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# Guide to the Jay and Marjory Kapenga Papers

RG 338



Yarra Berger

2024

409 Prospect Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 432-5301

[divinity.library@yale.edu](mailto:divinity.library@yale.edu)

<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Yale Divinity Library  
409 Prospect Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 432-5301  
divinity.library@yale.edu  
<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

**CALL NUMBER:** RG 338

**CREATOR:** Kapenga, Jay Roland (1918-1993)

**TITLE:** Jay and Marjory Kapenga Papers

**DATES:** 1940–2018

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 3.5 linear feet (8 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English (Latin script)

**SUMMARY:** Jay Roland Kapenga (1918-1993) and Marjory Underwood Kapenga Marker (1922-2011) served as missionaries for the Reformed Church of America and were stationed in the Middle East from 1944-1983 as part of the Arabian Mission. This collection includes decades of correspondence written to and from Marjory and Jay Kapenga during their time in Oman, as well as multiple reflective writings on missionary work in the Middle East. Annual reports, essays, and collected materials provide a detailed look at the lifestyle of American missionaries abroad and the changing political development of Oman during the mid to late 20th century.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.338>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.338>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of the Kapenga Family, 2024.

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## Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Preferred Citation

Jay and Marjory Kapenga Papers (RG 338), Special Collections, Yale Divinity Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Reverend Jay Roland Kapenga was born June 3, 1918, in Holland, Michigan. He graduated from Hope College in 1941 and completed his studies at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1944. He was ordained as a minister at the Trinity Reformed Church on September 7, 1944, and accepted an evangelistic position abroad with the Reformed Church of America shortly after. That same year, he traveled to Basrah, Iraq, for a three-year missionary term that later extended to thirty-nine years as a member of the Arabian Mission for the Reformed Church of America. During this time, he met his wife, Marjory Underwood Kapenga, whom he married in 1947 in Tehran, Iran. After their marriage, Jay and Marjory Kapenga briefly worked in Bahrain before relocating to Muscat, Oman in 1948. The Kapengas subsequently continued their evangelistic work in Oman until they retired in 1983.

Marjory Underwood Kapenga Marker was born November 24, 1922, in Buffalo, New York. She graduated from Cornell University in 1944. After college, Marjory Kapenga was appointed by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions to teach at the American Community School in Tehran, Iran, for three years. After her marriage to Rev. Jay Kapenga, Marjory Kapenga continued her missionary work in Christian education. During her time abroad, Marjory Kapenga taught at the American Mission School in Muscat, Oman, and briefly served as an educational consultant to the Mission School in Bahrain.

While in Oman, Rev. Jay Kapenga served as pastor to the Arabic- and English-language Christian congregations, and he also worked with his wife in the American Mission School. He was appointed by the Sultan, Said Bin Taimur, to the Price Control Commission for Oman, and he served on the Mission Hospital Board. In addition to this, Rev. Jay Kapenga also managed the building construction and maintenance for the women's hospital, church, school, and several mission residencies.

The Kapengas took several sabbaticals during their decades of missionary service. During these times, they lived and worked at Pendle Hill, a Quaker retreat and study center in Wallingford, Pennsylvania. Here, Marjory Kapenga taught religious classes while Rev. Jay Kapenga served as a guest preacher and managed the grounds. After a three-year sabbatical, the Kapengas returned to Oman in 1975 to study Omani weaving and traditional handicraft. This assignment was sponsored by the Government of Oman under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor and was later continued by the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture.

The Kapengas retired in 1983 and returned to the United States to live at the Penney Retirement Community in Penney Farms, Florida. During their careers, the Kapengas wrote extensively about their experience in Oman. They continued their writing into retirement and collectively wrote a book about Omani weaving, which was later independently published in 2018. Rev. Jay Kapenga passed away on August 19, 1993. Marjory Kapenga later remarried Rev. Charles Marker and passed away on May 5, 2011.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection comprehensively covers the evangelistic work and research completed by Jay and Marjory Kapenga during their time in the Middle East from 1944-1983. As missionaries with the Reformed Church of America, Jay and Marjory Kapenga wrote extensively about their experience working for the Arabian Mission. These experiences are largely recorded in their personal correspondence, journal entries, and reflective essays. Correspondence and writing within the collection stretches from 1940-2010 as it spans

Marjory Kapenga's tenure as a student at Cornell University, as well as the couples' sabbaticals at Pendle Hill and later retirement.

