The Apocryphal New Testament* (London 1924) 364.

<sup>6</sup> W. Wright, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* II (London/Edinburgh 1871) 279–83 (from Syriac). Compare 251.10–258.19 Bonnet (Greek).

sion of the martyrdom in some Greek texts (including Bonnet's P)<sup>7</sup> may well reflect a superior version now lost from the Syriac.

However, the Greek versions, though rendered from Syriac, are closer to the original than the extant Syriac versions in one essential matter: the Gnostic tendency is much stronger in the Greek. This can be seen most clearly in the "Ode to Sophia."<sup>8</sup> Here the Greek gives "the maid is the daughter of light" but the Syriac has the Christian adaptation "my Church is the daughter of light"; the thirty-two who praise the maid in the Greek have become in the extant Syriac versions the twelve Apostles and the seventy-two Disciples; and at the end of the ode the living Pneuma, the Father of Truth, and the Mother of Sophia (in the Greek) have been changed (in the Syriac) to "Father, Son, and Spirit, His Wisdom."

The present paper makes use of certain textual evidence in the Greek *Acts* in order to clarify some problems in the imagined itinerary of the apostle. The evidence is mainly geographical and toponymic, and when we have examined it we shall be able to perceive more clearly the East Syrian context wherein the *Acts* originated.

Our first geographical question is: where did Abbanes and Judas-Thomas meet? After the Saviour appeared to Thomas at night and ordered him to preach in India, the apostle said that he would not go to the Indians. Next it is said that Abbanes happened to be there (ἐκεῖ, 101.4 Bonnet) in his search, at the command of king Goundaphoros, for a carpenter. ἐκεῖ seems, *prima facie*, to mean Jerusalem where, we are told earlier, Thomas and the other apostles had gathered. However, there are difficulties in the inference that Abbanes was also in Jerusalem. Having been conducted to Abbanes after the sale, Thomas went aboard the merchant's ship: he cannot have done that at Jerusalem. Moreover, in the Syriac it is not said that Abbanes was "there"; the text states that Abbanes had come "into the south country" (II 147 Wright). From the point of view of an East Syrian author 'the south country' would be rather Mesopotamia than Palestine. Thus in the original version of the *Acts* Abbanes is likely to have met Thomas in Mesopotamia, whither the Lord conducted the apostle from Jerusalem.

Abbanes and his slave Judas-Thomas set out by ship from the place of their meeting and with a fair breeze came gently to a city called "Andrapolis, a royal city" in some of the Greek manuscripts and in the Syriac "the town of SDRWK."<sup>9</sup> Commentators have, so

<sup>7</sup> *Paris.gr.* 1510, saec. XI.

<sup>8</sup> 109.1-110.20 Bonnet, II 150-52 Wright.

<sup>9</sup> I 174.12 in Wright's Syriac text.

far as I can discover, without exception assumed that the town or city was in India. However, the assumption must also be questioned. Not all the Greek texts state that 'Andrapolis' was in India, and in the Syriac it is not until Abbanes and Thomas reach the realm of Goundaphoros at the beginning of the second Act that Thomas is said to enter into India. Thus there is no obligation to follow von Gutschmid in equating 'Andrapolis' with a "Stadt des Andras, d.h. des Königs der Andhra."<sup>10</sup> Nor are we required to connect SNDRWK with Sindh.<sup>11</sup>

In one group of Greek texts (BHM of Bonnet's class Γ) 'Andrapolis' is called *ἐναδρωχ*, a corruption of \**Σεναδρωχ* (from the Syriac SNDRWK).<sup>12</sup> The alternative place-name has resisted identification not only because it does not in fact refer to India but also because it is corrupt. *εἰς Ἀνδράπολιν, πόλιν βασιλικήν* suffers from dittography. If †*Ἀνδρα-* is combined with SNDRWK (or \**Σεναδρωχ*) an identification is possible: Hatra, al Haḍr (*Ἄτραι*).<sup>13</sup> In Aramaic and Syriac texts this trading city in the desert between the Tigris and the Euphrates on the caravan route from the middle Tigris valley to Edessa was called *Ḥaṭre d' Sanatrūk*. Sanatrūk was the supposed founder,<sup>14</sup> and a powerful king who reigned in the middle of the second century A.D. bore the same name.<sup>15</sup> The name itself is of Parthian origin.<sup>16</sup>

