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COLUMBIA GLOBAL CENTERS | AMMAN
**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
TIES WITH ARABS &
THE ARAB WORLD**

THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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SOPHIA FULTON

FOREWORD

This collection of student essays, a project arising from Columbia Global Centers | Amman, thoughtfully explores the University's Global Centers, established to expand research and education, promote cultural exchange students have researched and explored issues both historical and contemporary, across a wide geographic terrain, including Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, and other regions.

archives, databases, and libraries. The result is unique scholarship that captures, preserves, and expands upon the University's complex historical relationship with the Middle East and covers topics as diverse as Orientalist thinking, feminism across cultures, to how events in the Arab world have intertwined with campus culture.

When Columbia Global Centers | Amman opened in 2009, Jordan offered vast opportunities for research and engagement, and provided easy access to the rest of the Middle East. From the outset, the Amman Center has alliances with the ministries of Planning and International Cooperation, Social Development, Higher Education had an enduring impact on child and family welfare, sustainable development, juvenile justice, poverty alleviation,

This publication demonstrates that Columbia Global Centers | Amman provides students opportunities to practitioners, and have cast a critical eye on decades of history, reconciliation, and acceptance. They address the preconceptions and biases that the west—which of course includes Columbia University—attaches to Arabs have furthered the mission of the Columbia Global Centers: exchanging knowledge and sharing experiences in order to create better understanding.

thank these scholars for their contributions to scholarly research, and to improving cross-cultural understanding.

SAFWAN M. MASRI

Executive Vice President for Global Centers
and Global Development, Columbia University
June 2022

INTRODUCTION

THE COLUMBIA GLOBAL CENTERS | AMMAN LAUNCH



initiative launched by Columbia University to expand its international presence. The Center was launched under the Patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah and was created as a response to Columbia University  more fully with global partners.

The launch event, held on March 22, 2009, drew more than 200 participants from around the world and featured panel discussions by internationally renowned speakers. It represented a major announcement to the regional and international academic community about the creation of the Columbia Global Centers and the Amman Center's foundation in the Middle East.

In addition to keynotes by Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah, Columbia President Lee C. Bollinger, and Professor Safwan M. Masri, speakers included:

- Lisa Anderson, Provost of the American University in Cairo (from 2008 - 2011)
- Jeffrey D. Sachs, Director of Columbia University's Earth Institute (from 2002 - 2016)
- Rashid Khalidi, Professor of Arab Studies, Columbia University
- Jim Muir, BBC's Middle East Correspondent
- Rajenda K. Pachauri, Chairman of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change



U.S. former President Barack Obama would have on the Middle East. The launch helped draw international media coverage from outlets such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* about the establishment of the Global Centers.



Courtyard reception during the Columbia Global Centers | Amman launch on March 22, 2009



Panel session during Columbia Global Centers | Amman launch activities. *In the photo:* the late Peter Awn, former Dean of School of General Studies and Director of Middle East Institute, Naif Al-Mutawa, the Serial Entrepreneur and Clinical Psychologist Naif Al-Mutawa, and Prof. Safwan M. Masri (from left to right)



the Columbia Alumni Association. The event included panel discussions, networking events, dinners hosted by alumni, and a trip to Petra. Panel sessions focused on themes such as media perspectives on the Middle East, sustainability and consumption, and Islam in the 21st Century. The symposium helped strengthen the University's connections to alumni throughout the region, increase awareness about the Global Centers among members of the Columbia community, and provided a foundation for ongoing alumni engagement at the Center. This network was a base of support for the Center's activities and helped broaden connections to potential partners in the Gulf and throughout the Levant.



Professor Monette Zard, Director of the Program on Forced Migration and Health (PFMH) at Columbia, in discussion on the research study *In My Own Hands: A Medium-Term Approach Towards Self-Reliance and Resilience of Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Jordan*, a collaboration between Durable Solutions Platform and PFMH at the Columbia Global Centers | Amman on February 6, 2020.



Workshop in August 2018, as part of the Columbia Global Centers | Amman's Soraya Salti Youth for Youth Series.

WORKSHOP

scholarship and had started to deliver impact already through a number of programs, research initiatives, and partnerships. For almost two years prior, Teachers College had been involved in upgrading the skills of Jordanian public school teachers, a partnership that ultimately led to the creation of the Queen Rania Teacher

TEACHER TRAINING

offer a portfolio of executive education programs. Faculty from Columbia's School of Social Work had already

EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

would become one of the Center's flagship programs, the *Jordan Social Work Education for Excellence Program* (JSWEEP), a collaboration with the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development and a number of other local entities to support the establishment of the social work profession in Jordan and build the capacity of a robust cadre of frontline workers and supervisors.

ABOUT THE COLUMBIA GLOBAL CENTERS | AMMAN

The Amman Center serves as a hub for programs and educational initiatives throughout the Middle East; providing Columbia faculty and students with opportunities to collaborate with partners from the region to expand their research and scholarship, but also as a conduit for knowledge exchange and skill development with local and regional academics, experts and practitioners. The programming has revolved around a number of focused themes that include:

ARCHITECTURE

Studio-X Amman Lab (2009 - 2021), a joint initiative by Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (GSAPP) and the Amman Center, operated as a regional platform for conversations and research in architecture and experimental design in the Arab region, dedicated to investigating the future of cities.

ARTS AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION

In collaboration with a wide range of local, regional, and international institutions, the Amman Center works on



CLIMATE

Through interdisciplinary partnerships with Columbia University, the Amman Center brings together local and regional experts, academics and practitioners to reflect on climate-related challenges and solutions in the MENA

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND YOUTH

With the support of Columbia Engineering and the Columbia Business School, the Amman Center develops programs in Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco to nurture entrepreneurial culture and innovation among young people in their pursuit of developing business ventures through a unique model based on supporting a national and international peer network of shared learning, knowledge advancement through mentor development, and startup exposure.

FORCED MIGRATION

The Amman Center is a hub on forced migration and displacement at both an academic and policy level. This is achieved by partnering with operational actors to set research agendas and produce evidence-based data, providing a neutral convening space to engage decision makers in policy debates directly with operational partners, building capacity of humanitarian actors, providing scholarship opportunities for refugee students on campus, and offering fellowships for emerging displaced scholars at the Center.

GEOPOLITICS

Strategically positioned in the Middle East, the Amman Center has the advantage of drawing from the diverse array of regional socio-political structures. The Center engages with experts and scholars to advance research and discussions on the intersection of historical and current affairs, international relations and the protection of human rights, as well as power dynamics among religion, society, and politics.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Partnering with the Mailman School of Public Health (MSPH) and the Columbia School of Nursing, the Amman Center continues to build local and regional capacity with local and international institutions in health, nutrition, and child protection by developing new partnerships, offering training workshops to address current gaps, providing technical assistance, and supporting operational research.

SOCIAL WORK

Over the past decade, the Amman Center partnered with the Columbia School of Social Work on several

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■ ■ ■ ■

Social Development, monitoring and evaluating programs to improve quality of social work interventions, and advancing knowledge through research and the production of evidence-based data to inform policy.

ABOUT THE COLUMBIA GLOBAL CENTERS

The Columbia Global Centers promote and facilitate the collaborative and impactful engagement of the University's faculty, students, and alumni with the world, to enhance understanding, address global challenges, and advance knowledge and its exchange. The Global Centers, as envisioned by President Lee C. Bollinger, were founded with the objective of connecting the local with the global, to create opportunities for shared learning, and to deepen the nature of global dialogue.

The nine Global Centers are located in Amman, Beijing, Istanbul, Mumbai, Nairobi, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago, and Tunis. This network forms the core of Columbia's global strategy, which is to expand the University's ability to contribute positively to the world by advancing research and producing new knowledge on the most important issues confronting our planet.

ABSTRACTS

P. 1 THE COLUMBIA(N) GAZE: READINGS OF THE ARAB WORLD

LIDIA HELOU | Dual Master of Arts/Master of Sciences in International and World History at Columbia University joint with the London School of Economics, Class of 2020.



Quran - Opening pages (Sura 1 and Sura 2), Accessed August 4, 2021, Photograph, Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions Undated & unsigned (possibly 1600-1800 CE).

Exploring Columbia University's history with Arabic script and the Arab world begins with an analysis of the late-nineteenth-century fascination with the "Orient" and the implications of Columbia's reading, or *misreading*, of Arabic texts. Next, a focus on Philip Hitti, Columbia alumnus and precursor of Arab Studies, uncovers a pivotal moment in Columbia's relation to Arabic textuality and its evolution. Tracking Columbia's gaze on the concept of the Arab world and its reading of it subsequently examines the different routes of study taken at the University since Hitti. The trajectory Columbia followed to be a leader of postcolonial thought is narrated and includes the way it

collections to eventually becoming home to a constellation of scholars and thinkers of the Arab World.

P. 27 OVERCOMING ORIENTALISM: AMONG COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S EARLIEST ARAB ALUMNI

KEVIN CARL PETERSEN | Bachelor of Arts in Economics with a concentration in Modern European Intellectual History from the School of General Studies, Class of 2022.

Throughout the twentieth century, Orientalist thinking largely obscured the diversity of Columbia University's international students from the Middle East. To help correct this past trend, this paper highlights the political, religious, and gender diversity that was present among Columbia's earliest Arab alumni through the life stories of Khalil Abdallah Totah, Mohammed Fadhel Al-Jamali, and Alice Mitri Kandalaf. Additionally, I show how Columbia University became more cosmopolitan, in part, because of the persistent presence of these students on campus. By telling these stories, the monolithic characterization of "Oriental" students so commonly used throughout the past century is challenged, in order to restore the individuality of the Arab students that Orientalism denied.



Harry Almond, Al-Jamali and Sarah Powell Wedding Picture, 1933, from the Al-Jamali Family Collection, 1993, Photograph, Iraqi Statesman: Portrait of Mohammad Fadhel Jamali.

P. 43 THE ARAB WORLD ON LOW STEPS: COLUMBIA CAMPUS CULTURE AMIDST 20TH CENTURY CONFLICTS

EMILY KOHN | Bachelor of Arts Double Major in Political Science and Linguistics from Columbia College, Class of 2023.



Rally for Peace: Over 700 Columbia Students Marched to the U.N., 1991, Photograph, Columbia Spectator Archive, New York.

Three key periods of Middle Eastern twentieth-century history are presented through the lens of Columbia University students to shed light on how events in the Arab World became intertwined with campus culture. Using multimedia archives from *The Columbia Daily Spectator*, the University's oldest daily student paper, along with university reports, Columbia student life during the formative eras of the Arab world's history is reconstructed. Columbia has

controversies, and more. The three eras of 1919-1939, 1955-1975, and 1990-2010 come together to paint a portrait of how the Arab world found its way onto campus and how students have engaged with these issues over the decades.

P. 67 A MAN OF MULTIPLE SELVES: EDWARD SAID AND HIS LEGACY AT COLUMBIA

IONA TAIT | Dual Master of Arts/Master of Sciences in International and World History program at Columbia University joint with the London School of Economics, Class of 2023.

Elevated to an academic celebrity during his time as Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, Edward Said was one of the most renowned public intellectuals of the past century. His reputation as a public intellectual, an examination of the 'Orient' as an imperialist construct, catapulted him to fame. He was also a celebrated essayist, a critic of U.S. foreign policy, and an advocate for the Palestinian cause – all within the public sphere. This paper will focus, however, on his legacy at Columbia, examining his secular humanist values within the context of academic freedom as well as the strong imprint his increased interest in Middle Eastern politics and history left on academic life at Columbia. Moreover, this paper will examine how his political engagement was not without its ironies - like many parts of his life.



Jean Mohr, Edward Said with Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, 1986, Photograph, Getty Images.

P. 77 FEMINISM ACROSS THE EAST/WEST DIVIDE: COLUMBIA ACADEMICS AS BUILDERS OF THE 'BRIDGE'

SUHANI CHAUDHRY | Visiting Student completing a non-degree program at Columbia College, Bachelor of Arts in Social Anthropology from the London School of Economics, Class of 2022.



Lila Abu-Lughod, Writing Women's Worlds (15th Anniversary Edition), 2008, Book Cover, University of California Press, Berkeley.

decades. Several academics at Columbia have not only played a role in, but

and various others have brought perspectives of their diverse disciplines and shed light on the disjuncture between how women from the Middle East are perceived and what their lived realities are. Their contributions in building a metaphorical

feminism of tomorrow and their work paints a picture of progress and egalitarianism - work that demands recognition for its contemporary relevance.

P. 89 TEACHERS COLLEGE AND EDUCATION REFORM IN JORDAN

ALAA QAROONI | Dual Master of Arts in Islamic Studies and Muslim Cultures from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Class of 2023.

Teachers College has enjoyed a historical connection to the Middle East since its inception, hosting many academics and educators from the region.

of the Columbia Global Centers Amman in 2009, Teachers College was able to be more involved in advancing education in the Middle East by initiating the School Network Learning Project through its Consortium for Policy Research in Education, in partnership with the Queen Rania Teacher Academy in Jordan. The project sought to build a network of schools that are linked by the principles of collaboration, professional development, and research-based instruction. It reached almost 3,000 educators and school leaders upon its conclusion in 2015, and implemented a sustainable educational model that I argue has the potential to last for years to come.



Columbia Global Centers | Amman Headquarters, Photograph, Columbia University.

P. 99 THE POWER OF PROXIMITY: HOW THE COLUMBIA GLOBAL CENTER IN AMMAN EMPOWERED COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S RESEARCH AND SUPPORT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES

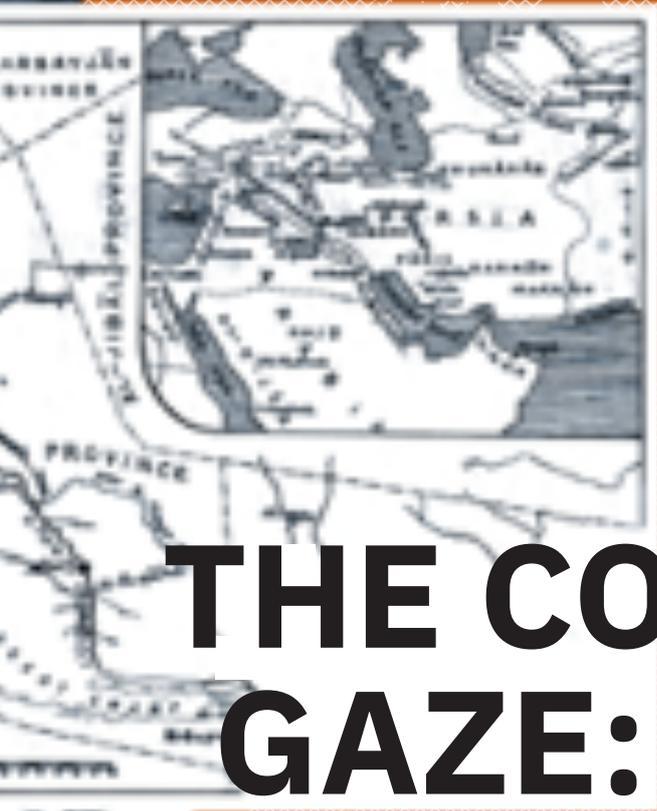
SOPHIA FULTON | Master of Public Administration (International Security Policy and the Middle East) from the School of International and Public Affairs, Class of 2023.



Adeline Guerra, Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan - Oxfam, Photograph, CBS News.

Proximity to a crisis sometimes matters most in meeting humanitarian needs. Columbia University's ties to the Middle East, including physical proximity through Columbia Global Centers Amman, allowed faculty and students to respond effectively to crises, such as the Syrian civil war. Faculty have used this network to develop culturally aware and effective policy recommendations and programs. This includes the formation of multi-year Columbia-led projects to support Syrian refugees in collaboration with partners on the ground in the region, such as the *Impact of Separation on Refugee Families* report and the Columbia University Scholarship for Displaced Students. These projects and their impact serve as models for academics, practitioners, and individuals hoping to contribute to humanitarian causes effectively and positively.





**THE COLUMBIA(N)
GAZE: READINGS
OF THE ARAB
WORLD**
LIDIA HELOU

نظرة كولومبيا: قراءات في العالم العربي

THE COLUMBIA(N) GAZE: READINGS OF THE ARAB WORLD

الخطوط

different,” said Columbia alumnus and former lecturer Professor Philip K. Hitti (1886-1978, Ph.D. Columbia) in a 1971 interview with *Aramco*.¹ Philip Hitti’s life mission had been to rebrand Arabic as a pedagogical tool and popularize the teaching of both the language and the *History of the Arabs*, the namesake of his influential 1937 book.² Neither a region nor a period,

its own polysemy. This paper takes Hitti’s insight to occasion a literary promenade that tracks Columbia’s gaze on the concept and its reading of it. This exploration starts in the Butler Library stacks with Columbia’s “hidden” manuscript collections, makes stops between Beirut and Morningside Heights at biographical crossroads before landing in Amman for a contemporary observation of Columbia’s ability to promote and produce knowledge that does not reify a region’s or language’s identity.

Researching the notions of a Columbia(n) gaze and how Columbia scholars have read the Arab world

الخطوط

of which explores Columbia’s Arabic manuscript

was read, or misread, from the late 1890s to the mid-twentieth century. During this period, Columbia’s leading position in Middle Eastern Studies depended on the accumulation of *materia arabica* and the late nineteenth-century philological quest for the “original” or “*asli*.”³

how Columbia has treated, *mis-cataloged* those manuscripts, often conflating categories such

as religion and language, aesthetics and text. The second act follows Professor Philip K. Hitti’s career as the inaugural moment that emancipated the Arab

This focuses on Hitti’s time at Columbia and the way the institution inspired both his and a subsequent generation of Levantine students and scholars. Finally, the third part looks at the multiplication of loci for Arab Studies at Columbia

This last section explores the political origins of research institutes and initiatives, their trajectories, and attempts at de-orientalizing the study of Arabic-speaking communities.

READING THE ARAB WORLD

An atmosphere of literary exotica and mystique shrouds Columbia’s “hidden” collections: the Arabic script manuscripts.

The adjective “hidden” has often been used in this context to refer to a collection of over 800 manuscripts collected between the 1890s and the 1960s at Columbia through the travels of peregrinating academics caught in the throes of Orientalistic ambitions. However, several of these collectors could not read Arabic, as underlined by Columbia University librarian Jane Siegel.⁴ Columbia’s history with the Arab World is, hence, also a history of Arabic literature long locked in arabesques. The preclusion of a readership for these manuscripts in the early years of Columbia’s

¹ John R. Starkey, “A Talk With Philip Hitti,” *Aramco World*, 22, no. 4, 1971, 26.

² Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, “The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field”, in *The Art*

, 85(1), 2003, 152.

³ *Asli* is a transliteration of the Arabic word أصلي, which means “original.”

⁴ Jane Siegel, in discussion with Lidia Helou, March 2021.

ARMCHAIR ORIENTALISM

Oriental Research director in Jerusalem in 1909-1910 before being considered for the role of ambassador to Constantinople by President Woodrow Wilson.¹²

ARMCHAIR ORIENTALISM

the path for Columbia's presence in the region and our current consideration of the proximity between academics & policymakers. The professor's attachment to this region extended its branches into his family tree through his marriage to Beirut-born Emma Léon, an

ARMCHAIR ORIENTALISM

owing to her acclaimed lectures on French Literature.¹³

This connection highlights Columbia's nascent relation with members of the Arabic-speaking diasporas, including Levantine historian Philip K. Hitti and Iranian scholar Reverend Abraham Yohannan, both students

ARMCHAIR ORIENTALISM

¹⁴

ARMCHAIR ORIENTALISM

Columbia's signature lies in its level of self-critique, so this paper similarly does not shy away from a healthy dose of post-orientalist introspection as well. In the quest for manuscripts and curiosities,

ARMCHAIR ORIENTALISM

bolstering the formation of an impressive collection but also precipitating the attendant displacement of the archive from the region. Their status as nomadic intellectuals tied them to the cliché of an "armchair scholar of Oriental languages" who, "armed with a dictionary[...], could decipher all that was important about the culture and character of Orientals."¹⁵ This quest for absolute expertise in world religions and affairs characterizes the late-nineteenth-century transformation of global empires marked by their growing propensity towards research for textual truths and philological origins.¹⁶

were, in this regard, truly men of their epoch. Their academic ranks gave them an often ill-founded legitimacy to comment on political events and cultural shifts outside the realm of their philological expertise. A fascinating article in a 1910 September issue of *The*

of the Orient": it revealed the professor's views on "migrations to the Holy land," his perspective on The

ARMCHAIR ORIENTALISM

group, and Egypt's "recognition" of Britain's alleged role in advancing the nation's progress.¹⁷

ability to write with the authority of a political expert while being a philologist illustrates the dangerous permeability between expertise and presumption

that often characterized the armchair Orientalists Professor Edward Said would later expose. In a similar article published the following month, Jackson was praised for a conference on "Oriental development," whose title itself could have ignited the spark of postcolonial studies.¹⁸ These monolithic readings of the Orient enmeshed past and

Jackson's curricular aspirations with a teleological narrative of progress.

ARMCHAIR ORIENTALISM

"cultures" was not only necessary to the formation of young minds, but that it was also exclusively enclosed within manuscripts.¹⁹

study of Arabic-writing societies and entailed the apparent denigration of contemporary Arabic works in Columbia's collection in favor of older texts.²⁰



Figure 2. William J. Whittemore, (1860-1955), Photograph, Encyclopedia Iranica.

¹² Studies Blog, May 28, 2019.

¹³ June 13, 1947, 23.

¹⁴ Dagmar Riedel, "Islamic Books," accessed February 30, 2021.

¹⁵ Charles Kurzman and Carl W. Ernst, "Islamic Studies in U.S. Universities," 46, no. 1, 2012, 30.

¹⁶ Marwa Elshakry, "Afterword," 5, no. 3-4, 2020, 451.

¹⁷ , September 28, 1910, 54 edition, sec. 1, 2.

¹⁸ "Conference on Oriental Development," , October 3, 1910, 54 edition, sec. 5, 1.

¹⁹ Kaoukab Chebaro and Jane Rodgers Siegel, "A History of the Muslim World Manuscript Collection at the Columbia University Libraries," 5, no. 3-4, 2020, 266.

²⁰ Dagmar A. Riedel, "Manuscripts, Printed Books, and Near Eastern Studies in North America: The Manuscripts in Arabic Script of the Columbia University Libraries," 6, no. 2-3, January 2015, 280.



Figure 3. June 4, 1914, Photograph, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C., New York. Photograph shows Walter



Figure 4. circa 1916 - 1936, Photograph, New York Public Library Digital Collections.

This devaluation corresponds to the mirage of the “*asl*” or “original” and the obscured value accorded to primeval examples of literature or art. Columbia excellent critique of this phenomenon, underlining that many of these century-old manuscripts were used as active pedagogical tools until the twentieth century in their native contexts and only gained this collections.²¹ To a certain extent, by losing their pedagogical essence and becoming more artifacts than texts, these manuscripts were initially misread or Library (formerly known as South Hall).

COLLECTING THE ARAB WORLD

The art dealer Samuel P. Avery (1822–1904) and the businessman Alexander S. Cochran (1874–1929) were among the benefactors who gave Columbia some of the most “spectacular” Arabic-script manuscripts.²² In 1897, following the inauguration of the Oriental Languages Department, a repository was created

²¹

²² Riedel, “Manuscripts, Printed Books, and Near Eastern Studies in North America,” 289.

for the University’s growing literary and philological ambitions: Low Library.²³ While other grand libraries such as Avery and Butler would soon follow, this architectural gesture illustrated Columbia’s drive for both the material accumulation of knowledge and its spectacularization. In the spirit of philological investigation, an acute interest was generated around “the Bible lands” and their scholarship. A 1959 article of the *Journal of Semitic Studies* authored by Isaac Mendelsohn, then Associate Professor of Semitic Languages, alluded to this:

Although Columbia University has not participated in excavations of Ancient Near Eastern sites, [...] Butler Library possesses a small but valuable collection [...] purchased by the University back in 1896.²⁴

This passage references the substantial donation made by Alexander I. Cotheal (1804-1894), traveler,

Orientalist, and translator of one lesser-known tale of *One Thousand and One Nights*, as highlighted by Columbia head librarian Dr. Kaoukab Chebaro.²⁵ In this vein, the Cotheal Fund, one of the oldest continuously active endowed funds at Columbia, was established for the purchase of more “Oriental books.”²⁶ The subsequent contributions made to the collection until the 1950s were referred to as the “X collection,” in reference to the variety in subjects, languages, and provenances of these manuscripts.²⁷ Dr. Chebaro adds another interpretive lens to the letter “X” by attributing it to Columbia’s unfamiliarity with non-Roman scripts and librarians’ inability to catalog Arabic-script documents.²⁸ Following Cotheal’s initial donation, Columbia’s collection was broadly divided into four sub-collections constituted by Columbia friends or faculty such as Mathematics Professor David Eugene Smith, *Journal of Semitic Studies* editor Arthur Plimpton, Near Eastern Studies Professor Arthur Jeffrey, and other *Journal of Semitic Studies* contributors.²⁹



Figure 5. *Qur'an*, *Manuscripts, Printed Books, and Near Eastern Studies in North America*, Accessed August 4, 2021, Photograph, *Manuscripts, Printed Books, and Near Eastern Studies in North America*. Undated and unsigned (possibly 1600-1800 CE).

²³ Chebaro, “Columbia University Libraries,” *Journal of Semitic Studies*, May 28, 2019.
²⁴ Isaac Mendelsohn, “Cuneiform Tablets,” *Journal of Semitic Studies*, May 1959, 8 edition, sec. 3, 29.
²⁵ Chebaro, “Columbia University Libraries,” *Journal of Semitic Studies*, May 28, 2019.

²⁶ Riedel, “Manuscripts, Printed Books, and Near Eastern Studies in North America,” 288.
²⁷ Chebaro, “Columbia University Libraries,” *Journal of Semitic Studies*, May 28, 2019.
²⁸ Chebaro, “Columbia University Libraries,” 2019.
²⁹ *Ibid.*



Figure 6. [redacted] , Accessed August 4, 2021, Photograph, [redacted].
 [redacted] . Unsigned and undated (possibly before 1300 CE) complete copy of the Quran.



Figure 7. [redacted] , Accessed August 4, 2021, Photograph, [redacted].
 [redacted] (Ottoman Empire).

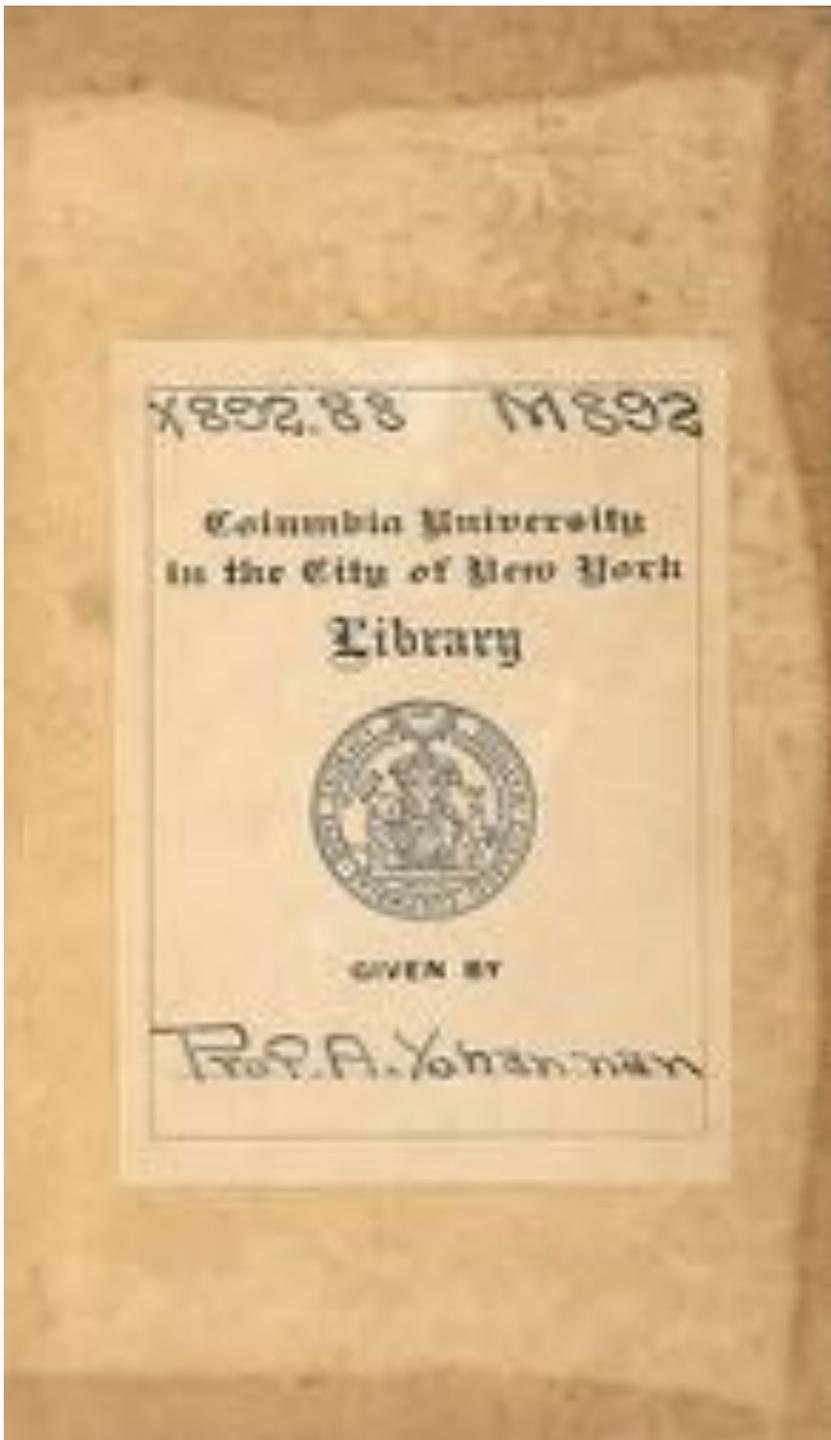


Figure 8. Persian Book property of Prof. (Rev.) Abraham Yohannan, Photograph, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries, X892.88 M892.

