



Aram Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies

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Dear colleagues,

I would like in this letter to outline the main guidelines for our Fifty Fifth ARAM International Conference, on **Orientalism and Western Travellers to the Levant, 1500-1950**, to be held at the Institute of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, the University of Oxford, on 8TH – 11TH JULY, 2024.

The subject of Orientalism is very large and complicated, so the attached draft “A Guide to Orientalism” states the main guidelines to follow for our fourth ARAM conference on this subject. It is far from complete, and still needs your help to fill in missing information, but it should give you a clear sense of what we mean by Orientalism, which began during the Greco-Roman period in the Levant.

There are important boundaries on the scope of our conference, which are outlined below.

We would like to limit this conference to the modern period, which in our opinion started with the Ottoman period in the Levant and continued up to the mid-twentieth century. We consider that the contemporary period (as opposed to the modern) started shortly after the Second World War, around 1950, and will need a separate ARAM conference to deal with its extensive literature. The period after 1950 is therefore outside the scope of this conference.

The activities of Western educational missions in the Levant contributed to Orientalism, and Western political and sociological influence in the Levant is also part of Orientalism. But, as a non-political Society, ARAM cannot deal with any subject that could cause a political debate in any ARAM forum.

Orientalism is an important subject for the Middle East as a whole, but ARAM is confined to the Levant, despite the historical and cultural interchange between different countries and ethnicities in the Middle East.

Common books such as the Bible, the Qor’ān, Grammar, and lexicons, etc., which played a major role in the work of Orientalists, are beyond geographical boundaries, and thus the restriction to the Levant does not apply in these cases.

In brief, cultural interaction between East and West in the Levant since the Greco-Roman period is part of Orientalism. So please read the ARAM guidelines attached to this letter, and try to choose the subject of your paper in harmony with the points outlined above and in “A Guide to Orientalism”.

Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this conference, and I look forward to hearing from you before the end of this calendar year.

Yours sincerely,

Shafiq Abouzayd