Thus the first place visited by Abbanes and Thomas after they departed by ship from the place of their meeting was Hatra.<sup>17</sup> They cannot have travelled by ship all the way to Hatra, but in the original *Acts* part of their journey may well have been by barge downstream

<sup>10</sup> *RhM* N.F. 19 (1864) 182–83.

<sup>11</sup> A. Dihle (following a suggestion by Herzfeld), *JbAC* 6 (1963) 59–60.

<sup>12</sup> xxi and 104.4 app.crit. Bonnet.

<sup>13</sup> For the Greek form of the name see Arrian *FGrHist* 156F48.

<sup>14</sup> Note also Joseph Marquart's suggestion that Mani introduced a giant Sanaṭrūg of Ḥaṭrē into his *Book of Giants: Philologus* Suppl. 10 (1907) 229. Concerning the *Book* see Timothy of Constantinople *De recept.haer.* (Migne, PG 86.21), and Birūni *Chron.* 191.6 tr. E. Sachau.

<sup>15</sup> A. Maricq, "Hatra de Sanatrouq," *Syria* 32 (1955) 273–88.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Phlegon *FGrHist* 257F12.7 and [Lucian] *Macrob.* 15. It is not certain that Sanaṭrūk of Hatra was already king there at the time of the successful defence of the city against Trajan (for which see Cass. Dio 68.31–32 [III<sup>2</sup> 219–20 Boissevain], and F. A. Lepper, *Trajan's Parthian War* [Oxford 1948] 211–12). In any case he must be distinguished from the Sanatroukes defeated with his Parthian force by Trajan or Quietus: Dio 68.30 and Suda s.v. *Σανατρούκης* (Σ 89 Adler), with U. P. Boissevain, *Hermes* 25 (1890) 329–39. For the defeated Sanatroukes see Stähelin, *RE* 1A (1920) 2231–32 s.v. "Sanatrukes."

<sup>17</sup> James (*supra* n.5) 366 and G. Bornkamm (in E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha* II, ed. W. Schneemelcher [London 1975] 444) do not alert readers to the textual difficulty in 'Andrapolis'.

along the Tigris or the Euphrates. Consistent with the inference that originally there was a river journey at the beginning of the *Acts* is the claim of the apostle to be good at making oars for barges and ferryboats. Oars for ferryboats are twice mentioned by him in the Syriac;<sup>18</sup> they are more apt to river navigation than to a sea journey. From Hatra Abbanes and Thomas in the original version would have made their way by river to the head of the Persian Gulf and thence to the realm of Goundaphoros in India in an ocean-going ship.<sup>19</sup>

A precedent for the journey past the head of the Gulf was found by the Gnostic author of the *Acts* in the "Song of the Pearl," an originally independent composition incorporated into the narrative.<sup>20</sup> In the song the traveller from the East passed through the borders of Maishan (Mesene), "the meeting place of the merchants of the East"—near the modern Basra, in ancient Charakene. Thence on his way to Egypt the traveller reached the land of Babel and entered the walls of Sarbūg. Sarbūg is rendered as 'Labyrinthos' in the Greek, but it has yet to be identified.<sup>21</sup> On the return journey from Egypt to the East the traveller passed Sarbūg and, having left Babel on his left hand, came again to Maishan, "to the haven of merchants, which sitteth on the shore of the sea." Thus the Gnostic author knew that not only Hatra but also Maishan profited from trade with India and the East. Indeed the mention of Hatra in the *Acts* suits well the hypothesis that the author was a Bardesanite, because the *Book of the Laws of the Lands* shows the Bardesanites to have studied the customs of Hatra.<sup>22</sup> The trade of Hatra declined after the attack on the city by Sapor I, and a further blow to the caravan trade was the attack of Aurelian on Palmyra. The author of the *Acts* was writing while the trade was still flourishing, sometime in the first half of the third century A.D.

