

Christianity was firmly established in Iraq from the earliest times, and the Churches of Iraq were to play a major role in the development of Christian theology and spirituality for many centuries. By the seventh century evangelization from Iraq had brought Christianity to China, Central Asia and India. Yet few people in the West are aware of Christianity's vibrant past in this region, or of the fact that Christianity has continued to be a significant cultural and religious presence in Iraq right up to the present day.

The story of the Churches of Iraq, their interaction with each other and their varied fortunes under successive Parthian, Sassanid, Arab, Mongol and Ottoman rule, is told here with consummate skill. Suha Rassam guides the reader seemingly effortlessly through complex issues of doctrinal dispute and ecclesiastical politics. She helps us to explore the ancient heritage of these Churches, and the major contribution they have made to the intellectual development of the region and the wider world.

The detailed account of the Churches in the twentieth century, under British rule, the monarchy and then the Ba'athist regime and Saddam Hussein, is particularly useful. This book sheds much-needed light on the present dire situation for Christians in Iraq, under occupation and transitional rule. It is essential reading for all those in the West who are concerned for the future of Iraq and its people.

Gives to the general interested public a comprehensive and informed insight into two thousand years of Christianity in Iraq.

Dr Erica Hunter, School of Oriental and African Studies, London University

Suha Rassam's book comes to fill a large vacuum in the knowledge of those in the West, many of whom are still not aware of the fact that from ancient times Christianity was firmly rooted in Iraq and the rest of the territory now seen as the 'Arab Middle East'.

Archbishop Mikhael Al Jamil, Patriarchal Vicar of the Syrian Catholic Church of Antioch to the Holy See and Visitor Apostolic for Europe

Dr Suha Rassam has written a work of remarkable scholarship. But it is also a vivid portrayal of an extraordinary story of conflict, persecution and, for fifty years in the twentieth century, of hope, harmony and prosperity for the Christian community in Iraq. It would be a tragedy if that Christian community were now extinguished. Dr Suha Rassam's book portrays starkly and powerfully what would be lost: not just the Christian community itself but a shared history with the Muslim people of Iraq which is a vital part of the fabric of that country.

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Archbishop of Westminster

Suha Rassam was born in 1941 in Mosul to a medical family. Assistant Professor of Medicine in the University of Baghdad, she came to England in 1990 to do further research. Since that time she has worked in hospitals in London, studied Eastern Christianity at London University, and is now retired.

GRACEWING

