September 21, 2016

An American Orientalist: The Life & Legacy of Edward E. Salisbury (1814-1901) (exhibit curator's talk)

Roberta L. Dougherty, Yale University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/bintalbalad/31/
EXHIBIT TITLE:
An American Orientalist: the Life & Legacy of Edward E. Salisbury (1814-1901)

In 1841 the Yale Corporation appointed alumnus Edward Elbridge Salisbury (class of 1832) as professor of Arabic and Sanskrit languages and literature, the first such position in the Americas.

The exhibit I have prepared in the Memorabilia Room outside has been created to mark the 175th anniversary of his appointment. It introduces visitors to Salisbury’s scholarly development, his career at Yale and after, his benefactions (including two endowed chairs), and the growth of Yale collections of Islamic manuscripts after Salisbury’s death in 1901.

Salisbury was among the earliest members of the American Oriental Society (founded 1842), and energetically supported both the organization and its journal. His most famous student, William Dwight Whitney, became a prominent linguist and would succeed Salisbury as professor of Sanskrit.

After resigning his professorship in 1856, Salisbury continued to contribute to Yale through his service on both the Library Committee and the advisory council of the School of Fine Art. His 1870 donation of his “Oriental Library” made Yale’s the largest library for the study of Arabic, Sanskrit, and Persian in its day.

Materials on view come principally from Yale libraries (Manuscripts and Archives, the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, the Yale Divinity School Library, and the
general collections). Additional items come from the Yale University Art Gallery and the Near East School of Theology (Beirut). Many items are on display for the first time.

Before I begin I wish to thank all of my colleagues in the Yale University Library Department of Manuscripts & Archives, the library of the Divinity School, the department of Library Preservation, the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Library Administration, the Office of the University Printer, the Department of Area Studies and Humanities Research Support, and in particular the Council on Middle East Studies.

SLIDE: title slide
This afternoon I’m going to introduce you to a person that many of you probably never heard of, and whom Yale has likewise nearly forgotten. Because I have a great deal to say about him, I’ll jump right in.

Edward Elbridge Salisbury was related to the wealthy Salisbury clan of Worcester, Massachusetts,¹ and from his earliest years experienced all the privileges of such a connection.

SLIDE: Yale campus, 1830²


² Reproduction of *New Haven CT. Yale College and State House in 1830*. Ca. 1830. Yale University Art Gallery, 1929.779.84 (gift of Rev. Anson Phelps Stokes, B.A. 1896, M.A. [Hon.] 1900, L.L.B. 1921), [http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/36034](http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/36034) --note that at this time, New Haven was co-capital of Connecticut along with Hartford. The State House that can be seen in this image was not razed until 1885 (for the history of the two capitals & their
When Salisbury was 12 years old, his father Josiah Salisbury (1781-1826) died, leaving his mother Abigail Breese Salisbury (1780-1866) to see to his education. Although his father was a graduate of Harvard, the young Salisbury (age 14) was sent to New Haven to study at Yale College in 1828.

Like that of all Yale undergraduates, his course of study emphasized Western classical literature in Greek and Latin, English rhetoric, mathematics and chemistry. In the first of the exhibit cases outside, you can see Salisbury’s personal copy of Homer’s *Iliad*. The Greek epic was required reading for all Yale College freshmen. His boyish bookplate quotes Phaedrus (15 B.C.-ca. 50 A.D.), the Roman composer of fables: “*Nisi utile est quod facimus, frustra est gloria*” (Unless what we do is useful, glory is in vain)—this motto of “usefulness” guided him throughout his life.

This illustration of a tranquil Yale campus of 1830 shows the chapel where what was then considered the College’s library was kept in an upper room. Salisbury would have been a sophomore or junior there at that time.

---

3 Information on EES’ mother’s life can be found in his publication *Family Memorials…* (1885): [http://www.iment.com/maida/familytree/breese/abigail.htm#abigail](http://www.iment.com/maida/familytree/breese/abigail.htm#abigail)

4 NOTE: this is his copy, with his bookplate, but was NOT part of the 1870 donation. It might have come along with the other papers from his estate.
At this time, the expectation was that Yale graduates were principally prepared for ministry. Some of them might have been exposed to the Hebrew language, but its study was not required, and the undergraduates were not particularly enthusiastic about it—as Ben Foster has noted, although Yale president Ezra Stiles “read Hebrew well,… his efforts to teach it to Yale undergraduates met with scant enthusiasm.”

**SLIDE: Ezra Stiles’ Arabic notebook**

Stiles could also read Arabic and could translate it into English with the help of a preexisting text, although his Arabic handwriting is atrocious—what we are looking at here is part of the text of “Nazm al-Jawhar,” a chronicle of world events up to the year 932 C.E. written by Eutychius of Alexandria, an Egyptian bishop known for being the first Christian Egyptian to use the Arabic language in his writings. [NOTE: Stiles’ stilted handwriting, I wonder if he’d copied it from one of the printed editions that presented the text in parallel Arabic & Latin, pub. ca. 1654?—no copy associated with Stiles is in Yale collections.]

**SLIDE: student rebellion (“Blackboard,” Winslow Homer, 1877)**

One of the curious stories associated with Salisbury’s Class of 1832 was that the sophomore members of this class were noted for the “Conic Sections Rebellion” of 1830: students objected to being made to demonstrate problems on the new classroom technology, the blackboard, rather than being allowed to refer to their textbooks, as had been the norm up to that time. 43 rebellious students—HALF the sophomore class!—were dismissed from the college and did not graduate with their classmates. Edward

---

5 Ben Foster, “A Mithradaitic Nation,” in *Assyriologica et Semitica…*, p. 55.

Elbridge Salisbury proved himself a non-“Conic Rebel” and dutifully performed his mathematics requirement as required by his professors. But in later years, when in 1879 he pursued his duties as Secretary of the Class of 1832, Salisbury organized a petition of the surviving members of his class to the officers of Yale College to “heal” his “maimed” class, ensuring that the surviving 18 members of his rebellious classmates were granted the honorary M.A. customarily awarded to Yale graduates. –Here I’ve anticipated my story a bit, but you will see how this act of generosity towards his friends and former classmates is characteristic of Edward’s nature.

SLIDE: Case 1b.2, Class album, 1832, Sterling Memorial Library, Manuscripts & Archives, *Yb71 832s (gift of the estate of E.E. Salisbury)*

When Salisbury graduated from Yale in 1832, there were of course no official yearbooks for graduates of Yale College. Students purchased a blank album from a local stationer’s shop, and then gathered autographs from their friends when they could. Salisbury added biographical notes, such as obituaries, after his friends signed his album.

Salisbury chose for his own epigraph a few lines of verse from the “Fire Worshippers” episode of the epic poem *Lalla Rookh*, published in 1817 by Thomas Moore (1779-1852), the prominent Irish balladeer. This epic poem set in a mythical “Persia” was a huge bestseller in the early 19th century and may have been among Salisbury’s leisure reading, as the poem was not included in either of the two works on rhetoric to which he would have been exposed as an undergraduate.8

---


8 Hugh Blair, *Lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres* (1783 and after, several eds.); and Alexander Jamieson, *A Grammar of Rhetoric and Polite Literature* (1818 and after, several eds.). For
SLIDE: Case 1b.3, inscription of Winthrop from inside the album

Student autographs were usually accompanied by a scholarly epigraph in English or Latin (in this case from Horace, 65-27 B.C.). Salisbury’s friend Charles Winthrop’s added note\(^9\) wryly refers to himself as one of the 43 students expelled from Salisbury’s sophomore class in the “Conic Sections Rebellion” of 1830.\(^{10}\) The quote, in Latin, reads: “That man will live happily as master of himself who can say each day, ‘I have lived.’” Winthrop (1813-1885) was one of those awarded honorary M.A.s in 1879 thanks to a petition organized by Salisbury to redeem his wayward classmates.\(^{11}\)

SLIDE: EES inscription, class album of William Power\(^{12}\)

One class album exists in MSSA collections with EES’ own inscription to his fellow non-Conic Rebel classmate, William Power, who went on to become a physician—a paraphrase of Exodus 33:15, in which Moses speaks to God before the revelation of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Again, this is typical of Salisbury, who liberally sprinkled Bible quotations throughout his personal writings.