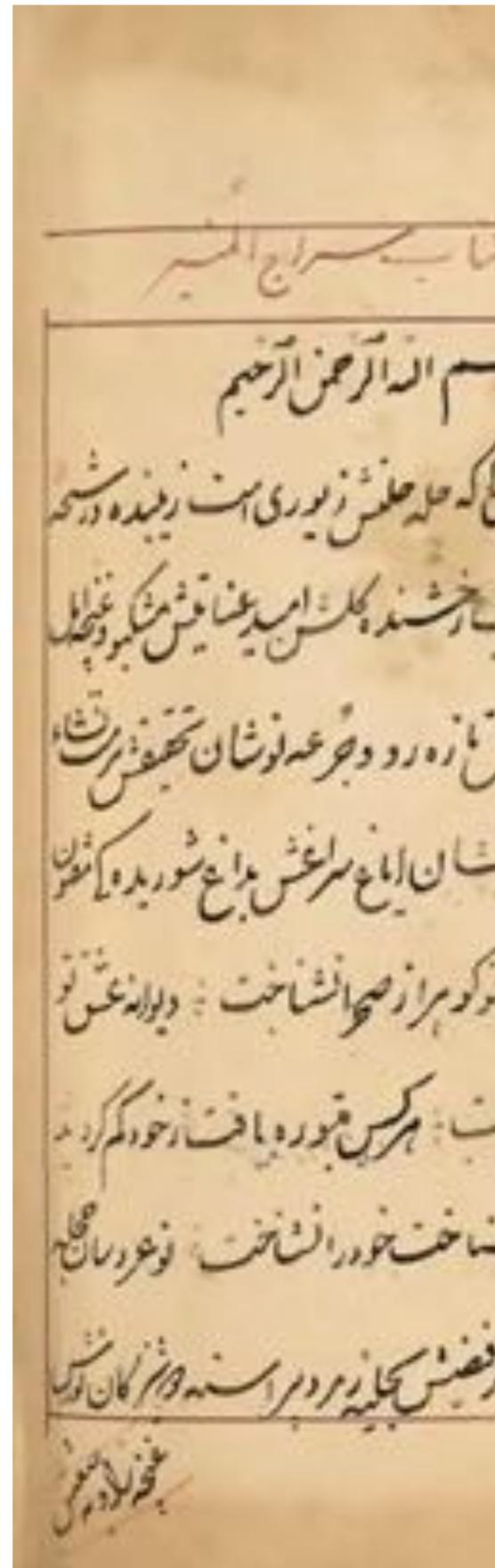


Figure 9. Photograph, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries, X892.88 M892.

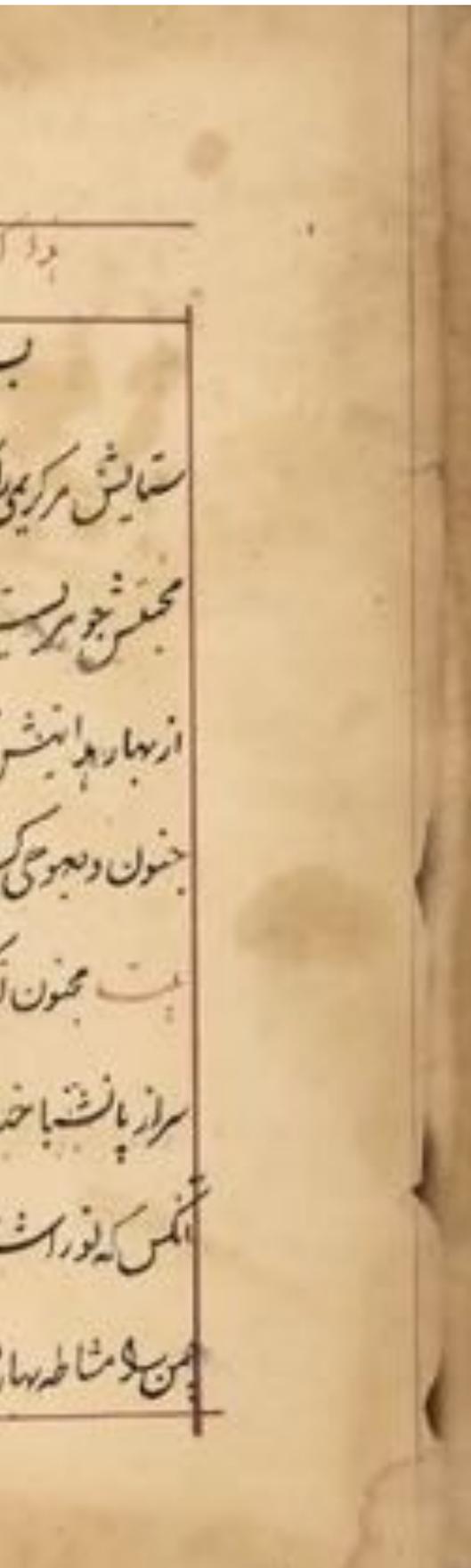


Figure 10. [\[Redacted\]](#), Columbia University Libraries, X892.88 M892. Three works in Persian bound together and copied in different hands, produced between 1825 and 1830.

MAKING ARABIC VISIBLE

At the turn of the century, the collections continued to grow while their readership remained highly limited. The “hidden” collections could only be made visible through the effort of dedicated cataloguers, such as deaf librarian Mary Lyon McClure (1870-1956).

Miss McClure has devoted much of her time outside the library this year in studying Arabic & Sanskrit and has done a great deal of work on the old and new collections.³⁰

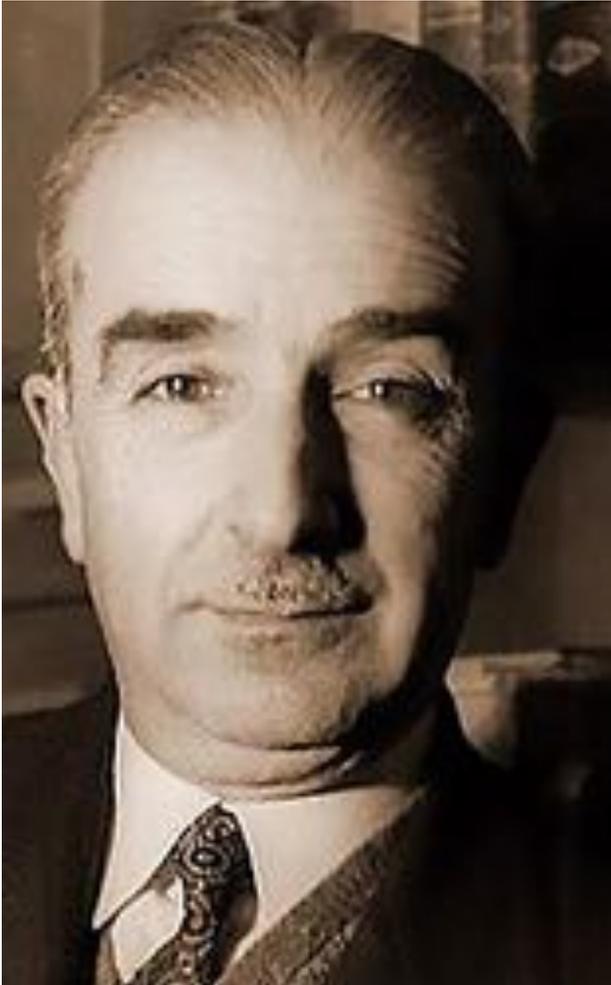


Figure 11. Photograph of Mary Lyon McClure.

This quote from Columbia librarian Harriet Prescott’s 1914-1915 report illustrates McClure’s

relentless effort to self-learn Arabic and make texts accessible to scholars and students.³¹ While McClure’s work tremendously advanced the knowledge and access to these collections, errors and mistranslations were inevitable and non-Roman script remained an *exotica* at Columbia as long as these words, or worlds, were seen and not read.³²

A compelling 1959 article by Egyptology Professor Arthur Schiller attested to this inability to read the Arabic texts:

Schiller regretted the reduction of texts to their static graphic marks and the resulting deprivation of their semantic content:

[...] among a much larger group of Arabic manuscripts. There were no records of accession [...] The Coptic texts were framed and photostated; what has become of the Arabic texts, I do not know.³³

It seems as though Columbia only cracked these texts later that year thanks to Turkish historian, medical practitioner, and savant Ahmet Suheyl Unver who spent the fall semester of 1958-1959 at Columbia.³⁴ Unver completed a new catalog of the Arabic-script manuscripts at Butler Library and dedicated much of his time to the “*personality*” of those texts.³⁵

When I wanted to examine the Oriental works [...], I found, [...] the catalog cards which had been given to me, [...] were inadequate and contained many errors.³⁶

Unver counted 375 manuscripts at Butler Library written in Arabic.³⁷ In his paratext, the visiting scholar inscribed those texts in a new format, presenting them with a renewed political value and impact. Unver’s writing was anchored in Republican-era Turkey and his reading was thus tinted by Mustafa Kemal’s fundamental principles, including his particularism as differentiated from neighboring Arabic-speaking nations and societies.³⁸

Although the language is Arabic, [...] to classify the manuscripts according to the language in which they are written might give the impression that the Arabs have produced more than they did.³⁹

³⁰ Harriet Prescott, “Private Report to Librarian concerning recommendations for advanced salary, Catalog Department,” typed manuscript, 19 March 1912, p.3 in Jane Siegel, “Women in the Stacks,” *Women in the Stacks*, May 27, 2020.

³¹ Jane Siegel, in discussion with Lidia Helou, March 2021.

³² Jane Siegel, “Women in the Stacks,” *Women in the Stacks*, May 27, 2020.

³³ A. Arthur Schiller, “Coptic Papyri,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, May 1959, 8 edition, sec. 3, 22.

³⁴ Ahmet Suheyl Unver, “Islamic Manuscripts in the Columbia Libraries,” 34.

the Columbia University Copy of an Ottoman Compendium of Arabic Manuscripts, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 5, no. 3-4 (2020), 354.

³⁵ Ahmet Suheyl Unver, “Islamic Manuscripts in the Columbia Libraries,” 34.

³⁶ A. Süheyl Unver, “Islamic Manuscripts in the Columbia Libraries,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, May 1959, 8 edition, sec. 3, 31.

³⁷ Ahmet Suheyl Unver, “Islamic Manuscripts in the Columbia Libraries,” 34.

³⁸ John C. Dewdney and Malcolm Edward Yapp, “Kemalist Policies,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, accessed July 29, 2021.

³⁹ Unver, “Islamic Manuscripts in the Columbia Libraries,” 34.

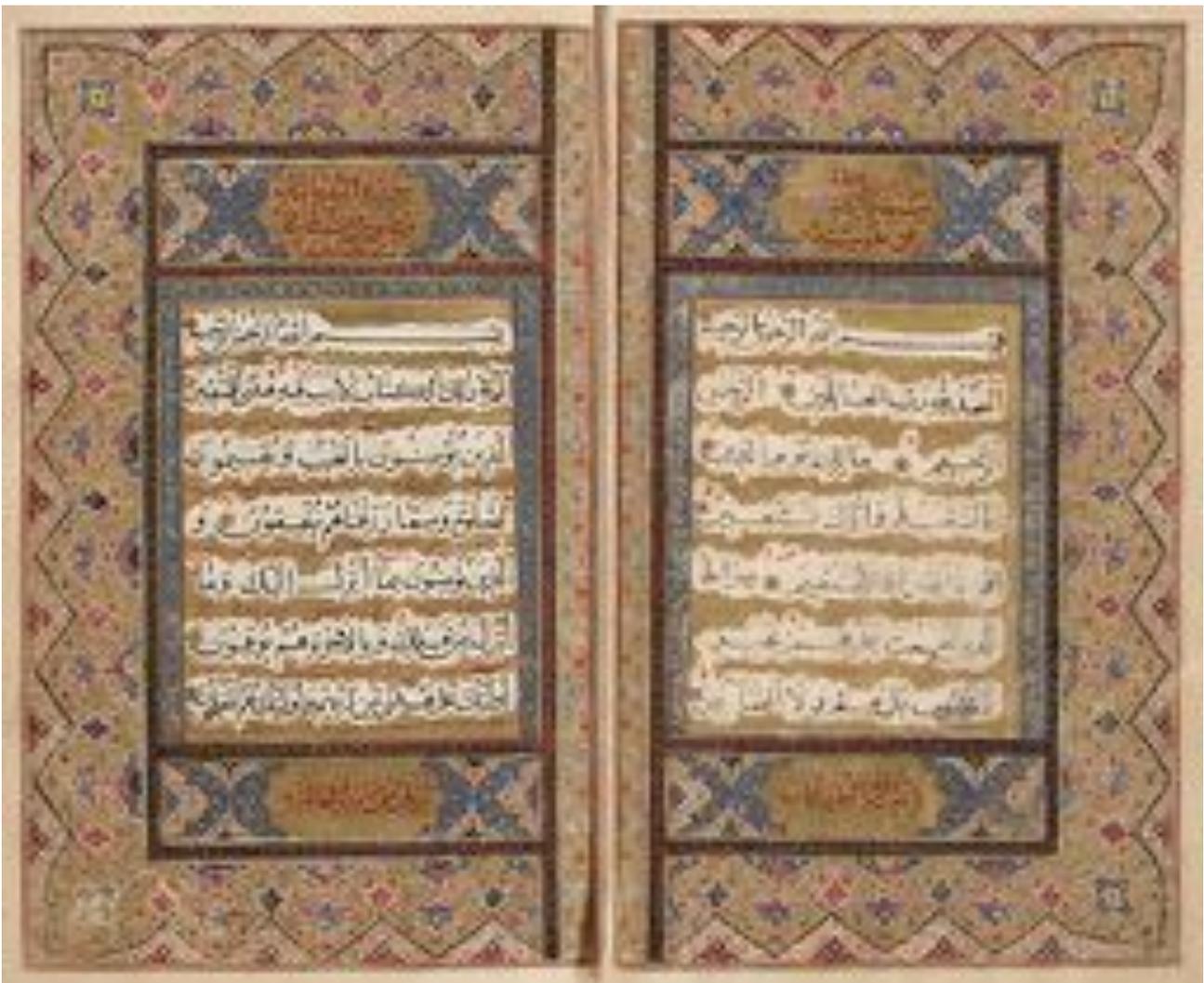


Figure 12. [Columbia University Libraries](#) accessed August 4, 2021, Photograph, [Wikimedia Commons](#). Donated by David E. Smith, 1931. Opening pages of the complete copy of the Quran with Persian interlinear translation. Colophon signed by Muhammad Muhsin [Columbia University Libraries](#). [Wikimedia Commons](#)

This idea of national belonging hints at the shifting identities of these texts. We observe the manuscripts’ transition from image to text to the (political) narrative. Yet, if the language is Arabic, the workmanship Turkish, and the readership absent at Columbia, who did these manuscripts pertain to? As elegantly put by Professor.

part of the manuscripts’ identity.⁴⁰ Professor Avinoam Shalem further underlined this idea in his essay on Columbia’s Tashkent Quran: “[...]the inability to read the Arabic text [...] incapacitates its owner from claiming ownership.”⁴¹ Unver’s interrogations demonstrate Columbia’s role not only as a locus of intellectual questioning and reconsideration but also a place where the attribution of textual identity was constantly renegotiated. Further along in the same article, Unver meandered around nomenclatures:

these manuscripts under a general name such as ‘Islamic Manuscripts,’ taking the three languages of the Near and Middle East together, while at the same time distinguishing among them manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish.⁴²

ENCAPSULATING THE ARAB WORD

However, these collections also contained Syriac manuscripts and other texts that pertain to a world not necessarily anchored in Islam’s textuality. For this reason, Unver also raised the question of the religious Middle East historian Dr. Riedel underlined, not all Arabic manuscripts are religious, just as not

⁴⁰ [Columbia University Libraries](#)
⁴¹ Avinoam Shalem, “On Original and ‘Originals’: The ‘Copy’ of the [Columbia University Libraries](#)

Library,” [Columbia University Libraries](#) 5, no. 3-4, February 2020, 307.
⁴² Unver, “Islamic Manuscripts in the Columbia Libraries,” 34.

all Muslims are Arabs, and *vice versa*.⁴³ Riedel interpreted Unver's statement as a call for a common (religious) foundation that is primarily projected, or

World. This brings us to the contemporary moment and the "Muslim World Manuscript" project evoked earlier. There seems to be growing momentum for the study of manuscripts against the domination of policy-oriented concerns by social studies and area studies, even as nomenclature remains an unanswered and contested question. Indeed, how do we regroup manuscripts whose common foundations are neither language nor religion, provenance or subject? Siegel proposed the "Arabic-Script Manuscripts Collection" as an alternative, more accurate title.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, one of the virtues of Columbia's digitizing movement is the return of texts as quotidian pedagogical tools.

Arabic-script collections at Columbia stopped progressing around the 1960s, ironically with the beginning of accurate cataloging.⁴⁶ Area studies and the fascination with exactitude within the social sciences had stolen the spotlight away from the attachment to the handwritten word within the humanities.⁴⁷ However, while Arabic manuscripts might have been relegated to the stacks, Arabic and its worlds went through a political renaissance initiated, among others, by a Columbia alumnus: Philip K. Hitti.

Columbia's remodeling of Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic literature in the 1970s, the postcolonial movement seems to have had semantic roots in Hitti's work and his ambition to make Arabic a pedagogical medium in American universities: from the American University of Beirut (AUB) to Columbia.

SEMANTICS OF ARABNESS & HITTI'S EMANCIPATION OF THE ARABIC LANGUAGE

Following our exploration of Columbia's relationship a section on a "voice in the desert" whose echo still resonates in the American academic landscape.⁴⁸ Born in 1886 in Shemlan, a small village south of Beirut, Philip Hitti rose to become the father of

at Princeton. This section tells his odyssey through "Arabness" and academia.



Figure 13. Philip K. Hitti, accessed May 04, 2021, Photograph, Immigration History Research Center Archives.

FROM SHEMLAN TO COLUMBIA

A series of fortuitous events pushed Hitti into history and its arcane detours, leading him to the AUB (then known as the Syrian Protestant College), where he earned his degree in 1908 and started teaching Arabic, Bible studies, and "imagine, a course in physiology!"⁴⁹ In 1913, Hitti's mentor, University President Howard Bliss, sent his *protégé* to the USA as a delegate to an international students conference.⁵⁰ Armed with transatlantic trip.⁵¹ After touring different Ivy League universities, Hitti opted to stay at Columbia for a few months to observe the American educational system. The reasons behind this decision are multiple, including the developing Oriental Studies and Jackson, and maybe most notably, New York and its Levantine community "on Washington Street

⁴³ Dagmar Riedel, in discussion with Lidia Helou, March 2021.

⁴⁴ Riedel, "Manuscripts, Printed Books, and Near Eastern Studies in North America," 282.

⁴⁵ Jane Siegel, in discussion with Lidia Helou, March 2021.

⁴⁶ Riedel, "Manuscripts, Printed Books, and Near Eastern Studies in North America," 282.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ John R. Starkey, "A Talk With Philip Hitti," *Aramco World*, 1971, pp. 21-31.

⁴⁹ Starkey, "A Talk With Philip Hitti," 23.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

in lower Manhattan.”⁵² A phenomenon around this diaspora caught Hitti’s attention and fostered a career-long interest: the various inaccurate terminologies used to refer to the Arabic-speaking newcomers who had disembarked at **بني بعلب** **بني بعلب** **بني بعلب** in lower Manhattan: “Turks,” “Assyrians,” or “Arabs.”⁵³

The outbreak of World War I prevented Hitti from returning to Beirut, who then started working at Columbia’s library and studying to earn a Ph.D.⁵⁴ Ironically, he was not assigned to Arabic-script books - but to magazines.⁵⁵ Hitti eventually majored in Semitic Languages and minored in History and Sociology, earning his Ph.D. in 1915 with the thesis that would later become his groundbreaking *History of the Arabs* in 1937. When he graduated in 1915, the War was still raging on the other side of the Atlantic, and famine was ravaging Lebanon, forcing Hitti to

extend his stay at Columbia as a lecturer in Semitic languages.⁵⁶ During those years, he met his wife, Mary **بني بعلب**

an **بني بعلب** of Columbia’s library.⁵⁷ This Columbian connection with the Arabic-speaking diasporas brings to mind the ensemble of Arabic-speaking intellectuals who were gradually coalescing around Columbia. Hitti’s stay and work at Columbia marked the début of Columbia’s involvement with the politics of the Arab World from an Arab perspective in contrast to the otherwise profuse displays of armchair Orientalism. This represented a crucial step in Columbia’s history as a leading institution in Middle Eastern Studies. As underlined by Dr. Riedel, it is interesting to note **بني بعلب**

this academic collaboration was pursued in French, shedding light on the more overtly diplomatic nature of such enterprises.⁵⁸



Figure 14. **بني بعلب**

1916, Photograph, **بني بعلب**

, New York.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Philip K. Hitti, “The Syrians in America, With an Introduction by Talcott Williams,” **بني بعلب**, 1924, 20.

⁵⁴ Starkey, “A Talk With Philip Hitti,” 24.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Starkey, “A Talk With Philip Hitti,” 24.

⁵⁸ Riedel, “Islamic Books,” **بني بعلب**, accessed February 30, 2021.



Figure 15. [H. V. D.](#), Photograph, Bain News Service, September 18, 1916. Library of Congress, New York.

A VOICE IN THE DESERT

During his time at Columbia, Hitti remained devoted [to the study of the](#) particularly those in Palestine. In 1918, following the Balfour Declaration of 1917, Hitti and other intellectuals organized a famous protest in Brooklyn to support Palestinians and developed an acerbic critique of the “betrayal of the Arabs.”⁵⁹ The [Hittite](#)

⁵⁹[Hitti, “Arab Identity,”](#) [Hittite](#)

41, no. 2 (2019): 153.

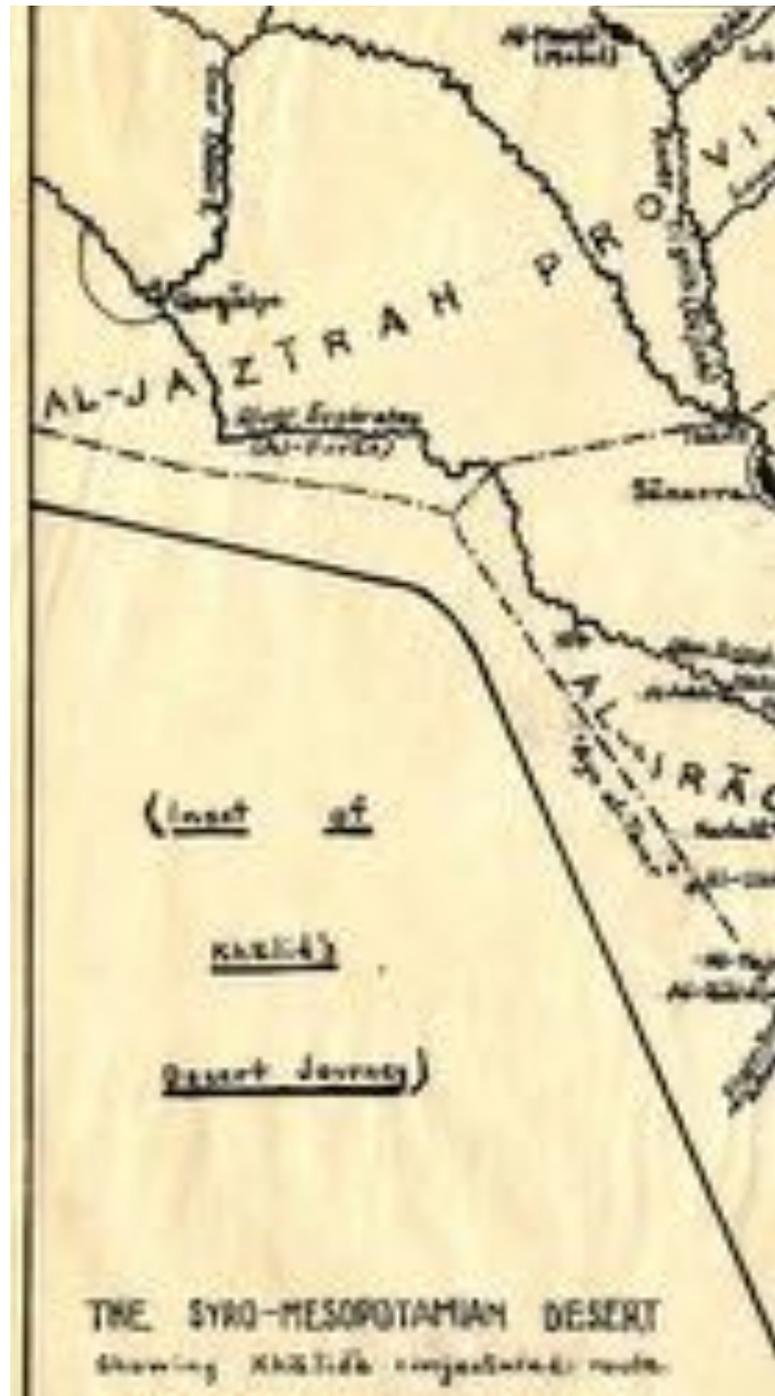
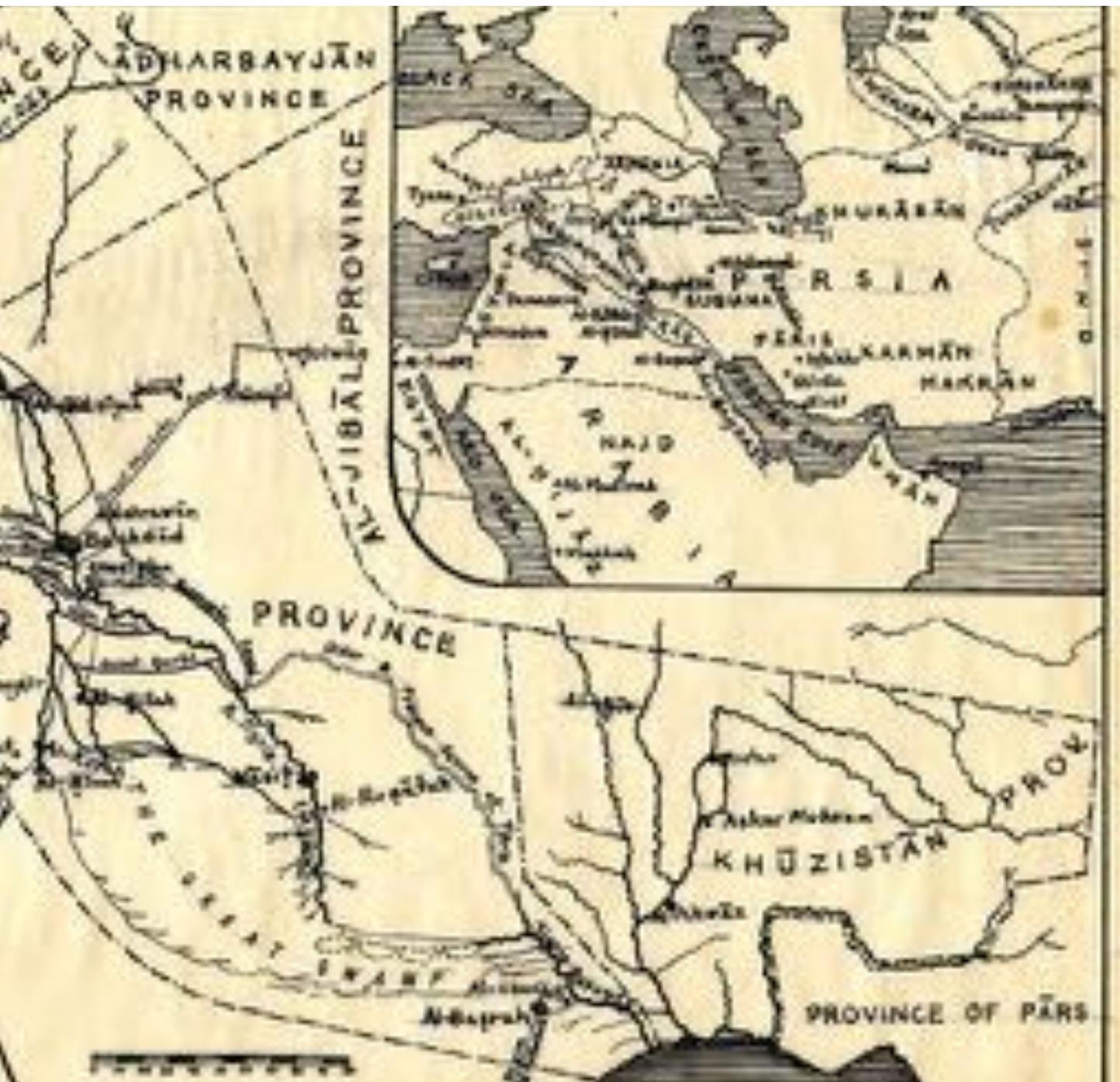


Figure 16. Philip Hitti, [Hittite](#) desert, Accessed May 04, 2021, Photograph, [University of Chicago](#) Immigration History Research Center Archives.

