

Christianity in Iraq II: Synopsis

Located strategically on great trade-routes, Iraq was a natural starting point for various missionary expeditions by land and by sea. By the fifth century, a string of dioceses stretched across Iran to Afghanistan and Central Asia where the city of Merv served as the headquarters for missions east of the Oxus River, amongst both Turkic and Iranian peoples. Trade also played an important role in the spread of the Church of the East from southern Iraq down the Gulf to India.

During the Abbassid period, particularly under the incumbency of Patriarch Timothy I, the Church of the East had dioceses in the Yemen, Tibet and as far as China. Although Christianity was expelled from China at the end of the T'ang dynasty, it returned several centuries later in the Mongol period. Syriac inscriptions at Tokmek and Pishpak provide remarkable evidence of widespread medieval communities in Central Asia. Tombstones from Quanzhou in China are testimony of the expanse of Syriac Christianity up to the fourteenth century.

The Churches of Iraq have once again assumed a global dimension in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Diaspora communities have now emerged in Europe, England, north America and Australia. Like their venerable counterparts, they are faced with challenges of multi-culturalism, linguistic diffusion and competing religions as well as distance from each other and Iraq. Many of these challenges will take considerable effort to overcome, but the new electronic age provides some solutions. Far-flung congregations are now able to be linked by the internet and e-mail and maintain a new international identity.

PROGRAMME (provisional)

Morning Session.

[10.00 A.M. – 12.30 P.M.]

The missions of the Churches of Iraq

The morning session will consist of a series of papers exploring the historical spread of the Churches of Iraq up to the fourteenth century. Speakers include:

Prof. John Healey (Manchester)

Christians in the Gulf in the 7th century A.D.

Dr. Wassilios Klein (Bonn)

Syriac inscriptions from Tokmek and Pishpek, Central Asia [illustrated]

Dr. Erica C.D. Hunter (SOAS/Cambridge)

Christian communities in Yuan dynasty China [illustrated]

Mar Aprem (India)

The mission of the Church of the East to India.

Afternoon Session.

[2.00 – 4.30 P.M.]

The modern diaspora of the Churches of Iraq.

The afternoon session investigates the problems and challenges encountered by the diaspora communities today. The current situation will be discussed by representatives of the various Syriac Churches [the Assyrians, Chaldaeans, Syrian Orthodox and Syrian Catholic].

Dr. George Kiraz (Beth Mardutho Institute, USA)

will conclude the day talking about "the role of the Beth Mardutho and the global aspects of bringing Syriac studies anywhere, anytime."

Christianity in Iraq II: Application Form

NAME (S):

ADDRESS:

Day time tel.no.

e-mail address:

Please circle fee enclosed

Full	£25.00
BSAI Member	£20.00
AECA Member	£20.00
Student	£10.00*

- Please send proof of student status.

Fees include lunch, morning and afternoon tea/coffee.

Do you require disabled access? Yes/No

Please send this form with your remittance by Monday April 4th

(cheques should be made payable to Dr. Erica Hunter):

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CHRISTIANITY IN IRAQ II:

SATURDAY 9th APRIL, 2005

Enquiries to:

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**DEPT *for the* STUDY of RELIGIONS
SCHOOL *of* ORIENTAL *and*
AFRICAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY *of* LONDON
in conjunction with**

**The British School of Archaeology in
Iraq
&
The Anglican and Eastern Churches
Association**

Presents

**CHRISTIANITY IN
IRAQ II:**

**A seminar day on the
international Churches of Iraq**

SATURDAY 9th APRIL, 2005

to be held at

**The Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre
SCHOOL *of* ORIENTAL *and*
AFRICAN STUDIES,
Thornhaugh St., Russell Square,
London, WC1H 0XG**