Anthropologies of Arab-Majority Societies

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Abstract

This article reviews recent anthropological scholarship of Arab-majority societies in relation to geopolitical and theoretical shifts since the end of the Cold War, as well as conjunctures of research location, topic, and theory. Key contributions of the subfield to the larger discipline include interventions into feminist theorizing about agency; theories of modernity; analyses of cultural production/consumption that destabilize the culture concept; approaches to religion that integrate textual traditions with practice, experience, and institutions; and research on violence that emphasizes routinization and affect. Emerging work in the areas of race and ethnicity, secularism, law, human rights, science and technology, and queer studies has the potential to strengthen anthropology of the region as well as to contribute to the discipline more broadly.

INTRODUCTION

Two decades have passed since the last *Annual Review* essay on the Arab world (Abu-Lughod 1989). Since then, anthropology has undergone a major paradigm shift to focus on connections among cultural practices, power, and history on multiple scales from global to local. Geopolitics shifted concurrently from a Cold War paradigm to that of the so-called War on Terror, positioning Arabs and Muslims as quintessential enemies of the United States as state violence consolidates and intensifies. These scholarly and geopolitical developments have inspired new research agendas and approaches that are poised to make significant contributions to anthropology as a whole. These include feminist interventions into theories of agency; theories of modernity; analyses of state violence that highlight routinization and affect; research on religion that integrates textual traditions with practice, experience, and institutions; and work on cultural production/consumption that continues to destabilize the culture concept by showing its constructedness and emphasizing transnational circuits. We examine post-1989 work on Arab-majority societies, highlighting how specific locations, topics, and theoretical approaches become entangled in or symbolic of a region. As we detail in full below, scholarly strengths and weaknesses are produced both in the conjuncture of location, topic, and theory and in the relationship among discipline, region, and geopolitics.

THE POLITICS OF LOCATION AND TOPICAL ASSOCIATION

Defining what constitutes "the Middle East" is always a precarious and power-laden exercise. One runs the danger of uncritically adopting colonial or imperial definitions (the term was invented by an American military historian in 1902 and linked to US military strategy). Often, definitions of the Middle East privilege geography, the Arabic language, Arabs as an ethnic group, or Islam over all else. More than 1,200 anthropological texts related to the

region were published since 1990, including stellar work on Afghanistan, Iran, Israel, and Turkey (each of which deserves its own review article).[1] Given the thorny issues of defining a "field," we decided to focus on Arab-majority societies to chart shifts in scholarship since Abu-Lughod's (1989) piece on the "Arab world." We use the term "Arab-majority societies" because it avoids associations of insularity and homogeneity: Which other groups have a regional "world" ascribed to them? Nonetheless, this focus acknowledges the importance of "Arab" as a meaningful social and political construction in such societies (note the salience of the category "Arab" in the ongoing revolutions), one that affects social life for Arabs as well as for ethnic or linguistic minorities. Yet it also highlights how a scholarly field is defined and represented, calling into question the oft-assumed correlations among Arab ethnicity, Arabic language, Islam, and geography. Such questions are foregrounded as we consider research trends on ethnic and linguistic hierarchies, non-Arab populations in Arab-majority societies, and the effects of diasporic circulations of people from the region on life "at home."[2]

Locations within the geographic Middle East frequently represent the region in scholarship, and particular topics become dominant in certain locations. Places on the periphery—Morocco, North Yemen, and sparsely populated areas—were once the regional "prestige zones" for scholarship, a focus Abu-Lughod (1989) attributed to romanticism, an aversion to conflict zones [especially what she aptly termed the "political minefield" (p. 279) of Palestine],

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[1]We discuss single or coauthored English-language books by anthropologists published by academic presses and peer-reviewed journals. There are many excellent edited volumes as well as anthropological texts by nonanthropologists, which we simply do not have space to include.

