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DOI: 10.35765/pk.2020.3104.05

Dr. Aziz Suryal Atiya and the Establishment of the Middle East Center and the Aziz S. Atiya Library for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Utah

ABSTRACT

Aziz Suryal Atiya was an Egyptian Coptic Studies expert, historian and orientalist specializing in the study of the Crusades era. He published several important books, including primarily *The Crusades in the Later Middle Ages* (1938). He contributed to the creation of the Institute of Coptic Studies in Cairo in the 1950s. He was also the originator and founder of the Middle East Center at the University of Utah, which today is one of the most important centers of wide science research on the Middle East. This article discusses the background and circumstances of the establishment of the Middle East Center and the Aziz S. Atiya Library for Middle Eastern Studies, both at the University of Utah, which is the fifth largest institution of its kind in North America.

KEYWORDS: Aziz Suryal Atiya, Middle East Center, Aziz S. Atiya Library for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Utah, coptology, Crusades history

STRESZCZENIE

Dr Aziz Suryal i powstanie Centrum Badań Bliskowschodnich oraz Biblioteki na Rzecz Badań Bliskowschodnich im. Aziza S. Atiya na Uniwersytecie Stanu Utah

Aziz Suryal Atiya był egipskim koptologiem oraz historykiem i orientalistą specjalizującym się w studiach nad epoką wypraw krzyżowych. Opublikował kilka ważnych dzieł, w tym przede wszystkim *The Crusades in the Later Middle Ages* (1938). Doprowadził do powstania Instytutu Studiów Koptyjskich w Kairze w latach 50. ubiegłego stulecia. Był również pomysłodawcą

Suggested citation: Chiarelli, C.L. & Mirfakhrai, M. (2020). Dr. Aziz Suryal Atiya and the Establishment of the Middle East Center and the Aziz S. Atiya Library for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Utah. *Perspectives on Culture*, 4(31), pp. 43–59. DOI: 10.35765/pk.2020.3104.05.

Submitted: 08.09.2020

Accepted: 23.12.2020

i założycielem Centrum Badań Bliskowschodnich na Uniwersytecie Stanu Utah, które do dzisiaj jest jednym z najważniejszych centrów nauki dotyczącym badań nad Bliskim Wschodem w szerokim kontekście. Niniejszy artykuł opowiada o tle i okolicznościach powołania Centrum Badań Bliskowschodnich oraz Biblioteki na Rzecz Badań Bliskowschodnich im. Aziza S. Atiyi na Uniwersytecie Stanu Utah, która jest piątą co do wielkości tego typu instytucją w Ameryce Północnej.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: Aziz Suryal Atiya, Centrum Badań Bliskowschodnich, Biblioteka na rzecz Badań Bliskowschodnich im. Aziza S. Atiyi na Uniwersytecie Stanu Utah, koptologia, historia wypraw krzyżowych

Aziz Suryal Atiya was a prominent world-renowned scholar, writer, and historian, whose expertise spanned the fields of the Crusades, Islamic and Coptic studies. He was born to a Coptic family in the small village of El-Aysha, a few miles from the Damietta branch of the Nile, Egypt on July 5, 1898. When he was around eight years old his father, an accountant for large landowners, moved his family to the larger town of Zagazig where Aziz Atiya began his elementary and middle school education. Previously, he had been attending primary school with the other children of the town learning the literary basics, especially the Qur'an. After completing what would be a High School level of education, he moved to Cairo to further his studies (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 1: 1–7). He studied medicine for two years, but in 1919 his schooling was interrupted by the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution against British rule, where Dr. Atiya took part in anti-British demonstrations. He started his education anew by seeking a literary baccalaureate at the French School of Law, but economic conditions were such that he had to work. He took a clerical position in the ministry of agriculture and part-time teaching, mainly English, in local schools. Before completing his French Law program, he entered the Higher Training College, where his attention was now turned to literature, history and the humanities. For four years he clerked in the morning, taught in the afternoon and studied at night. In 1927 he completed his studies at the Higher Training College and received his Baccalaureate in the Humanities, and because he scored so high on his final examinations, the Egyptian Office of Education gave him a stipend to continue his studies at the University of Liverpool in England (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 1: 8–14).

