



GASSHO

“Hands together
in reverence & gratitude”

May 2013

Issue: 05-13



THE MISSING YEARS OF JESUS

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: This month's GASSHO is based on quotes from James M. Hanson's *WAS JESUS A BUDDHIST?* in the Buddhist-Christian Studies, Annual 2005 v 25 p. 75 (15 pages). Hanson's words are set in " " .

James M. Hanson raises the question: "Was Jesus really a Buddhist?" He says the answer:

"is not yes or no, but rather to what extent Jesus was or was not a Buddhist. The historic evidence shows that Buddhism had spread throughout the area, from Mesopotamia to Egypt, which included **Jerusalem as a trading center between East and West**. Contrary to Rudyard Kipling's colonialist belief that never the twain shall meet, **East and West have shared the same history at least since Aryan populations began settling west and central Asia four thousand years ago**, which are the ancestral stock shared by Jews and Hindus alike. **East/West wars have been documented since at least the Trojan War 3,200 years ago**. Both **Alexander and Ashoka brought East and West together in different ways**, and the **Silk Road** was well established during the beginning of China's Han dynasty [206 BC – 220 AD] **at least a century before Christ.**" In bold for emphasis. [] mine.

These words imply that in the colonial past ever since Columbus, European and American histories generally were written as a "one-way process" of North European Aryans invading, conquering, then colonizing the lands of non-Europeans in the Near, Middle and finally the Far East as they were

MONTH'S THOUGHT



Our true home is in the present moment. The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the green earth in the present moment. Peace is all around us — in the world and in nature and within us — in our bodies and in our spirits....
—Thich Nhat Hanh. *Living Buddha, Living Christ*. 23. 24.



Christianizing as well as miscegenating with or intermarrying with the peoples they had conquered and subjugated.

However, says Hanson:

"The textual evidence shows that Buddhism not only had spread West through Silk Road travelers and contacts between East and West from the Conquests of Alexander, but also had been deliberately propagated through emissaries sent from India during the third century BC. This influence is revealed both by the actions and statements of Jesus and by the old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, a term probably derived from Sanskrit."

These words of Hanson tell us that even well before Judaism emerged to be followed by Christianity, then by Islam, Easterners and Westerners were already traveling back and forth on a "two-way street," not just a "one-way street" as generally presented by Eurocentric and Americentric historians.

REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES for MAY 2013

1st SUN May 5th:

9 A.M. Eng. Service
Dharma Talk
for Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

2nd SUN May 12th:

9 A.M. Eng. Service
Dharma Talk
for Children & Adults
Rev. R. Tatsuguchi

3rd SUN May 19th:

Commemorating Shinran's Birthday

9 A.M. Eng. Service
Guest speaker:
Rev. Shigeaki Fujitani

4th SUN May 26th:

MONTHLY FAMILY WORSHIP
9 a.m. Eng. Service
Dharma Talk for Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

KARAOKE SINGERS CLUB Mon 7 - 9 p.m.
Mr. Nelson Yoshioka

KARATE CLASSES Tues & Fri 6 - 8 p.m.
Shihan - Walter Nishioka

FUJINKAI LADIES' FELLOWSHIP GROUP
Wed 9 a.m. - noon

With Deepest Sympathy

Mrs. Jeannette T. Nakayama 91 yrs. March 7, 2013

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2013 Memorial Service Schedule

2012	1 Year	2011	3 Year	2007	7 Year
2001	13 Year	1997	17 Year	1989	25 Year
1981	33 Year	1964	50 Year	1914	100 Year

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Western civilization, as of consequence, came to be deeply steeped in Judeo-Christian culture, resulting in Israelites and Christians perceiving "non-believers," as pagans engrossed in ways of gross sensuality and abject sinfulness that were abominations to their One and Only God, the "Lord God of Israel."

In Isaiah we get a few indirect hints that already foreigners from the Far East had settled in and around Jerusalem as follows: "Give ear you people from far countries" (Isaiah 8:9); "she (Jerusalem) is a marketplace for the nations" (Isaiah 23:3); "commit fornication with foreigners with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth" (Isaiah 23:17); "a palace of foreigners" (Isaiah 25:2); "the sons of foreigners shall build your wall" (Isaiah 60:10). In Matthew 2:1-12, one of the three Magi, Gathaspa, was an Indian scholar. He had to pass through Pakistan and Afghanistan then through Iran and Iraq in order to get to Bethlehem.

