

## **Transcript: Edward Said and Orientalism - Mehiyar Kathem interviews Nasser Jassem, Director of the Unit for the Study of Istisharaq (Orientalism) at the University of Mosul**

Mehiyar 0:00 Welcome to the Nehrein Network Podcast series. Today we are with Professor Nasser Jassem from Mosul University. professor Nasser Jassem is a British Institute for the Study of Iraq and Nahrein Network scholar and you're based at UCL.

Nasser Jassem 0:16 Thank you very much. And nice to meet you. Nice to being here today. And I'm glad we can, we will talk about this scholarship.

Mehiyar 0:24 You've just come for the second leg of your scholarship. You arrived a few days ago, and you were here for a month before. So up to now, and you have another you have another 10 days left of your scholarship.

Nasser Jassem 0:24 In fact, I was concentrated all my life and career to study the British Orientalism. And I study then I teach an array and administrating works on British Orientalism, but I didn't get a chance to be in Britain, and meet in person a British Orientalist all over this. So the scholarship was a long life, to be in here in Britain, is a long life dream for me. And this scholarship fulfilled that dream. When I when I'm here in Britain, I find a contradiction in defining Orientalism because this word as related to the most famous book in the in this field is by Edward Said, Orientalism, and its relation to the social sciences is very difficult topic, because there is a tradition of those interested in the Middle East and the Oriental area and Africa, and this tradition belong to a period of the European history. And this period is related, as you know, with colonialism, and with the hegemony on the east, and also related to the machinery works also there is educational aspect and the intellectual aspects in the east by painting and by discovering the Orient had its many purposes, you discover it by escorting the military army or also going to orient to make a missionary work. Or you go to the Orient to write a novel. So Orientalism is different. There is many oriental-isms, and not just one, all related to its own goals and purposes.

Mehiyar 2:29 And the concept, as you've described it emerged before Edward Said's work.

Nasser Jassem 2:33 Well, of course, the word Orientalism is belong to the 18th century, it was just a romancing idea toward the east, and it's dominated by painting and music, not by historical works, although there is those interested in overall works on the east, you know, the [Name] Chair and Oxford belong to 1636 and the chair of Thomas Adams in Cambridge, belong to 1632. But they don't call those Orientalists, they call them Arabists. What Orientalism in the beginning means, those who are interested in there is a way of looking to the east. Mehiyar 3:17 Edward Said depicted a very particular way of looking at the Middle East, which he called Orientalism. So how does that differ from what came before his work?

Nasser Jassem 3:27 Before it was I there is a criticism of Orientalism, and they'd say Anwar Abdul Malik in 1963, wrote an article about the criticism of Orientalism in the Western world. Also, there is Abdul-Latif Tibawi. By the way, he was a British Palestinian scholar who write a critic of Orientalism and publish it, but, Edward Said, in my mind, he gets this fame, not through handling this topic, but through the methods that he adopted in handling the topics. He was specialized in literary criticism and theory criticism, and he handled this topic from this point of view, and that makes him different. Anwar Abdul Malik, and Abdul-Latif Tibawi in the Arab world, where the criticism of Orientalism

belongs to a century or more ago, and as I said in the lecture I delivered here, the criticism of Orientalism takes three main trends, the Islam, religious criticism, and the socialist criticism, and the nationalist criticism. Orientalism identified with the West or the Western hegemony, so it was criticized through those three main trends. My scholarship is about a project, I am intending to write a dictionary for the British Orientalist or the British scholars who are interested in the Iraqi history and civilization. And it did not just related to the scholars it related all British persons who devoted works related to the Iraq. It means to have written material or painting, or music, or any kind of... in relation to Iraq specifically... just relation to Iraq. It's a dictionary for the British person who wrote and given articles.

Mehiyar 5:43 And what are we looking at in terms of the period?

Nasser Jassem 5:46 I even included those who are interested in archaeology and I didn't confine it with a limited period. It's up to now. Mehiyar 5:55 So what you mean by a dictionary is also your profile, you're creating profiles of important individuals who have written about Iraq?

Nasser Jassem 6:04 From the age those who are interested in archaeology, and travelers in the 18th century. And before that, you know, there is a literature related to Iraq prayer too in 1920. There is a book by Zeki Salah, called Britain and Iraq, down to 1916.

Mehiyar 6:26 What kind of criteria are using to identify the specific researcher you're looking at or the writer?

Nasser Jassem 6:32 This specification is related to the output as the output related to Iraq and in Iraq or the area relating to Iraq. It's included in my dictionary. Archaeology, social sciences, economic and everything related to Iraq.

Mehiyar 6:49 Specifically, uh British.