Dr. Atiya entered the University of Liverpool to study the Middle Ages, and in 1930 completed his Bachelor of Arts degree and received a first-class honors degree which led to a Charles Beard Fellowship and a Ramsay Muir Fellowship in the Department of History. A year later he

received a Master's of Arts degree. It was the first time that that one person received two fellowships at the University of Liverpool. These fellowships financed his research in England, Spain and Egypt which eventually led to the publication of his first book, the *Crusade of Nicopolis* (1934), and gave him the opportunity to begin his life-long search for books, manuscripts and papyri (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 1: 17–20). Coming from a multilingual environment in Egypt, Dr. Atiya had already mastered, besides his native Arabic tongue, English and French. His research, however, led him to gain command of German, Italian, Latin, and to a lesser extent, Greek, Coptic and Turkish. He also studied Welsh and Dutch (Walker, 1972, p. 5).

In 1933 he transferred to the University of London, where in the next year he completed his book, the *Crusade of Nicopolis*, which gained high praise for its original research and the significance of the battle to the Crusading movement. One major scholar of the Crusades, John La Monte, stated in his review of the book:

[The author] asserts that the crusade of Nicopolis in 1396 ended the crusading movement in that it produced an indifference towards the crusades in all classes of society. The tremendous loss of life among the knightly participants 'alarmed the noble classes of all countries to such an extent that it became impossible to rouse them again for common action in defense of the East' while 'the demands for money from bourgeois and clergy, firstly for the crusading engendered the spirit of indifference amongst the various classes of mediaeval society towards what they might justly describe as expensive and futile schemes' (p. 116–117) [...] In his discussion of the crusade Dr. Atiya proves the inaccuracy of several old conceptions regarding the battle; he produces evidence to prove that the two armies were rather evenly matched numerically, each side having approximately 100,000 men, the Turks having only a few thousands more than the Christians. Dr. Atiya's present volume is of value and interest to students of the later Middle Ages and of the early history of the Ottoman Empire. Of even greater import is his announcement that it is but a part of a larger work on the crusading movement (1934).

The world-renowned Dutch scholar of Arabic and medieval Islam at the University of Leiden, J.H. Kramers, noted in his review:

This monograph on the historically so momentous battle of Nicopolis in 1396, its prelude, its immediate consequences, and its importance in medieval history as the last serious crusading enterprise from Christendom against Islam, is without any doubt a most useful contribution to our knowledge of the period. The author has been able to make use of many new documentary sources or to profit, in a more correct form, from sources only imperfectly known hitherto (1934).

This work gained Dr. Atiya the acclaim of contemporary medieval history scholars, especially his erudition in the field of the Crusades. He went on to receive his Ph.D. in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of London in 1936. The famous German orientalist Prof. Paul Kahle, director of the Oriental Department of the University of Bonn, recognized his scholarship and offered him the position of *Dozent* and Honorary Professor of Medieval and Oriental History for Kahle's Orientalisches Seminar in Bonn, Germany (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 1: 23–24). While in this position, he completed an enormous amount of research, leading him to complete his second book in 1938, *The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages*. A classic in the field of Crusader history, which the late Professor and renowned historian of the Crusades, John L. La Monte described in the journal *Speculum*:

[Dr. Atiya] has produced a volume which will long remain the standard work on a difficult subject. The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages is unquestionably one of the most significant books in the field of crusading history which has appeared for many years, and will be an essential work of reference for every student of the crusades (1939).

These two works were ground-breaking in their interpretation of the Crusades, which was recognized as major works and was so valued that the University of Liverpool awarded him in 1938 a D. Litt. (Doctor of Letters). He was the first non-Briton from the Middle East ever to be granted that distinction. In 1939, however, as the war started in Europe, his stay in Germany ended and he returned to Egypt where he took the position of "First History Inspector of the Secondary Schools for the Ministry of Education" and at the same time he began his tenure as Professor of Medieval History at Cairo University.

It was at this time that he started a family. On July 31, 1941 he married Lola Messiha, the daughter of Habib Bey Messiha, chief accountant in the Ministry of Finance and a member of one of the most eminent Coptic families in Egypt. She was educated in a French Lycée school and later was awarded a Baccalaureate degree (Atiya 1985, Pt. 1: 38; Atiya, 1989, Pt. 1:1–3). They soon had two children, a daughter Nayra and a son Ramez.

