

The Canadian Society for Syriac Studies: Schedule of Public Lectures

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- [1] The following lecture series will be held at the University of Toronto under the auspices of The Canadian Society for Syriac Studies during 2001 First Quarter. The venue for all lectures is:

Auditorium, Earth Sciences Centre
Room 1050, 5 Bancroft Avenue
St. George Campus, University of Toronto

1. Syriac Christianity in the Egyptian Desert: Recent Discoveries in the Monastery of the Syrians (Wadi al-Natrun)

Lucas Van Rompay, Duke University

8.00 PM, Thursday, January 25, 2001

- [2] The Egyptian desert always exerted a strong attraction on the Christians of Syria and Mesopotamia. Since the 9th century, West Syriac monks, supported by the wealthy people of Takrit among many others, settled in a monastery there, which became known as the "Monastery of the Syrians." Later, monks from the Lebanon and the region of Damascus demonstrated interest in that monastery up until the 17th century, when the edifice became entirely Coptic again, although the name remained "Deir al-Surian." Here, Dutch, Polish and Egyptian scholars of art and conservation have been working in the main church since 1995, where they uncovered under the plaster an impressive number of wall paintings and Syriac inscriptions. Taking these discoveries into consideration, we shall talk about the history of the monastery, its role as centre of artistic and intellectual creativity, and as a place of encounter and interchange between the Syriac and the Coptic cultures.

2. Mar Tadros, Bahdeidat: A Visit to a Lebanese Church in the Thirteenth Century

Erica Dodd, Victoria University

8.00 PM, Thursday, February 15, 2001

- [3] During the Crusades in the thirteenth century, Christians in the Lebanon prospered and there was a revival of church building. Lebanese Christians acted as intermediaries between the Crusaders

and the Arab Muslims, profiting greatly from their favoured status in local society. In their position as middlemen, they engaged actively in the transfer of goods from along the silk route to the seaports and across the Mediterranean. This prosperity led to the building of churches and their decoration in Christian strongholds along the coast and in the mountains. One of these churches is the little church of Mar Tadros in the village of Bahdeidat, in the foothills just above Jubeil. This paper will illustrate the paintings in this Church and examine them in the context of other paintings in this region, in order to understand how the Christians of Lebanon interpreted their religion and their liturgy in the Middle Ages.

3. Syriac Heritage on the Northern Silk Road: The Archaeological and Epigraphic Evidence of Christianity in Kirghizia

Wassilios Klein, Bonn University

8:00 PM, Thursday, March 29, 2001

- [4] Since the 1890s Kirghizia has attracted the attention of scholars in the field of Syriac epigraphy, when Daniel Chwolson published about 600 Syriac funerary inscriptions found there. The discovery of these inscriptions came as a surprise since there was little literary evidence that Christianity had played any important role in the lands located to the north of the Tianshan Mountains. In recent years archaeological excavations in the Middle Age capital revealed a church with three naves and the grave of a holy man. Taking into consideration these excavations, the other religions coexisting with Christianity in Central Asia, and the political history of that region at that time, we shall describe the role played by East Syriac (so-called Nestorian) Christianity and the Syriac language in the daily life of the Sogdian and Turkish people.

Membership in the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies includes free admission to public lectures, an annual symposium, and subscriptions to the CSSS Bulletin, which will include the transcripts of the public lectures.

Annual regular member: US\$ 35.00

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