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THOMAS PEREGRINUS. THE APOSTLE AS STRANGER IN THE LATIN APOCRYPHAL ACTS OF THOMAS

In the apocryphal Acts of Thomas, the apostle Thomas is presented as a stranger (ξένοσ, peregrinus). The present article explores how in the late Roman rewritings of the ancient Acts, the position of the apostle as an outsider is highlighted as an essential part of his role in the process of conversion and Christianisation. Whereas previous publications in Apocrypha have signalled Thomas' identity as a "stranger" (ξένοσ) and his appeal to his converts to become "strangers" with him in the ancient Acts of Thomas (Drijvers 1990, Myers 2006), the Latin rewritings of this apocryphon are at the centre of the present contribution. These texts give a detailed account of the way the apostle, as an outsider, transforms the cities of his mission area from within into Christian communities. The Latin rewritings of the Acts of Thomas thus form a representation of a paradoxical approach to the binary opposition of insider and outsider, presenting Thomas emphatically as a "stranger" as opposed to civis. At the same time, the Passio Thomae (BHL 8036) in particular emphasises in an elaborate digression the way the apostle grants his converts an inalienable share in a new civic identity, which concerns both life in the Christian community on earth and, eschatologically, life in the heavenly city.

Les Actes apocryphes latins de Thomas présentent l'apôtre comme un « étranger » (ξένοσ, peregrinus) à maintes reprises. Le présent article cherche à savoir comment, dans le monde romain antique tardif et médiéval, cette qualité d'étranger représente un aspect essentiel du rôle de l'apôtre dans le processus de conversion et de christianisation. Tandis que l'identité de Thomas comme « étranger » dans les Actes de Thomas anciens et son appel aux convertis à devenir eux aussi des « étrangers » ont été étudiés dans divers articles d'Apocrypha (Drijvers 1990, Myers 2006), les réécritures latines de cet apocryphe montrent en détail comment l'apôtre comme « outsider » transforme les civitates Indorum en communautés chrétiennes. Ainsi, les Actes de Thomas latins représentent une approche paradoxale de l'opposition entre citoyens et étrangers, en présentant Thomas explicitement comme « étranger »

opposé à civis. La Passion de Thomas (BHL 8036), en particulier, illustre dans une interpolation élaborée de quelle manière l'apôtre accorde à ses convertis une nouvelle identité civique inaliénable à la fois dans la société chrétienne terrestre et, eschatologiquement, dans la cité céleste.

Introduction

Various contributors to *Apocrypha* have called attention to the identity of the apostle Thomas as a “stranger” which is emphasised in several passages of the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*. Han Drijvers was the first to pay attention to the role of the apostle Thomas as “a stranger and an outsider in that milieu”.¹ With “that milieu” Drijvers points at the “spiritual and intellectual climate of the Edessene royal court”,² in which cultural environment we must envisage the composition of the ancient apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*, dated to the third century and written in Greek and Syriac.³ In her article “Revisiting Preliminary Issues in the *Acts of Thomas*”, Susan Myers signals the repeated use of the label ξένοϛ attached to the apostle through (the first part of) the ancient *Acts of Thomas*.⁴ Both Drijvers and Myers refer to the revolutionary character of the *Acts of Thomas* and interpret the protagonist as “a

1. HAN DRIJVERS, “Apocryphal Literature in the Cultural Milieu of Osrhoëne”, *Apocrypha* 1 (1990), p. 231-247, at p. 238.

2. DRIJVERS, “Apocryphal Literature” (cit. n. 1), p. 237-238.

3. On the date and place of origin of the *Acts of Thomas*, see SUSAN MYERS, “Revisiting Preliminary Issues in the *Acts of Thomas*”, *Apocrypha* 17 (2006), p. 95-112, at p. 95-96; on the original language(s) in which the early Christian Acts of Thomas were composed, see ALBERTUS F. J. KLIJN, *The Acts of Thomas. Introduction, Text and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 3; GERARD A. M. ROUWHORST, “La célébration de l'eucharistie selon les Actes de Thomas”, in CHARLES CASPERS and MARC SCHNEIDERS (eds.), *Omnes circumadstantes. Contributions towards a History of the Role of the People in the Liturgy* (Kampen: Kok, 1990), p. 51-77, at p. 53-54; HAROLD W. ATTRIDGE, “The Original Language of the Acts of Thomas”, in HAROLD W. ATTRIDGE *et al.* (eds.), *Of Scribes and Scrolls: Studies on the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and Christian Origins* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), p. 241-250. On Greek-Syriac bilingualism in Edessa more generally, see DRIJVERS, “Apocryphal Literature” (cit. n. 1), p. 234-235.

