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*The Birth and Development of Anthropology in Arab Countries:
A Still Controversial and Marginalised Knowledge?*

“The fact that colonial governments made use of Anthropology does not mean that Anthropology was constituted perforce to serve colonialism. This fact should not detract from Anthropology, just as the atomic explosion in Hiroshima should not detract from Nuclear Physics.” (Abou Zeid, 1997, pp. 260–261)

Introduction

This chapter is the result of a synthesis of the existing written sources¹ on the historical itinerary of anthropology in the Arab countries² in the postcolonial period, an anthropology practiced by researchers originating from that region and based in local institutions. For some countries, such as Egypt or Algeria, there are sources through which it is possible to reconstruct the history of anthropology in local research institutions. For many other countries, however, no written sources exist—or at least, none available except by physically going to their university libraries. To address these gaps and silences, I turned to colleagues who work or have worked in those countries as researchers and teachers, and conducted a series of interviews.³ Much of the

¹ Unfortunately, I was unable to consult any Arabic sources published locally and inaccessible to Europe.

² The terms “Arab countries” or “the Arab world” should be used with caution in light of the historical specificities of the various units that make up this region of the world. However, in addition to constituting a common linguistic area (despite differences in local dialects), most of the countries of the Arab world were under the aegis of the Ottoman Empire for several centuries (1516–1918). Many of them therefore shared a common political and administrative centre and were exposed to the religious and cultural repertoires that circulated within the empire. More recently, the creation of the Arab League (1945); ALECSO, its branch dedicated to education, culture, and science; and especially the circulation of ideas, cultural products, and common religious repertoires thanks to the new technologies and the media; have all helped reinforce the existence of a common Arab-speaking area. The policies of the Arabisation of education in the last third of the 20th century in many states that still used European languages, as well as numerous wars, have also caused a wide circulation of people within the Arab world: teachers, researchers, professionals, and refugees. For all these reasons, although the term *Arab world* does not allow us to account for the differences that characterise the countries within it, it seems to me that it has historical, linguistic, and cultural relevance.

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literature consulted does not relate directly to anthropology, but more broadly to the social sciences in the Arab world. Compared to sociology, political science, economics, or social psychology, anthropological knowledge still occupies a marginal place in academic institutions—when it is not completely absent.⁴ The few reviews of anthropological literature in the Arab world are written in English and include only works in this language, leaving aside not only works written in other European languages, but also those written in Arabic (Abu Lughod, 1989; Deeb & Winegar, 2012). Whereas production in Arabic is for now limited and consists in many cases of university manuals for student use (al-Zuabi, 2019; Hanafi, 2011; Hanafi & Arvanitis, 2014; Roussillon, 2002; Shami, 1989), Anglo-Saxon anthropologists' lack of consideration for French-language ethnological literature seems problematic. Indeed, one must consider not only the rich historical corpus of works in French (e.g., Berque, 1956; Rachik, 2012), but also the lively and prolific scholarly activity that French research centres based in Arab countries nurture mostly in this language (Hanafi, 2010). Two recent works written by researchers based in the region that take stock of anthropological production in Arabic should be noted because they are an exception. The first is the review of anthropological literature produced in Arab countries by Ali al-Zuabi (2019), a Kuwaiti researcher. This is an interesting attempt by an academic from the region to review anthropological works in Arabic, although the scholarly quality of the article is mediocre. The second is the 2012 book *Al-antropolojia fi al-watan al-'arabi (Anthropology in the Arab World)*, written jointly by a Moroccan anthropologist, Hassan Rachik, and a Saudi anthropologist, Abu Baker Bagader. The book is an unprecedented attempt by two academics from two areas of the Arab world –that do not usually collaborate– to produce a history of anthropology in the region that includes many researchers from this area who also or only write in Arabic. Although the book focuses mainly on Saudi Arabia and Morocco, it is a work that bears witness to an interesting attempt at synthesis.

It is important to point out that the studies written by Arab anthropologists working in the region are mainly in English and French rather than Arabic. Arabic itself remains marginal for various reasons related to the history of educational policies and academic institutions in each country, the need to join international networks, and the influence of the NGOs and international

⁴ For example, the volume coordinated by Eberhardt Kienle (2010) on the itinerary of the social sciences in the Arab countries, *Les sciences sociales en voyage. L'Afrique du Nord et le Moyen-Orient vus d'Europe, d'Amérique et de l'intérieur*, includes four sections on history, sociology, political science, and economics but none on anthropology.

institutions that fund a large part of social science research in the region (Currie-Alder et al., 2018; Hanafi, 2011; Hanafi & Arvanitis, 2016). In fact, the contemporary Arab world can be divided into three different areas in terms of the organisation of academic institutions, the links maintained with the Global North and the languages used in teaching and scholarly publication (Arvanitis et al., 2010; el-Kenz, 2008; Hanafi, 2011).⁵ North Africa is characterised by public universities and state research centres that are inspired by European models, particularly the French model. The state is the main actor on the academic scene and the funder of research. The Near East, on the other hand, is characterised by the existence of a private university system modelled on the Anglo-Saxon one;⁶ public universities are few and often lack sufficient funding to become centres of scientific excellence (Arvanitis et al., 2010). In Lebanon, for example, the famous American University of Beirut produces half of the country's internationally visible scientific publications (Hanafi, 2010). Especially since the 1990s, there has been a proliferation of private research centres producing commissioned reports on topics that are often imposed by the international agencies that fund them and are not necessarily related to the interests of local researchers (Bamyeh, 2015; Hanafi, 2010). The states of the Arabian Peninsula established their first public universities after independence in the 1960s and are now experiencing the explosion of a vast number of private universities inspired by the North American model. After Arabising higher education by mobilising mainly teachers and researchers from the Mashrek and North Africa, the states of the Arabian Peninsula have changed course by Westernising secondary and university education since the 2000s. This development has been stimulated by the international policies of the so-called "knowledge economy" (Cantini, 2019; Eickelman & Mustafa Abusharaf, 2017). English has become the dominant language in high schools and private universities created over the past two decades, which are often branches of North American universities.

In the remainder of this chapter, I intend to first highlight some general characteristics of anthropology in Arab countries and then briefly examine the situation of the discipline in those countries for which I have been able to gather documentation.

The weakness of anthropology in the Arab world

⁵ French is still the main language in which many social science researchers in North Africa publish, whereas English is dominant in the Near East and the Arabian Peninsula.

⁶ Seventy percent of universities in the Arab world were founded after 1991 (Bamyeh, 2015).

Social sciences in the Arab world are considered to be of mediocre quality (Abdul-Jabar, 2014; Lamine, 2009; Shami, 1989). Their weakness is attributed to structural problems in academic institutions; a lack of public funding; censorship imposed by many authoritarian states; the absence of a scientific community, resulting in limited exchanges between researchers within and among countries; and a lack of dialogue with civil society (Arvanitis et al., 2010; Hanafi, 2010; Hopkins, 2014; Shami, 1989). Arab societies' disconnection from their past, the absence of pan-Arab scientific associations, and the lack of policies to support the development of social sciences are other factors that explain their marginality in the Arab world (Shami, 2017). Moreover, since the 1980s, the Arabisation and Islamisation of the social sciences linked the first to the contestation of the colonial legacy and relations of political and economic dependence (Morsy et al., 1991) and the second to the "Petro Islam" policies (Abaza, 2000) promoted by Saudi Arabia have contributed to disconnect the social sciences among Arab nations from knowledge produced in the countries of the Global North (Abaza, 2000; Shami, 1989). However, the "radical perspective" on Euro-American knowledge adopted by some Arab intellectuals (Morsy et al., 1991, p. 84) has nurtured a critical understanding of Western social sciences and their application to the Arab world that is still relevant today. Abdelkebir Khatibi's (1975) critique of colonial sociology sums up this perspective well:

The essential task of the sociology of the Arab world consists in doing a double critical work: a) a deconstruction of the concepts coming from the sociological knowledge and discourses that have spoken in the place of the Arab world and that are marked by Western dominance and an ethnocentric ideology; b) and at the same time a critique of the knowledge and discourses elaborated by the different Arab societies for themselves. (as cited in Roussillon, 2002, p. 209)

Although radical intellectuals have not rejected dialogue with the social sciences of colonial origin, the Islamisation and the "neo-traditionalist perspective" (Morsy et al., 1991, p. 84) of the social sciences have produced an impoverishment—an emptying and a "communitarisation" of the work of Arab and Muslim researchers who have joined this movement (Melliti, 2006; Roussillon, 2002).