SLIDE: Quadrille in NYC, 1830

undergraduate required texts of Salisbury’s day, see the *Yale College Annual Catalogues* for the years 1828-1832, where the titles are listed in abbreviated form.

\(^9\) Referencing Horace, C. 3.29.41-43, “Ille potens sui laetusque deget, cui licet in diem dixisse ‘vixi.’” (That man will live happily as master of himself who can say each day, “I have lived.”)

\(^{10}\) The class album contains 40 signatures, including Winthrop’s.


\(^{12}\) Yb71 832p: [Class album]
After graduating from Yale in 1832 at the age of 18, Salisbury returned to his mother’s home in Boston to pursue the active social life of members of New England’s elite. This image is a bit of speculation on my part, and is based on a brief vignette provided in the diary of 21-year-old Anna Cabot Lowell Quincy (1812-1899), describing an 18-year-old Edward Salisbury, in phrases clearly showing the influence of Jane Austen novels on the young diarist: “…Then came young Mr. Salisbury … with whom I *hammered* thro’ a dance…”13 His later letters and journals also describe how much Salisbury enjoyed a good party as well.

**Slide: Theodore Dwight Woolsey**

Theodore Woolsey (1801-1889), a professor of Greek at Yale who had been one of Salisbury’s teachers during his time there, was also in Boston, courting Salisbury’s sister Martha Salisbury (1812-1852) throughout the social whirl of the spring of 1833. Martha became engaged to Woolsey, whom Anna Quincy described as “a perfect stick, in my humble opinion & if he has agreeable qualities they are … ‘well concealed.’”)14 After the wedding, Salisbury returned to New Haven to pursue theological studies at Yale College while living at his sister’s home.

**SLIDE: Josiah Gibbs**

In October Salisbury wrote home to his mother in Boston, telling her that he had attended a recitation in Hebrew with Josiah Gibbs15 though he had hardly yet begun his

---


14 Quincy, ibid., p. 80.

studies, and added: “As for me I am quite happy, and feel very cheerful in view of my future labors; I intend to find some sphere of usefulness here which may serve to call forth exertion and to enlist my affections; I feel as if I was in the right place.”

In 1834, his mother moved to a house near to that of the young Woolseys in New Haven, and Salisbury continued his studies while living with her.

During this time he would have been studying the Scriptures in Hebrew and Greek, under Gibbs’ tutelage. Gibbs was keenly interested in the idea that knowledge of Biblical languages (which he called “Oriental languages”) enhanced correct engagement with and transmission of Scripture.

**SLIDE: Abby & Edward (Case 2a: Item 3)**

At the age of 22, when Salisbury had passed his examination for the ministry in Boston, he married his cousin Abby Breese Phillips (1814-1869). The image you see here is the only one I have of the two of them, and shows them in later years, when they were both perhaps in their 40s or 50s. At the time of his engagement Salisbury’s mother wrote to her son these words of stern Christian advice and admonition:

> I suppose you already feel that where dear A[bigail] is there is your home—may it be a happy one to you both, & you live long to enjoy it. But the shadows will

---


17 CITATION NEEDED: Yale Annual Catalogs for 1834 ff.

18 Possibly using this copy of Gesenius’ Hebrew grammar that was owned by J.W. Gibbs?: [http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/2280420](http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/2280420)

19 From Agnes Woolsey, *Too Young to Travel Abroad: Journal of a Year of European Travel in 1856-7* (Portsmouth, NH: Peter E. Randall, 1995).
soon lengthen & the ‘fashion of this world pass away.’\textsuperscript{20} How necessary to aim high, to set your marker above the fleeting objects of time….\textsuperscript{21}

At this point in his life, Salisbury still intended to follow a career in Christian ministry, and this was also his mother’s chief desire for her son. But he may already have been tempted to explore the life of scholarship through his contact with Gibbs\textsuperscript{22} and his brother-in-law Woolsey, who had spent time studying in Germany.

Both Salisbury and his bride came from wealthy families, and as he puts it in his autobiography, “We younglings … were amply provided for, and could follow freely our fancies and tastes.”

**SLIDE: EES Passport\textsuperscript{23}**

So, almost immediately after their wedding, the two went off to Europe on the typical “Grand Tour,” [SHOWN: their passport, issued to “Edward Elbridge Salisbury, lady, and two servants”] --as Salisbury wrote later in his autobiography, “We chose to go abroad for travel and self-improvement … we threw ourselves with all the abandon of inexperience in the ways of the world upon the wide ocean and the wider expanse of a

\textsuperscript{20} 1 Corinthians 7:31.

\textsuperscript{21} Letter from Abigail Breese Salisbury in New Haven to her son, E.E. Salisbury, February 25, 1835. Sterling Memorial Library, Manuscripts & Archives, MS 429, box 3, folder 173

\textsuperscript{22} He wrote back to Gibbs from Germany to report on his activities, see Josiah Willard Gibbs papers in MSSA (GEN MSS 1175, Series V, Box 21, Folder: Salisbury…, EES to Gibbs 9 July 1836.

\textsuperscript{23} MS 429, Series 1, Box 6, folder 259, “Legal Documents and Financial Papers”
new life in foreign climes.” — but this was not to be merely a honeymoon or tourism; the journey helped push Salisbury towards a new purpose, “This was a turning point.”

In addition to their letters back home, of which quite a few have survived, EES kept his own journal — and while it was often quite revealing of his moods, sometimes wildly swinging between hope & despair from one day to the next, it was intended to be *shared*—he literally ripped the pages from the notebook from time to time & sent them on home with the explicit notion that they would be read aloud to family members, and it appears that all of the pages of the journal made it home safely. The letters were also clearly written — and their answers received — with the understanding that they would be read aloud, and shared, among family members, which makes their personal revelations even more astounding.

But his principal obstacle to embarking on the study of non-Western languages was the fact that his Yale education had prepared him neither in French nor German—these were the only languages from which it was possible to access advanced study in Arabic & Sanskrit, which had become Salisbury’s goals. In order to acquire these linguae francae of scholarship, part of his time in Europe was devoted to their study with private tutors. And Abby followed him & supported him in this the entire way.