Dr. Atiya's position at Cairo University lasted until 1942, when in that year, he went to help establish Alexandria University (Prior to the 1952 Revolution called Farouk I University), where he held a foundation chair in Medieval History and served as Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Arts (1949–1950) and as Chairman of the History Department (1952–1954). During his tenure at Alexandria University, Dr. Atiya pursued his interest in the

history of the Coptic Church and community. He became a member of the Coptic Community Council (1952), an organization that administered Coptic community affairs, and two years later, with another member of the Council, he established and became the first president of the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies, a research institute in Cairo for the study of the Coptic heritage.

Continuing his work on medieval history, in 1943 he published in Arabic the 13th century work *Kitāb qawānīn al-dawāwīn* by Salahdin's Vizier and Minister al-As'ad Ibn Mammātī (d. AD 1209). A valuable and important work on Egypt at that time, giving a detailed description of its agriculture and irrigation systems, the mint, the weights and measures, weaving centers, shipbuilding, forests and animals, the science of surveying, together with some mathematics and geometry, and other interesting data.

Following up on his interest in the history of the Coptic Church, Dr. Atiya co-edited and translated three volumes (1948–1949) of the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church* by Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 987), bishop of el-Ashmunein in Upper Egypt around the end of the 10th century.

It was at this time (1949–1950) that the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., together with the American Foundation for the Study of Man, began a project to microfilm the manuscripts and archival collection of the library of St. Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai. The representative of the Library of Congress' project, Kenneth Clark and Wendell Phillips of the American Foundation for the Study of Man, along with the American ambassador to Egypt, Jefferson Caffrey, were having a difficult time getting permission from the monastery to film their collection. Wendell Phillips then thought of having an Egyptian university collaborate with him, so he went to the Alexandria University to seek their assistance. The university, knowing that Dr. Atiya had a close relationship to the Archbishop of Sinai, Porphyrios, especially since the archbishop helped him previously to do research at the monastery, asked him to assist them. Porphyrios convinced the monks that Dr. Atiya would safeguard the material and be part of the microfilming expedition (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 1: 26–31). The whole microfilming expedition lasted six months and was comprised of two million pages in twelve languages, the most important of which were in Arabic and Greek (*Aziz S. Atiya Papers*, 1949. Box 23:2/4).

During this expedition he discovered a manuscript called *Codex Arabicus*, a unique Biblical palimpsest on parchment with five layers of writing in three languages (Syriac, Greek and Arabic) which dated back from the 4th to the 9th century. He also found the *Codex Georginaus*, a Georgian Psalter on Egyptian papyrus and around 2,000 scrolls in Arabic and Turkish

dating back from the 10th to the 19th centuries.¹ The success of this micro-filming project gave him such notoriety that many doors were opened, and this microfilming project became the cornerstone to his stellar career in research, lecturing, publishing and teaching.

In 1950 he was the first academic from Egypt to receive a Fulbright Exchange Professorship, which led him to lecture at a number of American Universities and to be a consultant to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. (Aziz S. Atiya interview, Pt. 1: 42–44).

It was during this period that Dr. Atiya was a “Visiting Lecturer” at thirteen American colleges and universities: University of Chicago, Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), University of Denver, University of Colorado, College of Puget Sound (Tacoma, Wash.), Washington University (Seattle), Hartford Seminary Foundation, Stanford University, University of California (Berkeley), University of Utah (Salt Lake City), Weber College (Ogden, Utah), and Brigham Young University (Provo, Utah) (Airmet et al., 1998, Box 1: 3/4).

It was while lecturing at the University of Colorado that a life-changing chance meeting with Arthur Beeley, head of International Studies at the University of Utah, would lead to a major change in his life. Prof. Beeley invited him to Utah to give a lecture on his St. Catherine’s Monastery expedition and the manuscripts found there. He gladly accepted the invitation and met the President of the University of Utah, Dr. Ray Olpin, marking this the beginning of an enduring and fruitful relationship. Dr. Olpin was impressed by Dr. Atiya’s academic achievements and his enthusiasm for learning, while Dr. Atiya’s affable personality solidified their life-long friendship. They remained in contact even after his lecture tour ended and Dr. Atiya returned to Egypt. These lectures led him to become a celebrated medieval scholar and his notoriety soared among the academic institutions in the United States (Atiya 1985, Pt. 1: 44–50).

