“The function of the humanistic disciplines is the critical study of that organized tradition which we call civilization ... We cannot, and in the long run, will not fight for what we do not understand. Our democratic way of life is not, in the last analysis, a material order; it is a spiritual point of view. It is a kind of sum total of the achievements of man's intelligence and idealism in all the ages that have gone before us. It can in the end only be destroyed by being forgotten. It must be remembered and understood if men are to have the basis for still greater achievements in the future. Human nature does not change; in each generation men possess the same capacities for good or for evil as their forefathers. But different ages vary widely in the vividness of their understanding of the great achievements of the past. When humanistic studies flourish, life is richer and gracious. When they decay in the dark ages of history, man's way of life becomes brutal, poor and mean. The natural and the social sciences teach us, among other things, the techniques of preserving our way of life in peace and in war. The humanistic disciplines show us what it is we are struggling to preserve. They supply the motive for effort and sacrifice and show us the meaning of success in that great struggle against chaos and the mark which the human race has made since the beginnings of civilization, that effort which we can never forego to make life on this planet not merely a blank animal existence but something free, gracious and spiritual, filled with ardour and meaning.”

(Frank Aydelotte,
Director of the Institute for Advanced Study,
1939 through 1947, writing in 1941)
Uncovering 80 Years of Research into the Near and Middle East at IAS


*Sabine Schmidtke*
"From the first writing down of the Bible to why the Jews escaped in modern Syria, this collection is a display of up-to-date scholarship at its best. Almost every aspect of the long history of the Middle East is discussed, each from a fresh point of view. Sabine Schmidtke has gathered a heartening testimony to how modern scholars can contribute to a debate which concerns us all."

— Peter Brown

"For over 80 years, the program of Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey has provided scholarly depth, insights, and innovation. This important reference book is timely and welcome. The volume, edited by Professor Sabine Schmidtke, contains an overview of the institution's many historical contributions to the field of Near and Middle Eastern studies. It provides a much-needed historical depth and perspective. This instructive, comprehensive, and excellent guide is designed to serve not only the needs of well-established scholars but also aspiring students."

— Vazgen Gregorian

The history of Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study dates back to 1935 and is in the core area of scholarship that has been continuously represented at the Institute over sixty-five years. The Institute's History of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, 1935-2018 offers a comprehensive overview of the developments in the field of Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the Institute, focusing in particular on the contributions of key scholars who have been associated with the Institute.

Edited by Sabine Schmidtke
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island
June 14 '62
Flag-waving day

Dear al-Kindī,

Thanks for the Namecard. I now understand the formal order (not the reason) of the procedure. If and when Allah bring me back to the City of Peace and the Garden of Delight, we will be able to fix up the doubtful passages of the text.

The Greek version is much more corrupt than any of the subsequent Arabic's version. As

April 24th

Dr. al-Kindī,

Thanks for your long letter of April 17. The premonition from the Namecard of al-Shībī, I shall check with my older son upon return to the Presidential City.

I wrote to Miss Barr that she should contact you before she makes any use of the Deshman. She is apparently a very wise old lady, your pupil of Bell.

From your get at least one of the MS prints; I presume it can not be held away for a large time.

Your remarks on Tusi's procedure comes just at the right time. I have seen him use found in a very MS the procedure for the other animals. But it is fully a broad; it is the center of the minor circle, that carries the same.

Thus the equivalent with other scribe or epicycle is broad, and e=3.485. I think it is only some "philosophical" advantage which appeared to be so small for the main one. Could you give me "auria" or name, same?
The Ancient Near East and Early Islamic History
The Bible and the Qur’ān
Islamic Intellectual History Within and Beyond Denominational Borders
Arabic and other Semitic Languages and Literatures
Islamic Religious and Legal Practices, Law and Society
The Islamic West and Beyond
The Ottoman World and Beyond
Iranian and Persianate Studies
The Modern Middle East and Islam in the West
Letter from Morey to Flexner, April 9/10, 1934 (excerpts)
Letter from Morey to Flexner, April 9/10, 1934 (excerpts)

Erwin Panofsky, Faculty 1935-1962

Elias Avery Lowe, Faculty 1936-1945

Benjamin Dean Meritt, Faculty 1935-1969
Ernst Herzfeld (b. 1879, d. 1948)

Persepolis Portrait of Dr. Ernst Herzfeld, Field Director of the Persepolis Expedition of The Oriental Institute, photographed in front of Persepolis reliefs by James Henry Breasted, Jr 23 1933.

