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Descriptive Summary

Identifier  ICU.SPCL.HODGSONMGS
Title  Hodgson, Marshall G. S. Papers
Date  1940-1971
Size  11 linear feet (18 boxes)
Repository  Special Collections Research Center
           University of Chicago Library
           1100 East 57th Street
           Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
Abstract  Marshall Goodwin Simms Hodgson (1922-1968) was a professor of Islamic Studies and Chairman of the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. The Marshall G.S. Hodgson Papers contain correspondence, teaching materials, research notes, and writings, primarily related to his professional life and scholarly work.

Information on Use

Access  Series V contains student evaluations, restricted for 80 years.

The remainder of the collection is open for research.

Citation  When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Hodgson, Marshall G. S. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note  Marshall Goodwin Simms Hodgson (1922-1968) was a professor of Islamic Studies and Chairman of the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago during the 1950s and 1960s.

Hodgson’s tenure at the University overlapped with the restructuring of the core "civilizations" courses for undergraduates. During the 1950s the sequence was expanded to include India, China, and Islam. This integrated approach provided an important intellectual background for Hodgson’s own work; so too did his involvement with the Committee on Social Thought, which brought him into contact with important historians, anthropologists, and sociologists, notably John Ulric Nef, Mircea Eliade, Robert Redfield, and Edward Shils.
As an Islamic scholar, Hodgson rejected the Eurocentrism of most historical study. He argued that Europe's historical divergence occurred not during Renaissance, but much later, during the scientific revolutions of the seventeenth century. His efforts to locate the origins of modernity in a global context led to his interest in theories of world history. He is known primarily for his Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization (1975, 1977) and The Secret Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs Against the Islamic World (1955). The former was revised by university colleague Reuben W. Smith and published after Hodgson’s death. Both books are still considered major contributions to the field. In these works Hodgson broke with the dominant historiographical narrative of Islam, focusing on piety rather than on political or dynastic history. He was concerned with the way Islamic philosophers and historians used Qur'anic teachings to approach the problems and ideals of their contemporary societies.

Hodgson was a practicing Quaker who attended the 57th Street Friends Meeting. His Quakerism informed his academic work and his political views. Hodgson was interested in the role of individual conscience and sensibility in history. He downplayed the idea that war and violence accounted for Islam’s initial spread, and he supported anti-Vietnam pacifism and draft resistance. As a scholar who paid particular attention to terminology and the relationship between language and the perception of reality, he sought to distance himself from the oversimplified umbrella of "radical politics." Hodgson was also a strict vegetarian described as "ascetic."

Hodgson had three children with his wife, Phyllis, also an active member of the Hyde Park community.

Scope Note
The Marshall Hodgson Papers cover the period between 1940-1971 and are organized into five series:

Series I: University of Chicago, contains correspondence, teaching materials, and copies of papers delivered during Hodgson’s tenure as Chairman of the Committee on Social Thought and Professor of Islamic Studies and History at the University of Chicago. It covers the period 1943-1968.

Series II: Professional, contains correspondence and papers relating to Hodgson’s academic work beyond the University of Chicago. It contains correspondence with colleagues from other institutions. It also includes notes for, and copies of, papers delivered at venues outside the university. This series spans 1946-1967.
Series III: Research, contains research material compiled by Hodgson between 1941 and 1948. These are primarily detailed notes and commentary on secondary sources, many folders also containing correspondence on the subject or author in question. Some notes are written on the back of unrelated personal correspondence. This series spans 1941-1971.


Series V: Restricted, contains student evaluations.

Related Resources
Browse finding aids by topic.

Subject Headings
- Hodgson, Marshall G.S.
- 
- 
- University of Chicago. Committee on Social Thought
- Islamic studies

INVENTORY
Series I: University of Chicago
This series contains correspondence, teaching materials, and copies of papers delivered during Hodgson’s tenure as Chairman of the Committee on Social Thought and Professor of Islamic Studies and History at the University of Chicago. It covers the period 1943-1968.

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Series II: Professional

This series contains correspondence and papers relating to Hodgson’s academic

beyond the University of Chicago. It contains correspondence with colleagues from other

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university. This series spans 1946-1967.

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Series III: Research

This series contains research material compiled by Hodgson. These are primarily detailed notes and commentary on secondary sources, many folders also containing correspondence on the subject or author in question. Some notes are written on the back of unrelated personal correspondence. This series covers the period between 1941 and 1971. It is divided into four topical subseries:

Subseries 1: Islamic Studies, contains notes, commentary, and correspondence on Islamic history, philosophy, religion, and culture.

Subseries 2: Religion, contains notes, commentary, and correspondence on world religions and the philosophy of religion.

Subseries 3: History and Politics, contains notes, commentary, and correspondence on historical method, historical periods, particular regions, and problems of politics.

Subseries 4: Philosophy, Language, and Literature, contains notes, commentary, and correspondence on theories of language and the text. Of particular interest is Hodgson’s correspondence with Wilfred Smith on translation, and his notes and outlines for a science fiction novel, "Valley of Vision."

Subseries 5: Oversize, contains a map of Muslim population distribution.

Subseries 1: Islamic Studies

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Subseries 5: Oversize

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Series IV: Writings and Publications

This series contains drafts and offprints of articles and books by Hodgson. It includes book reviews and correspondence with publishers. In addition to his scholarly work, of note are his "Legacy Essays," which include "If Your Friend Turns Vegetarian" and "Dialogue for the Soul of an Ex-Nazi." This series contains notes by Roy Benbee for a paper on Marshall Hodgson. Material in this series spans 1940-1968.

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