In a few countries, anthropology has been taught at university and practised in the field, often by student groups trained by resident Western anthropologists or local researchers trained in Europe or the United States. For example, Sudan (Ahmed, 2003), Egypt (Fahim, 1977; Hopkins, 2014), Morocco (Roussillon, 2002), and Tunisia (Mahfoudh & Melliti, 2009) have

had such programmes. Apart from these, the discipline has little presence in Arab universities (Bamyeh, 2015; Shami & Herrera, 1999).⁷ In some countries (Libya, Syria, Mauritania, and Yemen), anthropology has never been present in academic institutions born after independence, or it has only recently become present (Tunisia, Arabian Gulf countries). An episode recounted by Seteney Shami, a pioneer of cultural anthropology in Jordan, reveals the discipline's marginal status in the Arab world. Shami (1989) explained that when the anthropology department was created at Yarmouk University in 1984, they decided to send questionnaires to all Arab universities to get information on anthropology teaching, propose student exchanges, and organise joint workshops. Only the American University in Cairo, one of the oldest and most prestigious foreign universities in the region, responded (Shami, 1989). At the end of the 1980s (and still today), anthropology departments and specific courses of study in anthropology were rare in the Arab world; anthropology is often taught in social science or sociology departments, where other disciplines dominate. With few exceptions, it is not possible to continue anthropology studies at the master's or doctoral level, although there are some bachelor's degrees with an anthropological orientation. In general, economics, social psychology, political science, sociology, history, and geography all enjoy greater legitimacy in universities in the Arab world. The figure of the professional researcher in anthropology or the social sciences has only recently and with difficulty been considered legitimate, and is mainly linked to private research centres that produce commissioned reports for international agencies. However, these centres do not allow the accumulation of knowledge, nor the training of young researchers, let alone nurture academic publications and the development of critical knowledge (Hanafi, 2010). With few exceptions, outside of private universities, existing anthropology courses are usually in Arabic and oriented towards a theoretical approach that does not allow students to apply knowledge to field research (Shami, 1989). Although this was true in the late 1980s, the review of literature by al-Zuabi (2019) and Bagader and Rachik's (2012) handbook seem to confirm this trend even at the beginning of the 21st century. Monographic studies in Arabic are rare, as are translations of works written in other languages (Ben Salem, 2009; Hanafi & Arvanitis, 2014; Salhi, 2002). This makes anthropology a purely theoretical discipline in the eyes of students in many Arab universities (Shami, 1989).⁸ Prior to the Arabisation of education, which took place in many Arab countries in the 1970s and 1980s, most students of

⁷ As Bamyeh (2015) pointed out, "A look into the disciplinary composition of social sciences in Arab universities reveals that economics is the frontrunner, comprising 26% of social science faculties, while anthropology does not exceed 2% of these faculties" (p. 20).

⁸ A few exceptions are mentioned below in the sections discussing specific countries.

anthropology or other social sciences were able to read and write in at least one European language, allowing them to access a large body of texts and publish their work in Euro-American journals or books. The disconnection from the international anthropological landscape, which is still largely dominated by the countries of the Global North, has resulted in the provincialisation of anthropology written in Arabic. This reinforces its peripheral nature, to which the lack of an academic community in this discipline within the Arab world contributes (el-Kenz, 2008).⁹ Although this view is shared by many observers, Colonna (2010) pointed out that the Arabisation of social sciences in Algeria has also produced positive effects, as the new generation of researchers trained in Arabic has been able to “conceive new research themes from Arabic or Berber sources . . . which their previous ‘academic Francophonie’ did not allow them to access” (p. 105).

The rejection or marginalisation of anthropology after independence, especially in North Africa, is due to the discipline’s links with the colonial enterprise (Ahmed, 2003; Boëtsch & Ferrié, 1998; el-Kenz, 2005; Lucas & Vatin, 1982; Mahfoudh & Melliti, 2009; Rachik, 2012). This situation has produced an effect highlighted by Melliti (2006) for Tunisia (but also present in other countries). Melliti (2006) pointed out that in his country,

Most anthropologists cannot fully claim to belong to the discipline, because they are used to circulating on the margins, on the border between disciplines such as history and anthropology, or sociology and anthropology. Their work is the result of an obligatory interdisciplinarity. (p. 176)

A different fate befell sociology, which could be more easily adopted in Arab countries; it was not directly compromised by colonial administrations as a knowledge long confined to the study of “civilised societies.” Although it is a science elaborated by former colonisers (Ben Salem, 2009; Madoui, 2015), its link with European societies—which symbolised modernity—meant that sociology was put at the service of the development policies that many Arab states adopted in the first decades after independence (1950–1980). Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt, for instance, created research centres including disciplines such as sociology, economics, demography, and geography; or employed researchers in social sciences in their state administrations to promote social, economic, and technological transformations (urbanisation, industrialisation, mass schooling, changes in family structures, etc.) and solve associated

⁹ For example, according to a report by the French Insitut de Recherche sur le Développement, scientific cooperation between North African countries “does not exceed 3%” of relations between them (cited in el-Kenz, 2008, p. 53). The absence of inter-Arab or even national academic associations or their low activity is also denounced by Bamyeh in his report on the state of social sciences in the Arab world (2015).

problems. To cite just a few cases, we can mention the National Centre for Social and Criminological Research (1956) in Egypt, which was designed specifically to study “social destructuring and cultural underdevelopment” (Roussillon, 2002, p. 213). In Tunisia, the National Office for Family and Population was formed in 1973. Over several decades, it has funded research in the fields of demography and sociology linked to birth limitation policies (Maffi, 2020).

To conclude the first part of the chapter, I feel it is important to point out that many anthropologists from Arab countries occupy important positions in the Euro–American academic world and have made major contributions to the development of the anthropology of Arab majority societies and beyond. These researchers have studied and made careers in the academic system of the Global North and have rarely returned to their countries of origin or their parents’ countries to teach and train new generations of researchers. Or, they have returned but have taught in private English-language universities reserved for elites that appear to have minimal influence on anthropology in the countries where they are located (Shami, 1989). Such institutions, such as the American University in Cairo, the American University of Beirut, the Université Saint Joseph (also located in the Lebanese capital), or the more recent New York University and Université Sorbonne in Abu Dhabi, do not seem to participate in creating a national anthropological tradition, remaining rather connected to a Euro–American academic space. Thus, despite the importance of their work, such researchers from the Arab diaspora have not been considered in this chapter; I have decided to focus on the development of anthropology in Arab countries and the university institutions that shape the discipline locally.¹⁰

Teaching and practice of anthropology in Arab countries

In light of these general considerations about anthropology in the Arab world, in the second part of the chapter, I briefly examine the situation of the discipline in the countries where it is taught and practiced. The boundary between anthropology and sociology is not always clear cut when looking at the research practices of scholars in different Arab countries. However, from an institutional point of view, sociology has been clearly distinguished from anthropology because of the latter’s ties with European colonialism. My analysis is limited to examining the scientific production of those who claim affiliation with anthropology, leaving aside sociologists who use ethnography and are partly inspired by anthropological theories.

