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Creator: Chirri, Mohamad Jawad
Title: Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri papers.
Inclusive dates: 1959-2005
Extent: 7 linear feet
Call number: 2009063 Aa 2

Language: Material is in English and Arabic
Acquisition: The collection was donated in December 2008 by Adnan Jawad Chirri (donor no. 10144).
Accruals: Periodic additions to the collection are expected.
Access: The collection is open without restriction.
Photographs: Photographs located in Box 1 and 5.
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Processed By: Shelley Hayreh, February 2009; Suzy Adra Mazloum (translation of Arabic titles), June 2009

Abstract

Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri was the director of the Islamic Center of America and the writer of many renowned works on Islam. The collection consists primarily of correspondence, newspaper clippings, photographs, memorandums, board minutes, writing drafts, publications and newsletters related to Chirri and the Islamic Center of America.

Biography

Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri was born in Lebanon on October 1, 1905. He was a graduate of the theological Institute of An-Najaf Al-Ashraf University in Iraq. In 1948, the small Muslim community in the Detroit area invited Imam Chirri to the United States of America. As the spiritual leader to the primarily Lebanese-American community, Imam Chirri envisioned the construction of a new mosque which would help strengthen the local Muslim population as well as enlightened non-Muslims throughout America on the practices of Islam.

In 1959, a little over a decade after arriving in America, Imam Chirri traveled to Egypt seeking financial assistance for the construction of the mosque he envisioned for the growing Detroit area Muslim community. While in Egypt, Imam Chirri met with President Jamal Abdul Nasser who provided the Islamic Center with a donation large enough to purchase land on Joy Road and Greenfield. During his visit to Egypt, Imam Chirri also met with Sheikh Mahmood Shaltut, Imam of the Al-Azhar University of Cairo. The two spiritual leaders participated in lengthy discussions about the similarities between Shi-ite Jaafari and Sunnite. After their discussions, Imam Shaltut made the historic announcement declaring the equality between the Shi-ite Jaafari and Sunnite Schools.

Three years after his trip to Egypt, the Islamic Center of Detroit (which would later be renamed the Islamic Center of America) opened its doors in 1962. The new center and mosque allowed for weekly Sunday services and became the social center of the strengthening community.

Along with being the founder of the Islamic Center of America, Imam Chirri was a renowned author and lecturer. Imam Chirri published widely in Arabic, but the self-taught English speaker also wrote many celebrated works in English. Some of his writings include *Inquiries About Islam*, *The Faith of Islam*, and *Imam Hussein, Leader of the Martyrs*. His writings and position as the director of the Islamic Center of America made Imam Chirri a widely sought after authority on Islam. His views and insights on topics related to Islam and the Muslim community were often quoted in the national media.

Over a decade after Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri's death in 1994, the Islamic Center of America opened a new center on Ford Road in 2005. The new center is the home of one of largest mosques in North America.

Scope and Content Note

The Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri Papers document the cleric's religious, leadership, and scholarly activities as well as the inner workings of the Islamic Center during Chirri's tenure and after his death. The collection consists primarily of correspondence, newspaper clippings, photographs, memorandums, board minutes, writing drafts, publications and newsletters. The material is generally in English, unless otherwise noted. The collection contains the following series: **Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri, Islamic Center of America, Zehia Kahil and Publications.**

Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri series reflects Chirri's significant role in shaping and managing the Islamic Center of America and his scholarly contributions to the study of Islam. The series consists primarily of correspondence, newspaper clippings, photographs, writing drafts, and publications. The series contains two subseries: **Personal/Background**, and **Writings, Drafts and Notes**. Sub-series **Personal/Background** includes newspaper clippings, correspondence, and photographs reflecting Chirri's standing as an authority on Islam and a guiding figure at the Islamic Center of America. Sub-series **Writings, Drafts and Notes** documents the development of Chirri's celebrated writings. The material is generally undated, unless otherwise noted. The drafts have been organized by title and usually contain multiple edited versions of the particular writing rather than the published version. The titles are listed alphabetically under English Titles, Arabic Titles, or Notebooks. English Titles indicates that the drafts are written in English, whereas Arabic Titles indicates that the drafts are written in Arabic. The series also contains thirty-eight of Chirri's notebooks. The notebooks are primarily in Arabic and contain drafts and notes for sermons and book chapters. When more than one title is listed this indicates that the notebook is a combined volume and contains multiple drafts or book chapters.