Therefore, because of this two-way cultural exchange, this resulted in many underlying similarities between Christianity and Buddhism. Hanson then notes:

"When nineteenth-century missionaries translated and read ancient Sanskrit and Pali documents in India, they began to call Buddhism the Christianity of the East. **But Buddhism came first, five hundred years before Christ.** The more accurate dubbing is to call Christianity the Buddhism of the West." In bold for your attention.

Then Hanson speculated:

"If Jesus did not go to India, then at least India went to Judea and Jesus. The real historical question is **not if** he studied Buddhism, **but where and how much he studied Buddhism**, especially during his so-called 'lost years.'" In bold for emphasis.

GASSHO is the Monthly Newsletter of
SHINSHU KYOKAI MISSION of HAWAII
1631 S. Beretania Street, Honolulu, Hawaii,
96826-1105. Temple 973-0150.

Editor: **Rev. R.K. Tatsuguchi**

Circulation: SKM Staff

PUBLICATION DATE: **April 25, 2013**

WORDS OF SHINRAN

I really do not know whether the nembutsu may be the cause for my birth in the Pure Land, or the act that shall condemn me to hell.... In essence, such is the true entrusting of this foolish one. Now, whether you accept the nembutsu, entrusting yourself to it, or reject it, that is your own decision. T. Unno.
Tannisho. II.

Hanson then noted, as did other scholars, that:

"textual analyses indicate striking similarities between what was said by Jesus and by Buddha and between prophetic legend of Jesus and ancient Buddhist texts. ... The similarities are so striking that, even if no historical evidence existed, we can suspect that Jesus studied Buddhist teachings and **that the prophecy and legend of Jesus was derived from Buddhist sources.**"
In bold for emphasis.

Therefore, concluded Hanson: "The identities and parallels between the legends of Buddha and Jesus and between their deeds and statements require explanation."

Hanson as of consequence cited a very long laborious list of commonalities and similarities. I will mention but just a few as follows:

"Consider others as yourself." — Buddha.

"Do to others as you would have them do to you." — Jesus

"Do not look at the faults of others or what others have done or not done; observe what you yourself have done and have not done." — Buddha.

"Judge ye not that ye be not judged."
— Jesus.

Because of the amazing, overwhelming number of such similar verses, Hanson said, "The biblical silence about Jesus' lost years is one of the strangest hiatuses in history" (*hiatuses* is the plural of *hiatus*, which means an interruption in space like a gap or a break of continuity in time).

Concerning the "missing years of Jesus," Hanson then says:

"It is a total silence about one of the greatest moralist in human history, covering seventeen years of Jesus' life between the ages of twelve and twenty-nine. Indeed, except for his birth and a singular account of Jesus as a twelve-year-old in Jerusalem, **there is silence about all but the last three years of his life....**" In bold for emphasis.

For this reason Hanson raises the following intriguing question,

"Why did not Jesus' twelve disciples and his thousands of followers not comment on his life for twenty-nine of his thirty-two years?"

He then asks about Jesus sending his twelve apostles abroad in differing directions, such as Thomas who in 52 A.D. went to promulgate the Christian faith among the Jews who were already settled as far away as Kerala, India (a district in southern India on the western coast).

In 1887, Nicholas Notovitch, a Russian journalist, was shown a manuscript at Himis, a monastery in the remote Himalayan mountains of Northern India, that during his teens and twenties, Jesus had "traveled with a merchant caravan along the spice route to India where he studied the teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism — teachings that, combined with his Jewish upbringing, molded him into the man we know today." But when Notovitch published his *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ* in 1888, he was immediately condemned as an apostate and the book was declared to be a "hoax." Then strangely, somehow, the Jesus manuscripts vanished into thin air. The manuscripts at Himis were said to have never existed.

Then in 1947, a herder stumbled on some manuscripts hidden in an obscure cave at Khirbat Qumran near the city of Jericho on the ancient western bank of the city. The discovery of the manuscripts were heralded as one of the greatest finds just a few years after WWII. The *Copper Scroll* discovered there was like a map that led archaeologists to other such caves where dozens of other such scrolls were discovered. There was also a *Temple Scroll* that contained detailed construction plans for the Temple of Jerusalem.