¹⁰ The academic itinerary of Arab anthropologists of the diaspora could be the subject of another chapter.

For the sake of convenience, my analysis is divided into three sections that correspond to the three geographical areas into which the sources I consulted divide the region on the basis of historical, institutional, and linguistic characteristics. The first section is devoted to the countries of North Africa, the second to those of the Near East, and the third to the countries of the Arabian Peninsula or the Gulf.

Anthropology in North Africa (the Maghreb)

With the exception of Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Mauritania were colonised by France and share the fact that they still have strong links with French academic institutions and still partly use the language of their former colonisers. The influence of the French anthropological and sociological tradition has been fundamental to constructing the discipline in each of these states, and intellectual exchanges with France continue to be intense. Many Maghrebi students take their doctoral studies in France or in a French-speaking country. Local researchers and teachers collaborate with French research centres and universities, write and read in French and Arabic, and contribute to the construction of French-speaking anthropology in the Arab world.

Algeria

The occupation of Algeria,¹¹ the first North African country colonised by France in 1830, generated a large body of ethnographic and ethnological texts from the mid-19th century onwards (Berque, 1956; Lucas & Vatin, 1982). A few years after the end of Algeria's war of liberation (1962), anthropology was condemned by its institutions as a colonial science. From 1971 on, the teaching of anthropology disappeared from Algerian universities (Salhi, 2008); and during the International Congress of Sociology held in Algiers in 1974, the Minister of Education peremptorily condemned ethnology as opposed to sociology, which was considered an ally of postindependence Algerian nationalism (Bourdieu et al., 2003). During the 1970s and 1980s, however, anthropology continued to be practised on the fringes of the academic world, particularly by researchers linked to the Centre national des recherches anthropologiques, préhistoriques et ethnologiques in Algiers under the leadership of Mouloud Mammeri (1991). The "thaw" towards the discipline began towards the end of the 1980s: in 1992, the Centre de recherche en anthropologie sociale et culturelle (CRASC) was founded at the University of Oran (Salhi, 2008). A few years earlier, departments of Amazigh language and culture had been

¹¹ On the postcolonial development of anthropology in Algeria, see Benghabrit-Remaoun and Haddab (2008) and Marouf et al. (2002).

created at the universities of Tizi Ouzou (in 1990) and Béjaïa (in 1991; see Assam, 2013). Despite the continuing controversy surrounding the reintroduction of anthropology in Algerian universities (Assam, 2013; Salhi, 2008), two master's degree programmes in cultural and social anthropology were created in the universities of Constantine and Oran. Anthropology courses were also introduced at the Institut des cultures populaires in Tlemcen (created in 1981). The discipline thus seems to have found an academic space as knowledge linked to the preservation of heritage and popular traditions, particularly in the Berber-speaking world. The anthropological master's theses of students studying Berber language and culture are detailed village monographs written very often in the Amazigh language (Assam, 2013). At the same time, a decline in sociology has been linked to the nationalist ideology and development policies that had triumphed in previous decades (Akli, 2015; Chachoua, 2010). Interestingly, anthropology made its appearance in Algerian universities during the black decade of the civil war, at a time when social science researchers and journalists were often victims of attacks or forced to leave the country (Beaud, 1998; Chaulet, 2008).

Of a different orientation is CRASC (<http://www.crasc.dz>), a centre that brings together 69 permanent researchers and 309 associate researchers and that has been coordinating and guiding anthropological research in Algeria for several years. The CRASC, which comprises four research units (two located in Oran, one in Constantine, and one in Algiers), created a national doctorate in anthropology in 2006 in which six universities participate, and has played a fundamental role in training researchers in anthropology for 15 years. The CRASC regularly organises conferences and seminars attended by researchers from other Maghreb countries and publishes one of the main regional journals in the social sciences: *Insaniyat* (<https://journals.openedition.org/insaniyat>). The journal aims to give visibility to research carried out in Algeria as well as to open a space for meetings with researchers from other countries (Soufi, 2008). CRASC also regularly publishes collective and monographic works on various historical, anthropological, linguistic, and literary themes in French and Arabic. Today, CRASC plays a key role in the consolidation of anthropology in Algeria in light of the fact that in 2008, the discipline was considered "a field of study not yet established" (Salhi, 2008, p. 79) and that some researchers (Haddab, 2008) complained about the poor quality of locally published works. Finally, I would like to mention a few of the topics dealt with by *Insaniyat* journal over the last 10 years: young people and everyday life, the family and social challenges, spaces and funeral rites, migration from the south, women in Arab countries, reforms in Algeria, health in Arab countries, graffiti in North Africa, and the *Hirak* movement.

Tunisia

Anthropology in Tunisia in many ways shares the fate of the discipline in Algeria. It was born as a colonial science practiced first by military officers, doctors, and administrators (1881–1930), then by civil servants and a few university researchers (1930–1945), and finally by “indigénophiles” missionaries (1945–1959) (Mahfoudh, 1988–1989, p. 251). Characterized by stereotypes similar to those found in the ethnographic corpus produced in Algeria such as on the conflicts between Berbers and Arabs, nomads, and sedentary, the works on Tunisia are imbued with colonial ideology. Therefore, it is not surprising that after independence, ethnology and anthropology were excluded from the Institut des hautes études (ISST), the first academic institution created under the pressure of the Tunisian elite at the end of the First World War. This institution depended on the Sorbonne, and the teachers were French (Ben Salem, 2009). The three disciplines in which it was possible to obtain certification in Tunis out of the four required were general sociology, social psychology, and political and social economy. Those who wanted to study ethnology had to go to Paris; the others could choose the human geography option offered locally (Ben Salem, 2009). Although among the teachers and directors of doctoral theses were figures such as Jacques Berque and Georges Balandier, anthropology did not become part of the teaching of the nascent Tunisian academy during the 1950s and 1960s. When the Centre d'études et de recherches économiques et sociales (CERES), which would play a central role in the development of the social sciences in Tunisia, was created in 1962 at the initiative of the Secretariat of National Education (Mahfoudh & Melliti, 2009; Melliti, 2014), anthropology would be “kicked out” because of its links to colonialism and would “take refuge in heritage” (Melliti, 2006, p. 173). CERES researchers adhered for several years to the ideology and development policies the independent Tunisian state promoted, and they dealt with ongoing social transformations with a Marxist and functionalist approach promoted in particular by Paul Sebag,¹² who at the time was teaching at ISST (Ben Salem, 2009; Mahfoudh & Melliti, 2009; Pouessel, 2013).

Anthropology often ended up being practised by historians or specialists in popular traditions who conceived of it as knowledge aimed purely at documenting archaic cultural forms or

¹² It is interesting to note that in North Africa, after independence, despite the negative reactions of Maghrebi intellectuals to the social sciences the colonisers developed, French researchers critical of colonialism trained the first generations of local sociologists and anthropologists: Paul Pascon in Morocco, Pierre Bourdieu and Claudine Chaulet in Algeria, and Paul Sebag and Jean Duvignaud in Tunisia. Jacques Berque directed most of the doctoral theses of Maghrebi sociologists who completed their studies in the first years after independence (between the end of the 1950s and the 1960s).