Islamic Center of America series documents over 40 years of the Islamic Center of America's administrative services and community activities. The series includes correspondence, flyers, photographs, religious material, and reports. The series contains three subseries: **Administrative, Activities**, and **Subject Files**. Sub-series **Administrative** contains background material related to the overall functioning of the Center including board minutes, financial statements, reports, community surveys, laws and guidelines. The sub-series also documents the planning, construction, and completion of the Grand Mosque and new Islamic Center of America building on Joy Road. **Activities** sub-series contains newspaper clippings, religious material, event announcements, and memorandums and petitions on political and social issues affecting the Muslim community abroad. The sub-series reflects the Islamic Center of America's involvement within the Detroit/Dearborn community. Sub-series **Subject Files** contains files from the Islamic Center of America, which contains correspondence and other documents from the Center's multiple religious leaders as well as a file containing correspondence documenting the Center's search for a librarian. The sub-series contains a file with material originating from Imam Chirri causing some overlap with the **Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri** series.

Zehia Kahil series documents the activities of the first Muslim woman to be elected the head of an Islamic organization. The series contains correspondence, notes, meeting agendas and minutes, and newspaper clippings from organizations in which Kahil held an administrative position. The organizations represented in the series include the Arab World Festival, Federation of Islamic Associations, and the Order of the Eastern Star.

Publications series contains newsletters and publications created or collected by the Islamic Center of America. Many of the publications are newsletters from outside Islamic associations primarily from North America but also from abroad. Some of the newsletters are more complete than others. For example, the series contains a very comprehensive collection of the *Muslim Star* but contains only two issues of the *Palestine Digest*. The series also contains booklets and scholarly publications on Islam.

Box No. Description

**Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri
Personal/Background**

Box 1

Business and membership cards, undated
 Commemorations on the death of Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri,
 1994-2003
 Correspondence, Arabic (3 folders)
 Correspondence, English, 1959-1993 (3 folders)
 Lebanese Cedar Medal, 1991
 Newspaper clippings on Chirri, 1966-1998
 Notes/Notebook, Arabic, undated
 Portraits and Photographs of Chirri at ICA and other events, undated
 United States Citizenship and Passport, 1957-1977

Writings, Drafts and Notes

Book Lists, 1975-1981
 Book List, undated (in Arabic)
 Library Addresses and Correspondence, 1983-1984
 Address to the Lions and Rotary Club, 1967
 Hadith Writings for book, undated (in Arabic)
 Sermons, undated
 Lecture Notes, 1967-1969, undated (in English)
 Lecture Notes, 1957, 1966-1971, undated (in Arabic)
 Questions for Newspaper Column, 1967-1968 (in Arabic)
 Writing Draft Fragments, undated (2 folders)
 Titles in English
 "About the Islamic Schools of Thought"
 "The Book of Islam"
 "Chapter I: A light on the history of the Prophethood"
 "Chapter I: A Uniting Force"
 "Chapter II: Mohammed the Prophet of the Universal Religion"
 "Chapter V: A Criterion of the True Religious Principles"
 "Chapter VI: The Second Principle of Islam"
 "Chapter VIII: Justice of God"
 "Chapter VIII: Man is the Master of his Actions"
 "Chapter VIII: The Prophethood of Mohammed"
 "Chapter IX: Man is the Master of his Actions"
 "The Creation of Life"
 "The Creator by His free will, not by Necessity"
 "Dear American Friends"
 "Determination"
 "The Directive of the Imam Ali to Malik-el Ashter"
 "The Divine Justice in His Laws"
 "Early Political Difference between the Muslims"
 "Economical Justice"
 "The electoral convention"
 "The Faith of Islam," 1964, 1979
 "Fasting in Islam"
 "The first principle in Islam"
 "The flexibility of the Islamic Laws"
 "God"
 "God, of Islam, is ever-living, never dies"

Box No. Description

Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri (cont.)

Writings, Drafts and Notes (cont.)

Box 1 (cont.)

