

Workshop 24.-25. October 2025

Monastic Landscapes in Northern Mesopotamia in the 6th - 10th centuries

The study of Christianity in northern Mesopotamia during the late Sasanian and early Islamic periods (6th-10th centuries), particularly within the context of monasticism, offers critical insights into how Christian communities were shaped by the intersection of religious, cultural, and political dynamics. This era was characterized by significant religious diversity, with Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian, Manichaean, and Islamic communities coexisting in the region.

Northern Mesopotamia, encompassing regions like the Tur Abdin plateau, the Jazira plain, and the upper and middle Tigris valley, was a significant center of Christianity and monasticism. The region was home to numerous monastic communities that functioned not only as religious centers but also as hubs of religious education and cultural interaction.

The workshop will explore the archaeological, architectural, social, and cultural dimensions of monasticism and investigate the role of monasteries in shaping the socio-religious landscapes of northern Mesopotamia. The presentations of case studies, along with the discussions that follow, will contribute to a deeper understanding of the spatial organization, communal life, and broader societal impact of these monastic communities. Additionally, the workshop aims to highlight the ways in which monasteries functioned as centers of religious practice, education, and cultural exchange, providing new insights into the dynamics of interfaith interaction and the region's historical development.

Goethe-University Frankfurt

(Campus Westend, IG-Farben Building, Room: 1.314, Eisenhower-Saal)

Organizers

Dr. Mustafa Ahmad (Goethe-University Frankfurt)

Prof. Alexander Pruß (Johannes-Gutenberg-University Mainz)

Registration by 16.10.2025

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Workshop Programm

First day (Friday, 24. October 2025)

15:00 Registration

16:00 Welcome

16:15 **Keynote: Hartmut Leppin** (Goethe University Frankfurt)

Imaginations of Monastic Landscapes in the Vitae Beatorum Orientalium (Lives of the Eastern Saints) of John of Ephesus

17:30 Coffee Break

17:45 **Keynote: Stefan R. Hauser** (University of Konstanz)

The Materiality of Monastic Landscape: History of Research and Future Directions

18:30 Discussion

19:00 Reception

Second day (Saturday, 25. October 2025)

09:00 **Philp Wood** (Agha Khan University)

Monasteries and the Election of Patriarchs of the Church of the East (750-1000 CE)

09:30 **Simon Pierre** (IFPO- Beirut and Orient et Méditerranée- Paris)

Jazīran Miaphysite Monastic Networks and Tribal Political Contention (2nd Century AH)

10:00 **Simon Brelaud** (Institute Français du Proche Orient/IFPO-Erbil)

Property Marks and Accounting. Epigraphic Evidence on Ceramics of the Language of Monasteries

10:30 Coffee Break

11:00 **Ute Verstegen** (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Architecture and Liturgy in the Monastic Landscapes of the Church of the East (6th–9th Centuries)

11:30 **Karel Nováček** (Palacký University Olomouc)

Tracing Cenobia: Archaeology of Monastic Communal Cores in North Iraq

12:00 **Narmin A. Amin** (University of Salahddin-Erbil)

Interactions and Identity Construction Between Cultural and Religious Groups in Villages of North-Eastern Mesopotamia

12:30 **Xenia Kolińska** (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)

Architecture of the Former Diocese of Marga: From Thomas of Marga to 14C dating

13:00 Lunch

14:00 **Rafal Koliński** and **Johannes Köhler** (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)

More on the Identification of Bēt 'Āwé Monastery

14:30 **Mustafa Ahmad** (Goethe-University Frankfurt)

Investigating the Settlement and Monastic Landscape of Deir Za'faran in Iraqi Kurdistan

15:00 **Alexander Tamm** (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Christians in Gird-i Kazhaw (Iraqi-Kurdistan)?

15:30 **St. John Simpson** (The British Museum-UK)

The Monastery with the Column: Pottery from Excavations at a Monastic Site in the Eski Mosul Dam Salvage Project

16:00 Coffee Break

16:30 **Elif Keser-Kayaalp** (Hacettepe University - Turkey)

Engaging with the Landscape: Foundation of a Monastery in Tur Abdin

17:00 **Martina Müller-Wiener** (Museum für Islamische Kunst - Berlin) and **Martin Gussone** (Technische Universität Berlin)

Churches, Monasteries and the City: Some Remarks on the Sacred Topography of al-Hira

17:30 **Catharina Hof** (Technische Universität Berlin)

A 'Hīran' Cross Stucco Plaque at Tuneinir (Upper Khabur): Archaeological Evidence of Interconnections Between Northern Mesopotamia and the Lower Euphrates in Umayyad/Abbasid Times

18:00 **Agnieszka Lic** (Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, Polish Academy of Sciences)

Platforms and Podia in the Architecture of Monastic Churches of the Early Islamic Period in the Gulf and their Possible Connections to Northern Mesopotamia

18:30 Discussion

19:00 Speakers Dinner