



Smithsonian  
*Freer Gallery of Art and  
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery*

Mehmet Aga-Oglu Papers

FSA.A.10

Max Howell

Funding for partial processing of the collection was supported by a grant from the Smithsonian Institution's Collections Care and Preservation Fund (CCPF).

2017

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Mehmet Aga-Oglu Papers
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1877-1947
<b>Identifier:</b>	FSA.A.10
<b>Creator:</b>	Aga-Oglu, Mehmet, 1896-1949
<b>Extent:</b>	7.8 Cubic feet (consisting of 12 boxes and 9 oversized flat file folders.)
<b>Language:</b>	Collection is primarily in English with a substantial amount of material in Arabic, French, German, Persian, Russian, and Turkish.
<b>Summary:</b>	The Mehmet Aga-Oglu Papers, dating from approximately 1877-1947, measure 7.8 cubic feet and include writings and notes, photographs, and maps related to Dr. Aga-Oglu's work <i>Corpus of Islamic Work</i> , which was never published due to Dr. Aga-Oglu's death in 1949.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Donated by Dr. Kamer Aga-Oglu in 1959.

### Processing Information

In 2016, with funding provided by the Smithsonian Institution's Collections Care and Preservation Fund, the Archives at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives implemented the use of minimal level processing standards to increase information about and facilitate access to more of our collections.

Minimal processing included arrangement to the folder level, based on prior processing and preservation action, with retention of the pre-existing arrangement when possible. Otherwise, an order was imposed by the Processing Archivist. For this collection, minimal level processing was implemented, which included arrangement to the series, subseries and folder levels, adhering to the creator's original arrangement as much as possible. Generally, folder contents were simply verified with the original folder titles, but items within folders were not arranged further. Non-archival housing was replaced for long-term stability, but staples and other fasteners have not all been removed.

Minimal level processing and machine-readable finding aid completed by Max Howell, 2017 August. The initial collection record was produced by Lara Amrod in 2011.

### Preferred Citation

Mehmet Aga-Oglu Papers. FSA.A.10. National Museum of Asian Art Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of Dr. Kamer Aga-Oglu, 1959.

### Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

## Conditions Governing Use

Permission to reproduce and publish an item from the Archives is coordinated through the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery's Rights and Reproductions department. Please contact the Archives in order to initiate this process.

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## Biographical Note

Dr. Mehmet Aga-Oglu was an Islamic art historian and professor born on August 4, 1896 at Erivan in Russia-Caucasia.

In 1916, Dr. Aga-Oglu was awarded a Doctor of Letters in the history, philosophy, and languages of Islamic countries from the University of Moscow. Following his graduation, Dr. Aga-Oglu traveled through Turkistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Asia Minor studying Islamic art. Dr. Aga-Oglu returned to academia in 1921 at the University of Istanbul where he studied the history of Islam and the Ottoman Empire.

During his time as a student at the University of Istanbul, he traveled extensively to European universities as a part of his program of study. This included studying Near Eastern art and architecture under Dr. Ernst Herzfeld in Berlin; classical and early Christian archaeology and Western art at the University of Jena; and completing his art history studies in Vienna. Dr. Aga-Oglu was awarded a Ph.D in philosophy in 1926.

Dr. Aga-Oglu was appointed curator by the Department of the National Museum in Istanbul in 1927. In 1929, the city of Detroit recruited Dr. Aga-Oglu to build the Department of Near Eastern Art at the Detroit Institute of Arts. In 1933, he was appointed as Chair of the History of Islamic Art at the University of Michigan. He joined the university first as a Freer Fellow and Lecturer and then later became a professor.

Dr. Aga-Oglu's accomplishments during his tenure included representing the University and the Detroit Institute of the Arts at the Millennium Celebration of Firdausi and the Congress of Orientalists in Tehran in 1934; organizing an exhibition of Islamic art at the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco in 1937; founding and serving as editor of the periodical *Ars Islamica*; and serving as a Visiting Professor at the Summer Seminar of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Princeton University in 1935 and 1938.

Following his departure from the University of Michigan in 1938, Dr. Aga-Oglu primarily focused on research and writing. His publications include *Persian Bookbindings of the Fifteenth Century*, *History of Islamic Art*, and *Safawid Rugs and Textiles*. From 1948 to 1949, Dr. Aga-Oglu consulted for the Textile Museum in Washington D.C.

