

The Christian Heritage of Iraq

Collected papers from the Christianity of
Iraq I-V Seminar Days

Edited by
Erica C. D. Hunter

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**PRESTER JOHN'S REALM:
NEW LIGHT ON CHRISTIANITY BETWEEN
MERV AND TURFAN**

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The question of the historical role of Nestorianism in Turkestan, and of the reasons for its complete disappearance belongs to the questions of main concern for that part of the local intellectuals who take interest in the country's past ... A more academic formulation would of course only become possible when all information of the Oriental authors is collected, and when those places where, according to that information, Christianity once flourished are subjected to thorough study in order to discover substantial new monuments. Wilhelm Barthold (1869–1930), 'More on Christianity in Central Asia'¹

For centuries, Europeans were captivated by the figure of Prester John, the legendary Christian priest-king who supposedly ruled over vast stretches of Asia. The West eventually realised that he never existed, but the fascination with Christianity far to the East of Europe remained and indeed was based on solid historical fact.

As the quote from Barthold above points out, the task of

¹ V. V. Bartol'd, *Raboty po otchel'nym problemam istorii Sredney Azii* 2. *Sochineniya* (Moscow: 1964) 315.

reconstructing the history of Christianity in the heart of 'Prester John's realm,' namely Central Asia, remains a challenge, due to the scattered nature of literary references in a variety of languages and the general scarcity of archaeological data, relative to what we have available for understanding the history of Christianity in Europe or the Middle East.

The Christians in Prester John's realm followed the teachings of such spiritual authorities as Narsai (ca. 399–ca. 502) and Mar Babai the Great (ca. 551–628), now largely familiar only to church historians. The language of worship for this millions-strong flock, stretching from eastern Syria through the Middle East, across Central Asia and into China, was Syriac, modern varieties of which are still spoken in small enclaves in the Middle East. Often called 'Nestorians' by others, these Christians belonged to the Church of the East, the largest and most influential Christian community of its time outside the former Roman Empire.

Before the first Christian missionaries brought the Gospel to the barbarian tribes of Europe, priests of this Church had already established strongholds in Persia, Afghanistan, India, the vast expanses of Central Asia, and China, where they competed with other religions and experienced both favour and persecution, according to the changing political climate. Following the trade routes of Late Antiquity, they mounted pan-Asian ventures, achieving a degree of geographical expansion which would not be matched by the West until after the beginnings of European colonisation in the 16th century.²

Among the 25 metropolitan provinces of the Church of the East that had been founded by the 13th century was Samarkand, the heart of the country then known as Sogd or Sogdiana.³ There is no agreement as to when the foundation of this metropolitan see took place; although it is attributed to the Catholicos Saliba-Zakha (714–728), other sources also suggest an earlier date, under either

Ahai (410–414) or Shila (Silas) (503–523).⁴

Although Asian Christianity began to decline with the spread of Islam in the 10th century, the community at Samarkand still survived. According to Bar Hebraeus, they still had a metropolitan in 1046.⁵ The Persian historian al-Juzjani tells of a conflict that occurred between the Christian and Muslim communities at Samarkand between 1256 and 1259, which resulted in the destruction of a Christian church.⁶ Marco Polo's report on the church of St. John the Baptist in Samarkand, abundant in fantastic detail, dates to ca. 1275.⁷ The Syriac *History of Mar Yabballaha III* mentions Mar Jacob, the metropolitan of Samarkand, amongst those who participated in the consecration in Baghdad in 1281 of Rabban Marqos, a Turkic monk from China, as Yabballaha III, the first and only Turkic Patriarch of the Church of the East.⁸

In 1329 Pope John XXII sent his bishop to Samarkand, probably in order to try and persuade the non-Chalcedonians to recognise his authority.⁹ In 1404 Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo, the envoy of Henry III of Castile, reported that many Christians in Samarkand had been captured by Timur during his raids on Syria, Armenia and Persia.¹⁰ The end of their prosperity is signalled by the 15th century Armenian chronicler Thomas of Metsop, who reports in his *History of Lanktamur and His Successors* about persecutions of the Samarkand Christians between 1421 and 1429.¹¹ But what more can be said about this millennial presence apart from these fleeting

⁴ See the discussion in B. Colless, 'The Nestorian Province of Samarqand,' *Abr-Nahrain* 24 (1986) 51–7.