Times covered the protest and published resolutions co-penned by Hitti, the journalist Habib Ibrahim Katibah, and Fuad Isa Shatara, President of the Arab National League of America, among others.⁶⁰ While there was no Center for Palestine Studies yet, Columbia was already a locus of intellectual effervescence regarding the status of Palestine.

⁶⁰[Hitti, “Brooklyn Meeting,”](#) [Hittite](#)

, November 9, 1918, 4.



At the end of the War in 1919, Hitti returned to AUB.

Arabs” course, which he had conceptualized while at Columbia.⁶¹ In its alumni book, AUB described Hitti as an “Orientalist,” nodding to his influence in the realm of “Oriental Studies,” where he was actually a pioneer in the de-homogenization of Arabness and its proto-de-orientalization.⁶² Interestingly, a few pages later in [REDACTED] of the Near Eastern countries” from Columbia, and

father of Columbia’s current Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies, Rashid Khalidi.⁶³

Per Hitti, “the History of the Arabs should be taught in Arabic.”⁶⁴ This stance reinforces his insistence on Arabic as a legitimate pedagogical medium. In 1926, following the visit of Princeton Arabic-manuscripts [REDACTED] difference between Aleph and Ba’ - between A and B,” Hitti departed for Princeton, where he developed the Department of Near Eastern Studies

⁶¹ Starkey, “A Talk With Philip Hitti,” 21-31.

⁶² Alumni Association Beirut, “The American University of Beirut Directory of Alumni 1870-1952,” April 1953, 68.

⁶³ Alumni Association Beirut, “The American University of Beirut Directory of Alumni 1870-1952,” 281.

⁶⁴ Starkey, “A Talk With Philip Hitti,” 21-31.

he had imagined while at Columbia.⁶⁵ While his work remained “peripheral” up until the late 1940s, the publication of *History of the Arabs* in 1937 gave Hitti’s “voice in the desert” a profound echo.⁶⁶ In a way, Hitti initiated his own Ivy-League *Nahda*, and his work became a rite of passage in Middle Eastern studies and literature in the United States. The work that Hitti started at Columbia University allowed for the

In this sense, alongside the plethora of revolutionary Arab world scholars that Columbia has hosted, it the writing of *History of the Arabs*. It was also at long program for reading Arabic as an expansive language encompassing numerous cultures, politics, and histories rather than just empty calligraphy, or alternately, a compendium of religious values. It would be no far stretch to argue that the spirit of Hitti’s pedagogical agenda, if not his scholarly output,

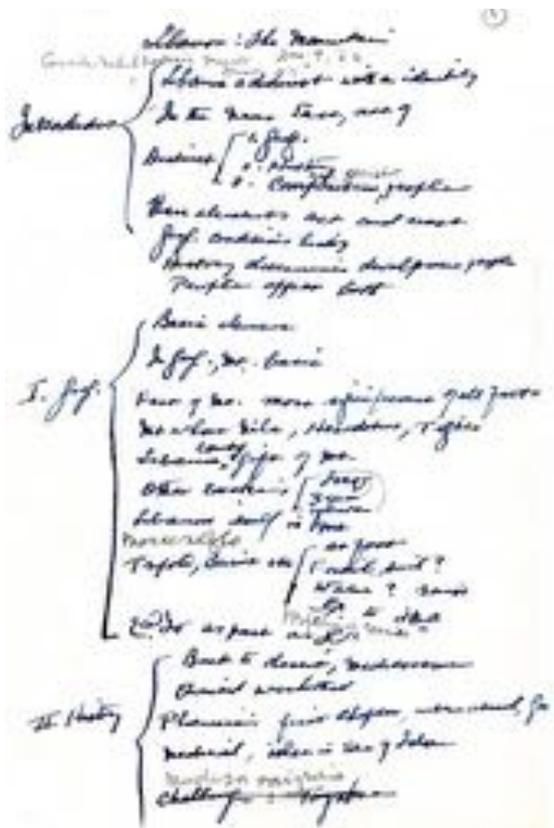


Figure 17. 1966, Accessed May 04 2021, Photograph, Immigration History Research Center Archives.

continues to provide the impetus for much post- and in Columbia an intellectual atmosphere to launch a counter-tradition to the very same Orientalism that it, to a great extent, generated and facilitated warrants a closer look.

DEFINING THE ARAB

Hitti’s work is complex & not exempt from contradiction s and biases. He developed his thesis of linguistic versus ethnic identity based on Columbia lecturer Rev. Yohannan’s work on the Arabic-speaking communities of Washington Street.⁶⁷ His study of the “most leaderless” brought to light the intricacies of and oppositions between Levantine and Arab nationalisms.⁶⁸ Hitti’s Syrians were “Arabic-speaking, Arabic-writing, Arabic-thinking non-Arabs,” with “Arabness” anchored in religious and racial factors instead of linguistic ones.⁶⁹ In *America*, published in 1924, he wrote, “culture, and not a strain of blood, is the determining factor in the nationality.”⁷⁰ For all his work towards complexifying the region, Hitti’s thought nevertheless remained categorizations and its epochal emphasis on religious

While aspects of Hitti’s thought belong to another century, his defense of the Arab World’s plurality remains highly pertinent. In a 1943 , Hitti penned an incisive critique of intellectuals such as Ben-Horin, who pretended to offer “A remedy for Arab Troubles.”⁷¹ The eerily contemporary echo of this piece can be found in the following statements: “The Arab is the villain of the piece,” and Palestine is the eternal “pièce de résistance.”⁷² Hitti pointed out the numerous mistranslations of words which in turn galvanized mistranslations of entire stories, historical evidence, concepts, and ultimately, the Lands.⁷³ Hitti chastised the author’s ignorance of the regional feminists and Ben Horin was a supposed expert of, and Hitti accented the writer’s shortsightedness in his description of the Druzes as a people only to be found “in deepest Syria.”⁷⁴ Hitti wittily underlined that an illustrious Druze newspaper’s headquarters were only a few blocks away from the printing press where Ben Horin’s book was published.⁷⁵

⁶⁵ Ibid.
⁶⁶ Ibid.
⁶⁷ Hitti, , 1924, 20.
⁶⁸ Philip K. Hitti, *Talcoott Williams*,
⁶⁹ Arab Identity,” 41, no. 2 (2019): 157.
⁷⁰ Hitti, , 1924, 20; 34.

⁷¹ Philip K. Hitti, “Bridge Between Two Worlds; THE MIDDLE EAST: CROSSROADS OF HISTORY. By Eliahu Ben-Horin,” *Times*, September 12, 1943, 15.
⁷² Hitti, “Bridge Between Two Worlds,” 1943, 15.
⁷³ Ibid.
⁷⁴ Ibid.
⁷⁵ Ibid.

In another unique piece of writing for a World War II lecture, Hitti formulated the idea of the necessary in academia. “In the International *mêlée*, the Arab seems to be the forgotten man.”⁷⁶ Hitti wrote these words in reference to the lack of consideration given to Arab troops and their importance in the world conflict, which was reflected in the lack of academic interest in Arabic-speaking societies. Hitti’s cry for a governmental interest in Arabs and Arabic ironically ignited the movement that led to the former President of Columbia University and then-United States President Eisenhower’s introduction of area studies and the popularization of Arabic as a political tool that would decades later divert attention away from manuscripts.

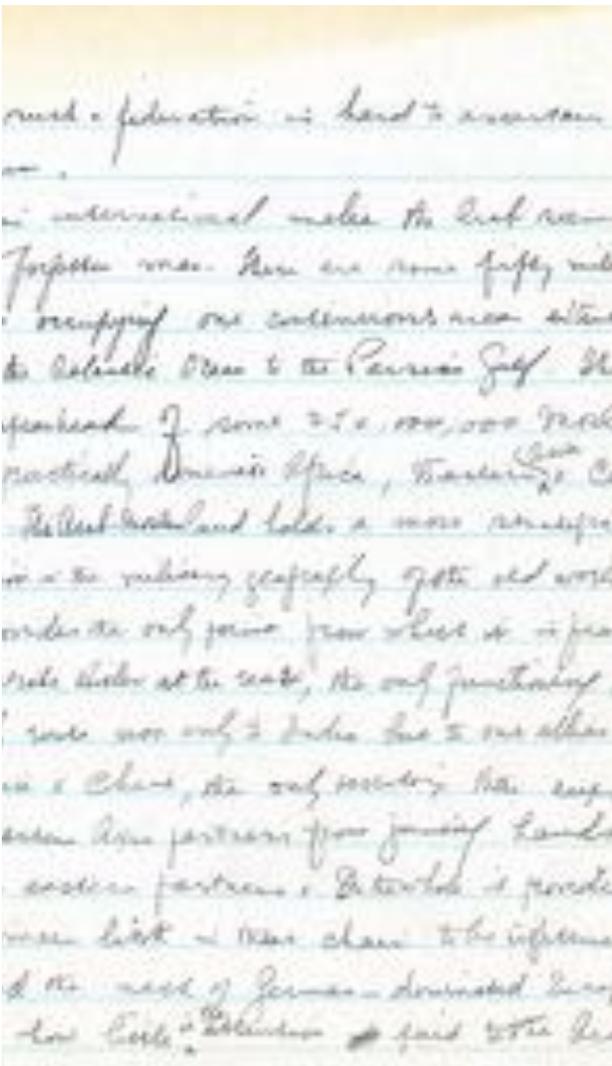


Figure 18. [redacted], Accessed May 04, 2021, Photograph, [redacted], Immigration History Research Center Archives.

⁷⁶ Philip K. Hitti, “Philip Hitti’s Notes in English: Philip Hitti’s Notes for a Lecture on Arab Culture, in the English Language, on a Princeton University Notepad Paper.”

⁷⁷ [redacted]

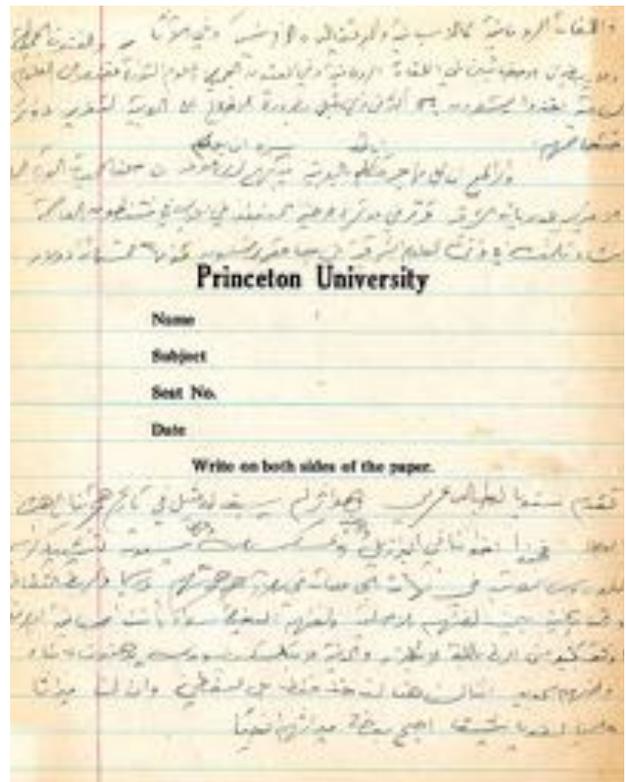


Figure 19. [redacted] Accessed August 04, 2021, Photograph, [redacted] Immigration History Research Center Archives.

A GUIDE TO SYRIAN STUDENTS

[redacted] scholarship is his 1921 [redacted]. In this piece, it was Hitti’s reading of Columbia that put into words the Arab experience in America. At the Syrian Educational Society’s request, Hitti wrote a detailed handbook explaining student life in the USA.⁷⁷ This companion book aimed at preparing Syrian students for an *émigré* life in America. The Syrian Educational Society was a sponsor-based group created around 1915 to help Syrian students in the United States [redacted] support. The Society motto was, “The future of the Syrian people lies in its youth. And the hope of the youth is its education.”⁷⁸ This guide was commissioned following a surge in Syrian student enrollment in American universities, which coincided with Columbia’s [redacted] and 1914. Per Hitti’s research, in 1919-1920, the United States counted around 10,000 international students around the country, among which 43 were from Syria.⁷⁹ While the number might seem like a meager drop in the ocean, the Syrian Educational Society saw in it an omen for future Syro-American collaborations.⁸⁰ After enumerating all the intricacies

[redacted] U.S.” [redacted], 1921.
⁷⁸ Hitti, [redacted], 34.
⁷⁹ Ibid, 37.
⁸⁰ Ibid, 33.

and complexities of American life, Hitti emphasized the need to comply with local etiquette and recommended [Hitti, 1933](#). A [Hitti](#) to be the most impeccable Syrian cultural ambassadors in each and every situation.⁸¹ Through the publication of this book, Hitti's experience at Columbia as both a student and then a lecturer framed the experiences of countless Levantine students who approached studying in America through the lens given by an illustrious Columbia alumnus.

Hitti was passionate about bringing the study of Arabic-speaking societies to the spotlight; his ambition was that every university in the U.S would offer an introductory course on the Middle East by the end of the century. His conviction that this would be accomplished through "area studies" allowed [Hitti](#),⁸² as the father of Arabic studies, was shaped and could, in turn, have an impact because of Columbia's ability to invest in histories of the Arab World. The next section follows Hitti's legacy by tracing the establishment of Columbia's modern reputation as a center for Middle Eastern Studies and analyzes its loci as a mosaic of numerous visions of Arabness.

MOSAICS OF THE ARAB WORLD

The previous two sections looked at the way Columbia's relation to Arabic and Arabic-script evolved from an aesthetic - somewhat passive - appreciation of texts to the revival of Arabic not only as a living language, but a world to study in all its depth as spearheaded by Hitti. The following section explores the different routes the study of the Arab World has since taken at Columbia University.

AREA STUDIES AND STRANDS OF ARABNESS

Before delving into Columbia's history of the contemporary study of the Arab World, it seems relevant to look at the context in which area studies came to be. As mentioned earlier, Hitti defended the fact that for Arabic to become an independent and [Hitti](#) political value. In other words, why did it matter to study the Arab World?

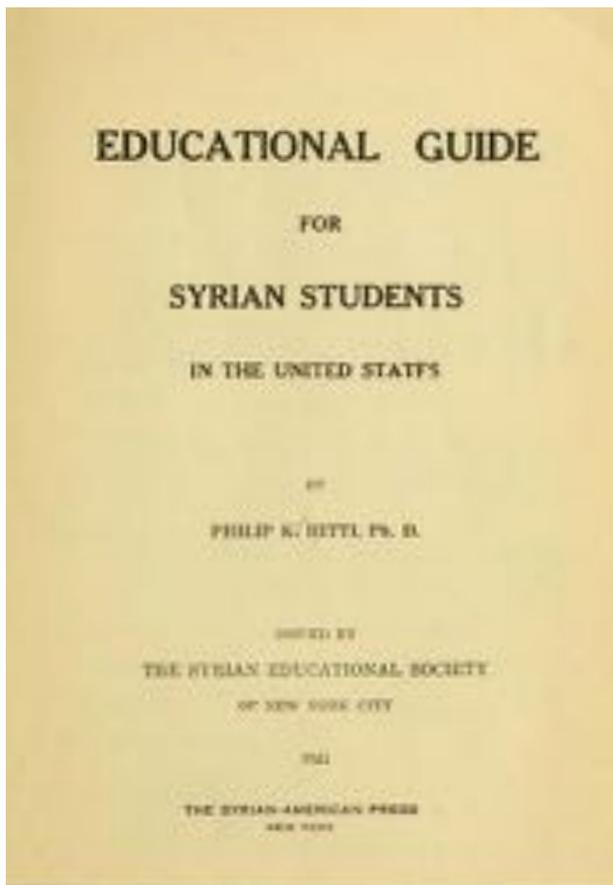


Figure 20. Philip Khuri Hitti, [Hitti, 1933](#), Photograph, [Hitti](#) Academic Press.



Figure 21. [Hitti](#) [Hitti](#) January 16, 1953, Photograph, [Hitti](#)

⁸¹ Ibid, 40.

⁸² Starkey, "A Talk With Philip Hitti," 1971, 25-26.



Figure 22. Christopher Caldwell, [Wikimedia Commons](#), 1948, Photograph, [Wikimedia Commons](#)

, 1948, Photograph, [Wikimedia Commons](#)



The late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century rearrangement of academic departments created momentum around Morningside Heights to realign political and academic interests. The impetus of area studies, or the specialization of disciplines according to geographical regions with an added political lens, started in the 1930s. After World War II, President Eisenhower, who was elected President of Columbia in 1945 and then President of the United States in 1952, allowed the same vision that led to Columbia's political redesign of academic departments to echo nationwide. Eisenhower encouraged the creation of the School of International Affairs (SIA) in 1946 and within it, the Middle East Institute (MEI) later in 1954.⁸³ The MEI was created for instruction in "less commonly taught" languages and was tightly related to policy objectives, shifting the tide away from the attention to textuality that animated Hitti's early days of study. In 1958, the Title VI of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), which supported research on

regarding American security agendas.⁸⁴ This was an example of Hitti's conviction that politicization was

The new Department of Near and Middle Eastern Languages was founded the same year as the MEI.⁸⁵ From there on, we can observe two strands in Columbia's Middle East Studies program: a division of academic labor was achieved with SIA, which

advisors; meanwhile, philologists and linguists flocked to the Near and Middle Eastern Department. This division between security studies and the humanities remained highly tenable up until the "academic awakening" of the mid-to-late 1960s, which was provoked by world movements that succeeded in highlighting the intimate connections between power and knowledge as well as the overarching biases that controlled access to these spheres.⁸⁶ This opened the path to Edward Said's work and the subsequent disillusionment in academic Orientalism.⁸⁷

⁸³ Chebaro; Siegel, "A History of the Muslim World Manuscript Collection at the Columbia University Libraries," 2020, 277.

⁸⁴ Lockman, [Columbia University Libraries](#), 2016, 264.

⁸⁵ Chebaro; Siegel, "A History of the Muslim World Manuscript Collection at the Columbia University Libraries," 2020, 277.

⁸⁶ Riedel, "Islamic Books," Islamic Books, accessed February 30, 2021.

⁸⁷ Riedel, "Islamic Books," 2021.

EDWARD SAID

A paper on Columbia's ties with the Arab World would not be complete without a reference, even if

created in global scholarship. Said was appointed Professor in the English and Comparative Literature Department at Columbia in 1963. It was, as Professor Khalidi pointed out in a recent article, the 1967 Israeli-Arab War that triggered Said's postcolonial spark.⁸⁸ Witnessing the conflict unfolding from the West may have pushed Said to write about the

around clichés anchored in exoticism. *Orientalism* was published in 1978, followed by *Palestine* just a year later. The companionship between these two intertwined themes marks the main tenets of Said's scholarship.

publication marked a watershed in postcolonial literature and led to a scholarly cataclysm of global proportions.

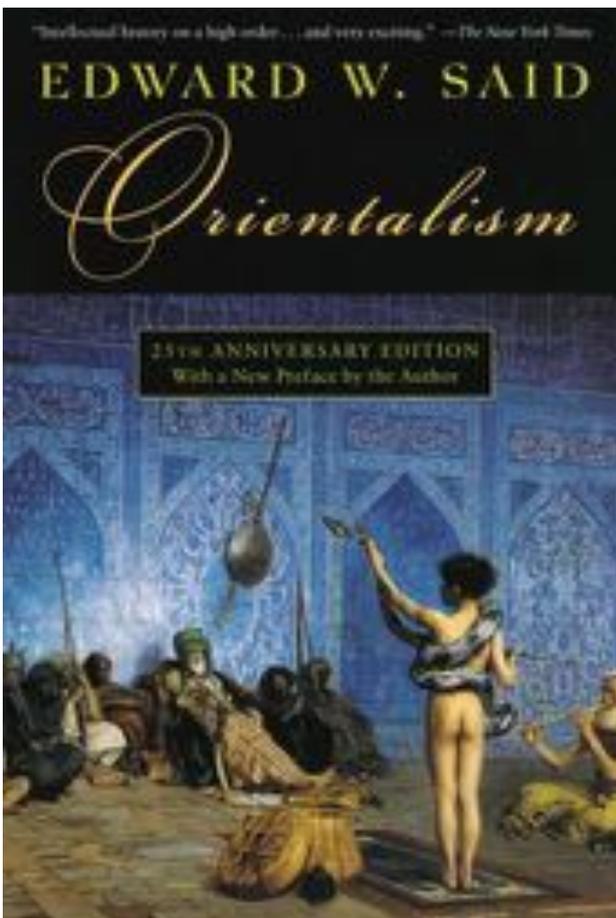


Figure 23. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Photograph, New York.

The strength of *Orientalism* lies in its examination of western societies and the obsessive pursuit of preconceived notions of the “East.” In doing so, Said exposed the distorted reality in the works of Orientalists and offered a critique of the discipline, setting the ground for alternative narratives, transdisciplinary

ological introspection. Not only has *Orientalism* been translated in a multitude of languages and is found in the reading lists of universities all around the world,

also become the object of impromptu postcolonial pilgrimages. In this sense, both Hitti and Said created diametric tools of understanding despite having both been committed to deconstructing Orientalist attitudes towards the Arab World. While Hitti's

was written to help 1920s diaspora students navigate America and abide by its etiquette, Said's *Orientalism* offers a guide to instead deviate from an idea of Middle Eastern adaptation to the western narrative and advocates for a reading of history that does not exoticize the “Orient,” but emanate from it. It is not the West that reads the East anymore, but the East(s) that tells its story.

as being a quasi-taboo in post-Saidian context, but noted that the word might have more stories to tell, nodding to Columbia's enduring intellectual activity

⁸⁹ The value that Edward Said brought to Columbia and its stance regarding Middle Eastern Studies lies primarily in allowing for its emancipation from fabricated certainties. Said's political work

the Palestinian cause and its defense. In step with Said's legacy, Rashid Khalidi, current Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies, whose father we evoked earlier with Philip Hitti, has written abundantly on Palestine and the history of the Arab World, and incarnates a continuation of his predecessor's academic and political

The mixed genres between autobiographical snippets and Chicago-style footnotes offering a brilliant example of both Columbia's and Said's signature courage to break disciplinary and stylistic barriers. Today, Columbia celebrates Edward Said's memory through annual lectures, dedicated archives, but also more consistently through the work of the Center for Palestine Studies (CPS), founded in 2010. In fact, the literary estate that Columbia inherited from Said, the Edward Said reading room in Butler Library, and the impressive multimedia archive collected by the CPS guarantee Columbia's place as a hub for post colonial scholarship.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Rashid Khalidi, “The Worldly Exile Edward Said's Life and After-lives,” *The Nation*, May 5, 2020.

⁸⁹

⁹⁰ “Edward Said Archival Collection - Center for PALESTINE STUDIES: Columbia University,” Center for Palestine Studies|



Figure 24.  , Photograph,    

RENAISSANCES

Following the allusion made earlier to a rivalry between the SIA (known today as the School of International and Public Affairs, or SIPA) and the Near Eastern Department, it is interesting to notice that in 2009, MEI changed its administrative home from SIPA to the School of Arts and Sciences, distancing itself from the former’s security-oriented mission. In a similar vein, the Near Eastern Department changed its name

and African Studies (MESAAS) in 2009. These changes are testimonies of a will to increase interdisciplinarity while embracing postcolonial studies and its Saidian principles in nomenclature as much as in content. When asked, Professor Lisa Anderson, former Dean

of having a foot in both camps, speaking to both the future governing individuals (at SIPA) and their critics (at MESAAS), acknowledging the rivalry between the

Schools and the schools of thought alike.⁹¹ In this sense, Columbia’s longstanding history of divergent readings of Middle Eastern and Arabic studies is illustrated in the various strands of scholarships that its various Institutes and Centers pursue. For Professor Anderson, while the risk to homogenize exists in umbrella institutes, the juxtaposition of different “areas” is also a source of intellectual enrichment.⁹² Columbia’s manuscripts, on the other hand, showed the inherent problems of nomenclature and terminologies when bringing under the same heading texts pertaining to different languages, subjects, and traditions.⁹³ Could this apply to MESAAS? Professor Kathryn Spellman Poots, a founder of the Center for the Study of Muslim Societies at Columbia (CSMS), raised similar concerns regarding terminologies and naming “Islamic studies” in mind, for example.⁹⁴



Figure 25. Karim Jabbari, *Arabic Calligraphy*, 2020, Photograph, New York.

⁹¹ Lisa Anderson, in discussion with Lidia Helou, May 2021.

⁹² Anderson, in discussiwon with Lidia Helou, 2021.

⁹³ [Redacted]

& Publishing in the Age of Manuscripts: the Columbia University Copy of an Ottoman Compendium of Sciences with Marginal [Redacted] 5, no. 3-4 (2020), 353-377.

⁹⁴ Kathryn Spellman Poots, in discussion with Lidia Helou, May 2021.

CONCLUSION

This exploratory essay followed Columbia's voyage from late-nineteenth-century fascination with the "Bible Lands" and the aesthetic conditioning of Arabic-script manuscripts, to the University's ability to question its own history, and welcome stellar scholars and linguists from the very regions being studied. The essay situated these developments within the intellectual and personal trajectory of Philip Hitti, his often forgotten Columbian contributions and his Morning-side inspired quest for academic renewal. Today, Columbia maintains its leading position engaging the Arab World and its necessary study with around 30 specialists (in over ten departments) in the

and 14 language lecturers concerned with various aspects of Muslim societies and Arabic textuality.



and others' unread manuscripts are currently being digitized at Columbia. We could say that Hitti's late-century ideal is underway to being realized. However, others still remain "hidden" at the Rare Books and Manuscripts Library.

Columbia's relation to the Arab World and its surroundings has evolved from an unreadable

institutionalization of readings via the University's

had largely different impacts. While MESAAS remains the most, one could say, pedagogical locus, MEI was at the origin of the Special Commission on Ethics and Social Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa. CPS carries the duty of keeping the Palestinian cause alive in American academic circles while strengthening the bonds between Palestinian scholars worldwide. CSMS, the last entry in Columbia's academic landscape, seems to play the role of Hermes, bringing cohesivity to this constellation of thoughts and scholarships. If rivalry exists, it is of a highly intellectual degree since it is mainly the same faculty members who contribute and circulate from one mission to the other. However, it would certainly be very *à la* Columbia to be in competition with one's self. The proliferation of sites, and their respective approaches and tools for studying the various languages, cultures, and histories grouped under the term "Middle East" reflects the inherent undecidability and necessary incompleteness of one overarching cohesive frame. The differences, subtle or distinctive, between these Institutes illustrate the plural visions for how to best approach a region and its particularities. To an extent, these contrasts are different answers to the question of what kind of relation Columbia seeks to maintain with the Middle East. Some, like Hitti, tried to walk the line between academia and politics; but is that still possible today? Was it ever?⁹⁵

Columbia's progression from housing unread Arabic sources to the politicization of the Arab World, passing through the Saidian turn, is an odyssey through contextual evolutions, charismatic scholars, and vital librarians. This essay forged a path through America, the Levant, Arab diasporas, and yet, one question remains: how do we express this knowledge, in English or in Arabic? Decades later, Hitti's prescient call remains unaddressed.

