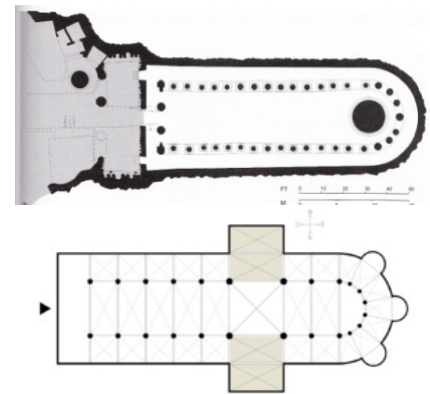
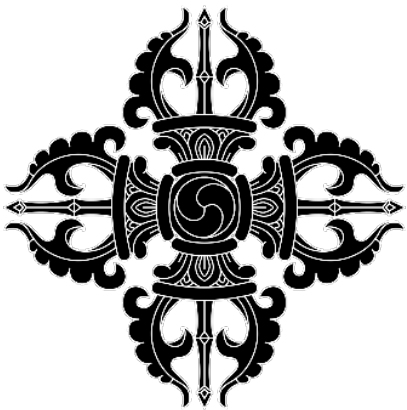
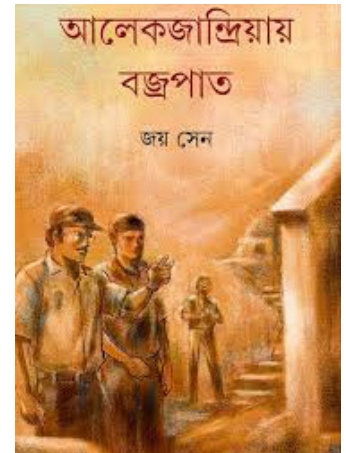


2

Thunderbolt strikes Alexandria:

Buddhist Missionaries and 'Therapeutae', the first Christians



*'...Rock-sculpture and rock architecture have been practiced in many countries in the past, particularly in Egypt and Assyria, by the Greeks in Lycia, and the Romans in Petra, while in Persia under the Achaemenids, and later by the Sassanids as seen at Naksh-I-Rustam.... but in none of these instances did the art of the rock-cutter show so wide a range or such audacity and imaginative power as in India, where some of the most **original** examples of architecture produced in this manner may be seen.... but the most striking fact in connection with the plan and the general design of the Buddhist Chaitya hall is its undeniable resemblance to the Greco-Roman basilica, a type of structure, which was being evolved in Europe about the same time'*

Percy Brown
Indian Architecture Vol 1

'...We can only say that there was always some contact between the Hellenic world and India, mediated first by the Achaemenid Empire, then that of the Seleucids, and finally, under the Romans, by the traders of the Indian Ocean. Christianity began to spread at the time when this contact was the closest. We know that Indian ascetics occasionally visited the West, and that there was a colony of Indian Merchants at Alexandria. The possibility of Indian influence on Neo-Platonism and early Christianity cannot be ruled out.'

A. L. Basham
The Wonder that was India

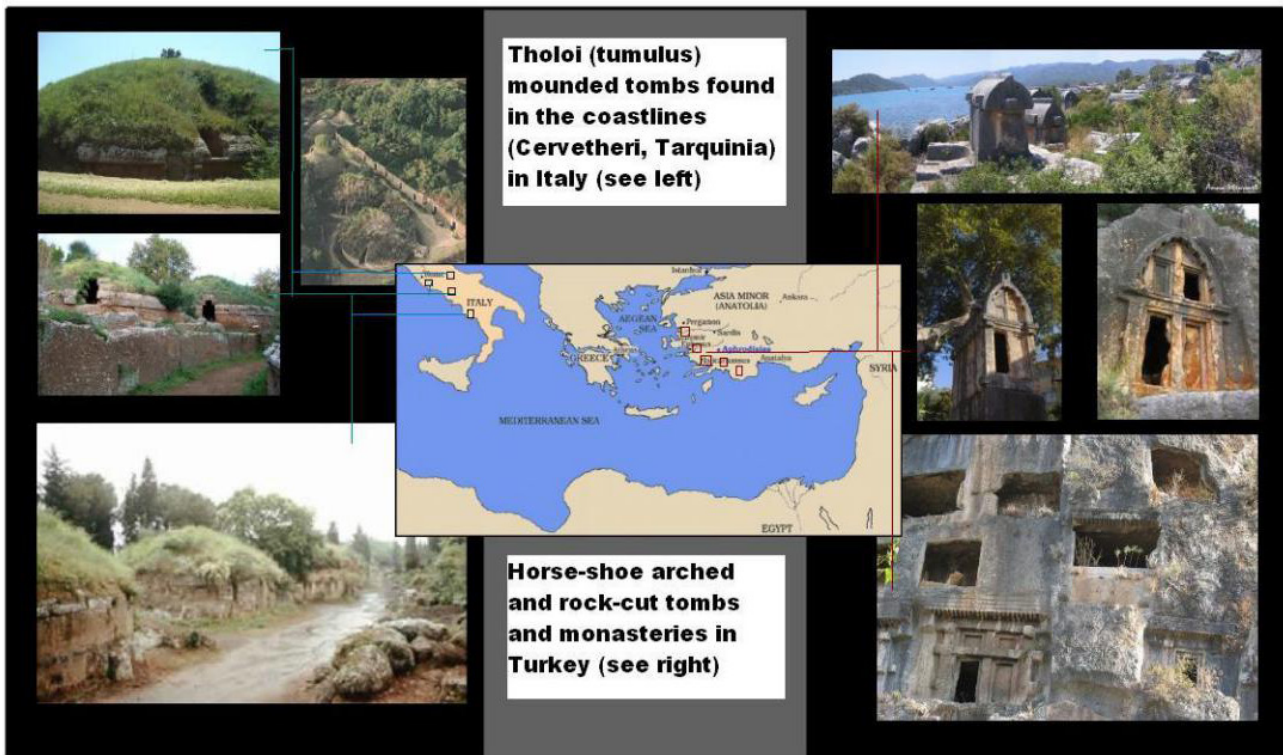
'... For Priyadarsi, the beloved of Gods, desires safety, self-control, justice, and happiness for all beings. The beloved of Gods considers that the greatest of all victories is the victory of righteousness, and that victory the Beloved of Gods has already won, here and on all his borders, even 600 leagues away in the realm of the Greek king Antiyoka, and beyond Antiyoka among the four kings Turamaya, Antikini, Maga and Alikasudara, and in the south among the Cholas and Pandyas and as far as Ceylon'.