4. MYERS, “Revisiting” (cit. n. 3), p. 102. Footnote 28 speaks of “Act 1 or the Mygdonia story”, while the Mygdonia part is usually indicated as part two of the ancient Acts (ch. 82-162); PAUL-HUBERT POIRIER and YVES TISSOT (transl.), “Actes de Thomas”, in FRANÇOIS BOVON and PIERRE GEOLTRAIN (eds.), *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 1321-1470, at p. 1323. The (incomplete) index of Bonnet's edition indicates the word in ch. 4 and 95; MAXIMILIAN BONNET (ed.), *Acta Thomae*, in *Acta apostolorum apocrypha* II.2 (Leipzig: Mendelssohn, 1891-1903; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1990), p. 99-291, at p. 106 and 208 respectively. See further below section “ξένοϛ and *peregrinus*”, p. 165.

danger to established order”⁵ who brings about “an inversion of social roles”.⁶ The *Acts of Thomas* propagate the process of Christianisation and the related formation of a new kind of community as a radical conversion and, hence, a breach with current norms and standards. Drijvers accentuates the radical encratic world view of the *Acts of Thomas*, which expresses itself in a negative approach to social relations such as marriage. Drijvers qualifies this central element of the *Acts of Thomas* as “anti-social”,⁷ and in stark contrast with the prevailing world view of the Bardaisanite philosophy of harmony and order.⁸ Thus, in Drijvers’ words: “[T]he preaching of the Gospel at Edessa caused a fundamental change in a traditional pattern of life and brought about new social groupings”.⁹

In the present contribution, I take the late Roman Latin rewritings of the ancient *Acts of Thomas* as my point of departure to explore in more detail the characterisation of the apostle as an outsider and stranger, indicated with the Latin word *peregrinus*. By analysing the context in which the word *peregrinus* occurs and by examining the meaning of the words with which it is combined or with which it is contrasted, I shall further elucidate the paradoxical nature of the performance of the apostle Thomas who, from his position as an outsider, brings about a social and religious transformation from within.

The Latin *Virtutes Thomae*

The date of origin of the Latin *Virtutes Thomae*,¹⁰ composed in various stages as rewritings of the ancient *Acts of Thomas* presumably in Italy or Gaul, is difficult to establish with certainty. Klaus Zelzer proposes the second half of the fourth century, contra Lipsius’ later dating in the sixth century, although with a margin of uncertainty.¹¹ The

5. DRIJVERS, “Apocryphal Literature” (cit. n. 1), p. 238.

6. MYERS, “Revisiting” (cit. n. 3), p. 102; DRIJVERS, “Apocryphal Literature” (cit. n. 1), p. 240.

7. DRIJVERS, “Apocryphal Literature” (cit. n. 1), p. 237.

8. DRIJVERS, “Apocryphal Literature” (cit. n. 1), p. 238.

9. DRIJVERS, “Apocryphal Literature” (cit. n. 1), p. 244.

10. I use the term *Virtutes Thomae* to indicate the Latin rewritings of the ancient *Acts of Thomas* as a whole. In general, the Latin apocryphal Acts of the apostles are headed by a variety of titles in the medieval manuscripts, such as *passio*, *miracula*, *vita*, and *gesta*; see Guy PHILIPPART, *Les Légendiers latins et autres manuscrits hagiographiques*, Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental 24-25 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), p. 88 and Els ROSE, “*Virtutes apostolorum*: Origin, Aim, and Use”, *Traditio* 68 (2013), p. 57-96, at p. 58.

11. Klaus ZELZER (ed.), *Die ältesten lateinischen Thomasakten* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1977), p. XXIV-XXVI. One of the uncertainties is the involvement of Gregory of Tours (538-594) with the composition of the text, suggested by Lipsius but rejected by Zelzer; see ROSE, “*Virtutes apostolorum*: Origin” (cit. n. 10), p. 77-78.

Latin rewritings comprise two main text traditions: the *Miracula Thomae* (BHL 8140) and the *Passio Thomae* (BHL 8136). The *Miracula* is, according to Zelzer, the most original Latin version closest to the ancient *Acts of Thomas*. However, it is transmitted only in a redaction that is dependent on and, therefore, written later than the slightly younger and partly abbreviated *Passio Thomae*.¹² The latter text, dated by Zelzer around 370 on the basis of its specific theological concerns, is considered by Felice Lifshitz to be a transmission of the Greek version of the *Acts of Thomas* the lady Egeria brought with her from her pilgrimage to Jerusalem.¹³ Lifshitz dates the first Latin version of the *Passio Thomae* around 400. The oldest extant manuscripts, however, go back to the middle of the eighth century. I will return to the context of this eighth-century transmission further below in the section “The outsider procures a transformation from within”.

Like the ancient *Acts of Thomas*, the Latin *Virtutes Thomae* can be roughly divided into three parts. Part I briefly recounts the tradition of the *Divisio apostolorum*, or the division of the apostles to fulfil their mission. According to this tradition, Thomas is sent to India. After initial protest by the doubting apostle, *quasi Ionas*,¹⁴ his eventual departure is told as a miracle.¹⁵ Christ appears to a trader from India named Abbanes, who is in search of an architect to build a palace for his king Gundafor. Christ recommends his slave (*servus*) Thomas to him. Abbanes and Thomas travel to India, where their first stop is the city (*civitatem*) Andronopolis (*Passio Thomae* 6). Upon their arrival, they are summoned to attend the royal wedding that is just going on. Thomas converts the bridal couple to a chaste life, after which the apostle and Abbanes travel on to their destination, Gundafor’s court in the city (*civitatem*) Hieroforus (*Passio Thomae* 16). Here, part II is staged. The king entrusts his treasure-chest to Thomas to enable the apostle to fulfil his assignment of building a new royal palace for the king. Gundafor then leaves the court for a considerable period of time. In his absence, Thomas applies the king’s treasures to configure a Christian community

12. ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. xxiii. The oldest manuscripts date to the middle of the eighth century: Els ROSE, “Abdias scriptor vitarum sanctorum apostolorum? The ‘Collection of Pseudo-Abdias’ Reconsidered”, *Revue d’histoire des textes* n.s. 8 (2013), p. 227-268, at p. 254-268.