Nasser Jassem 6:50 Yes, of course, it wasn't [originally] a British person, or individual. In the beginning, it was, the project is not just related to Britain. It related to the Western Orientalists first and then it not related to Iraq, specifically. The initial steps of the project is related to the Middle East area, or the Arabic and Islamic area. You know, there is a book in Arabic called a Al Mustashriqoon by Najib Aqqi. He was very enduring work of three volumes, and the author spent more than 40 years editing and revising his book. The first idea is to translate the book into English. It didn't translate it into English before and many English even a specialist in Middle Eastern studies have no idea about this book from Lebanon. But he was resident, was in Egypt a high official member in the Arab League, [who] issued many editions of this book, did it all with his own effort. And this book was rare in its importance, because all those who write about Orientalism in the Arab world, depending mainly on his [book] and there is no original contribution in study in Orientalism that can overcome this book. All are as it is said, all rise from the of Najib Aqqi. In the beginning, I decided to translate the book into English and then I found additional material here. He wrote his books, before internet and before the relevant materials through periodicals and databases and something like that. Now there is the material he gave it in regard, to the actual, there are multiplying numbers of those he didn't included in his book. Also, he ended his book in 70s, and something like that. My intention is to supplement his work down to the present day.

Mehiyar 8:55 And your book could be both in English and Arabic?

Nasser Jassem 8:59 Yes, I decided to write it in Arabic and then translate it into English. Or I do though the two books in two version in the same time. Because I sometimes I don't need to translate material.

Mehiyar 9:12 The you are though, or was at previous, but you're still part of a, associated with a unit of study? Could you tell us more about the history of this unit which is part of the University of Mosul.

Nasser Jassem 9:22 The study of Orientalism and Mosul University had its good traditions, because the founders of the humanities in this university have their degrees in UK universities. And when they establishing the humanities departments, they give us a well balanced view towards the British orientalist, especially those who are supervising their thesis and works. We made an infrastructure for handling or understanding the Orientalism and we built about it. We managing to add the study in PhD and MA thesis about Orientalism, specially about the British Orientalism. The main contribution work is the establishing of a special unit related to study of Orientalism.

Mehiyar 10:13 The only one in Iraq or the others?

Nasser Jassem 10:15 It is the only one in the Arab world in the whole Arab world.

Mehiyar 10:18 It looks at Orientalism, but it is tied to a university in the Middle East.

Nasser Jassem 10:22 Yes, we don't concentrate on the Orientalism with a broad meaning as related to India and China, or something like that. We concentrated only on the Middle East area. Mehiyar 10:33 When was established?

Nasser Jassem 10:34 It was established in 2011. We did good works in that regard. But at that time, also was, as you know, was the eve of invaded by Daesh, and there is a kidnapping and killing and something like that. So we have to make many of our efforts in a private works. We published a periodical translating articles, we made in interviews with specialists in Middle Eastern Studies and through video broadcasting, and all that is not in we didn't make it public, because of even the word istisharat is dangerous on our safety.

Mehiyar 11:14 You lived in Mosul, under the occupation of ISIS. Where were you when Daesh, the Islamic State occupied Mosul?

Nasser Jassem 11:21 I was in Mosul, I didn't have an intention to evacuate my city. In fact, as I said, once I decided to, Daesh enter Mosul and the majority of Mosulese evacuate in hurry, to the night that Daesh enter Mosul.

Mehiyar 11:42 This is June 2014.

Nasser Jassem 11:43 Yes, in June, five or nine June 2014. And nine in the night of nine 2014. And I go out with with thousands, with hundreds of thousands of people who are evacuating in hurry from Daesh occupation in that night. We spent nearly nine hours just to cross a distance, what no more than three kilometers, to enter the Kurdistan and to get...

Mehiyar 12:19 So you left immediately. Yes, as far as I cross this and back to my house. Because I in my mind, I remember the Palestinian who left their houses. So did you cross over to Iraqi Kurdistan?

Nasser Jassem 12:34 Yes, I crossed to Iraqi Kurdistan. Just I reached the Kurdistan I turned back and I said I don't want to be a Palestinian. Or they make French emigre, evacuating during the French Revolution had the intention to go back two months or three to their homes. With the invasion.

Mehiyar 12:54 You were with your family.

Nasser Jassem 12:56 Yes. And my wife, and my sons were crying. Why don't, why you went back to...? Yes, I told them...

Mehiyar 13:03 You're probably the only one going back!

Nasser Jassem 13:05 Of course, I am the only one going back! Because the you know, the way to go to Kurdistan was very crowded. And the way to enter back, I was even afraid that the border will close between us and is denied for me to go back to my, my home. So I hurried in the car just to reach my, my home because as I told you I thought of Palestinian who evacuating their houses, and yes and taken their keys with them. And they believe that it's only one month or two and they will be back to those homes. You remember Mahmoud Darwish, his famous poem about why you left the horse alone. So this, this idea was in my mind, so I take I back to Mosul

Mehiyar 13:57 And your family was happy with you...

Nasser Jassem 13:59 My family was crying. And they don't understand why I did. Why I'm doing that. And I told him I thought, a full responsibility for back to...

Mehiyar 14:10 And your colleagues from the university were they also leave into Kurdistan? Or some of them stayed on? Could you tell us a bit about that?

Nasser Jassem 14:16 Yes, as I say many, majority of Mosulese evacuate this night from Mosul. Some of them prefer to stay in Kurdistan and never back. And the...

Mehiyar 14:30 The border was open with Kurdistan, to enter.

