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Manuscript Heritage of the Christian East: Its Conservation and Study

Abstract

The article addresses activities of the Society for Studying Christian East (Forschungsstelle Christlicher Orient) of the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (Germany). The Christian East includes territories from Ethiopia to Georgia and from the Mediterranean to India and East Asia. The task of the Society is to study Christianity (mainly in the Middle East) from the perspective of historical science and theology. The Society actively interacts with its colleagues in other regions and countries. Of great importance are its activities in preparation of publications and description of ancient and early medieval Syrian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Arabic, Persian

manuscripts, as well as records in other Oriental languages. Among its current projects are study and scientific publication of the oldest ecclesiastical legal texts, preserved in the Coptic, Arabic, Ethiopian and Syrian manuscripts; digitization and description of Coptic manuscripts in Egypt; scientific publication of the Syrian Octoechus, a review of the East Christian manuscripts from the Andechs monastery (Bavaria); and others. In addition to research projects and teaching activities at the university, the Society publishes a collection entitled "Eichst tter Beitr ge zum Christlichen Orient" (EBCO). 5 volumes have been published by now. The article assesses various issues of the Society activities, tasks of studying history of the Christian East in connection with current political and cultural situation and history of studying eastern manuscripts in Europe. The author makes observations concerning prospects of using the European experience for studying the Orthodoxy in the East. At present, when the Middle East is a place of complex political and social processes, publication and study of Christian culture monuments in Russia and Europe is necessary for countries keeping up their Christian traditions; it may help to achieve peace in the land of ancient civilizations. Conservation and study of historical, philological, theological and cultural heritage of the Christian East is a significant task for archivists and historians.

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### Keywords

Christian East, source study, archeography, theology, manuscripts.

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