In 1954 he accepted a one-year position as visiting professor of the Arab Program at the American University in Beirut. A year later, on his return to Egypt, he was invited to teach for the 1955–1956 session at the University of Michigan with the position of Medieval Academy Visiting Professor of Arabic Studies. After completing that assignment in 1957, he was given a combined appointment, Henry W. Luce Professor of World Christianity

1 Library of Congress has made available the manuscripts on their webpage <https://www.loc.gov/collections/manuscripts-in-st-catherines-monastery-mount-sinai/?fa=language:arabic> and <https://www.loc.gov/collections/manuscripts-in-st-catherines-monastery-mount-sinai/about-this-collection/>

at the Union Theological Seminary and Visiting Professor of History at Columbia University's Near and Middle East Institute (Airmet et al., 1998, Box 5: 1/10).

Later that year he simultaneously held the Patten Visiting Professor and Lecturer position at Indiana University (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 1: 46–58). These lectures would later become the basic materials for his two books *Crusade, Commerce and Culture* (1962), and *Crusade Historiography and Bibliography* (1962). During this period he was able to compile and publish his guide to the Arabic manuscripts at St. Catherine's Monastery, *The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai; a hand-list of the Arabic manuscripts and scrolls micro-filmed at the library of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai* (1955).

Dr. Atiya's lecture tour of the United States in the 1950s gained him a reputation for scholarly achievements in medieval Middle Eastern history, attaining a celebrated status that had been noticed by Prof. Philip Hitti, Chair of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Department of Oriental Studies, Princeton University. His high regard for Dr. Atiya's work led Dr. Hitti to invite Dr. Atiya to replace him for a two year appointment to the Faculty of Princeton University as Visiting Professor of Arabic and Islamic History (1957–1958) (Airmet et al., 1998, Box 5: 2/2, 5: 4/2). As his tenure in this position came to an end, he received an invitation from Dr. Robert Oppenheimer, Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies, to be a member of the Institute for Advanced Studies for the academic year 1958–1959 (Airmet et al., 1998, Box 5: 4/2; Atiya, 1985, Pt. 1: 44–50).

In 1956, while being Visiting Professor of History at Columbia University's Near and Middle East Institute, University of Utah President, Ray Olpin, invited him to give the commencement speech that June. Among the audience, was the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter cited as LDS Church), David O. McKay, who was according to Ray Olpin, extremely impressed with the speech, as were students and faculty alike (Airmet et al., 1998, Box 5: 6/2/2; Atiya, 1985, Pt. 2: 1–13). In fact, President McKay was so impressed that he tasked him to give a lecture at the LDS Ward Chapel, to a group of LDS Church officials on Egyptian culture and the Coptic Church (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 1: 48). Later, Dr. Atiya's relations with the LDS Church would grow fonder, especially after Dr. Atiya while doing research, found at the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian hieroglyphic scrolls of papyri used by the founder of their Church, Joseph Smith, to construct some of their religious texts. Dr. Atiya acted as a mediator between the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the LDS Church First Presidency to acquire this collection of papyri. They would agree to have some items of Egyptian art, which the LDS Church had owned, in exchange for the papyri. The LDS appreciated and never forgot his assistance (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 2: 41–43).

Afterward they corresponded with each other, but in 1959 President Olpin went to Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies to ask Dr. Atiya if he would be interested in establishing an intercultural studies institute. The position would be given with full professorship and tenure, but it would come with the heavy responsibility to establish a new department with funding coming from the Federal Government's National Defense Education Act. President Olpin envisioned an intercultural studies center for poly-cultures with a concentration on the Middle East (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 2: 50). Dr. Atiya gladly accepted the offer and the monumental challenge that it would entail. He took on the responsibility for the academic side of the endeavor, and chose as director Prof. William Mulder, professor of English at the University of Utah who had been interested in eastern cultures, especially since he had experience teaching at Osmania University in Hyderabad, India. He also knew Dr. Mulder after he had accompanied him in 1951 in visiting the University of Utah and Brigham Young University (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 3: 1).

