

CISMOR Workshop
March 27, 2017 Doshisha University
Imadegawa Campus Shisei-kan 3rd floor
15:00-17:00

Speaker:

Prof. Dr. Uri M. Kupferschmidt
Department of Middle Eastern History, University of Haifa, Israel

Moderator:

Prof. Dr. Ada Taggar-Cohen
Faculty of Theology, Doshisha University, Japan

Theme of lecture:

*The Differential Diffusion in the Middle East of 'Small Technologies'
from Europe and the USA*

Prof. Dr. Uri M. Kupferschmidt
Curriculum Vitae

Prof. Kupferschmidt was born in Montreux, the Netherlands, in 1945 and since 1969 he became a permanent resident in Israel. Prof. Kupferschmidt received his BA degree in 1968 from Leiden University, Dept. of Semitic Languages and Cultures. In 1969 he received his MA degree from The University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, and his PhD he received in 1979 from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Dept. of History of the Islamic Countries. Since 1971 he began his career as a lecturer at the university of Haifa and in 2010 he became a professor. Since 2013 he is an Emeritus professor of Haifa University.

Prof. Kupferschmidt has published extensively and among his important publications are the following books:

2012 (Co-editor with M.Hatina), *The Muslim Brothers, A Religious Vision in a Changing Reality* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz haMeuhad) [in Hebrew]

2007 *The Orosdi-Back Saga: European Department Stores and Middle Eastern Consumers:* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre)

1999 *Henri Naus Bey: Retrieving the Biography of a Belgian Industrialist in Egypt* (Brussels: Royal Academy of Overseas Sciences)

1987 *The Supreme Muslim Council, Islam under the British Mandate for Palestine* (Leiden: E.J.Brill)

1983 (Co-editor with G.R.Warburg), *Islam, Nationalism, and Radicalism in Egypt and the Sudan* (New York: Praeger)

Uri M. Kupferschmidt , Dept of Middle Eastern History, University of Haifa

"The Differential Diffusion in the Middle East of 'Small Technologies' from Europe and the USA", CISMOR, Doshisha University, 27 March 2017

ABSTRACT

Sometime after the 1500s, the main direction of transfer of new technologies between the Islamic world and Europe is thought to have become reversed. New military technologies, railways, telegraphs, steam shipping, urban development and transport, and agricultural and botanical innovations reached the region from Europe (and later from America). Most current scholarly literature discusses these technologies as embedded in an Imperialist power structure.

In contrast to these 'big' technologies, we intend to talk about 'small' technologies. By 'small' we don't mean their physical size, or a limited impact, but their growing affordability, their relative user-friendliness, not needing profound scientific knowledge on its inner working or a long professional training to operate it. Common people, whoever they were, could gradually attempt acquiring them by their own 'agency', more or less independently, - in contrast to the big 'turn-key' projects which were transmitted directly or even imposed by the Imperialist powers or their dependents and adherents. In short, many 'small' technologies became durable consumer goods.

The most widely cited theoretical model on diffusion was proposed by Everett Rogers in his *The Diffusion of Innovations* (1962-2003, five editions). Innovations - he said- are usually diffused in an S-curve of phases: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Though we lack accurate statistics as are available in the USA, it is a model which needs consideration, and possibly elaboration, for the Middle East, including the role of the periodical press, commercial advertising, and private commerce.

We will also have to take into account delaying factors. Was "Islam" (in general) somehow one of these? - a question which must be considered in the light of recent discussions on the late, or belated, advent of print to the Middle East. This brings us also to the question of who needed these new technologies at all.

In our lecture we propose to discuss in more detail different cases pertaining to the late 19th and to the 20th centuries. Following our earlier study on the success of the sewing machine in the Middle East, we will consider the much slower diffusion of its 'younger sister', the typewriter. Electrical appliances were an aspect of a 'big' technology becoming 'small', initially limited to light bulbs but followed by the adoption of a long range of other inventions. We will also ask why western musical instruments (here as technological devices) such as pianos had little impact on the countries of the Middle East. Motorization and automobilism, a broad field for historical investigation, will equally be touched upon as a challenge for more systematic research. All these cases in the Middle East are stories to themselves,

Most studies have been done under a certain impact of determinism, often with Europe and America in mind, but there might be other models possible.