“traditional culture.” Especially from the 1970s onwards, a movement aimed at the valorisation of local identity and the preservation of popular traditions presided over ethnological studies in Tunisia. These were relegated to the sphere of the institutions responsible for preserving cultural heritage, such as the Institut d’archéologie et d’arts and the Centre des arts et traditions populaires (Melliti, 2006, p. 174). The paradox is that the absence of anthropology from academic institutions meant that most historians working in the heritage institutions mentioned “were ignorant of all the ethnology that was to become their discipline” (Gargouri-Sethom, 1987, as cited in Melliti, 2006, p. 174). The rebirth of anthropology applied to less stale objects and with a critical approach took place thanks to a group of historians interested in minorities (the poor, Jews, Blacks) of which Jocelyne Dakhliya was one of the first representatives. Later, an interest in popular religious traditions such as the cult of saints or Sufi brotherhoods developed. During the 1990s, studies on young people, nutrition, sexuality, and the use of the veil contributed to recreating a relationship between the anthropology practised in Tunisia and “the experience around the objects of everyday life” (Pouessel, 2013, p. 2). However, during the years of Ben Ali’s authoritarian regime, it was difficult for Tunisian researchers to deal with contemporary subjects without incurring the repression that a critical orientation could induce. After the introduction of a course in historical anthropology at the Faculté des lettres, arts et humanités at the University of Manouba in Tunis, a master’s degree in anthropology was created at the Faculty of Law and Political Science at the University al-Manar in Tunis, which was, however, abolished shortly afterwards (Pouessel, 2013). In 2005, a master’s degree in social and cultural anthropology was created at the Institut supérieur des sciences humaines in Tunis but disappeared 4 years later. In 2007, the Tunisian Association of Cultural and Social Anthropology (ATASC) was created (<https://www.facebook.com/Association-Tunisienne-dAnthropologie-Sociale-et-Culturelle-ATASC-758819427551235/>), proving the existence of a group of researchers of various generations interested in the institutional recognition of the discipline. Only after the revolution of 2011 were the first attempts to institutionalise anthropology crowned with success through the creation of a 3-year degree at the Institut supérieur des sciences humaines in Tunis, coordinated by Sihem Najar and at the same time, the creation of the Institut d’anthropologie at the University of Sousse, thanks to the support of Pierre-Noël Denieuil, previously director of the French Institut de recherches sur le Maghreb contemporain (IRMC). Often, young researchers who completed their doctorates at universities in the Global North work alongside teachers from previous generations who, although they employ an anthropological approach, had not hitherto been able to declare their disciplinary affiliation openly. Two examples are Khaoula Matri, who completed her doctorate in 2014 at

the Université Paris 5 in conjunction with the Université de Tunis 1 with a thesis on the use of the veil and the representations and practices of the female body in Tunisia, and Ramzi Ben Amara, who completed a doctorate in 2011 at the University of Bayreuth with a thesis on the Izala Islamic movement active in Northern Nigeria.

The 2011 revolution and the democratization of Tunisian society seem to have enabled a new departure even in the field of anthropology by offering it an institutional re-legitimation.

Morocco

Anthropology and social sciences in Morocco share similar destinies to those of Algeria and Tunisia, although direct colonisation was shorter in Morocco than in the other two countries. At the time of independence, anthropology “suspected of being a ‘science’ in the service of colonialism” (Madoui, 2015, p. 105) disappeared from the Moroccan academy under construction. During this period, sociology took on a fundamental role among young Moroccan researchers in the social sciences, a large proportion of whom trained with Paul Pascon, a French administrator and scholar who had taken a very critical stance on colonialism (Roussillon, 2002). The sociology that developed in the 1960s at the Institut de sociologie at the University of Rabat made a fundamental contribution to the institutionalisation of the social sciences in Morocco, a country where the colonisers had not created any academic institutions (Rachik & Bourquia, 2011; Roussillon, 2002). Critical, committed, and Marxist-inspired, early Moroccan sociology would be condemned by the monarchy in 1970 and would remain in universities as marginal knowledge until the late 1990s (Madoui, 2015). Its marginalisation coincides with the opening of a space for anthropology, which came about as Moroccan sociologists’ response to the dialogue initiated by Anglo–Saxon anthropologists conducting research in Morocco in the 1970s and 1980s, such as Clifford Geertz, Ernest Gellner, and David Hart (Madoui, 2015; Rachik & Bourquia, 2011). These anthropologists renewed studies on Morocco and allowed Moroccan researchers to distance themselves from the French ethnographic corpus and approach the study of their own society from a new perspective. Some local researchers could thus complete their training in England or the United States, for example, the sociologists Fatima Mernissi and Fatma Bourquia (Madoui, 2015; Rachik & Bourquia, 2011). Others, such as Abdallah Hammoudi, left Morocco permanently to become professors in the United States. Moroccan anthropology has developed classic themes of anthropology, including colonial anthropology, but with innovative approaches such as religious rituals, brotherhoods, the cult of saints, segmental organisation, and rural societies (Rachik & Bourquia, 2011). Although the institutionalisation of this discipline remains weak

and there are no undergraduate or doctoral courses in anthropology, its teaching has been initiated in several universities and research centres over the last few decades, such as in the Centre marocain des sciences sociales at Hassan II University and the Institut universitaire de la recherche scientifique, both in Rabat, and the Moulay Ismail University in Meknes. A new generation of very dynamic researchers is fuelling anthropology education in Morocco by introducing novel themes such as kif consumption (Khalid Mouna), critical reflection on anthropological tradition (Hassan Rachik), and medical anthropology (Zakaria Rhani and Saadia Radi) (Baylocq, 2013; Planeix, 2014). A more “rational and dispassionate” (Planeix, 2014, p. 400) attitude towards the Western anthropological tradition on Morocco and a critical distancing of the indigenisation of the discipline now seem to have been acquired. However, as several North African anthropologists pointed out during the 2014 Antropologie du Maroc et du Maghreb conference organised by the Jaques Berque Centre in Rabat, anthropology continues to have a precarious status in their countries. In many cases, the discipline is still banned or censored by the authorities, precarious within academic institutions, not completely legitimate in the eyes of social sciences professionals, and difficult to distinguish from the history or sociology in which it has often taken refuge to continue to exist (Planeix, 2014).

Libya

Libya, first an Italian and then a British colony, does not seem to have developed a local anthropological tradition. The Italian occupation (1911–1947) was at the origin of several expeditions of an anthropological nature oriented mainly towards a physical anthropology imbued with racial ideology, due to Italian ethnologists’ generalised adherence to fascism (Di Bella, 1998; Dore, 1980). Italian anthropological studies on Libya are rare because the populations that inhabited the country did not correspond to the category of “primitive peoples” in which the discipline was interested in the first decades of the 20th century (Grottanelli et al., 1977). However, some studies dedicated to the popular and linguistic traditions and to the history of the Berber populations were published (Bruzzi, 2020; Cresti, 2016; Dore, 1980). Some expeditions were organised to collect objects and artefacts from Libyan populations to enrich the collections of museums in Italy and Libya. Some of them, such as the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology in Florence, were centres of production of ethnographic knowledge about Libya (Dionisio et al., 2020; Falcucci, 2017; 2019). During colonisation, ethnography was usually conceived as a part of knowledge about the country alongside geology, botany, zoology, and so on. This is illustrated, for example, by the Museum of Natural History in Tripoli, which, in 1937, was “built to provide an all-encompassing view of natural

