

# Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite

In the annals of American history, there exists a little-known but extraordinary group known as Arabists. These intrepid adventurers, scholars, and diplomats dedicated their lives to exploring the enigmatic and alluring Middle East, leaving an indelible mark on the course of history.



## Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite

by Robert D. Kaplan

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
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## The Allure of the Orient

The allure of the Middle East has captivated Western minds for centuries. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, as the world underwent profound transformations, a growing fascination with the region's ancient civilizations, vibrant cultures, and complex politics seized the imagination of Americans. Among them emerged a select few who resolved to delve into the heart of this captivating world.

## Birth of an Elite

The Arabists were an eclectic mix of individuals from diverse backgrounds. Some were diplomats, like Edward Mortimer Young and George Antonius, who witnessed firsthand the unfolding political dramas of the Middle East. Others were scholars, like Charles Leland and Henry Preserved Smith, who sought to unlock the mysteries of ancient Arabic manuscripts and the intricacies of Islamic thought.

United by their shared passion for the Middle East, these individuals formed an informal network that extended across continents. They exchanged ideas, shared knowledge, and inspired one another's work. Over time, they evolved into a distinct elite, recognized for their unparalleled expertise and profound understanding of the region.

### **Adventures in Arabia**

Driven by a thirst for adventure and discovery, Arabists embarked on perilous journeys into the heart of the Arabian Peninsula. They ventured into uncharted territories, crossed vast deserts, and encountered diverse tribes. Their experiences were both exhilarating and perilous, testing their limits and expanding their horizons.

Among the most renowned Arabists was Charles Doughty, a British poet and traveler. In 1876, he embarked on a five-year expedition through the unmapped desert of Arabia. Along the way, he faced starvation, thirst, and the constant threat of violence. Yet, his determination remained unwavering, and his detailed accounts of his journey became a literary masterpiece.

### **Diplomatic Bridging**

Beyond their adventures, Arabists played a pivotal role in bridging the diplomatic divide between the United States and the Middle East. They served as interpreters, advisors, and mediators, fostering understanding and forging alliances. Their intimate knowledge of the region's politics and cultures enabled them to navigate complex negotiations and promote cooperation.

One notable Arabist, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., served as the American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during World War I. His firsthand observations of the Armenian genocide and his diplomatic efforts to assist refugees earned him international acclaim.

### **Preservers of History**

Arabists were not only adventurers and diplomats but also meticulous chroniclers of the Middle East's past and present. They translated ancient Arabic texts, collected artifacts, and preserved oral histories. Their contributions to scholarship have left an enduring legacy, enriching our understanding of the region's civilizations and shaping academic discourse.

One such scholar was Philip Hitti, a Princeton professor who wrote extensively on the history and culture of the Middle East. His comprehensive works, including "History of the Arabs" and "The Arab Mind," have become standard references in the field.

### **Legacy and Impact**

The Arabists of the 19th and early 20th centuries left an enduring legacy on American society and international relations. Their explorations and diplomatic efforts laid the foundation for a deeper understanding of the Middle East and contributed to the United States' role in the region.

Today, their story serves as an inspiration for all those who seek to bridge cultural divides and promote global cooperation. Their passion for knowledge, their adventurous spirit, and their unwavering commitment to diplomacy continue to inspire new generations of scholars, diplomats, and adventurers.

In the pages of "Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite," historian and author Margaret Moran offers a captivating account of this extraordinary group. Through meticulous research and engaging storytelling, she brings to life the individuals, adventures, and ideas that shaped the Arabist movement.

Delve into the enchanting world of Arabists and discover the hidden history of an American elite who dedicated their lives to exploring the captivating Middle East. Their story is a testament to the transformative power of knowledge, adventure, and diplomacy.



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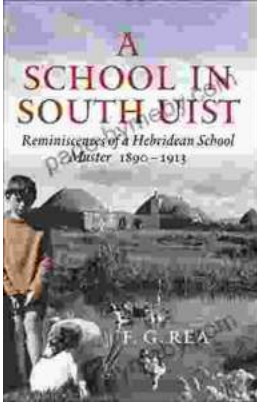
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