Nasser Jassem 14:32 Yes, Kurdistan's border was closed in that time. And many of them spent two days or three in in a free area until they permitted them to enter. But the majority of them decided to back as I did before, to back to Mosul and see what will happen. We believe that it's this occupation was very temporary and wouldn't last a month. And the Daesh will evacuate and leave the city because it's insane to understand that just a few militants who can who can controlling this city, the central government will certainly will reback the city from from the occupation.

Mehiyar 15:18 So when you came back. You came back to Mosul. What did you do?

Nasser Jassem 15:21 You know, that was in summer. And there is no university at that time. I spent nearly two months...

Mehiyar 15:30 The university was closed.

Nasser Jassem 15:32 The university was closed through summer. And when we back to the university in August, they told us there is a new administration of the university by Daeshi teachers, we discovered some of our, few of our colleagues became a part of attending the Daeshi administration.

Mehiyar 15:53 So some of the university lecturers teachers, became part of Daesh

Nasser Jassem 15:58 Yes of course. But those who are very, very, very few, and they are not a prominent scholars or something like that. They only just a handful of MA graduate or, and they still had didn't finish their MA, but they have the responsibility. They have the high ranking in the in the new establishment. So they instruct us under a threat of death, to back to the university and teaching students but there is no students in the university. So they bring us to the central library, at the pretext of editing a new curricula for the university and the for secondary schools and the primary schools. Yeah, come to the concentration camp in a way. Yes of course. And I think this is one of the main reason that it was targeting the central library in the liberation operations. The Central Library became a host for university scholars, they well, as I said, there was enforced to be there to write a curriculum for the whole grade. It's not just as...

Mehiyar 17:14 The curriculum is obviously the work that was asked of you and other colleagues. It was obviously associated with Daesh's own ideology, understanding of Islam, politics. What was the kind of program they wanted, the university teachers to prepare?

Nasser Jassem 17:30 It's not related to the Daesh. It dealt with all specialization in physics, medicines, something like that.

Mehiyar 17:40 So it was about revising.

Nasser Jassem 17:42 Yes, revising it, according to Daeshi principle. Okay, if there is a picture, they cutting the head of the of the picture. There is, if you're going to count, better than to choose one apple two apple, it says one bullet two bullet, three bullets or something like that. Also, I would say this is not just related to university or undergraduate curriculum is related to secondary schools and primary schools.

Mehiyar 18:10 What about history? Did they even particularly say, for instance, the British history in Iraq, colonization, occupation? What about European history? What about American history? What did they ask you? What did they ask universities to do? Did they just blank slate?

Nasser Jassem 18:28 In fact, it is, as I say, as may say, it is just a project, but didn't fruit nothing. They bring to us and make us editing text and give us instruction to do that. And doing that no.... The result is zero, is nothing written or nothing editing from all those [unclear]. They are photocopying books and bending them and going them and something like that. But it just like, like a show. No more than a show.

Mehiyar 19:04 And during this time, obviously, there is no teaching for [unclear] there's no this is closed.

Nasser Jassem 19:13 The unit was closed during...

Mehiyar 19:15 the president of the University of he had fled.

Nasser Jassem 19:18 Yes the whole administration, the whole administration's administrator and the university fled. The Deans and the...

Mehiyar 19:28 So were you not scared for your life when you went back to...

Nasser Jassem 19:30 Yes, of course Mehiyar 19:31 And all the other colleagues who went back and you stayed on in Mosul and how what kind of environment were you living in? I mean, you were going back and forth between the university and your house. But otherwise, you didn't do anything beyond that. It was very restricted, your mobility was restricted. What you could say was restricted. Could you tell us about general life under Daesh when you were there in Mosul?

Nasser Jassem 19:53 Yes, it was various stages. The first stages was a peaceful period for nearly three months or or more that the people feel a relief because before Daesh occupation, there is two things. There is very restriction from the military in Mosul and also there is a bombing and kidnapping and assassination by Daesh. So after the Daesh occupation there is no assassinations and no military restrictions [relative calm] and some people believe that it's it's all arranged with the with the government or other arrange with the foreign powers and [so rumor and hearsay] they even believe that Ba'ath was regain its control on of the city as a beginning to re controlling the Iraq and back to the life between, before 2003. And everything will be stable and and we will get rid of from this kidnapping and killing and assassination. Yeah, and back to our usual life before 2003. But with time, there is gradual presence of a new brutal rule with, they take it step by step. Firstly, they

evacuating the Christians and and their assaults against the Yazidis for the Mosulese was really astonished upon this because they don't ever imagine that this kind of of things happened in Mosul. As you know that Christian Muslim live together for hundreds of years. And they believe they are, there is a coexistence that inseparable part of the Mosul and with the day or two the you see this happening...

Mehiyar 21:58 But Daesh, did Daesh attack the Christian community in Mosul?

Nasser Jassem 22:02 Not attacking them. They order them to evacuate and [their houses] evacuate the houses and their properties and left and take nothing with them outside the city. Even if they, even their cars. When they get an out by their own cars.

Mehiyar 22:21 There was no physical attacks on Christians.