Ever since these discoveries, once again, the troublesome question concerning the "Lost Years" (or "Missing Years") arose, especially more so with the further discovery of the Gnostic Gospels

in 1959. As of consequence, the claims of Nicholas Notovitch again have emerged to arouse the attention of historians, theologians and scholars of comparative religion. They began, and even now, are comparing and challenging the tenets of the Catholic Church that have and were solely based on the Synoptic Gospels, especially as backed by the Epistles of Paul of Tarsus in the New Testament.

Hanson then quotes a Serrano:

"By the second century CE, **the Church of Christ was destroying every piece of evidence of the life of Christ that did not support its doctrines and the church continued its purging** with more or less fervor throughout the succeeding centuries. The activity at the turn of the twentieth century, when the very question of Jesus' travel as a young man, was raised first by Notovitch. **Different church authorities destroyed documents at the Himmis Monastery and later documents at the Tun-huang [or Dunhuang] caves in central Asia.**" Serrano. *The Serpent of Paradise*. p. 255. In bold for emphasis. [] mine.

What was at stake:

"throughout the centuries was the critical church doctrine that Christ was a Jew who started his own religion as the Son of God. **Any evidence not supporting this view was condemned as 'apocrypha'** [unlikely, false, heretical, etc.] **and destroyed or rewritten. Even the four gospels were rewritten** to provide the impression **that Jesus never left Judea.**" In bold for emphasis. [] mine.

Furthermore,

"His travel and exposure to Buddhist ideas could not be acknowledged nor could the records of Buddhist influence upon the Essenes and other sects in Judea before and during Jesus' time. Hence the inexplicable lost years."

Who then were the Essenes?

The Essenes were Jews who were influenced by Buddhists passing through and living around Judea. They, unlike the traditionalist Sadducees and Pharisees, were not limited to any one religion.

They studied and extracted moral and scientific principles from the various religious cults and sects that had come to Jerusalem. Hanson says that the Christians, like the Sadducees and Pharisees, could not accept other religions. For out of doctrinal necessity, they had to reject the idea that Jesus had been influenced by Buddhism or that he had “spent his lost years possibly elsewhere like in Kashmir to study Buddhism exclusively.”

However, says Hanson, the fact is that:

“... Jesus did not live in a pastoral, ethnically isolated place and time. On the contrary, non-Jewish political and cultural influences permeated **Judea**, which **was an important shipping center for trade between India and the West** and **the military gateway** to invade Egypt via land.... **Sea routes from Bombay and the mouth of the Indus River** went through the Persian and Red Gulfs.... Much of the trade came up the **Gulf of Aqaba** and **overland** up to **Jerusalem** ... as the **shipping point** to the Mediterranean.” In bold for emphasis.

Furthermore, notes Hanson,

“During Jesus’ time, Judea was a Roman dominion and most of the trade was Roman. Being the wealthiest empire of the time, **Rome sent tons of gold-minted sesterces eastward for goods from India and other places**. Most of the trade came over the Mediterranean and through Judea, making **Jerusalem a cosmopolitan shipping center**. Because of trade alone, **Zoroastrianism and Buddhism were well known to the people of Judea**....” In bold for emphasis.

This then means that during his “missing years” Jesus was undeniably exposed to and influenced by many kinds of religions from India as well as from elsewhere like Egypt, Tibet, China as well as by the religions out of Northern Europe. There is also the speculation that Jesus was even in far off England.

However, says Hanson, it is more likely that Jesus

“probably traveled extensively throughout Asia Minor, which increased his exposure to Buddhism. Interest in the “Missing Years”

SHINRAN’S WASAN

No one passes by
the Primal Vow, in vain!
The Vow is a Boundless Ocean,
full of merits and virtues
Into which flow the waters of
blind passions and vanities
without being
condemned or rejected!

Koso Wasan No. 13.
rkt – trans.

was indicated by the many records found in India, China ...”

As confirmation that ancient Buddhists and people from the Far East were already interested in and traveling to the West, Hanson quotes Durant as follows:

Ashoka sent Buddhist missionaries to all parts of India and Ceylon, even to Syria, Egypt and Greece, where perhaps they helped prepare for the ethics of Christ. Will Durant. *The Story of Civilization Our Oriental Heritage*. 1935. vol 1, p. 449.

Hanson then mentions that Max Mueller also knew that such emissaries from India even well before Ashoka’s reign were already being dispatched. Referring to Ashoka’s Buddhist emissaries, Mueller had already had written:

That remarkable missionary movement, **beginning in 300 BCE**, sent forth a succession of devoted men who spent their lives in spreading the faith of Buddha over all parts of Asia. Max Mueller quoted in John Reimburg. *The Christ: A Critical Review and Analysis of the Evidences of His Existence*. p. 510. In bold for emphasis.