⁹⁵ Thanks to Mohamed Kouta's inspired reflection and help for this section.

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**OVERCOMING
ORIENTALISM:
AMONG COLUMBIA
UNIVERSITY'S
EARLIEST
ARAB ALUMNI**

KEVIN PETERSEN

تخطي الاسـتـشراق: بين أوائل خريجي جامعة كولومبيا العرب

OVERCOMING ORIENTALISM: AMONG COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S EARLIEST ARAB ALUMNI

Arab students have been present at Columbia University since at least 1892, when that year's *Annual Report of President Low to the Trustees* recorded one Syrian and one Egyptian studying on campus.¹ Due to the Western cultural attitude that Edward Said, the esteemed Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, later called 'Orientalism,' these early Arab students likely passed through campus largely overlooked by their peers. As Said wrote, "the limitations of Orientalism are... the limitations that follow upon disregarding, essentializing, denuding the humanity of another culture, people, or geographical region."² Consequently, this cultural attitude subsequently "[conceived] humanity either in large collective terms or in abstract generalities."³

This frame of mind was especially present in an early twentieth-century article of *The Columbia Daily Spectator* when, on February 8th, 1911, it reported on an incoming student delegation from the Ottoman Empire with an article succinctly headlined "Five Turks at University."⁴ While it was true these students were coming *from* Turkey - all of the applicants wrote their application essay in Ottoman Constantinople - a

later paragraph in the *same* article reveals that not all of them were ethnically Turkish as the headline suggested. According to one of the essay's examiners, ██████████ was Armenian, and only one was actually Turkish. Of ██████████ a scholarship while a third student, another Turk, "was chosen from the next best candidates."⁵ And as for the ██████████ them besides the article's even more vague subtitle of their foreign condition as "Oriental Students Coming."⁶

Considering that many thousands of international students would later follow this delegation to Columbia University, it is unfortunate this article is part of a long trend of Orientalist depersonalization on campus. In 1922, a *Spectator* story reported on a banquet meant to honor the University's "Oriental guests" while never specifying the actual nationalities of the celebrated students.⁷ A decade later, a 1931 *Spectator* article described a round-table discussion of Christianity where students from countries as different as China, India, Korea, and the Philippines were grouped together under the familiar designation of "Oriental students."⁸

¹ "Annual Report of President Low to the Trustees 1892," *Columbia University Press*, 1892, 44.

² Edward Said, "Orientalism," *Vintage Books*, 1979, 108.

³ Edward Said, "Orientalism", 1979, 154.

⁴ "Five Turks at University," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, February 8, 1911.

⁵ "Five Turks at University," 1911.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ ██████████

December 5, 1922.

⁸ "Oriental students to discuss Christianity," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, March 31, 1931.

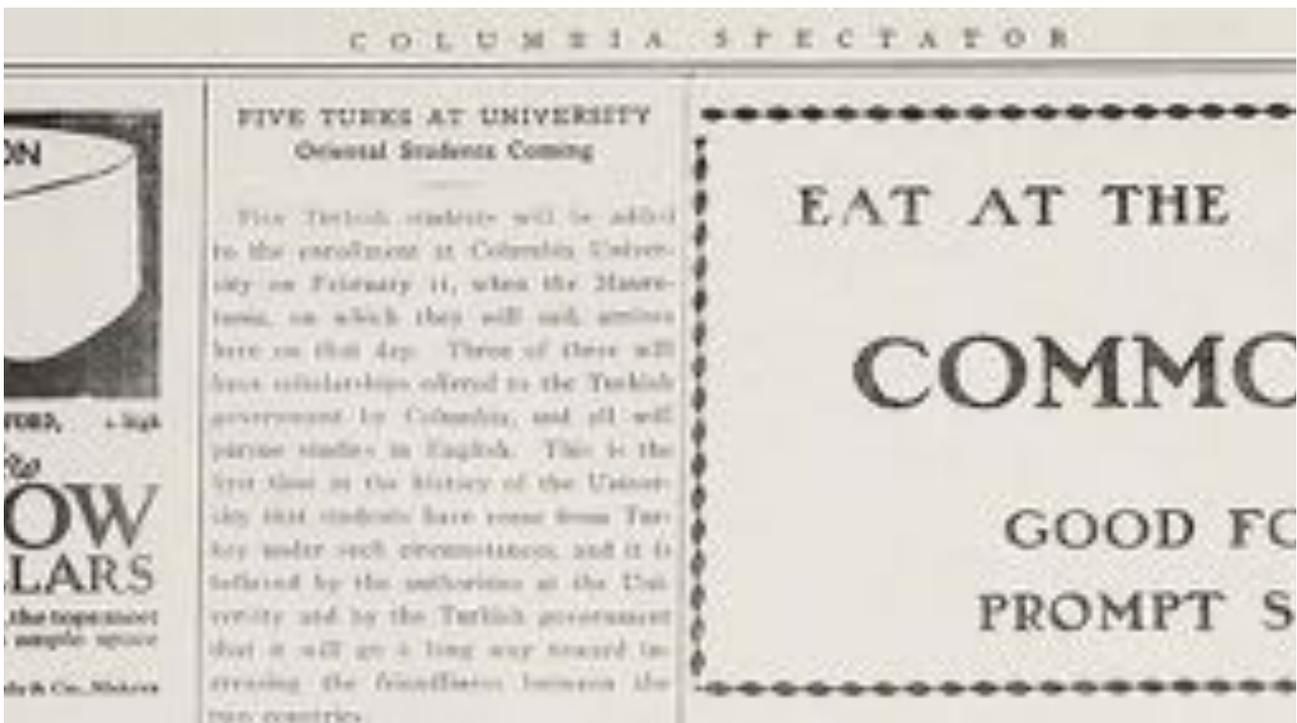


Figure 1. *Five Turks at University*, February 8, 1911, *Columbia Daily Spectator*.

Even as recently as 1989, the *Spectator* reported that **1911** to take courses about foreign cultures like “Oriental music” or “Oriental civilizations” to graduate, with no mention as to what was actually meant by “Oriental” **9**

1 can only imagine just how many Arab students might have passed through campus similarly overlooked and misunderstood since their initial appearance in 1892. To help correct this record, in this paper, I tell the story of three Columbia University alumni who, together, illustrate the religious, political, and gender diversity of Arab students that Orientalism masked: Khalil Abdallah Totah, a Palestinian Quaker who dedicated his life to international Palestinian activism; Mohammad Fadhel Al-Jamali, a Shi’a Muslim from Iraq who served as his country’s Foreign Minister and Prime Minister; and Alice Mitri Kandalaft, an Orthodox Christian feminist **10** United Nations.

After all, had these three individuals been a part of that 1911 student delegation from the Ottoman Empire, they too would have been simply labeled as “Oriental students.” Consequently, their stories - which are but a few from among the thousands of Arab students to pass through campus - deserve to be told.

KHALIL ABDALLAH TOTAH (M.A. 1912, PH.D. 1927), TEACHERS COLLEGE

Coming to the United States from a peasant family in Palestine, the lack of money had long been a challenge in Khalil Abdallah Totah’s life. After all, his dream of attending Haverford College ended when he did not receive a scholarship to pay tuition fees. Instead, he had to wash dishes, mow lawns, and clean houses in order to support himself through his years at Clark College.¹⁰ Yet, a successful stint as a kitchenware **11**

to enjoy his last year at Clark College without working: it also revealed his ability to persuade others to his side - a skill he used throughout his life in his passionate pursuit of Palestinian independence.

On May 20, 1886, Khalil Abdallah Totah was born in the town of Ramallah in the country that was then known as Ottoman Palestine. His parents, Abdallah Totah and Azizeh Mughannam, were Christian Quakers after converting from the more regionally common Orthodox faith years earlier. Like many other peasant families of the time, Totah endured a rather lean upbringing as his father eked out a meager living weaving men’s clothing. Unfortunately, this lower standard of living

Daily Spectator, February 15, 1989.

Columbia

¹⁰ Thomas Ricks, “Khalil Totah: The Unknown Years,” *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 2008, 56.

was very evident in Totah's family life: out of his eight sisters and three brothers, only four sisters and two brothers survived into adulthood.¹¹

EDUCATION

education revolved around the study of the Holy Bible.¹² As he began formal schooling, he transferred between several public and church schools until 1899, when he was given permission to study at the

BOY'S TRAINING HOME

founded by American missionaries in 1888. Two years later, he transferred to the newly established Boy's

TRAINING HOME

After

TRAINING HOME

the last year of his early education in Jerusalem at the Church Mission Society English School.¹⁴

Upon returning to his parents' home in Ramallah after his high school graduation, Totah quickly

independence. Naturally, he began looking for an opportunity to gain this desired independence. As it turns out, his close relationship with American missionaries while growing up inspired him to look west to the United States for precisely such an opportunity. Unsurprisingly, his parents were not as excited about the idea of him moving across the world as he was. But with the help of an American missionary friend, Totah was eventually able to persuade them. On July 16, 1906, he left his home in Palestine for the long journey to Vassalboro, Maine, to attend high

Much like his school years in the Middle East, Totah excelled in his studies in the United States. After earning an American high school diploma from the

degree in 1911 from Clark College in Worcester, Massachusetts. The next year, he moved to New York City for a postgraduate program at Columbia University's Teacher's College.¹⁶ At this time, Totah possibly was the only Arab student on campus since the University's 1912 *Annual Report of the President of Columbia University to the Trustees* mentions no students from Arab countries among a total of 256 international students.¹⁷ Regardless, it is evident that Totah was eager to leverage his personal experiences in his studies: during that year in Morningside Heights, he wrote a thesis about American Quaker high schools. After graduating with a master's degree in 1912, Totah then returned to Ramallah to work at his alma mater,

the Boy's Training Home, which had been renamed the Friends Boys School.¹⁸

Perhaps just as important as Totah's academic achievements in the United States was his acculturation into its society. While he long felt like an outsider as an Arab in early twentieth-century America, he did develop an admiration for the country's ideals.¹⁹ So much so that a few years later, in 1918, he enlisted into the United States Army as a non-combatant despite having already served in the Ottoman Army for three months in 1914.²⁰ And like many other foreign intellectuals involved with the war, President Wilson's post-war endorsement of the right to self-determination legitimized Totah's long-simmering passion - the independence of his home country of Palestine.²¹ After around a year of service with the 79th Infantry Division in wartime Paris, he returned to Palestine in 1919.²²

Next, Totah worked for a few years as the principal of the British Men's Elementary Training College in Jerusalem. He got the chance to begin working on this passion when he returned to Columbia University's Teachers College in 1925 for a Ph.D. program.²³ The student population grew substantially since 1912,

TEACHERS COLLEGE

of 622 international students on campus - including four students from Syria and four from Palestine.²⁴ Even though his program was focused on education, Totah was able to center his studies around his interest in Palestinian independence. In his dissertation, "The Contribution of the Arabs to Education," he challenged Western stereotypes of Arab civilizational inferiority and backwardness.²⁵ After graduating with a Ph.D. in 1927, Totah returned again to Palestine to work in its public education system.



Figure 2. Joy Hilden, *Khalil Total Portrait, 1945, 2016, Photograph, A Passion for Learning: The Life Journey of Khalil Totah, a Palestinian Quaker Educator and Activist.*

¹¹ Thomas Ricks, "Khalil Totah: The Unknown Years," 55.

¹² Joy Hilden, "A Passion for Learning: The Life Journey of Khalil Totah, a Palestinian Quaker Educator & Activist," *Bloomington: Xlibris*, 2016, 7.

¹³ Ricks, "Khalil Totah," 2008, 55.

¹⁴ Ricks, "Khalil Totah," 56.

¹⁵ Ricks, "Khalil Totah," 2008, 54.

¹⁶ Ricks, "Khalil Totah," 54.

¹⁷ "Annual Report of the President of Columbia University to the Trustees 1912," *Columbia University Press*, 1912, 214.

¹⁸ Ricks, "Khalil Totah," 2008, 58.

¹⁹ Ricks, "Khalil Totah," 73.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Amy Smith, "Dr. Khalil Totah: Arab-American Quaker Educator and Palestinian Nationalist Crusader, 1914-1948," PhD diss., *University of Maine*, 2018, 3.

²² Ricks, "Khalil Totah," 2008, 58.

²³ Ricks, "Khalil Totah," 2008, 54.

²⁴ "Annual Report of the President of Columbia University to the Trustees 1927," *Columbia University Press*, 1927, 366.

²⁵ Colin Rutherford, "The Education of Dr. Totah," Master's thesis, *California State University*, 2010, 63.



Figure 3. Joy Hilden, *Postcard of Totah, 1909, 2016*, Photograph, *A Passion for Learning: The Life Journey of Khalil Totah, a Palestinian Quaker, Educator and Activist*.

Despite his full-time work in education, Totah's involvement with Palestinian activism quickly

published an essay, "Education in Palestine," where he analyzed the educational system of Mandatory Palestine.²⁶ In 1934, he served as a delegate to the London Yearly Meeting of Friends, where he brought up the question of Palestinian independence to the

the Peel Commission about the viability of Mandatory Palestine, where he "declared that the Arabs of Palestine were entitled to their own country."²⁷ In the years following this testimony, he continued to split his time between working to improve the educational system of Palestine and raising international support for Palestinian independence through tireless letter writing and public activism. All of this effort eventually culminated into a full-time job in 1944, when he was invited back to New York City to head the Institute of Arab American Affairs. He spent the next three years traveling the country, giving speeches, and participating in debates about Palestinian independence.²⁸ Fittingly with this position and his love for his adopted country, Totah became an American citizen in 1946. That same

Committee of Inquiry regarding Mandatory Palestine.²⁹



Figure 4. Joy Hilden, *Totah in Doctoral Robe in 1943, 2016, Photograph, A Passion for Learning: The Life Journey of Khalil Totah, a Palestinian Quaker Educator and Activist.*

²⁶ Ricks, "Khalil Totah," 2008, 64.

²⁷ Hilden, *A Passion for Learning*, 2016, 298.

²⁸ Ricks, "Khalil Totah," 2008, 69.

²⁹ Hilden, *A Passion for Learning*, 2016, 302; 198.



Figure 5. Joy Hilden, *Totah in Army Uniform in 1914 and 1918, 2016, Photograph, A Passion for Learning: The Life Journey of Khalil Totah, a Palestinian Quaker Educator and Activist.*



unfortunate that his efforts would end in disappointment. With the 1947 decision of the United Nations to partition Palestine came Totah's disillusionment. Three years later, in 1950, the Institute of Arab American Affairs closed its doors in New York City.

from public life. He spent the last few years of his life out west in Whittier, California; however, Palestine never did leave his mind. In 1955, Totah published his last book, *Dynamite in the Middle East*, where he discussed the future of his country in the post-World War II Middle East.³⁰ He died that year, on February 24, at the age of 69.

Totah lived in New York City three times during his life.

As a master's student at Columbia University's Teachers College studying public education administration. He then later returned to the same school in 1925 as a Ph.D. student, where he wrote his thesis on the history of education in Palestine.

In retrospect, it must be noted how these two stays distinctly marked the two phases of his professional career.

The first was as a school administrator in Palestine; the second initiated his career as a public intellectual raising support for the Arab cause.

During his time

at the

of the Institute of Arab American Affairs, he was both its chief executive and lead activist. Not only did Columbia University play a role in preparing him for his first career, but

it also prepared him for a third career that only somebody like Totah could have pursued.

MOHAMMED FADHEL AL-JAMALI (M.A. 1930, PH.D. 1934, DHUMLITT 1954), TEACHERS COLLEGE

Looking back on his life, Mohammed Fadhil Al-Jamali certainly did a lot to be proud of. Among the numerous degrees he earned and books he wrote, he helped found the Arab League, signed the Charter of the United Nations as his country's representative, and served as Iraq's Prime Minister.³¹ He even gained so much international renown that, when the 1958 Iraqi military coup d'état sentenced him to death, no less than King Mohammad V of Morocco, the United States, and the United Kingdom

all rallied for his release.³² Despite

³⁰ Ricks, "Khalil Totah," 2008, 71.

³¹ Wolfgang Saxon, "Mohd Al-Jamali, 94, of Iraq; A Founder of the Arab League," *New York Times*, May 29, 1997.

³² Alan Rush, "Obituary: Mohammed Fadhil Jamali," *Independent*, June 2, 1997.

these impressive achievements, however, not much of his modest upbringing would have indicated such a

Sometime in 1902, Mohammed Fadhel Al-Jamali was born in the Kadhimiya neighborhood of Baghdad, Iraq. His family was particularly conservative and religious. His father was a prominent Shi'a sheikh who had studied Islam in the sacred city of Najaf for twenty years, while his mother - the daughter of a famous female mullah - had a similarly high religious standing in her community.³³ In a later memoir about his upbringing in a strict Shi'a household, Al-Jamali recounted how as a child, he "cherished a negative attitude against the Sunnite Muslims... [and] was taught that all non-Muslims, although [he] had rare occasion to see any of them, were unclean and untouchable."³⁴ Knowing this, it is not surprising that Al-Jamali's later disinterest in following his father's professional footsteps - perhaps a consequence of the severe corporal punishment he suffered at his religious elementary school - created a great deal of conflict in his household.³⁵

Thankfully, a later switch to a Persian school better

teaching that offered him a path to the independence he desired. Consequently, his high academic performance landed him a seat at the Baghdad Teacher Training College at just 15 years of age.³⁶

For his elementary studies, he taught elementary school for a few years before earning an opportunity to continue his studies at the American University of Beirut, which was then known as the Syrian Protestant College. His father, understandably scandalized by the thought of his son

receive permission from the prominent Sheikh Mahdi

relented when Al-Jamali promised that his studies in Beirut would eventually, in some way, serve Islam.³⁷

It was in this collegiate environment that Al-Jamali began to challenge his inherited conservative instinct. Two aspects of his experience at the Syrian Protestant College prompted his adoption of political liberalism

was his participation in an inter-religious organization called the Brotherhood Society, & the second was his studies in science, in particular the theory of evolution. Consequently, he later recalled that he graduated from the University with "a spirit of tolerance, open-mindedness and critical-mindedness" that did not exist in his younger self.³⁸

After graduating from the Syrian Protestant College,



Figure 6. Harry Almond, *Al-Jamali and Sarah Powell Wedding Picture, 1933, from the Al-Jamali Family Collection, 1993, Photograph, Iraqi Statesman: Portrait of Mohammad Fadhel Jamali.*

Al-Jamali spent a few years teaching at his alma mater, the Teachers Training College in Baghdad - until he won

grants to pursue postgraduate education at Columbia University's Teachers College in 1929.³⁹ The grant of \$1,000 a year was awarded through the International Institute of Teachers College, and the Institute's President, Dr. Paul Monroe, became Al-Jamali's faculty advisor. Al-Jamali was so set on studying in New York City that he even turned down an appointment to tutor the Crown Prince of Iraq full-time.⁴⁰

His time at Columbia University was an especially intellectually formative period of his life. One particular aspect of this experience that Al-Jamali

³³ Harry Almond, *Iraqi Statesman: Portrait of Mohammad Fadhel Jamali*, Grosvenor, 1993, 6.

³⁴ Mohammad Al-Jamali, "An Arab Faces the Modern World," *Remembering Childhood in the Middle East*, ed. Elizabeth Fernea, University of Texas Press, 2002, 10.

³⁵ Almond, *Iraqi Statesman*, 1993, 15.

³⁶ Almond, *Iraqi Statesman*, 1993, 14.

³⁷ Al-Jamali, "An Arab Faces the Modern World," 2002, 16.

³⁸ Almond, *Iraqi Statesman*, 1993, 19.

³⁹ Christopher Tudico, *The History of the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation* (New York City: Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, 2012), 11.

⁴⁰ Almond, *Iraqi Statesman*, 1993, 24.



most cherished was the opportunity to interact with students from all over the world. Although during that year, he would have been only one of two Iraqis out of the 18 students from the Middle East (one from Egypt, two from Iraq, twelve from Palestine, and three from Syria), the 1929 *Annual Report of the President of Columbia University to the Trustees* indicates that he would have encountered 570 international students on campus from 62 countries.⁴¹ Additionally, he interacted with and learned from students from 68 different countries while staying at the nearby International House New York, giving him a cosmopolitan perspective of the world.⁴²

Beyond the social aspect of Al-Jamali's time at Columbia, his studies at Teachers College greatly prepared him for his long career in education administration. In particular, his dissertation on the unique challenges of educating Iraq's Bedouin population, "The New Iraq: Its Problem of Bedouin Education," foreshadowed the type of work he would

undertake later in his service in Iraq's Ministry of Education.⁴³ Perhaps even more important than his professional development was his marriage to Sarah Powell, a Canadian-American and fellow Columbia University graduate whom he met while taking summer courses at the University of Chicago.⁴⁴ This

searching for the common humanity of people despite cultural differences.

Education

his Ph.D. in 1934. He returned to Iraq married, credentialed, and ready for his new job in Iraq's Ministry of Education. He worked there for eight years

Education, where he oversaw Iraq's school system.⁴⁵ Among the many influential reforms he implemented in this position was a system of scholarships for Iraq's most talented students to study abroad.⁴⁶ After all, he cherished the opportunity he had received to study in Lebanon and the United States, and he wanted to offer the same experience to other young Iraqis. Notwithstanding his faithful work in the Ministry of Education, he was suddenly transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1943 because of his international background.



Figure 7. Harry Almond, Al-Jamali signs United Nations Charter for Iraq, 1945, Photograph, *Iraqi Statesman: Portrait of Mohammad Fadhel Jamali*.

⁴¹ *Annual Report of the President of Columbia University to the Trustees 1929* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1929), 473.

⁴² Almond, *Iraqi Statesman*, 1993, 27.

⁴² Almond, *Iraqi Statesman*, 1993, 27.

⁴³ Almond, *Iraqi Statesman*, 35.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 31.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 35.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 44.

Despite his initial displeasure with the move, Al-Jamali ascended through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ranks even faster than he did in his previous job. By 1944,

promoted next to the rank of Minister Plenipotentiary in 1945.⁴⁷ Fittingly with his meteoric diplomatic rise,

than the organizational meeting of the United Nations later that same year, where he signed the Charter of

Iraq.⁴⁸ A short while later, he was appointed Foreign

Speaker of Parliament before being appointed to serve as Prime Minister by King Faisal II.⁴⁹ Much like

he spent his two years as Prime Minister reforming Iraq's educational system and social welfare system.⁵⁰

For his various accomplishments in the international sphere, Columbia University honored Al-Jamali with an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters in 1954.⁵¹



Figure 8. Lisa Larsen, *Fadhil Jamali of Iraq (L) and Toshikazu Kase of Japan, at UN general assembly meeting, 1957, Photograph, LIFE Magazine.*

⁴⁷ Almond, *Iraqi Statesman*, 1993, 45.

⁴⁸ Almond, *Iraqi Statesman*, 1993, 63.

⁴⁹ "E. J. MOB," 54," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34, no. 3, July 1999, 423.

⁵⁰ Rush, "Obituary."

⁵¹ *Al-Jamali Alumni Card.*

Al-Jamali's public career was cut short just a mere four years later in 1958 when a military coup d'état took over Iraq, imprisoned him, and gave him a death sentence.⁵² An unexpected release from prison in 1961 forced him to spend the last part of his life in exile. Despite the circumstances, Al-Jamali eventually found refuge as a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Tunis, where he published his most influential book, *Letters on Islam*, which contained reflections of his personal struggles as a political prisoner.⁵³ This book

Mahdi al-Khalisi many decades earlier. On May 24, 1997, he passed away at the age of 94.



Figure 9. Harry Almond, *Al-Jamali with Tunisian President, 1933, from the Al-Jamali Family Collection, 1993, Photograph, Iraqi Statesman: Portrait of Mohammad Fadhel Jamali.*

In later reflections on his life, Al-Jamali often emphasized how his beliefs changed throughout his personal development. It is also evident that a large part of his intellectual development was owed to his time at Columbia University. In a 1992 essay, "Promotion of World Peace," written when he was 90 years old, Al-Jamali recommended that an "International University" be established to foster international brotherhood.⁵⁴ He asserts,

If diplomats and statesmen of the world were to have the same educational background, there would be a much better chance for international understanding and cooperation. This belief is based on my personal experience as a Macy Fellow of the International Institute of Teachers College, Columbia University, 1929-1931, and as a student living at the International House... during the same period.⁵⁵

⁵² Almond, *Iraqi Statesman*, 1993, 140.

⁵³ Almond, *Iraqi Statesman*, 161.

⁵⁴ Mohammad Al-Jamali, "Promotion of World Peace," *International Journal on World Peace*, 1992, 56.

⁵⁵ Al-Jamali, "Promotion of World Peace," 56.

ALICE MITRI KANDALAFT (B.SC. 1926, M.A. 1927), TEACHERS COLLEGE

For Alice Mitri Kandalaft, born in nineteenth-century Damascus, the opportunity to be a leader and one of the few women in a position of power was inconceivable due to many factors. Yet, her lifelong activism to promote education and feminism prepared her for such an improbable opportunity when she was later appointed to be Syria's representative to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women after Syria gained independence from French control in 1946.



Figure 10. Kandalaft at her home in Beirut in the 1970s, Photograph, Alice Kandalaft Library.

Details of Kandalaft's early life are recorded. We know that she was born sometime in 1895 in the al-Qaymariya neighborhood of Damascus - a neighborhood known today as the 'Old City.' Finally, her last name, Kandalaft, is a common name in the Orthodox community, a connection that could explain the last little bit that is known of her childhood - her early education in Orthodox schools.⁵⁶

It was during her young adult years that her life

became immensely more interesting. After completing her secondary education in Syria, Kandalaft moved to Beirut to continue her undergraduate studies at the Syrian Protestant College. Sometime during those years, she met Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar, a brilliant Syrian Protestant College-trained medical doctor who was heavily involved in Syrian nationalist politics.⁵⁷ (So much so, that later in 1932, Shahbandar was seated next to Mohammad Fadhel Al-Jamali during a luncheon when Al-Jamali visited the Iraqi Consulate in Beirut.)⁵⁸

Thankfully for Kandalaft, Shahbandar was highly trusted by Syria's short-serving king, Faisal bin Al-Hussein. When Henry King and Charles Crane of the American King-Crane Commission arrived at Syria in 1919 to investigate the case for Syrian independence, Shahbandar served as King Faisal's personal translator. While, unfortunately for Syrian nationalists, this inquiry ended in total disappointment as the French successfully maintained their mandate over the country - the investigation did bear some positive fruit for Kandalaft. When King Faisal I told Shahbandar that President Woodrow Wilson wanted to sponsor two Syrian students to earn their master's degrees in the United States, Shahbandar knew just the right people to recommend.⁵⁹ He nominated two women for the opportunity, Kandalaft being one of them, as he cited Syria's need for more graduate educated women.⁶⁰ And thus, one more unexpected but critical stop was added to Kandalaft's journey from Damascus - to Columbia's Teachers College.

When Kandalaft arrived at Morningside Heights in 1922, Teachers College was still a relatively new

Columbia University about two decades earlier. Despite its relative novelty, however, Kandalaft would have encountered a large and diverse campus with respect to nationality and gender. Across the undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools, there were 10,951 students on campus.⁶¹ Of those, 2,238 students were enrolled at Teachers College.⁶² Among the entire student body, there were 557 international students from all over the world.⁶³ And while Kandalaft would have been one of only two Syrian students at Columbia University, there were plenty of women studying with her as 5,045 women were present on campus.⁶⁴

It was during this particularly productive time in her life. First, she completed a Bachelor of Science degree in 1926

⁵⁶ "Alice Mitri Kandalaft," *The Syria Times*, August 18, 2019, representing Syria in 1948.

⁵⁷ Kamil Mansur and Leila Fawaz, *Transformed Landscapes: Essays on Palestine and the Middle East in Honor of Walid Khalidi*, American University in Cairo Press, 2009, 35.

⁵⁸ Almond, *Iraqi Statesman*, 1993, 36.

⁵⁹ Dima Mansour, "أليس قندلفت السيدة العربية الأولى في الأمم المتحدة" [Alice Kandalaft, the First Arab Woman at the United Nations and Syria's Representative], *Emarat Al Youm*,

July 13, 2019.

⁶⁰ Marefa Foundation, "أليس قندلفت" [Alice Kandalaft], *Marefa.org*.

⁶¹ *Annual Report of the President of Columbia University to the Trustees 1922* (New York City: Columbia University, 1922), 273.

⁶² *Annual Report of the President of Columbia University to the Trustees 1922*, 188.