Goundaphoros in the *Acts* has been much discussed. It is certain that there was a king of the name in northwestern India at about the epoch of St Thomas. Goundaphoros in the Greek and GWDNPR<sup>23</sup> in the Syriac match Guduvhara (Gondophernes), the Parthian form of

<sup>18</sup> II 148 and 159 Wright.

<sup>19</sup> Concerning Palmyrene connexions with Kharg island in the Persian Gulf in the third century A.D. see E. W. Gray, *JRS* 45 (1955) 199–200, and R. Ghirshman, "L'île de Kharg (Ikaros) dans le golfe Persique," *RevArch* 1959.1, 70–77.

<sup>20</sup> II 238–45 Wright, 220.11–224.20 Bonnet.

<sup>21</sup> O. Omodeo, *ParPass* I (1946) 337, thought that Labyrinthos in Egypt (Hdt. 2.148) might have been intended.

<sup>22</sup> W. Cureton, *Spicilegium Syriacum* (London 1855) 22 ([Bardesanes] *FGrHist* 719 F3.24). Compare also the gold-wearing men of the Geloi in [Bardesanes] F3.19 with the mention of gold of Gilan in the *v.l.* in the "Song of the Pearl" (tr. James [*supra* n.5] 411).

<sup>23</sup> As at I 173.3 Wright.

the name, which comes from an Iranian \**Vindafarna* and means 'winner of victory'.<sup>24</sup> The Takht-i-Bahi inscription of Guduvhara is dated, according to Rapson's calculation, to the year 103 of the Vikrama system in A.D. 45 and to the twenty-sixth year of his reign.<sup>25</sup> Thus he began to rule about A.D. 19. Since many of his coins have been found in the Kabul valley, it is likely that he ruled there as well as in northwestern India. Earlier in his career he had acted as viceroy in Arachosia, where eastern Iranian connexions were strong. He was one of the Skytho-Parthians or Pahlavas, who used to take Saka and Parthian names. From a Mesopotamian viewpoint he could have been regarded as a Parthian.

In the earliest testimony to the apostolate of Thomas the saint is said to have been allotted Parthia.<sup>26</sup> At first this may have meant that he went no further than Parthian territory at Edessa, but it became at least plausible to imagine him to have gone so far as a realm in India ruled by a great king of partly Parthian origin, who was known to have reigned there during the inferred period of Thomas's missionary activity. However, the synchronism shows, not that Thomas went to India in the second quarter of the first century A.D., but that the author of the *Acts* knew the date of Gondophernes. The main question, as P. Peeters pointed out, is to know, was it quite impossible for a Syrian (of Edessa, for example) to have heard about king Gondophernes except from a local Indian tradition of a meeting with Thomas?<sup>27</sup> We do not have to answer the question in the affirmative. Since trade between upper Mesopotamia and northwest India both overland and by way of Mesene and the Persian Gulf was frequent during the first three centuries A.D., knowledge of Gondophernes and his kingdom would have been available in Syriac-speaking communities of Mesopotamia from the mid-first century onwards. The king was specially memorable, because after his reign Pahlava power rapidly declined. Thus in dating the king correctly the author of the *Acts* does not also prove that St Thomas went beyond Parthia to India. What

<sup>24</sup> J. Filliozat, *JSav* 1981, 133 n.83. The dating of Greek letter-forms on the king's coins is discussed by A. K. Narain, *The Indo-Greeks* (Oxford 1957) 158. For the possibility that the king's brother Gad in the *Acts* has a historical antecedent in Guḍa who is associated with Guduvhara on coins see E. J. Rapson, *The Cambridge History of India I* (Cambridge 1922) 579.

<sup>25</sup> Rapson (*supra* n. 24) 576.

