

Paul Davids
at the Taj Mahal



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"It was then that Issa clandestinely left his father's house, went out of Jerusalem, and, in company with some merchants traveled toward Sind, that he might perfect himself in the divine word and study the laws of the great Buddhas."

"The Life of St. Issa"
Translated by Nicolas Notovitch

• BY LEN KASTEN

Hollywood producer Paul Davids seems to have an affinity for what appear to be "lost causes." He is intrigued by stories about brave and persistent individuals who fight on heroically in pursuit of gaining acceptance of an important principle or an idea that the world has ignored or already rejected. This proclivity for championing the antihero has been demonstrated throughout his filmmaking career. In view of this, it is no surprise that he became very interested in the Edward Martin story. Our readers may recall that we published an article about Martin's book, *King of Travelers: Jesus' Lost Years in India* (Jonah Publishing, 1999), in *A.R.* #59, titled "Jesus in India." Martin's thesis—that Jesus spent the so-called "missing years" of his life; i.e., from 13 to 30, in India and Tibet—was based on his travels in India, and on years of research. Martin further gives evidence in the book that Jesus survived the crucifixion and traveled back to India with his mother, Mary, who died en route and was buried in Pakistan. He claims that Jesus later married in India, had several children, and died at the age of 110, and that his tomb still exists near Srinigar in the Himalayan foothills. This post-crucifixion part of the story was not covered in our article.

An Epic Journey

Martin's adventures and his book came to the attention of Robert Rotstan Jr, a close friend and associate of Davids'. Apparently, Rotstan recognized in Martin's lonely uphill battle to fill a vital gap in the life of Jesus, against a disinterested, and even hostile, Christian world, the kind of story that fascinated Davids, and he arranged to bring them together. After a brief introductory meeting in March, 2003, Martin, Davids and Rotstan had lunch in Hollywood in June, at which time a documentary movie project was first discussed. The idea was dropped for awhile, and then revived with new energy in early 2005 when Davids learned that Martin was planning his third trip to India that summer.



The ancient Meenakshi Temple is in Madurai in southern India. These ancient temples post-date the era of Jesus by hundreds of years, although other Hindu temples and learning centers were at these locations in Jesus' day.

Jesus in India

Making the Movie with Filmmaker Paul Davids

Davids quickly obtained the financing, designed a shooting schedule based on a cursory script, put together a combined American-Indian production team, and made the arrangements for filming in India to begin in June, 2005, accompanied by Martin.

It was to be an epic six-week journey, undertaken during the worst time of year weather-wise. Indian heat and humidity would be at the annual zenith, and the trip would extend throughout the monsoon season, which meant probable heavy rains. But the planned dates were dictated by Martin's work schedule. Anil Kumar Urmil, also from Los Angeles, was Davids' co-producer. The Indian members of the team were H.R. Madhusudan (Madhu), the Production Manager, who was Anil's brother-in-

law, Nelvan Binney, Assistant Director, Dnyanesh Moghe, second cameraman and Sanjay Shetye, associate producer and travel agent. The shooting itinerary was ambitious and daunting. They were to travel about 4,000 miles from Goa, first to the south to Bangalore and Madurai, and then northeast to the coast to Chennai (Madras) and Puri, then over to Kolkata (Calcutta) in extreme eastern India and up to Darjeeling and Sikkim. This eastward leg of the journey would take them up into the cool and welcome mountain country for awhile before they descended again to the intense heat of central India. On the westward leg, they were to stop first in Varanasi (Benares) and then go over to Bareilly, New Delhi and Agra, all in north central India. Then north again, this time to the



The church of Saint Thomas on St. Thomas Mount in Chennai, India, is a little yellow building located at the exact spot where St. Thomas had his church and preached about 2,000 years ago.