- “God, of Islam, is not dead”
- “God’s being”
- “The growth of Islam”
- “Have you known that Al-Azhar recognized the Shi-ite Jaafari Mazhab as equal to the Sunni Mazhab?”
- “The Historical Declaration of His Eminence, Sheikh AL-Azhar Mahmoud Shaltut”
- “The Imam Hussein: Leader of the Martyrs”
- “The Imams from the relatives of Mohammad and their followers”
- “Immortality”
- “Inquire and think freely, Islam advises”
- “Inquiries on Islam”
- “Islamic Teachings in the form of Questions and Answers,” 1961

Box 2

- “Jesus in Islam”
- “The Just God”
- “Life After Death”
- “Man is a free Agent”
- “Man’s Purity and Height”
- “The Meaning of Islam”
- “One God”
- “The Originator of the Universe”
- “Pilgrimage in Islam”
- “Prayers in Islam”
- “Preface” I
- “Preface” II
- “Prohibitions in Islam or its Commandments”
- “The Prophet of Islam”
- “The Prophethood”
- “Question and Answer”
- “A statement”
- “A statement of the Islamic Principles”
- “To George Romney...”
- “Unfulfilled Will of the Prophet”
- “Universality (?)”
- “When I met...Sheikh Al-Azhar”
- “The Wise”
- “The Wise administrator”
- Titles in Arabic
 - “Abi Bakr’s Era,” Omar’s Era,” The Perfect Protector,” “The Mother of the Pious,” “Consensus,” “Othman,”
 - “About the Various Sects of Islam”
 - “Abu Baker Follows”
 - “Al Shura—Consensus”
 - “Consensus”
 - “During Omar’s Time”
 - “During the Time of the Caliphs”

Box No. Description

Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri (cont.)

Writings, Drafts and Notes (cont.)

Titles in Arabic (cont.)

Box 2 (cont.)

“Islam and Christianity: a comparison”
 “Materialism and Spirituality”
 “Muslims as a Political Minority”
 “On Occasion of Ramadan Approaching”
 “The perfect opposition”
The Prophetic Plan
 “Questions”
 “Should succession be by vote or by a prophetic creed”
 “Unfulfilled Will of the Prophet”
 “The Various Forms of Government and its Virtue”
 Notebooks (in Arabic, unless otherwise noted)
 Book, untitled
 General Notes in English
 Notes on “Al Saqeef (?) and its termination and questions,” “The Imam’s position,” and “Response to the 4th question about the Prophet’s administration”
 Notes on Ali’s Position
 Notes on Ali’s Special Attributes
 Notes on Chirri’s politics
 Notes on the Birth of the Imam
 Notes on the Prophet’s family position
 Notes “On those with the original role, part II,” and notes on Islam of the Imam
 “About the legend”
 “After the Prophet’s will – Prophet’s will does not get implemented,” and “The fulfillment of the Prophet’s will”
 “Ahl al Bayt’s Status in Islam - Battle of Safayn”
 “Al Shura” from *Consensus*, part III
 “Argument” (in English), and “Who are ‘Ahlel el Bayt’ (Prophet’s Kin)”
 “Ayat Al Tableegh (the message),” “Who is the Prophet,” “The Prophet declares his Brother Ali, XII,” and “The Prophet’s confidant, part VI”

Box 3

“Battle of Busra”
 “Battle of Busra, part XXIII,” and “Ablution (Wudu’) Prayer”
 “Battle at Safayn was it inevitable?,” and Sermons, 1975
 “Conclusion, part II”
 “Def: Al Shura = consensus or agreement,” “Abdel Rahmanibn Araf Al Shura, part II” and “Prophet Mohammad’s family, part I”
 “During Omar’s Time,”
 “Failure of the Imam, part II”
 “The four questions surrounding the election of Abi Bakr, part II”
 “Fulfillment of the prophet’s will”
 “Fulfillment of the prophet’s will,” and “Ahel el Bayts role in Islam, part I”
 “The Imam’s judgment style was it like a king?, part XXX,”

Box No. Description

Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri (cont.)

Writings, Drafts and Notes (cont.)

Box 3 (cont.)

“Imam’s Failure, part II,” “Conclusion, part I
 “The myth of the conspiracy, part XXIV,” and “The Prophet’s
 kin in Islam”
 “Othman’s Time”
 “Othman’s Time, part II,” and “Loyalty—The Imam,”
 “The Prophet’s personality,” “The Prophet’s successor – death of
 the Prophet,” and “Should the Caliphate or successor be by
 appointment or by vote”
 “A Prophet’s will does not get implemented, (page 190-223)”
 “A Prophet’s will does not get implemented, (page 224-626)”
 “Shahada of the Imam,” “Imam’s responsibility to Muslims,” and
 “Bearers of the original role, part I”
 “Should the Caliphate be decided by vote, prophecy or by kin?”
 “Status of Ahl Al Bayt (Prophet’s family), part I”
 “Those with the original role and the arrival of Ali, part II,” “The
 first Muslims, part IV,” “Radio Talks, 10/10/1976,” and
 “Talks at Islamic Center in Detroit, 1975”
 “Who are the Prophet’s Kin?”
 “Why did the Imam fail, part XXXI”