13. Felice LIFSHITZ, *Religious Women in Early Carolingian Francia. A Study of Manuscript Transmission and Monastic Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), p. 42, 44.

14. *Miracula Thomae* 3, ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 46.

15. On the tradition of the *Divisio apostolorum*, including the topoi of doubt and hesitance on the part of the apostle and the miraculous transfer of the apostle to his mission area, see Jean-Daniel KAESTLI, “Les scènes d’attribution des champs de mission et de départ de l’apôtre dans les Actes apocryphes”, in François BOVON et al. (eds.), *Les Actes apocryphes des apôtres. Christianisme et monde païen* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1981), p. 249-264.

by helping out the poor, by building Christian churches and by installing a clergy. Part III, finally, is the most elaborate and perhaps the most famous part of the *Acts of Thomas*, where Thomas persuades a number of aristocratic women, most notably Mygdonia, to forsake their marriage bed and become practitioners of the chaste life he preaches – a common theme in the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.¹⁶

ξένος and *peregrinus*

In the Greek *Acts of Thomas*, the word ξένος appears in two scenes. The first scene is the royal wedding Thomas and his master Abbanes attend during their stay in Andronopolis. Heralds of the king, the bride's father, have announced the wedding banquet and summon all in the city to take part: poor and rich, slaves and freemen, strangers and citizens (ξένους τε καὶ πολίτας).¹⁷ Abbanes therefore urges Thomas to do as told lest they would offend the king, "for above all, we are likewise strangers (ξένοι)".¹⁸ Once they have arrived at the wedding, the apostle is looked at by all "as a stranger and someone from a foreign country" (ξένον καὶ ἐξ ἄλλοδαπῆς γῆς).¹⁹ The same word is used slightly later by the bridegroom, who utters a prayer of thanksgiving (εὐχαριστῶ) after Thomas has converted the bridal couple to a chaste way of life. The groom gives thanks for the divine intervention of the stranger (διὰ τοῦ ξένου ἀνδρὸς).²⁰ The second scene is in Act III, describing Thomas' sojourn at the court of king Mesdeas and the conversion of the royal lady Mygdonia. Here, the lady Mygdonia rouses the anger of her husband's relative Charisius, by indicating "the stranger" (ξένον) as a "physician" (ιατρόν).²¹

The Latin *Miracula Thomae* and the *Passio Thomae* are close to the ancient *Acts of Thomas* in their repeated characterisation of the apostle as a stranger. To express this idea, they use the word *peregrinus*, the most common translation of ξένος in the Latin Vulgate (Matth. 27, 7; Hebr. 11, 13; Hebr. 13, 9; 3 John 1, 5). Likewise, the words ξένος and *peregrinus* are treated as equal in early medieval glossaries.²²

16. POIRIER and TISSOT (transl.), "Actes de Thomas" (cit. n. 4), p. 1324.

17. BONNET (ed.), *Acta Thomae* (cit. n. 4) ch. 4, p. 105.

18. *Ibidem*.

19. *Ibidem*, p. 106. The word is translated by Poirier and Tissot as "pérégrin", with the explanation in a footnote that the word refers to "a stranger living in Rome, or in a country subject to its dominion, as opposed to a Roman citizen". POIRIER and TISSOT (transl.), "Actes de Thomas" (cit. n. 4), p. 1334 footnote.

20. BONNET (ed.), *Acta Thomae* (cit. n. 4) ch. 15, p. 120-121.

21. *Ibidem*, ch. 95, p. 208.

22. E.g. in the Greek-Latin glossary transmitted in the eighth-century MS Harley 5792, fol. 147r; cf. Gustav LOEWE and Georg GOETZ (eds.), *Corpus glossariorum latinorum* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1888-1923), vol. II, p. 378 and in the *Glossae Bernenses*, MS Bern, 688, fol. 7v; cf. LOEWE and GOETZ (eds.),

In the *Miracula Thomae*, the word *peregrinus* occurs twice in part I on Thomas' travel to India and his attendance at the royal wedding (ch. 6 and 7²³) and once in part II, in the episode on his dwelling at Gundafor's court (ch. 21²⁴). In part III, on Mygdonia, the word also occurs twice (ch. 70 and 84²⁵). In the *Passio*, the word *peregrinus* is found only in the same passages of part I, and there in slightly different contexts. The passage on the royal wedding mentions the word *peregrinus* in the same two *loci* but in different phrases (ch. 6²⁶). The episode on Gundafor and his newly built palace gives one *locus*, different from the one in the *Miracula* and found in the admonition Thomas expresses in front of Gundafor and his brother concerning perishable and imperishable riches (ch. 22²⁷); the latter use of the word is the only instance where it does not apply to Thomas. Where it does apply to Thomas, however, the word *peregrinus* takes a specific meaning, positioning the apostle as outsider and stranger as against the "citizen" (*civis*), but not without further implications. In the following I will argue that Thomas' position as foreigner is emphasised in order to highlight the

Corpus glossariorum, vol. III, p. 505. I thank Evina Steinová for sharing her knowledge of medieval glossaries.