**SLIDE: Oxford, Merton Field & Horace Hayman Wilson**

As I mentioned, Salisbury formed a taste for the academic life during his years at Yale, and thanks to his former Yale professors (and his brother-in-law Woolsey) he traveled

24 CITATION NEEDED
to Europe with letters of introduction that smoothed his way to meet with prominent academics there.

His first visit to one of these greats came about on “a whim,” as he would later write in his autobiography—armed with a copy of an article written by Woolsey in lieu of a letter of introduction, he called upon eminent Oxford Sanskritist Horace Hayman Wilson (1786-1860). Wilson had only been in this post a few years after long service in the East India Company. In his autobiography Salisbury suggests that this visit was “nothing more than curiosity,” as though visiting an Oxford don was something else to check off his “Grand Tour” bucket list, like visiting Blenheim Palace and Stonehenge, and described his meeting thus:

I was, at once, struck with the professor’s sleek and trim appearance, so strongly contrasting with the disorderly, not to say slovenly exterior of most of our college-gentlemen—which is, I suppose, considered among some quite essential to the reputation of a scholar.... In conversation about American colleges he seemed to me to show a quite discreditable depth [?] of ignorance respecting the character and rank even of Harvard and Yale.... He said, with a smile, that he supposed Sanscrit literature had not yet recd much attention in America. I told him, no—but that I hoped it would be attended to in long, and gave him, therefore, a discourse touching the obvious reasons wherefore such studies have been hitherto neglected.26

25 CITATION NEEDED

26 Journal of travels in Europe, 1836, June 10-Sept 6 (pp. 68-69, entry for July 10, 1836). Sterling Memorial Library, Manuscripts & Archives, MS 429, box 5, folder 247
This is the first time Salisbury describes the study of Sanskrit as being “neglected” in the United States. Although he did not enumerate in his journal the “obvious reasons” for this, the simplest reason would have been that there simply were no persons qualified to teach Sanskrit in this country at that time. Salisbury could not help recording in his journal his delight to learn that Wilson used Moses Stuart’s Course of Hebrew Study, also used at Yale, to teach Hebrew at Oxford. In his later autobiography he says he “carried away from the visit a new impression of the reality of the new science.” At Wilson’s recommendation, Salisbury took himself off to Talboy’s bookshop to purchase his first book on Sanskrit literature, Adelung’s Versuch einer literature der Sanskrit-sprache, a bibliography of all Sanskrit works known up to that time (Salisbury’s copy is on view in the exhibit).

**SLIDE: American tourists on the Grand Tour**

While it’s possible to “cherry-pick” from EES’ journal and letters the morsels relating to his growing interest in Oriental languages, for the first two years of their sojourn in Europe he & his wife are principally interested in seeing the sights. From winter 1836 to spring 1837 they traveled in Italy, spending some time in Rome (where Salisbury viewed Oriental MSS in the collections of the Vatican), where Salisbury educated himself in art history. They spent the summer of 1837 in Geneva, where their daughter Mary was born.

**SLIDE: 1836-1838: Encountering Parisian Orientalists**

---

27 CITATION NEEDED
Salisbury intended to study Sanskrit in Berlin that winter, but reports of a cholera outbreak in that city caused a change in his plans. In the fall of 1837 the little family moved to Paris, where Salisbury enrolled at the Ecole spéciale des langues orientales vivantes (founded 1795). Salisbury embarked upon the study of Arabic, Persian, and Hindustani with the renowned Orientalists Baron Silvestre de Sacy and Garcin de Tassy. In his autobiography he paints this portrait of the two great scholars:

De Tassy was a sprightly and vain little Frenchman, but most good-natured, complaisant and helpful to a beginner like myself, while De Sacy … won all hearts by his perfect learning communicated with the gentlest mildness.

Unfortunately Salisbury was to enjoy the benefit of direct instruction from De Sacy for barely two months, for the lectures commenced in December 1837, and De Sacy died suddenly in February 1838. However by March he was able to write home to his BIL, Theodore Woolsey:

You will be glad to know, I am sure, that I am constantly encouraged in my present studies:—my progress in Arabic has really surprised myself.…. I have acquired a more thorough knowledge, already, of the characteristics of the Arabic than I even possessed of the Hebrew—But maybe,—what I have said will, however, serve to show that I can study, even though Abby is with me.

In his journal he elaborates on his impressions of De Tassy, and describes quite frankly how overwhelmed he felt:

\[\text{CITATION NEEDED}\]

He is conceited, that is certain, [I] learnt from him all I could about the advantages for Oriental studies in Paris—he is not impartial … and what am I to regulate these important matters of my life, all alone? I am almost ready to give up in despair;--but no, I am pledged to myself, and I yield not but to the helping hand of Providence.30

In his autobiography he says of his time in Paris, “Thus were laid the rude and imperfectly jointed foundations of my Semitic studies.”

SLIDE: 1838-1839: Encounters with German scholars in Berlin
Salisbury’s encounters with Orientalists in England and France coincided with the decline in support of academic study of these languages in those countries. But it did not matter to Salisbury, for he had already formed the opinion that the place to be for advanced study was Germany, and in particular Berlin. Therefore, after concluding his studies in Paris in May 1838, and after spending another summer in Switzerland, in October 1838 Edward, Abby, and little Mary made their way, at last, to Berlin, the original object of Salisbury’s intellectual pilgrimage. Along the way he passed through Bonn, meeting the Norwegian Orientalist Christian Lassen and everyone else who was *anyone* at the time, people who represented the cutting-edge not only of philology but other sciences as well. He did not linger long in Bonn but hastened on to Berlin to take up his studies with Franz Bopp, writing:

> The great attraction was Prof. Bopp, the leading Sanscritist of his time … whose *Comparative Grammar* was supposed to be the key to all the mysteries of the comparison of languages…. He was a pleasant gentleman with a complacent yet

30 Journal of travels in Europe 1837, May 22-1838 May 26 (p. 91, entry for Oct. 9, 1837). Sterling Memorial Library, Manuscripts & Archives, MS 429, box 5, folder 250
modest sense of his high position in the world of learning—on whom all European scholars were in attendance so to speak, waiting to see what new combinations he might contrive to unlock farther the secrets of the new science.

SLIDE: German Christmas market
The Salisburys enjoyed their time in Berlin, where the German scholars included the young Americans in the local social life, inviting them to dinner parties, fancy-dress balls, and lectures. Among the new things they experienced here was the German celebration of Christmas with trees & presents--Abby wrote this description of the custom for her mother-in-law back in New Haven:

This is a very gay time in Berlin, every one is making preparations for Christmas, a fair has already begun, to last until Christmas, the booths are filled with toys & fancy things, principally for children, & every one seems so busy & happy that it is a pleasure to see them, one enclosure is filled entirely with fine trees to place the presents on, which is the custom in every German family you know, in the evening the booths are illuminated & must present I think a very pretty sight….

If it please God, I trust the next year we may all form a happy family circle around a Christmas tree, for it is such a pretty custom, I think we shall adopt it.31

And in his journal Edward wrote:

I like the festival which thus spreads a joy over half the year, or at least makes one bright spot when, otherwise, all would perhaps be gloom, or dimness; I could suggest, as an addition, however, that there might be some great musical festival on this occasion, to give utterance to the deeper feelings associated with

the season in the performance of the “Messiah”. I think it is not preaching which one wants at such a time….\textsuperscript{32}

Remember, that well into the 19\textsuperscript{th} century a large number of American Christians neither celebrated Christmas nor approved of its observation—Abby & Edward, devout Congregationalists, nevertheless found it an appealing novelty.

SLIDE: Univ. of Berlin, ca. 1830

In his journal entries describing his Berlin days, Salisbury candidly revealed his doubts about whether his intellectual endeavors would ever prove worthwhile, yet felt stimulated to success by the heady scholarly atmosphere he found himself immersed in:

Felt somewhat gloomy,--partly from the impression of the impossibility of attaining the goal which I would wish to reach while here, and to which my present course naturally tends, but which I may never reach, if I am once diverted. My education thus far has been, through my own fault in a great measure, so superficial, that I am in a manner like a bird thrown out of its nest without being fledged. This German atmosphere! How exciting, how developing! One cannot live in it without feeling oneself stimulated to exercise [p. 141] and cultivate every faculty.\textsuperscript{33}

SLIDE: “New Chapel” on Yale campus (where the library would have been housed)

\textsuperscript{32} Journal of travels in Europe 1838, May 27-1839, Aug 6, p. [147].