Nasser Jassem 22:23 No, no, no, no physical no killing or no arresting. They just let them get out of the city.

Mehiyar 22:31 And this was because they were because they were Christian. As opposed to Yazidi?

Nasser Jassem 22:36 Yes, of course

Mehiyar 22:37 ... Who were seen as outcasts from the three main religions?

Nasser Jassem 22:40 Yes, of course.

Mehiyar 22:42 And this is why Yazidis were attacked? Nasser Jassem 22:44 Daesh saw the Yazidi as heretics.

Mehiyar 22:47 What was the Yazidi community like in Mosul itself in the city of Mosul itself prior to 2014?

Nasser Jassem 22:55 In fact, there was there was a Yazidi presence in Mosul. But as I said until 2006, or 2007, there is a kidnapping or killing the Yazidis. So all of them evacuate the city and live back to outside Mosul, go to Sinjar and then [Place] and other safe areas, safe areas. There is no Yazidi in Mosul 2014. Even the students from the when they came to to Mosul, some of them was kidnapping and killing. So they prefer to change their teaching to Kurdistan universities, other universities.

Mehiyar 23:41 So with the liberation of Mosul in 2017, you at the very end of Daesh's rule of Mosul, you left. You left Mosul.

Nasser Jassem 23:53 I did stay in Mosul and also and I saw the liberation operation

Mehiyar 23:59 So you never left?

Nasser Jassem 24:00 No, no. I didn't left Mosul ever. Mehiyar 24:03 You're very brave.

Nasser Jassem 24:04 No, you know, those who live or live in Mosul. They have a deep relation to the city, and they didn't find themselves elsewhere. But when you leave the city, and as those who left the city, in 2014, many of them get used to the new life in the in Kurdistan and Turkey and others, and they didn't think that it's they didnt think of backing to Mosul. Everybody loves his own birthplace. And you know, during the harsh time, we thinking of evacuating the city, but that was very dangerous project. And many of those who are going out Mosul, they may killed or...

Mehiyar 25:04 So it's also a risk to leave.

Nasser Jassem 25:06 The university managed to recover from this black times and to reinitiate its, recommence...

Mehiyar 25:16 The university was heavily damaged. some of Nasser Jassem 25:18 Some of its building are heavily damaged. If we want us to talk about what happened in the university, there is two things, there is Daesh managing to burning some of the colleges and also the American or the airplane strikes, destroy some of the buildings, especially the central library of the university and destroyed it. Daesh also burning as I said, because I was in the university just two days before its liberation, after its liberation, and I saw barrels of gasoline and, in front of the colleges,

Mehiyar 26:06 Aall of the colleges?

Nasser Jassem 26:08 I came across the College of Arts College of Education, College of Ed...

Mehiyar 26:13 And these barrels were designed to burn?

Nasser Jassem 26:16 To burn and they are burning. Some of the the, say, College of Education was burned by Daeshi fighters, before the liberation of the University. College of Arts, I have pictures I can again, send you pictures about what I'm photoing. Just two days after liberation of Mosul University.

Mehiyar 26:40 The University eventually was able to come back to its rather relative normality. So by 2000- and liberation happened in 2017. So by within a few months, University of life was coming back to...?

Nasser Jassem 26:55 In the beginning, we go to Al Hamdanya of Mosul and commencing there and make an examination for these students for for nearly two months, or three. And then we've, in that time, nothing is done in Mosul main campuses. But after that, we are decided ,by our own efforts to, to cleaning the University, with our students and those workers in the university to make life back again. And then we, the main administrator of the university, stay in Kurdistan. And come and back sporadically. You mean the President of the University, the Chancellor. Deans of the universities, University, also many heads of the departments

Mehiyar 27:57 Under Daesh's rule were there any lecturers who are killed? Lecturers or teachers? [Yes,] Who are deliberately killed, executed by Daesh?

Nasser Jassem 28:07 Yes, yes. Those even in our department in history department. Our two or three of our scholars was killed by Daeshi, the crime that they are participating in the elections or nominating themselves to [unclear] the election and something like that. One of the son of our, one of our colleagues, his son was in the media department, and he took a photo for a burning car, a burning Daeshi car, he was accused and executed because of of that.

Mehiyar 28:50 Because he took a photo they thought he was a spy.

Nasser Jassem 28:52 Yes, they've heard that he was transmitting this to, to military forces. He was he was only a second, second grade in the media department. And he thought it's just his work as a as you know, in this department, and there are others in the other departments and they are also some of these scholars died through bombing, also the liberation, the dean of the the ex dean of the engineering college, was died through the liberation. He and his wife. The dean of the computer college.

Mehiyar 29:36 2017, those who had fled coming back now. [Yes]. And the university was temporarily relocated in Dahuk and other places. Could you tell us about that process?

Nasser Jassem 29:50 During Daesh regime , the university commencing its work in in Kurdistan region and also in Kirkuk in the north. And the administrating. There is the university and they are gathering the students who are now out of Mosul. And the this is in Dahuk and Erbil and in Kirkuk.

Mehiyar 30:16 So those three temporary campuses.