history” (Falcucci, 2017, p. 89) and included an ethnographic section highlighting knowledge of local populations. The link between colonial conquest and scientific knowledge, understood simultaneously as an instrument of domination and propaganda, was also present in the speech of the governor general of Libya, Italo Balbo, at the museum’s opening (Falcucci, 2017). After independence (1951), a university was created in Tripoli in 1955 that later split into two universities, one in Benghazi and one in Tripoli (1973). In 1956, sociology was introduced among the disciplines taught at the university (A. Baldinetti, personal communication, August 27, 2021). In the 1950s and 1960s, university teachers were recruited mainly from Egypt and other Arab countries and often subsidised by them (Clark, 2004). In 1995, there were 13 public universities in the country, but in 2021, anthropology did not appear in the degree courses of the universities whose websites I consulted. However, according to a Libyan colleague Anna Baldinetti interviewed, anthropology is now taught in several sociology departments, although it is not clear whether this is cultural or physical anthropology (A. Baldinetti, personal communication, August 27, 2021, and October 11, 2021). In any case, it is likely to be theoretical rather than research-oriented teaching in the field because doing research, even before the beginning of the civil war, seems to have been almost impossible. Extracts from the field diary of a French anthropologist, Xavier Thyssen (1987), indicated that in the 1980s, it was not possible to carry out field research because of the capillary control Gaddafi’s regime had established. Thyssen (1987) denounced “a daily climate of tension imbued with suspicion” (p. 102) and the necessity for each researcher to sign a contract according to which “no secret information that could be obtained during the stay should be divulged” (p. 99). It was impossible to use a tape recorder, camera or typewriter (Thyssen, 1987). Despite my efforts to contact social science researchers in Libya through colleagues living and working in North Africa, I was unable to obtain any names or responses from those to whom I wrote.

Of note, however, is the recent creation of a social science journal hosted by the University of California, Berkeley: *Lamma: A Journal of Libyan Studies* (<https://escholarship.org/uc/lamma>), the first issue of which came out in 2020. Among the members of its editorial board are numerous Libyan researchers and intellectuals residing in the United States or Europe and only one Libyan scholar, Amal Sulayman al-Oweis, who obtained a doctorate in political science in Britain and teaches at the Faculty of Economics and Political Science at the University of Benghazi. Although there are important works on the history of Libya and Italian colonisation in Libya such as those by Libyan–American political scientist Ali Ahmida (1995, 2000), anthropological works written by Libyan researchers trained and active in academic institutions in Libya are not known.

Mauritania

In Mauritania, there is no anthropology teaching at the University of Nouakchott, the only public university in the country. However, some professors have doctorates in this discipline, including Yahya Ould-al-Bara, who in 2001 completed his doctorate under the direction of the well-known French anthropologist Pierre Bonte on the attitudes of specialists in religious law in Mauritania between the 17th and 20th centuries. A French anthropologist specialising in the country, Bonte has greatly contributed to making the discipline known and training researchers in Mauritania (Ben Hounet et al., 2020). Also noteworthy is his collaboration with Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh, a central figure in Mauritanian anthropology, who, with Bonte, contributed to raising the profile of the discipline in the country. Ould Cheikh began his career as a researcher at the Institut mauritanien de la recherche scientifique (IMRS), where he eventually became director (1970s and 1980s); he later became a professor at the University of Nouakchott and ended his career in the French Academy. He published his research mainly in French, placing himself more in the context of French anthropology than that of Mauritania, which has no scientific community in this discipline. Ould Cheikh (1988, 2014) has published many important works on Mauritania dealing with different aspects of the local society: from the history of tribes to the formation and functioning of the independent state, from Islamic finance to religious brotherhoods, and from cultural heritage to slavery.

Ould Cheikh trained, among others, Mohamed Fall Ould Bah, who is among the founders of the Centre d'étude et de recherche sur l'Ouest saharien (CEROS, created in 2008), which has played an important role in building a scientific community in social sciences in Mauritania. Ould Bah (2010) completed a doctoral thesis on Islamic finance at Metz University, which led to several publications in French-speaking social science journals on an original topic little treated by anthropologists (Ould Bah & Ould Cheick 2009).

Supported by Ould Cheikh and Bonte, among others, CEROS has organised conferences and seminars to bring together local and foreign researchers working in the Western Sahara region, welcoming foreign and local students and promoting scientific publications on the region. Some young Mauritanian anthropologists are now working in American universities or doing research in the country as part of international research projects or providing expertise for foreign organisations such as Mariem Baba Ahmed (S. Boulay, personal communication, August 12, 2021).

Anthropology in the Near East (the Mashrek)

Having examined the situation of anthropology in the Maghreb countries that colonisation has linked to the French ethnological tradition, next I highlight the history of anthropology in the countries of the Near East. France and Great Britain colonised the latter after the First World War at the time of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and these countries are thus part of the Anglo–Saxon academic tradition.

Egypt

Although in Egypt,¹³ a country Britain has colonised since 1882,¹⁴ “anthropology is not yet ‘naturalised’, integrated into the academy” (Hopkins, 2014, p. 120), it has enjoyed greater legitimacy than in the Maghreb countries. This is partly due to the fact that anthropology never became an instrument of power for the Egyptian colonial authorities as it did in other African countries. At the Egyptian University (founded in 1908), now Cairo University, Edward Evans-Pritchard and Maurice Hocart, two of the major figures in British anthropology at the time, taught successively, the first during the academic years 1932–1934 and 1936–1937 and the second from 1934 to 1939. In 1946, Reginald Radcliffe-Brown taught for a year at the University of Alexandria, where he founded the Institute of Social Sciences “to train social workers by allying the methods of functionalist micro-anthropology and the reformist optimism of Anglo–Saxon-inspired social services” (Roussillon, 2002, p. 211). At Alexandria University, the only anthropology department present in the country was created in 1974 by Ahmed Abou Zeid, the most eminent Egyptian anthropologist of the 20th century (Hopkins, 2014). Abou Zeid trained with Radcliffe-Brown during the latter’s stay in Alexandria and in later years completed his training at Oxford under Evans-Pritchard. Therefore, his work is part of a structural-functionalist perspective, as was clearly illustrated by his research in the oasis of Kharga on the changes in the local social structure following the migration of some of the area’s inhabitants. A follower of Jamal Abdel Nasser’s ideology, Abou Zeid’s work was geared towards fostering an understanding of the social changes linked to the development projects the regime promoted.

Abou Zeid is one of the few local anthropologists to have trained a generation of students, many of whom went on to careers in the United States, such as Safia Mohsen and Abdul-Hamid el-Zein (Hopkins, 2014). Mohsen worked with the Awlad Ali Bedouins, taking an interest in their

¹³ Although Egypt is located in North Africa, for historical, political, and linguistic reasons, it is considered part of the Mashrek.

¹⁴ Following Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt (1798–1801), France exerted great influence on Egypt during the 19th century, although the country was not directly colonised.

legal system and ways of resolving conflicts and taking into account changes due to the intervention of the Egyptian central state. El-Sayyed el-Aswad has taught in the United States and Gulf countries,¹⁵ whereas Iman al-Bastawasi made her career at the Institute of African Studies at Cairo University (Hopkins, 2014). Although some early anthropologists such as Mohammad Galal¹⁶ trained in France at the school of Durkheim and Mauss, British functionalist anthropology dominated the country in the 1950s and 1960s. Anthropology was also present in the aforementioned National Centre for Social and Criminological Sciences and put in the service of the economic and social development of the country, which under Nasser, had undergone important reforms (Roussillon, 2002). The other institution that played a key role in the training of many Egyptian anthropologists was the Centre for Social Sciences hosted by the American University in Cairo (AUC), one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in the country.¹⁷ The Centre for Social Studies played a central role during the Nubian Project (1961–1964) (Fahim, 1977; Hopkins & Mehanna, 2010), a large-scale research project designed to study the resettlement of a population of approximately 100,000 people due to the construction of the Aswan Dam. This project, led by the AUC and funded by the Ford Foundation, included many young Egyptian, American, and European researchers, including Hussein Fahim (1982), famous for fuelling the debate on “indigenous anthropology” in colonised countries, and Laila al-Hamamsy, who contributed much to women’s studies and to the scientific organisation of anthropology in Egypt and other Arab countries (Hopkins, 2014, p. 100).¹⁸ Since the period of optimism linked to the development policies in the 1960s and 1970s, Egypt has seen no real development of anthropology in the academy nor the construction of a scientific debate in this discipline (Sholkamy, 1999). The absence of a national scientific community, the difficulties of doing research due to censorship by local authorities, and the lack of funding are major obstacles to the development of the discipline in the country (Fahim, 1977; Shami & Herrera, 1999). Many brilliant Egyptian researchers, often trained at AUC, where several anthropology courses are offered, have thus left the country after completing a PhD in the United States or Europe to pursue an international career. Although Egypt is their

¹⁵ Many social science researchers from North Africa and the Mashrek have migrated to universities in the Gulf countries during the last three decades due to the explosion in the number of universities in this area, the lack of qualified local teachers, and high salaries (al-Husban & Na’amneh, 2010; Bamyeh, 2015; Roussillon, 2002).