\textsuperscript{33} Journal of travels in Europe 1838, May 27-1839, August 6 (pp. 140-141, entries for Oct. 25-Nov. 20, 1838). Sterling Memorial Library, Manuscripts & Archives, MS 429, box 5, folder 251
Towards the end of his last year in Europe, EES conceived the notion that his ultimate purpose would be to obtain a post at Yale where he could provide instruction in the languages he had spent much time, energy, and expense to acquire, and he gently hinted this idea in a letter home to his brother-in-law Woolsey.\textsuperscript{34} Salisbury’s wife Abby wrote to her mother-in-law describing Salisbury’s drive to build his book collection thus: “Edward almost begrudges the time he is obliged to spend in buying books, but is very necessary to be done, for upon this much of his future usefulness depends.”\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, Salisbury had even gone to the length of borrowing $1000 from his mother in order to buy a collection of Sanskrit books published in India. [NOTE: this is a GREAT DEAL OF MONEY for the time! Poss. $25K!!] Upon his return to New Haven this unique collection attracted the interest of American scholars,\textsuperscript{36} and set in motion the creation of a professorship of Arabic and Sanskrit at Yale.

SLIDE: Gesenius

Returning from Berlin to the United States, Salisbury passed through Halle and Leipzig, where he had two significant encounters. The first of these was with the German scholar Wilhelm Gesenius (1786-1842) of the University of Halle. Salisbury described Gesenius, “In his features and expression of face he reminded me of some likenesses of Gothe, and his manners are … such as I have imagined those of the poet. He is quick in thought, and lively in conversation.” In this slide we see Gesenius’ book, which

\textsuperscript{34} CITATION NEEDED

\textsuperscript{35} Salisbury Family Papers / MS429 / Series III / Box 11 / Folder no. 45a / [18381122] Abigail Phillips Salisbury to her MIL, Abigail Breese Salisbury, from Berlin

\textsuperscript{36} CITATION NEEDED: AOS early issue
aggregated all 70 Phoenician inscriptions then known to exist, and established Gesenius’ stature as a founder of ancient Phoenician studies.

During their encounter Gesenius opened this book and offered Salisbury a curious challenge: “He said I ought to be able, at least to read the characters, while I was obliged to tell him I could not.” But Salisbury was pleased with Gesenius’ praise for the accomplishments of Yale alumnus Eli Smith (1801-1857, class of 1821), a missionary in Syria and expert Arabist, and recalled: “I felt my own littleness of attainment, and a new impulse to exertion; it is good for one, although humiliating, to realize how far one comes short; w[oul]d that the impression might be abiding!”

**SLIDE: 1839: Eli Smith and the American translation of the Bible into Arabic**

In March 1839 Salisbury met Eli Smith (1801-1857, Class of 1821), a missionary who had been sent to Malta to manage the printing press of the American Board of Christian Foreign Missions. As indicated during Salisbury’s encounter with Gesenius, Smith was renowned for his expertise in Arabic and was at the time engaged in what would become his life’s work, a new translation of the Bible into that language.

Smith died before he could see this work completed, and the finished Bible was published in Beirut between 1860 and 1865 by Cornelius Van Dyck (1818-1895). The manuscripts of his Arabic translation are held by the Near East School of Theology in Beirut, and we see in this slide one of the pages, from the translation of the gospel of Matthew.\(^37\)

---

\(^37\) Reproduction of manuscript of the Arabic translation of the Bible (Matthew 3:6-10), 1852-1860. Special Collections Library, Near East School of Theology, Beirut
The photo of Smith also shows his wife Sarah Lanman Smith (1801-1857), who founded a girls’ school in Beirut in 1833 welcoming children of all faiths. In 1836 the couple were shipwrecked on a journey from Beirut to Izmir, and all their possessions—including precious samples of Arabic calligraphy that Smith had been collecting as models for his new Arabic typeface—went down with their ship. Sarah died of complications from the disaster three months later.

Salisbury’s journal describes their meeting in Leipzig at the shop of the printer Tauchnitz, where Smith was supervising the casting of his improved typeface, later called “American Arabic.” His conversation with Smith ranged from noting Gesenius’ recent work on the ancient Himyaritic script of Yemen, to the response of an Arab poet to a translation of classical Arabic poetry by the late Silvestre de Sacy, to the ease of collecting Arabic manuscripts in Constantinople and Cairo, and finally Smith’s comments on travel in Syria in the early 19th century, paraphrased by Salisbury thus: “It is unnecessary, except sometimes to avoid notice, to wear the costume of the country in travelling there…. Mr. Smith says he travels in Syria, as a foreigner, with as little fear as in Europe.”38

Smith and Salisbury formed a lasting friendship, and among the manuscripts later donated by Salisbury to Yale are half a dozen given to him personally by Smith. Smith has a memorial plaque in Grove Street Cemetery (New Haven), where other family members are also buried.

38 Journal of travels in Europe 1838, May 27-1839, August 6 (p. 193, entry for March 25, 1839). Sterling Memorial Library, Manuscripts & Archives, MS 429, box 5, folder 251
SLIDE: 1841-1843: A new Yale professorship, and further European study (marble busts)

Salisbury returned to New Haven in August 1839 and shortly afterwards gave what would be the first of many gifts to his alma mater—these three marble busts of Greek notables, donated to the Trumbull Gallery. These sculptures had been acquired by the Salisburyys while in Rome during their Grand Tour. The sculptor, Thomas Crawford (1814-1857), would later become one of those engaged to create the decorations of the U.S. Capitol Building—including the statue of Freedom that tops the dome! But at the time of their meeting in 1837, the artist was described by Abby in a letter home thus:

Edward has … engaged an American sculptor to copy their [the Vatican’s] antique busts of Demosthenes, Cicero & Homer,39 this same [p. 3] artist is employed at present, in taking busts of many American ladies & gentlemen, he is a young man who seems to have had much to contend with from poverty & other circumstances.40

SLIDE: Yale Corp. vote

On August 17, 1841, the Yale Corporation appointed Salisbury as Professor of Arabic and Sanskrit Languages and Literature, “to give such instruction from time to time, as may suit his convenience”—but with no salary:

39 By American artist Thomas Crawford (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Crawford_(sculptor)), 1814-1857, whose sculpture of Freedom tops the dome of the U.S. Capitol! These were later donated by EES in 1839 for the Trumbull Gallery at Yale College (see Corporation minutes) and are still in the collection of the YUAG: Cicero (http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/592), Demosthenes (http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/591), and Homer (http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/593)

40 Salisbury Family Papers / MS429 / Series III / Box 11 / Folder no. 45b / [18370222] Abigail Phillips Salisbury to her MIL, Abigail Breese Salisbury, from Rome, p. [2-3]
Whereas the Arabic and Sanscrit Languages are original and leading languages of the Eastern Nations, and the study of them is acquiring importance, on account of our Missionary efforts & commercial intercourse with those regions, and also has important bearings on our own language & literature, as well as on the History of the World;

Voted, that a Professorship of the Arabic & Sanscrit Languages be established in this College—

Whereupon the Board proceeded to appoint Edward E. Salisbury A.M. an Alumnus of this College to said Professorship, to give such instruction from time to time, as may suit his convenience, without the expectation however of a pecuniary compensation from this Board, as the funds of the College do not at present authorize a compensation to be given to said Professor.

Rather typically for the Yale records as I found them, this vote appears in the record without any indication of prior discussion, or indication of need, or any dissenting opinions. The fact that EES could be got w/o salary (as TDW would have known he was a man of means) was possibly also a contributing factor. Yale’s finances at the time were poor and would not improve until after the Civil War.