Les Inscription d'Asoka, Paris
On 'Buddhist Missions to the Eastern Mediterranean'



The IIT Kharagpur team proceeded for another sequel of events in the Eastern Mediterranean after a successful discovery of events in the Ancient Near East (from India through Persia and in lands further west). The team reached the eastern Mediterranean by chance and discovered a set of striking similarities between the preaching of the Buddha and that of the Christ. Not only that, they also observed:

1. Strange similarities in spatial content, arrangement of furniture, chairs and the nature of collective worship between the more older order of Buddhist Chaitya Halls and the earliest rendition of Christian basilicas. Striking similarities were observed in forms of apsidal (semi-circular) ends and circuits of movements by worshippers (in the aisles and from the nave or *nabhi*) seen in both the earliest Buddhist rock-cut caves in India (200 BCE or earlier) and those in later Greco-Roman Basilicas. Such traditions of mass worship and mass initiates were also a central theme amongst the followers of Orpheus. Orphism was essentially Asiatic and a body of non-Olympian religious beliefs that emphasized the doctrine of transmigration of souls and principles of karmic reincarnation like Indian religions. Orphism was practiced in the ancient Cyclades and Anatolia and found its way into later European thought through the earliest Milesian sages of Greece and subsequently Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus and Spinoza. A portion of these beliefs were practiced by Pythagoreans and another great religion called Mithraism mysteries, whose origins were probably in India and Persia, with variations in the Roman Empire predating Christianity. Many of these belief systems were transferred as the basis of Christian sacraments, which the Christians labelled as 'pagan' or barbaric later.
2. With the fold of the aforesaid broadband argument, the team traced a significant mention of a sect called the "*Therapeutes of Alexandria*", whose earliest mentions come from the work of Philo of Alexandria. In Philo's work entitled '*De vita Contemplative*' the writer refers explicitly to this historic sect existing from times that pre-date Christianity by a hundred year. They are further mentioned in the earliest works of the Orthodox Church) by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, as a group of early (or earliest) Ascetics and Contemplative group, who were strangely baptized by St. Mark as the 'First original Christians', and St. Mark intentionally did it for deriving the new Gospel of truth from this body of 'Elders', as they are mentioned in the New Testament! The team found another startling similarity between the etymological roots of words that represented 'spiritual healing' of the two ancient religions, Christianity and Buddhism, where the former (1) succeeded the later (2) in terms of words like:
 1. *Therapy, Cathera, Therapeutics, Eleutheros (Al-der or elders), Catherine, Kythera, Theresa*
 2. *Theravada, Thera Buddhism, Sthavira (Sanskrit) or Thera (Pali)*
3. Finally, the group reached the shoreline of Turkey, where they witnessed a plethora of rock-cut tombs and rock-cut caves in the Anatolian coastline used solely for monastic traditions and entombment with traces of cremation (urnfield or tumulus pits). These caves or tomb system forwarded a style similarly used by Buddhist and other ascetic traditions of India. The similarity have had been found all along the western and southern coastline of Turkey and northern Syria, and even in Villanovan or Etruscan Italy. These areas in inner Turkey are also known as the ancient Damascus Line, where St. Paul was probably converted from a revolting soul (Saul) to a great man of faith (Paul). The rock-cut tombs of Cappadocia, Myra and Sura; that of Telmessos, Fethiye and Amyntyas: that of Letoon, Caunos in Turkey and Lalibela in Coptic Ethiopia supplied the team with ample evidences of explaining the origin of earliest Christian traditions from some distant but definite influences of Monastic Buddhist establishments found in India.



The team finally faced a similar opposition from a sustained international chain of piracy till they could prove their point regarding the ancient connection. After their previous adventure, 'From Indus to Seine', the team uncovered a far greater truth at Alexandria, which was a melting point of Indian and Egyptian wisdom and the making of the second branch of the Semitic order of religion based on some historic events at Galilee. These facts and figures were uncovered after a long journey of thrills, adventure and terror! The book is a must read for all youngsters to know the true story of Indian Civilization!

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