Series I, Correspondence, contains letters written by Jay and Marjory Kapenga to family, friends, and associates in the United States and abroad. These letters contain descriptions of their initial travel to the Middle East, as well as their experience living and working as missionaries in Oman. Their relationships with the Sultanate of Oman, British authorities, other missionaries, and locals are included. This series largely retains the original order established by the family and is organized chronologically.

Series II, Writings, contains published and personal essays, poems, sermons, and notes written by Jay and Marjory Kapenga during their lifetimes. It contains three subseries that account for writing authored by Jay and Marjory Kapenga as a couple, as well as work written by each individually. The first subseries, JRK and MUK Writings, contains annual missionary reports written by the couple on the progression of the Arabian Mission in Oman and the status of the American Mission School. It also includes correspondence related to their research about traditional Omani weavers as well as a draft and posthumously published copy of *Traditional Weaving in Oman*. The second subseries, JRK Writings, contains Jay Kapenga's personal journal from 1944 that details his initial journey to the Middle East, as well as liturgical writings that include sermons given by Jay Kapenga in both English and Arabic. The third subseries, MUK Writings, contains essays written by Marjory Kapenga about the status of Mission Schools in the Middle East, as well as brief journal entries from 1976-1983. This series largely retains the original order established by the family and is organized chronologically.

Series III, Biographical Documentation, features biographical information on Jay and Marjory Kapenga, as well as a family genealogy report and additional collected materials. It includes newspaper articles published about the couple, multiple resumes, answers to a missionary questionnaire the couple completed while in retirement, a speech given during their wedding in Tehran, Iran, and information about their respective funeral services. The fourth folder in this series, Collected materials, includes excerpts from a statement by the Sultan of Oman from 1968 about financial improvements in the Middle East and the export of oil, as well as examples of calligraphy collected by Jay Kapenga.

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## Arrangement

### Arrangement

- I Correspondence, 1940-2010
- II Writings, 1946-2018
- III Biographical Documentation, 1940-2014

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## Collection Contents

### Series I: Correspondence, 1940–2010

b. 1, f. 1	MUK college correspondence Correspondence to/and from MUK during enrollment at Cornell University.	1940 January 21– 1943 January 26
b. 1, f. 2	MUK college correspondence	1943 February 27–1944 October 30
b. 1, f. 3	MUK college correspondence	1940–1944
b. 1, f. 4	MUK college correspondence	1940–1944
b. 1, f. 5	MUK college correspondence	1940–1944
b. 1, f. 6	Correspondence	1944 May–1944 December 15
b. 1, f. 7	Correspondence	1945 January 1– 1945 July 12
b. 1, f. 8	Correspondence	1945 July 15– 1945 December 28
b. 1, f. 9	Correspondence	1946 January 27– 1946 August 4
b. 1, f. 10	Correspondence	1946 August 7– 1946 September 29
b. 2, f. 1	Correspondence	1946 October 2– 1946 November 4
b. 2, f. 2	Correspondence	1946 November 7–1946 December 29
b. 2, f. 3	Correspondence	1947 January 1– 1947 March 11
b. 2, f. 4	Correspondence	1947 March 13– 1947 May 11
b. 2, f. 5	Correspondence	1947 May 12– 1947 July 28
b. 2, f. 6	Correspondence	1947 August 2– 1947 December 25
b. 2, f. 7	Correspondence	1948 January 6– 1948 November 25

b. 2, f. 8	Correspondence	1949 January– 1949 December 25
b. 2, f. 9	Correspondence	1950 January 4– 1950 December 26
b. 2, f. 10	Correspondence	1951 January 26– 1952 December 27
b. 3, f. 1	Correspondence	1953 January 6– 1954 December 19
b. 3, f. 2	Correspondence	1955 January 3– 1955 November 12
b. 3, f. 3	"Ruth Young affair" Correspondence organized by the family regarding missionary Ruth Young's leave from the Oman Mission in the 1950s.	1954 November 3–1955 February 24
b. 3, f. 4	"Ruth Young affair" Correspondence organized by the family regarding missionary Ruth Young's leave from the Oman Mission in the 1950s.	1955 March 6– 1955 December 19
b. 3, f. 5	Correspondence	1956 January 1– 1956 December 26
b. 3, f. 6	Correspondence	1957 January 1– 1957 December 17
b. 3, f. 7	Correspondence	1958 January 15– 1958 December 30
b. 3, f. 8	Correspondence	1959 January 8– 1959 December 31
b. 3, f. 9	Correspondence	1960 January 2– 1960 December 5
b. 3, f. 10	Correspondence	1961 January 2– 1962 December 18
b. 3, f. 11	Correspondence	1963 January 4– 1964 December 27