Beginning in 1940, Dr. Aga-Oglu planned, researched, and wrote drafts of his unpublished work *Corpus of Islamic Metalwork*. His project was intended to be a multi-volume work, but was not completed. Dr. Aga-Oglu died on July 4, 1949.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of Mehmet Aga-Oglu measure 7.8 cubic feet and date from 1877 to approximately 1949. The papers largely relate to Aga-Oglu's research and writings for his unpublished work *Corpus of Islamic Metalwork*. The papers include manuscript drafts, research files, printed material, maps, and photographs.

The manuscript drafts include handwritten drafts, citations attached or written onto drafts, and revision notes for his unpublished manuscript. Content includes material related to metalliferous mines, precious and base metals, and traffic of metals in Islamic and non-Islamic countries, as well as unlabeled writings related to astrolabes and synthetic protective coatings for metals.

Research material represents a majority of the records, and consists of accumulated research notes, citation lists, and object sketches. Subjects of the research material are related to metallurgy, iconography, metals commonly used in metalwork, geology and mining, and histories of metalwork in ranging locations or eras.

Printed material contains published articles from periodicals, a bulletin from the Detroit Institute of Arts, catalogues of scholarly publications available for purchase, and reviews of Aga-Oglu's published works.

Graphic materials present in the collection include maps depicting areas such as the Middle East, the northern Arabian Peninsula, and Northern India during different eras, and hand traced maps with marked metalliferous mine locations; and a substantial number of photographs of objects and artworks.

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## Arrangement

The Mehmet Aga-Oglu papers are arranged in five series.

Series 1: Manuscript Drafts

Series 2: Research Files

Series 3: Printed Material

Series 4: Maps

Series 5: Photographs

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Art metal-work, Islamic  
Art, Islamic

Types of Materials:

Maps  
Notes  
Photographs

Places:

Berlin (Germany)  
Detroit (Mich.)  
Istanbul (Turkey)  
Michigan  
Turkey

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Manuscript Drafts, circa 1945

**Scope and Contents:** Includes handwritten manuscript drafts, attached citations, and revision comments written by the author. Subjects include metalliferous mines in Islamic countries, types of precious and base metals, and the traffic of metals in both Islamic and non-Islamic countries. Unlabeled manuscript drafts include information about astrolabes and synthetic protective coatings for metals such as lacquers, varnishes, and glazes.

**Arrangement:** Material is arranged according to the volume and section designations established by the author. Labeling conventions for the different sections are not all consistent. Unlabeled manuscript sections have been arranged alphabetically.

Box 1, Folder 1-2      Islamic Metalwork, Historical Survey of Metalliferous Mines, circa 1945  
Notes:                  Volume I, Part I, A-1.

Box 1, Folder 3      Islamic Metalwork, Historical Survey of Metalliferous Mines, Modern Observations, circa 1945  
Notes:                  Volume I, Part I, A-2.

Box 1, Folder 4      Traffic in Metals in Islamic Countries and with non-Islamic Countries, circa 1945  
Notes:                  Volume I, Part I, B.

Box 1, Folder 5-6    Precious and Base Metals, circa 1945  
Notes:                  Volume I, Part I, C-1.

Box 1, Folder 7      Technical Processes and their Terminology, circa 1945  
Notes:                  Volume I, Part I, E-1.

Box 2, Folder 1      Some Notes on Lacquer, Varnish, Paint, Glaze, and Lustre in Islamic Art, circa 1945  
Notes:                  Unlabeled section.

Box 2, Folder 2      Two Astrolabes of the Late Safawid Period, circa 1945  
Notes:                  Unlabeled section.

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## Series 2: Research Files, 1922- circa 1945

**Arrangement:** Research material related to manuscript topics are arranged by the volume or section designation established by the creator. Manuscript topics without a volume or section designation are grouped under Subjects. Research material related to subjects or objects have been arranged alphabetically by the label given by the creator.

**Scope and Contents:** Includes accumulated research material, citation lists, and object sketches related to Islamic metalwork, and research correspondence. Subjects include geology, mining, metallurgy, iconography, objects, material used for metalwork, and metalwork traditions in various locations and eras. Assorted research notes include loose or unlabeled research notes where a subject has not been identified.

Box 2, Folder 3 Correspondence, 1935-1944

### Manuscript Topics, 1937- circa 1945

Box 2, Folder 4-5 Mines, circa 1945  
Notes: Volume I.

Box 2, Folder 6 Geology related to zinc, circa 1945  
Notes: Volume I, Part I, A-1, A-2.