Himalayan foothills to Dharamsala and Amritsar, and finally to the politically volatile and dangerous city of Srinigar in “the vale of Kashmir.” The plan was to film supplemental footage until reaching the Jagannath Temple at Puri, and then attempt to loosely follow in the purported footsteps of Jesus up into Kashmir. It was urgent to complete the southern segment quickly and then move north as soon as possible to try and stay ahead of the monsoon rains which come up from the south. Martin took detailed notes throughout the trip. These ultimately became the basis of his second book, published in October, 2008, *Jesus in India, King of Wisdom: The Making of the Film & New Findings on Jesus’ Lost Years* (Yellow Hat Publishing). This account of the trip is taken from his book.

Hindu Concurrence

In Bangalore, they were able to obtain an interview with the resident Hindu priest of the ISKON Temple who was in charge of the computer database. The magnificent ISKON temple is the world center of the

Author of *King of Travelers*, Edward T. Martin at the Buddhist prayer wheels in Dharamsala, near the headquarters of the Dalai Lama, who contributed to the film.

international Krishna Consciousness movement, the home of the Hare Krishna devotees. The young priest told them that their records show that the Spiritual Master of the temple, Swami Prabhunanda, confirmed that Jesus had studied at the Jagannath Temple in Puri. They were informed that Prabhunanda was aware of the *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ* by Levi Dowling, and that his sources confirmed that those channeled writings describing the travels and studies of Jesus in India were true. Of interest here is the fact that the young priest referred to Jesus as “Issa,” the name used in the original book by Nicolas Notovitch, *The Secret Life of Jesus Christ*. In Madurai, they were granted an interview with the Head Priest of the massive Meenakshi Temple Complex, consisting of several huge towers dominating the city, completely covered at every level with sacred statues. Only Hindus may enter the Temple, and it is the site of reverent pilgrimages, but the film crew was granted access. According to the recorded transcript, the Head Priest said, “He’s (Jesus) taken one part of Hindu culture, namely patience, love, affection—because Hindu culture is something very big...But Jesus has taken that message to Western culture and preached it over there.”

In Chennai, the production team was able to film inside the St. Thomas Chapel, rebuilt on the very spot where, in the original chapel, St. Thomas had preached for 20 years

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after arriving in India about 52 A.D. It was there on that hilltop in Mylapore, now called St. Thomas Mount, that St. Thomas had been assassinated by a Hindu fanatic in 72 A.D. They also filmed in the Cathedral of St. Thomas in Chennai, a beautiful white gothic structure, and in the actual tomb of St. Thomas near the cathedral, where a wax likeness of the apostle lies in repose. The Gospel of St. Thomas, not in the New Testament, was discovered with the Dead Sea Scrolls at Nag Hammadi in 1948. The very presence of Thomas in India, especially in the easternmost area near Puri, where Jesus is claimed to have studied, is a strong testimony to the earlier presence there of Jesus. As Martin says, "If St. Thomas could get there, why not Jesus?" It would tend to indicate that Jesus told his disciples about his Indian sojourn, which seems very likely.

A Surprise at Jagganath

After an all-day trip northward along the eastern coast on an express train in which part of the team suffered without air conditioning on a sweltering day, the wilted crew arrived in Bhubeneshwar, the capital of Orissa state, from where they would proceed to the Jagganath Temple at Puri. This would be the most crucial segment of the entire shoot. In the words of Martin, "...a large and looming question during our journey was: what would authorities at Jagganath, today, say about Jesus in India? Specifically, what would the Shankaracharya, one of the four ecclesiastical heads of modern Hinduism, who presides at the Jagannath Temple, have to say about such claims? Could access to such an authority ever be gained by our film crew? If so, we knew it would be truly historic." To their astonishment, the Shankaracharya granted an interview, even to include the non-Hindu Davids and Martin! Davids was made an "honorary Hindu" for the occasion because of his devotion to Yogananda, and "what the heck," they allowed the unaffiliated Martin in, too. And most surprising, they permitted filming. Anil conducted the interview in Hindi, later translated and subtitled for the film. The 20-minute conversation categorically confirmed everything that Martin had written about. The Shankaracharya said, "The Jagannath Temple was established as an education center in 483 B.C...Jesus studied our teachings of Truthfulness, Mercy, Charity, Serving Others, Compassion and Ethics." And then, "...the truth has been covered up." For this revelation alone, the entire trip can be considered a smashing success.

