

‘Antioch’: A New Initiative for the Study of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch

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In 2006 a new charity, named ‘Antioch’, was set up and registered with the aim of promoting research on the cultural heritage of the Rum Orthodox (Chalcedonian) Patriarchate of Antioch. Although the early period, up to the time of the Arab conquests, is comparatively well known, the subsequent centuries have been very little studied, despite their importance, both for the history of the Orthodox Church as a whole, and for that of the Middle East in general. Discoveries in recent years of medieval wall paintings in Syria and Lebanon, as well as of hitherto unknown manuscripts, forgotten saints, and the identification of new Christian archaeological sites, are just one indication of some of the new and unexpected aspects that are coming to light. At present, however, ‘Antioch’ is concentrating its attention on the very large number of manuscripts of Antiochian Orthodox provenance, written in four different languages, Greek, Syriac, Christian Palestinian Aramaic and Arabic. At the end of many of these the copyist has provided a colophon with notes stating where, when and for whom the manuscript was written; quite often, further information of a historical or topographical nature is also given. Work on these manuscripts has already brought to light a forgotten saint, besides providing a lot of new and valuable historical information. Once all this information has been collected together, it will make it possible to write a much more authoritative and reliable history of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch than is at present available.

At the present time ‘Antioch’ is supporting the research of Monk Elia Khalifeh, an Orthodox monk from Lebanon who is currently residing in Oxford, where he is able to benefit from the resources of the University’s libraries, above all from its manuscripts and its collection of microfilms from St Catherine’s Monastery, Sinai. He has already made an inventory of several thousand manuscripts in Syriac, Christian Palestinian Aramaic and Arabic, and is in the process of entering all the varied information contained in their colophons into a carefully designed data base. The aim of ‘Antioch’ is eventually to be able to make all this information available to scholars in the form of a fully searchable database, as well as to support and publish research on the Antiochian Orthodox heritage in general. In due course it is hoped that it will also be possible to organize conferences on the Antiochian Orthodox tradition, and, ideally, to establish a physical Centre to further promote research and to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge about this neglected and little-known tradition to a wider public.

Needless to say, the future success and development of ‘Antioch’ depends on financial support for its work. Further information about ‘Antioch’ in general, and about how to support it, can be found on its website, www.AntiochCentre.net

NB: This ‘announcement’ was published in different academic periodicals and journals, e.g. *Aram*, *Parole de l’Orient*, *Hugoye*, and *Sobornost*.