The Arabic Print Revolution

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Mass Readership and Cultural Production in the Middle East

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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