Nasser Jassem 30:19 Yes for the university, through the help of the Kurdistan University and University of Kirkuk.

Mehiyar 30:25 And this is for students who had left?

Nasser Jassem 30:27 Yes, who had succeeded in leaving Mosul and staying outside it, they are, you know, the students of Mosul University, is not belong to the Mosul itself. There are many students who was already from another governorates and also there is a Mosul students who fled from Mosul at the time of the day of occupation, and the following month, and they start just commencing their studies, you know, there is those who are in the fourth grade.

Mehiyar 31:01 Now who were the teachers in these three temporary, were they the same teachers?

Nasser Jassem 31:05 Yes, the other teacher, there was the teachers of the Mosul University. But as you know, when they evacuated most of them, some of them settled in Dahuk and others settled in Erbil and other settled in Sulimaniya, so that the campuses related to them to the main settling of the, of the University [unclear].

Mehiyar 31:24 So it was like a makeshift University, temporary University.

Nasser Jassem 31:27 Yes temporary University, but they succeeded in and you know, graduating, the students, and also those who had who need to defending their thesis and dissertations.

Mehiyar 31:41 So these have closed down now?

Nasser Jassem 31:42 Yes, yes, it's all closed. With time, not just with deliberation and reconnaissance, there is some belongings to related to the, to the old or to the previous campuses, but now they are resolved. But as I said, some of the university teachers and others, they still live in Kurdistan, and came in the early morning to Mosul University and back at the end of the of the time, but the university now in full capacity to recommence its work. And [Now it's back to normal life.] Yes, it's back to normal life. There are money spend by United Nations and other organizations to rehabilitate life in the in the university. And as you know, the postgraduate works are on, in advance and the university, especially with the new presidency, all look forward for a new era of its its work.

Mehiyar 32:55 Let's go back to the unit that you're speaking about for Istisharaq, and were you able to rebuild the capacity of Istisharaq after the liberation of Mosul in 2017?

Nasser Jassem 33:09 In fact, we are just want to go recommencing our work. But there is an administrative obstacles, because we have to address an application once again to the president of the university to have his cabinet, to recommencing in our work. Our old building was destroyed and burned. And we need a new a new place to gather, also the equipment's related to the unit was also destroyed, the computers and photocopying machines and something like that. There is in the beginning there is an obstacles, administrative obstacles and there is a need to refurbish equipments, but as the online contacts and the online material, we started just from the first day of liberation we recommence in our contact with the with specialists in the Middle Eastern studies. There is a page on the on Facebook, we provided it with a new materials and something like that. And also there is a students who have their degree on Oriental Studies. They are starting to finishing



their thesis and defending on it even just before the the re-establish of the unit. And within years or more or less, the unit started its work officially officially. But now it's taken it's a few steps and I'm sure this scholarship will give much back to the unit for its work. And I have very promising prospects for this unit to recommencing its work. And I may add that between 2011 and 2014, we didn't work with the full capacity, owing the situation. And we are declined many projects related to the unit. Because we are afraid from make this in public. As I said before.

Mehiyar 35:30 Through this scholarship, you're strengthening the capacity of unit Istisharaq, and the unit of Istisharaq is part of the history department? Nasser Jassem 35:37 Is not it's part of the it's an independent department in the College of Arts. [Okay]. But it there is no teaching on it. It's only a research unit. But it's it's an independent department. And there is affiliated scholars or teachers from all over from all the departments of the College of Arts.

Mehiyar 36:01 And you said it was the only one in Middle East but if we look at Iraq, specifically, what other departments look, examine Orientalism in Iraq? Is it just this unit, or is also part of sort of the curricula of other universities?

Nasser Jassem 36:18 The first initiative in a study Orientalism. Wholesale it teaching Orientalism is belonging to the those scholars who was have their own degrees and Western more than that, and they initiating the interest in Orientalism, and with time it's been a core [unclear] in the Postgraduate Studies in the Department of History Department, of English literature, and Department of Arabic also. The main issue for the British audience, that there is a difference between the departments, or the scientific departments in the Iraq and the Arab countries. On this UK universities or the Western universities, there is a department of history related to the ancient history, medieval history and modern history are not just restricted to Iraqi or the Arab history and there is a department of Arabic studies related to the language, Arabic language and Arabic literature. And also there is a translation department. And those departments are interested in Orientalism, as I said, through the experience of their teachers with a Western education within years is became a curriculum in the in the undergraduate and the fourth grade of the undergraduate to study Orientalism. But the first let's say postgraduate thesis, about Orientalism is, is by 1992 by me. Is about Saladin's English speaking biographers. And then the other universities are interested in this field. And there is a thesis in Baghdad university and in Kirkuk University.

Mehiyar 38:07 And it has these links with other universities.

Nasser Jassem 38:10 Yes, they keep consulting us about their work, they want a new subject, supervisor, contacting us about materials something.

Mehiyar 38:19 Do you have any other connections? Do you have connections with universities research centers outside Iraq in the Middle East itself?

