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BOOK REVIEWS

LARA DEEB and JESSICA WINEGAR, *Anthropology's Politics: Disciplining the Middle East* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2016). Pp. 273. $85.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780804781237

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"We never could have written this book before tenure." The first sentence of this ground-breaking and provocative book speaks volumes about its contents and the intrepidness of its authors. In this ethnography of anthropology—its practitioners and institutions—two of the leading Middle East anthropologists have undertaken the task of exploring in detail a historically focused politics of the production of scholarship in the post-9/11 world, positioning Middle East anthropology as a case study. The book does cover the post–World War II period when the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) became, and still remain, a central focus of US foreign policy from our interests in oil to Israel to the recent US wars in the region. Deeb and Winegar argue that scholarly production is "never pure" (p. 3). While acknowledging the mutual constitution of power and knowledge, they hone in on how knowledge is produced and the constraints that knowledge production involves. Their work is certainly relevant well beyond the case study at hand but it is in the MENA region that this entanglement seems most charged. It is safe to say that a well-argued and empirically supported critique of a Latin American regime is hardly likely to elicit the same kind of rapid, often fact-challenged and twisted reaction as a critique of Israeli policies toward Palestinians.

Written in an accessible and engaging style, the authors unsettle anthropology's progressive credentials and expose its double standard when it comes to dealing with the MENA. They draw attention to a disturbing situation when they write that the institution that represents anthropologists, the American Anthropological Association (AAA), excluded MENA anthropologists "from the discipline's discussions about anthropology's engagements with various military conflicts in the region" (pp. 25, 161). What could be more indicative of marginalization than having your own colleagues discount your professional expertise and experience?

A main takeaway from Deeb and Winegar's book is the Middle East as "exception" to anthropology's sense of itself as progressive and inclusive. For a brief moment, a new era appeared to be on the horizon when hundreds of anthropologist voted down a resolution to oppose the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction movement at the 2014 AAA meetings. Alas, the vote of the full membership on adopting a Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction resolution failed by a very narrow margin in 2015. Yet the barrier had been broken. Compulsory Zionism was openly challenged and the marginalization of MENA anthropologists appeared to have eased.

Turning their ethnographic skills to MENA anthropologists and stepping into the fraught terrain of speech in the academy reveals much about anthropology's ostensibly progressive past, present, and future. To my knowledge, this book is one of the few to detail the way compulsory Zionism manifests itself in the academy, particularly within anthropology. Censorship is most effective when it becomes self-monitoring and normative. Tactics to compel conformity with "compulsory Zionism" and mute criticism of US foreign policy include: intimidation and disruption at public lectures, disparaging and/or threatening e-mails, the compiling of black lists, appeals to university administrators to disallow certain speakers, unhiring, and external interference in tenure deliberations.

Although quite a few of their interlocutors had not faced pronounced campaigns of intimidation and silencing, the fact that they *feared* its possibility and that their institutions would not protect

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them both revealed the atmosphere of self-monitoring and served as a warning to others not to enter the fraught terrain of MENA studies (p. 52). The simple knowledge of the problems faced by MENA anthropologists, or their anticipation of them, was often enough for faculty advisors to warn students away from studying the region.

What the authors accomplish in this book is to clarify the entanglements of scholarship on MENA with power, more precisely the power to intervene in the production of knowledge through a particular set of silencing practices. They employ standard ethnographic methods of participant observation and interviews to amass an impressive series of ethnographic accounts of what being a MENA anthropologist can entail, as well as archival and media sources. This is a fascinating story, told up-close and intimately, of how people decide to become anthropologists, the factors that go into choosing an area of research, getting through graduate school, and finding a job.

The authors were motivated by a cascading series of events—the end of the Cold War, the US wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, growing Islamophobia in the United States, continuous Israeli assaults on Palestinians, the second Palestinian intifada, and the long marginalization, if not silencing, of MENA anthropologists within their discipline. In their detailed interviews with several generations of MENA anthropologists (in the interest of full disclosure, I was interviewed) and digging into how decisions are made in the AAA's governing structure when it comes to resolutions on events in the region, what they found disturbing was the discipline's lack of response to events of moral and global magnitude. As an index of marginalization, the authors contend that the AAA seemed more open to and at ease with resolutions on Central/Latin America than they did on those regarding violent events of global magnitude in the MENA region (p. 129).