[2]We include scholarship on Palestinian citizens of Israel because they live in historical Palestine, which remains an Arab-majority area despite political borders. On Palestine ethnography, see Furani & Rabinowitz (2011). Some scholars who work on Jewish Israelis, such as Nadia Abu El-Haj, also confront Zionism's erasure of Palestinians.

and a sense that anthropology was ill-prepared to study urban life. Our quantitative analysis shows that there has been a massive shift in the location of Middle East anthropology, in terms of both where anthropologists work and how the field is viewed. Egypt now attracts the most anthropologists, followed by Palestine and Lebanon, with the Gulf a newly emergent locale. The majority of anthropologists now conduct fieldwork in capital cities. These shifts reflect several developments: the growth and influence of urban and transnational anthropology; the emergence of violence as a central focus within anthropology; and the rapid post-oil transformation of Gulf countries.[3]

Egypt, especially Cairo, is clearly the newly dominant prestige zone. Egypt's popularity among anthropologists reflects its centrality to Middle East area studies, as well as the availability of institutional support, especially language training, for US scholars. Additionally, Egypt's centrality to US foreign policy and regional politics and its massive state apparatus have made it a key site to investigate new anthropological interests in postcoloniality, development, nationalism, and the state. Of all the region's field sites, Egypt is the most varied in topical trends, probably owing to the sheer number of people working there. Anthropological interest in cities has motivated increased attention to Cairo, the region's largest city, where interdisciplinary scholarship incorporates especially diverse foci, including Islam, gender, fertility, cultural production, youth, household economies, development, and nationalism. Yet the rest of the country remains greatly understudied.

Research conducted in the occupied Palestinian territory as well as in Palestinian communities in Israel and in refugee camps in neighboring countries has increased significantly. Scholars of Palestine have found it an ideal site for exploring gendered nationalism and activism, memory and history, state violence, and spatial exclusions. Work on Palestinians is defined almost exclusively by the violence of Israeli occupation, an important and understandable association, though one that may sideline other analytic and thematic possibilities. This work is also associated with progressive political positions, despite a trend in Israeli anthropology focused on "honor killings" and on the Negev Bedouin as an othered native population. Palestine may be a new prestige zone, but it remains a politically fraught one.

Lebanon joins Egypt and Palestine as a privileged location and a site where institutional resources have begun to support scholarship in recent years. Although it is the subject of half as many publications as the other two countries, there are several emerging scholars working there. This newfound popularity began when the US Department of State lifted its travel ban in 1996 and has increased steadily since, despite (or perhaps because of) periods of war and violence. Lebanon is associated with sectarian conflict and war, but scholars work on myriad topics including gender, activism, space, memory, cultural production, youth, sexuality, and the state. Work on Lebanon would benefit from greater focus on areas other than Beirut, as well as on the interrelationship of Beirut to the rest of the country.

As the Arab Gulf gains new research attention, it is heavily associated with work on transnational labor migration in the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait. Scholars also address the effects of oil wealth on the production of urban space, gender, and social relations within native Gulf communities or between citizens and migrants. Expansion of research to other Gulf countries is desirable but difficult because of restrictions on research. There is comparatively little research in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, the Sudan, Syria,

[3]Morocco continues to attract anthropologists and to be associated with experimental, psychoanalytic, or highly reflexive approaches. New Morocco research on urban areas, religious and ethnic minorities, gender, and cultural production revitalizes that domain. North Africanists continue to engage the work of well-known earlier anthropologists such as Bourdieu, Geertz, and Gellner, who helped shape the wider discipline, with several edited volumes published after their deaths. Yemen is now well-known not for work on tribes qua tribes, but for studies of textuality/orality, knowledge production, history, and authority. Much-needed gender analytics have led to innovative work on households, propriety, the Islamic revival, and development.

Jordan, and Iraq, in some cases owing to access and on-the-ground conditions. Creative management of such conditions and concerned attention to these locations should be a priority.