Salisbury (with what I have come to learn was his typical modesty) immediately requested a year’s leave of absence before taking up his post, in order to return to Germany and continue his studies, a request the Corporation granted. Though appointed, he did not take up teaching right away, but in December 1841 was
appointed to a committee charged with raising funds for the construction of a new campus library (the present Dwight Hall).41

SLIDE: University of Bonn

In the spring of 1842, with this work underway, he sailed for Europe with Abby and daughter Mary to spend a year studying Sanskrit and Arabic in Bonn (which he had neglected in his previous tour), studying there with professors Freytag and Lassen. In a letter home to his brother-in-law Woolsey, he describes the intensity of the intellectual stimulation available to him there:

I am much pleased with Bonn as a place of study, and am happy to be able to say, that I think I have gained in one month, here, more than I should have gained in them, at home,—happy, because it is a proof to myself that I have not come these thousands of miles from a dear home, in vain.... Profs. Freytag and Lassen are all I could desire in respect to their qualities as instructors.... In Arabic, I am reading some of the most difficult literature...

Salisbury had already left for Europe when “a few gentlemen interested in Oriental literature” founded the American Oriental Society in Boston in September 1842,42 and—naturally enough, given his stature as the first holder of a professorship in Arabic and Sanskrit in the Americas—immediately elected Salisbury to membership. The AOS is

---

41 The committee was Day, Warner, & Salisbury; Woolsey was added in April 1842 when the committee was charged with arranging for construction to begin if $13,000 could be raised by 1 June ("A record of the votes & proceedings of the Prudential Committees of the Corporation of Yale College in New Haven," 1800-1851. Yale University Corporation and Prudential Committee Minutes / RU 307 / Series II / Box 44.

one of the oldest scholarly societies in the United States, and the oldest that is devoted to a particular field of scholarship.

**SLIDE: De Sacy & quote**

EES’ return to Europe also gave him the opportunity to purchase books and manuscripts offered in the first auction of Silvestre de Sacy’s library, held in Paris in April-May 1843, just as he was making his plans to return to the United States. The thousands of printed works & manuscripts in this collection were auctioned at three separate sessions (the other two were held in the spring in the years 1846 and 1847). The quote you see in the slide is commonly attributed to Silvestre de Sacy, although I was unable to identify its actual source.

**SLIDE: De Sacy auction catalog & Mme Vve Dondey-Dupre**

Salisbury’s copy of the catalog of the auction of Silvestre de Sacy’s books is not annotated, however this copy gifted to the library in later years includes marginalia specifying (in ink) the price paid for each title, and (in pencil) the vendors who purchased each one. Salisbury’s purchases from the auction came from at least two vendors that I have been able to identify: Duprat, and Mme Ve Dondey-Dupre—the latter is a person I would love to learn more about, the widow of a French printer & bookseller, there are many books in the EES collection that indicate they could be purchased at her “Librairie orientale,” where “On fournit tous les ouvrages, soit de France, soit de l’étranger. On imprime dans presque toutes les langues de l’Asie.”

---

43 His personal copy of the catalogue of MSS is dated January 1846.

44 (chiefly the Parisian booksellers François Antoine Brutus Duprat, 1795-187-?, or Dondey-Dupré, who may be Madame Veuve, b. 1803).
By the time of his return to New Haven, Salisbury’s personal collection of books related to Arabic, Sanskrit, Pali, Persian, and the literatures and civilizations of those languages, would be as unique in the United States as was his own professorship of Arabic & Sanskrit.

**SLIDE: 1843-1850: Inauguration and first students (Yale College ca. 1843)**

Salisbury returned from Europe in April 1843. His inaugural discourse at Yale College, delivered that August, surveyed for his audience (which would be who? I have no idea!) the history of Arabic and Sanskrit literature (and the state of the art in their study).45

---

45 Yale College library at time of EES appointment was in the New Chapel (erected 1824), the library “removed to an apartment prepared for it in the new chapel” (Belden 1843: 56; marked “F” on the campus map, Belden 1843: 71).

Hebrew, French, German, Italian, or Spanish, “at the option of the student,” offered in the junior year (Belden 1843: 73-74). Arabic/Sanskrit are not mentioned as options for undergraduates. “The College library is best furnished in theology, and in the sciences; and is most deficient in classical and general literature. In classical literature, the private collections belonging to the gentlemen in that department make up to them, in a good measure, what is wanting in the public library” (Belden 1843: 96).

“The room which contains the library is over the College Chapel. This apartment, for some years past, ‘besides being unsafe in respect to fire, and inconvenient of access, has been too small to receive the additional books which might have been purchased with the income of some small permanent funds devoted to that purpose” (Belden 1843: 96). (Engraving of new Yale College Library, Belden 1843: 99; floor plan, Belden 1843: 102)

“Section IX. The Theological Department. The Theological Building stands at the northern extremity of the line of College edifices [marked “J” on the campus map, Belden 1843: 71]. It was erected in 1835. [engraving: View of the Theological Building] … The conditions for entrance are, hopeful piety, and a liberal education at some College, unless the candidate has otherwise qualified himself for pursuing advantageously the prescribed course of studies.

“No charges are made for tuition or lectures.
He commented, meaningfully:

You perceive, gentlemen, that my field of study is broad and requires much minuteness of research in order to know it thoroughly. I profess only to have set foot upon it... and to do what may be in my power to attract others into it, though I am aware I must expect to labor, for a time, almost alone.... I shall eagerly seek to add brightness to my flickering lamp from the shining lights about me.

Salisbury offered lectures on classical Arabic literature but his teaching duties were light. He threw himself into the work of publishing the American Oriental Society’s journal, and in 1846-47 served on the Yale committee that established the new post-graduate Department of Philosophy and the Arts (the future Graduate School of Arts and Sciences).

But within a few years after his return to NH, various contemporary accounts indicate that he was losing his spark, sinking into a “morbid modesty” (per Hadley) and overwhelming feelings of inability & unpreparedness. Although he was by then deeply involved in the affairs of the still-young AOS (of which he was one of the earliest members), he had at that point no students and no seeming purpose.

“No funds have as yet been granted to this Department for defraying the expenses of indigent students.

“The rooms in the Theological Building are without charge, and are in part furnished.” (Belden 1843: 110-111)

46 CITATION NEEDED
Never confident in his own abilities as an instructor, he attempted to resign his 
professorship in 1848, writing to the Yale Corporation:47

   One who pursues oriental studies … can not at present have, in this country, that 
sympathy & cooperation of others engaged in the same pursuit, which even the 
orientalist of Europe feels constantly the need of, in order to overcome the 
obstructions in a field comparatively so little explored. 48

--Somehow, his colleagues convinced him to remain.


48 In JAOS vol. 1, no. 4, Salisbury (as corresponding sec’y) presented this Annual Report of the Directors in the proceedings for 1847-8: “It seems evident that it must be some time, before there will be any considerable number of persons, in this country, who apply themselves specifically to oriental studies; not only because these studies want the attractiveness which general appreciation gives to an object, and the means of prosecuting them exist to a very limited extent, among us; but also because the oriental student in this country finds little sympathy, at present, between himself and the community of literary men, at large, around him, and is obliged to depend almost solely upon the close atmosphere of the narrow circle of personal activity, for the sustenance of intellectual life. But our Society may do much to correct this state of things, by contributing to the naturalization of oriental studies in this western clime; and we think it has advanced, during the past year, a few steps in the direction proper to be given to its operations for this end.