Hanson, therefore, concluded, “Given all of these East-West trade and settlement patterns, Jesus certainly was exposed to Buddhism” though “the Bible makes no mention of where the young Jesus lived.”

Therefore, says Hanson, though the Bible:

“provides no account of Jesus’ lost years

between ages thirteen and twenty nine, ... Jesus certainly studied and preached during his lost years. ... This almost certainly means that he traveled and evangelized elsewhere, **as non-biblical evidence indicates....**"
In bold for emphasis.

According to Hanson, if Jesus had spent his formative years merely as a carpenter's apprentice and had not continued studying somewhere under other learned teachers, this fact alone then:

"would have nullified everything about his period of intensive study and contemplation that was guided by some unusual teachers, and probably of evangelizing as well."

This is why the "missing years" presents troublesome problems and questions for zealous Christians and hard-line Zionists who say Jesus never left Judea or studied abroad or was influenced by other religions, especially Buddhism.

Now, there is also the most astonishing speculation that Jesus may have actually survived the ordeal of his most horrendous crucifixion and, with the help of his disciples and supporters, had escaped undetected to places unknown such as Kashmir (areas now bordered and claimed by Pakistan, China and India). If this is historically and archaeologically ever proven to be the case, then such empirical evidence would be most problematic for the Synoptic Gospels' versions concerning their varying accountings of Jesus' resurrection, ascension and prophesized final return of Jesus as the Only Begotten Son of God. This is why, said St. Paul: "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:17). In other words, if Jesus was not crucified and died on the cross and raised from the dead, then the subsequent accounts of his resurrection and ascension back to his heavenly Father in heaven would then be all meaningless.

The so-called Gospel of Thomas "was based on the letters written by Thomas. Thomas, as mentioned, was a missionary in Taxila Punjab. In ... his letters he states that Jesus was there at age of forty-nine" and that "... Jesus had escaped death on the cross and recuperated and fled to Kashmir..."

Now, however, when Nicholas Notovitch published his *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*, the:

"Christian Church denounced it as a hoax.

The British Church Mission in India employed a professor to find and bury the documents described by Notovich. The Anglican Church commissioned the services of F. Max Muller, the great German scholar who taught at Oxford. Muller dismissed it, largely by challenging the two main sources, namely a book of fourteen chapters and another document titled *Nath Namavali* preserved by the Saddhus of Yoga Nath."

As evidence, Mueller merely cited the chief lama's verbal denial as evidence of the manuscript's non-existence at Himmis monastery.

However, the fact was and yet is that the lamas by that time were well aware that ever since Alexander the Great (327-326 B.C.) and especially during the colonial intrusions of Europeans since the 1500s, their monasteries had been plundered by Westerners of their priceless ancient treasures. They were also even more than well aware that overzealous missionaries had desecrated their "idols" and scriptures by breaking and burning them in public. They also had defaced their temple murals and frescos. The lamas also were aware that the Muslims even before the colonialists and missionaries had also destroyed as well as plundered and defaced their sacred paintings and images of the Buddha. So, if a visitor exhibited and "telegraphed" such nonverbal and postural cues, they naturally were not told of the existence of the Jesus manuscripts.

Furthermore, Hanson noted that some twenty-five years, even before Notovitch's expedition to Himmis monastery, Mueller himself had acknowledged the fact that:

"Between the language of the Buddha and his disciples, and the language of Christ and his apostles, **there are strange coincidences**. Even some Buddhist legends and parables sound as if taken from New Testament, **though we know that many of them existed before the beginning of the Christian era**. In bold for emphasis.

Other scholars then began joining Mueller to confirm that:

"The history of Jesus of Nazareth, as related in the books of the New Testament is **simply a copy of that of Buddha, with a mixture of mythology borrowed from other nations**." In bold for emphasis.

Out of doctrinal necessity, nevertheless, the Catholic Church, especially during the Dark Ages followed by the fundamentalist Protestant Christians and hard-line Zionists had to reject outright even the slightest of intimations that Jesus, during his "missing years," might have ventured as far into India, Tibet or even into China for reasons as mentioned above.

Later, however, three very credible witnesses confirmed the existence of the Saint Issa documents.