<sup>26</sup> Eus. *HE* 3.11 (I 88 Schwartz). Part of the passage comes from Origen (*Expl.Gen.* 3), whom Eusebius mentions here, but it is not certain that the naming of Thomas in connexion with Parthia comes to Eusebius from Origen: cf. A. von Harnack, *Der kirchengeschichtliche Ertrag der exegetischen Schriften des Origines I* (Leipzig 1918) 14–15.

<sup>27</sup> *AnalBoll* 44 (1926) 402–03.

the author shows is an interest in India; in this he was like other Bardesanites, as we can see from the *Book of the Laws of the Lands*,<sup>28</sup> but his interest provides no support for the supposition of von Gutschmid that there was Buddhist influence upon the *Acts*.<sup>29</sup>

In the *Acts* the kingdom of Goundaphoros is distinguished from that of Misdaios, but both are said to be in India. The position of Misdaios' kingdom is more precisely defined in three Greek manuscripts (FLZ of Bonnet's group Σ). In them Misdaios (Mazdai) is said to have departed, immediately before the martyrdom, to the city of Aksum, *εἰς Ἀξούμην τὴν πόλιν* (278.15 Bonnet). The detail is not found in the Syriac version, nor according to Bonnet is it in the Ethiopic, but its appearance within the Greek textual tradition is significant, because, if Misdaios departed to Aksum, then he was regarded as an Ethiopian, and the India wherein Thomas was martyred was a Hither India, distinct from the India where Goundaphoros ruled.<sup>30</sup> The existence of different Indias was acknowledged in the apostolic apocrypha: in the *Passio* of St Bartholomew an attempt is made to distinguish three of them. One of the three is said to extend to Ethiopia;<sup>31</sup> it is the India thought in the Greek *Acts* to have been in the kingdom of Misdaios. It is the Himyarite (Homerite) India in southern Arabia, across the Red Sea from Aksum.

In the *Hodoiporia* from Eden to the land of the Romans the following sequence of countries is included: Greater India, Aksum, (over the Red Sea to) Little India, Persis.<sup>32</sup> Greater India is the further India, called "interior" by Sokrates,<sup>33</sup> who denied that it had been enlightened by Christianity before the time of Constantine; Little India is the India of the Homerites, adjacent to the Red Sea and easily reached by the Ethiopians of Aksum. In the geographical conception of the Gnostic author of the *Acts of Thomas*, Goundaphoros belongs to a part of further India, but it is not certain that in the original text Misdaios had been placed so far away. What is certain is that some of the Greek interpreters saw fit to associate the martyrdom of Thomas, not with further India, but with Little India, which they knew to be within reach of the Ethiopians of Aksum.

<sup>28</sup> Cureton (*supra* n.22) 17–18. [Bardesanes] *FGrHist* 719F1, 2, and 3.14.

<sup>29</sup> *Supra* n.10: 179–83.

<sup>30</sup> As R. A. Lipsius remarked in passing, *Die Apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden* I (Braunschweig 1883) 236.

<sup>31</sup> *prima est India quae ad Aethiopiam mittit* (*Passio S. Barth. Apost.* 2.1, 128 Bonnet).

<sup>32</sup> Ed. A. Klotz, *RhM* N.F. 65 (1910) 38–47. For Little India see also the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* 17 Rougé.

<sup>33</sup> *HE* 1.19. Concerning the different meanings of 'India' in late Roman and early Byzantine sources see K. Meister, *RhM* N.F. 64 (1909) 360–61.

We have already noted Gnostic interest in itineraries in connexion with the journey of Thomas and Abbanes and with the return journey in the "Song of the Pearl." In the "Song" the traveller comes from far away in the East; in the *Hodoiporia* the journey starts in Eden. That the *Hodoiporia* or an itinerary very like it was studied by Gnostics is suggested by the title in some of the manuscripts: 'Οδοιπορία τοῦ αἰῶνος.<sup>34</sup> Thus the notion of at least two Indias was not alien to Gnostic thought, and such itineraries could be compared with the journey of the soul through life. Such is the journey in the "Song of the Pearl."