¹⁶ Galal (1905–1943) was mentored by Marcel Mauss and the famous orientalist Louis Massignon. He studied and published his work in Paris. He did not hold any position in the Egyptian academy (Hopkins, 2014).

¹⁷ This university was founded in 1919 by a group of Americans interested in furthering higher education in the Middle East (<https://www.aucegypt.edu/about/history>).

¹⁸ In particular, al-Hamamsi took over as director of the Organisation for the Promotion of Social Sciences in the Middle East (Hopkins, 2014, p. 100).

field of research, they do not contribute to the building of a scientific community of anthropologists in the country, prevented by political, structural, and economic conditions.

Sudan

During British colonisation, Sudan played a key role in the history of anthropology because it was the focus of studies by such well-known anthropologists as Charles and Brenda Seligman, Edward Evans-Pritchard, Siegfried Nadel, Godfrey Lienhardt, and many others (Assal, 2018). The British colonial government equipped itself in the 1930s with an Anthropology Board and the post of government anthropologist to secure, through the studies carried out in the field, control over the country's rebel groups. British influence was very strong in Sudanese academic institutions and in the training of the first local anthropologists. In 1958, Ian Cunnison founded the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Khartoum, where until the late 1970s, the teaching staff were mainly British anthropologists (Ahmed, 2003). Despite the hostility of the Sudanese elite towards anthropology, which had been an instrument of colonial domination, local and foreign anthropologists teaching in Sudan managed—at least in part—to revive it by putting it in the service of the development policies of independent Sudan. Anthropology courses were thus also created at the Universities of Juba and Gezira. Starting in the 1970s, thanks to Fredrik Barth's presence in Sudan and the agreements he established between the University of Khartoum and the University of Bergen, close ties were forged between Sudanese anthropology and European academia. During the 1970s and 1980s, despite the civil war, Sudanese students were able to obtain doctorates in Britain, Norway, and the United States. Thus, since the end of the 1970s, the teaching staff of almost exclusively Europeans has been replaced by Sudanese anthropologists, although European researchers have continued to make regular visits to the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Khartoum (Ahmed, 2003). The advent of the Islamist government (1989), the war in Darfur, and the Arabisation of higher education caused a weakening of Sudanese anthropology (Assal, 2018). Here, as in other Arab countries since the 1990s, the lack of research funding and low salaries prompted many university teachers to work full-time for international agencies and NGOs, producing reports on the humanitarian situation and conflicts between different groups in the country (Ahmed, 2003). Despite the discipline's weakening in recent decades, Sudanese anthropologists have acted as reference sources in the field of anthropology for many Arab countries. Some of them have contributed to the circulation and institutionalisation of anthropology in the academic institutions of the Gulf countries, even creating a department of anthropology at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia (Ahmed, 2003).

Among the issues Sudanese anthropologists have addressed are nomadism, the relationship between state and tribe, sedentarisation, and the impact of development projects on the populations concerned (Ahmed, 2003).

Jordan

In Jordan, a former British colony, the country's first and only anthropology department was created in 1984 at Yarmouk University in Irbid, a city in the country's north. Founded as a research unit by a group of anthropologists and archaeologists at the encouragement of European, American, and Turkish researchers (Al-Husban & Na'amneh, 2010), the department offered only master's-level courses until 2002, when a bachelor's degree in anthropology was created. Since then, the department has reinforced its teaching vocation by relegating research to a secondary activity (Al-Husban & Na'amneh, 2010). Since 1991, researchers in physical anthropology and bioarchaeology have also joined the department, which today has a dual vocation (Abu Dalou et al., 2014). In its early days, the department had very dynamic teachers such as the already mentioned Seteney Shami, a Jordanian anthropologist trained at the American University of Beirut and the University of California, Berkeley, who is among the founders and president of the Arab Council for the Social Sciences, "an independent regional non-profit organisation that aims to strengthen social science research and knowledge production in the Arab world" (<https://arabfoundationsforum.org/author/ACSS/>). Founded in 2010, the Council for the Social Sciences encourages quality research in Arab countries through grants and subsidies to academic institutions, organises scientific meetings and congresses that bring together researchers from different Arab countries, and publishes their work. For several decades, Shami has been involved in organising and coordinating social science research in the Arab world, convinced of its importance and aware of the difficulties it faces at regional and national levels (Shami, 2017). Whereas Shami completed his studies in the United States, even today most of the professors in Yarmouk's anthropology department earned their doctorates in Europe or the United States. Several former students of the department have made academic careers in Jordan or in the Arab world, including Abdelhakim al-Husban, Mohammed Tarawneh, Mohammed Tabishat, and Mahmoud Na'amneh. Their research interests are manifold and include relations between state and tribe, cultural heritage (al-Husban & Na'amneh, 2010); collective memory, poverty, the impact of capitalism on rural populations (Tarawneh, 2014); organ transplantation, popular representation of illness (Tabishat, 2014); the construction and circulation of scientific knowledge, love, and marriage (Alibeli & Na'amneh, 2018); and representations of their society in cinema.

Despite the existence of the anthropology department at Yarmouk University, published research on Jordan by Jordanian researchers is still a minority compared to that published by Western researchers (Al-Husban & Na'amneh, 2010), and it is mainly Euro–American universities or research centres that fund research projects, international academic meetings, and publications on Jordan. The proliferation of private research centres and the practice of carrying out short-term research commissioned by international organisations has spread in Jordan since the 1990s. Several anthropologists teaching at the university supplement their teaching activities with research activities determined by the interests of international organisations. This is also because field research is undervalued and poorly funded (Al-Husban & Na'amneh, 2010).

Syria

Syria, which was under French mandate between 1920 and 1946, after a period of great political instability characterised by coups d'état and army interventions, experienced a very harsh authoritarian regime that left little room for the development of the social sciences and anthropology in particular. Dominated by the Assad family since 1970, the country, due to strong censorship and political repression, could not create a local academic community capable of producing critical knowledge, although sociology was taught at university (F. Mermier, personal communication, July 6, 2021). As Sari Hanafi (2010) effectively summarised, in Syria, “the government continues to control production in the social sciences and humanities. These sciences are highly apologetic, limited in their approach to research, controlled by single-party authorities and used for ideological propaganda and political manipulation” (p. 7). Some anthropologists of Syrian origin have trained and taught in universities in other countries of the Arab world. Among them is Sulayman Khalaf, who, after training in anthropology at the American University of Beirut and in the United States, spent most of his career at universities in Gulf countries (University of Kuwait, University of the United Arab Emirates, University of Sharja, University of Bahrain). Khalaf has worked on the construction of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the Gulf countries, writing numerous works on popular culture and practices considered traditional, such as camel racing and falcon training. Khalaf (2020) is also one of the few Arab anthropologists to have published works on Syria, such as the very recent *Social Change in Syria: Family, Village and Political Party*. Another example is Zouhair Ghazzal, who, although not strictly trained in anthropology, studied at the American University of Beirut and then completed his doctoral thesis at the Haute Ecole en Sciences Sociales in Paris in the field of social studies on Arab–Islamic societies; he is presently a history professor at Loyola

University in the United States. Interested in the modern history of the Near East at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Ghazzal (2007) is well-known for his book *Grammars of Adjudication: The Economics of Judicial Decision Making in Fin-de-Siècle Ottoman Beirut and Damascus*.

