

Mat Immerzeel and Dirk Kruisheer

Master of Arts Programme 'Eastern Christianity': a New Initiative of Leiden University

The languages and traditions of Christians of the Middle East have been studied at the Dutch city of Leiden since the establishment of the University in 1575. Even today Leiden is a major centre of research on Eastern Christianity. It combines expertise in nearly all of the languages of the Christian East with strong art-historical and archaeological research programmes as well as the study of the contacts between Eastern and Western Christianity in early modern and modern times, and it is open to sociological and anthropological approaches. The staff, which belongs to the Faculties of Arts and Theology, supports an impressive number of research projects. In addition, it offers a fully up-to-date education programme Eastern Christianity with a strong Coptic component.

This MA programme is an initiative of the Faculties of Arts and Theology. Both Dutch and foreign students are invited to apply for participation in this programme. The courses are all taught in English and are designed for an international group of talented and motivated students. The teaching is directly linked to ongoing research. Agreements for student exchange exist with several institutes in the Netherlands as well as abroad, such as the Nijmegen Graduate School of Theology and the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC). Depending on the programme specialization, courses are also followed at the Leiden Faculty of Social Sciences.

The duration of the programme is one year (12 months), starting in September. Within the programme it is possible to concentrate on one or more areas of specialization. It comprises tutorials in the specialization chosen; a seminar in which papers are given on a common theme as well as more incidental subjects once a fortnight during term; optionally, one or more courses at the Faculty of Social Sciences; fieldwork or a course abroad at one of the affiliated institutes, depending on the background and the interests of the student; a language, either that of the Christian tradition studied, in the specialization 'Art History and Archeology of the Christian Middle East', or a second relevant language complementing the one studied as a part of a BA or preparatory programme, in the remaining specializations; and a large final thesis.

As a rule, students with (the equivalent of) a BA degree in another discipline and those who need more background are required to enroll in the individually tailored one year 'conversion course'. In this way the student ensures that he meets the qualifications for entering the MA programme. This course leads to the award of a certificate in Eastern Christianity.

The MA Programme offers six specializations:

1. Art History and Archeology of the Christian Middle East;
2. Arab Christianity;
3. Armenian Christianity;
4. Ethiopian Christianity;
5. Coptic Christianity;
6. Syriac and Indian Syriac Christianity.

ad. 1: the art and architecture of the various Eastern Christian communities are studied (4th-19th century). Special attention is paid to the late antique roots of early Christian art, and the connections with Islamic and Western art. There is an important link with current research in Egypt (excavation of Deir al-Baramus, conservation of mural paintings in Deir al-Suryan) and Syria (restoration of icons in Saydnaya). This specialization is coordinated by the Paul van Moorsel Centre (see below). In this specialization, Arabic, Coptic and Syriac are the relevant languages.

ad. 5: At Leiden University, Coptic Egypt can be approached from different angles, for most of which, however, acquaintance with the Coptic language is a requirement. In the instruction, first a working knowledge of the Sahidic and Bohairic dialects will be obtained. This is followed by a further introduction to the numerous written sources. Particular attention is paid to monastic and hagiographic literature and to gnostic and magic texts. Coptic epigraphy is an important link to the world of art and archeology. Another option is the study of Coptic papyri (at the Leiden Papyrological Institute). For a proper understanding of many Coptic sources, the knowledge of Christian Arabic is a prerequisite.

Degree, Advanced Master's and PhD Programmes

Upon completion of the whole programme, including the thesis, students are awarded an MA degree in Eastern Christianity, mentioning the specialization studied. Students may also be admitted to study part of the conversion and MA programmes without aiming at a degree. All receive a certificate, stating the courses followed, the results and the level obtained by the student.

After successful completion of the MA programme, it is possible to enter a one-year Advanced Master's or MPhil Programme as the first step towards a PhD. The contents are individually tailored and consist of tutorials, specific assignments and participation in research projects, including fieldwork if applicable, and, for Advanced Master's students, the writing of a research proposal.