b. 3, f. 12	Correspondence	1965 February 9– 1965 December 28
b. 3, f. 13	Correspondence	1966 January 11– 1966 December 29
b. 3, f. 14	Correspondence	1967 January 7– 1967 December 16
b. 4, f. 1	Correspondence	1968 January 4– 1969 December 22
b. 4, f. 2	Correspondence	1970 January 2– 1970 December 15
b. 4, f. 3	Correspondence	1971 January 25– 1971 December 14
b. 4, f. 4	Correspondence	1972 March 11– 1972 December 5
b. 4, f. 5	Correspondence	1973 January 2– 1973 December 9
b. 4, f. 6	Correspondence	1974 January 16– 1974 October 14
b. 4, f. 7	Correspondence	1975 February 18–1975 December 26
b. 4, f. 8	Correspondence	1976 January 4– 1976 December 30
b. 4, f. 9	Correspondence	1977 January– 1977 November 10
b. 4, f. 10	Correspondence	1978 January 19– 1978 December 28
b. 4, f. 11	Correspondence	1979 January 4– 1979 December 30
b. 4, f. 12	Correspondence	1980 January 7– 1980 December 27



b. 5, f. 1	Correspondence	1981 January 2– 1981 November 29
b. 5, f. 2	Correspondence	1982 January 11– 1982 December 27
b. 5, f. 3	Correspondence	1983 January 2– 1983 November 29
b. 5, f. 4	Correspondence	1984 January 4– 1987 October 26
b. 5, f. 5	Correspondence	1988 January 17– 1988 November 1
b. 5, f. 6	Correspondence	1989 January 22–1989 November 10
b. 5, f. 7	Correspondence	1990 January 3– 1990 November
b. 5, f. 8	Correspondence	1991 February 5– 1992 April 6
b. 5, f. 9	Correspondence	1993 February 2– 1995 June 13
b. 5, f. 10	Correspondence	2002 August 6– 2010 January 19
b. 5, f. 11	Arabic language correspondence	1960s?–1990s
b. 5, f. 12	Miscellaneous correspondence	n.d.

**Series II: Writings, 1946–2018**

JRK and MUK writings		
b. 6, f. 1	Annual missionary reports Includes materials related to annual meetings.	1949–1975
b. 6, f. 2	"Life in Muscat," "The Kapenga Family," "Trip to Europe"	1949–1963
b. 6, f. 3	"Raps with the Kaps," Advice for new missionaries	
b. 6, f. 4	Correspondence for weaving book	1983–1991
b. 6, f. 5	"Traditional Weaving in Oman" Includes drafted chapter and family note.	2018
b. 6, f. 6	"Back Home and Beyond"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 7	Miscellaneous writings	n.d.
JRK writings		
Original order established by family kept intact.		
b. 6, f. 8	Personal journal	1944–1945?
b. 6, f. 9	"That The Light May Shine," "A Shop on Maine Street," "Ya'Coub, Colporteur in Kuwait," "Those Crazy Missionaries," "A Team in Muscat," "On Religious Movies"	1946–1956
b. 6, f. 10	"1949 Trip from Bahrain to Muscat"	
b. 6, f. 11	Thoughts on 'The Evangel', "Evangelism Today as I See It," "The Resurrection and Its Meaning," Essay on 'the origin of worship', Holland Classis meeting speech, "The Cross - A Symbol"	1950s?
b. 6, f. 12	Thoughts on 'Mission Medicine in Muscat'	
b. 6, f. 13	"Kuwait Church News-Notes," Graduation speech at Kodai school	1958–1968
b. 6, f. 14	Self evaluation	
b. 6, f. 15	"Arabic Sunday Service," "The Muscat Bookshop," "The Expatriate Church in Oman," "A Talk on Travel in the Old Days," "Old Days in Oman"	1970s–1980s
b. 6, f. 16	"Dum Dum," "Lepers," "The Squeaky Pulley,"	1980s?
b. 6, f. 17	"Sayyid Said Bin Taimur Bin Faisal: Sultan of Muscat and Oman"	1980s?
b. 6, f. 18	"The Adnan," "Cars/Police," "Coffee," "Potpourri Hub,"	1980s?
b. 6, f. 19	"Whose Religion?," "George Fox and Quaker Spirituality,"	1980s?
b. 6, f. 20	"Two Talks on the History of the English Speaking Protestant Church, Ruwi, Oman," American women's group speech	1980–1981
b. 7, f. 1	"Islamic Revivalism"	1988 November 8
b. 7, f. 2	"Pastorate in Mission," Prayer for Penney Farms Church	1989–1990