Lebanon

In Lebanon, a country colonised by France in the period between the two world wars, the region's first Western-style universities were founded in the second half of the 19th century: the American University of Beirut (AUB; 1866) and the Université Saint Joseph (USJ; 1875). Both founded by clerics, these institutions made Lebanon a locus of higher education and culture in the Near East (Kabbanji, 2012). Even after independence (1946) and the explosion of private universities in the country (since the 1990s), anthropology remained "on the margins of both the academe and the wider society" (Sawaf, 2021, p. 241) and is still a secondary discipline for those enrolled in bachelor's and master's degree programmes in social sciences where sociology is dominant (King & Scheid, 2006). The civil war, which ravaged the country between 1975 and 1990, caused the closure of the only bachelor's and master's degree programmes in anthropology that AUB offered. Only in 2005 was a master's degree in anthropology reestablished, allowing students to specialise in this discipline. The enhancement of anthropology at the AUB was strongly advocated by Fuad Khouri, one of Lebanon's leading anthropologists, along with Selim Abou and Chawki Douaihy (King & Scheid, 2006). Khouri has worked on various issues related to political power and the role of the army in Arab countries and conceptions of the body and bodily expressions in Arab-Islamic societies. His autobiography humorously traced his career as an anthropologist in the Arab world (Khouri, 2007). Abou, who did his university studies in France, played a major role in promoting the social sciences and anthropology in particular at the USJ, of which he was also rector. A writer, philosopher and anthropologist, Abou has studied identity conflicts, intercultural dialogue, acculturation processes, and multiculturalism by doing research in Argentina, Canada, and Lebanon. Douaihy has worked on issues related to urban and political anthropology in Lebanon and on the organisation of the Maronite community. Annie Tohme Tabet, a Lebanese anthropologist teaching at the USJ, studies urban and political anthropology and the anthropology of war and violence. One of her recent works is on Syrian refugees in Lebanon (Boissière & Tohme Tabet, 2018).

Although there are anthropology teachings at the AUB, the USJ, and the Lebanese University,¹⁹ Tohme Tabet believes anthropology remains an individual initiative of some researchers and a sensibility rather than an autonomous discipline (Boissière & Tohme Tabet, 2018). Lebanese anthropologists who teach and do research in Lebanon, with a few exceptions, do some or all of their training in Europe or the United States. Famous diaspora anthropologists such as Suad Joseph and Ghassan Hage have not succeeded in making anthropology visible in Lebanon or in creating important training centres. In recent years, initiatives by young researchers, such as the creation of the Anthropology Society in Lebanon, seem to indicate a new dynamism. One of the difficulties encountered in the institutionalization of anthropology in Lebanon is related to multilingualism: The few Lebanese anthropologists who exist publish mainly in French and English and much less in Arabic (King & Scheid, 2006), making it difficult to create a “unified Lebanese anthropology” (Puig & Tabet, 2021, p. 227) and thus a community of local researchers.

Palestine

In Palestine, universities offering training in the social sciences are concentrated in the occupied territories and particularly on the Ramallah–Jerusalem axis (Romani, 2003). No university has an anthropology department, and anthropologists often teach sociology (Romani, 2010). The only institution where anthropology has a visible presence is Bir Zeit University in Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian Authority. Here, a Department of Sociology and Anthropology was founded in the early 1970s at the behest of one of the first anthropologists to teach there: Sharif Kanaana. Like Khalil Nakhleh and Ismail Nashif, two other anthropologists who taught in the department, Kanaana was born into a Palestinian family living in Israel. These three anthropologists completed their studies in the United States and arrived at Bir Zeit with disciplinary backgrounds influenced by the North American anthropological tradition. Kanaana, a folklorist and anthropologist, launched a project in 1984 to collect the oral traditions of the inhabitants of Palestinian villages destroyed by the Israeli occupation (Van Teeffelen, 1997). Although his work has a critical slant, he is part of a local anthropological tradition initiated in the early decades of the 20th century by Palestinian physician and scholar Tawfiq Canaan and his circle (Nashef, 2002; Tamari, 2008). Oral history, folkloric studies, and anthropology intersected and determined the interests of several anthropologists in the 1970s and 1980s. In recent decades, new themes have emerged in relation to the social transformations

¹⁹ The Lebanese University offers an applied master’s degree in urban socioanthropology and a research master’s degree in anthropology (<https://www.ul.edu.lb/faculte/branches.aspx?facultyId=8>).

that occurred following the Oslo Accords, the increasing colonisation of the West Bank, the fragmentation of the Palestinian people, and the interest in the status of women. The Institute for Women Studies at Bir Zeit, one of the first research centres for gender studies in the region (founded in 1984), employs a number of anthropologists who helped create the first master's degree in gender studies and the first doctorate in social sciences in Palestine. Although Bir Zeit does not offer any degrees in anthropology, some anthropologists teach in the social sciences curriculum, but their courses are often thematic or methodological rather than disciplinary. Examples include Ala Alazzeh, who conducts research on resistance to Israeli colonisation in the West Bank, and Rima Hammami, whose work focuses on gender studies, nationalism, religion, humanitarian interventions, and civil society in the Palestinian territories. The Israeli military occupation, the first and second intifadas, and the censorship exercised by the Israelis and even the Palestinian Authority make it difficult to do research and sometimes to maintain a critical approach that is nevertheless considered proper in the social sciences (al-Sakka, 2018, 2020; Hammami & Tamari, 1997; Romani, 2010). The proliferation of private research centres and the scarce resources available to universities combined with the very important teaching load of teachers (A. al-Sakka, personal communication, August 16, 2021) mean that research, practised mainly on the mandate of international organisations, is uncritical and often unpublished (Tamari, 1994). Therefore, the construction of a dynamic scientific community in the field of anthropology and more generally in the social sciences seems yet to be achieved (A. al-Sakka, personal communication, August 16, 2021). However, in 2016, the Palestinian Association of Sociology, which brings together anthropologists, and the Insaniyat Association, which brings together only anthropologists residing in the occupied territories and Israel, were created (A. al-Sakka, personal communication, August 16, 2021).

Iraq

I was able to assemble little information about anthropology in Iraq. The pioneer of the discipline is Shakir Mustapha Salim (1919–1985), who obtained a doctorate from University College London in 1955. His doctoral research, carried out in southern Iraq, was published first in Arabic (1956–1957) and then in English as *Marsh Dwellers of the Euphrates* (Salim, 1962) and was reviewed in several Anglo–Saxon scientific journals. He has taught in the Department of Sociology at Baghdad University and is the author of an English–Arabic anthropology dictionary. The censorship imposed by Saddam Hussein first and the massive destruction related to the American occupation of the country later almost annihilated the possibility of doing social science research in the country (Ahram, 2013).