Nasser Jassem 38:26 As regard the Orientalism, there is no independent center concentrate on the study of Orientalism all over the Arabic world, there was a center in Saudi Arabia and Mohammed Bin Saud university is called the Center for Orientalism and Civilization, and this was a closed long ago.

Mehiyar 38:52 Why is that the case? Why is it the case that we don't have these what should be quite important centers of research particularly given the history of this region?

Nasser Jassem 39:02 Something related to the the ability to find those who are efficient to study it. Study Orientalism or study Western studies actively, and also you know, the language obstacles, and also the most important thing is that there is a preoccupation related to Orientalism. And if you want

to study Orientalism, you have to be an apologist or polemical, you have to say something about Orientalism and accept its point of view. There is no ability to challenge this long existed the view toward Orientalism. So if you want to study this topic, you have to attack Orientalism and the defending your religious doctrine and defending your national identity and something like that. It is the purpose of studying Orientalism, this point. The other point is that available materials in the Arab world was very, very scanty, because it's all dependent on translation works. And the process of translation works by only interest, is very limited. There is a concentration on translating novels, book of sciences and something like that. And the interest of studying Orientalism or in translating book by an Orientalist is very short.

Mehiyar 40:43 Just on that point, how do people in Iraq look at this concept? Edward Said wrote about Orientalism, with a view to a western audience. How do Iraqi scholars use Edward Said, do they still use him? Do they still think he's important? And I also would like to ask you is how does that inform Iraqi scholarship?

Nasser Jassem 41:03 As regards Edward Said, his book has great fame, not in, say, [like] in the Western world. And there is any, because in the Arab world, as I said, in a lecture yesterday, the translation of the book, by [?] was an obstacle to really understand the book and the message of the book. As I say the book is, it's a difficult book, but the translation make it more difficult to comprehend. But this people celebrating Edward Said and celebrating his attitude and celebrating his fame in the Arab world, because they put it in, you know, in defending the East against the West and against colonialism. And they show the book in this perspective. And also, the method by Edward Said was very advanced, regard the Arabic readers and they found in it a way to upgrading their handling with the Western materials. Those who misconceptions the message of the book, and they are welcoming the book, although they are don't have the actual message of it, and those who are welcoming the book, and they are just aware of its message and reinterpreting.... As we talking about the responses, there is varied responses, there is responses by those scholars who have their degree in the West, and some of them are welcoming the book and some of them, they say that Edward Said know nothing about Orientalism, because he he was a graduate of English department, not of... If he was a graduate of history department and work with in contact with Orientalist, he will surely give us a different point of view. He concentrate on the novels and the the writers and he didn't handle the actual achievements of the British, or the Western Orientalism. He also excluded the German Orientalism, as you know, and he defended on that and say this German Orientalism have no nothing relation with the colonialism and something like that, because Germany had no history in in colonialism and something like that. The book was so influenced. But in my mind, there is other Arabian origin scholars who spent much time in the Western world and write about Orientalism and but they don't get the same recognition from the Western world. And also this because of he was efficient, the media, neither persons are well qualified for how he contact audiences. Sometimes you find a great scholar, scholars who have no access to media. Edward Said, and also he struggled for a long time in you know, in his controversy against Bernard Lewis and other scholars or from the from the right, or the conservative scholars and this controversy, and it's polemical give much fame and lead people to stay beside him. Also there his Palestinian, his Palestinian background, as he said in his autobiography, he said, all those old immigrants have their own original countries and they can speak on the name of it and I am I have no countries to back to it. Because now Palestine was occupied by Israeli government. A new and a new government. This give give his ideas more credit. He also were educated in Western Humanities, he play music, well qualified in literature and painting, and this kind of a qualification are rare in the Arab world. He was a Western scholar in the Caribbean name and, and defend his case properly and find many who stand beside [him].

Mehiyar 45:35 Where do you see the future of studies that look at Orientalism? You spent some time now in the UK, you've been to the School of Oriental and African Studies, which is one of the main venues for your research. And of course, here at UCL University College London, and you've met with Iraqi, non-Iraqi British scholars. You've given some talks yesterday at SOAS and in a few days in Oxford, I believe, could you tell us about the scholarship that you've seen particularly from your perspective and Iraqi perspective, Muslawi perspective regarding Orientalism?

Nasser Jassem 46:10 Of course. There is difference between what you hear and what you see. When I when I be here in Britain, many of my older perspectives are modified according to the actual experiment and personal context. I just, yes, I have my own contacts with the British specialist in Middle Eastern studies before, but not like you're seeing them and you you enter the the rooms of the of the classes and and attending events, something like that. The main issue, that there are different much difference with our perspective in studying Orientalism and the developments now happening in the study, because there is as you know, there is an an interdisciplinary subjects, there is a social sciences, you can talk about social scientists and Developmental Studies and Political Studies is there are two links, the first link is the area. Now, those who studied economic by concentrating on Iraq, they have links with the old tradition of Orientalism, because of the uniqueness of the place. And also there is a language the other link that related us with the old conception of Orientalism is the language, and I see through my experiment here, even there is the interest in orient on the languages or Oriental language which was backward in regard to the interest in social sciences. Or even so many scholars who have their degree on related to Iraq or to Syria or other areas, and are not well qualified in the languages of the area. And I wondering how they can make an actual comprehension of the history of Iraq and the area without reading the original material in its original languages. And also I saw interest in colloquial language language Arabic colleague one better than interest in [?]. And when asked they say it's a practical importance for for teaching those colloquials, but in my mind, you need to go to and read the original materials and all the original materials written in the Arabic [?]. You cannot ignoring the importance of studying language, when you decided to study the social and the economic or even or even the economic situation in this area. As I said, there is less importance on the on the language in the languages of the the area than before. There is interest in social sciences, there is more interest in current issues than interest in the...

