



Creating Spaces, Connecting Worlds: Dimensions of the Press in the Middle East and Eurasia

Keynote Lecture: At the Fringes of Empire: The Press in Egypt and Syria on the Eve of World War I

Prof. Samir Seikaly (American University of Beirut)

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University of Zurich, Room RAA G15, Rämistrasse 59, 8001 Zürich

Abstract

With one or two exceptions, and following the rise of the nation state in the countries of the modern Middle East, the history of journalism has been studied in relation to the individual Arab states constituting the region for example, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon. But, as this intervention suggests, a variant perspective, the regional, is closer to reality and more likely to yield a closer, more involved and complex understanding of the phenomenal outbreak of the virtual press revolution, represented by the daily newspaper and periodical publication, in Egypt and geographical Syria on the eve of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire which, in its closing stages, exercised differing degrees of sovereignty over its domains. Arguing the viability of the regional, the intention of this exercise is also to shed comparative light on questions pertaining to origins, operation, self-representation and the representation of the other, communally, politically ideologically and gender wise. It also raises, for discussion, the question of similarity or difference between what obtained in the regions under discussion and the shrinking remnants of the Ottoman Empire, principally in the Balkan region. In conclusion the crucial historical uses of the newspaper as the archive of the daily, its availability and accessibility, will be broached.

Dr. Samir Seikaly history graduate of the School of Oriental and African Studies, is long-time Professor of modern Middle Eastern History at the American University of Beirut.