⁵ E. A. W. Budge, tr., *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l Faraj, the son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician, commonly known as Bar Hebraeus* (Oxford: 1932) I: 204–5.

⁶ Cited in W. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*. E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series, N.S. 5 (London: 1968) 486.

⁷ R. Latham, tr., *The Travels of Marco Polo* (London: 1958) 81–2. Scholars are generally of the opinion that Polo never in fact visited Samarkand.

⁸ E. A. W. Budge, tr., *The Monks of Kūblāi Khān, Emperor of China* (London: 1928) 155–6.

⁹ J. Mosheim, *Historia Tartarorum Ecclesiastica* (Helmstadt: 1741) 110–1, add. LXIII–LXV.

¹⁰ C. Markham, tr., *Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy González de Clavijo to the Court of Timour, at Samarcand, A.D. 1403–6* (London: 1859) 171.

¹¹ Shakhnazarian, ed., *Tovma Mets'opetsi* (Paris: 1860) 28–9.

² Unless otherwise noted, all dates are in the Common Era (CE). For a broad panorama of the missionary activities of the Church of the East, see the following excellent source: C. Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006). See also E. Hunter, 'The Church of the East in Central Asia,' *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 78/3 (1996): 129–42.

³ J. S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*, (Rome: 1719–28) III: 2, 630.

references in literary sources? What traces remain of the 'realm of Prester John'?

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Amongst the more important artefacts uncovered from former Sogdian territory, now in modern-day Uzbekistan, is a bronze censer, found in the summer of 1916 in Urgut, a small town ca. 40 km to the south-east of Samarkand.¹² Its dating is disputed: 8th–9th century or late 12th–early 13th century, but it would have been used during the liturgy.¹³

Other artefacts uncovered in Uzbekistan point to a significant Christian presence, albeit only partially preserved. In the 7th and 8th centuries, several Sogdian rulers identified themselves with Christianity, as can be seen from coins they minted which bear crosses.¹⁴ A number of other archaeological finds date to the same period: Christian burials at the sites of Durmon-tepa¹⁵ and Dashti-Urdakon¹⁶ near Samarkand; wearable crosses;¹⁷ various ceramic

¹² Plate 1. Bronze censer from Urgut. Photo N. Tikhomirov.

¹³ V. Zalesskaya, 'Siriyskoye bronzovoye kadilo iz Urguta.' *Sredniaya Aziya i Iran* (Leningrad: 1972) 57–60.

¹⁴ Plate 2. Sogdian Christian coinage, 7th century (bronze). Top group: Bukhara oasis (Western Uzbekistan). Bottom group: Samarkand area (Central Uzbekistan and Tajikistan). Right (obverse only): Chach (Tashkent region). For information on this material see A. Musakayeva, 'O nestorianakh v Sredney Azii.' *Iz istorii drevnikh kul'tov Sredney Azii. Khristianstvo* (Tashkent: 1994) 42–55, and A. Naymark, *Sogdiana, its Christians and Byzantium: A Study of Artistic and Cultural Connections in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages* [Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation] (Bloomington: 2001).

¹⁵ G. Shishkina, 'Nestorianskoye pogrebeniye v Sogde Samarkandskom.' *Iz istorii drevnikh kul'tov Sredney Azii. Khristianstvo* (Tashkent: 1994) 56–63.

¹⁶ A. Belenitskiy et al, 'Raskopki drevnego Pendzhikenta v 1976 g.' *Arheologicheskkiye raboty v Tadzhikistane XVI* (1976) 217–8.

¹⁷ See Plate 3. Cross, bronze, Quwa (Ferghana Valley, Eastern Uzbekistan). Plate 4. Cross, bronze, Qashqadarya province (Central Uzbekistan). Plate 5. Cross of thin sheet gold (sewn onto funeral clothing of the deceased), Durmon (near Samarkand). Plate 6. Cross with the ornamental design of grapes (a Eucharistic symbol), coal shale, Samarkand province. Plate 7. Pendant with Virgin and Child, glass in silver mounting, Balalyk-tepa (Surkhandarya province, southern Uzbekistan).

