

## Christianity in Iraq VIII: Synopsis

Between 1902-1914 the *German Turfan Expedition* unearthed a library at the monastery site of Bulayiq in Turfan (north-west China) that yielded over 1000 Syriac, Christian Sogdian and Christian Uighur manuscript fragments written in the Syriac script. This wealth of material was brought to Berlin where it was preserved in various locations. Since April 2008, this remarkable collection has been catalogued by an AHRC-funded project, *The Christian Library from Turfan*.

Liturgical and biblical fragments form the bulk of the Syriac manuscripts. There are also hagiographies (Bar Shabba and George), prayer-amulets and even pharmaceutical treatments. The Christian Sogdian manuscripts include translations from the *Peshitta*, hymns and psalms as well as several bilingual lectionaries (Syriac-Sogdian), hagiographies and translations from East Syrian ascetical writings. The Christian Uighur manuscripts include a marriage contract and Psalters.

Dated between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, this remarkable range of literature clearly shows that the monastery at Turfan was an outpost of the Church of the East whose dioceses stretched to China, to the old imperial capital at Chang'an, serving communities who were largely Turkic and Persian speakers. Despite its far-flung location in China, the monastery's heritage lay westwards. Intrinsic links were maintained with the 'mother church' in Mesopotamia, seen in the range of literature and the liturgy that was always recited in Syriac. Several *Hudras* (liturgical cycles) found amongst the manuscripts, that are dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> centuries are the earliest examples of their kind and provide precious insight into the history and development of the East Syrian liturgy that has a relevance for the modern communities today.

## PROGRAMME

### Morning Session.

[10.30 A.M. – 1.00 P.M.]

The morning session will consist of four papers exploring the manuscript discoveries from the monastery site of Turfan

#### Dr. Erica C D Hunter (SOAS)

*Syriac prayer-amulets from Turfan.*

#### Prof. Peter Zieme (Berlin)

*Old Uighur Christian texts between Turfan and Kharakhoto.*

#### Dr. Mark Dickens (SOAS)

*Biblical texts from Turfan: Psalters and lectionaries.*

#### Prof. Nicholas Sims-Williams FBA (SOAS)

*The contribution of Christian Sogdian texts to Syriac literature.*

### Afternoon Session.

[2.00 – 4.30 P.M.]

The afternoon session explores contribution made by the Turfan discoveries to the modern communities of the East Syrian churches.

#### His Grace, Mar Awa, bishop of the Assyrian Church of the East, California, USA

**will deliver the keynote address:**

*The importance and impact of the liturgical texts from Turfan on liturgy today.*

This address will be followed by discussions and presentations from the various Christian communities in London.

## Christianity in Iraq VIII: Application Form

NAME(S):

ADDRESS:

Day time tel.no.

e-mail address:

Please circle fee enclosed

<b>Full</b>	<b>£30.00</b>
BISI Member	£24.00
JAMECA Member	£24.00
Student	£12.00*

\*Please send proof of student status.

**Includes lunch, tea/coffee.**

Do you require disabled access? Yes/No

**Please send this form with your remittance by Tuesday May 24<sup>th</sup>**

**(cheques payable to Dr. Erica Hunter):**

Dr. Erica C.D. Hunter,  
Centre of Eastern and Orthodox Christianity,  
Dept. for the Study of Religion,  
School of Oriental and African Studies,  
Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square  
LONDON WC1H 0XG

You can also register and pay on-line at  
**[www.easternchristianity.com](http://www.easternchristianity.com)**

For **further details**, please write to the above address or contact by e-mail.

e-mail: [eh9@soas.ac.uk](mailto:eh9@soas.ac.uk)

**CHRISTIANITY IN IRAQ VIII**

**SATURDAY 28<sup>th</sup> MAY 2011**

**Enquiries to:**

**Dr. Erica C.D. Hunter**  
*Centre of Eastern and Orthodox  
Christianity*  
Dept. for the Study of Religions  
**SOAS**  
Thornhaugh St.  
Russell Square  
London WC1H 0XG

**E-mail: [eh9@soas.ac.uk](mailto:eh9@soas.ac.uk)**

**For further details visit:**

**[www.easternchristianity.com](http://www.easternchristianity.com)**

*Centre of Eastern and Orthodox  
Christianity*

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

in conjunction with

**The British Institute for the Study of Iraq  
&  
Jerusalem and Middle Eastern  
Churches Association**

*Presents*

## **CHRISTIANITY IN IRAQ VIII**

A seminar day on  
The Christian library from  
Turfan and the 'mother  
church' in Mesopotamia

**SATURDAY 28<sup>th</sup> MAY 2011**

to be held at

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