23. *Miracula Thomae* 6: *Audite, habitatores urbis omnes, divites mediocresque ac peregrini uel pauperes, accedite ad palatium regis et epulamini, gaudete et estote iocundi. Si quis vero se ab hac laetitia subtraxerit, reum se nouerit maiestatis* and 7: *Thomas autem apostolus discubuit in medio intendentibus omnibus in eum et scientibus quod peregrinus esset*. ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 47. Both *loci* are absent in Zelzer's index.

24. *Miracula Thomae* 21: *Nunc autem rogo ut transferas in dicionem meam palatium quod tibi homo peregrinus aedificavit*. ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 52.

25. *Miracula Thomae* 70: *Somnio autem monita sum ut ad peregrinum istum venire qui tenetur in carcere* and 84: *Factus sum igitur pauper, indigens, peregrinus ac servus, in vinculis, in ieiuniis, fame ac siti, in laboribus, in periculis, ut confidentia non periret, spes non confunderetur*. ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 68 and 74 respectively. The *locus* in ch. 84 is also absent in Zelzer's index.

26. *Passio Thomae* 6: *Nam et praecones per civitatem circumeuntes clamabant ut omnes interessent huic nuptiali ac regali convivio: dives pauper, nobilis ignobilis, civis ac peregrinus; quicumque non venisset regem offenderet. Contigit autem et Abbanem cum sancto Thoma interesse convivio; stupebant autem eos discumbentes quasi peregrinos et quos numquam viderant*. ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 6-7. The first *locus* is not included in Zelzer's index.

27. *Passio Thomae* 22: *Permittite ergo illas servire tribulantibus, egentibus, peregrinis, afflictis, necessitatem patientibus, infirmantibus, debita habentibus, viduis, orfanis, esurientibus, sitientibus, nuditatem patientibus atque variis casibus subiacentibus; et estote securi quoniam ibi vobis centuplicantur vestrae divitiae ubi nullus finis decurrit*. ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 17. This *locus* is also absent in Zelzer's index.

radical transformation the apostle brought about in the communities he encountered during his mission, in particular with regard to issues of membership and participation – issues that were, in the Roman world, directly related to being a citizen (*civis*, πολιτά) or the opposite (*peregrinus*, ξένος).

Peregrinus in context

Although the *Passio Thomae* gives fewer examples of the qualification of Thomas as a *peregrinus* than the *Miracula*, the former text offers a specific semantic context that helps to interpret the meaning and implications of the word. In order to highlight this semantic context, I give the relevant passages of part I here in a comparative table:

<i>Miracula Thomae</i>	<i>Passio Thomae</i>
<p>ch. 6 <i>Audite habitatores urbis omnes diuites mediocresque ac peregrini uel pauperes. Accedite ad palatium regis et epulamini, gaudete, et estote iocundi. Si quis uero se ab hac laetitia subtraxerit, reum se nouerit maiestatis.</i></p> <p>Listen you dwellers of this city, all you: high and middle class, strangers and poor, come to the royal palace and attend the banquet, celebrate and be joyful. If anyone withdraws from this gladness, he must know that he is guilty of lèse majesté.</p>	<p>ch. 6 ... <i>et precones per ciuitatem circumeuntes clamabant, ut omnes interessent huic nuptiali ac regali conuiuio, diues pauper nobilis et ignobilis, ciuis ac peregrinus quicumque non uenisset regem offenderit.</i></p> <p>And heralds went through the city, proclaiming that all should be present at the wedding and the royal banquet, rich and poor, noble man and commoner, citizen and foreigner, and that whosoever failed to come would offend the king.</p>
<p>ch. 7 <i>Thomas autem apostolus discubuit in medio, intendentibus omnibus in eum et scientibus quod peregrinus esset.</i></p> <p>The apostle Thomas, however, reclined at the middle of the table, while all gazed at him, knowing that he was a stranger.</p>	<p>ch. 6 <i>Contigit autem et Abbanem cum sancto Thoma interesse conuiuio; stupebant autem eos discumbentes quasi peregrinos, et quos numquam uiderant.</i></p> <p>And so it happened that Abbanes and the holy Thomas joined the banquet as well, but they were all stupefied that they reclined at table being strangers whom nobody had ever seen.</p>

The way the *Passio Thomae* uses the word *peregrinus* in opposition to *civis* indicates that the word *peregrinus* must be understood in a discourse that relates to citizenship: the apostle is depicted as an anti-citizen.²⁸ The emphasis on Thomas' lack of status is accentuated by the