⁶³ *Annual Report of the President of Columbia University to the Trustees 1922*, 288.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 273.

before completing a Master of Arts degree the following year. Her 243-page master's thesis, "Readings in Psychology for Normal Schools in Arabic Countries," is an impressively comprehensive investigation into the various factors that determine educational outcomes.⁶⁵ Her intention to translate education theory into practical use is prominent, as the thesis opens up with this inquiry:

The question that every Arabic speaking student here at Teachers' College asks himself is this, "After getting acquainted with the best of current educational theories and methods on the various subjects or school activities, I am interested in... what am I going to do

What books or materials am I going to use with my Arabic pupils or students, and in an Arabic-speaking community?⁶⁶

As can be expected from the topic of her thesis, after her graduation from Columbia University, Kandalaft went on to work in school administrations throughout Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon.⁶⁷ In particular, she focused on expanding the quality of, and access to, education for local women.⁶⁸

While education was always a priority in Kandalaft's life, she also became heavily involved in various political causes - chief among them were Arab feminism and Syrian nationalism. In 1933, she spoke at the International Congress of Women in Chicago, where she denounced the French Mandate of Syria.⁶⁹ In 1938, she served as the chair of the Arab Women's Congress for the Defense of Palestine.⁷⁰ In 1942, she opened a salon in the Umayya Hotel of Damascus, where many of Syria's most famous writers and politicians met to converse, debate, or even start political parties that later greatly influenced Syria's history.⁷¹ Three years later, in 1945, she helped found the Arab Women's National League

was the only woman to testify at the Anglo-American Committee on Palestine in Washington D.C. in 1946. The following year, in 1947, she returned to the United States on a teacher's fellowship from the Institute for International Education.⁷² During that fellowship, she went on a nationwide tour where she spoke at various universities about feminism, Palestinian independence, and the Middle East in general.⁷³

Perhaps her greatest accomplishment was her 1947 appointment to be one of Syria's representatives



Figure 11. Kandalaft with the representatives of India - 1948, Photograph, Alice Kandalaft Library.

to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. Shortly after its founding, the United Nations decided to continue the work of the League of Nations inquiry on women's rights with this new commission.⁷⁴ Kandalaft was the perfect candidate for this job as she had an impressive education at the Syrian Protestant College and Columbia University's Teachers College, extensive professional experience in school administration throughout the Middle East, and many years of dedication to the Arab feminist movement.⁷⁵ Over her four years in that position, she worked extensively on the expansion of women's political rights in Arab countries.⁷⁶

⁶⁵ Alice Kandalaft, "Readings in Psychology for Normal Schools in Arabic Countries," Master's thesis, (Columbia University, 1927), I.

⁶⁶ Kandalaft, "Readings in Psychology for Normal Schools in Arabic Countries," I.

⁶⁷ Nova Robinson, "Sisters of Men": Syrian and Lebanese Women's Transnational Campaigns for Arab Independence and Women's Rights, 1910-1949," PhD diss., (Rutgers University, 2015), 465.

⁶⁸ Robinson, "Sisters of Men" 78.

⁶⁹ Leila Rupp, "Challenging Imperialism in International Women's

Organizations, 1888-1945," *NWSA Journal*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 16.

⁷⁰ Robinson, "Sisters of Men," 2015, 390.

⁷¹ Wassouf, "Alice Kandalaft," 2019.

⁷² Robinson, "Sisters of Men," 2015, 390.

⁷³ Robinson, "Sisters of Men," 397.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 398.

⁷⁵ Robinson, "Sisters of Men," 2015, 389.

⁷⁶ Robinson, "Sisters of Men," 2015, 78.



Figure 12. 
Kandalaft Library.

Photograph, Alice

Unfortunately, her involvement in Syrian politics would come to a sudden end in 1958 with the founding of the United Arab Republic and the subsequent union of the 

Abdel Nasser's assumption of political leadership over Syria effectively closed off the majority of opportunities for public involvement in politics. Consequently, Kandalaft spent the last years of her life in Beirut, where she passed away sometime in the 1960s.⁷⁷

Kandalaft was deeply saddened by the death of her friend, Shahbandar, when he was assassinated on July 6, 1940.⁷⁸ After all, besides their decades-long personal friendship, she had him to thank for the Columbia University scholarship he recommended her for 21 years earlier in 1919. This opportunity at Teachers College provided the intellectual and professional development that helped nudge her onto a unique career path in school administration and feminist activism that culminated in her appointment

to the United Nations. It is unfortunate, then, that Shahbandar did not live long enough to see Kandalaft leave for New York City once again in 1947. Not only was she already one of the most prominent public 

City as the international representative of a newly independent Syria - a lifelong goal of his as well.

CONCLUSION

As one might expect, given the early twentieth-century setting of this paper, researching the lives of Totah, Al-Jamali, and Kandalaft was no simple task. For one, the 1,500 pages of the *Columbia University Alumni Register 1754-1931*, while comprehensive, did not lend itself to easily identifying the Arab alumni. Although there is a section that categorizes alumni 

⁷⁷ Mansour, "Alice Kandalaft," 2019.

⁷⁸ Marefa Foundation, "Alice Kandalaft," 2019.

requires painstaking cross-checking to verify the identity of each student with a second alphabetical listing containing full names. Next, after making an initial list of Arab alumni, I searched through various secondary sources for information on their backgrounds. This involved examining countless books, master's theses, Ph.D. dissertations, and newspaper clippings until I was able to form a picture of each student. Finally, the inevitable challenges of searching through sources in Arabic as a non-native speaker - or even just working around the English transliterations of Arab names, as was especially the case with Alice Mitri Kandalaft - made the task of

This account of my research process, however, then brings up the question of subject selection. Why did I ultimately choose to write on Totah, Al-Jamali, and Kandalaft, out of the many other Arab alumni I encountered in my research? Ultimately, there were

accessible research on their lives, since many alumni listed in the *Columbia University Alumni Register* had little to no accessible research on their lives; second, their compelling life stories, which is perhaps the impetus for having such research about their lives

religious, political, and gender diversity they showed between them, given my intention to showcase the diversity of Arab students that was masked by campus Orientalism. Although I had to limit my writing to these three individuals, I found many other Arab alumni whose stories are just as deserving of further research or storytelling. Such examples include Amir Boktor, a 1924 Egyptian graduate of Teachers College who wrote a book on Egypt's educational history;⁷⁹ Raja Howarani, a 1930 Syrian graduate of Teachers College who served as the secretary to a Syrian Prime Minister;⁸⁰ and Bulus Khauli, a 1905 Lebanese graduate of Teachers College who was a renowned professor and Lebanese nationalist intellectual at the American University of Beirut.⁸¹

As I progressed in my analysis, I slowly noticed that my research objectives were also shifting as well. While I initially started this study with the intention of highlighting the diversity of Arab students attending Columbia University, I realized that I was also effectively documenting how Columbia University changed because of such alumni as well. In 1892,

Columbia University, there were only 31 international students from 21 countries on campus.⁸² By 1929, the year Al-Jamali started his master's degree, there were 570 international students from 62 countries.⁸³ And

today, the latest report from Columbia University's that there are 10,172 international students from 145 countries enrolled.⁸⁴ Alongside this diverse student body, Columbia University currently hosts 47 different cultural clubs and student associations, teaches 54 foreign languages, and invites foreign dignitaries to campus every winter to participate in its World Leader's Forum. Even the boundaries of the University's footprint have expanded beyond its campus in New York City, as Columbia University has opened Brazil, Chile, Tunisia, and Jordan.

Such a transformation, I believe, was not the product of an arbitrary change of University policy to open its doors to the wider world. Rather, I consider it was the gradual, decades-long inflow of international students to Morningside Heights that slowly changed the culture of Columbia from within. After all, with those students came the student associations, languages, and diversity that makes Columbia University the uniquely global institution it is today. Consequently, while I was able to show snapshots of this change through the lives of Totah, Al-Jamali, and Kandalaft - a truly thorough account of Columbia University's cosmopolitan transformation would have to be shown through the lives of a great many more of the thousands of international students who have passed through its 116th Street gates over the course of its history.

⁷⁹ "Columbia University Alumni Register 1754-1931," *Columbia University Press*, 1932, 84.

⁸⁰ Souad Lazkani, "Meet the 19 AUB graduates who helped establish the United Nations," *The 961*, June 16, 2020.

⁸¹ Samir Khalaf, "Letters, Links and Bulus Khauli," *International College Newsletter* (Winter 2018): 6.

⁸² *Annual Report 1892*, 44.

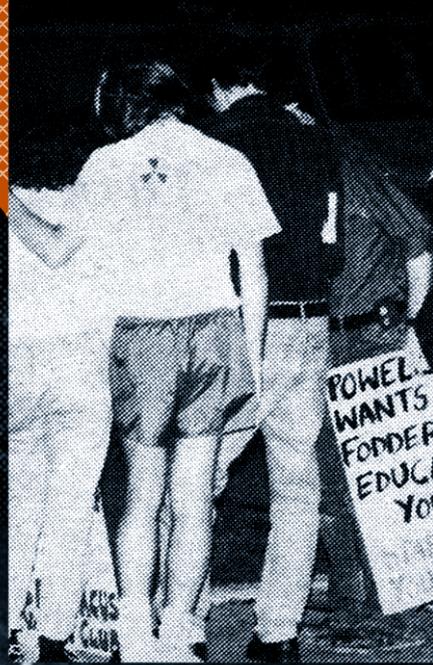
⁸³ *Annual Report of the President of Columbia University to the Trustees 1929* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1929), 473.

⁸⁴ "Statistics," *Columbia International Students and Scholars*, Columbia University.

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كولومبيا
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الأمم المتحدة
الثمسينين
ثقافة





THE ARAB WORLD ON LOW STEPS: COLUMBIA CAMPUS CULTURE AMIDST 20TH CENTURY CONFLICTS

EMILY KOHN

العالم العربي على درجات مكتبة لو: ثقافة الحرم الجامعي في كولومبيا وسط نزاعات القرن العشرين

THE ARAB WORLD ON LOW STEPS: COLUMBIA CAMPUS CULTURE AMIDST 20TH CENTURY CONFLICTS

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THE INTERWAR PERIOD: UNDERSTANDING IMPERIALISM AND NATIONALISM AT COLUMBIA (1919-1939)

SPEAKER EVENTS ON ARAB NATIONALISM AND IMPERIALISM

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Figure 1. Low Memorial Library, Columbia Undergraduate Admissions

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Figure 2. Earle Listed to Speak on Campus Tomorrow
Columbia Spectator Archive

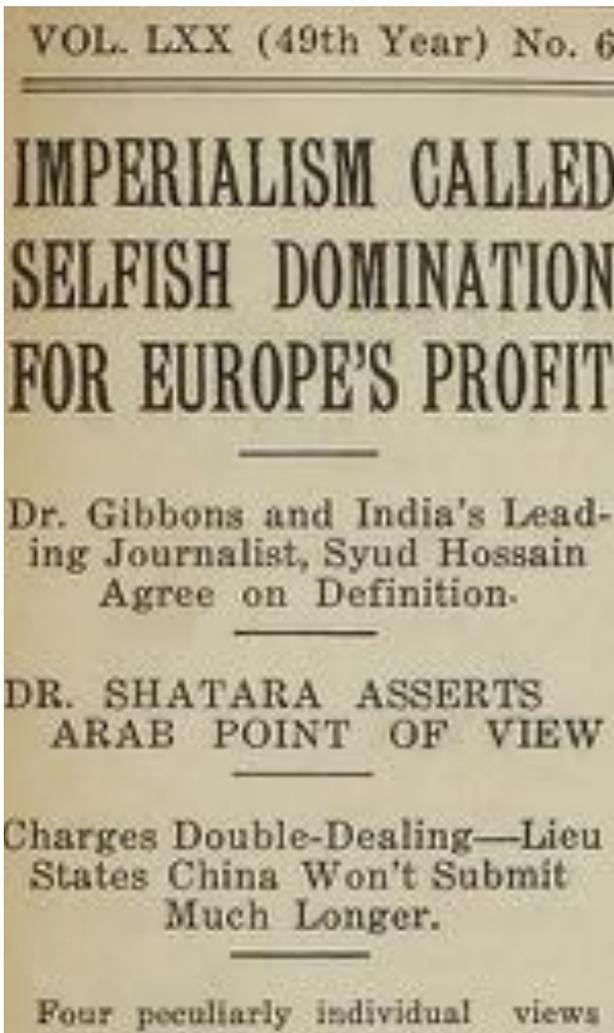
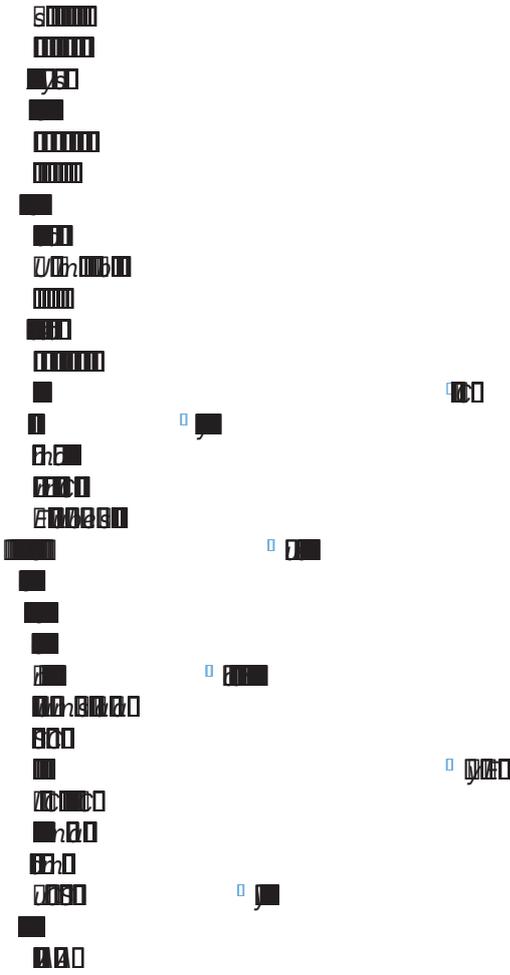


Figure 3. Imperialism Called Selfish Domination for Europe's Profit
Columbia Spectator Archive



THE EMERGENCE OF AN ARAB STUDENT BODY



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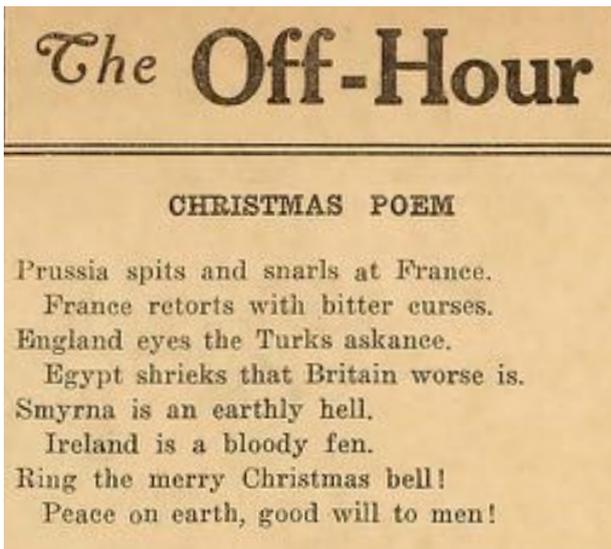
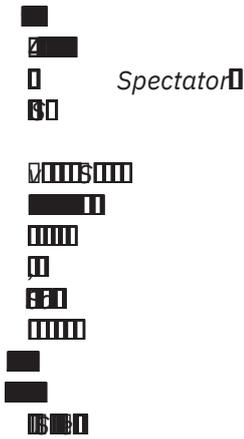


Figure 6. Christmas Poem. Columbia Spectator Archive.

THE COLD WAR: NAVIGATING ISRAELI, PALESTINIAN, & EGYPTIAN TENSIONS ON CAMPUS (1955-1975)



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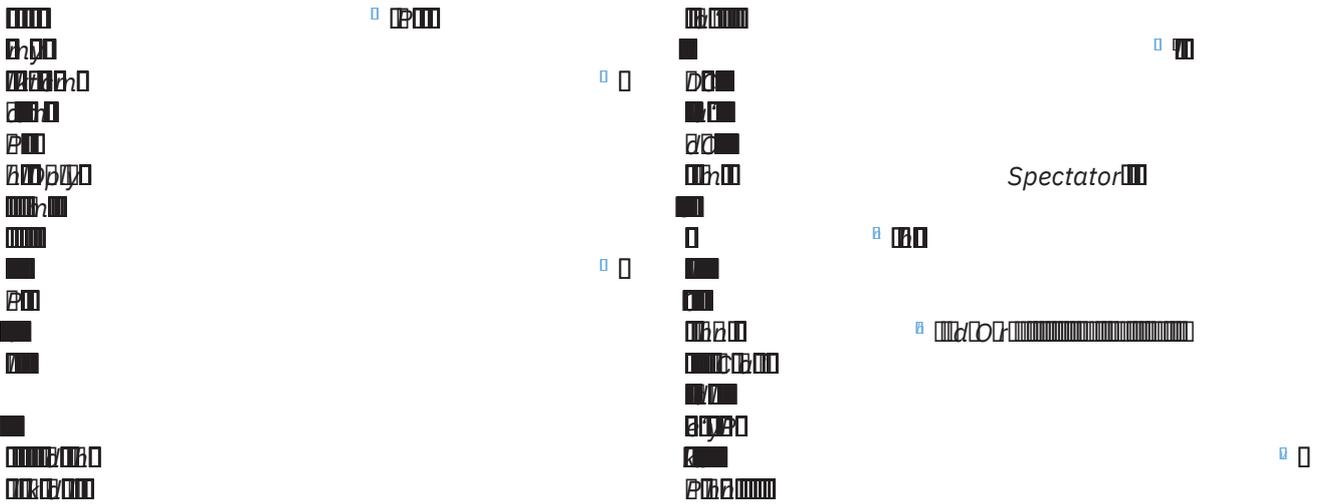
THE 1950s: STUDENTS FIND THEIR VOICE ON ARAB ISSUES



Figure 7. Israeli Consul Hits Arabs' Implacability. Columbia Spectator Archive.



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David Segal '59, emphasizes a point while speaking at yesterday's soapbox forum on "Arms for Israel."

Figure 8. 'Hyde Park' Draws One Speaker, 

Columbia Spectator Archive, 

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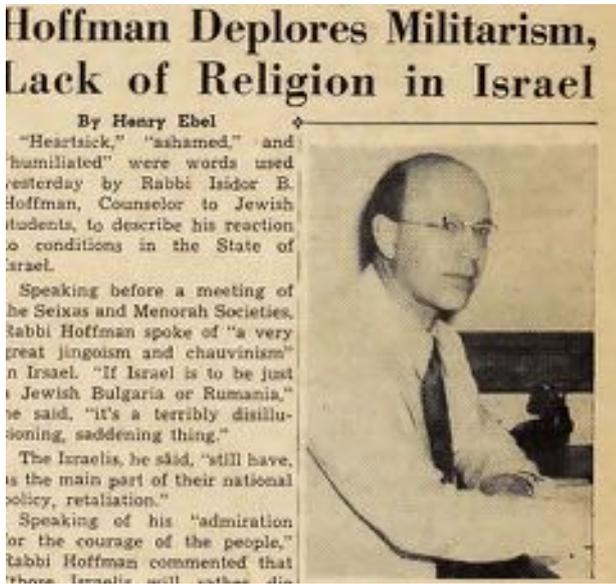


Figure 9. Hoffman Deplores Militarism, Lack of Religion in Israel, Columbia Spectator Archive,

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THE 1960s: A CHANGING WORLD AND A CHANGING CAMPUS CULTURE

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Figure 10. Open Letter
Columbia Spectator Archive



Figure 11. Mrs. Roosevelt Sees US Tardy in Mideast
Moves
Columbia Spectator Archive



Figure 12. Arab Student's Club at C.U.
Columbia Spectator Archive,

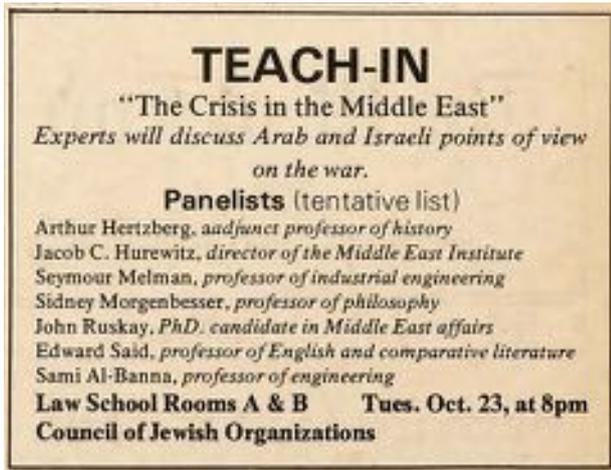
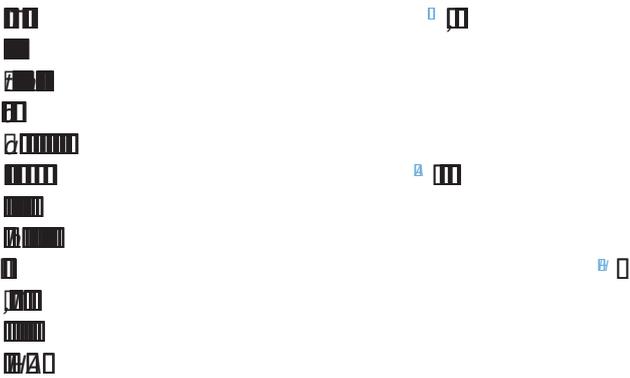


Figure 14. Teach-in on 'The Crisis in the Middle East,' Columbia Spectator Archive

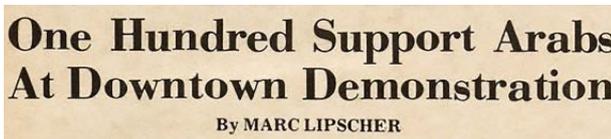
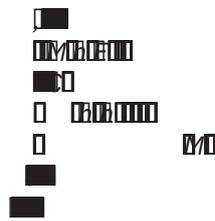
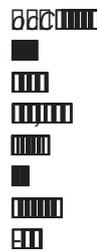
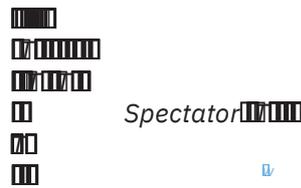


Figure 15. One Hundred Support Arabs At Downtown Demonstration, Columbia Spectator Archive



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Figure 1.1
Archive, [Columbia University](#)

Jewish Activists Clash at Hamilton Meeting, 1948

Columbia Spectator



STUDENTS REACT TO THE GULF WARS WITH ACTIVISM



Figure 18. Protestors Rally against U.S. Role in Middle East, Columbia Spectator Archive,

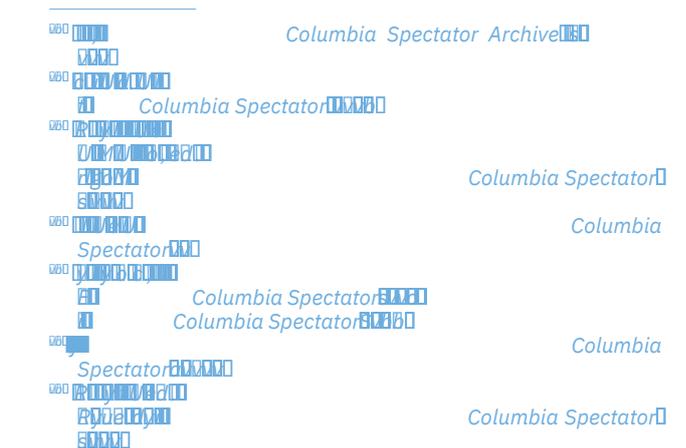
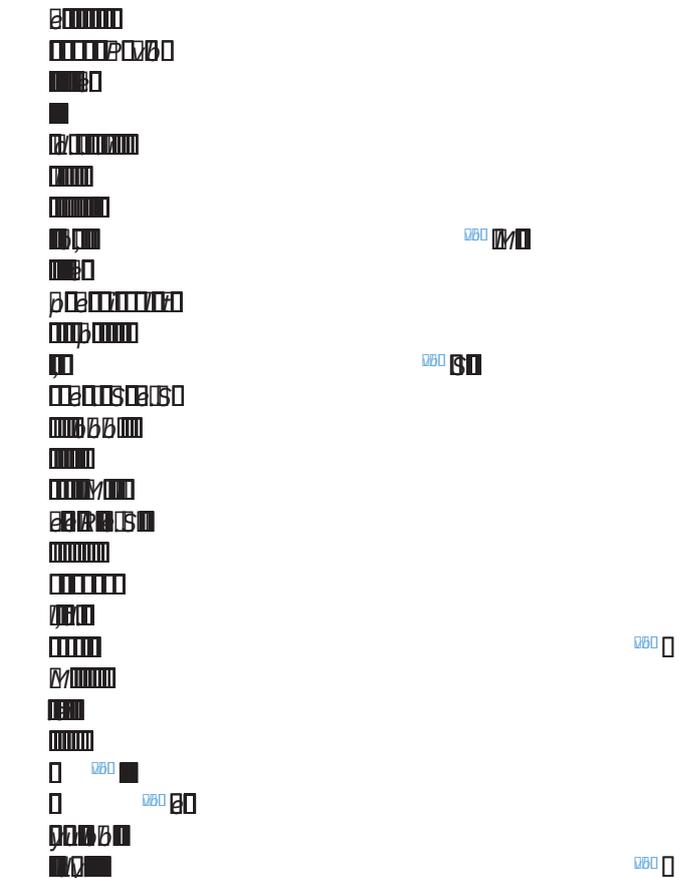
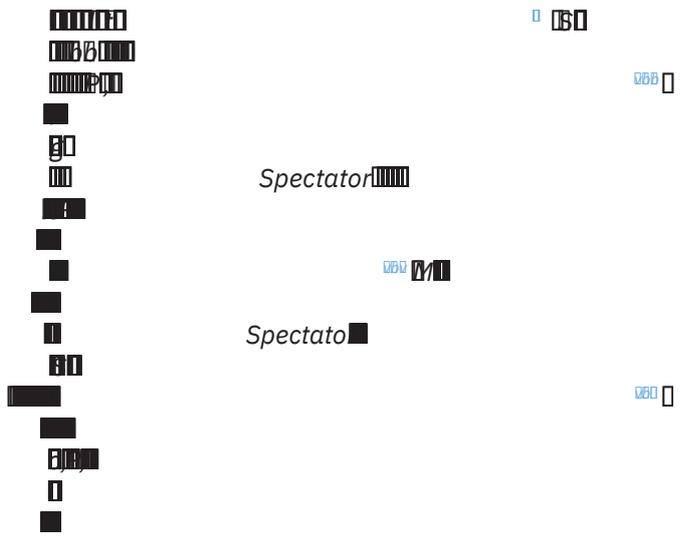




Figure 19. *The Best Party Since '68: About 2000 people attended a rally,* [Columbia Spectator Archive](#)



Figure 20. *Rally for Peace: Over 700 Columbia Students Marched to the U.N.,* [Columbia Spectator Archive](#)



Figure 21. *War and Peace: Students, Professors, and Locals Gathered on Low Plaza to Call for the Removal of Troops from Iraq.* Columbia Spectator Archive

Arabs take stance on Mideast crisis

By the Arab Association at Columbia University

After weeks of relentless bombing of Iraqi and Kuwaiti cities and massive civilian casualties, the Arab Association of Columbia University feels it necessary to present an Arab viewpoint on the Gulf War.

ries in which popular opinion is allowed to be expressed, including Jordan, Algeria, and Tunisia. These countries have consistently opposed U.S. intervention in the Gulf, and the countries whose governments supported this intervention are witnessing mass public demonstrations which will make this unpopular policy increasingly difficult to sustain. As thou-

Figure 22. Columbia Spectator Archive

Arabs Take Stance on Mideast Crisis,

CONCLUSION

By the Arab Association at Columbia University
Spectator

After weeks of relentless bombing of Iraqi and Kuwaiti cities and massive civilian casualties, the Arab Association of Columbia University feels it necessary to present an Arab viewpoint on the Gulf War.

After weeks of relentless bombing of Iraqi and Kuwaiti cities and massive civilian casualties, the Arab Association of Columbia University feels it necessary to present an Arab viewpoint on the Gulf War.