Islamic Center of America

Administrative

Box 4

General Background, undated
 “A statement presented to the Chairman, present and previous
 members of the Board of Trustees of the Islamic Center of
 America, may Allah bless them all; from Mohamad Baker
 Chirri, servant of the Muslims and brother of the founding
 Imam,” undated
 Agreements and Warranties, 1982-1988
 Board of Directors, 2004
 Board of Trustees, 1975-2004
 Board of Trustees Correspondence, 1986-1995 (3 folders)
 Community Address Lists, undated
 Community Survey, 1994
 Correspondence, Arabic (2 folders)
 Correspondence, English, 1975-2003 (3 folders)
 Finances, 1962-2004 (2 folders)
 Fundraising, 1971-1999
 Grand Mosque, Ground Breaking Ceremony Photographs, undated
 Grand Mosque, Planning and Completion, 1996-2005 (3 folders)
 Reports, Laws, Guidelines, 1962-1990
 Specifications for ICA on Joy Road, undated (5 folders)

Activities

Box 5

Dr. Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin Address, 1978
 Event Announcements, 1969-2003 (6 folders)
 Outside Events and Organizations, 1980s
 Inmate Correspondence, 2001-2003
 Lebanon Crisis Correspondence and Petition, 1996 (2 folder)

Box No. Description

Islamic Center of America (cont.)**Activities (cont.)****Box 4**

Marriage Contracts, English, 1969-1984, (2 folders)
 Marriage Contracts, Arabic
 Mourning Forms, 1984-1992 (2 folders)
 Newspaper clippings on ICA and Islam in Detroit/Dearborn Area,
 1972-1998, (2 folders)
 Newspaper clippings on Islam, general, 1984-2002
 Newspaper clippings, Arabic (3 folders)
 Photographs of ICA Community, undated
 Prayers in Arabic, undated
 Prayers in English, 1978, undated (2 folders)
 Religious Instruction, undated
 Social and Political Causes, 1974-1992

Box 6

Social Causes, Mailgrams, 1972-1982
 Youth Associations, 1969-2005 (2 folders) (includes "Lessons for
 Moslem Children")
 Misc. Documents in Arabic (2 folders)

Subject Files

Imam Berro, 1987-1989
 Imam Hassan Habhab, 1988-1995 (2 folders)
 Imam Jawad Chirri, 1983-1994 (2 folders)
 Imam Mohammad Ali Elahi, 1992-1994 (3 folders)
 Imam Sayel El-Katat, 1989-1990
 Khalil Alawan, 1992-1995
 Librarian Recruitment, 1986-1988

Zehia Kahil

Arab World Festival
 Correspondence, 1973-1976
 News Releases, Fact Sheets, Programs, 1974-1976
 Agendas and Meeting Notices, 1974-1976
 Minutes, 1973-1974 (3 folders)
 Federation of Islamic Associations
 Newspaper clippings, 1972-1981
 Constitution, Laws and Meetings, 1968-1973
 Mailings, 1969-1978
 Convention Material, 1971-1977
 Notes and Attendance Lists, undated
 Correspondence, 1967-1975 (2 folders)

Box 7

Order of the Eastern Star, 1962-1967

Publications

Islamic Center of America Publications, 1988-2000 (5 folders)
Muslim Star, 1964-1982, (11 folders)
 Islamic Center of America (ICCA) Newsletter, 1990-1993
Al-Fajr: Islamic Service Organization Newsletter, 1969-1974

Box No. Description

Publications (cont.)**Box 7 (cont.)**

The Bulletin of the Islamic Center of New York, 1973-1974
The Bulletin of the Islamic Center of Washington, D.C., 1972-1980 (2 folders)
Facts: Bulletin of the Lebanese Association for Information on Palestine, 1974-1975
Islam Canada, 1972-1974
Impact, 1974
Islamic Items, 1972-1975
Palestine Digest, 1974-1975
The Link, 1973, 1987
Al Urdun, 1978, 1981
 Misc. Islam Organizations' Newsletters, 1964-1990 (2 folders)
 Misc. Publications on Islam, 1960s-1970s
 Publications in Arabic,
 Published Lectures, 1971-1983
Qur'an and Woman by Amina Wadud-Muhsin, 1992
Shi'ite Encyclopedia by Hassan Al-Amin, 1965-1966
 Book 5: "Life of the Prophet" from *A Series of Islamic Books for Children*, 1970