items,¹⁸ including an ampoule (a small glass vial for holy water or oil, carried by pilgrims on the belt) of St. Menas, the Egyptian saint and martyr (ca. 285–ca. 309);¹⁹ a scene involving veneration of the cross scratched on the side of a large jar;²⁰ and an ostrakon with fragments of the first two Psalms in Syriac.²¹

One of the biggest challenges to reconstructing the history of Central Asian Christianity is the relative scarcity of Christian buildings which have been discovered and excavated in the region. Up until recently, remnants of churches had only been found in the following locations in the region:

- 1) the Kharoba-Koshuk in Merv (Turkmenistan), used between the 5th/6th and 11th/12th centuries;²²
- 2) a church and a monastery in Aq-Beshim (Kyrgyzstan), dating from the 8th–11th centuries;²³
- 3) a church in Qocho, near Turfan (Xinjiang, China).²⁴

¹⁸ See Plate 8. Ceramic jug, Taraz region, Kazakhstan. Photo C. Baumer. Plate 9. Ceramic bowl for ritual washing before ceremony, Andijan (Ferghana valley, Eastern Uzbekistan). Plate 10. Ceramic cast for moulding crosses, Rabinjan (Samarkand area).

¹⁹ B. Stavitskiy, "'Ampula sviatogo Miny" iz Samarkanda.' *Kratkiye soobshcheniya Instituta istorii material'noy kul'tury AN SSSR* 80 (1960): 101–2.

²⁰ Belenitskiy (1976) 218.

²¹ A. Paykova, 'The Syrian Ostrakon from Panjikant.' *Le Muséon* 92 (1979) 159–69.

²² G. Pugachenkova, 'Kharoba-Koshuk.' *Izvestiya Akademii nauk Tukkmenskoy SSR* 3 (1954) 15–9; G. Dresvianskaya, 'Kharoba-Koshuk.' *Pamiatniki Turkmenistana* 2 (1968) 28. See also the discussion in G. Herrmann, *The Monuments of Merv: Traditional Buildings of the Karakum* (London: 1999) 103–5, 180.

²³ G. Clauson, 'Ak Beshim–Suyab.' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1961) 1–13; L. Hambis, 'Communication: Ak-Bešim et ses sanctuaires.' *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres (Comptes Rendus)* (1961) 124–38; W. Klein, 'A Newly Excavated Church of Syriac Christianity along the Silk Road in Kyrgyzstan.' *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 56 (2004) 25–47; G. Semionov, 'Raskopki 1996–1998 gg.' *Suyab. Ak-Beshim* (St. Petersburg: 2002) 44–114.

²⁴ M. Bussagli, *Central Asian Painting* (London: 1978) 111–4; K. Parry, 'Images in the Church of the East: the evidence from Central Asia and China.' *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 78:3 (1996) 143–62. To this list, although further away geographically, may be added the two

A NEW DISCOVERY

Against the aforementioned scant inventory of individual archaeological finds in the Samarkand area, some of which are simply accidental, the following testimony offers tantalizing hope of finding evidence of a more substantial Christian presence:

The mountains to the south of Samarkand are [called] Shawdar... There is no other district in the vicinity of Samarkand healthier in climate, more abundant in crops or better in fruit than this. Its people excel the people of the vicinity in physique and complexion. This district stretches for more than ten farsakhs,²⁵ and it is one of the most salubrious mountain areas with the nicest buildings, neither isolated nor inaccessible. On Shawdar there is a monastery of the Christians where they gather and have their cells. I found many Iraqi Christians there who had migrated to the place because of its suitability, solitary location and healthy climate. It [the monastery] owns real estate, and many people retreat to it.²⁶

So wrote an Arab traveller, Abu Qasim Muhammad ibn Hawqal, who left Baghdad in 943 to become acquainted with other lands and peoples and to make money by commerce, in his famous geographical treatise 'Roads and Kingdoms' (*al-Masalik wa'l-Mamalik*).²⁷

The precise location of this monastery had never been established (despite a series of attempts made in 1894, 1900 and 1938), but there were hints as to its whereabouts:

churches, one 'Nestorian' and one 'Latin,' excavated in Olon Süme, Inner Mongolia, both dating from the 13th-14th centuries, on which see J. Dauvillier, 'L'archéologie des anciennes églises de rite chaldéen.' *Parole de l'Orient* 6-7 [Mélanges offerts au R. P. François Graffin] (1975-6) 383-4.

²⁵ 1 farsakh ≈ 6 km.