Spectator

Arabs Take Stance on Mideast Crisis,

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Columbia College and Columbia Engineering

Spectator

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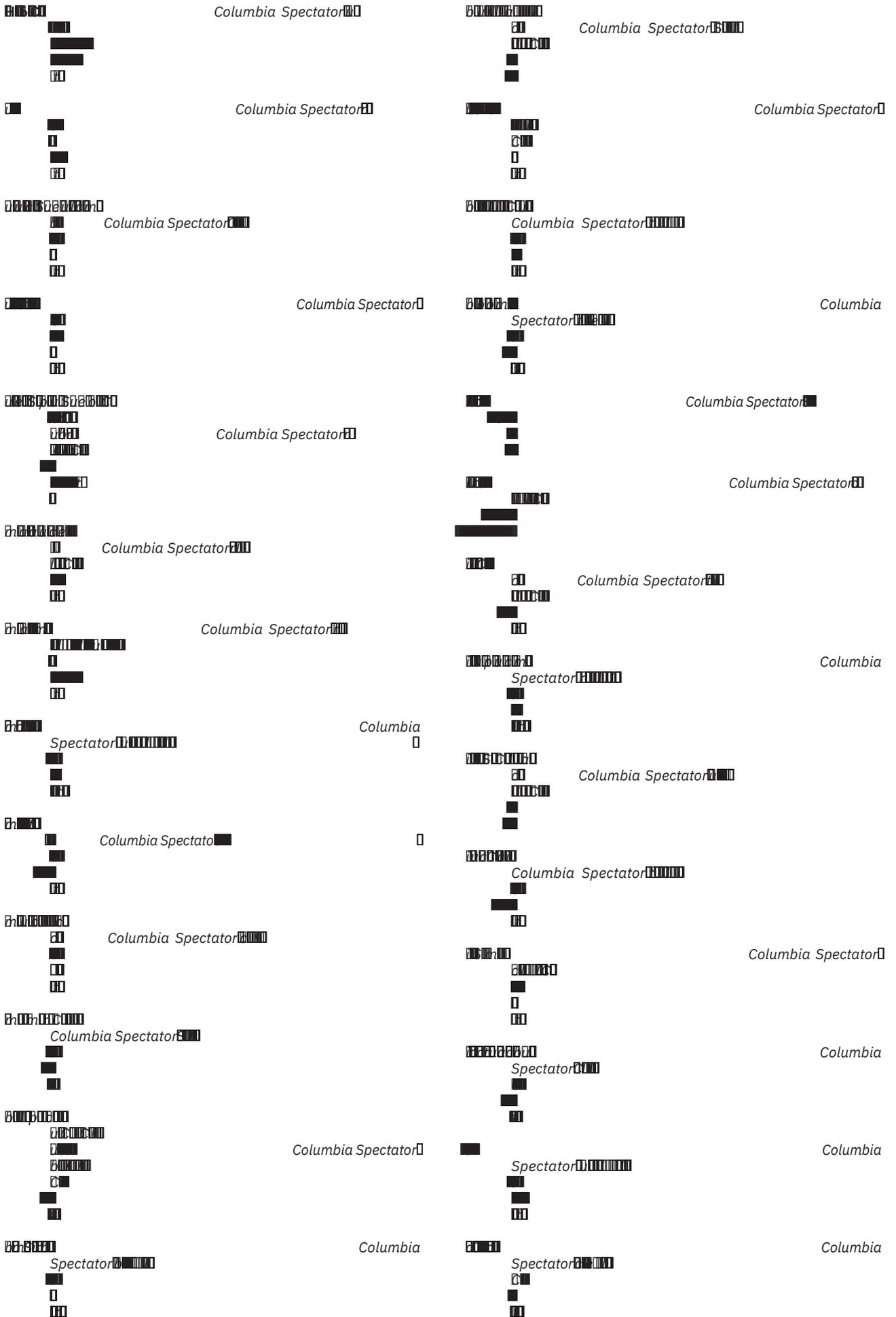
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**A MAN OF
MULTIPLE
SELVES:
EDWARD SAID
AND HIS LEGACY
AT COLUMBIA**

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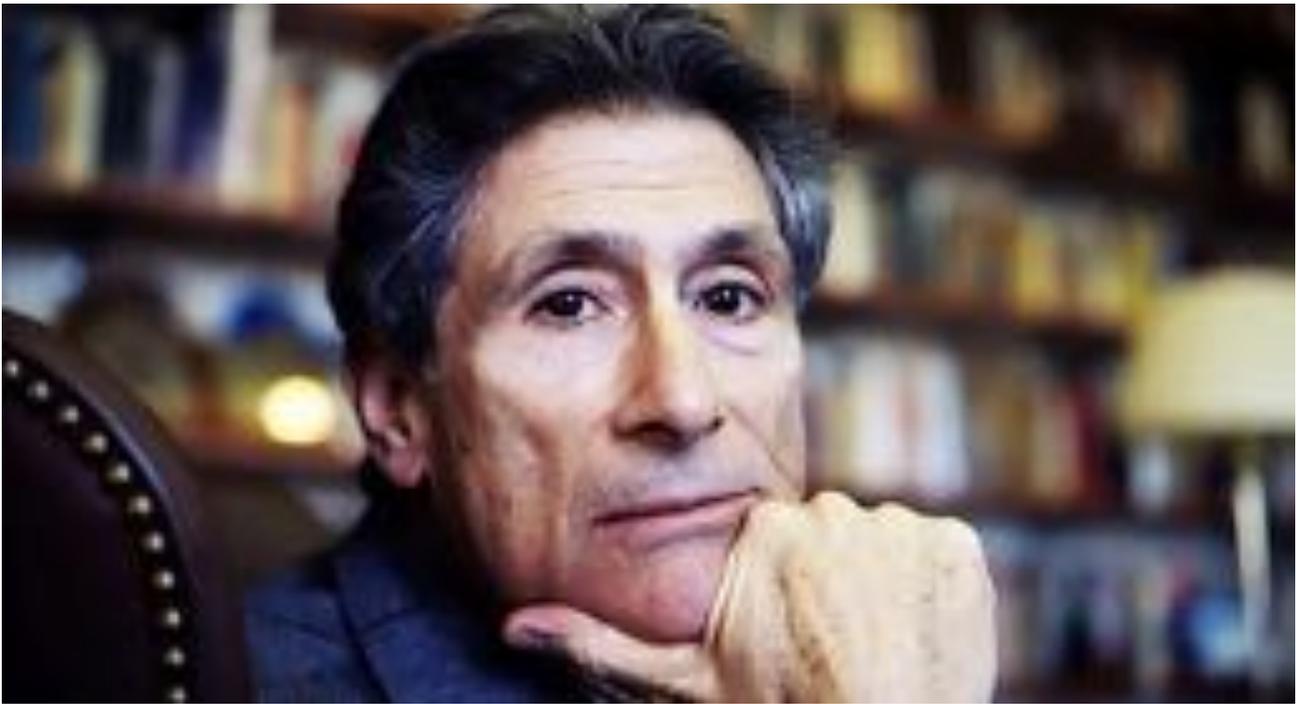


Figure 2. [D&A](#)
[D](#) [A](#)

[E](#)[S](#)[A](#)[I](#)[D](#)

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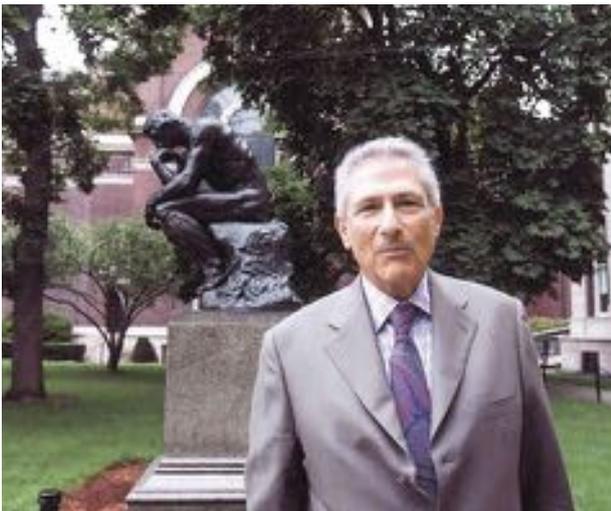


Figure 3. [D&A](#)
[D](#)[A](#)

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[Haaretz](#)

ON THE UNIVERSITY

Edward Said needed the university: “[O]nly there could

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(2004), published posthumously, in which he defends secular humanistic ideals and calls for a more inclusive literary canon,

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and think, and the capacity to dissent which were

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available to real alternative intellectual practices: no other institution like it on such a scale exists

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former student of Said’s, informs me that many are

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[I](#) Said’s extolment of the university perhaps is shown in his

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Said maintained his awe and admiration for him and was very (1975) for it bore the literary icon's name; he would win his second for

comment points to the importance of the academy in

of professors: the celebrities and those who did

an institute as it has become today, and he started a

be contained by the clichés of campus novels and

POSTCOLONIALISM AND ITS AMBIVALENT FATHER

'Orient' to justify and further imperialist domination,

Said was very *Beginnings* (1975) for it bore the literary icon's name; he would win his second for

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Boston Review

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Said's seminal postcolonial studies, made him the father on world literature, with many of his students and most important texts of postcolonialism, which was

in the same department, subaltern studies built on Said's analysis of the power and continued dominance of colonial studies and world literature, both indebted to with a host of postcolonial scholars, who helped to set

postcolonial studies, Said's relationship with the author of *Places of Mind* and former student of his, asserts that postcolonialism's methods drifted far from Said's own efforts to

Said's ambivalence towards from the the preoccupations with personal identity that were

the preoccupations with personal identity that were

the preoccupations with personal identity that were

Beginnings: Intention and Method

Vintage Books

Review

Boston

th ed, Vintage Books

Politics

Places of Mind: A Life of Edward Said

Places of Mind: A Life of Edward Said

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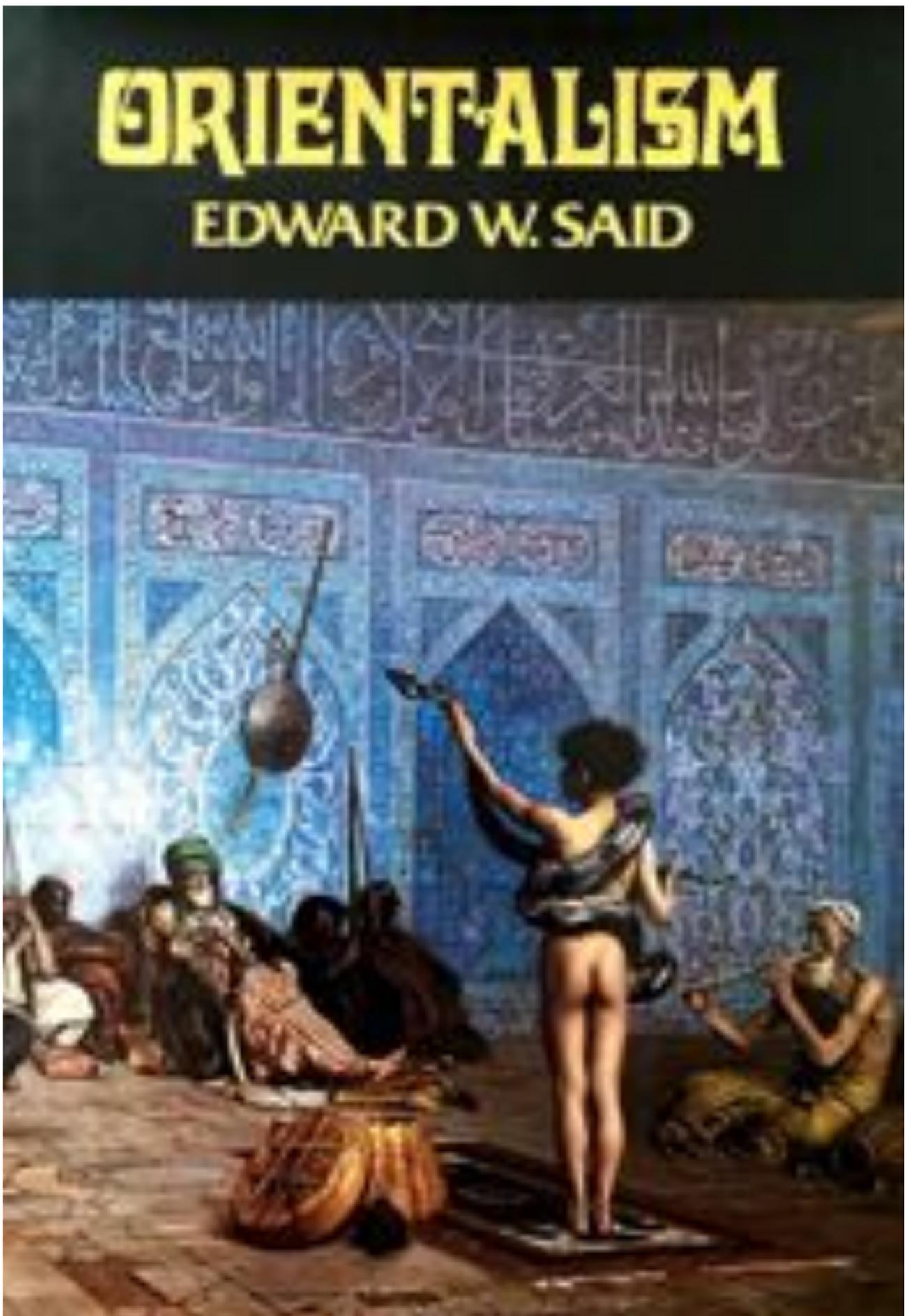


Figure 4. Edward Said, 



Pantheon 

He never saw himself as an advocate for a
 the history of representation of the non-Western world,
 that Said's attitude towards postcolonial studies was
 an end to colonialism and imperialism that Said
 as the cause of his ambivalence towards postcolonial
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SAID AND STUDIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST

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Haj form a network of scholars who continue to pay
 of studies of the Middle East and its colonial ties
 States to dedicate academic research to the study
 the academy, he strove to make the term Palestine
 the *Question of Palestine* was one of the
 make Palestine the subject of serious scholarly debate,
 commitment to Palestine is not, however, to overlook
 the efforts and achievements of other professors
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 22



Figure 5. Jean Mohr, *Lughoc*

17. *Salon*
 18. *Places of Mind*
 19. *Places of Mind*
 20. Edward W. Said

21. *Places of Mind*, Vintage Books,
 22. *Places of Mind*, London Review of Books volume

Baffler,

PALESTINE AND POLITICS

perennial impact can be seen in political discourse Said's academic interests from his political interests seems a facile exercise as he loathed attempts to writes that, in Said's world, "the political and the investment policies on the basis of particular views results and demonstrates a lack of respect towards references the erasure of Said's Palestinian identity critics to think of Said as authentically



investment policies on the basis of particular views results and demonstrates a lack of respect towards references the erasure of Said's Palestinian identity critics to think of Said as authentically of much scrutiny and is an example of the many was undoubtedly politically committed, he had his popular culture was certainly one of his academic War and how he called the campus police on student did he see himself as removed from student politics,

24 Hussein Omar, 'The Baffler' Places of Mind

Passions of Edward Said', Washington Post Places of Mind Places of Mind



Figure 6. Edward Said in Moderna

CONCLUSION

campus in solidarity, he “found the protesters’ blanket anti-authoritarianism” students wh

to Palestine, he “was not above the sweat and noise” He was on the side of anti-autocratic position in the Middle East and anti-

with student politics, Said’s work has been embedded

downloaded from the internet, photoshopped onto

have founded, and he was politically committed yet his contradictions, Said was a colossal intellectual

to someone’s private library is one of the most intimate ways to learn about someone’s academic pursuits

world literature and postcolonial studies, the Middle

Places of Mind

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Salon
In Other Worlds:
Boston Review
 , 22 March
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The Baffler
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**FEMINISM
ACROSS THE
EAST/WEST
DIVIDE:
COLUMBIA
ACADEMICS AS
BUILDERS OF
THE 'BRIDGE'
SUHANI CHAUDHRY**

الحركة النسوية عبر الانقسام الشرقي والغربي: أكاديميو كولومبيا بصفتهم حلقة الوصل

FEMINISM ACROSS THE EAST/WEST DIVIDE: COLUMBIA ACADEMICS AS BUILDERS OF THE 'BRIDGE'

Feminist theorization in the last century has seen rapid development and astounding progress. Yet, many scholars have found that theoretical frameworks have historically been, unintentionally, just as “othering” as colonial and patriarchal narratives. Traditional feminist frameworks generally applied only to white, middle-class women, leaving all others

This issue remains relevant today as people continue to contend with their sense of self infringed on by stereotypes and preconceptions. The focus of this paper is to look at the misrepresentation of women from the Middle East in global narratives and scholarships, the ways in which these misrepresentations have been and are being corrected, and how new spaces are being opened up for self-representation. This paper aims to trace the metamorphosis of narrative and scholarship over the last four decades as contemporary theorization moves away from eurocentrism and towards reflexivity.

It will explore the disjuncture between perceptions, inscribed identities, and lived realities - but more played in striving to bridge this chasm.

These are the kinds of academics that have made waves and completely changed how global thought and narratives progress.

Given that these two factors are so deeply connected to this topic, it is important to acknowledge the work that has allowed for transformation as well as those behind the change. Academics like Edward Said, Lila Abu-Lughod, Nathalie Handal, and all those highlighted within this paper, as well as the many others who are not featured, have not only made tremendous helped to change the way in which gender in the Arab world is thought and talked about.

MISREPRESENTATIONS OF ARAB-WOMEN

WESTERN FEMINISM AS THE AGENT OF DIVISION

Introduction

brand of liberal feminism.¹ Western liberal feminism aimed at creating equality through political and legal reform; however, in this pursuit, it marginalized women who came from contexts in which these institutions were inextricably linked with other social and cultural environments. Historically, narratives were shaped by Orientalist perspectives that rendered Arab women as passive victims of backward ideas and institutions - all of which were often exclusively perceived as Islamic. This resulted in crude stereotyping, propagating the demonization of Muslims in the media, which, sadly, was reflected in the academic literature of the time.² Sensationalized

on veiled Arab women, only heightened political antagonisms.³ Essentially, this created an atmosphere of condescension and marginalization - issues that different groups continue to have to contend with today when it comes to identity politics.

On top of being rendered invisible in discourse, Arab

Arab women might be made into silent “non-subjects of feminist history” because they were perceived as upholding and propagating the same patriarchal

against.⁴

feminist framework of notions of equality.⁵ Those from the West could be misreading the sources of Eastern resentment, while authentic Eastern voices remain unheard.⁶ Western feminists inadvertently seem to

The 1980s saw a shift in theorization; feminist debates of the time revolved around the heterogeneity of

determining variable, and the importance of alternative

categories of analysis such as socioeconomics, colonial lives.⁷ With the emergence of “transnational feminism” in the 1990s, discourse became situated in local contexts and cultural processes.⁸ However, even today, Arab feminists “are all put on the defensive by some activities of feminists abroad and by the

Islam and women.”⁹ Worse still, they are often represented as having abandoned their own culture for the Western one.¹⁰ By challenging the frameworks used for interpretation and the power structures that reify, Arab feminists, scholars, and activists continuously

as hybrid identities of Arab women.¹¹ What theorists now seek is a framework that progresses beyond the Eurocentric and allows Arab women to establish their indigenous identities as well as their economic and legal rights.¹² This project is an extremely important one due to the tendency of the latent effects of colonialism to surface even in the modern world.

‘ORIENTALISM’: THE LAUNCHPAD

and project their identity, they face the harrowing prospect of being denied self-representation and instead receive a collective label that corresponds to the pre-existing cultural and ideological expectations.¹³

Identity politics implicate notions of the “Self” and the “Other” - these, in turn, implicate “Orientalist” discourse which emanates from the West.¹⁴ Sharify-Funk claims that “instead of remaining just academic discourse, Orientalism became a political process

particularly but not exclusively, in the Middle East and the Islamic world.”¹⁵ Perhaps the greatest contribution

Orientalism has been considered the jumping-off point which led to the rise of feminist poststructuralism.¹⁶ It was not meant to be feminist scholarship or theory, yet it generated feminist scholarship and debate in various disciplines and opened up theoretical avenues regarding gender and sexuality and how they have been mediated by Orientalist discourse.¹⁷

re-examination of East/West politics.¹⁸

¹ Theresa Saliba, “Arab Feminism at the Millennium,” *Signs* 25, no. 4 (2000): 1087.

² Nadjé Al-Ali, “Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis by Haideh Moghissi,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 23, no. 2 (2000), 264.

³ Meena Sharify-Funk, “Mixed Messages and Multiple Agendas: The Politics of ‘Women and Islam,’” *Encountering the Transnational: Women, Islam and the Politics of Interpretation*, 1st ed, 2008, 14.

⁴ *Stanford University*, 1998, 148.

⁵ Theresa Saliba, “Arab Feminism at the Millennium,” 2000, 1090.

⁶ Meena Sharify-Funk, “Mixed Messages and Multiple Agendas: The Politics of ‘Women and Islam,’” 2008, 20.

⁷ Meena Sharify-Funk, “Mixed Messages and Multiple Agendas: The Politics of ‘Women and Islam,’” 2008, 20.

⁸ Theresa Saliba, “Arab Feminism at the Millennium,” 2000, 1088.

⁹ Lila Abu-Lughod, “*Orientalism* and Middle East Feminist Studies,” 2001, 101.

¹⁰ Meena Sharify-Funk, “Muslim Woman as Self/Other: The Politics of Identity,” *Encountering the Transnational: Women, Islam and the Politics of Interpretation*, 2008, 143.

¹¹ Theresa Saliba, “Arab Feminism at the Millennium,” 2000, 1087.

¹² Theresa Saliba, “Arab Feminism at the Millennium,” 2000, 1088.

¹³ Meena Sharify-Funk, “Muslim Woman as Self/Other: The Politics of Identity,” 2008, 135.

¹⁴ Sharify-Funk, “Muslim Woman as Self/Other: The Politics of Identity,” 2008, 141.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Theresa Saliba, “Arab Feminism at the Millennium,” 2000, 2000.

¹⁷ Lila Abu-Lughod, “*Orientalism* & Middle East Feminist Studies,” 2001, 101.

¹⁸ Abu-Lughod, “*Orientalism* & Middle East Feminist Studies,” 2001.

■ Middle East studies, Orientalism revealed the mechanisms behind cultural production - even that which is academic in nature. It also exposed the trap that many theorists of gender and sexuality fell into, and ■■

■■■■ situated in a global context and provided a starting point for theorists to think about gender and sexuality as integral aspects of colonialism rather than just as an afterthought. His work led to the recognition of stereotypes as crucial to negative, disparaging narratives. It provoked many scholars to reveal the complex realities of gender and women in the Arab world; it prompted exploration into how Middle Eastern women represent themselves.¹⁹ *Orientalism* highlighted that the division between the representations of East and West were subsequent products of the political and historical encounter of imperialism.²⁰ Said offered Middle East feminist scholars a model for their own academic engagement and path to move forward: the refusal of the tradition/Western modernity, or rather the East/West divide.²¹

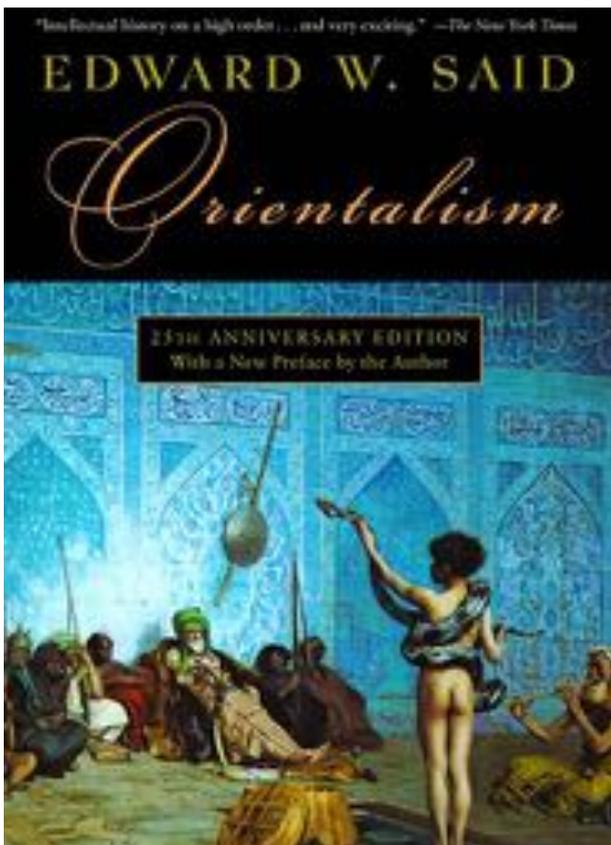


Figure 1. Edward Said, *Orientalism 25th Anniversary Edition* ■■■■■■ Vintage Books, New York.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, 106.

²¹ Ibid, 109.

²² Tamer Marhood, "Religion and the Global Framing of Gender Violence," *Columbia Center for the Study of Social Difference*, 2020.

REPRESENTATIONS OF ARAB WOMEN

CORRECTION AND CONTEXTUALISATION: LILA ABU-LUGHOD

■■■■■

topic has been made by Lila Abu-Lughod, Joseph L. Bottenwieser Professor of Social Science in the ■■■■■■

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to light the misrepresentations and correcting the false perceptions that have been propagated by the West. Her work began in the 1970s and 1980s; it continues to be relevant in modern academia. Her Spring 2022 course is titled 'Women and Gender ■■■■■■

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and Gender Studies, including the directorship of the Institute for the Study of Sexuality and Gender. ■■■■■■

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the Global Reframing of Gender Violence project ■■■■■■

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focused on gender and the Middle East, such as Nina Berman, Katheryn Spellman Poots, Katherine Pratt Ewing, and more. This project criticizes the conflation of religion and violence against women by the mobilization of "the collective experience, expertise, and creativity of an international group of critical feminist scholars, practitioners, activists, and journalists."²² The aim is to re-examine gender-based violence to develop more appropriate and effective strategies to combat it. By opening up crucial global conversations and introducing more nuanced analysis, a better understanding of the causal factors of this kind of violence can be found without being clouded by Orientalist framings of religion and culture. Projects like these exemplify the way forward for feminism and aim to rectify the misdirection of previous actions and narratives.

In her work, Abu-Lughod delineates several of these false constructions by pointing out that the consistent resort to the cultural and religious, rather than looking ■■■■■■

■■■■■

divided the world; the result was separate spheres along the imaginative geography of West versus East.²³ The dichotomy thus created is societies in which women speak to entire nations juxtaposed with those where women are silenced by burqas.²⁴ Female symbols were employed in the "War against

²³ ■■■■■■

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"Others," *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002), 784.

²⁴ ■■■■■■

Terror” and fed into narratives of saving and liberating. What was not taken into account was the cultural perspectives and value systems attached to the burqa, the hijab, and other veils - which not all Arab women would later shun, much to the surprise of some Western liberals.²⁵ The burqa is the image that the West has chosen to stand for all the social, political, and economic issues that women in the Middle East have to contend with when it does not necessarily embody them.²⁶ Sometimes perceived as a lack of agency, it prescribed a certain conception of freedom that may not translate across different contexts.²⁷ Western feminists and wider narratives have historically failed to understand that many see the veil as liberating, a symbol of the separation of the public and private that invokes ideas of sanctity and protection.²⁸

¶

the practice of feminist analysis regarding the East; attention must be paid to the way this limits feminist solidarities and unfairly binds women to larger state projects.²⁹ Abu-Lughod edited a collection of essays, *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*. Through this work, she allows scholars

¶

associations.³⁰ Her numerous articles, as well as books such as *Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving*, *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*, *Veiled Sentiments: Honour and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*, etc., all bring to the forefront the contextualized experiences of women and feminism in the Middle East, aiming to correct the misrepresentation of Arab women.

Abu-Lughod proposes that it is strategically dangerous to continue to accept the cultural oppositions between East/West and fundamentalism/feminism.³¹ Failure to acknowledge and correct the ways that feminist political activism and analysis can reproduce forms of exclusion could lead to a never-ending cycle of imperialist othering. She has proposed that anthropology, a discipline that has been charged with understanding and managing cultural differences, is in a unique position to intervene and prevent the continuation of colonial feminism.³² Abu-Lughod asserts that it is crucial to “interrogate the genealogy of feminism” and focus on a local conception of it rather than a universal one.³³ Social scientists that focalize culture in their analysis can help to reterritorialize complexly gendered worlds.³⁴ Abu-Lughod states,

“Much of the best recent literature in Middle East

of as working against universalizing discourses about patriarchy, Islam, and oppression.”³⁵ She suggests that such ethnographic work can, and does, change the parameters of public discourse.³⁶ Rather than offering salvation, what individuals should offer is solidarity. By seeking to be active in the affairs of the Middle East, and doing so in the spirit of support, the focus can be on making the lives of the women (and men) that live in these communities better, rather than trying to make their lives the same as their counterparts in the West.

