

Princeton University

Honors Faculty Members
Receiving Emeritus Status



May 2013

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Faculty Members Receiving Emeritus Status

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András Peter Hámori



András P. Hámori, the Cleveland E. Dodge Professor of Near Eastern Studies, joined the Princeton faculty forty-six years ago. He was born and raised in Budapest and began the study of Arabic and Persian at the University of Vienna in 1958. After moving to the United States, he received his A.B. and Ph.D. degrees from Princeton and Harvard University, respectively—the latter never nudging the former from first place in his affections.

András is considered one of the deans of the field of classical Arabic literature. His distinction arises from the confluence of two traditions of scholarship.

The first is a commitment to linguistic excellence in the best tradition of Central European scholarship. In András's case this means that he has achieved a mastery of classical Arabic as a language of high culture—a culture that emphasized its social elevation by developing styles of prose and poetry so difficult that only the highly educated were at home with them. That András has attained this level of philological expertise in classical Arabic reflects his extraordinary linguistic talent.

The second foundation of András's distinction is that he is thoroughly at home in Western traditions of literary criticism, particularly as applied to the study of medieval European literature. He has a remarkable understanding of these ever-changing theoretical approaches, with their subtlety and insight on the one hand, and their sound and fury on the other; they are, of course, yet another European tradition of scholarship, though more French than German in origin and inspiration.

The core of András's contribution to the study of medieval Arabic literature lies in the brilliance and originality with which he has brought together these two streams of scholarship, philological and literary, in the context of medieval Arabic literature.

András's pioneering book, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, was published in 1974. One reviewer described the book as explaining the "alien aesthetic phenomena" of Arabic poetry "in terms familiar to a Western reader," and gave it high marks as "the only accessible introduction to the field, the only one that gives the nonspecialist reader the sense of what the Arabic texts feel like."

András's second book, *The Composition of Mutanabb's Panegyrics to Sayf al-Dawla* (1992), also received high praise, being called "a milestone in the study and analysis of Classical Arabic poetry."

Over the years, András has written about topics in Arabic and, to a lesser extent, Hebrew literature. These include composition and meaning in classical Arabic poetry, the Arabic background of some Hebrew poems from medieval Spain, the serious and comic representations of manners in medieval Arabic narratives, the nineteenth-century Arabic translation of the *Iliad*, modern jihadist poetry, the concepts of shame and prudence in an eighth-century mirror for princes, aspects of the *Thousand and One Nights*, and the metamorphosis of a Mediterranean legend into the sober classical Arabic anecdote about the young woman of good family whose favorite pastime is to dig up graves and add the shrouds to her extensive collection.

András will long be remembered for his highly sophisticated scholarship, and as a devoted teacher, mentor and university citizen. He served as chair of the Department of Near Eastern Studies from 1997 to 2005. Pleased to leave professoring to his daughter, he hopes to take more walks with his wife Ruth in their favorite place, the desert Southwest, and to improve his vibrato on the cello.