Box 2, Folder 7 Traffic in Metals in Islamic Countries and with non-Islamic Countries, circa 1945  
Notes: Volume I, Part I-B.

Box 2, Folder 8 Precious and Base Metals: Alloys According to Islamic Scientists, circa 1945  
Notes: Volume I, Part I, C-1.

Box 2, Folder 9 Arabic, Persian, and Turkish Terms for Metals, circa 1945  
Notes: Volume I, Part I, C-3.

Box 2, Folder 10 Alloys, Their Terminology and Metallurgy, circa 1945  
Notes: Volume I, Part I-D.

Box 3, Folder 1 Technical Processes and their Terminology, circa 1945  
Notes: Volume I, Part I, E-1.

Box 3, Folder 2 Historical Accounts of the Fourth to Ninth Centuries, circa 1945  
Notes: Volume I, Part 2B.

Box 3, Folder 3 Historical Accounts of the Fifth and 11th Centuries, circa 1945  
Notes: Volume I, Part 2C.

Box 3, Folder 4 Historical Accounts of the 12th and 13th Centuries, circa 1945  
Notes: Volume I, Part 2D.

Box 3, Folder 5-6 Historical Accounts of the 14th and 15th Centuries, circa 1945  
Notes: Volume I, Part 2E.

Box 3, Folder 7	Historical Accounts of the 16th and 17th Centuries, circa 1945 Notes: Volume I, Part 2F.
Box 4, Folder 1	Historical Accounts of the 16th and 17th Centuries, circa 1945 Notes: Volume I, Part 2F.
Box 4, Folder 2	Metalwork of Sasanian Iran, 1937- circa 1945 Notes: Volume 2-1.
Box 4, Folder 3	Metalwork of Sasanian Iran, Post Sasanian Hellenistic, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 2-3.
Box 4, Folder 4	Early Turkish Metalwork, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 3.
Box 4, Folder 5	Turkish Metalwork of the Fourteenth through the Seventeenth Centuries, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 9.
Box 4, Folder 6	Metalwork of Maghrib, Islamic Spain and Sicily, Azzimina Works, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 11.
Box 4, Folder 7	Metalwork of Maghrib, Islamic Spain and Sicily, European Metals Under Islamic Influences, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 11.
Box 5, Folder 1	Metalwork of the Atabeks, Ayyubids in Syria and Egypt of the Rasulids of Yemen, Atabeks, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 11.
Box 5, Folder 2	Metalwork of the Atabeks, Ayyubids in Syria and Egypt of the Rasulids of Yemen, Ayyubids, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 11.
Box 5, Folder 3	Metalwork of the Atabeks, Ayyubids in Syria and Egypt of the Rasulids of Yemen, Rasulid, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 11.
Box 5, Folder 4	Metalwork of the Mameluke Period in Syria and Egypt of the Rosulids of Yemen, Mamluk, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 11.
Box 5, Folder 5	Aquamanilia and Incense Burners in Animal Shape and Sculptures, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 12.
Box 5, Folder 6	Dated Metals, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 12.
Box 5, Folder 7	Hellenistic-Byzantine, Coptic Metals, circa 1945



	Notes: Volume 12.
Box 5, Folder 8	Metalwork of the Golden Horde, 13th and 14th Centuries, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 12.
Box 5, Folder 9	Principal Shapes of Vessels, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 12.
Box 5, Folder 10	Iconography and Symbolism, circa 1945 Notes: Volume 15.
Subjects, circa 1945	
Box 6, Folder 1	Artists, circa 1945
Box 6, Folder 2	Demothe, circa 1945
Box 6, Folder 3	Metalwork of Sasanian Iran, Sogndo-Khwarizmian Metals, circa 1945
Box 6, Folder 4	Objects of Material Culture, circa 1945
Box 6, Folder 5	Paleographic Material, circa 1945
Box 6, Folder 6	Some Arguments About the Character of Islamic Art, circa 1945
Box 6, Folder 7	Zodiac, circa 1945
Objects, 1922- circa 1945	
Box 6, Folder 8	Appliqués, circa 1945
Box 6, Folder 9	Arms and Armors, circa 1945
Box 6, Folder 10	Basins, circa 1945
Box 6, Folder 11	Bells, circa 1945
Box 6, Folder 12	Belts, circa 1945
Box 6, Folder 13	Bottles, Pitchers, circa 1945
Box 6, Folder 14	Bowls, Cups, circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 1	Boxes, circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 2	Braziers, circa 1945

