

## IN MEMORIAM

### Norman Itzkowitz (1931–2019)

Norman Itzkowitz lived a full and good life, leaving his mark on the field of Ottoman history through his published work and through his outstanding teaching and mentorship of students, many of whom he inspired to enter the field.

Itzkowitz's parents immigrated from Eastern Europe to New York City, where Itzkowitz was born. A proud alumnus of New York City public schools, he graduated from Stuyvesant High School before going on to attend the City College of New York, graduating in 1953. Upon the advice of his college mentor, Hans Kohn, he came to Princeton University to study Persian, but then was lured into Ottoman and Turkish studies by another mentor, Lewis Thomas. He finished his doctorate in 1959 with a dissertation entitled "Mehmed Raghıb Pasha: the Making of an Ottoman Grand Vezir."<sup>1</sup> Subsequently he joined the Princeton faculty and was promoted to Associate Professor in 1966 and then Full Professor in 1973. He retired in 2001.

Itzkowitz had an almost immediate impact on the field of Ottoman studies with his 1962 publication of "Eighteenth Century Ottoman Realities,"<sup>2</sup> which became required reading for generations of graduate students in Ottoman history. His interest in prosopography, or career line analysis, resulted in further publications. But his 1962 article remains his most studied work, for it debunked long-held assumptions about the Ottomans by critiquing Orientalism *avant la lettre*. As Zachary Lockman aptly put it:

<sup>1</sup> For an extensive listing of Itzkowitz's publications, see "Norman Itzkowitz – A Representative List of Publications," in *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz*, eds. Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir (Madison, Wisconsin: The Center for Turkish Studies at The University of Wisconsin and The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), xiii-xv.

<sup>2</sup> This article was reprinted in *ibid.*, xvii-xxxii.

[Itzkowitz] demolished A. H. Lybyer's assertions about the character of Ottoman state and society and criticized [H.A.R.] Gibb and [Harold] Bowen's uncritical acceptance of those assertions in their widely acclaimed and cited *Islamic Society and the West*, published in two parts in 1950 and 1957. Itzkowitz castigated "the attitude that knowledge of Near Eastern languages was unnecessary – anything worth knowing could be found in European sources" and described what he called the "Lybyer, Gibb and Bowen thesis" as "comforting to the Christian West's deep-seated sense of superiority" but grossly inaccurate.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1970s, following training at the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis, he became a lay analyst and began a long-lasting collaboration with Vamik Volkan of the University of Virginia Medical School's Department of Psychiatry. That collaboration resulted in the publication of three books, including *The Immortal Atatürk: A Psychobiography* (1984). With L. Carl Brown, he co-edited a collection of essays, *Psychological Dimensions of Near Eastern Studies* (1977). In 1991 the University of Virginia Medical School appointed Itzkowitz as clinical professor in behavioral medicine and psychiatry.

Besides these major works, Itzkowitz edited and revised Lewis Thomas's *Elementary Turkish* (1967) and *A Study of Naima* (1972), following his untimely death in 1965. He also published a short treatment of Ottoman history, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (1973), which is still in print. In retirement, he co-authored five works for young readers.

Where many other professors would prefer to focus on their research and/or graduate education, Itzkowitz took his job as educator so seriously that he involved himself in undergraduate life at Princeton, serving as master of Wilson College, one of the campus's residential colleges, from 1975 to 1989. He advocated for the admission of Sabra Meservey, the first woman ever admitted to Princeton University, who completed her dissertation under the guidance of Lewis Thomas and Itzkowitz in 1965. In addition to training many graduate students, he also contributed greatly to American education on the Middle East through many summer seminars for elementary, secondary, and college teachers, and, as noted above, even in retirement Itzkowitz continued his work on secondary education.

<sup>3</sup> Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 149–50.

Itzkowitz is survived by his wife of 65 years, Leonore, a retired teacher, two children, the older of whom was born in Ankara while the Itzkowitizes lived in Turkey, and four grandchildren.

None of the foregoing can convey the impact Itzkowitz had on several generations of graduate students of Ottoman history. It is noteworthy that he did not try to impress his own views onto those students, each of whom has gone on to make unique contributions and offer new perspectives in an ever-growing field. All will miss him. ✧

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