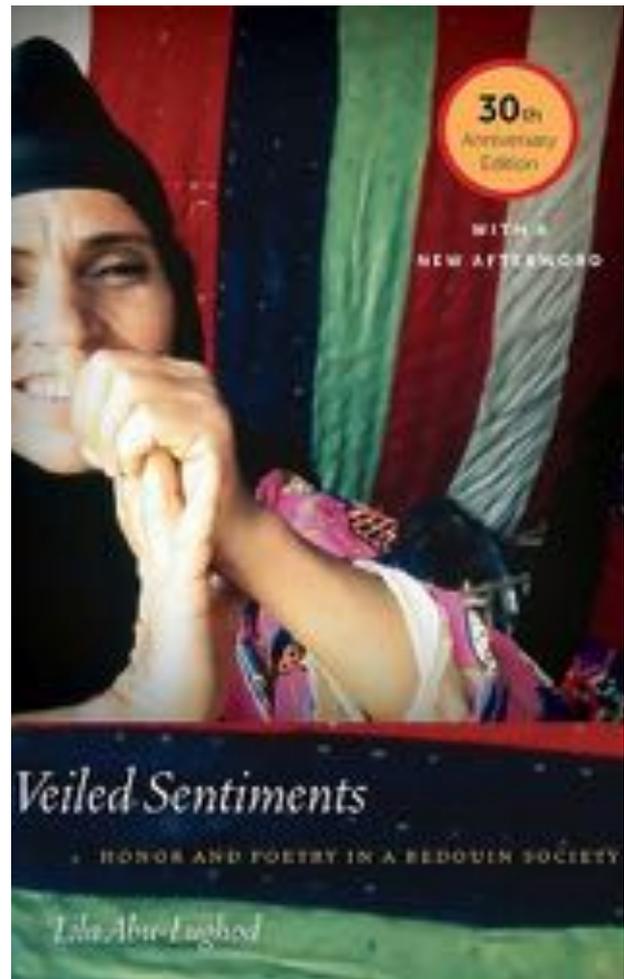


Figure 2. Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (First Edition, Reissue, 30th Anniversary Edition) University of California Press, Berkeley.

²⁵ Lila Abu-Lughod, “Introduction: The Politics of Feminist Politics,” *American Ethnologist* 35, no. 4 (2015), 505.

²⁶ Lila Abu-Lughod, “Introduction: The Politics of Feminist Politics,” *American Ethnologist* 35, no. 4 (2015), 505.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid, 785.

²⁹ Lila Abu-Lughod, “Introduction: The Politics of Feminist Politics,” *American Ethnologist* 35, no. 4 (2015), 505.

³⁰ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (1998), 4.

³¹ Lila Abu-Lughod, “Introduction: The Politics of Feminist Politics,” *American Ethnologist* 35, no. 4 (2015), 505.

Lila Abu-Lughod, “Introduction: The Politics of Feminist Politics,” *American Ethnologist* 35, no. 4 (2015), 505.

³² Ibid, 784.

³³ Lila Abu-Lughod, “Introduction: The Politics of Feminist Politics,” *American Ethnologist* 35, no. 4 (2015), 505.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Lila Abu-Lughod, “Introduction: The Politics of Feminist Politics,” *American Ethnologist* 35, no. 4 (2015), 505.

³⁶ Lila Abu-Lughod, “Introduction: The Politics of Feminist Politics,” *American Ethnologist* 35, no. 4 (2015), 505.

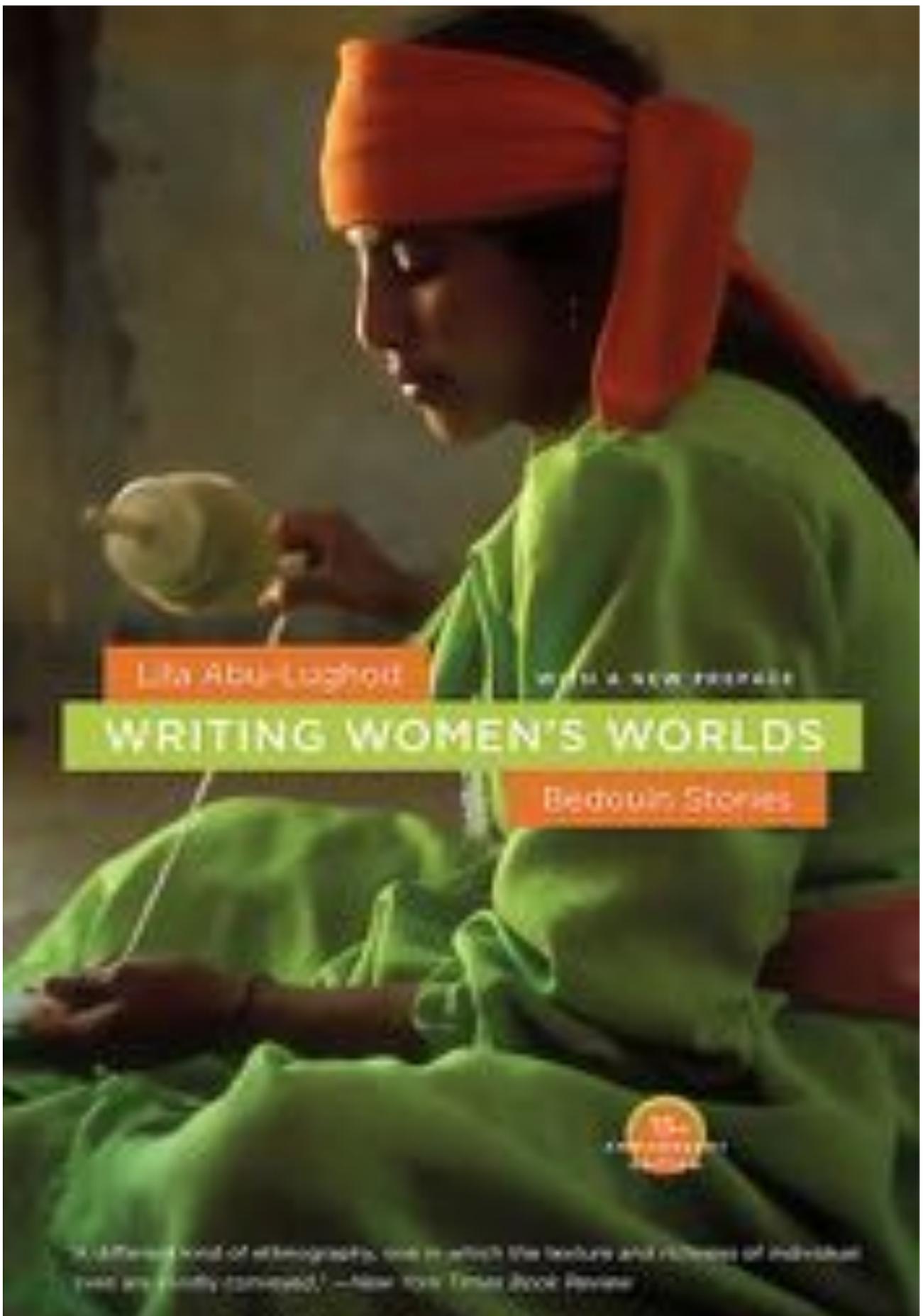


Figure 3. Lila Abu-Lughod, *Writing Women's Worlds (15th Anniversary Edition)* University of California Press, Berkeley.

University of

BRINGING FEMALE VOICES AND EXPERIENCES TO THE FOREFRONT

A lot of contemporary narratives are reminding the world that feminism is not an isolated phenomenon but rather occurs in particular historical and social contexts.³⁷ These women all come from diverse disciplines and bring with them different viewpoints, yet what unites them is that they purposefully stay away from essentializing the experiences of Arab women. In line with what Abu-Lughod proposes,

topics that must be contended with given the context; they choose to represent the viewpoints and lived realities of these women from a lens that is a complete contrast to that of the stereotyping West. They aim

as Nina Berman, Manijeh Moradian, and Jerusha T. Rhodes have been bringing female experiences to the forefront while rooting this in the historical, social, and cultural contexts in which they have lived.

Photojournalism

Graduate School of Journalism, is a renowned photojournalist whose work addresses American politics, violence, and resistance - all of which have been implicated in the project of "saving" Arab women. Among her work, Nina Berman has photo essays in the Middle East, such as *Za'atari: Inside these walls* featuring Syrian refugees displaced to Jordan. However, it is her *Under the Taliban* project which best represents her approach towards feminist projects. The project captured the lives of Afghan women under Taliban rule, utilizing images taken in Kabul in 1988 and Kandahar in 2000. Her comments on the context in which these photos were taken echo those

given for the invasion of Afghanistan was liberation - and whether intentionally or unintentionally, the photographs speak to that narrative by drawing the focus away from imposing identities and towards simply showing the world on the ground realities.³⁸ Her interests, with regards to this project, lay in the way that women were used and violated in order to promote wider ideological agendas.³⁹ She said in an interview, "I suppose it speaks to the failure of military solutions in forcing progress on basic economic, cultural and gender issues."⁴⁰ Her work, while focusing on women, extensively features the world around them and the environments they are submerged in. A stark deviation from the images in mainstream media that pander to the narratives of poor, oppressed women, she calls attention to the problems that must be addressed without invoking a savior complex. Her work

speaks to many of the issues previously discussed regarding discourse and narrative to rectify them by looking not only at the women, but the politically and socially mediated world in which they live. She is quoted as saying what a tragedy it is that given the extensive cost of the war in Afghanistan, many of the images are mistaken for being contemporaneous.⁴¹

Another academic making contributions to historicizing and grounding narratives around Arab women is

2011, examines memory, affect, and emotion in understanding marginalized experiences and knowledge. She teaches courses such as Gender Globalization and Empire as well as Affect and Activism. Moradian focuses on the way that gendered histories and diasporic identities function as crucial vectors in the formation of minority subjectivities, which are intimately connected with new Middle Eastern feminism. Aside from having published extensively on the subject - "Women can do anything

Gender and the Affects of Solidarity in the U.S. Iranian Student Movement (1965-1979), New Middle Eastern Uprisings: Gender, Class, and Security Politics in Egypt and Iran - she is also a founding

intervention by building alliances with grassroots movements for gender and sexual justice.⁴² They ground contemporary issues in their cultural context without conflating the two, allowing a shift in narrative from the neocolonial. They promote an extensive list of scholarship on everything from historical context to social movements in order to educate people without imposing Western biases. In doing so, the aims of the collective speak to the larger project of reclaiming narratives and the construction of identities. The progression from Western projects of salvation to projects of empowerment from within communities is embodied by the work of Moradian and the collective.

Jerusha T. Rhodes, Associate Professor of Islam

Seminary, extensively employs feminist theology to reframe ethnocentric discourse on women and Islam so that theorization can escape from the trap of Arab

like hers comes with all the tensions to be expected from interreligious feminist theology and dialogue.⁴³

³⁷ 1988, 23.

³⁸ Nina Berman, interview by Tricia Khutoretsky, *10 Years and Counting*, October 4, 2011.

³⁹ *Guernica Magazine*, January 10 2011.

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NOOR. Accessed November

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Raha Feminist Collective, 2020.

⁴³

Wells," *The Christian-Muslim Studies Network*, April 12, 2019.



Figure 4. Nina Berman, *A Woman at a Birth Class*, 1998, Photograph, Kabul, Afghanistan.



Figure 5. Nina Berman, *A Woman's World through the Burka*, 1998, Photograph, Kabul, Afghanistan.

She stresses the importance of learning about other people and their traditions directly and on their own terms.⁴⁴ This is both crucial to nuanced understanding as well as to represent authentic experiences of gender and religion accurately. In her work, *Divine Words, Female Voices: Muslima Explorations in Comparative Feminist Theology* (2018), she argues that women have been harmed by both patriarchal norms and the contributions of Western feminism which perpetuate negative stereotypes, while employing the work of Muslim women scholars and Islamic feminists to build a cohesive scholarship which negates the binary of the liberated West and the woman-oppressing East.⁴⁵ Rhodes proposes new approaches while critiquing old ones in order to challenge both Western frameworks as well as Eastern social structures; she urges that each generation, subsequently, challenge earlier assumptions and practices. The work of

which are products of transnational and transcultural conversations, attempting to transcend the East/West divisions and reflect the development of new discursive spaces amongst diverse individuals for the



Figure 6. Monica Trinidad, 'Liberation Comes From Below' - Raha Iranian's Feminist Collective Statement on #NoWarWithIran, 2020, Illustration, Raha Feminist Collective.

SELF-REPRESENTATIONS OF ARAB WOMEN

MOVING FROM REPRESENTATION TO SELF-REPRESENTATION: NATHALIE HANDAL

Other academics have built on this narrative and scholarly tradition and moved from presenting new discourse and representing Arab women to creating

spaces for self-representation. Nathalie Handal, Literature, is an award-winning poet, playwright, and editor. Her book, *The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology*, is an attempt to comment on Handal stated in an interview that poetry has the extraordinary ability to influence individuals and perspectives as well as to galvanize people into action.⁴⁸ She brings together the voices of Arab women from different nationalities and positionalities to highlight their subjectivities in a "counter to dominant colonialist Western feminist approaches that highlight "religion" (Islam) as the

Handal created this anthology to "eradicate invisibility" to women who have been robbed of theirs by both the West and their societies.⁵⁰ Male poets and authors have emotions, and experiences.⁵¹ The same could be said medium through which these Arab women represented their authentic voices and experiences; voices and experiences that have seldom been heard in the Arab world or the West.⁵²

Handal mentions several historical pieces of literature and it could be argued that Handal does the same through this anthology. Many of the poets included in the anthology have Western influences but are not determined by them, marking a huge step for both feminism and Arab women. They provoke discussions on "religious identity within the context of intersecting coordinates of power [...] and historical circumstances."⁵³ They stand at a "crossroad between East and West," which gives both more accessibility to the other.⁵⁴ Poets present in the anthology, like Ghada al-Samman, broaden the view of Arab women and play important roles in feminism and sexual politics.⁵⁵

Western narrative and feminist perception that this paper has discussed. Arab-American poets remain virtually absent in feminist discourse, and Handal aims to rectify this because their work criticizes injustices and stereotypes. Handal allows them challenging perceptions and stereotypes.⁵⁶ While they have come a long way, Handal insists that they

⁴⁴ *The Christian-Muslim Studies Network*, 2019.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Meena Sharify-Funk, "Mixed Messages and Multiple Agendas: The Politics of 'Women and Islam,'" 2008, 20.

⁴⁷ Anthology, Edited by Nathalie Handal," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 36, no. 1 (2002), 76.

⁴⁸ Jared Jackson, "The PEN Ten: An Interview with Nathalie Handal," *PEN America*, 2020.

The Christian-Muslim

⁴⁹ Nadine Naber, "Arab American Femininities: Beyond Arab Virgin/American(Ized) Whore." *Feminist Studies* 32, no. 1 (2006): 89.

⁵⁰ Nathalie Handal, "Preface," *The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology*, XII.

⁵¹ Nathalie Handal, "Introduction," 2015, 4.

⁵² Nathalie Handal, "Introduction," 2015, 7,31.

⁵³ Nadine Naber, "Arab American Femininities: Beyond Arab Virgin/American(Ized) Whore." *Feminist Studies* 32, no. 1 (2006): 89.

⁵⁴ Nathalie Handal, "Introduction," 2015, 48.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 23.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 59.

require more recognition for the perceived duality that they, and so many other Arab women, embody: inhabiting both the role of feminist and Arab women. She provides both these women and the world a way to re-read misguided narratives and allows them the agency over their own identity, which they have so long been denied.



Figure 7. *A Portrait of Nathalie Handal, 2016, Photograph.*

The aforementioned scholars have been involved with the Middle East representing viewpoints from a wide range of disciplines. The Institute promotes interdisciplinary study of geographical and global communities with rich social, cultural, and political histories. It aims to supplement departmental offerings and provide a forum for academics & students. The MEI is working to inform and educate the media, governments, and the public to lay the foundation for future change and progress. It plays a vital role in the modern world, where so much of the social, cultural, and political factors are inextricably linked.

the Institute is important given the nature of the topics and themes of the MEI. It helps embody so much of what the academics discussed advocate for.

CONCLUSION

reclaim

subjectivities of women that have for so long been ignored or been homogenized. Their work remains just as relevant today, in a world that is dominated by power structures that have by no means disappeared, but rather become more obscure and hard to delineate from institutional mechanisms, as it was when women did not have the right to vote or the right to own land. The progression outlined by this paper can be summarized as one that has gone through the steps of

awaited, self-representation of Arab women. This metamorphosis follows the chronological changes and developments thus indicating an overarching trend. The trend shows the movement of theorizations and public narratives towards more progressive and liberal ideas around identity, gender, and nationhood.

By looking at the work of women scholars in various

clear how they are both lending their voices and supporting others in raising theirs, prompting the shift from external theorization to internal expression. Structures of power have always, and still do, mediate the construction and perception of identities. However, the hope remains that identity politics will one day become the domain of the individual rather than the tool of socio-economic and political forces. The work

the many more that the scope of this paper could not extend and do justice to, are crucial in forging this path and building the bridge between perceptions and reality.

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**TEACHERS
COLLEGE AND
EDUCATION
REFORM IN
JORDAN**
ALAA QAROONI

كلية المعلمين والإصلاحيين التعليمي في الأردن

TEACHERS COLLEGE AND EDUCATION REFORM IN JORDAN

Columbia University’s ties and influence in the Arab world interest me on many fronts as a student at the University – be it my background as an Arab student from Bahrain, or my studies in the history and politics of the modern Middle East, as well as my Columbia experience that spans two of its graduate schools (Teachers College as well as the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences). I have experienced the institutional strength of Columbia – in its global reach, its influence my studies there, as well as through my friends, acquaintances, and professors.

Understanding how an international, wide-reaching institution like Columbia University can be examined reveal how its scholars left an important mark on the Middle East. The focus of this paper follows *The School Network Learning Project* (SNLP), a recent Teachers College, which was facilitated by the Columbia Global Centers | Amman.

The SNLP focused on the primary goal of enhancing development of teachers and improving the quality of After an analysis of the becomes apparent that Columbia was able to achieve the following:

1. Create a modern teaching and learning infrastructure that relies on cutting-edge educational research.

2. Use robust knowledge to build effective, sustainable educational institutions and frameworks.
3. identify comprehensive strategies for sustaining the systems they developed.

The overall idea that I aim to communicate in this paper is that Teachers College expertise was essential to help create and sustain a culture of continuous instructional improvement. To begin, I would like a way, his work is an early twentieth-century parallel

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TEACHERS COLLEGE IN THE ARAB WORLD: BULOS KHAULI

Teachers College has an interesting history in the Arab world. Many influential people from the region arrived at the College in the early twentieth century with an interest in improving educational institutions operationally (identifying structural issues and how to solve them) and ideologically (introducing new philosophical ideas or approaches to educational practice). Some of these students went on to become prominent members of their respective educational College through *The School Network Learning Project*.

¹ Marian A. Robinson, “Growing School Networks for Instructional

Bulos Khauli was an instructor at the Syrian Protestant College – now called the American University of Beirut (AUB) - prior to arriving at Teachers College.

education in the Ottoman-ruled Levant. Khauli was passionate about using education as a tool for reform.

education espoused. Arrangements were made for him to spend a year at Teachers College. During his time there, he wrote about how fascinated he was

pursuit of knowledge.³

Towards the end of his time in New York, he produced

in the Levant, effectively served the purposes of

that was already divided along sectarian, ethnic and

could regenerate the Empire and bring about a revival of learning.⁴ Khauli’s experience abroad at Teachers

to identify, deal with, and rethink the approach to education in the Levant region.

To learn more about Khauli’s life, I recommend *One Hundred and Fifty*.⁵ This is an edited volume that was released to celebrate

th anniversary, and includes a discussion of Khauli’s time in the Ottoman-ruled Levant, in New York in Teachers College, and after his return to the region.⁶ Further, a paper produced by another student (Kevin Carl Petersen) in this history

arrived from the Middle East to study at Columbia around the same time as Khauli, all of whom also attended Teachers College; the reader can look into that for more information as well.

In a way, the SNLP, which occupies the remaining

structural issues in its educational systems, and leverages Teachers College to bring in ideas and people to restructure and improve them.

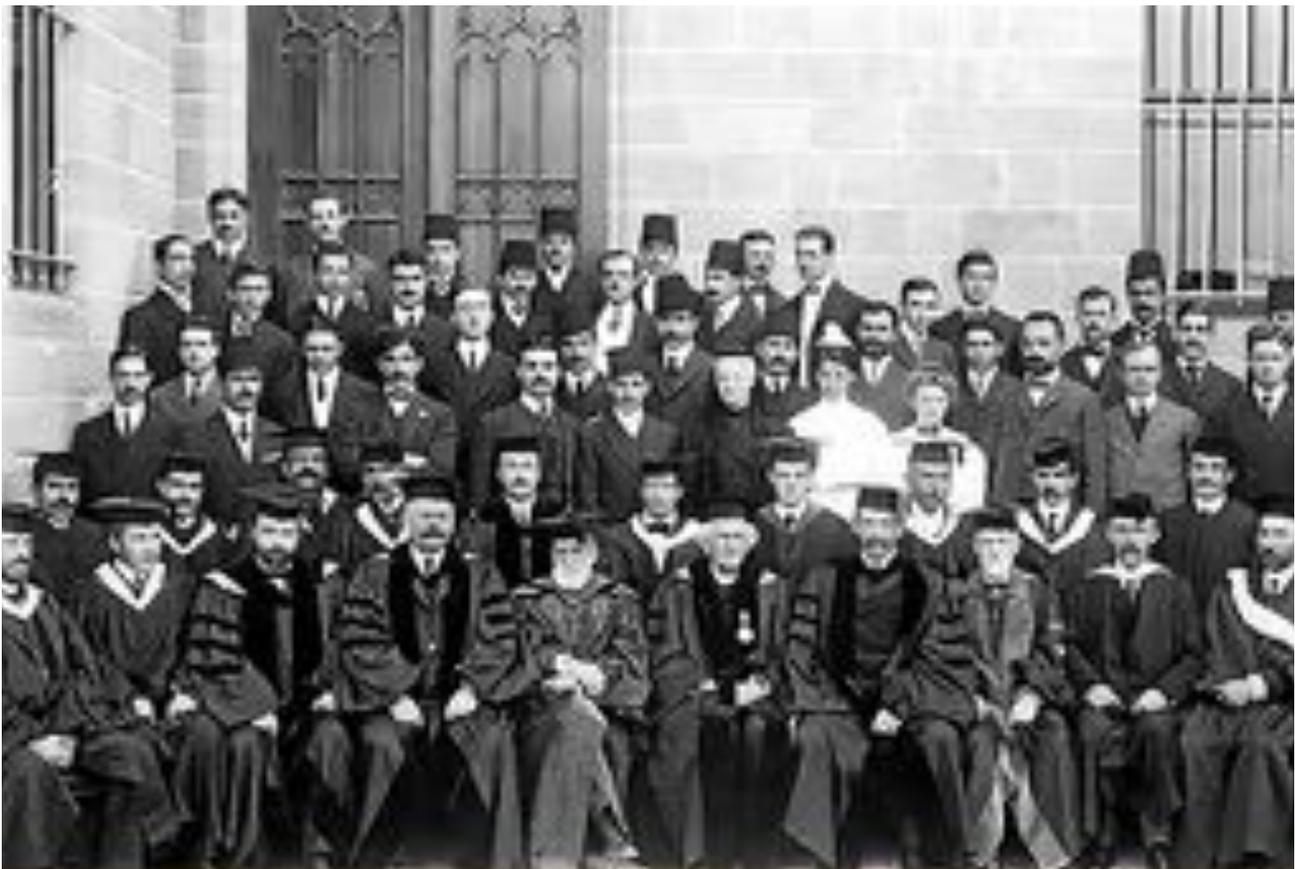


Figure 1. Reverend Daniel Bliss with Graduates and Students in 1908,

Reverend Daniel Bliss with Graduates and Students in 1908,

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

THE SCHOOL NETWORK LEARNING PROJECT IN JORDAN

MOTIVATIONS AND BEGINNING STAGES

Given the political and historical context of the MENA region, initiating robust, sustainable, and much-

government cooperates with international partners who could provide the necessary support to advance public institutions. A strategy was formed that revolved around identifying the resources to stimulate

for a human resource-centered approach, which would give the country a competitive advantage

important to develop its people’s skills and relevant competencies through improving the country’s different social systems and institutions, primarily in the education sector.⁵

Therefore, through a comprehensive reform initiative called *Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy (ERfKE)*, the country began a process of modernizing and improving its educational system in the early

with life-long knowledge relating to current and future needs to ensure a continuously stimulated local economy through an educated population and fundamental governance and administrative strategies

reorienting high-level decisions so that they are less “traditional, hierarchical and top-down, and more participatory, outcome-based and student-

different providers of educational opportunity at the system level, etc.⁷ The second phase of the

instructional issues that require ameliorating at the micro-level, such as decreasing class sizes, modernizing facilities, and developing teachers’ skills, etc.⁸ Prior to Columbia University’s involvement

development. The collaborating institutions then were

7

8

were facilitated through the Columbia University Middle East Research Center (now known as the Columbia Global Centers | Amman) and began with the coordinated establishment of the Queen Rania

9

A nascent organization, the QRTA was founded in order

East. The SNLP took form through the introduction of a team of experts from the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) at Teachers College who, in partnership with the QRTA, would “implement comprehensive approaches to school improvement, effective professional development practices, and

The SNLP began with the goal of “creating supported networks of schools in different regions of the country as vehicles for providing professional development of teachers [...] as well as leadership training for principals and



Figure 2. Columbia Global Centers | Amman Headquarters, Photograph, Columbia University.

⁷ Jordan - Education Reform for Knowledge Economy Program Project
⁸ Development Coordination Unit, Second Phase of Education

Reform For Knowledge Economy Project (ERfKE II)

FEATURES AND OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT

- 1. School Improvement
- 2. Professional Development
- 3. Instructional Practices

I interpret these three features as broad strategies that target administrators / school leaders, educators, and how the partnership developed school improvement strategies on a broad, macro-level; the second and third features describe the nature of the school networks at a micro-level.

The features are important to discuss for two reasons:



participants, in this case, the school educators. Secondly, such a consideration gives the experiences of those participants some much-needed importance. Many theorists of education, such as Paulo Freire and education what it is. Examining how the SNLP “implemented... effective professional development reveal how the structures put in place for school educators helped transmit valuable experiences.

FEATURE 1: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

School improvement involves designing a system of school networks to improve the coordination between schools and the overarching bodies that supervise them.

strategy taken by the CPRE team, according to the *Growing School Networks for Instructional Improvement in Jordan, 2009-2010*, involves designing a ‘school network’ system, which

The Partnership is using school networks as vehicles for providing professional development for teams of teachers and their principals and education supervisors.

and focused on the improvement of instruction. The theory holds that over time the norms of collaboration to improve practice will spread in a school, from the

drawn from the same geographic region and / or directorate to support access to periodic professional development sessions and to encourage collaboration across schools. Each school is expected to support the participation of a group of

in each network. Support for each network is expected to continue for three years.

Establishing these networks of schools aims to from a dynamic exchange of experiences and ideas between the participating teachers and schools. It revolves around planting the seed for self-sustaining

This falls in line with the framework that the ERfKE initiative is based on, that efforts at reforming the education system must shift away from hierarchical, top-down decision-making to a more participatory way of operating.

it is important to scrutinize whether the CPRE and QRTA had any long-term safeguards to periodically assess how the networks are performing and ensure that teachers will be continually supported. In other

built, it requires periodic maintenance and supervision after the building phase is completed to ensure that safeguard that the partnership has taken, in that regard, is the transfer of capacity to the QRTA. This transfer of capacity is the main outcome of the school

OUTCOMES

and thus the QRTA is responsible for sustaining the networks and professional development workshops that were being done in collaboration with the CPRE. Since the QRTA was established with the launch of the SNLP, it needed a gradual build-up of capacity that coincided to train the QRTA team how to carry out the professional development workshops for the initial cohorts of participating teachers, and as they progressed through the workshops they were gradually given

Furthermore, as part of the SNLP, each cohort of participating teachers were given anonymous surveys to provide feedback on the workshops. This was done QRTA as team members. Survey results have indicated that the quality of workshops remained consistent

not met due to several reasons, the largest of which is geographical. Because of the long travel distance between QRTA's Amman headquarters and some networks of schools that are far from the capital, the QRTA was not able to reach "the goal of providing There were also issues with attrition to the English early phases.

FEATURES 2 AND 3: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Professional development involves transmitting 'high-impact instructional strategies' to Jordanian educators and creating systems that facilitate such transmission. is achieved in school improvement and professional both the educators' ability to teach and the students' role in the educational process.