Dr. Atiya did much of the teaching and selected instructors for Arabic, Turkish and Persian which were new to the University's program, while Hebrew and Greek were already being taught. He selected instructors from the other academic departments and disciplines to teach classes related to the Middle East. The Intercultural Center was in essence a broker that worked through the various departments, such that Middle East languages were taught through the Department of Languages, while history classes through the Department of History and so on. Thus, economics, social work, history, sociology, geography, and others were put under the umbrella of the Intercultural Center, which in 1963 became the Middle East Center. He began the first program in the United States to teach, as part of the Arabic Department of the University of Utah, the Arabic language in high schools (at first Bountiful H.S. and Highland H.S.) (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 3: 2–3). The Center began a graduate program, giving Master's and Ph.D. degrees, and in order to have an elevated quality of learning, Dr. Atiya brought in as visiting scholars to lecture and teach. These included such notable figures as Sir Hamilton Gibb,² Philip Hitti,³ John Glubb Pasha,⁴

2 Professor of Middle East History at the London School of Oriental and African Studies, and later Harvard as University Professor and in 1957 Director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University.

3 Chairman of the Department of Oriental Languages, and the first director of its Near Eastern Studies Program. He is considered the founder of Middle East studies in this country and in a real sense the father of these studies in America.

4 British army officer who in 1939–1956 commanded the Arab Legion, an army of Arab tribesmen in Transjordan and its successor state, Jordan. He became advisor to King Husayn of Jordan and then after he left the Arab Legion in 1956 Glubb returned to England, was awarded a knighthood and settled down to a life of scholarship.

Montgomery Watt,⁵ Andre Raymond,⁶ W.H.C. Frend,⁷ Claude Cahen,⁸ Mohammed Talbi,⁹ George Makdisi.¹⁰

As he organized the Intercultural Center, he realized that the library had few materials (books and journals) on the subject of the Middle East, and thus he brought his huge private library from Egypt to Utah. It was the core of the Middle East Library's collection, but President Olpin extended to him the sum of \$20,000 to go to Egypt and purchase the additional resources needed to establish a Middle East collection for the library (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 2: 14). This was the beginning of many buying trips that Dr. Atiya made until the last year of his life.

With the help of his wife Lola, who had library experience at the Library of Congress, he began to build one of the top five Middle East collections in North America. In 1964, the president of the University of Utah, James Fletcher (1964–1971) and former president, Ray Olpin (1946–1964) established the Aziz S. Atiya Library for Middle East Studies (henceforth Middle East Library) (Airmet et al., 1998, Box 18: 1/s; Box 18:1/9; *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 4, 1964, p. 3). Recognition of the unique status of the Middle East Library came when in 1968, after the J. Willard Marriott Library was built, the University established within that library a separate, independently enclosed Aziz S. Atiya Library for Middle East Studies. Then with the guidance of the first librarian for the Middle East Library, Marian Sheets, who had been in the Cataloguing Department

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- 5 Montgomery Watt taught at the University of Edinburgh, as Professor of Islamic Studies from 1964 to 1979. Scottish Orientalist, historian, academic and Anglican priest. From 1964 to 1979, he was Professor of Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Edinburgh.
 - 6 Andre Raymond (d. 2011) was professor emeritus at the University of Provence and director of the Institute for Research and Study on the Arab and Islamic World in Aix-en-Provence.
 - 7 W.H.C. Frend specialized on Early Christianity, especially in North Africa. He was at Cambridge in 1952 and was university lecturer in divinity from 1956 to 1969 and from 1969 to 1984 he was Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Glasgow University, including three years as Dean of the Divinity Faculty.
 - 8 Claude Cahen was a professor at the University of Strasbourg from 1945 to 1959 and then at the Sorbonne. He was a specialist in the Crusades and the economic history of the medieval Islamic states.
 - 9 Mohamed Talbi (d. 2017) was a Tunisian historian, Islamologist and scholar who authored a number of books and articles on the history of Islam and the Maghreb. He received his doctorate degree in history from the Sorbonne in Paris and later became the first dean to head the faculty of literature at University of Tunis.
 - 10 George Makdisi (d. 2002) studied in the United States and later in Lebanon. He then graduated in 1964 in France from the Paris-Sorbonne University. He taught in the University of Michigan and Harvard University before reaching the University of Pennsylvania in 1973, as a professor of Arabic. Here he remained until his retirement in 1990, when he held the post of director of the Department of Oriental Studies.

of the Marriott Library, and along with the assistance of Mrs. Lola Atiya, a new Middle East Library was created.

In order to have a continuous flow of new books in Arabic, Dr. Atiya subscribed to the Library of Congress' PL480 Program (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 2: 14). This U.S. government administered program had newly published books and periodicals in Arabic and English from all parts of the Middle East sent to subscribing American libraries. This ensured the Middle East Library would continue to grow to support the expanding Middle East Center's program.