28. The equalisation of *peregrinus ac pauperes* in *Miracula Thomae* 6, on the other hand, is reflected in a law issued by Constantine and preserved in the Theodosian code of the fifth century, where "paupers" are condemned to "suffer diminution of status and shall cease to be Roman citizens"; Codex Theodosianus 3.39.4; Peter GARNSEY, "Citizens and Aliens", in Peter GARNSEY and

fact that he is not only characterised as a *peregrinus* but also as a slave (*servus*). In the *Miracula Thomae*, when Christ recommends Thomas to Abbanes as an architect fit for the job Gundafor requires, he presents Thomas as his “slave”: “I have a suitable slave (*servus*) and I shall sell him to you if you want”, and “This is my slave (*servus*), the craftsman of whom I have spoken to you”.²⁹ In the *Passio Thomae*, Thomas’ status as a slave is conveyed even more repeatedly.³⁰ Thus the apostle enters his mission field: profiled as a slave and recognisable as a foreigner.

What did the notion of *peregrinus* entail in the late Roman world in which we situate the composition of the Latin *Virtutes Thomae*? Some scholars are of the opinion that after the Antonine Constitution issued by Emperor Caracalla in 212 the distinction between *civis* and *peregrinus* became irrelevant, given the fact that Roman citizenship was granted to all free men living in the Empire.³¹ Others, however, maintain that the label *peregrinus* to mark a non-citizen was still “alive and well in the later empire”,³² and interpret the word *peregrinus* as an indication of “non-citizen” in late Antiquity.³³ Whatever the fluctuations in social and legal mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that are visible in the ancient and late antique world,³⁴ it is clear that the word *peregrinus* remains a significant term also in the post-Roman period, calling forth associations with “citizen” and, hence, with the question of membership of a given community or the opposite. Thus, the encyclopaedic work *Etymologiae* by the influential seventh-century author

Caroline HUMFRESS (eds.), *The Evolution of the Late Antique World* (Cambridge: Orchard Academic, 2001), p. 88-91, at p. 89.

29. *Miracula Thomae* 4: *Est mihi servus talis quem si volueris comparabis ... Hic est servus meus artifex ille de quo locutus sum*. ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 46.

30. The same episode on Thomas’ sale uses the word *servus* seven times: *Passio Thomae* 2 and 3; ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 4-5.

31. Jean GAUDEMET, “Les romains et les ‘autres’”, in IDEM, *Droit et société aux derniers siècles de l’empire romain* (Naples: Jovene, 1992), p. 301-331, at p. 303.

32. Ralph MATHISEN, “*Peregrini, Barbari, and Cives Romani*: Concepts of Citizenship and the Legal Identity of Barbarians in the Later Roman Empire”, *The American Historical Review* 111 (2006), p. 1011-1040, at p. 1020; GARNSEY, “Citizens and Aliens” (cit. n. 28); Peter GARNSEY, “Roman Citizenship and Roman Law in the Later Empire”, in Simon SWAIN and Mark EDWARDS (ed.), *Approaching Late Antiquity: The Transformation from Early to Later Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 133-155, at p. 143-145.

33. Oliver SCHIPP, “Römer und Barbaren: Fremde in der Spätantike und im Frühmittelalter”, in Altay COŞKUN and Lutz RAPHAEL (eds.), *Fremd und rechtlos? Zugehörigkeitsrechte Fremder von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch* (Cologne-Weimar-Vienna: Böhlau, 2014), p. 121-151, at p. 122.

34. See Altay COŞKUN, “Die politische und rechtliche Stellung Fremder in der Antike”, in COŞKUN and RAPHAEL (eds.), *Fremd und rechtlos?* (cit. n. 33), p. 85-120, at p. 119.

Isidore of Seville discusses the word *peregrinus* in the context of what it means to be a “citizen” (*civis*). Isidore discusses a number of words that are traditionally opposed to *civis*, such as *advena* and *incola*. *Peregrini* are, according to Isidore, those whose parents are unknown to the community the *peregrini* have settled in, for “they (the *peregrini*) come from afar”.³⁵

In the context of the *Virtutes Thomae*, the double emphasis on Thomas’ quality not only as a *peregrinus* but also as a slave (*servus*) implies that the intention is indeed to accentuate the position of the apostle as a non-citizen, and that both the terms *peregrinus* and *servus* must be understood, in their ancient meaning, as opposed to *civis*.³⁶

In addition to the Roman imperial context of the opposition *peregrinus* – *civis* and *servus* – *civis*, the specific Jewish-Christian semantic context of the words and their relation should be taken into account. In the first place, the word pair *peregrinus* – *civis* forms a binary opposition in the Old Testament.³⁷ This opposition comes to the fore in the Pentateuch, where various laws juxtapose the position of the *civis* with that of the *peregrinus*. In the Jewish covenant tradition, love of the neighbour is placed next to “love [of] and respect [for] the stranger”,³⁸ most explicitly expressed in Deut. 10, 19. In many laws included in the books Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, the equal rights and duties of *civis* and *peregrinus* are stressed when it comes to legal protection³⁹ and ritual obligations.⁴⁰ In that sense, the opposite statuses *civis* – *peregrinus* are less mutually exclusive than is the case in the legal opposition of both in imperial Roman citizenship. Therefore, the Old Testament seems to be of less importance in the emphasis on Thomas’ foreignness as found in the *Virtutes Thomae*, loaded with a higher tension than the harmony seeking prescriptions in the Pentateuch. The use of the motif of foreignness in early Christian texts seems to be more relevant.

35. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* IX.IV.41: *Peregrini dicti eo quod ignorantur eorum parentes, a quibus orti existunt. Sunt enim de longinqua regione.* Wallace M. LINDSEY (ed.), *Isidori Hispalensis Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911), vol. I (s.p.).

36. COŞKUN, “Die politische und rechtliche Stellung Fremder” (cit. n. 34), p. 102-103. On the opposition *civis* – *servus* in the later Roman Empire, see GARNSEY, “Roman Citizenship and Roman Law” (cit. n. 32), p. 141-143.

37. Susan Myers emphasises the affinity of the ancient *Acts of Thomas* with “the Hebrew tradition” in northern Mesopotamia in the third century: Susan MYERS, “Antecedents of the Feminine Imagery of Spirit in the *Acts of Thomas*”, *Apocrypha* 26 (2015), p. 103-118.

38. James ARTHUR, “Christianity, Citizenship and Democracy”, in James ARTHUR et al. (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Education for Citizenship and Democracy* (Los Angeles – London – New Delhi-Singapore: SAGE, 2008), p. 305-313, at p. 307.

39. E.g. Lev. 24, 10-23; Num. 35, 15; Deut. 5, 14 (Decalogue).

40. E.g. Num. 9, 14; 15, 11-15.

Thomas' foreignness is depicted in the *Virtutes Thomae* in religious as well as conventional terms. During the wedding banquet, the apostle prays in his customary Hebrew fashion (and language), uttering the ritual blessing before the meal. By doing so, he is recognised by his compatriot, a Hebrew female flute player. They are disturbed in this happy recognition (*nec desistebat [mulier] ab admiratione vultus eius; libentissime aspiciebat [Thomas] ad eam*) by a cupbearer, who reproaches Thomas for staring at the girl.⁴¹ Thomas utters a curse, and soon afterwards the cupbearer is devoured by a lion and his right hand is brought to Thomas by a dog.⁴² The *Passio Thomae* adds to the agility of the story by depicting Thomas' lack of participation, absolved as he is in prayer instead of enjoying the food.⁴³ The same cupbearer reproaches Thomas now for abstaining from eating and drinking not with words but with a slap in the apostle's face, upon which Thomas foretells the loss of his life and the return of his hand through the dog.⁴⁴

Thus, the foreignness of the apostle Thomas makes him an outlaw, and the fact that he engages with the flute-girl, belonging to the lowest strata of Roman social life, only raises the suspicion of the courtiers.⁴⁵ This outsider's position of the apostle is exploited in a way not uncommon in early Christianity. It is described by Susanna Elm as an expression of the subversive character of the "new" religion, with its strong tendency to value the striving for "citizenship in the city above" over commitment to traditional norms:

Frequent references to "pilgrimage" or *xenitheia* (foreignness) in our sources appear to corroborate such acts of seeming subversion.⁴⁶

Representative of this "subversive Christianity" is the way the apostle Thomas, a foreigner and anti-citizen, is put forward as a model missionary, able to reconfigure the cities of the late Roman world, not only

41. *Miracula Thomae* 7-8, ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 47-48.

42. *Miracula Thomae* 8-9, ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 48.

43. *Passio Thomae* 7-8: *Tunc pincerna increpans apostolum quod neque manducaret neque biberet dedit palmam in faciem eius*. ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 7.

44. *Passio Thomae* 8-9, ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 8.

45. The flute-girl is ranked among the various kinds of entertainers, including prostitutes, in Graeco-Roman society; see Dominic MONTSERRAT, *Sex and Society in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1963/London – New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 107. Felice Lifshitz does not mention the girl's low status but suggests instead that the flute-girl had a positive effect on Thomas' mission, and considers her role essential in "jump-starting Thomas' mission in India". LIFSHITZ, *Religious Women* (cit. n. 13), p. 121.

46. Susanna ELM, "Church – Festival – Temple: Reimagining Civic Topography in Late Antiquity", in Claudia RAPP and Hal DRAKE (eds.) *The City in the Classical and Post-Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 167-182, at p. 168 and footnote 3.

in an inversion of social roles among the nobility⁴⁷ but in an encompassing inversion or, rather, conversion of civic relationships such as between the citizen and the non-citizen, the slave and the free. Conversion is, as Han Drijvers puts forward, an essential element in the apocryphal writings in general, and no less so in the (Greek and Latin) *Acts of Thomas*.⁴⁸ However, rather than a return to a paradisiacal state of innocent chastity, as Drijvers signals in the ancient *Acts of Thomas*, the conversion Thomas preaches according to the Latin *Virtutes Thomae* is concerned, first, with a Trinitarian belief, and second, with the virtues (*virtutes*) that are preached as the fruit (*fructus*) of this belief. The digression on the Trinity and the enumeration of the twelve fruits are aspects in which the Latin *Virtutes Thomae*, particularly in the version of the *Passio Thomae*, which became most influential in the Latin Middle Ages, are innovative with regard to the ancient *Acts of Thomas*, as we shall see in the next section.

