



The Arabic Print Revolution: Cultural Production and Mass Readership

By Ami Ayalon

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In a brief historic moment, printing presses, publishing ventures, a periodical press, circulation networks, and a mass readership came into being all at once in the Middle East, where none had previously existed, with ramifications in every sphere of the community's life. Among other outcomes, this significant change facilitated the cultural and literary movement known as the Arab 'nahda' ('awakening'). Ayalon's book offers both students and scholars a critical inquiry into the formative phase of that shift in Arab societies. This comprehensive analysis explores the advent of printing and publishing; the formation of mass readership; and the creation of distribution channels, the vital and often overlooked nexus linking the former two processes. It considers questions of cultural and religious tradition, social norms and relations, and concepts of education, offering a unique presentation of the emerging print culture in the Middle East.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Significantly expanding his well-established studies on the history of printing, journalism, and literacy in the Arab world, Ami Ayalon's new book offers an incisive analysis of what amounted to an Arab printing and reading revolution. A transition which, in comparison to Europe, may have come late to the region but was all the more intensive and influential from the nineteenth century onwards. Systematically investigating the gradual diffusion and circulation of print, its initiators, and evolving reading habits, this is an impressively documented, tightly argued, and elegantly written account of the entire process, which will not only enlighten social, cultural, and intellectual historians of the Middle East, but anybody desiring to comprehend the evolution of Arab society, or comparable developments elsewhere."

Uri M. Kupferschmidt, University of Haifa

"Building on his earlier work on the Arabic press and its reception, Ami Ayalon breaks new ground with this ambitious study on the history of publishing and reading in the Middle East. Impressive in its breadth and depth, *The Arabic Print Revolution* details the story behind the making of the nahda, showing the cultural transformations that made it possible. Rigorously researched, the book is a must-read for anyone interested in print culture."

Beth Baron, author of *The Orphan Scandal: Christian Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood*

About the Author

Ami Ayalon is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University. His scholarly interest focuses on the cultural and political history of Arabic-speaking societies in modern times, with a recent accent on the entry of printing into the Middle East and its wide implications. Ayalon has published numerous studies on these subjects, including *Language and Change in the Arab Middle East* (1987), *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History* (1995) and *Reading Palestine: Printing and Literacy, 1900-1948* (2004).

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