At the same time, Dr. Atiya was going on annual buying trips to Europe and the Middle East purchasing, often with his own financial resources, some private Middle East collections of renowned orientalists and close friends.¹¹ Besides these materials, Dr. Atiya would scour the rare book dealers of Europe and the Middle East, especially Beirut, Cairo and London, for acquiring rare items, such as Arabic rare-paper and papyrus. Dr. Atiya through the years amassed a papyrus collection totaling 1674 documents, which would eventually become the largest in North America. The Arabic papyri specialist and scholar Dr. Gladys Frantz-Murphy of Regis University surveyed the Papyrus Collection and noted in her report that the "collection is by far the largest collection of pre-modern Arabic documents in the United States, and therefore, the Americas, numbering some 1,674 pieces. The collection is also the most diverse, not only being distinguished by its diversity, but also by the time span that it covers." She also affirms that the collection is "remarkable in that the great majority of both the papyrus and particularly the paper documents are complete or nearly complete documents" (Frantz-Murphy, Letter, December 12, 2004). These documents have been dated from the 8th century A.D. through the Ottoman period to around 1517 A.D. A large number of these documents contain complete texts, and all have been digitized.¹²

The Library's collection includes an *Aziz S. Atiya Manuscript Collection*, some 2,704 manuscripts ranging from the 11th century A.D. to the 20th

11 Such collections as that of Sir Arthur Jeffrey, Australian professor of Semitic languages at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary in New York City; Dr. Étienne Combe Swiss Arabist and director of the Swiss Institute in Cairo; Ḥmad Zakī Abū Shādī (d. 1965), Egyptian Romantic poet, publisher, medical doctor, bacteriologist and bee scientist. Mostly known for having founded the poetry journal *Apollo* (1932–1934) which was devoted to romantic poetry. He was a close friend and colleague of Dr. Atiya at Alexandria University; Fayeḡ Sayeḡh collection of books, papers, manuscripts and letters. Dr. Sayeḡh (d. 1980) taught modern Middle East history at Yale, Stanford University, Macalaster College, American University of Beirut and at the University of Oxford. He also did diplomatic work for the Lebanese Embassy in Washington DC. and the United Nations.

12 Cf. <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/search?q=Papyrus>

century. Although the collection is primarily comprised of works in Arabic, it also includes manuscripts in Persian, Turkish and Coptic. In addition, there are Hebrew and Tibetan scrolls.

There is also a large microfilm collection, comprising a number of various specialized collections, such as a copy of the *Mount Sinai Manuscripts* (Arabic and Greek Manuscripts) which Dr. Atiya acquired after his expedition there in 1950. Other collections include the *Arab League Arabic Manuscripts Collection*, being 400 medieval Arabic manuscripts from the Institute of Arabic Manuscripts in Cairo; Syriac and Arabic Manuscripts from the *Catholic Microfilm Center* (Theological Union Library, Berkeley, California); the *Martin Levey Papers and Manuscript Collection* of more than 1,000 medieval and early modern rare manuscripts on medicine and science accumulated by the late historian of science Dr. Martin Levey of the State University of New York; the *Garrett Arabic Manuscripts Collection* of more than 4,500 titles comprises Arabic manuscripts from the *Robert Garrett Collection of Arabic Manuscripts* at Princeton University.¹³ It also includes a *Kabbalah Collection of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America*, which is composed of Hebrew works (689 documents) devoted to Jewish mysticism. It consists of hundreds of books from around the world on the *Kabbalah* covering the early years to 1800.

The Aziz S. Atiya Collection has as of 2016 more than 176,000 monographs and more than 3,000 bound journals. The core collection of monographs in European and Middle Eastern (Arabic, Hebrew, Persian and Turkish) languages covers a wide range of subject areas. There are among the collection of monographs specialized subject areas of significant strength, that is, a large number of books focusing on specific subject areas, such as Islamic Law, ancient religions of the Middle East, Muslim and Christian religion, and the history of the region from Morocco to Iran. A sizeable part of the collection covers the region's relations with Europe, especially on the later Crusades 1274–1500. In addition to these subject areas a large portion of the collection comprises materials on the languages, literature, socio-cultural history and political science. With the establishment of the Middle East Center and the Middle East Library, Dr. Atiya's achievements began to be recognized not only by the University of Utah, but by the general academic community in the United States.