This is a book many of us who work in the region have imagined writing for many years. Most MENA anthropologists have a store of anecdotes and stories—some minor, some hair-raising—about the perils of working in this region. Interestingly, the minefields are less in the field where MENA anthropologists generally face little negative reactions from their interlocutors and more at home where marginalization, silencing, intimidation, and censorship become activated when the subject is the Middle East, Palestine in particular. It is noteworthy that whereas past sources of silencing and intimidation operated within the realm of government agencies, embodied most forthrightly in McCarthyism and the FBI, the source is now private institutions such as Campus Watch, the David Project, and alumni groups, among others, which it should be noted are not averse to deploying political pressure at the Congressional level to suppress speech. The Internet and social media have hastened the speed with which such pressures circulate and take shape and their spatial range.

Aside from detailing how gender, class, ethnicity, and nationality shape scholarship, the authors astutely and sensibly adopt a generational or cohort approach; they identify five generations—from the late 1950s through the post-9/11 world, each set against the backdrop of global and domestic political events which helps to set anthropology's politics across a historical spectrum from the Cold War and its demise to the more recent post-9/11 war on terror, a watershed date for MENA and academic entanglements with politics.

Given the pressures not to work on Palestine and MENA more broadly, from faculty warnings of the career perils—the seriously diminished job prospects—and the refusal of faculty to serve on dissertation committees, we have to be appreciative of those who have carried on and produced a growing body of solid anthropological accounts of the region. But it also makes us wonder what that body of literature would look like if, over the years, young scholars had not been dissuaded from working on the area. Taking this logic a bit further, many MENA scholars curtail or avoid teaching about Palestine/Israel in order to protect themselves from irate students, parents, and administrators as well as external organizations. On a positive note, the authors devote a chapter to the organizing and networking by a younger generation of MENA anthropologists in order to acquire a voice in the AAA.

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"Free Speech except for Palestine," a phrase that circulates among progressive students and academics, and in legal circles, is here on full display and should resonate as a warning about the possible futures where speech is monitored and punished, part of a larger war on the academy mounted by right-wing politicians and commentators. The experiences of MENA anthropologists stand as a sort of bellwether, a warning about what deviating from dominant narratives can entail. The present atmosphere does not bode well for the academy as a place for the exchange of ideas or even at its most basic the formulation and sharing of facts. In the era of the neoliberal university and its growing dependence on donors as state-funding shrinks, there are increasing calls to dilute tenure. The Middle East will be an interesting test site for the diminution of "free speech." In a region already so heavily freighted by censorship in the academy, how will it fare in the face of new attempts to control speech?

ALICE WILSON, *Sovereignty in Exile: A Saharan Liberation Movement Governs*, The Ethnography of Political Violence (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). Pp. 312. $59.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780812248494

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Research on the Western Sahara dispute in the English-speaking world appears to be inversely correlated with the intensity of the conflict. During the peak years of military and diplomatic activity between Morocco and the Sahrawi nationalist movement (1975–2004), only two research-based monographs (both in 1983) and two edited collections were published in English. In 2004, the UN Security Council effectively abandoned its fifteen-year effort to hold a referendum on independence in Western Sahara, a territory that has been largely under Moroccan control since Rabat seized it from Spain in 1975. Since 2004, the Western Sahara peace process has done little except to justify the presence of UN peacekeepers in the contested territory. Meanwhile, Moroccan efforts to create "facts on the ground"—settlers and infrastructure—have continued unabated while some two-fifths of Western Sahara's indigenous Sahrawi population have been exiled in refugee camps in neighboring Algeria since the 1975 outbreak of war between Morocco and the Sahrawi independence movement, the *Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro* (Polisario). Yet despite the increasingly marginalized status of the Western Sahara conflict globally, Anglophone interest in Western Sahara has surprisingly picked up in recent years. Since 2010, seven scholarly books on the dispute have been published. Alice Wilson's *Sovereignty in Exile: A Saharan Liberation Movement Governs* is a welcomed and vital contribution to this growing body of literature.

Wilson, a sociocultural anthropologist now at the University of Sussex, spent over two years in the Sahrawi camps conducting her study. Her primary research stint took place over the course of two years (2007–8), when a confluence of electoral reforms and foreign aid restrictions serendipitously elucidated many of the dynamics that she painstakingly documents. A remarkably insightful yet sympathetic account, *Sovereignty in Exile* challenges the tendency to examine sovereignty's power only within the context of territorial nation-states. Wilson uses the case of Polisario's state in exile (officially, *La República Árabe Saharaui Democrática*, or RASD) to examine sovereignty in an extraterritorial context. Through an analysis of evolving social, economic, and political practices in the Sahrawi refugee camps since the mid-1970s, Wilson not only finds contested operations of sovereignty (e.g., quotidian practices such as food aid distribution and bride gifts), but also makes rich ethnographic observations about the nature of democracy and revolution. Essentially, Wilson examines several sites where Sahrawi state power,

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