Apart from the explicit mention of Aksum in some of the Greek texts there is a personal name also pointing to an Ethiopian connexion of Thomas. In the later part of the *Acts* the son of the wicked king Misdaïos is appointed deacon by the apostle and Siphor is appointed presbyter (281.2, 284.14 Bonnet). In the Syriac text the son's name is given as WZN, rendered Vizān by Wright. In the Greek there are signs that the translator(s) had difficulty in adding vowels, for the name has suffered much distortion, the following forms being found: Οὐαζάνης (259.3), Εἰουζάνης (283.3), Οὐζάνιος (285.1), Οὐζάνης (263.2), Ἰουαζάνου (264.14: genitive, perhaps from τοῦ Ἀζάνου), Οὐαζάνου (264.14), Ἀζάνου (265.14). Of the Greek variants Οὐζάνης is closest to Syriac WZN. The name has resisted classification: von Gutschmid asserted that Ἰουζάνης was "wahrscheinlich eine Umschreibung von *Wij'en*, der Pehlewiform des neupersischen *Bij'en*,"<sup>35</sup> but the identification looks far-fetched. A key to the correct identification is provided by the connexion of Misdaïos with Aksum. Royal names of the Aksumites frequently end in -zena or -zana. The termination is rendered into Greek by -ζανᾶς. Thus the name Tazena is found in the Ethiopian king-lists,<sup>36</sup> and an Ethiopic prince of the time of the emperor Constantius II was called Sazanas (Σαζανᾶς).<sup>37</sup>

A contemporary of Sazanas and one of the greatest of Ethiopian kings, who was moreover the first of the Ethiopian rulers in Aksum to adopt Christianity, also bore a name ending in -zana: it is given as 'ēzana in a Ge'ez inscription and Aksumite coins give his name in Greek as HZANA.<sup>38</sup> In the inscription set up before his conversion to Christianity his dominions include the lands of the Aksumites, of the

<sup>34</sup> Cf. F. Pfister, *RhM* N.F. 66 (1911) 458 n.3

<sup>35</sup> *Supra* n.10: 166.

<sup>36</sup> E. A. Wallis Budge, *History of Ethiopia* I (London 1928) 211-12.

<sup>37</sup> Letter of Constantius II quoted in St Athanasius, *Apol.Const.* 31 (Migne, *PG* 25.636B).

<sup>38</sup> A. Caquot and P. Nautin, *JSav* 1970, 266.

Homerites (of hither 'India'), of the Ethiopians and of other peoples, and he is called "king of kings, son of the unconquered god Ares," his name being given as Ἀειζανᾶς (*OGIS* 200). In the letter of Constantius II to him and to Sazanias the form Ἀιζανᾶς is found.

WZN in the Syriac of the *Acts of Thomas* and Οὐζάνης in the Greek are so close to the Ge'ez 'ēzana that we may regard them as equivalents. Thus the deacon converted by Thomas in the novelistic *Acts* received his name from the historical figure of the first Christian king of Ethiopia. In the Greek *Acts* the son of the Aksumite king is one of the apostle's first converts in hither India; analogously Ezana who ruled over the Ethiopian 'India' of the Homerites in southern Arabia was the first Christian monarch of Aksum.

If Ezana the deacon owes his name and his literary existence to king Ezana of Aksum, then the deacon cannot have entered the tale of Thomas earlier than the conversion of Aksum in the reign of Constantius II. The deacon plays a significant rôle in the extant narrative of the martyrdom, but it does not also follow that the entire martyrdom as we have it in the *Acts* originated as late as the time of Constantius II. Ezana was introduced to the story when the kingdom of Mazdai was identified with Aksum and Aksumite 'India';<sup>39</sup> by means of the identification the martyrdom was also transferred to Aksumite territory and the name of the first Christian king of Ethiopia was endowed with apostolic precedent. The literary device of adding Ezana reflects the fact that there were strong Syriac influences upon early Ethiopian Christianity;<sup>40</sup> indeed Frumentius the first bishop of Aksum had been a Syrian. Thus a century or more after the Bardesanite composition of the *Acts* they were modified in order to take cognisance of the conversion of Aksum.