“One thing which, almost more than any other, we consider as auguring favorably for its usefulness, is its having begun to place itself in the right position with respect to the already numerous and constantly increasing body of intelligent and educated Americans resident in various countries of the East, chiefly missionaries, who have it in their power to open the field of oriental learning, in an interesting manner, to those who are strangers to it, as well as to afford important materials to others, by communicating personal observations and the fruits of familiar knowledge.” (p. xlviii)
Later that year he attracted his first known student for Sanskrit, James Hadley (1821-1872), and in the following year William Dwight Whitney (1827-1894). The two men relied greatly upon one another in their studies; Hadley’s diary often mentioned Salisbury’s disinterest in hearing their recitations but Hadley often described his own keen interest in trying to encourage Salisbury. This passage, I believe, is worth quoting at length:

Went to Professor Salisbury’s, with very little of a lesson…. Salisbury spoke very freely with us, wishing that if we preferred going on by ourselves we would do so…. He does not shrink from the labor—thinks the exercise has been of service to him—but wishes us to follow our own preferences. We must go on with him, I believe. It is better on the whole for us. We often get new views from him, and the responsibility of the recitation is useful. But beside that, it is better for him; it is in the line of his profession, and makes him feel that his profession is not profession merely but likewise practice. It gives him the discipline of teaching, which every teacher knows to be invaluable. It gives body to his department, and actual active existence, making it a concrete somewhat and not a mere name or abstraction, as some are apt enough to suppose of a Sanskrit and Arabic professorship. It lays a foundation for future effort of the same kind, presenting an example of regular and thorough instruction in these subjects which may not be without influence on others who feel a vocation for similar studies….49

With Salisbury’s blessing and letters of introduction, Whitney left New Haven in 1850 for Berlin, and remained in Europe three years, studying with other German Indologists including Albrecht Weber (1825-1901) and Rudolph von Roth (1821-1895, professor at Tubingen). During this time he also acted on Salisbury’s behalf to purchase Sanskrit and Arabic type for use in printing the newly established Journal of the American Oriental Society (examples in the exhibit), writing home to Salisbury: “You do not need to be assured that I am more than ready to do my best to help the introduction of the first

49 Diary of James Hadley, p. 35.
Sanskrit type into America: no one could be more rejoiced than I that such a thing is going to happen.”\textsuperscript{50}

\textbf{SLIDE: 1850-1894: the Atharvaveda}

Whitney, a precocious student, devoted his Sanskrit studies to preparing a scholarly edition of the \textit{Atharvaveda}, part of the Hindu scriptures. This he later co-published with his teacher Rudolf von Roth in 1856, cementing his stature as a scholar of Sanskrit.

Noting Whitney’s progress, Salisbury proposed in early 1853 that Whitney teach Sanskrit at Yale College in his place. The Yale Corporation approved this plan, and appointed Whitney as Professor of Sanskrit Language & Literature in 1854. He also taught “Ancient and Modern Persian, and Egyptian languages.”

Salisbury covered Whitney’s base salary, which Whitney augmented by teaching German—in particular to an evening class of young women, one of whom Whitney would later marry. Whitney also managed the AOS library (deposited at Yale in 1855) and assisted Salisbury with editing and publishing the \textit{JAOS}.

Whitney would go on to a distinguished career as Yale professor of comparative philology, president of the AOS (from 1884), founder of the American Philological Association, and editor of the \textit{Century Dictionary}.

\textbf{SLIDE: 1850-1871: Niagara Falls!}

\textsuperscript{50} Letter from William Dwight Whitney (1827-1894), in Berlin, to E.E. Salisbury, in New Haven. February 9, 1852. Sterling Memorial Library, Manuscripts & Archives, MS 429, box 4, folder 215
Salisbury successfully resigned his Arabic professorship in 1856 (writing from Niagra Falls!), writing:

Being convinced of the propriety of terminating all my official relations—inasmuch as, for various reasons, having reference to my family and myself, they must be merely nominal, and consequently neither useful, reputable nor agreeable, I hereby respectfully resign my place in Yale College, and desire it to be distinctly understood that no consideration will induce me to retain it. I express myself so decidedly because on a previous occasion my wishes to the same effect were over-rulled by mistaken kindness, and it must not be so again.

He continued to be active in Yale’s Library Committee and the Committee for the new School of Fine Arts (and in the AOS and several other academic societies), but he would never teach again. His bequests continue to benefit Yale to this day.

**SLIDE: Dana & Whitney**

In 1850 Salisbury contributed to endow the Silliman chair (now the “Silliman Professor of Chemistry”) for James Dwight Dana (1813-1895), creating an enduring legacy for education in chemistry at Yale. He also endowed Whitney’s Sanskrit chair in 1869, countering a tempting offer from Harvard—although the chair was not named for him until 1919.

**SLIDE: EES Bookplates & the Oriental Library**

After his wife Abby’s death late in 1869, Salisbury experienced another turning point. In 1870 he gave Yale College his entire “Oriental Library”—hundreds of volumes, including the rare books and manuscripts he had purchased from the auctions of

---

51 He had already paid $1200 p.a. for two years for Dana’s salary, on this occasion he offered $4000 to be paid over four years, and Woolsey offered $2000 on the same terms, on the condition that the Corp. raise the remainder to a total of $100k.
Silvestre de Sacy’s library in the 1840s, making Yale’s the largest such collection in the nation at that time. These latter are generally identified with a bookplate reading “Presented by Prof. Edward Elbridge Salisbury, 1870,” which sometimes appears along with his personal bookplate, and sometimes is pasted over it. In addition to his existing book & manuscript collections, Salisbury provided funds for further acquisitions of books related to Oriental languages. He valued his gift at that time at $28,000 (nearly half a million in today’s dollars), surely one of the most valuable gifts a U.S. library had ever received up to that point.

SLIDE: Yale College Library, ca. 1846
The books were to be shelved in the University Library all together under the name of the “Salisbury Oriental Collection,” and Salisbury further specified that his personal bookplates were to be removed from all of the donated items. Thankfully, this latter instruction seems to have been ignored.

52 Wilmarth S. Lewis refers to Salisbury in his dedication as among the “builders of Yale’s collections,” and EES is also mentioned in the section on the library among the faculty members who have donated their personal collections (p. 6), with no specifics of the nature of the donation or the fact that EES had set up a fund for library acquisitions. When describing the building of the “Old Library” (now Dwight Hall), Lewis does not mention Salisbury’s contributions both financially and through his activity on the Library Committee. Kurkis Awwad’s 1950 UNESCO-funded visit to the Yale library to examine the collections: he only mentions seeing the Landberg MSS, which he says at that time were held in the AOS Library (?), the Babylonian tablet collection, and the collection of Arabic MSS in the Medical Historical Library, and doesn’t mention Salisbury’s collection or the Wellcome-Kraus, which had added 370 Arabic MSS in 1949!

53 Salisbury would make another donation to the library: in 1896 he proposed to have all Yale Library books dealing with Orientalist topics (and in this case particularly Assyriology and other materials dealing with the archaeology of the ancient Near East) transferred to the collection named for him, that he would reimburse the library for their cost as though he had bought them in the first place, and that he would assume the cost of all subscriptions and additional titles to be selected for this collection. Alas, his eponymous collection was eventually
SLIDE: Mahometis Saracenorum...
This group of materials included a number of early European imprints, such as the first translation of the Quran into a European language (Machvmetis Saracenorvm..., 1543). (At a later point these rare European imprints were removed from the general collection and can now be found among the Beinecke’s collections).  

Then, he and his daughter left New Haven to spend several months in Europe, while the Yale librarian emptied his house of his precious books.

SLIDE: 1870-1901: Salisbury’s later years (Evelyn & Church St. house)
Soon after returning from Europe, Salisbury married Evelyn MacCurdy (1823-1917), only child of Judge Charles MacCurdy (1797-1891), a Fellow of the Yale Corporation from 1847-49.  

The wealthy and energetic Evelyn was interested in genealogy. Salisbury enthusiastically joined her in this field, each of them publishing articles on this topic through the 1880s. In 1892 the couple funded and co-published a massive five-volume work on the genealogy of their families and other elites of Lyme, Connecticut. Evelyn

absorbed into the general collection, probably at the time that Yale library collections were moved into the then-new Sterling Memorial Library building in 1831.