However, in the 1980s and 1990s, numerous studies on folk traditions were published and several folklore museums, which Hussein's regime supported for nationalistic purposes, were established (Baram, 1991). Finally, Omar Dewachi, although he has made his career abroad, is one of the very few known Iraqi anthropologists. A medical doctor by training, he converted to anthropology after escaping from Iraq and completed a thesis in medical anthropology at Harvard, later becoming an associate professor at Rutgers School of Arts and Science. Dewachi (2017) authored *Ungovernable Life: Mandatory Medicine and Statecraft in Iraq*, a highly original study on the role of medicine in the history of independent Iraqi state-building, and other works on therapeutic geography and toxic legacies related to Near Eastern conflicts.

Anthropology in the Arabian Peninsula

The Arabian Peninsula has been one of the regions where Western-style universities have emerged later than in other Arab states—mostly during the last 3 decades. Having shifted from the British to the American aegis, most countries on the Arabian Peninsula either did not develop a local anthropological tradition or gave it only a certain legitimacy as a discipline serving nation-states. In their attempts to create a national identity based on a common tangible and intangible cultural heritage (Davis & Gavrielides, 1991), the Gulf states employed anthropologists to collect and document local traditions that could create a sense of authenticity and historical depth. Anthropology addressing more contemporary issues and understood as a critical discipline is very recent and has been developed mainly by private universities, which are often branches of American universities. For Saudi Arabia, I was unable to get in touch with the only anthropologist about whose work I was able to learn: Abu Baker Bagader. Bagader obtained his doctorate in the United States and taught sociology at King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah over several years. He was interested in youth in Saudi Arabia (Bagader, 2010), environmental issues in relation to Islam, and Saudi literature.

In the 50 or so Saudi universities, whose websites I examined, I could not find any anthropology courses, although I do not rule out the possibility of anthropologists practising in the country. Two well-known anthropologists of Saudi origin who have made careers in other countries are Soraya Altorki, who taught for many years at the American University in Cairo in the Department of Sociology, Egyptology, and Anthropology, and Madawi al-Rasheed, who enjoyed a brilliant career in Great Britain. Mai Yamani, an independent researcher known for her media appearances and affiliated with various international bodies, also has an anthropological background and has published work on Saudi Arabia. Yamani taught at King

Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah for a few years at the beginning of her career, as did Altorki, who was a visiting professor at the same university between 1974 and 1976 and then a visiting professor at King Saud University (1982–1984). The three anthropologists conducted research in Saudi Arabia and published their work in English. Their work was concerned with the condition of women and the family in Saudi Arabia (Altorki, 1986); the construction of the Saudi state (al-Rasheed, 2002); the relationship between tribes and the central state, young people (Yamani, 2000); political opposition to the Saud regime (al-Rasheed, 2007); feminism in the Arab–Islamic world, relations between the Arab Gulf states, Iraqi opponents exiled in England, and changes in Egyptian society (Altorki & Cole, 1998). Though I was not able to contact Saudi anthropologists based in the Kingdom, according to Kuwaiti anthropologist Abdallah Alajmi (personal communication, June 30, 2021), there is a group of historians in Saudi Arabia who publish good quality work in the field of ethnohistory.

In Yemen, anthropology has never been taught, and research in the social sciences has been driven mainly by sociologists, the pioneer of whom is Hammoud al-Audi (F. Mermier, personal communication, July 5, 2021). In South Yemen, research in the field was impossible before unification, whereas in North Yemen, the ideology of development allowed the emergence of social sciences applied to government projects (F. Mermier, personal communication, July 5, 2021). The devastation of the country since 2011 has also destroyed university life, and today, academic activities seem to be reduced to a minimum (F. Mermier, personal communication, July 5, 2021).

Sociology is taught in Bahrain, but anthropology plays a marginal role. For example, the University of Bahrain offers a bachelor's degree in sociology and a bachelor's degree in history, both of which include anthropology courses. The teachers in the social studies department are all Arabs and have studied in Bahrain, Jordan, Egypt, and England.

Al-Ayn University in the United Arab Emirates has an applied sociology course in the College of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences, but anthropology is absent today, although an Egyptian-born American anthropologist, El-Sayyed el-Aswad, taught the discipline for a decade (2008–2018). El-Aswad also taught at the University of Bahrain and established the Folk Studies Unit at UAE University (1994–1996). This university includes a unit dedicated to training in “Tourism and Heritage,” areas the Gulf States also strongly supported in relation to the creation of branches of the Louvre, British Museum, and Guggenheim Museum in the Emirates. In general, universities in the Gulf States offer courses in engineering, medicine, biology, nursing sciences, economics, information technology, and education sciences, with the aim of producing professionals to fill posts in public administration, the health system, and

schools. Social sciences are considered of little value and are at the bottom of the university hierarchy (A. Alajmi, personal communication, June 30, 2021).

In Abu Dhabi, there are two recently founded universities that are branches of prestigious institutions in the Global North: Sorbonne Abu Dhabi and New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD). NYUAD has many anthropologists (European and American) dispersed among its various departments, and anthropology is a minor available within the Bachelor of Social Sciences and Humanities. Anthropologists teach general introductory courses, courses on the Arab world and Gulf societies, and other thematic courses related to their research (youth, musical traditions, environmental issues, migration). One of the minors in the bachelor's degree programme in which anthropologists teach is called Arab Cross-Road Studies and it covers societies in the Arab world. In 2021, there was still no master's degree in anthropology. Zayed University has a College of Humanities and Social Sciences oriented towards political science, from which anthropology is absent.

In Kuwait, at the American University of Kuwait, it is possible to follow a bachelor's degree programme with an anthropology orientation, although the teachers are few and not all in the same department. The Department of Social and Behavioural Sciences brings together several sociologists and political scientists and only two anthropologists. Three anthropologists I interviewed who are active in universities in the Gulf noted that there is almost no dialogue between anthropologists who teach in universities in the Arabian Peninsula or even within the same state (A. Alajmi, personal communication, July 30, 2021; L. Assaf, personal communication, July 6, 2021; P. Luciano, personal communication, June 27, 2021). Alajmi, an anthropologist trained in the United States and England, teaches at Kuwait's Arab Open University in the field of social sciences but does not conduct any anthropology courses. He continues his anthropological research without access to university funds or other grants, except when they come from foreign institutions. Alajmi is interested in the migration of native workers from Hadhramaut to Kuwait and studies the links between migrant communities and communities of origin and the relations between Kuwaitis and foreign workers (Alajmi, 2012, 2019). The Kuwaiti anthropologist is equally interested in the construction of social sciences in the Gulf countries and their role in the legitimation of political power.

In Oman, anthropology is absent from the universities, even in social science departments, although there are teachers with doctorates in anthropology from countries in the Global North (M. Sebiane, personal communication, August 18, 2021). Mainly European and American researchers have conducted anthropological research on Oman, which is still quite limited. Omani universities, however, have institutionalised sociology, which is understood more in a

quantitative sense as a tool of government than as critical knowledge aimed at analysing social phenomena (M. Sebiane, personal communication, August 18, 2021). As in the other Gulf states, anthropology is generally understood as the study of folklore and is used as a tool to establish collections of material objects and oral traditions that can form the basis of a national identity (M. Sebiane, personal communication, August 18, 2021).

In conclusion, anthropology in the Arab world still appears to be primarily a knowledge related to the Euro–American world. Poorly institutionalised, marginalised, perceived as an instrument of colonial domination, and censored because it is too critical, anthropology still seems little known or appreciated in the Arab countries considered in this chapter. American or French universities are the main institutions that teach and practice the discipline, although there are a few departments in Arab universities where the term “anthropology” appears in the name. A new local interest in the discipline has arisen in some North African countries such as Algeria and Tunisia, but the overall balance is poor; even countries where anthropology seemed to have more solid and ancient roots, such as Egypt and Sudan, have failed to create local traditions, and the best known researchers have often had solitary trajectories that have taken them abroad.

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