The reader will notice that I combined the remaining professional workshops were planned in accordance with the instructional practices that were intended to be transmitted through them - so the two goals are fundamentally intertwined and should be discussed as such. There are two important components of these networks that are most relevant: professional workshops and network meetings.

The professional workshops were split into three about research-based instructional strategies within practices that the SNLP sought to cultivate in the participating schools and teachers. These practices include lesson design, team-based instruction, academically focused and rigorous tasks, formative assessment and adaptive instruction, and student-practices arrived from an understanding that there are important approaches to education that needed fundamental, especially in relation to achieving a strong teaching and learning culture – for example, how to design lessons and formulate educative tasks before class time is as essential as the teaching strategies implemented during class time, and are deeply intertwined with them.

The intermingling of these practices meant that the workshops did not merely focus on directly training teachers on how to implement their training, but themes that cultivate these core practices collectively. For example, the science workshops aimed "to help teachers learn ways to design and structure inquiry-based lessons to make their instruction Engagement, Exploration, Explanation, Elaboration The math workshops sought to improve the teachers' "pedagogical content knowledge and ability to diagnose and address

⁸⁰ Ibid.
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⁸² Marian A. Robinson, "Growing School Networks for Instructional

contents and procedures... that are important to the *development of mathematical reasoning*.¹⁷ The writing workshop model developed by the Teachers student-centered instruction [and]...importantly... *develops critical thinking* as students learn to use more complex and precise language to express their

Inquiry is an important pedagogical theme in science because science disciplines (like physics, chemistry, a certain phenomenon and inquiring on how it should Additionally, mathematical reasoning is an important pedagogical theme in math, and critical thinking is essential for engaging with or writing texts in any language. As such, framing the workshops around practices to be comprehensively covered because the teachers will understand what their teaching is meant to achieve. They can, therefore, more easily adopt

OUTCOMES

These professional development workshops were received quite well by the teachers, according to participating teachers holding positive views on the quality and usefulness of the introduced educational strategies.¹⁸ Further, more teachers reported implementing these strategies in their own teaching practice, with most indicating that they used them in at least a moderate frequency.¹⁹

school network system – ‘network meetings’ were also an integral part. These were meetings where participating teachers from nearby schools could gather and learn from each other. They discussed the strengths or weaknesses of the instructional strategies introduced in the workshops and how well they were able to use them in their practice. were intended to transmit important knowledge and practices to teachers, the network meetings helped create a community of teachers who now have a platform to remain in constant communication and share their experiences. These meetings have also been well received, as survey results and personal

testimonies from the teachers indicated a generally positive outlook on the role that these meetings have played and can continue to play in their work as educators.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation report produced by the CPRE rests itself on three evaluation parameters: change in practice, transfer of capacity, and sustainability. reform - *The School Network Learning Project* was able to satisfy this need effectively by transferring important educational principles from Teachers local overarching framework for maintaining and change in practice by bringing international education about important instructional strategies and how to implement them. It also involved a transfer of system of professional development workshops and a sustainable educational system that nurtured a community of teachers that can exchange ideas and experiences to help with supporting a culture of continuous instructional improvement.

It is my belief that bringing in international expertise to collaborate with local institutions is essential for reform. Although the issues and problems that require solutions have local and idiosyncratic dimensions, they are also connected to broader developmental early twentieth century through his experiences in the Syrian Protestant College and Teachers College. the consequent launch of the SNLP. The outcomes is important to not be too optimistic too soon, and to educational system in the long-term. Producing years might be an interesting undertaking that Teachers College or the QRTA, or even the Columbia Global Centers | Amman can pursue.

¹⁷ Marian A. Robinson, “Growing School Networks for Instructional Improvement”
¹⁸ Robinson, “Growing School Networks for Instructional Improvement”

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**THE POWER OF
PROXIMITY: HOW
THE COLUMBIA
GLOBAL CENTER
IN AMMAN
EMPOWERED
COLUMBIA
UNIVERSITY'S
RESEARCH
AND SUPPORT
OF SYRIAN
REFUGEES**

SOPHIA FULTON



ميزة الجوار: آلية عمل مركز جامعة كولومبيا في عمّان على تقوية أبحاث جامعة كولومبيا ودعمها لللاجئين السوريين

THE POWER OF PROXIMITY: HOW THE COLUMBIA GLOBAL CENTER IN AMMAN EMPOWERED COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S RESEARCH AND SUPPORT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES

Sometimes proximity to a crisis matters the most to help meet humanitarian needs. U.S. policymakers and activists alike often scramble to respond effectively and quickly to crises. With many conflicts on the other side of the globe, crisis response can feel sterile and inadequate. It is often those physically closest to a conflict that can provide the most effective and relevant assistance.

Consider the Syrian civil war. Since 2011, the war has triggered a humanitarian crisis, quickly sparking a mobilization of activists and policymakers to provide relief. Today, after over a decade of ongoing

conflict, individuals and institutions continue efforts to provide long-term relief. The organizations that most effectively met humanitarian needs emphasized working with local partners and listening to the voices of those affected.

Columbia University's ties to the Middle East and the Arab world, largely through the Columbia Global Centers | Amman (CGC Amman) network, allowed Columbia faculty and students to respond constructively in regard to the Syrian civil war. From helping build research projects that informed policy to supporting displaced students who are unable to

complete higher education, Columbia's pre-existing connection to the region helped bridge the divide between academics and activism. This paper will look at two case studies of Columbia's work: the *Impact of Separation on Refugee Families* research project and the Columbia University Scholarship for Displaced Students initiative. CGC Amman and Columbia faculty have worked on numerous projects to support Syrian refugees, these two projects illustrate the power of Columbia's regional partnerships in providing the expertise and resources to create projects that help Syrian refugees.

Columbia's network enables faculty to build programs that addressed the needs of Syrian refugees by working with partners on the ground in the region and members of the refugee population instead of simply relying on academic assumptions about their needs. In the future, other academic organizations that wish to provide humanitarian support and effective research policies can learn from this model. By diving into the details of how these projects impacted the region following the crisis, potential researchers and activists alike can learn from the work of Columbia to help build better futures for those impacted by the Syrian civil war.

BACKGROUND: THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR AND ENSUING REFUGEE CRISIS

The Syrian civil war sparked a refugee crisis that mobilized many activists and academics, including those at Columbia University. The war started in 2011 when anti-regime protests escalated into a full-scale war between the Syrian government and anti-government forces.¹

The conflict has erupted between the Syrian government and opposition forces, between the coalition to defeat the Islamic State and the Islamic State, and between the Syrian Kurds and Turkish forces.² The conflict continues today along numerous fronts.

Calculations. UN Human Rights Chief Michelle Bachelet reported in September 2021 that the conflict resulted in the death of over 350,000 individuals – both civilians and combatants – between March 2011 and March 2021. However, these numbers are likely a low estimate.³ Furthermore, the conflict forced many to flee, leading to a massive refugee crisis. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates 6.6 million Syrian refugees exist worldwide.⁴ Currently, more than 660,000 Syrian refugees live in Jordan.⁵ The largest refugee camp in Jordan, Zaatari refugee camp, still hosts nearly 80,000 Syrian refugees as of 2020.⁶

¹ "Syrian Civil War," *Britannica Encyclopedia*, July 2020.

² "Civil War in Syria," *Council on Foreign Relations*, Accessed January 2, 2022.

³ "Syria War: UN Calculates New Death Toll," *BBC News*, September 2021.

⁴ "Syria Emergency," *UNHCR*, Accessed December 2021.

⁵ *Ibid.*



Figure 1. Adeline Guerra, *Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan* - Oxfam, Photograph, CBS News.

Refugees in Jordan and around the world face massive challenges, including lack of access to education and healthcare.⁷ Both the initial outbreak of civil war and the ongoing refugee crisis inspired many around the world, including Columbia faculty and students, to provide support and policy recommendations for Syrian refugees.

COLUMBIA'S MIDDLE EAST CONNECTIONS AND FORCED MIGRATION

Even before mobilizing to research and respond to the Syrian refugee crisis, Columbia faculty and CGC Amman had begun building the network and foundation to address forced migration in the Middle East. CGC Amman's work on forced migration began in 2012 and initially focused on public health

partners on this topic included United Nations (UN) organizations such as the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).⁸

Since then, CGC Amman has created an extensive network throughout the Middle East focused on the thematic area of forced migration. CGC Amman and Columbia Global Centers | Istanbul (CGC Istanbul) organized a refugee symposium in 2016, hosting Columbia faculty and speakers from regional stakeholders, including UNHCR MENA, the Lebanese Ministry of Education, the World Bank, the International Labor Organization (ILO), Reaching All Children with Education (RACE), Carnegie Middle East Center and the Jordanian civil society organization Arab Renaissance

⁶ "Jordan: Zaatari Refugee Camp," *UNHCR*, Accessed January 2021.

⁷ Paolo Verme, "The Welfare of Syrian Refugees: Evidence from Jordan and Lebanon," *World Bank Group*, 2016.

⁸ Columbia Global Centers | Amman, "Columbia University Scholarship for Displaced Students," *Columbia Global Centers*, Accessed 2021.

for Democracy & Development (ARDD) Legal Aid.⁹ It looks at discussing the initiatives related to the refugee crisis at Columbia and the current research on how to improve refugees' access to health services, inclusive education, and sustainable employment opportunities. Secondly, it highlights developmental approaches developed and practiced in the context of past humanitarian crises in order to extract lessons and reflect on its relevance today. Thirdly, this symposium looks to ensure a robust scholarly exchange that enables partnerships between academic institutions such as Columbia University with MENA organizations that could inform future multidisciplinary interventions to support the Syrian refugees. Events like this symposium created partnerships across the region and helped Columbia faculty understand migration challenges from those closest to the issues.

Furthermore, Professor Safwan M. Masri, the then Executive Vice President for Global Centers and Global Development, led a University-wide initiative to create the Columbia University Committee on Forced Migration (CFM). This committee was founded in response to the growing number of forced migrants & migration crises around the world; as such, the CFM sought to further develop Columbia's role as a platform to engage, support, and share information on issues relating to forced migration across its community. This initiative coordinates collaboration and builds interdisciplinary networks among Columbia faculty, students, and staff on forced migration.¹⁰ It is through the interconnected nature of the committee that allows for new approaches to addressing problems of forced migration. Masri emphasized that the Committee and Columbia faculty "are committed to researching into the myriad issues involved in forced migration, and to engaging meaningfully in providing solutions."¹¹

Situated in the Middle East, within proximity to assist those most affected by the Syrian civil war to seek meaningful solutions to the challenges Syrian refugees faced. The programs soon expanded to research projects, advocacy, and workshops partnered with universities, advocacy organizations, UN organizations, and government agencies throughout the region to produce research to inform policy in a nuanced, culturally appropriate manner. Humanitarian aid and research responding to crises can easily seem out of touch with the true needs of communities. However, in Columbia's case, by creating intentional linkages with local organizations and policy-focused institutions, Columbia provided an example of effective

humanitarian work. Outlined next are two case studies that demonstrated how Columbia, through CGC Amman, leveraged a network throughout the Middle East to support Syrian refugees.

CASE STUDY: THE IMPACT OF SEPARATION ON REFUGEE FAMILIES – SYRIAN REFUGEES IN JORDAN

In 2018, Columbia faculty and the UNHCR Regional MENA) collaborated to research the challenges of family separation that Syrian refugees in Jordan faced. This study explored the impact of this reality experienced by many Syrian families across the Middle East and the world. The researchers conducted 85 interviews with Syrian refugees in Jordan and found

1. Family separation occurs at distinct times during displacement and exhibits a shared pattern across the sample.
2. Family separation has damaged or broken social connections and resulted in new and smaller networks with less capacity to support one another.
3. The absence of key family members exacerbates stress, child labor, debt accumulation, and strained relationships with host communities.
4. Keeping Syrian families apart.
5. Syrian refugee perceptions about durable solutions are greatly influenced by the location of family members.¹²

Through partnerships facilitated through CGC Amman, Columbia faculty, including Lead Principal Investigator Neil Boothby, worked with the UNHCR MENA Director's recommendations on family separation impacting Syrian refugees. This partnership represented a "strategic regional collaboration between academia and UNHCR MENA."¹³ According to Zahirah McNatt, one of the lead researchers of this project, the UNHCR MENA team asked Columbia to collaborate on this study so that they could utilize the research in policy discussions

⁹ Columbia Global Centers | Amman, "Refugee Integration: Developing a New Paradigm Symposium, Draft Agenda," *Columbia Global Centers*, October 2016.

¹⁰ Columbia Global Centers, "Committee on Forced Migration," *Columbia Global Centers*, Accessed 2022.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Columbia Global Centers | Amman, "Impact of Separation on Refugee Families: Syrian Refugees in Jordan," May 2018.

¹³ Columbia Global Centers | Amman, "Impact of Separation" May 2018.

with governments and regional organizations.¹⁴ In an interview on the Columbia podcast *Conversations from the Leading Edge*, McNatt stated that this project “came at the request of UNHCR from their Middle East

“would help to identify areas for advocacy [and] areas for policy improvement.”¹⁵ Because CGC Amman already worked in Jordan and with Syrian refugees, Columbia had the infrastructure in place to partner with UNHCR MENA and contribute to research used in policy discussions.

Furthermore, McNatt emphasized that the Columbia team, made up primarily of researchers and graduate students from the Mailman School of Public Health, collaborated closely with Jordanian researchers and UNHCR MENA team members to ensure that they understood the context of Syrian refugees in Jordan. This allowed them to ask effective and respectful questions when interviewing the displaced Syrians. “We all wanted to make sure we understood the context before we started meeting with families,” McNatt emphasized.¹⁶ The Columbia team and the Jordanian researchers cooperated to complete a demographic analysis of Syrian refugees in Jordan. Through their interviews with Syrian refugees, the researchers found that family separation creates

and social burdens on the separated families and their communities. UNHCR MENA could then utilize policy recommendations for governments to reunite families and support Syrian refugees that experience family separation.

The relationships CGC Amman had built with researchers and practitioners based in Jordan allowed Columbia researchers to understand the cultural and historical context of the impact of family separation on Syrian refugees, ultimately resulting in a more effective research project relevant to humanitarian policy. Furthermore, by partnering with the team in Jordan, the Columbia team ensured that they conducted their interviews compassionately in a context-sensitive and culturally-aware manner so that participants felt respected during interviews. The researchers provided an example of how research projects in other countries can go beyond the required minimum when researching sensitive topics.

Despite the different cultures between academics and practitioners in humanitarian work, McNatt emphasized that academics must work in partnership with practitioners to ensure their work is relevant:

I personally really enjoy work in the academic space that’s partnered with practitioners... There is a really important role for academics to play in the humanitarian setting and that is helping understanding context, doing the kind of research that evaluates the effectiveness of programs... there’s a [large] role for

because we tend to work quite differently so a lot of times we’re learning the culture of the academic institutions & the culture of humanitarian response...These kinds of relationships are important if academics are going to be relevant in the humanitarian space.¹⁷

For other academics hoping to make an impact in humanitarian work, partnering with practitioners active on the ground can model an effective way for academics to ensure their research helps solve humanitarian challenges.

Soon after this research collaboration began, UNHCR MENA and CGC Amman signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to increase future cooperation. At the MoU signing event in 2018, Masri emphasized

and humanitarian agencies.¹⁸ The research project’s success has encouraged other institutions to launch similar partnerships. Later in 2018, UNHCR MENA held its 2nd Regional Roundtable on Enhancing Dialogue and Partnership between Academia and UNHCR on Regional Displacement Crises, informed by the work of the 2016 research symposium hosted by CGC Amman and CGC Istanbul.



Figure 2. David Azia, Syrian Refugee Family, Photograph, UNHCR, Jordan.

¹⁴ Meredith Smith, “Impact of Separation on Refugee Families, with Neil Boothby and Zahirah McNatt,” *Conversations from the Leading Edge*, Podcast, August 2018.

¹⁵ Smith, “Impact of Separation on Refugee Families” 2018.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Columbia Global Centers | Amman, “Discussion on Regional Signing of the MoU between UNHCR and Columbia Global Centers | Amman,” 2018.



Figure 3. Executive Vice President for Global Centers and Global Development at Columbia University, Professor Safwan M. Masri, signs Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR’s Regional Director for MENA, Mr. Amin Awad, May 2018, Photograph, Columbia Global Centers | Amman, Jordan.

Throughout the roundtable, participants emphasized the need for “better understanding [of] the role and relevance of academia in formulating evidence-based policies related to responding to the enormous displacement crises facing the region.”¹⁹

Participants in the roundtable also highlighted the *Impact of Separation on Syrian Refugees in Jordan* as “a good example of effective partnership” and emphasized the need for creating other similar partnerships to support displaced persons.²⁰ This research project not only shed light on the unique challenges of Syrian refugees facing family separation but also showed UNHCR MENA and other institutions the power of partnerships between academic and non-academic organizations to develop policy solutions. CGC Amman’s partnership with UNHCR MENA illustrates the power of local connections and partnerships to allow academia’s work to impact humanitarian policy.

CASE STUDY: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP FOR DISPLACED STUDENTS

In addition to research projects on Syrian forced migration, Columbia’s network across the Middle East has facilitated direct support for refugees. Bruce Usher, the co-director of the Tamer Center

for Social Enterprise at Columbia Business School, began planning for what would become the Columbia University Scholarship for Displaced Students in 2016.²¹ I sat down for a conversation with Bruce Usher. Although he wanted to do more to help Syrians, he emphasized, “what I realized was there was very little I could do individually to help Syrian refugees here in New York.”²² Usher remembered that his grandfather, who lived in Canada, took in “a refugee from Europe...a high school student who had lost his family during the [Second World] War.”²³ Usher described his conversations with the man and stated, “He had told

■ able to come to Canada was that he got to complete his education.”²⁴ This experience sparked an idea for Usher that he could provide powerful support for Syrian individuals by providing access and resources for them to complete their education.

The conflict in Syria destroyed many universities and took away many Syrians’ hopes for higher education. Thus, Usher gathered a team of Columbia Business School students to research how to help. They

■ Syrian refugees whose education was interrupted, ■ and whether there was a model for funding their education. The team “concluded that the answer is, in theory, yes to all the above.”²⁵

Usher and his team launched a pilot program to identify and eventually support the higher education needs of

¹⁹ UNHCR, “Second Regional Roundtable on Enhancing Dialogue and Partnerships between Academia and UNHCR on Regional Displacement Issues”, 2018.

²⁰ UNHCR, “Second Regional Roundtable on Enhancing Dialogue,” 2018.

²¹ Kim Gittleston and Bruce Usher, “Higher Education for Refugees by Professor Bruce Usher and Kim Gittleston,” *Columbia Global Centers | Amman*, 2017.

²² Bruce Usher, in discussion with Sophia Fulton, December 2021.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Syrian refugees. Jad Najjar, a student who worked on the initial pilot program, emphasized that “the lack of data was one of the main challenges” for the project.²⁶ Thus, the team utilized personal connections and the extensive CGC Amman network in Jordan and Lebanon to identify the populations they wished to empower. Usher and Columbia graduate student Kim Gittleson and representatives, Jordanian, Lebanese, and Turkish non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey to learn about the true learning needs of Syrian refugees. The stakeholders on the ground in these countries could give a nuanced, truthful account of the needs of Syrian refugees regarding higher education.²⁷ The team also went to CGC Istanbul to meet with informal partners in Turkey and gain additional perspectives.²⁸

Meeting with stakeholders on the ground in the aforementioned three countries, Usher and Gittleson found that “the one clear message from all [their] meetings was that everyone in the region was desperate for help from US universities, with their extraordinary educational resources, to do something to curtail the tremendous loss of human and economic potential from the Syrian crisis.”²⁹ Usher confessed the team was “very worried that the response would be [that our] solution is too small to be of any interest.”³⁰ However, reactions from the stakeholders in Jordan and Lebanon were overwhelmingly positive; “they said it’s extremely important to send a message to those who have been displaced that there’s still opportunity for them even if that opportunity is only for a very small number.”³¹

Using their experiences conversing with individuals in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey closely tied to Syrian refugees, Usher and Gittleson knew they had to create a program to offer educational pathways for displaced migrants. They created a pilot program to cover the tuition fees, living expenses, and housing of Syrian refugees at Columbia. Once they raised the necessary funding from donors and rallied the Schools at Columbia to commit to waiving their tuition fees, they again used Columbia’s network throughout the Middle East to promote the scholarship directly to refugees. In late 2016, they distributed the scholarship program application via regional partners to refugees for a full-tuition scholarship to Columbia.³² Both CGC Amman and CGC Istanbul shared the

scholarship opportunity with their networks. The response was overwhelming, with many CGC-connected organizations in Lebanon and Syria, such as UNICEF in Lebanon, forwarding the opportunity along their networks. The scholarship launched its first cohort and seven in the second. The program faced challenges obtaining visas for refugees from outside of the United States, so the pilot program focused on Syrian refugees already in the United States on temporary protection visas.³³

In 2018, the Scholarship for Displaced Students moved from the Tamer Center for Social Enterprise in New York, whose global reach and local networks allowed the scholarship to expand from the initial cohort of seven displaced Syrian students to up to 30 refugee students each year. The Scholarship also extended to include refugees from and living in other countries status (but without permanent resident status) or in the asylum process, those with Temporary Protected Status within the U.S., Internally Displaced Students, and Displaced Afghan students on Humanitarian Parole or with Special Immigrant Visas.³⁴ As of Fall 2021, the Scholarship has now provided scholarships to 35 students representing 19 countries to attend 14 schools across Columbia.³⁵

“Some people would say you save one life, you save the whole world,” Usher noted.³⁶ This scholarship has transformed the lives of both Syrian refugees and now refugees and displaced persons from around the world. Usher asserted that “we wanted to change the perception of displaced people from individuals who need help, to individuals who can contribute to both education and society” while also providing a message of hope to refugees that there are still opportunities for them.³⁷ Through CGC Amman and Columbia’s connections throughout the Middle East region, the Scholarship Program for Displaced Students was informed by conversations with experts in the region about Syrian refugee educational needs. The team then leveraged the regional connections to NGOs, UN agencies, and educational institutions to share the scholarship with eligible individuals who would not otherwise know about it. Columbia’s ties to the region informed and aided in creating frameworks such as the Scholarship Program for Displaced Students that have improved the educational opportunities for Syrian refugees in the Middle East.

²⁶ Jad Najjar, “Personal Essay,” *Columbia University Social Enterprise Summer Fellowship Program*, 2016.

²⁷ Kim Gittleson and Bruce Usher, “Higher Education for Refugees by Professor Bruce Usher and Kim Gittleson,” 2017.

²⁸ Gittleson and Usher, “Higher Education for Refugees,” 2017.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Bruce Usher, in discussion with Sophia Fulton, December 2021.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Kim Gittleson and Bruce Usher, “Higher Education for Refugees by Professor Bruce Usher and Kim Gittleson,” 2017.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Columbia University Scholarship for Displaced Students, “Frequently Asked Questions,” Columbia Global Centers, Accessed 2022.

³⁵ Columbia Global Centers, “Columbia University Scholarship for Displaced Students,” Accessed December 2021.

³⁶ Bruce Usher, in discussion with Sophia Fulton, December 2021.

³⁷ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The Columbia Global Centers have a unique mission to strengthen the ties between Columbia and global partners. Not only does this enrich the experiences and work of Columbia faculty and students, but it also provides unique opportunities to research, advocate for, and empower marginalized populations, such as the Syrian refugee community.

In Columbia's *Impact of Family Separation on Syrian Refugees in Jordan* project, CGC Amman's connections to UNHCR MENA allowed the researchers to partner with UNHCR. This helped contribute research to be used in policy discussions that directly impacted the lives of Syrian refugees. For Columbia University's Scholarship for Displaced Students, Columbia faculty and students accessed CGC Amman's networks again to articulate the academic needs of Syrian refugees and share the scholarship program with eligible students. Since then, CGC Amman has also launched the Mellon Fellowship Program in partnership with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This Fellowship Program supports emerging displaced scholars, including Syrian scholars, and connects them with the global network of academics and scholars associated with Columbia.³⁸

These projects illustrated the power of proximity in addressing humanitarian crises & working physically on the ground with experts who understand the cultural context. By collaborating with local partners, Columbia faculty and students helped ensure their work did greater good than harm and respected the desires of the populations they serve. Columbia's academic resources and expertise, combined with the expertise and connections of local partners, allowed Columbia faculty and students to create initiatives that supported Syrian refugees.

Moving forward, the forced migration projects associated with CGC Amman can be used as an example for educational organizations hoping to create real change & create effective programs that provide humanitarian support and policy recommendations. These two projects demonstrate the power of collaboration between academic institutions, local partners, and subject matter experts. In a world with increasingly complex crises and humanitarian needs, these effective partnerships will help create a better future for vulnerable communities.



Figure 4. Associated Press/Syrian Arab News Agency, *Syrian people gather outside of a destroyed university in Aleppo, 2013, Photograph, Syria.*

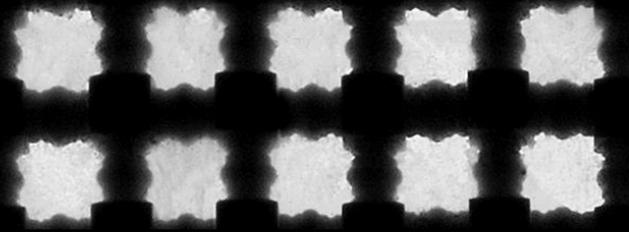
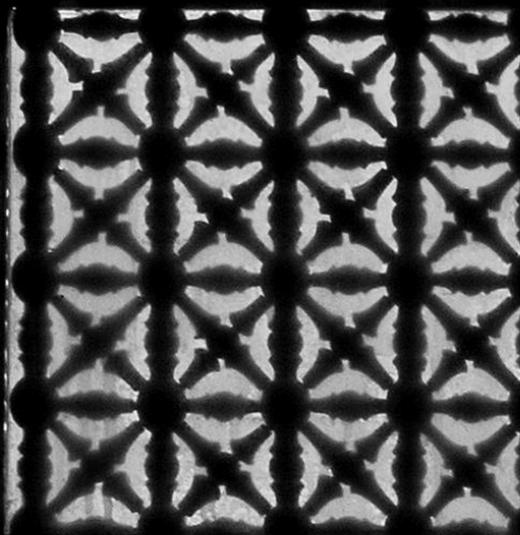
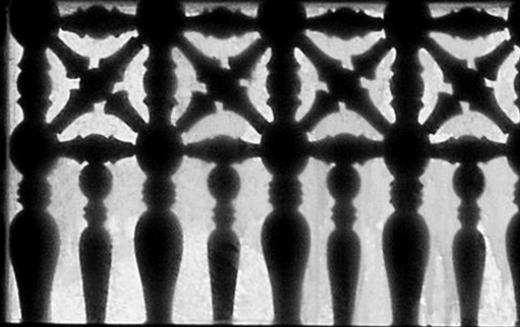
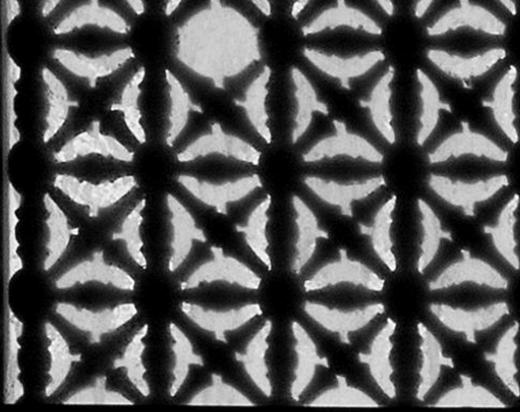
The two projects outlined here are just two examples of how Columbia has used connections to the Middle East to better understand the needs of Syrian refugees. Other projects include the following:

- Women Advancing Solutions in Policy Implementation, Research, & Engagement for Refugees (2017-2019)
- Changing Health Needs in Protracted Crises: Learning from the Case of NCDs in Syrian Refugees (2015-2018)
- Health Status and Reproductive Health among Postpartum Syrian Refugee Women in Jordan (2017-2019)
- Evaluating a Comprehensive Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services for Vulnerable Refugees (2014)
- Workshop for Journalists on Early Childhood Development, Trauma, & Resilience (2019)
- Seminar on Improving Refugee Access to Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (2018)
- Roundtable discussion on the Needs of Children in the Syrian Refugee Crisis (2018)
- Workshop on Responding to Changing Health Needs in Protracted Crises: Learning from the Case of NCDs in Syrian Refugees (2018)
- Conference on Durable Solutions for Displaced Syrians: Perspectives from Syrian Civil Society (2018)
- The Role of Local Government in Addressing the Impact of Syrian Refugees: Jordan Case Study (2015)

³⁸ Columbia Global Centers | Amman, "Mellon Fellowship Program," *Columbia Global Centers*, Accessed 2022.

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