



Invitation

Tuesday, 3 November 2009, 7 pm

'Baghdad, Yesterday. The Making of an Arab Jew'

Lecture by Prof Sasson Somekh (Tel Aviv University)

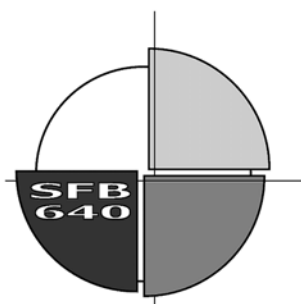
He describes himself as an Arab Jew – Sasson Somekh, poet and professor for Arab literature at Tel Aviv University, born in 1933 in Baghdad. At that time one-third of Baghdad's population was Jewish. The mass exodus of Jews between 1949 and 1951 ended 2,500 years of Jewish presence in Mesopotamia. Among those who left their country was Sasson Somekh. In the first part of his memoirs, *Baghdad, Yesterday. The Making of an Arab Jew*, he tells the story of this vanished world, stating: 'What spurred me to write these memoirs is the fact that there is no longer any sort of Jewish presence to speak of either in Baghdad or in Iraq. I belong, that is, to the last generation of Iraqi Jews who lived side by side with Iraqis of other religions, speaking a common language and participating actively in Iraqi culture.'

Prof Sasson Somekh started to read and write Arab poetry when he was a teenager in Baghdad. After his emigration in 1951 he studied in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Oxford. He received his PhD on the oeuvre of the Egyptian writer Nagib Mahfuz. Back in Israel he became a lecturer in Arabic Literature and head of the Arabic Language and Literature department at Tel Aviv University, where he is now professor emeritus. Sasson Somekh, who translated various Arabic novels and poems into Hebrew, became one of the best known critics of Arabic literature in Israel. *The Making of an Arab Jew* was published in 2005 in Hebrew and has been translated into Arabic, English and Turkish. In 2008 the second volume *Yamim Hazuyim* ('Call it Dreaming') was published in Hebrew.

Venue:

Humboldt Universität zu Berlin
Hausvogteiplatz 5-7
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10117 Berlin



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