²⁶ Translation by A. Savchenko. A less than accurate translation of this passage can also be found in J. Kramers and G. Wiet, tr., *Ibn Hawqal: Configuration de la Terre (Kitab Surat al-Ard)*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1964) 478.

²⁷ M. de Goeje, ed., *Viae et regna. Descriptio ditionis moslemicae auctore Abu'l-Kasim Ibn Haukal* (Lugduni Batavorum: 1873) 373.

- 1) The aforementioned censer was found in Urgut in 1916 and sold to the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, where it now housed. Unlike an icon or a crucifix, a censer cannot belong to an individual and is thus evidence of an organised Christian community celebrating the liturgy;
- 2) In 1920, a group of university students from Tashkent discovered a rock carved with Syriac inscriptions on a cliff near Urgut, since which references to these inscriptions have become commonplace in all studies dealing with Christianity in Central Asia;²⁸
- 3) In 1955, a group of local Young Pioneers (the Soviet equivalent of Boy Scouts) discovered a cave cemetery in one of the many caves found in the neighbouring hills. A number of Syriac inscriptions inscribed on the walls of the caves were reported, but these appear not to have survived.²⁹

Realising that the only way to pin-point the location was to gather together all the available evidence, a careful examination was made of Ibn Hawqal's original text, preserved in several mediaeval manuscripts kept in libraries in Oxford (Bodleian), Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), Leiden (Leiden University), and Berlin (Gotha), as well as in the private collection of Sir William Ouseley.

By studying the transmission of a Sogdian place-name down through the centuries, it was possible to correct the key passage, which probably read as follows before it was corrupted in the process of scribal copying: '*this place towers over the major part of Sogd and is known by the name of Warkūdah*' (Urgut in present-day Uzbek pronunciation, a town ca. 40 km to the south-east of Samarkand).³⁰

Correlating this to the rest of the geographically identifiable landmarks, this led to the southernmost edge of the

²⁸ On these inscriptions, see A. Savchenko, 'Urgut Revisited.' *Aram* 8 (1996) 333-54.

²⁹ G. Parfyenov, 'Qidirishga yordam bering.' *Lenin Uchquni* № 33 (2749), 24 April 1955; G. Parfyenov, 'Rahmat sizga, Urgutli dustlar.' *Lenin Uchquni* № 45 (2761), 5 June 1955.

³⁰ A. Savchenko, 'Po povodu khristianskogo seleniya Urgut.' *Zapiski Vostochnogo otdeleniya Rossiyskogo arkhеologicheskogo obshchestva* II (XXVII) (2006) 551-5.

habitable territory, in the foothills of the Zarafshan Mountain Range, close to the therapeutic springs of Qutir-buloq and the site of the Syriac inscriptions at Qizil-qiya. It was this small area, in the watershed of two streams coming down from the melting glaciers, where *The East Sogdian Archaeological Expedition* started to investigate, combing the area for any signs of an early mediaeval monastic settlement.

The excavations, conducted under the aegis of *The Society for the Exploration of Eurasia*,³¹ have revealed, at 39°22'51" N, 67°14'30" E, a church built according to the architectural traditions of the Church of the East, as we know them from a number of similar edifices, ranging from the Persian Gulf to present-day Kyrgyzstan. The analysis of structural material, including bricks, tiles, ceramics, glasswork and coinage, indicated the main period of habitation was between the 8th and 13th centuries, while radiocarbon dating pointed to the late 7th century as the time of founding. All the elements, except the western and eastern façade walls, survived in satisfactory condition, which allows for a detailed description.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING

The building can be described as a double-nave church with two isolated naves oriented east-west with a slight deviation and, as with many sanctuaries, independently furnished for celebration of the liturgy. The northern nave was probably the main chapel, given the entrance to it from outside through an arched doorway. The southern nave has no doorway in its western wall and can be entered only through a narrow corridor from the other nave. Such double (and triple) churches are well-attested in Mesopotamia, as well as elsewhere in the East since the Early Middle Ages. The naves are separated by a raised clay platform in the centre which served as a base for a church tower.

In front of the main entrance to the northern nave there is a rectangular narthex paved with alternating rows of long- and cross-laid fired bricks. Along the right wall,³² there is a large stand

laid with fired bricks, with an oval niche in the centre which probably contained a baptisterium.