The outsider procures a transformation from within

Now that we have depicted the position in which Thomas enters his missionary field, it is time to consider the way he approaches the social, cultural and religious milieu he is so alien to. The disguise under which Thomas fulfils his missionary task in the *civitates Indorum* is that of a craftsman at the court of the ruler, *rex* Gundafor. Gundafor offers his treasures to Thomas to enable him to build a palace, upon which the king leaves the city for a period of two years. Instead of building a palace, Thomas employs the money to give alms, construct churches and install a clergy (*cleros*), not only in Gundafor's city but round about the *civitates (vicinas)* (*Miracula Thomae* 17; *Passio Thomae* 17). Gundafor upon his return is outraged when he sees what is done with his money (*pecunia publica*; *Miracula Thomae* 20) and that his orders are not followed, but is converted when he hears the story of his brother Gad, who during a severe illness and near-death situation receives a vision (*Miracula Thomae* 20-21; *Passio Thomae* 19) in which he is shown the palace that Thomas has prepared in heaven for Gundafor.

A close reading of the *Virtutes Thomae* reveals that the transformation the apostle brings about in the *civitates Indorum* is twofold. In the apostle's acts, the way he carries out his plan in the absence of the king, the reward of conversion in the form of a palace or mansion in heaven seems to be decisive. The result of Gad's vision is that the brothers enter into battle to find out whose property the heavenly palace is: "If you like this building", says Gundafor to his brother, "give your money to Thomas that he builds one for you as well, but I will

⁴⁷ 47. As Drijvers brings forward; DRIJVERS, "Apocryphal Literature" (cit. n. 1), p. 240.

⁴⁸ 48. DRIJVERS, "Apocryphal Literature" (cit. n. 1), p. 237.

not give up my house (*domum meam*) which I have acquired with so much strain".⁴⁹ (*Miracula Thomae* 21; see also *Passio Thomae* 21).

The *Miracula Thomae* might give the impression that the heavenly mansion is built for the king alone, but the *Passio Thomae* gives a more elaborate report of what happens after the conversion of the king, and this account highlights the second aspect of the Christianisation of the Indians, where "conversion" becomes the acceptance of a new way of life. The *Passio Thomae* includes in its chapters 26-31 a long digression on Thomas' preaching to the people, which is lacking in the *Miracula* as well as in the Greek *Acts of Thomas*.⁵⁰ In this innovative interpolation, Thomas teaches the people how they can attain eternal life (*Si volueritis ad vitam aeternam pertingere*).⁵¹ Membership in the life to come, depicted for Gundafor and Gad as a place in the heavenly mansion, is promised to the entire people of India, if they are willing to be converted to Christian doctrine and life. Thomas starts his sermon with an urge to "believe in the triune God...",⁵² followed by an explanation of the Trinitarian belief (*Passio Thomae* 27-29). Then, the people are summoned to live according to the "fruit" (*fructum*) – in Thomas' sermon an equivalent of the holy Spirit⁵³ –: to hold the right belief; to be baptised; to abstain from fornication, avarice, and gluttony; to do penance; to be perseverant in good works; to practice hospitality; to search to know God's will and do it; to avoid doing what is against God's will; to love not only one's friends but one's enemies; and to be day and night vigilant guards of "the riches of these *virtutes*" (*harum omnium virtutum divitias*).⁵⁴ The characterisation of these twelve *virtutes* as *fructus* or "the holy Spirit" echoes Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, even though the nine fruits of the Spirit listed there differ both in content and in number. What they have in common, however, is that "living by the Spirit", as Paul phrases it in Gal. 5, 16 and 25, is closely connected to being an heir of the heavenly kingdom, even if in Paul's letter this connection is in the negative construction of verse 21: "I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this [viz. following the "desires of the flesh" v. 17-21] will not inherit the kingdom of

49. *Miracula Thomae* 21: *Si tibi hoc aedificium placet, da ei pecuniam et simile construat tibi. Ego autem non relinquam domum meam quam multo labore quaesivi.* ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 52.

50. See Zelzer's concordance in ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. XIII-XXII, at p. XIV.

51. *Passio Thomae* 27; ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 20.

52. *Si volueritis ad vitam aeternam pertingere, primo omnium credite in deum ... et in filium ... et in spiritum sanctum.* *Passio Thomae* 27; ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 20-21.

53. When explaining the Trinity, Thomas says "*In vinea tria sunt, lignum folium et fructus*". *Passio Thomae* 28, ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 22.

54. *Passio Thomae* 30, ZELZER (ed.), *Thomasakten* (cit. n. 11), p. 22-23.

God". In the *Passio Thomae*, participation in the heavenly kingdom through inheritance – the most secure form of membership – is granted to those who “live by the Spirit”, not only in their belief and submission to Baptism, but also through living the life of Christian virtues. Thus, rather than through the radical *enkrateia* through which paradise is regained, as Drijvers typifies the main focus of Thomas’ transformation of society in the ancient *Acts of Thomas*,⁵⁵ the Latin *Passio Thomae* presents the way to a heavenly dwelling as a programme of reform, and of conversion to a way of life that builds and confirms the Christian community, both here and hereafter.