## JRK writings (continued)

b. 7, f. 3	"Here and There Around the Great Sea"	1990
b. 7, f. 4	"Ahmed Al-Ghazali" Includes notes for final paper.	1991
b. 7, f. 5	"Live Sea Scrolls"	1992-1993
b. 7, f. 6	"New Forms of Mission"	n.d.
b. 7, f. 7	"The Psychological Basis for Expansions and other Emphases and Activities as I see it"	n.d.
b. 7, f. 8	Liturgical writings Contains several liturgical writings, including service in Oman with Arabic translation.	1968-1983
b. 7, f. 9	Notes	1940-1993
MUK writing Original order organized by family kept intact.		
b. 7, f. 10	"Senior Birds"	1940s
b. 7, f. 11	"American Indians"	1940s
b. 7, f. 12	"Social Psychology Term Paper: The Case of Dody"	1940s
b. 7, f. 13	"This We Count a Priviledge" Article written for publication "Neglected Arabia" #215.	1949
b. 7, f. 14	"Forces Influencing Arab Psychology"	1957-1958
b. 7, f. 15	"A Trip to the Wool Weavers" Account used in weaving publication.	1976
b. 7, f. 16	Journal Retyped notes from daily journal.	1976-1983
b. 7, f. 17	"Nothing at All: Hasidic Tales and Sufi Literature"	1978-1991
b. 7, f. 18	"Our Love Affair with Oman," "Old Oman," "Growing Up in the Muslim World"	1980-1984
b. 7, f. 19	"The Arabian Mission Dream"	1989
b. 7, f. 20	"Marching to a Different Drum," "The Time of Apricots," "Ramadan," "Generations"	1990s
b. 7, f. 21	"Why Mission Schools?"	1990s
b. 7, f. 22	"Arabian Mission, Muscat, Oman 1893-1994," "What Does it Mean to be a Missionary in a Muslim Country?" Contains publication written for the Church Herald while in retirement, as well as transcribed notes found on Marjory Kapenga's desk by her son, Peter.	1990s

## MUK writing (continued)

b. 7, f. 23	"A Journey of the Spirit: The Life and Poetry of Theodore Roethke" Includes correspondence regarding final paper.	1990s?
b. 8, f. 1	"Real Singing is a Different Breath: Rainer Maria Rilke"	1990s?
b. 8, f. 2	Letter to a magazine in response to an article about Jungian psychology and Hasidic Judaism Photocopied letter to an editor, contains additional handwritten commentary from Marjory's husband, Jay Kapenga.	n.d.
b. 8, f. 3	"Content of Your Christian Message"	n.d.

**Series III: Biographical Documentation, 1940–2014**

b. 8, f. 4	MUK biographical documentation Contains Marjory Kapenga's CV, a newspaper article about her first trip to the Middle East, answers to a missionary questionnaire posed to her during retirement, recorded reflections, funeral program and written eulogy, published obituary, and photograph.	1940–2014
b. 8, f. 5	JRK biographical documentation Contains program for ordination, a speech delivered at Jay and Marjory Kapenga's wedding, CV, newspaper articles, answers to missionary questionnaire completed during retirement, funeral program and transcript of memorial service.	1944–1993
b. 8, f. 6	Kapenga family geneology report Correspondence that includes Kapenga family geneology report.	1991–1992
b. 8, f. 7	Collected materials Includes excerpts from a statement by the Sultan of Oman from 1968 about financial improvements in the Middle East and the export of oil.	1959–1999

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Christian education  
Christian ethics  
Christian life  
Interdenominational cooperation  
Islam -- Relations -- Christianity  
Missionaries -- Middle East  
Missions -- Middle East  
Preaching  
Religion -- Study and teaching  
Religious education  
Sermons  
Women college students  
Women in church work  
Women in missionary work  
Women missionaries  
Women -- Missions  
Women -- Religious life

### **Geographic Names**

Middle East  
Middle East -- Description and travel  
Middle East -- History

### **Occupations**

Weavers

### **Names**

Kapenga, Jay Roland (1918-1993)  
Kapenga, Marjory Underwood (1922-2012)

### **Contributors**

Kapenga, Jay Roland (1918-1993)  
Kapenga, Marjory Underwood (1922-2012)