The PhD programme is the logical continuation of the Advanced Master's or MPhil, and takes three to four years. It involves additional courses, research and fieldwork, the specific requirements of which are determined in agreement with the supervisor of the doctoral dissertation. PhD candidates are also given the opportunity to participate in academic teaching (generally in their area of specialization).

Qualifications for Admission and Tuition Fee

To qualify for the Master's Programme Eastern Christianity, applicants should:

- have completed a MA degree (or equivalent) in Religious Studies, Theology, Humanities, or another relevant discipline with good results at a recognized university;
- have a thorough proficiency in spoken and written English;
- have acquired the necessary basic knowledge for the chosen specialization, i.e. generally one of the Eastern Christian Languages, or early Christian art and archeology;
- have acquired, for some specializations, a working knowledge of one or more relevant languages, such as Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, German or Italian;
- indicate the topics they may wish to investigate for their Master's thesis (if known).

The non-refundable application fee is E 50. The non-refundable registration fee is E 500 (credited towards tuition upon admission). The tuition fee for the conversion course is E 4,150 for a semester or E 7,300 for a full academic year. The tuition fee for the one-year MA-programme is E 9,000. The tuition fees are for the academic year 2002-2003 and may be subject to change annually.

Further information

Leiden University Worldwide

Rapenburg 67

PO Box 9500

2300 RA Leiden

The Netherlands

Phone: +31 (0)71 527 7287

Fax: +31 (0)71 527 7298

E-mail: study@luwp.leidenuniv.nl

Home page: www.leiden.edu

The Paul van Moorsel Centre for Christian Art and Archeology in the Middle East

Over the years Leiden University has obtained an important position in the scholarly field of Christian art in the Middle East, in particular in Egypt and Syria. The initiator of these activities, Professor Paul van Moorsel, was widely acknowledged for his pioneering work on Coptic wall paintings and icons. After his retirement the torch was held high by the next generation of scholars working under the aegis of the project 'Egyptian-Netherlands Cooperation for Coptic Art Preservation' (ENCCAP). Spin-offs of ENCCAP in Egypt were the excavations of the original Deir al-Baramus and the restoration of wall paintings in Deir al-Surian, while in Syria a similar project 'Syrian-Netherlands Cooperation for the Study of Art in Syria (SYNCAS)' was started up.

In December 2000 the financing of both ENCCAP and SYNCAS came to an end. To facilitate the organization of existing and future activities, an expertise centre was founded, called the 'Paul van Moorsel Centre for Christian Art and Culture in the Middle East', named of the godfather of this research in Leiden, who died in 1999. It was officially opened on 22 June 2001. The centre belongs to the Faculty of Arts (department Languages and Cultures of the Near East). In the centre the expertise on the field of study concerned that has been built up in Leiden is concentrated, including a unique slide collection and a specialized library. Its main aim is the study and conservation of the Christian material culture of the Middle East. Furthermore, the centre stimulates and supports other organizations and scholars involved in this field. To achieve these aims the emphasis is put on collaboration. Common activities are developed with museums and other universities, in the Netherlands as well as abroad. A first result is an agreement with Princeton University concerning the introduction of the slide collection that has been built up by van Moorsel into the database of the website of the Index of Christian Art (www.princeton.edu/~ica; for subscribers only). An agreement with University Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in Warsaw within the framework of the Socrates/Erasmus Programme (EU) provides in the exchange of lecturers.

The staff consists of Mat Immerzeel and Karel Innemée. The latter is involved in fieldwork in Egypt, in particular the restoration and documentation of wall paintings in Deir al-Surian, while Immerzeel participates in a new project of Leiden University called 'The formation of a communal identity among West Syrian Christians (451-1300)'. A junior researcher, who will focus on the relationship between Christian and Islamic art within the framework of this project, will be added to the team soon.

Contact address:

Leiden University

Languages and Cultures of the Near East (TCNO)

PO Box 9515

2300 RA Leiden

The Netherlands

Tel./Fax: +31 (0)71 527 2945

E-mail: neart@let.leidenuniv.nl