

**The New York Public Library
Humanities and Social Sciences Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

Maryam Jameelah Papers
1945-2005
MssCol 1545

Manuscripts and Archives Division Staff
April 2000
rev. 2005

Table of Contents

Summary	iii
Biographical note	iv
Scope and content note	vi
Arrangement note	vi
Series descriptions and container list	1
SERIES I. CORRESPONDENCE AND NON-FICTION WRITINGS	1
SERIES II. <i>AHMAD KHALIL: THE STORY OF A PALESTINIAN REFUGEE AND HIS FAMILY</i>	2
SERIES III. PHOTOGRAPHS	2
SERIES IV. VIDEO RECORDINGS, 1986, 1993	3
ADDITIONS, 2002-2005	3

Summary

- Main entry:** Jameelah, Maryam, 1934-
- Title:** Maryam Jameelah Papers, 1945-2005
- Size:** 2.5 linear feet (9 boxes)
- Source:** Gift of Maryam Jameelah, April 1962 with subsequent additions 1965 to 2005.
- Abstract:** The Maryam Jameelah Papers include the correspondence, fiction and academic writings of Maryam Jameelah, née Margaret Marcus, an American Jew who, after her conversion to Islam, emigrated to Pakistan and lives there still. Her correspondence and writings tell of her troubled youth, her interest in Palestinian life and literature, her sympathy for displaced Palestinians after the formation of modern Israel, her correspondence with Pakistani mentor Maulana Sayyid Abul Ala Maudoodi, her conversion to Islam, and her subsequent emigration and life in Pakistan. Later essays include book reviews of other Islamic authors and essays discussing Islamic life and culture.
- Access:** Apply in the Special Collections Office for admission to the Manuscripts and Archives Division.
- Preferred citation:** Maryam Jameelah Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
- Special formats** Drawings, photographs, video recordings

Biographical note

Maryam Jameelah (b.1934) was born Margaret Marcus, the younger of two daughters of German-Jewish parents, in New Rochelle, New York. She grew up in Larchmont, New York. She attended public schools, joined the Girl Scouts, studied music, art, modern and social dancing and attended summer camp each summer between 1940-1947. She was sent to religious instruction at a liberal Reform synagogue and at the Westchester Ethical Culture Society in New Rochelle between 1943-1949.

She became interested in the Arab world in the late 1940s during the creation of the state of Israel. While those around her celebrated the founding of a Jewish nation after the horrors of World War II, her sympathies were decidedly for the Palestinians, who by this same action were displaced from their own homes. She began to study Arab history, poetry, and writings. This sympathy would have profound ramifications throughout the rest of her life.

While Marcus appears to have had an average suburban childhood, a letter from her mother recalls that she didn't enjoy playing in group games, that she never felt accepted by peers, was often the object of teasing and ridicule at school, and that she was very sensitive to noise. Marcus proved to be a superior student, and artistically talented, but she was also described as "sensitive", "high-strung," and as having "eccentric habits" by both school officials and summer camp administrators. As a teen Marcus had no interest in the things most teenage girls do - fashion, make-up, dating, and the social scene of peers. She had few friends through high school.

School officials suggested she be sent to the local Child Guidance Clinic. In 1947 Marcus began the first prolonged experience of weekly therapy sessions, which continued until 1950. Marcus was diagnosed as schizophrenic. Psychiatric problems and therapy sessions continued to be a part of her life, on and off, for many years, including two years of institutionalization in New York and later, for several months in Pakistan.

Marcus graduated from high school in June of 1952 and though she was accepted to the University of Rochester for the fall of 1952, she returned home shortly after the first semester began, due to "nervous breakdown." In the spring of 1953 she began attending New York University, where she studied from 1953 to 1956, being forced to leave before obtaining her college degree, again attributed to "nervous breakdown".

Despite this, her parents insisted she occupied her time constructively and develop some skills to help support herself as an adult. She studied drawing at the Art Students League in NYC the fall of 1952, and attended the Berlitz School of Languages to study advanced French conversation after her expulsion from NYU. She volunteered as a clerical worker and took touch-typing classes in White Plains upon returning home from two years of hospitalization in 1959.

In March 1953 Marcus wrote to her sister Betty describing herself as "a total misfit," saying, "I know and care nothing about business or anything commercial, couldn't tolerate a single day of the monotonous routine of office or factory. So now I find myself absolutely unemployable. I can't find any respectable place anywhere." At the age of nineteen she felt that life was over, she was discouraged, exhausted, depressed, and despairing.

Her failure to fit in and her desire to find respectability pushed her to search for her Jewish roots in order to find a frame of reference and identity for adult life. During the winter of 1952-53 she made a concerted effort to embrace Orthodox Judaism, visiting meetings at the local YWHA, the Orthodox Synagogue in Mamaroneck, and even by attending a meeting of a Zionist youth group, the Mizrahi Hatzair. But in all these experiences she found what she considered disagreeable, unlikable people, who often rejected her outright due to her liberal, non-kosher background. At the single Mizrahi Hatzair meeting she attended she was horrified by the pro-Israeli propaganda film and what she felt was the total misrepresentation of the Arab. She never returned.

