

**Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center
(MEMEAC)**

*100 YEARS OF THE ARAB AMERICAN NOVEL: AMEEN
RIHANI'S THE BOOK OF KHALID AND ARAB LIFE IN LOWER
MANHATTAN*

**Presentations by
Todd Fine and Akram Khater and Rami Khouri (AUB) as MC**

**Welcoming Words by
Antoine Chedid, Lebanon's Ambassador to the U.S.A**

This talk will celebrate the centennial of the first Arab American novel. In 1911, Dodd, Mead, and Co. in New York City published Ameen Rihani's *The Book of Khalid*, a story of two boys from Lebanon who immigrate to the Little Syria neighborhood in Lower Manhattan and peddle on the streets. After exposure to the New York artistic and cultural environment of the period, the two return to Lebanon where, inspired by their New York experiences, they transform into political and social revolutionaries and become in conflict with the ruling Ottoman Empire. The work is considered the foundation of Arab American literature and is seen as a crucial influence on Kahlil Gibran's famous work *The Prophet* (1923). The New York Public Library is an especially appropriate venue as Rihani, who had no formal education, developed his literary knowledge from its holdings. With an introduction by Lebanon's Ambassador to the U.S. Antoine Chedid, Todd Fine, director of Project Khalid will talk about Ameen Rihani and *The Book of Khalid*, and Dr. Khater, Professor of History at North Carolina State University will lecture about Little Syria at the turn of the twentieth century. Journalist Rami Khouri will direct discussion and questions.

Todd Fine is the Director of Project Khalid, the centennial campaign for *The Book of Khalid*, and the editor of a new critical edition of *The Book of Khalid* under advance contract with Syracuse University Press.

Akram Khater is Prof. of Middle Eastern History at North Carolina State University. He is the author of *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender and the Making of a Lebanese Middle Class, 1861-1921; Sources in the History of the Middle East* and numerous articles and reviews.

Rami Khouri is the Director of the Issam Fares Institute of Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut. He is an internationally syndicated political columnist and author and serves as editor-at-large of the Beirut *Daily Star* newspaper.



New York
Public
Library

Tuesday, October 25, 2011, 6:00 - 7:45 pm

**The New York Public Library Stephen A. Schwarzman Building,
South Court Auditorium**

Co-sponsored with Project Khalid and The New York Public Library



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