Mehiyar 49:24 Because in Middle East, we have quite strict disciplines. Yes, you're taught in its discipline, and there is a sort of general lack of interdisciplinary research. [Yes, yes] This is one of the problems people find in the Middle East.

Nasser Jassem 49:38 I you know, as I as I told you, I face the new things are very new to our curriculum in the in the Middle East, because as I say, there is a history department related to history alone, and have nothing to do with other disciplinaries and also there is an Arabic studies a tradition of studied Arabic language without have the chance to go to other...

Mehiyar 50:06 What is the what is the impact of that on Iraqi scholarship, that way of looking at these disciplines on the caliber on the quality of scholarship in Iraq today? Nasser Jassem 50:16 I think they are, they are repeating themselves, and they giving nothing new, they just stick with the old traditions belonging to the 70s or the 60s. And we are needing a new revolution in studying as regards the history department which I belong to, we need a new technique and new method. You know, there is something missing there. And here what's very stressed on is the practical consequence of the practical, you know, for for the study, there's a practical aspect of the study, you can join, make a joint study between two or three topics or two or three specialization to it, or to to get an a project that will satisfy the needs belonging to the needs of a Western institution or

something like that. There is no nothing comparable in the, the, let's say, in this department on the Arabic, they don't have the need to satisfy the the satisfy an institution or a certain institution related to, to our works, we just submitting thesis. And if we can talk about postgraduate, the new Minister of Education managing to find solution for all that what I call laxity in in higher studies.

Mehiyar 51:54 This is a really important issue, particularly in terms of not just Europe, the Middle East academia, right, it's really about how do we learn from each other areas in disciplines that our borders are very been strictly defined? [Yes] This is this is the main issue that the Middle East doesn't have that cross communication between different different disciplines, which is one of the reasons why we don't have this kind of creativity that you're talking about, or this sense of things being reproduced over and over and over again, because of this lack of, absence of communication, but it's not it's not just about communication, obviously, this is about ways in which knowledge is produced.

Nasser Jassem 52:28 You know, multi aspects of problem is related with the with the qualifications of the of a scholar who can have invited this. It is also with the organizations that can back the research. In this regard, I saw in the Western world, there is many organizations or institutions that can give the aid to researcher to, to build multi talents. In Iraq, there is if you if you want to work on an interdisciplinary work, you have to do it by your on your own, if you want to, there is no those who can back you in this regard, you will you will work by yourself. Also, there is the teaching, there is a restricted core curriculum that you couldn't have additional, you couldn't get additional material, you couldn't attend courses, let's say courses related to Turkish language. If you are studied Ottoman studies, you need an Ottoman language. So, you have two choices, either to depend only on Arabic materials or English material. And this is not accepted from the scientific point of view, because the majority of the materials related to the Ottoman history out of the Ottoman language or in Turkish, modern Turkish. But how can you get this qualification? You may go to a translator to translate the documents for you. And it is also an unscientific way because the translators is not specialized in history. And he will translate something different that you are intended to have. And the second thing that you need to do attending courses in Turkish language, but there is no courses in the Mosul University, there is no extra courses for the special purposes. There is only a department of Turkish studies. You can attend this department and spent four years to have a degree in Turkish studies. And this not have nothing to do with your own work on history.

Mehiyar 54:46 What we need obviously more studies about this and research in the Middle East.

Nasser Jassem 54:50 If we want to make a contact between us and the Western universities and to help to upgrading our curriculum and something like that, we have to communicate between each other. And we have to understand the needs of each others. And because, as I said in an address in LSE. The American, ignoring the needs of the Iraqi universities and tried to enforce their own conception during after 2003. And the result was very, they failed, they failed in upgrading the levels of study in the Mosul universities, owing to their [lack of] understanding of the needs. So, I think I, the unit of Istisharaq, as regard to humanities can make a link between the Western universities and the colleges of the humanities and the Department of Humanities to make a reconnecting between both. Also, as you know, the Western universities needs to contact with the, let's say, Iraq universities, because there is a department, well established department in the Arabic studies, and even in the history of Iraq, and something like that. And they can give aid and I even think of a temporary, I told the president of the university, about an idea of hold the temporary courses for two weeks or three for PhD students in that British university, in the department of Arabic studies, or in the Department of History, they can enrich their their capacity in regard and in certain field. And they may can make a contact, personal contact with the, as I as I did in the, and vice versa.

Mehiyar 56:57 What are the key outcomes of this scholarship for you?