---

54 Some of these can be discovered through a keyword search in the online catalog as the presence of EES’ bookplate was sometimes noted for the items that went to the Beinecke—but not always!  

54 There is an unknown further number of EES items to be found in the Old Yale classification, and in these the bookplates are not traced in the catalog record.  

54 In the course of preparing this paper, I have managed to identify a number of them, but I don’t know what proportion of the original bequest is represented by these.

55 Also lecturer in life insurance, 1873-1875
was a founder of the Connecticut Society of Colonial Dames, and used her family’s wealth well. She contributed to the cause of children’s education in southern Connecticut through her endowment in 1893 of the MacCurdy-Salisbury Educational Foundation in Lyme. She further provided for two academic chairs in her father’s name: the Charles J. MacCurdy chair in anthropology at Yale, and the Charles J. MacCurdy chair of American History at Connecticut College.

**SLIDE: G. Grant MacCurdy**

Evelyn’s genealogical researches unearthed her distant cousin, George Grant MacCurdy, a Harvard student pursuing studies in archaeology. She & Salisbury treated him as an adopted son (with no children of their own, Salisbury’s daughter Mary having died in 1875), and sent him to Europe to further his education. With support from the Salisburys, MacCurdy eventually became Curator of Archaeology and Anthropology in the Yale Peabody Museum’s Division of Anthropology (1902-1931).

**SLIDE: EES**

Though he served a second term as AOS president (1873-1880), Salisbury published nothing more on “Oriental” topics after 1874. He remained involved in Yale affairs, serving on the library committee (1872-1899)\(^{56}\) and on the advisory board for the School of Fine Arts (1865-1901).

In 1898 he made an extraordinary proposal to the library: to transfer all its volumes relating to ancient Near Eastern archaeology to his “Oriental Library,” he reimbursing the cost, and covering the cost of additional recommended titles and journal

---

\(^{56}\) Correspondence scrapbook, 12/7/1899
subscriptions. In the following year his many gifts to the library were recognized by the
members of the Library Committee thusly:

It is appropriate [to] recall at this time his large gifts to the library, which have
been veritable landmarks in its history.... The gift in 1870 of his Oriental books
and MSS., a collection which has been made with unusual care and expense, with
the additions since made to it, has raised this one important department to a
measure of completeness which might well be set as a standard for the whole
library.57

In his autobiography, written in the form of a letter to George Grant MacCurdy,
Salisbury reflected on the usefulness of his life’s work:

In 1841 I was made Professor of Arabic and Sanskrit at Yale—an absurdly named
professorship, for to worthily cover such a broad field, one must have mastered
all languages of civilized man... The pretension implied in my professional title,
I think, discouraged me from the first; ... I never advanced much beyond the
position where I stood at the start, and not being able to keep the sources filled
up I never really welcomed any aspirants to take from me what little
I knew.”

Well into the nineteenth century, Yale students relied on professors’ private libraries to
supplement the college library’s holdings. Professors’ home addresses were published
in the Yale Catalogue, and homes were rarely locked, so students could easily use these
private collections.

57 Yale Library Committee’s acknowledgement of all Salisbury’s donations to the library (Dec. 7,
1899). Sterling Memorial Library, Manuscripts & Archives, MS 429, box 4, folder 228
Salisbury’s “Oriental Library,” donated in 1870 at what appears to have been a turning point in his life, eventually grew to some 4,500 items, including 100 manuscripts and many early printed items from Europe and India. These include the earliest examples of printing in Arabic type and the earliest translations into European languages of texts from Arabic and Sanskrit.

As I mentioned, this collection was shelved in the “New Library” building (Dwight Hall on the Old Campus) as the “Salisbury Oriental Library.” Many items were re-bound, making the collection visually distinct from the rest of the library’s collections.

Along with the Landberg collection of Arabic manuscripts (acquired in 1900) and Yale’s significant Japanese and Chinese collections, Salisbury’s “Oriental Library” was singled out for mention among Yale’s treasures in the magisterial eleventh edition (1910-11) of the Encyclopædia Britannica.  

Briefly describe some highlights:

**SLIDE: Tahtawi & De Sacy**


Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Salisbury MSS 64 (presented by E.E. Salisbury in 1870)

Rifa‘ah Raﬁ‘ al-Ṭahtāwī (1801-1873), an Egyptian educator and intellectual, was sent to Paris in 1826 with a group of Egyptian students to study Western sciences. In his report

---

58 *EB* (1911), v. 28, p. 900b.
of this trip, Takhliš  al-ibriż ilá talkhiš Barīż (Refining the gold in the description of Paris, pub. 1834), he mentions his French professor Silvestre de Sacy several times, at one point commenting,

In spite of appearances, the idea that foreigners do not understand Arabic when they do not speak it as well as the Arabs is without any foundation. Proof this is my encounter in Paris with a distinguished French personality, among the Franks for his knowledge of Oriental languages, especially and Persian, whose name is Baron (al-bārūn) Silvestre de Sacy…. when he reads, he has a fōreign accent and he cannot speak Arabic unless he has book in his hands. If he wants to explain an expression, he uses strange words, which he is unable to pronounce properly…. [but] his knowledge, particularly as regards Arabic, is famous…. In some of his books, I have seen proof of his great insight, significant explanations, and powerful refutations.

Ṭaḥtāwī presented the book on view, a commentary on a work of classical Arabic poetry, as a gift to his Orientalist friend.

SLIDE: Salisbury MSS 7

- Durrat al-ghawwas fi awham al-khawass
- Former De Sacy 116
- copied & corrected by De Sacy from a MS sold to the Emperor of Russia in 1825 by M. Rousseau 59
- Part of EES original collection

---

SLIDE: 1900-1949: Additions to the collection (Landberg)

In 1903 Yale professor of Semitics Charles Torrey (1863-1956) wrote that up to 1900, “Yale could boast … of the [Arabic] manuscripts acquired by the late Professor Edward E. Salisbury… it was a worthy beginning, and no libraries in the land were better off.”

Princeton had already captured the spot of largest collection in the U.S. to date with its acquisition of the Brill manuscripts in 1900--which Torrey assumed was driven largely by the motivation to best Yale’s acquisition of the Landberg collection. But the continual game of one-upmanship by the venerable East Coast universities was scored by Torrey as an overall victory for the United States, which by these twin acquisitions amounting to over two thousand MSS in total would ensure that country’s importance in the field of Semitic studies.

In 1900, an opportunity to build on this came when the collection of Carlo Landberg (1848-1924) came on to the market in Germany. Landberg was a prominent Swedish Orientalist who had a particular interest in Arabic dialects. This collection of some 800 items came to the university as a gift from American banker & philanthropist Morris Ketchum Jesup after the collection was put on sale in Germany shortly after Landberg’s 75th birthday.

---
60 CITATION NEEDED
61 https://www.wdl.org/en/item/17246/
62 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morris_Ketchum_Jesup
Landberg, similarly to Salisbury, was wealthy enough to direct the course of his own life, and he spent decades living in Arabic-speaking countries and recording local dialects and customs.