Passing through the doorway, we find ourselves in the longitudinal northern nave, paved with ceramic tiles and with walls made from sun-dried brick faced with fired bricks. The right wall has a row of several niches, probably for lamps (a great many oil-lamps typical of the area were found during the excavations throughout the site).

Proceeding forward, we approach the entrance to the chancel, emphasised by stone steps. Next to them, in agreement with normal ecclesiastical planning, we find a *šeqaqōnā*, a narrow opening through which only clergymen no lower in rank than deacon could pass. Finally, there is the cross-shaped chancel itself, with a cubical altar made of fired brick adjunct to the centre of the rear wall. In front of it, the seat of the priest is marked by ceramic tiles inserted into the flooring edgewise (in the tradition of the Church of the East, the priest celebrates the liturgy facing the altar, with his back to the congregation). The floor here is paved with ceramic tiles plastered with fine gypsum which is still intact over most of the church interior.³³

Immediately before the *šeqaqōnā*, there is a step to the right, leading to what probably was the *bēth diaqōn*, the chamber where the *prothesis* (the preparation of the bread and wine) was performed. The edges of this room are not well-preserved.

The other, southern, nave is longer and wider. Again, the adobe walls are faced with and the floor paved with fired brick. At the eastern end, we find the same layout: steps (this time made of fired brick) leading to the chancel, with the same cubical altar.³⁴ This southern chancel connects to a paved gallery circumventing the church from the east.

It is important to mention that paintings were used in the decoration of both chancels, providing us with samples of emerald-green, carmine, ochre, white and cobalt stucco.³⁵ These traces are

entered the church from the west.

³³ Plate 11. Northern nave with chancel in the background.

³⁴ Plate 12. Southern nave with chancel in the background.

³⁵ This calls to mind the wall paintings, including one of a priest with Syriac or Persian features and several Central Asian congregants, probably Uyghurs, that was discovered in a Christian church uncovered in Qocho, the former capital of the Uyghur Kingdom, dating from the 9th.

³¹ For the detailed report, see A. Savchenko, 'Urgut Unearthed.' *The Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* (in press).

³² Here and below, the orientations are described as if one

so slight that cannot be determined whether they are the remains of a single overall colouring or more complex decoration.

From the north, the church is flanked by another rectangular room of about the same size as the naves but void of the specific liturgical aspects of planning evident in the naves, namely the nave-chancel division, and without a paved floor. It is to be identified as a refectory, which was considered to be a sacred place in some Eastern monasteries and even in some cases was constructed as a full church with an altar, where certain services were performed. It was adjoining the kitchen, which was found in the form of several ovens extended in a row towards the north, with an accompanying cesspit. All food served in the refectory had to be blessed, and for that purpose, holy water was kept in the large jar found in one corner of the room.

A coenobitic community living continually in one place for about 500 years is bound to leave traces of its activities beyond the walls of the church yard. In addition to the previously discovered cliff inscriptions, several caves were discovered higher up the spur of the adjacent Olloyaron Mountain with a number of Syriac inscriptions and drawings carved on the cave walls.³⁶ Most of the inscriptions are still under study, but some have already provided valuable information about their creators, including one written 'in the year 1064 [AG] = 752–753, the earliest dated evidence for the monastery found so far.³⁷

Speaking of dates, the *terminus post quem*, marking the lifespan of this major Christian stronghold in Central Asia, can be inferred from several datable contexts testifying to abrupt termination circa 1220, i.e. the Mongol conquest of Samarkand.

The erstwhile Christian presence in the region is also manifested at several other nearby sites:

10th centuries, on which see n. 22 above.

³⁶ Plate 13. Ascetic caves with Syriac inscriptions near the monastery site.

³⁷ Plate 14. Syriac inscription in one of the caves, with the personal name 'Abdisbo' ('servant of Jesus'). These inscriptions are being studied by Dr M. Dickens.

- At Kosh-tepa, several miles north-east, a rim of a jar was discovered in 1973, with three offprints of a seal featuring a scene of baptism.³⁸
- Quq-tepa, in the nearby settlement of Gus, has yielded a pot for hallowed substances.³⁹
- The ostrakon found in Panjikant is considered to be a by-product of the monastic school,⁴⁰ and the two gravestones kept at the Ashkhabad Museum (Turkmenistan) are also thought to come from Urgut.⁴¹
- Finally, a local tradition, recorded as late as the end of the 19th century, holds that Christians once lived all along the Samarkand-Urgut road.⁴²

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Plate 3. Cross, bronze, Quwa (Ferghana Valley, Eastern Uzbekistan).