Box 7, Folder 3	Buckets, circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 4	Buckles, circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 5	Candlesticks, circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 6	Caskets, circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 7	Cauldrons, circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 8	Celestial Globes, Astrolables, Quadrants, 1922- circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 9	Coins, circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 10	Containers, circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 11	Dishes, circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 12	Door plaques, door knockers, keys, padlocks, window gratings, circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 13	Drums, circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 14	Ewers, circa 1945
Box 7, Folder 15	Inkwells, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 1	Jewelry, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 2	Lamps, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 3	Lanterns, Chandeliers, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 4	Magic Bowls, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 5-6	Mirrors, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 7	Mortars, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 8	Pen Boxes, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 9	Pitchers, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 10	Plates, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 11	Spoons, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 12	Stands, circa 1945

Box 8, Folder 13	Suspension "eggs", circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 14	Thurible, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 15	Trays, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 16	Vases, circa 1945
Box 8, Folder 17	Weights, circa 1945
	Material, 1922- circa 1945
Box 9, Folder 1	Achaemenian Metals, circa 1945
Box 9, Folder 2	Architectural Metals, circa 1945
Box 9, Folder 3	Bronze, circa 1945
Box 9, Folder 4	Chinese Islamic Metals, circa 1945
Box 9, Folder 5	Gold and Silver, 1922- circa 1945
Box 9, Folder 6	Metals in Avesta, Koran, Hadith, and Tafsir, circa 1945
Box 9, Folder 7	Sasanian Silver and Greco-Bactrian, circa 1945
Box 9, Folder 8	Turkish Material, circa 1945
Box 9, Folder 9-11	Assorted Research Notes, 1941- circa 1945 Notes: Unmarked or miscellaneous research notes originally grouped together by the creator. Some notes relate to other established objects and subjects, but are gathered in new groupings by the creator.
Box 10, Folder 1	Journal, circa 1945 Notes: Bound journal containing both research and manuscript notes.

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## Series 3: Printed Material, 1922-1941

Scope and Contents: Contains published periodical articles, bulletins, reviews of Aga-Oglu's publications, and catalogues of publications available for purchase.

Box 10, Folder 2           Articles and Clippings, 1922-1930

Box 10, Folder 3           Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts in the City of Detroit, 1935 October  
Notes:                    Volume 15, Number 1.

Box 10, Folder 4           Catalogues, 1941, undated

Box 10, Folder 5           Reviews of Persian Bookbinding of the Fifteenth Century, 1935-1941

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## Series 4: Maps, circa 1877-1918, undated

Scope and Contents: Maps of the Middle East, the northern Arabian Peninsula, and Northern India during different eras; and hand-traced map sketches with marked mine locations.

Box 10, Folder 6	Maps, undated Notes: 4 maps.
Oversize 1, Folder 1	Metal Site Maps Notes: 8 maps.
Oversize 1, Folder 2-4	Maps of Islamic World - General, circa 1877-1918, undated Notes: 12 maps.
Oversize 1, Folder 5	Maps in Russian Notes: 5 maps.
Oversize 1, Folder 6-8	Maps in Ottoman Turkish Notes: 10 maps.
Oversize 2, Folder 1	Map of Islamic World, undated Notes: 3 maps.

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## Series 5: Photographs, 1931-1947, undated

**Arrangement:** Titles of labeled object photograph folders were established by the creator and arranged alphabetically by their label. Loose or otherwise ungrouped photographs have been described as Assorted.

**Scope and Contents:** Includes photographs of objects, painted artworks, and negatives. Additionally, images of objects printed on postcards are present. Images of paintings depict battles, scenes from stories, and animals. Several mounted photographs have handwritten notes on them about the image.

### Object Photographs, 1931-1947, undated

Box 10, Folder 7	Astrolabe, 1947
Box 10, Folder 8	Boston Museum of Fine Arts, undated
Box 10, Folder 9	Han Regis and Continental and Trianon-Versailles, undated
Box 10, Folder 10	J. Brummer Objects, undated
Box 10, Folder 11	Mirrors, 1931, undated
Box 10, Folder 12	Rugs in the Shrine of Iman Cait, undated
Box 11, Folder 1-5	Assorted, undated
Box 12, Folder 1-3	Works of Art, undated
Box 12, Folder 4	Negatives, undated
Box 12, Folder 5	Postcards, undated

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