The emphasis on conversion to a Christian way of life focused on the people rather than an ascetic elite is a notable innovation in the *Passio Thomae* with regard to the older Latin and Greek traditions. Its reception in ritual performance, as it takes shape in the commemorative prayers for Mass functioning during the annual liturgical celebration of Thomas’ *natale*, is equally significant. The transformation from “a palace for the king” into “a palace for the people” is at the centre of the liturgical prayers in honour of the apostle Thomas that were used in early medieval liturgy and ecclesiastical cult. Here, the people are emphatically proclaimed as the winner in the battle of the royal brothers over the ownership of the heavenly palace, as I demonstrated elsewhere.⁵⁶ The programmatic approach that addresses the people as a whole and, thereby, differs from the focus on elite asceticism, let alone encratism, fits in the culture of the period that witnessed the first large-scale manuscript transmission of the *Virtutes Thomae*. As indicated above, the earliest extant manuscripts transmitting the *Passio Thomae* date to the middle of the eighth century. As is the case with the *Virtutes apostolorum* in general, a remarkable increase in manuscript production took place towards the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century.⁵⁷ In the eighth and ninth centuries, the Frankish rulers aimed at correction of the people and did so in an organised and programmatic way. Monastic and secular clergy were entrusted with the responsibility to carry out a programme of reform, described with the help of the concept *correctio*.⁵⁸ Conversion served a double purpose: to deepen the Christian character of already converted populations by spelling out the core characteristics of the Christian way of life, and to convert newly

55. DRIJVERS, “Apocryphal Literature” (cit. n. 1), p. 239.

56. Els ROSE, “*Provinciae et civitates ecclesiis plenae*. Transformation of the *civitates Indorum* in the Apocryphal Acts and the Liturgical Commemoration of the Apostle Thomas”, in Paul VAN GEEST *et al.* (eds.), *Sanctifying Texts, Transforming Rituals* (Leiden: Brill, 2017 forthcoming).

57. ROSE, “*Abdias scriptor*” (cit. n. 12), see also footnote 12 above.

58. Rosamond MCKITTERICK, *Charlemagne. The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 292-380.

conquered peoples to the Christian religion.⁵⁹ For both purposes, the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles were seen as important models, as the increase in manuscript transmission clearly demonstrates.

Conclusions

The Latin *Acts of Thomas* present the apostle, *servus* and *peregrinus*, as an anti-citizen, as a subversive stranger who invites the people of India to a new way of life as well as a new, heavenly belonging, matters that are inextricably intertwined. The alien and outlaw transforms the *civitates* from within, the slave buys their inhabitants an eternal house in heaven. By introducing the apostle Thomas as a foreigner, the *Acts of Thomas*, both in the ancient transmission and in the Latin rewritings, are in line with the tradition of the apostle as representative of the “foreign God”, a motif worked out by Timothy Luckritz Marquis for the apostle Paul.⁶⁰ Paul, whose travels and foreignness are described most meticulously in the canonical *Acts of the Apostles*, is probably the most important example of the “Christianisation” of “the wandering god”, as Luckritz Marquis formulates, whose representative enters in a given community as a foreigner. Luckritz Marquis identifies the foreignness of gods and their representatives as a powerful strength in any given civic community: “No matter the mythic background understood, [...] the god’s essential foreignness instilled a power difficult to control in a civic context”.⁶¹ From that perspective, the apostles that feature in the apocryphal *Acts* to no lesser degree act out their foreignness in order to give their mission impetus and persuasion.

By accentuating the position of Thomas as an “anti-citizen”, a profile given shape by his role as a foreigner and a slave, the *Acts of Thomas* are an important example of the way early Christianity employed terms used to formulate issues of membership of, participation in, and belonging to a given civic community. Such terminology often echoes or even includes traditional notions of citizenship, even if the political meaning and social implications of such notions had changed over time. The disguise of Thomas, an anti-citizen par excellence, demonstrates how Christian authors appropriated this terminology with which the boundaries are marked between those who could claim “citizenship” and, therefore, membership and belonging, and those who could not. This appropriation was not passive, but included an active translation of

59. Julia M. H. SMITH, “‘Emending Evil Ways and Praising God’s Omnipotence.’ Einhard and the Use of Roman Martyrs”, in Kenneth MILLS and Anthony GRAFTON (eds.), *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing* (Rochester NY: Rochester University Press, 2003), p. 189-223.

60. Timothy LUCKRITZ MARQUIS, *Transient Apostle. Paul, Travel, and the Rhetoric of Empire* (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2013).

61. LUCKRITZ MARQUIS, *Transient Apostle* (cit. n. 60), p. 71.

terms, leading to the introduction of a particular Christian “citizenship discourse”, one that provided new meanings that sat often in paradoxical opposition to the ancient definitions. It is precisely this paradox that conveyed the revolutionary character of the new religion, and granted an outsider like the apostle Thomas the role, the position and the possibility to transform communities from within.

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