Plate 4. Cross, bronze, Qashqadarya province (Central Uzbekistan).

Plate 5. Cross of thin sheet gold (sewn onto funeral clothing of the deceased), Durmon (near Samarkand).

³⁸ M. Iskhakov, Sh. Tashkhodzhaev, T. Khodzhaev, 'Raskopki Koshtepa.' *Istoriya material'noy kul'tury Uzbekistana* 13 (1977) 93–4.

³⁹ Ceramic pot with imitation Syriac writing, Gus.

⁴⁰ See footnote 18 above.

⁴¹ M. Masson, 'Proiskhozhdeniye dvukh nestorianskikh namogil'nykh galek Sredney Azii.' *Obshchestvenniye nauki v Uzbekistane* 10 (1978) 50–5.

⁴² See Alexei Savchenko, 'Urgut.' *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, available at www.iranica.com.

⁴³ Unless otherwise indicated, all photos are by Alexei Savchenko. All drawings are by Olga Zhuravleva.

Plate 6. Cross with the ornamental design of grapes (a Eucharistic symbol), coal shale, Samarkand province.

Plate 7. Pendant with Virgin and Child, glass in silver mounting, Balalyk-tepa (Surkhandarya province, southern Uzbekistan).

Plate 8. Ceramic jug, Taraz region, Kazakhstan. Photo C. Baumer.

Plate 9. Ceramic bowl for ritual washing before ceremony, Andijan (Ferghana valley, Eastern Uzbekistan).

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Plate 11. Northern nave with chancel in the background.

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Plate 13. Ascetic caves with Syriac inscriptions near the monastery site.

Plate 14. Syriac inscription in one of the caves, with the personal name 'Abdisbo' ('servant of Jesus').

Plate 15. Ceramic pot with imitation Syriac writing, Gus, near Urgut.

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Fig. 1

*Savchenko and Dickens Plate 1. Bronze censer from Urgut.
[Photo N. Tikhomirov]*



Savchenko and Dickens Plate 2. Sogdian Christian coinage, 7th century (bronze) Top group: Bukhara oasis (Western Uzbekistan). Bottom group: Samarkand area (Central Uzbekistan and Tajikistan). Right (obverse only): Chach (Tashkent region).



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

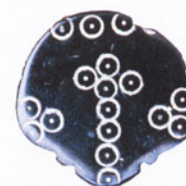


Fig. 6



Fig. 7

Savchenko and Dickens Plate 3. Cross, bronze, Quwa (Ferghana Valley, Eastern Uzbekistan).

Savchenko and Dickens Plate 4. Cross, bronze, Qashqadarya Province (Central Uzbekistan).

Savchenko and Dickens Plate 5. Cross of thin sheet gold (sewn onto funeral clothing of the deceased) Durmon (near Samarkand).

Savchenko and Dickens Plate 6. Cross with the ornamental design of grapes (a Eucharistic symbol), coal shale (Samarkand province).

Savchenko and Dickens Plate 7. Pendant with Virgin and Child, glass in silver mounting, Balalyk-tepa (Surkhandarya province, southern Uzbekistan).



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

Savchenko and Dickens Plate 8. Ceramic jug, Taraz region (Kazakhstan).
[Photo C. Baumer]

Savchenko and Dickens Plate 9. Ceramic bowl for ritual washing before ceremony, Andijan (Ferghana valley, Eastern Uzbekistan).



Savchenko and Dickens Plate 10. Ceramic cast for moulding crosses, Rabinjan (Samarkand area).



Savchenko and Dickens Plate 11. Northern nave with chancel in the background.



Savchenko and Dickens Plate 12. Southern nave with chancel in the background.



Savchenko and Dickens Plate 13. Ascetic caves with Syriac inscription near the monastery site.



Savchenko and Dickens Plate 14. Syriac inscription in one of the caves, with personal name 'Abdisho' ('servant of Jesus').



Savchenko and Dickens Plate 15. Ceramic pot with imitation Syriac writing, Gus, near Urgut.