Therefore, the prominent role he had in establishing and promoting Middle East studies in the United States was recognized in 1962 when the prestigious Baldwin-Wallace College, Ohio bestowed on him an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters (Airmet et al., 1998, Box 1: 3/4).

13 Handlist available at http://libweb2.princeton.edu/r_bsc2/arabic/Mach_Ormsby.pdf

Greater recognition of Dr. Atiya's academic achievements and his success in establishing the Middle East Intercultural Center was acknowledged in 1963 when the United States Department of Education decided to have its first annual meeting of directors of Middle East Centers at the University of Utah (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 2: 23–24). This meeting with such attendees as Harvard University, Yale University, University of California (Los Angeles and Berkeley), University of Chicago, and Princeton University enhanced the reputation of the University of Utah and the Middle East Library's collection, a collection that in 1963 came in third in size in the U.S. (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 2: 52). He was later elected to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the American Association of Middle Eastern Studies.

Dr. Atiya's accomplishments were once again recognized in 1967 when the University of Utah designated Dr. Atiya Distinguished Professor of History and was also granted the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. Brigham Young University at the same time made him an honorary Doctor of Laws (LL.D.), in recognition of his discoveries in the world of papyri.

Dr. Atiya's achievements became internationally noted in a number of world-wide publications, such as *Who's Who in America* (1964–1965), and *Who's Who in the Middle East* (1962) (Airmet et al., 1998, Box 1: 3/4). During this time, Dr. Atiya continued to publish major academic works. The lectures he gave at the Union Theological Seminary became the basis of his book *A History of Eastern Christianity* which he published in 1968, and then two years later he published the *Catalogue Raisonné of the Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai*, a list of the manuscripts of St. Catherine's microfilm project (1970). In 1968 he published the encyclopedic work of Muḥammad ibn Qāsim ibn Nuwayrī al-Iskandarānī (fl. 1336–1373), *Kitāb al-ilmām bi-al-i'lām fī mā jarat bihi al-aḥkām wa-al-umūr al-maqḍīyah fī waq'at al-Iskandarīyah*. He edited this work with the Swiss Arabist and director of the Swiss Institute in Cairo, Dr. Etienne Combe (1968). This 14th century manuscript, which when completed was a seven-volume work, covered mainly the history of medieval Alexandria, but it was a major source for the Alexandrian Crusade of 1365.¹⁴

His accomplishments were again recognized in 1972 when a festschrift was published in his honor, *Medieval and Middle Eastern Studies in Honor of Aziz Suryal Atiya*, which included articles written by the most notable scholars on the Middle East.¹⁵

14 Cf. Steenbergen, 2003; Niall, 2014.

15 Scholars such as Claude Cahen, Andrew S. Ehrenkreutz, Philip Hitti, Subhi Labib, George Makdisi, Bertold Spuler, etc.

With the management of the Middle East Center and teaching taking him away from conducting research and publishing projects, Dr. Atiya appointed Dr. Khosrow Mostofi to assist him in administering the Center. In 1958 Dr. Mostofi received a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Utah and went to teach at Portland State College where he was assistant professor 1959–1960. He returned to the University of Utah and became an assistant professor in the Political Science Department. Being an Iranian and an active proponent of Middle East studies, Dr. Atiya made him in 1962 acting director of the Middle East Center, and in 1967, as Dr. Atiya reduced his administrative activity, he became Director of the Middle East Center, a position he held until 1983 (Mostofi, 1985).

One of the major life-long projects, and most fulfilling to Dr. Atiya since he called it “a dream of my life” (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 2: 48), was the creation and publication of a *Coptic Encyclopedia*. The idea for a *Coptic Encyclopedia* began after he established the Institute for Higher Coptic Studies in 1954. The thought was always on his mind throughout his career, but he had to wait until he had freed himself from scholarly pursuits and the establishment the Middle East Center and Library. The opportunity came in 1977 when the Egyptian Antiquities Service sponsored a meeting for an International Congress of Coptic Studies. This gave him the opportunity to meet and promote the encyclopedic project to the Coptic scholars from around the world (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 1: 58–60). The response was enthusiastically supportive, since no comprehensive publication on the Copts had been published before. Dr. Atiya had to begin from zero, compiling the names of editors (sixteen associate editors) and the contributors, which eventually numbered over two hundred and fifty Western and Egyptian scholars on the subject (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 3: 61). He was able to get a commitment from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to sponsor the project, but he also needed additional financial support as well, especially from Europe, where Coptic studies’ programs had flourished (Ibid.). The first contributor to the project was the LDS Church, whose relationship with Dr. Atiya had always been harmonious and supportive of the project from the beginning (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 2: 40; Pt. 3: 65). In all, he received the largest sum for a single project that the Middle East Center had ever sought, over one million dollars, including gifts and matching funds (Mostofi, 1985, Pt. 1: 24).

