



Satellite Ministries: The Rise of Christian Television in the Middle East

By Febe Armanios

Discussants: Emir Mahieddin and Egor Korneev

This book explores how the rise of Christian television in the Middle East since 1981 has had a profound impact on the region. Western televangelists, in partnership with some indigenous Christians, utilized terrestrial and later satellite broadcasting to proselytize to nonbelievers and to spread their often-eschatological messaging. As Maronites, Copts, and various Protestant denominations embraced these platforms, they challenged or adopted foreign norms while integrating their own beliefs and experiences into the programming.



Through extensive fieldwork and archival research, *Satellite Ministries: The Rise of Christian Television in the Middle East* is the first book to explore the history of these media, to investigate how Western evangelicals and indigenous Christians harnessed television technologies to promote their religious traditions. From dubbed Japanese anime Bible stories and fiery American televangelists to indigenously produced talk shows and church services, the sixteen channels at the heart of this study have reshaped how Christianity is practiced and experienced in the Arab and non-Arab Middle East. At the heart of this research is an exploration of how Christian television has rendered religious experiences more immediate, fostered virtual faith communities, and functioned as a powerful tool for edification, education, and proselytism.

Egyptian Copts were relative latecomers in adopting these media. Between 2005 and 2013, new channels aimed to represent the religious, cultural, and political concerns of Copts both in Egypt and the diaspora. They successfully amplified the voice of the Middle East's

largest Christian community. They presented liturgical services, sermons, documentaries on saints and church history, and programs on faith and social issues from an insider's perspective. While Coptic channels initially focused on promoting Orthodox beliefs and rituals, they increasingly tackled political matters to reach a wider Egyptian and Middle Eastern audience.

In all, television has enabled Middle Eastern Christians—individuals and churches—to imagine themselves beyond their local contexts, to cultivate creative oratory styles, and to propagate their ancient theologies. *Satellite Ministries* [italics] reveals how modern expressions of faith, technology, and political power intersected and conflicted across the region and beyond.

Febe Armanios is the Philip Battell and Sarah Frances Cowles Stewart Professor of History at Middlebury College. Her research focuses on Middle Eastern Christian communities, particularly Egypt's Copts, with interests in comparative religious practices, food history, and media studies. She is the author of *Satellite Ministries: The Rise of Christian Television in the Middle East* (Oxford University Press, 2025), *Coptic Christianity in Ottoman Egypt* (Oxford University Press, 2011), and co-author, with Boğaç Ergene, of *Halal Food: A History* (Oxford University Press, 2018; winner of the best book award by the Association for the Study of Food and Society). She also co-edits, with Angie Heo, a book series titled “*Coptic Studies in Historical and Cultural Context*” published by the American University in Cairo Press.

Discussants:

- **Egor Korneev** is a PhD Candidate in Islamic Studies at the University of Michigan. His research centers on how Islamic premodern history is represented on Arab television at the intersection with other forms of modern popular culture, including film, radio, and theater. Combining approaches from media and memory studies, his dissertation project investigates the development of religious television drama (*musalsalāt dīnīya*) in 20th-century Egypt and how its visual vocabulary, linguistic conventions, and narrative structure forged popular imagery of “the Islamic golden age” in the Arab audiovisual mass media.
- **Emir Mahieddin** is an anthropologist, CNRS researcher and member of the CéSor (Centre d'études en sciences sociales du religieux) in Paris. He is specialized in the

study of Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity. After years of fieldwork in Sweden, he is now starting research on Christian edition in Egypt.