



**The Arab-American Educational Foundation, in collaboration with the Arab American Cultural & Community Center, invites Arabic language enthusiasts to come and meet an engaging speaker talking about the origin and history of Arabic! Opportunity to mix and network before the lecture.**



**TALK: FRIDAY, JANUARY 26TH, 2024  
“1500 YEARS OF ARABIC BEFORE ISLAM”**

**AHMAD AL-JALLAD**

**SOFIA CHAIR IN ARABIC STUDIES, PROFESSOR  
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

In the popular imagination, the rise of Islam led to the emergence of Arabic as a written language. Prior to that, speakers of Arabic were thought to have had a primarily oral culture and to have been illiterate. The archaeological and epigraphic exploration of the southern Levant and the Arabian Peninsula, over the last century or so, has challenged this narrative. The present lecture will track the development of the Arabic language based on the pre-Islamic inscriptional record, which now stretches back to the Iron Age. We will discuss the various writing cultures of Arabic speakers across space and time, the language's geographic distribution and dialectal diversity, and finally the transformations that occurred in the immediate pre-Islamic period that gave rise to the Arabic language and script as we know it today.

Ahmad Al-Jallad, Ph.D. Harvard University, with distinction, is the Sofia Chair of Arabic at Ohio State University. He is a philologist, epigraphist, and historian of language. His work focuses on the languages, writing systems, and cultures of pre-Islamic Arabia and the ancient Near East. His notable works include: *The Religion and Rituals of the Nomads of Pre-Islamic Arabia* (2022); *the Damascus Psalm Fragment: Middle Arabic and the Legacy of Old Hijazi* (2022); and an *Outline of the Grammar of the Safaitic inscriptions* (2015).

Friday, January 26, 2024

5:00 Reception, 5:30 Talk

Arab American Cultural & Community Center

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