She was drawn to the Bahai art and cultural center because they claimed to promote international understanding. She joined in their pen-friend program and corresponded with many young people around the world. But her search for friends her own age locally was not helped by her involvement in the center; mostly she found "old eccentrics" in this organization.

During her teens her support of the Arab culture led her to write a novel titled, *Ahmad Khalil: The Story of a Palestinian Refugee and His Family*, in which she hoped to reveal the true hardships and cruelty with which the Palestinians were forced to live. She created a series of pencil sketches and colored drawings to illustrate the book. In summer of 1954, she was invited to display several of these works in an exhibit at the Bahai Center's Caravan of East and West Art Gallery, which she was very proud to do.

During the exhibit she fell into a conversation about some of her drawings with a Jewish visitor. When he found out she was a Jew who sympathized with the Arabs, he "denounced her as a traitor to her race even more than the 'goyim' (gentiles). This rejection, coupled with her earlier experiences, caused her to write to her sister, "No people I have ever encountered are more intolerant, bigoted and narrow-minded than the disagreeable Jews I have had the misfortune to meet and that is why I find it impossible to identify myself as one of them."

During the fall 1954 semester at NYU, Marcus sat for a class titled, "Judaism in Islam," taught by a Jewish professor whose goal was to demonstrate the Jewish influence on Islam. Throughout this time, in fact from 1952, Marcus had been reading and studying the Islamic holy text, the Quran. She credits this class as convincing her of the superiority of Islam to Judaism. She states, "Judaism retains its tribal nationalistic character. Because Judaism is still in essence a tribe, it is a closed society. The Holy Prophet directed his message to the whole human race. Therefore Islam is a truly universal, cosmopolitan faith. He [Allah] would never restrict His Truth to a single people. Truth by its nature must be universal!"

Marcus had found her path. She met other Muslims at the campus of New York University and began to spend time in the Arabic neighborhoods of New York, attending mosque and learning the five daily prayers that are part of Islamic practice. On May 24, 1961 she formally professed her desire to live as a Muslim before the community of the Islamic Mission of America, in Brooklyn, New York, and her name was changed to Maryam Jameelah. She began writing articles on Islamic culture and life, publishing her first book, *Islam versus the West*, in Lahore, Pakistan in January of 1962.

She emigrated to Lahore, Pakistan in May, 1962 after much thought on her part and the encouragement of Pakistani mentor Maulana Sayyid Abul Ala Maudoodi, an Islamic scholar and writer with whom she had been corresponding with between 1960 and 1962. Maudoodi invited her to live with his family if she wished to emigrate. Considering her ongoing conflicts with her family, her lack of comfort with American culture, and her need to find a way to support herself as her parents planned retirement and informed her they would no longer be able to support her, this invitation solidified her decision. She would emigrate to a Muslim culture - Pakistan. About one year after arriving in her new country, Jameelah suffered another "nervous breakdown" and spent a few months in a Lahore, Pakistan mental hospital.

Jameelah married fifteen months after emigrating, becoming the second wife of Mohammed Yusuf Khan, a local political figure and leader in the Jama'at-e-Islami, a local political organization, in Lahore, Pakistan. She bore five children between 1964 and 1972, three girls, the first dying in infancy, and two boys. She has continued writing and is the author of more than thirty books on Islamic history and culture. Jameelah still lives in Lahore, Pakistan.

Scope and content note

The Maryam Jameelah Papers include correspondence (published and unpublished), manuscripts, bibliographies, chronologies, speeches, questionnaires, published articles, photographs, videocassettes, and artwork. Through her own correspondence to her parents and other family members, her Pakistani mentor, Maulana Sayyid Abul Ala Maudoodi, particularly those found in *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth in America 1945-1962*, Jameelah provides her readers with a candid view of her life as a young girl struggling with identity, and finding herself at odds with the culture around her. Except for one letter from her mother, published in the beginning of the Memoirs, correspondence from her parents, sister, and other family members is not found in these records.

Arrangement note

The Maryam Jameelah Papers are organized in the following series:

- Series I. Correspondence And Non-Fiction Writings
- Series II. *Ahmad Khalil: The Story of a Palestinian Refugee and his Family*
- Series III. Photographs
- Series IV. Video recordings
- Additions, 2002-2005

Series descriptions and container list

Series I. Correspondence and Non-Fiction Writings

This series contains primarily letters to Jameelah's parents and family members over most of her life in the United States (1945 through 1961) and in Pakistan (1963-1999) Box 1, folders 1-6; Box 2, folder 1). Whether or not all letters written during this period are included here is unknown; the bulk of the earliest correspondence to family members is published as a book, *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth in America, 1945-1962*. This material is an important element to understanding Jameelah's search for "her place in society," the development of her interest in Islam, and her decision to leave her homeland for Pakistan (Box 2, folder 1). It is unknown how much, if any, of this material is edited.