If the original author of the *Acts* was a Bardesanite Gnostic,<sup>41</sup> then he may have been writing at Edessa, the home of Bardesanes. An Edessene origin of the *Acts* has been declared "likely" (*supra* n.4), but there are two geographical arguments against Edessa. First, there is the

<sup>39</sup> Thus Mazdai cannot originally have been an Aksumite; it is arguable that the name is a corruption of the Persian Hormizdas (<'Ορ>μορδαίος): for in a list of the twelve (not three) Magi who came to Christ at Bethlehem there are included the names Hōrmīzdād son of Sītārūḳ (Sanatrwk) and Gūshnāsāph son of Gūndaphar. It seems that the original author of the *Acts* took the names Hōrmīzdād, Sanatrwk, and Gūndaphar from such a list; Thomas was to travel to the East as the wise men had come to the West before him. For the twelve Magi and their offerings see the list in chapter 39 of Bishop Shelemon, *The Book of the Bee* (ed. and tr. E. A. Wallis Budge, Oxford 1886); the bishop lived in the thirteenth century but drew on much earlier sources.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians*<sup>3</sup> (Oxford 1973) 95, 97–98.

<sup>41</sup> The use of the expression 'Bardesanite Gnostic' is not intended to imply that Bardesanes himself was a Gnostic dualist. Connexions of the *Acts* with the Bardesanites are discussed by Bornkamm (*supra* n.17) 440.



statement that after the martyrdom one of the brotherhood stole the saint's bones away "to the parts of the West" (εἰς τὰ τῆς δύσεως μετήνευκε μέρη).<sup>42</sup> The expression shows, as F. C. Burkitt saw,<sup>43</sup> that the writer may well have been composing the passage in a place to the east of Edessa (whither the bones were taken); variants include εἰς Μεσοποταμίαν and in the Latin *Miracula* explicitly *et in urbe Edissa a nostris sepultus est*.<sup>44</sup> Second, there is the name of the lady Mygdonia, whom Thomas converted. The choice of a Macedonian name for the putative Indian heroine is surprising but significant. Her name is an *ethnikon*, and it points to the Seleucid domains around Nisibis. The Greek name of Nisibis was Antiocheia Mygdonia or Antiocheia in Mygdonia.<sup>45</sup> Past the city the river Mygdonios flows. Thus it is possible that the Syriac author of the original *Acts* made the choice of the Greek name Mygdonia for his heroine—a determined convert to encratism—because he was writing in or near Nisibis in Mygdonia. The inference gains strength from the first of the geographical arguments, because Nisibis lay to the east of Edessa and was a copious source of literature in Syriac. The choice of the Greek name should not be used to support a claim that the story of the heroine Mygdonia was initially composed in Greek. The name Mygdonia found its way into Syriac and a pseudo-etymology was provided for it: in Guidi's anonymous Syriac Chronicle it is explained that Nisibis was called Antioch of Mygdonia because of the gardens and parks there<sup>46</sup>—thus the name is linked to the Syriac noun MGDN 'fruit'. So a Syrian writer at Nisibis would have had no difficulty in giving the Greek name Μυγδονία adopted into Syriac to his fictional Indian heroine.

When the author of the *Acts* placed the death of Thomas in 'India', he had to take account of the fact that the relics of the saint were known to be kept outside Edessa.<sup>47</sup> Therefore he added to his

<sup>42</sup> 286.5 Bonnet. In the *Bee* (*supra* n.39) the body of St Thomas is said to have been taken to Edessa by Ḥabbān the merchant.

<sup>43</sup> *JThS* 1 (1900) 289.

<sup>44</sup> 286.11–12 Bonnet with app.crit. See also J. B. Segal, *Edessa 'The Blessed City'* (Oxford 1970) 174. Latin versions of the *Miracula* and *Passio* are listed in *BHL* K–Z (Brussels 1900–01) 8137–38. See also *Supplementum BHL* (Brussels 1911) 8137a, b.

<sup>45</sup> Plb. 5.51.1, Strab. 16.1.23 (747), Steph. Byz. s.v. Ἀντιόχεια 3 (99.11f Meineke).