Thus, with the support of the University of Utah, the J. Willard Marriott Library, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and a host of scholars from around the world, Dr. Atiya and his wife Lola began this massive project. With more than two hundred authors and over 2,800 entries spanning sixteen disciplines and with most of the articles originally in Arabic, French, German and Italian, they had to have them translated by the

most capable scholars in Cairo, London, Rome and Scotland (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 3: 65). In all it took over thirteen years to complete, making it a unique treasure that was enthusiastically received by religious scholars, such as this review by the University of Michigan's Egyptologist T.G. Wilfong:

The year 1991 will undoubtedly be considered one of the most important years of Coptic studies [...] The editorial and production staff has clearly taken great care with this publication. The integration of the work of so many authors into a coherent whole is an enormous task and has been admirably accomplished in the *Coptic Encyclopedia*. [...] The overall outstanding achievement of the editors and authors of the *Coptic Encyclopedia* is remarkable and no amount of minor criticism can detract from it. This set will remain one of the standard reference works for Coptic studies for many years to come (1993).

As the publication of the *Encyclopedia* was nearing, Dr. Atiya and his wife Lola planned to have the royalties placed in an Aziz S. Atiya Foundation in order to finance updates and provide grants to students of Coptic Studies (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 3: 67; Pt. 4: 3). In 2009, religious historians and those interested in Coptic studies were notified that the Claremont Graduate University (CGU) School of Religion would digitalize *The Coptic Encyclopedia* and make it freely available to the public. The CGU had acquired the right to develop, update and continuously expand the Web-based version.¹⁶

Although Dr. Atiya died a very short time before its completion, and his wife Lola brought the work to fruition, the publication of the *Coptic Encyclopedia* consummated his life-long dream (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 2: 51), capping his monumental career in academia, and fulfilling his contribution to his Egyptian identity, which was most close to his heart. He declared in an interview that he considered his greatest achievements to be the micro-filming project at St. Catherine's Monastery and the Coptic Encyclopedia (Atiya, 1985, Pt. 2: 51).

After the publication of the *Coptic Encyclopedia*, Mrs. Atiya created and published an *Index* to the work Dr. Atiya partially edited in 1948–1949, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church* by Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqaffa' (Atiya, 2010). Thus, Dr. Atiya and his wife Lola made through the years great contributions to the University of Utah and the world community. In sum, Dr. Atiya published approximately twenty books, many of which are multi-volume projects, and his journal articles, book chapters, and encyclopedia articles which appeared regularly over a period of thirty-five years. Dr. Atiya came to the University of Utah as a Professor of Languages

16 <https://ccdlib.claremont.edu/digital/collection/cce> and <http://ccdlib.libraries.claremont.edu/c>

and History and until his death in 1988, he worked with the University of Utah, founding the Middle East Center and creating one of the most significant collection of Middle East manuscripts, papyrus, books, journals in the United States and the world.

His teaching philosophy was guided by his dedication to education and students, which can be summed up in his own words, “I am a teacher and I love students. I am here to serve students and it is my pleasure and privilege to live with them and to help them” (Airmet et al., 1998, Box 1: 1/6).

Dr. Atiya’s approach to teaching goes along with his dedication to students. I can attest to his comment to me when I began my doctoral studies with him. He astonished me by saying “Your job is to teach me. You have to dig deep to discover some new historical information which you can teach me and tell the world.”¹⁷ The deaths of Dr. Atiya in 1988 and his wife Lola in 2002 have left a great vacuum in the academic activity at the University of Utah and Middle East studies world-wide. Dr. Atiya, however, will always remain remembered by those who knew him, his works and the institutions he served.

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17 Told to Leonard C. Chiarelli, October 1976.

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