"One was an Indian, Swami Abhedananda, who visited the monastery in 1922. **He not only confirmed that such a manuscript existed, he received a translation of it** that is almost identical to the one published earlier by Notovitch. And in the late 1920s, Nicholas Roerich ... a skilled archeologist and linguist.... His son George, ... also an archaeologist and linguist and spoke the Tibetan language.... Wherever the Roerich expedition went, **they heard stories of Saint Issa**. And in 1937, Elizabeth Caspari made a trip to Tibet and was shown manuscripts and the lama who showed them said '**These books say your Jesus was here.**'" In bold for emphasis.

So, today it is interesting that the term *parallelomania* has been coined.

Paralleleomania refers to situations where a researcher with a vested interest perceives imagined similarities that have no scientific basis, who then construes theoretical parallelisms that are imaginary to justify his perception of a supposed similarity or commonality. The term *parallelomania*, therefore, is a very telling term as to how and why the convictions of orthodox Zionists rooted in the Old Testament, and why fundamentalist Christians are especially particular to the Synoptic Gospels and the letters of Paul that cover only Jesus' birth, his appearing at age 12 in a synagogue and the last three years of his life before and after his resurrection and final ascension.

Therefore, even "the post-crucifixion argument" that Jesus actually survived his crucifixion is also vehemently denied for this then would nullify Jesus' resurrection and his ascension back to his Father in heaven, as well as his prophesized eventual return on a Final Day of Judgment.

So Hanson pondered and concluded:

"I wondered how these travelers could be sure that Saint Issa and Jesus were one and the same, but in reading the Notovitch and Abhedananda translations, it is clear that this is the story of Jesus, but with some variations. This Jesus **praises women and urges men to treat them as equals**. This Jesus **affirms reincarnation**. These original sources are fascinating reading...." In bold for emphasis.

It is my fervent hope that our similarities as human beings endowed with a conscience and as mere human beings will bring us together in acts of
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continued from p. 2

Donations

to be continued in the next Gassho

kindness and generosity instead of opposition and conflict. Let us not keep dwelling on our differences that keep driving us apart. For, dwelling on our differences can only lead to acts of discrimination and divisiveness that can only end in acts of rejection, violence and destruction.

The future of those yet to be born and yet to live depends and demands that we, who are now living in the ever changing present, come together as we should, instead of growing further apart because of our persistent and nagging differences. For even now we are growing further apart because of the economic, educational and political chasms between the world's "haves" who are in the minority and the "not haves" in the majority who are becoming excluded by the few who have the political power to control people, the world's natural resources and the global monetary system.

Therefore, we must trust and take refuge in the Dharma's Timeless Selflessness and its All-embracing Togetherness that is the essence of all things and forms of life that sustains the sacred Oneness in which all things and beings are embraced. Let us then keep coming together in selfless understanding, love, penitence and forgiveness in the Dharma's All-embracing Togetherness!

BUDDHIST STORY OR PASSAGE

The People of the world, being weak in virtue, engage in strife over matters that are not urgent. In the midst of abject wickedness and extreme afflictions, they painstakingly toil for their living. Whether noble or corrupt, rich or poor, young or old, male or female, all people worry about wealth and property. In this, there is no difference between the rich and poor, both have anxieties....
Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life. (Hisao Inagaki. *Three Pure Land Sutras.* p. 282.)

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: Is Amida Buddha God?

ANSWER: Depends on what you mean and understand by the term "God." Amida Buddha differs radically from the traditional Judeo-Christian concept of an omniscient, omnipotent, omni-

Shinshu Kyokai Mission
1631 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96826
email: skm@flex.com
www.ShinshuKyokai.org

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present God who performs miracles that contravene the orderly and uniform laws and processes of causality, conditionality, interdependency that negate the consequences of karma. Amida as of consequence differs from God because:

1. Amida Buddha's compassion is unconditional and embraces all sentient beings, not only us human beings.
2. Amida Buddha does not judge or punish human beings.
3. Amida Buddha does not contravene causality or obviate the consequences of karma.
4. Amida Buddha does not reside outside of the universe or apart from this world but pervades and permeates in all things and beings as the Mind of Selflessness that is also the Heart of Togetherness.
5. Amida Buddha is not a jealous, wrathful or vengeful deity who rewards "good people" and punishes "bad people."
6. Amida Buddha does not discriminate and play favorites!
7. Amida's unconditional compassion is not based on someone else's blood and body that has been sacrificed. (*Dharma Teacher's Handbook*, pp. 92-93.)