

IN MEMORIAM

GEORGE CARPENTER MILES, 1904-1975

An Islamic scholar and a former director of the American Numismatic Society, George C. Miles died of cancer in New York City on October 15, 1975.

Leaving Princeton University in 1926 with an A.B. in English, he spent five years at Robert College in Istanbul. His brother-in-law, Ellis O. Briggs, U.S. ambassador, ret., recalls his pursuit there of what was to be his lifelong interest in mountain climbing. Homer Thompson, the distinguished Classical archeologist, speaks of his fascination for ornithology and languages. Most important at this time was his introduction to Turkish in the old (Arabic) characters dating back to the era before Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's alphabet reform which took him to Princeton to study Arabic under his mentor, Philip Hitti, and to achieve an M.A. (1930) and Ph.D. (1937) in Oriental Languages and Literature. Richard Ettinghausen writes they were befriended by the renowned archeologist, Ernst Herzfeld, who had come to Princeton from Germany. On Herzfeld's death, George Miles was chosen editor of the memorial volume published in his honor.

In 1937 he married Eleanor Briggs. Wartime naval service (1941-1946) took him from Washington, D.C. to Ankara, Calcutta and New Delhi. He attained the rank of commander.

Briefly a research assistant before the war at the American Numismatic Society in New York, he now returned for twenty-five years of close association serving as Curator of Islamic Coins (1946-1972), Chief Curator (1952-1968), Secretary (1966-1968) and Executive Director (1966-1971). Bayly Winder notes his enthusiasm and scholarly commitment to numismatic studies, a field then almost unknown. George Miles compiled a bibliographical record of fifteen books and over seventy-five articles including The Numismatic History of Rayy, "The Ayyūbid Dynasty of the Yaman and Their Coinage", "A Ninth Century Hoard of Dirhems Found at Susa", "A Mamlūk Hoard of Ḥamāh", "The Early Islamic Bronze Coinage of Egypt", The Coinage of the Umayyads of Spain, The Coinage of the Visigoths of Spain, and Early Arabic Glass Weights and Stamps.

Later years drew him particularly to Greece. Between 1956 and 1967, he spent four terms at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens as an associate member; and in 1961 he became a member of its Managing Committee. It was here that his daughter, Marian, met James McCredie, an archeologist and now director of that institution. George Miles' work on the island of Crete resulted in The Coinage of the Arab Amirs of Crete.

He was a member of the International Numismatic Commission from 1953, the executive committee of the Encyclopedia of Islam from 1951, and a vice president of the American Oriental Society, 1960-1961. He also belonged to the Royal Numismatic Society and the Institut d'Égypte.

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