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/545217098611165616/>
Members in Near and Middle Eastern Studies
1935 through 1945

• Richard Francis Strong Starr (1935-39, 1940-41)
• Donald Newton Wilber (1935-39)
• Edward Jabra Jurji (1936-38)
• Harold Walter Glidden (1937-38)
• Richard Ettinghausen (1937-38)
• George C. Miles (1938-39)
• Florence E. Day (1938-39, 1940)
• Paul Maximilian Tedesco (1938-45)
• Cyrus Herzl Gordon (1939-40, 194-42)
• James Henry Breasted, Jr. (1939-41)
See, for example, the decision of the faculty of the School of Humanistic Studies of December 13, 1945, not to invite Albert Schweitzer (b. 1875, d. 1965) as a member to the Institute, which was justified as follows: “... The question of inviting Dr. Albert Schweitzer, the distinguished authority on Bach and writer on philosophical subjects, to membership in the Institute, as suggested by Dr. Walter Lowrie, was brought up. The Faculty, while recognizing the great eminence of Dr. Schweitzer, felt that his work was in no way connected with that of the members of the School of Humanistic Studies and decided against inviting him....” (Records of the Office of the Director. Files by Schools: Economics and Politics/Humanistic Studies. Box 1 of 1. Humanistic Studies: Minutes of meetings. Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty of School of Humanistic Studies, December 13, 1945).

S. Schmidtke, “Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study: A Historical Sketch,” p. liii n. 80
Henri Seyrig avec Raoul Curiel, terrasse de la maison louée l’été à Cornett Chahouane (Liban) ca 1956
© Archives Seyrig

<https://journals.openedition.org/syria/5342>
Otto Neugebauer and Near Eastern Mathematics and Astronomy
Marshall Clagett and Ancient Egypt
1964 through 1986 (2005)
New Vistas in Near and Middle Eastern Studies

Bernard Lewis, Clifford Geertz, and the School of Social Science
Bernard Lewis’s book collection, formerly kept in his office at the IAS.

Dear Professor Lewis,

I am grateful for all that I’ve learnt from you.

Many thanks,

Tamara Achabi
Shlomo Dov Goitein and the Study of the Documentary Geniza

1971 through 1985
Letter from Strayer to Setton, May 15, 1969

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Letter from Strayer to Setton, May 15, 1969

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Report on The Geniza Project

In discussing the social and economic history of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean during the medieval period, Parvis Briendel asserted that we know very little about it, and asked almost plaintively and somewhat pessimistically: “Will we ever know it?” This obvious challenge to students of the medieval Islamic world has elicited varying responses. The common theme running through them all is that there is a distressing absence of documentary and archival sources from the periods being investigated. There are very few contemporary chronicles or biographies; most Islamic historical materials have been transmitted and therefore translated through several generations. In any case, chroniclers and biographers have little to say about social and economic history. Islamic documentary sources for economic and social history have been scarce indeed—a great deal more scarce than the materials available for comparable research in the medieval West. Thus, attempts at a reconstruction of the economic and social history of the medieval Near Eastern world have been—if not paralysed—at least severely handicapped.

This predicament has now been to a large extent relieved by the documents discovered in the Cairo Geniza. The Geniza is a cache of papers found in the synagogue at Fustat containing hundreds of thousands of pages of written material dating primarily from the 10th to the 11th centuries. In addition to a large number (approximately 250,000 leaves) of literary, religious and philosophical texts, the Geniza contains over 10,000 documents bearing...
Glen Bowersock and the Study of Ancient Arabia

1980–today
A REPORT ON ARABIA PROVINCIA

By G. W. BOWERSOCK
(Plates xiv–xv)

With the increasing sophistication of excavation and exploration our knowledge of the provinces of Rome has grown stunningly in recent years. It will, one may hope, continue to grow; but the prospect of further advances ought not to be a deterrent to periodic reassessment and synthesis. Specialization, inevitable and productive, nevertheless runs the risk of a loss of perspective. The study of the Roman provinces involves widely divergent skills, and this is especially true for regions at the fringes of the empire. The pages which follow constitute a gathering together of new material on the history of Roman Arabia. Incorporated in this report are various observations and discoveries of my own,—some the result of a profitable visit to the Middle East in January of 1970.1 In writing I have had particularly in mind the needs of Roman historians, including myself: this paper represents a preliminary stage in the preparation of a history of the province of Arabia. Obviously there can be no continuous narrative history here or a balanced consideration of all aspects of the province. New evidence and important problems (old or new) are at issue.

Near Eastern Studies at the Institute, 1990 through 2014

Oleg Grabar and Patricia Crone
Near Eastern and Islamic Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study Today

Perspectives for the Future