<sup>46</sup> See Th. Nöldeke, "Die von Guidi herausgegebene syrische Chronik," *Sitz Wien* 128 (1893) 11 ch. 10 with n.5.

<sup>47</sup> U. Monneret de Villard cannot be said to have demonstrated that the body of St Thomas was brought to Batnai before being transferred to Edessa ("La Fiera di Batnae e la Traslazione di S. Tomaso a Edessa," *RendLinc* VI.8 [1951] 77–104), but Batnai may nonetheless have a place in the *Acts*: for Sarbūg in the "Song of the Pearl" may well be a corruption Sarūg (Batnai), Sarūg<sup>h</sup> of the Arabs, and it is known from Amianus Marcellinus that Batnai was a station in the overland line of trade with India and beyond: he mentions at the annual festival of Batnai goods *quae Indi mittunt et Seres aliaque plurima vehi terra marique consueta* (14.3.3). See Monneret de Villard 77.

narrative the statement that the bones had been stolen away from the kingdom of Misdaios. It was necessary to retain the story of the transfer in those versions which specified the kingdom of Misdaios to have been Aksumite India. Thus, whether or not St Thomas ever visited one of the territories called India in Roman imperial times,<sup>48</sup> the earliest known resting-place of his relics was Edessa; his death in an India is not necessarily a primary part of the tradition—and, moreover, as the *Acts* show, this India was not the India of Goundaphoros, even if the apostle did in fact visit the realm of that king; a secondary development of the tradition is the placing of the martyrdom in Aksumite ‘India’ in southern Arabia. But our concern here has not been with the question of the historicity of St Thomas’s missionary journeys. Our aim has been to show that the internal geography of the narrative of the *Acts* helps to explain how they were composed and adapted. In the study of them a place must be found not only for Edessa, but in addition the Hatra of Sanatrūk,<sup>49</sup> the rivers of Mesopotamia,<sup>50</sup> the India of the Aksumites, and Nisibis in Mygdonia are all pertinent to the examination of the apostle’s travels, miracles, and martyrdom.<sup>51</sup>

THE QUEEN’S UNIVERSITY OF BELFAST  
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<sup>48</sup> In this matter a warning of the Bollandists should be more often heeded: “in mente habendum praeter ea quae in evangeliiis scripta sunt nihil de vita et morte S. Thomae traditum esse nisi in libris apocryphis. si quid forte in eis latitat quod ab historiae cultoribus contemnendum non sit, id operose eruere artis criticae est”: *AASS 69 Propylaeum* 595 (Dec. 21).

<sup>49</sup> It is not appropriate here to explore the identification by Syriac writers of the Hatra of Sanadrūk with the Calah of Genesis 10.11. For this and other such equations (e.g. Erech-Edessa, Akkad-Nisibis) see Nöldeke (*supra* n.46) 41 and n. 3. In the geography of Neofiti Nisibis is equated with Chalne: Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament* (Shannon 1972) 197, who also notes (194) that Edessa-Erech is found in St Ephrem.

<sup>50</sup> R. Ghirshman’s remarks on the India trade in the Gulf and on the rivers deserve to be quoted: “La présence de marchands palmyréniens dans une île du golfe Persique révèle un aspect inconnu de l’activité de ce grand centre commercial qu’était Palmyre. On sait que les caravanes descendaient de là vers Babylone, Séleucie sur le Tigre, Suse, Charax. La présence constatée sur l’île de Kharg permet d’apercevoir là un autre aspect, maritime, de l’activité palmyrénienne. Les marchandises amenées de l’Inde sur les bateaux de haute mer étaient transbordées sur des navires plus petits; ceux-ci remontaient l’Euphrate jusqu’aux points où des caravanes les attendaient pour emporter leur fret” (*supra* n.19: 76).

<sup>51</sup> In *BHO* (Brussels 1910) 1186–1222 (–1226 including *Laudationes*) there are listed the *Acta Thomae* and the *Martyrium*, in whole or in part, in Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Arabic, and Ethiopic.