

SHERINE HAFEZ and SUSAN SLYOMOVICS, EDS. *Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa: Into the New Millennium*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013. xxiv + 414 pages, acknowledgements, bibliography, list of contributors, index. Cloth US\$85.00 ISBN 978-0-253-00746-9. Paper US\$30.00 ISBN 978-0-253-00753-7. E-Book US\$24.99 ISBN 978-0-253-00761-2.

How can we assess the state of Middle East and North African anthropology today? This sixteen-chapter volume aims to do so through questions of nation, modernity, new media, youth, gender, Islam, and secularism. From Morocco to Afghanistan, Turkey to Lebanon, the aim of the volume is to “address contemporary theoretical debates about modernity, postcoloniality, and nation-state building projects” (xv). The collection is the result of a two-day workshop at the Gustave E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies (CNES) at the University of California, Los Angeles, and updates Dale F. Eickelman’s *The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach* (Prentice Hall, 2002), now in its fourth edition. While the major themes of both works include the manifestation of Islam in different geographic and political contexts, education, communication, and travel, the latest collection strongly emphasizes the political history of anthropological knowledge production.

The book is divided into four parts: “Knowledge Production in Middle East and North Africa Anthropology” (Susan Slyomovics, Seteney Shami and Nefissa Naguib, Jon W. Anderson, Paul A. Silverstein, Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar); “Subjectivities: Youth, Gender, Family, and Tribe in the Middle East and North African Nation-State” (Suad Joseph, Sondra Hale, Dawn Chatty, Christine Hegel-Cantarella); “Anthropology of Religion and Secularism in the Middle East and North Africa” (Sherine Hafez, Kim Shively, Susanne Dahlgren, Courtney L. Hughes); and “Anthropology and New Media in the Virtual Middle East and North Africa” (Emilio Spadola, Sebastian Maisel, Charlotte Karagueuzian and Pamela Chrabieh Badine).

Slyomovics’s opening chapter employs the definition of the “state-of-the-art,” a “past-oriented survey of what’s been accomplished and what’s missing” (4), to reflect on the field’s past in order to map directions for its future. This accounting of the past is one of the volume’s major strengths. Indeed, Hale’s observation of memory in Sudan and Eritrea—“The politics of memory is about what the past means to the present” (134)—speaks to one of the central ambitions of the volume: to scrutinize the history of contentious politics of anthropological knowledge production, which was and continues to be shaped by colonialism, institutional organization, and global politics.

Students of Middle East studies will learn much regarding the work and legacies of earlier anthropologists such as Carleton Coon and Fredrik Barth. Contributors explore the roles of early anthropologists associated with the military and espionage (Silverstein) and how archaeology has enabled “modern anthropology” (Anderson). Some contributors contemplate the responsibilities and potential benefits of anthropology to Middle East studies and to the communities in which anthropologists presently work (Shami and Naguib, Deeb and Winegar, Joseph).

The third part of the volume explores religion and secularism, with examinations of religious subjectivity that seek to undo binaries of rational/irrational and modernity/traditionalism in Egypt (Hafez), in the Protestantization of the Kemalist Turkish state (Shively), and in Moroccan women’s contraceptive practices as indicative of geopolitical spatial imaginations both Islamic and progressive (Hughes). In an effort to theorize beyond the category of the nation, the book also explores cases demonstrating transnational and diasporic experiences (Chatty, Dahlgreen).

A question arising from the collection is what might be on the horizon in the “new millennium.” Responses given in the chapters range from Shami and Naguib’s call for researchers to resist colluding with state identity politics to Joseph’s call for more study of Arab youth. Still, the volume could do more to chart future directions for the subfield. The final part, dedicated explicitly to “new media,” explores how technology shapes media and mediation between the state and its people, and among different political and tribal identities in virtual public forums. Spadola describes the 1975 Moroccan Green March to claim the Western Sahara as the effect of mass-mediated communication, specifically through Hassan II’s technologized call to “the People” to march. Maisel examines “a new form of tribalism” by tracing online communications in Saudi Arabia that are changing tribal feuds and relationships with the central state, while Karagueuzian and Chrabieh Badine examine the Arab and Iranian blogospheres as spaces for peace building.

The volume, including its comprehensive bibliography, will benefit students of Middle East studies looking to see how anthropology contributes to the study of the region. Anthropology students will find theoretical topics germane not only to the region but also to broader anthropological conversations. Readers will also enjoy the fine ethnography that drives these major theoretical trajectories in the anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa. ✎

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