Nasser Jassem 57:01 In fact, it's a long awaited opportunity for me. And I am really, as I said, I've spent much time reading and writing administrative work about British, let's say, Middle Eastern studies. But I didn't get a chance to be here. I wrote about SOAS and an Oxford and but I, I wrote it through only written materials. And being here, and in UK, I spent much time in the British Library in the British Museum, in the library of SOAS. And in the library of UCL and other libraries. I met people, met scholars specialized in Middle Eastern Studies in the Arabic history. For a long time I read their books, but I didn't get a chance to be in contact, personal contact with them. Professor Hugh Kennedy, professor [Name] attending lectures in the Royal Asiatic Society, all was much important for me because I knew it only through written materials. And now I see it face to face, I maybe modified some of my attitude toward Oriental Studies. I also built the links for the future between those specialized scholars specialized in the Middle Eastern Studies and between the Mosul University and the unit of Istisharaq and the College of Arts. And I believe that these links will give a fruition or give much to help as a personal as you say, I am editing dictionary being here, give me much aid to, for available, for not available material there are in Iraq. And there is a new material added. I made I talked to people about this project they promised with to help central libraries that was destroyed.

Mehiyar 58:59 But it had it before, prior to 20-...

Nasser Jassem 59:01 Yes, I had I gather as much material as I can. But still there is a material. I didn't I haven't not in mind to try this dictionary in that time. There is an obstacle of traveling between governates. There is a restrictions regard to accessing the libraries in Baghdad or in Basra on something like that in those days. I think it's better the situation is much better than it was before 2014 eve. Because since 2000, they say 2005, you know, the sectarian conflict and something like that. It's restricting our availability, availability to continue to traveling through Iraq. And also it's hard for us to have a new books online and as... Here, can I go everywhere and have books and periodicals with free access that are provided by UCL through the months that I spent it here. In Iraq, we had free access to JSTOR and other periodic databases. But this free access was denied now, owing to financial problems, and this prevents us from going to the real materials related to the Oriental Studies and something like that. It is an essential for, for us to, to have this. The other things that I think it's an important issue, that the project of the dictionary is not restricted to those who live in, let's say, down to the Second World War. Its aim is to, to include it, the living specialist in Middle Eastern Studies, and this need a personal contacts with those specialist, and have a clear idea about their works. And being here in Britain was a great opportunity for me to doing that. What I intended to say that I don't want our relation ended with the end of the scholarship. I thought this scholarship is just initiating step for a full cooperation with with the unit of Istisharaq, the college of art or the University of Mosul, and the Western institutions and the Western scholars. If the scholarship related two months or two months, I spent it in UK and I'm back to where I can cut my links with the institution that funding my scholarship, I think there is no good investment. In this regard, those institutions at the BISI and the UCL and Ashmolean and other institutions need to strengthen it contacts with the Mosul University, as I say, exchanging scholars and exchanging materials. In the unit office Istisharaq, we are thinking we are preparing to to issue a peer reviewed periodical related to the Middle Eastern Studies. And we are welcoming participation of Western scholars in this periodical. We are welcoming scholars attending, lecturing, to Mosulese audience there or through Skype or through the BISI or client of UCL, or any related institution. Arranging contacts between us and Western scholars, and I think is, is the main benefit from this kind of scholarships is the as what we how we build on it, and not just the scholarship itself. The most important issue, that many of

those who have working on their degrees on Iraqi studies as an example, they don't think it's essential to go to Iraq, and they believe they can have their degree without need to be in Iraq and spending much time there. Only the archaeologist and those who, they think it's it's essential for them to be in Iraq, but also interested in social studies and the, let's say, in Political Studies, or something like that. They believe it's enough for them to consult libraries, and met even the Iraqi person will live in UK, something like that. But I advised them, it's better for them to go to Iraq. And we can we can arrange suitable condition for them to be in Mosul. And to, to have a field study there. I can mention that the American University of Sulaymaniyah get used to, from their presence in Iraq to to make a field studies or to publish a field study works about political situation and about, you know, the elections and something like that very important. But I think that SOAS and other institution, who did it who interested in or specialized in Iraq studies, they didn't have this access. Why not there is a British school. Why there isn't even a center a much aid to unit of Istisharaq to be a host for those British scholars who are, or even a British researcher who have their degree on on Iraq and the Middle East, and they can host them there and help them in their needs. As I said, it's a matter of not related only with books. It related to contacts with people and the understanding things.

Mehiyar 1:05:04 On that note, Professor, Nasser Jassem, it's been a pleasure speaking with you, and I'm very delighted that you've benefited from your scholarship here at UCL.

Nasser Jassem 1:05:15 Pleasure is mine, I am very grateful to, to those who participate in enable me to be here in Britain, especially the BISI. And this wonderful team, Professor Eleaonr and Dr. Mehiyar and others who give me as I said, long life opportunity to, to be here in in UK and to to develop my prospects and regard to scholarship. And surely that I back to Iraq, with the new ideas and new projects for my students and my colleagues. Thank you very much. Mehiyar 1:05:57 Thank you very much.