SLIDE

**Landberg MSS 365:**

- Dhikr kalam al-nas fi manba al-Nil ...
- Suggested opening: Map of source of Nile in the Mountains of the Moon on f. 8a
- 1655
- [http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/3819553](http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/3819553)

SLIDE

**Landberg MSS 543:**

- [Rasāʾil] / Muhammad al-Mahdī ibn ʿAbd Allāh.
- Landberg notes; letter from Torrey to Nemoy (17 Dec. 1951) confirming authenticity of document
- Cf. JAOS, 31(1911), 368-69, from where it would seem that C. Landberg’s original manuscript 543 (a volume of "170 Seiten") is now in the Egyptian Intelligence Office in Cairo and that it was captured at the battle of Toski in 1889; Sverdrup is less certain about the exact provenance of the Yale copy.
- 1885
- [http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/3829720](http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/3829720)

Copies of letters sent by the Mahdi to various recipients. Shown here is the beginning of an undated letter sent to General Charles Gordon (1883-1885), inviting him to embrace Islam. The letter includes the crucial phrase: “If, on our arrival, we find you Muslim then all will be well; but if not ‘then God will accomplish what is decreed.””

---

63 Quran 8:43
SLIDE: Wellcome-Kraus
Next to be added to Yale’s collections of Islamic manuscripts was the Wellcome-Kraus collection, consisting of about 370 items purchased in 1949 from the renowned antiquarian book-dealer Hans P. Kraus of New York. The bulk of the collection (about 300 items) is in Arabic, the remainder in Persian.

SLIDE: war Quran in leather bag
There are some truly unusual items in this collection, such as the item we’re looking at here—a rather handsome leather bag containing a large Quran written in a Maghribi-style script, that was looted by British troops after the massacre at Benin…! This is not the only trophy of colonialist war that is in the collection; there is also another (partial) Quran that was looted after the 1898 British operations in the Punjab.

SLIDE: African Dalail al-khayrat (before 1865)
The text is a well-known collection of prayers to God for blessings upon Prophet Muhammad by a Sufi author. It has been in wide use amongst Muslims for six centuries, and there are several examples in Yale’s collections. This copy was probably made somewhere in West Africa. Shown here is a stylized depiction of Islam’s two holiest cities, Mecca and Medina.

SLIDE: Turandot
This collection of five long narrative poems is among the poet Nizāmī’s best-known works. Shown here is an episode from one of them, the Haft paykar (“Seven beauties”).

---

In this scene the hero Bahrām Gūr (who also figures in the Persian epic *Shāhnāmah* by the poet Firdawsī) pays a visit to the Princess of the Red Chamber, a cruel Russian princess who also inspired the story of Turandot.

**SLIDE: 1972: Additions to the collection (Rescher)**

Oskar Rescher (1883-1972) was born in Germany but in 1928 made Istanbul his permanent home, converting to Islam and holding a number of academic posts at various libraries and universities there. He was said to have lived in a house overlooking the Bosphorus that he shared with many cats! His license to teach in Germany was revoked by the Nazis in 1933, and in 1937 he became a Turkish citizen. Yale had purchased items from Rescher’s collection on a piecemeal basis throughout the 1960s, and in 1972, after his death, the Beinecke purchased a group of over 200 items. These were described by Leon Nemoy in the *Yale University Library Gazette* as “not a dealer’s but a scholar’s collection … assembled during half a century of continuous residence in a major Muslim state…. It was brought together not with a view toward eventual profitable sale, but with a scholar’s expert knowledge of the field.” Nemoy noted the relative difficulty at the time for any Western library to build collections in Near Eastern manuscripts, owing to what he described as “the recent upsurge in nationalism in the Near East, with its concomitant growth of solicitude for native cultural and antiquarian treasures.”

---

65 CITATION NEEDED
These items are primarily in Arabic, however there are also manuscripts in Persian and Turkish, and the topic coverage is broad. In examining items from the Rescher collection myself, I found that a number of them were in quite fragile condition.

SLIDE
Reproduction of Qurʼān. 13th century.
Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Arabic MSS Suppl. 80

On the right, the page on which the opening verse of the Qurʼān appeared had gone missing and was supplied in a later hand by an elegant calligrapher. On the left, the original 13th-century manuscript continues with the second surah (The Cow). This item was previously owned by Sultan Abdülaziz (1830-1876), the 32nd Sultan of the Ottoman Empire.

SLIDE
Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Arabic MSS Suppl. 166

Bound with three other didactic titles, this was a well-known work on the science of pedagogy.

SLIDE

66 It appears that only those Persian & Turkish items that were purch. separately got cataloged as none (?) of those listed in the 1972 checklist (Nemoy 1972) are in Orbis. There are 624 Orbis records with Rescher’s name in the 561 field = a group of ca. 200 items was purchased in 1970, and other items purchased in smaller groups b/t 1964-1972 up to >300 items.
Suđi Efendi Bosnali (d. ca. 1596). Reproduction of Kitab qawa‘id-i Qur‘ān. 1693.
Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Arabic MSS Suppl. 218

A work in Ottoman Turkish on the rules for oral recitation of the Qur’ān, a commentary on Ibn al-Jazari’s (1350-1429) Muqaddimah. Bound with 4 other titles.

**SLIDE: 2005: Additions to the collection (Hartford Seminary Arabic manuscripts)**

In 2005, the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library purchased the Arabic manuscript collection of the Hartford Seminary. This collection was built by Duncan Black MacDonald (1863-1943), an American-Scottish Orientalist and professor of Semitic languages at the seminary (1892-1940). An expert in the Arabian Nights, he helped to make the Hartford Seminary a center for Arabic studies in the early twentieth century.

The Hartford collection grew through additions from faculty and Congregationalist missionaries traveling abroad. MacDonald also had the assistance of Armenian émigré Madiros Harootioon Ananikian (1875-1924), assistant librarian at the seminary from 1905-1914. With financial support provided by Robert Garrett (1875-1961), a former Olympic athlete turned collector, Ananikian amassed nearly 1200 manuscripts for the Hartford collection between about 1918 and his death in 1924.

This acquisition secured Yale’s position as the third-largest collection of Islamic manuscripts in the United States. The collection is noteworthy for its theological manuscripts and its beautifully illuminated Qur’āns.

**SLIDE**
Reproduction of Qurʾān, 1834.
Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Hartford Seminary Arabic MSS 1262

The “carpet page” of this Qurʾān is completely covered in gold.

SLIDE
Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Hartford Seminary Arabic MSS 200

Ghazzālī was a prolific and authoritative Muslim scholar from Tūs (Iran), which is also the burial place of Firdawṣī (see case 8). This work is a famous treatise on Islamic doctrines, Sufism, and Islamic religious life. MacDonald described this manuscript in the JAOS of March 1894.

SLIDE
Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Hartford Seminary Arabic MSS 275

Like the Maqāmaṯ of Bādīʾ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (case 7), the Maqāmaṯ of al-Ḥarīrī similarly feature the picaresque adventures of its hero in the Islamic empire of the twelfth century. This copy of the text was made in China, demonstrating the wide geographical distribution of such classical Arabic texts.

SLIDE: Yale library collections in support of Middle East and South Asian studies—where are we now?
After Salisbury’s gifts of his “Oriental Library” and the funds to maintain and increase them in the late nineteenth century, Yale’s printed and manuscript collections in non-Western languages continued to grow, albeit slowly. The pace increased in the 1960s, when Yale joined other U.S. research libraries in the PL-480 program run by the Library of Congress.

This venture made it possible for libraries to increase their collections of modern books, periodicals, and other materials published all over the world. Yale continues to participate in the program for the acquisition of materials from South Asia, while working with individual vendors for materials published in Middle Eastern countries.

Special collections materials related to South Asia and the Middle East, including manuscripts and personal papers, also continue to grow, and significant new acquisitions of such items are made nearly every year.

CONCLUSION

When summing up his life in the brief autobiography written at the request of his adopted son George Grant MacCurdy in 1894, Salisbury concluded, “As concerns personal achievement … my life has been a failure,” regretting the decision to give up the life of a minister of God in order to pursue the pathways of Arabic and Sanskrit study.

I only wish he could have known where his “absurdly named professorship” would lead. Thank you, Edward.