The Den of the Tiger

In the final chapter of the book titled "To Kashmir: Into the Den of the Tiger," Martin describes the attempt to film in The Tomb of Yuz Asaf, or Rozabal Tomb, widely believed



(Top) This image of Jesus is a bas-relief in the Basilica of St. Francis of Xavier in Goa, India. The sacramental bread Jesus holds is round, suggestive of naan bread of India. **(Lower Left)** The Tomb of Yuz Asaf, also called the Rozabal Tomb (tomb of the prophet) is believed by Ahmadiyya Muslims to be the grave of the historic personage of Jesus Christ, whom they claim was known as Yuz Asaf ("Leader of the Healed / Cleansed") during his journeys in the east after surviving the crucifixion. Although dismissed by orthodox Christianity, much emphasis has been compiled for this point of view, and there is an ancient carving of the prophet's feet at the tomb that shows the crucifixion scars. **(Lower Right)** Aziz Kashmiri, who wrote *Christ In Kashmir*, was one of the first inspirations for author Edward T. Martin, who found in that book considerable evidence that Jesus survived the crucifixion and later returned to India to remain in Kashmir. Reportedly, Jesus was for a time the spiritual advisor to King Shalivahan.

to be the final resting place of Jesus after his death in Kashmir. This took them to Srinagar, very close to the Pakistan border, and now home to a majority Muslim population known to be very hostile to Westerners. On his first visit to the tomb in 1974, Martin encountered no problems; but this time, they were advised to send only the Hindu members of the production crew. Kashmir is now rife with sectarian violence and contention over its control, and armed Indian peace-keeping soldiers are everywhere. So Davids and Martin lolled about on a houseboat in

Lake Dal while Anil and the others took the cameras to the Tomb. They were able to enter the Tomb and to film for only five minutes before a hostile crowd gathered outside, and they were forced to terminate the shoot. They reported that the interior of the Tomb was completely changed. The ornate wooden scrollwork was gone, replaced by a more functional look. He reported that the famous stone carving of the feet of Yuz Asaf, clearly showing the crucifixion scars in the soles, was now covered with a cloth. A photo of the carving, previously taken, is in Martin's >

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book.

The plan called for a final interview at the Hemis Monastery near Leh in Ladakh in Kashmir. According to Nicolas Notovitch, his book, *The Unknown Life of Jesus*, was taken from the documents shown to him by the head lama at Hemis. If they could perhaps see and film that ancient scroll proving that Jesus really did live and study there, it would have been the crowning achievement of the trip. But because of the political turmoil in Kashmir, it proved to be too dangerous to travel to Ladakh at that time, so they returned to New Delhi for the trip home. The Indian film footage constituted about 100 hours of material and became the core of the final documentary, but there was much more to be done. Paul Davids spent another year filming interviews necessary to flesh out the film. He says in an Afterword to the book, "What I lacked, and what I knew I would have to obtain was the input of scholars and ex-



perts who could shape the argument about the Missing Years of Jesus in a coherent way." This took him all over the globe and included interviews with university scholars, priests and rabbis, historians, and journalists. The final movie, 90 minutes in length, premiered at the Camelot Theater in Palm Springs, California, in October, 2008, and was shown twice on the Sundance Channel in December, 2008.

This film, some think, has the potential to revolutionize Christianity by virtue of the humanization of Jesus. By taking away the godlike status conferred upon him by Constantine, and showing him as the brilliant and courageous spiritual teacher who succeeded in bringing together three great religions of the world, it removes the superstition and ritual from Christianity yet leaves the world with a magnificent message of hope and renewal. As he himself said, "ye are gods," and "greater things than these shall you do." ■

Jesus in India, the movie is available now in DVD. So are the books which are associated with the movie. To order see the ad in the inside back cover of this magazine.