Also included in this series are examples of some of her more recently published works on Islamic culture and reviews of other books (Box 1, folder 3), bibliographies of her works, with addenda, and a chronology of her life. (Box 2, folders 5, 6, and 7). Augmenting this is the collection of her correspondence with Maulana Maudoodi, her mentor in Lahore, Pakistan (Box 2, folder 2). These letters also document well Marcus' mindset, values and circumstances before her move to Pakistan. They are in English, as the Maulana's secretary translated them for Jameelah, but the Arabic originals are included.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1	Letters to parents, 1962 June-1964 October
	2	Open Letter to My Father, 1996 (with attachment, 1994)
	3	Letters to My Parents, 1963-1979
	4	The story of my life through original letters to my parents Vol. III, 1977-1992
	5	Correspondence with Maulana Sayyid Abul 'Ala Maudoodi, 1960-1962
2	1	Miscellaneous correspondence, 1996- Unpublished private papers, 1963-1995
	2	Correspondence
	3	Questionnaires
	4	Speeches and Addresses
	5	<i>Memoirs of Childhood and Youth in America, 1945-1962</i>
	6	Published articles and book reviews by Maryam Jameelah
	7	<i>An Anthology of Ancient to Modern Arabic Poetry, 1956</i> Collected and selected by Maryam Jameelah (Margaret Marcus)
	8	<i>Books on Islam and the Muslim World in English, 1997</i> Selective bibliography up to 1997 compiled by Maryam Jameelah
	9	Addenda to bibliography, #'s I, II, III , 1999 August 25
	10	<i>Chronology of life history and list of all published writings by Maryam Jameelah</i>

Series II. Ahmad Khalil: The Story of a Palestinian Refugee and his Family

The collection includes three unpublished versions of Jameelah's novel of a Palestinian refugee family. The first copy is handwritten in a bound book, the second two are typescripts. A separate epilogue for the story was written in 1995, and added to each copy.

The illustrations for the story are in a disassembled scrapbook, which includes black and white pencil sketches and color drawings, (between approximately 3x2" and 8x10" in size, Box 4) and a box of oversized pencil sketches (approximately 11x14" and larger, box 5). Additional illustrations were made by Ms. Jameelah and added to her art book, *My Art Work from Childhood to Maturity, 1938-1957* (Box 6).

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
3	1	Autograph manuscript (835 p.)
	2	Typescript (171 p.)
	3	Typescript, 1961 (144 p. unbound)
4		Illustrations
5		Pencil sketches (Oversized)
6		<i>My Art Work from Childhood to Maturity, 1938-1957</i>

Series III. Photographs

The photographs consist of color snapshots of family members on special occasions such as the weddings of both sons and the engagement party of her youngest daughter. Also includes photographs of Mohammed Yusuf Khan's first wife, Shafqa Khanum and her children and family members, photographs of Jameelah in the early years of her life in Pakistan (black and white) and the visits of sons Khalid and Haider with family in the U.S.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
7	1	Engagement party of Marya Khanum, 1992 September 14
	2	Extended Family, 1979-1989
	3	Family photos, U.S. and Pakistan, 1982 1993
	4	Invitation to wedding of Khalid Farouq Khan, 1992 Feb 7
	5	Marcus Family, 1951 May 6
	6	Maulana Sayyid Abul Ala Maudoodi, 1975
	7	Marya Khanum in the U.S., 1993
		Maryam Jameelah
	8	with children, formal portraits, 1985-1987
	9	with family members, 1983-1996
	10	and family, 1962-1975 (black and white)
	11	sons visiting U.S. relatives , 1987, 1988
	12-13	Weddings of Haider Farouq Khan, 1989, 1992
	14-15	Weddings of Khalid Farouq Khan, 1992, 1999

Series IV. Video recordings, 1986, 1993

Includes two cassette tapes. One is of an interview with Maryam Jameelah at the Jama'at-e-Islami Headquarters, Mansoor, Pakistan. Zaki-id-din Sahib, Director of Islamic Circle of North America interviews Jameelah on how and why she left America, her conversation to Islam, and her life in Pakistan. Her husband and two sons are with her, but only husband, Mohammed Yusuf Khan adds any comment. The sound track is difficult to hear. August, 1986

The second was made in 1993 when Marya Khunum and Haider Farouq Khan and his wife visited grandfather Herbert Marcus the U.S. The tape shows a long visit with grandfather Marcus, and visits to Mamaroneck and Larchmont places of interest to the Marcus family, including the school and synagogue Jameelah attended as a girl.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Unit ID</u>	
8	00941	Interview at the Jama'at-e-Islami Headquarters, 1986
	00942	Marya Khunum and Haider Farouq Khan visit the U.S., 1993

9 **Additions, 2002-2005**

Additional essays by Jameelah, interview, photographs.