

## **The Cold War and Franklin Book Programs: Iran and Egypt (1950s-1970s)**

In the bipolar world after the World War II and under the shadow of the atomic bomb, the Cold War gave shape to various aspects of people's lives across the world. While the fear of another war gradually disappeared, the superpowers engaged in a new battle over different forms of organizing people's lives and ideologies to "win hearts and minds." These efforts, often clandestine and led from Washington and Moscow, ranged from organizing international art exhibitions, music and ballet tours, to publishing journals, books, and broadcasting for the nations of the Iron Curtain and the "exploited masses" in the West, respectively. The study of these various efforts, known as the "cultural Cold War," has received a growing attention specially with the publication of *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* by Frances Stonor Saunders (1999).

Franklin Book Programs is one such American effort, a "book diplomacy" initiative, in other words. Founded in May 1952 as a non-profit corporation, it aimed to support the translation and publication of mainly American books in the Arab world. It was not a publisher per se, but it acted as a resource providing technical and editorial assistance to local publishers. In operation until 1977 in 12 countries across the Middle East, South-East Asia, Africa and parts of Latin America, Franklin's record in terms of publishing books, preparing textbooks and educational materials for schools, and training a new generation of translators, editors, and publishers was extensive.

In this talk, we will be covering some of the highlights of the program in the Middle East, trying to explore the impact and legacy of the program in light of previous scholarship. We will present the story of some of the best seller books in Arabic and Persian, the publication of first major encyclopedias in Egypt and Iran, and try to examine whether a propaganda approach is sufficient in exploring the case of Franklin.

This talk presents findings from the **Cold Books in Hot Lands: Winning and Losing of Hearts and Minds in the Middle East** (Coldbihot), a European funded research project under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions scheme, hosted at University of Leiden.

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