The urban focus in the past two decades, found in the Cairo School of Urban Studies as well as in studies of Beirut, Fez, and Dubai, among other cities, has helped dispel the region's image as a tribal, exotic, and isolated place. Work in urban areas has enhanced our understandings of household economies, the Islamic revival, space and mobility, nationalism, cultural production, and consumption. Yet this focus has also led to capital cities becoming representative of entire countries and urban, middle-class forms and experiences of, for example, cultural production, revivalist Islam, neoliberalism, and gender formations being taken as representative of these topics more generally. The marginalization of rural areas has led to a thin understanding of national and global political-economic processes, as well as to ignorance about how 40% of the region's population has experienced the dramatic changes of the past two decades.[4] Furthermore, this turn toward the urban parallels a general trend toward the ethnographic study of elites and the middle classes. Our subsequent more complex understanding of elite power formation has illuminated how the poor and working classes are displaced, silenced, or created as a category for elite intervention. At the same time, we are concerned that less fieldwork will be done in these communities, not only in capital cities, but also in provincial areas.

THE POLITICS OF THEORETICAL AND TOPICAL ENTANGLEMENTS

Shifting Metonyms

In the past two decades, anthropology of Arab-majority societies has moved, along with the

discipline as a whole, toward an approach that no longer understands culture as territorially bounded, static, and homogeneous and that views cultural practices, power, and history as interconnected. All the works we discuss below highlight the conceptual importance of power in ways that reflect this disciplinary paradigm shift. The 1990s were a transformative time for Middle East anthropology, a decade that contributed to the flourishing of scholarship in the 2000s such that there are now more anthropological publications on the region than ever before. Work in that period also paved the way for the creative expansion of topical interests. At the same time, many excellent earlier works that have been tossed into the dustbins of history are worth revisiting, both because contemporary theoretical models are sometimes unwittingly derived from them and because they have enduring ethnographic value.[5] The resulting dynamic body of scholarship has significantly challenged conventional anthropological and media representations of Arab-majority societies.

Also in the past two decades, the "theoretical metonym(s)" in anthropological representations of Arab-majority societies have shifted significantly away from tribes, gender, and Islam (Abu-Lughod 1989, p. 280). Today, topics of research are considerably rich and varied. Tribal social organization has practically vanished as a topic of concern for scholars, though not for policy makers, right-wing analysts, and anthropologists embedded with the US military, many of whom persist in using stereotyped notions of tribal structures to explain political violence. In contrast, scholarship on Bedouin and tribes addresses constructions of heritage, gender, and culture as well as the effects of national and global political economies on social life (Cole 2003, Lavie 1990, Peutz 2011). With this nondeterministic and nonisolated view of tribes, scholars examine dispute resolution (Antoun 2000),

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[4]Statistics were compiled using most recent World Bank data. For future research in this area, one can look to Nicholas Hopkins, Reem Saad, and James Toth, whose solid studies investigate agricultural politics and labor migrants in southern Egypt.

[5]Such historical depth is not within the scope of this review, which instead highlights trends with an eye to the future of the subfield.

settlement and development (Chatty 1996), the production of authoritative historical knowledge (Shryock 1997), poetry (Caton 1990), and rural and household economies (Mundy 1995).

In contrast to the relatively fewer works on tribes, both gender and Islam persist as metonyms—theoretical and topical—for the region, separately and in conjunction. Modernity has joined these metonyms as a more recent focus within the subfield, one that has made key contributions to anthropology's engagement with power more broadly. Within this tripartite framing of the field, gender and modernity operate as a different order of category than does Islam because they serve as broader frameworks that inform many of the other topical areas we consider, including Islam. Yet all three both represent the subfield within anthropology and are areas from which the subfield has contributed to the discipline more broadly. After discussion of these metonyms, we add several additional areas of strong contribution: nationalism and the state, cultural production and consumption, violence, and memory and history. Many works we discuss fit into several of these categories; we highlight both their key foci and their most innovative aspects. Finally, we conclude by illuminating a number of new areas of research and continuing lacunae that we hope the subfield will address in the future. For example, greater attention to the relationships of gender to class, and to race where relevant, as well as to nonheteronormative experiences, ideologies, and practices, will increase the potential contributions of the subfield to a variety of theoretical perspectives. It is important for Middle East anthropology to give more analytic attention to racialization processes, especially because scholars often sideline their importance despite the fact that these processes and the racial ideologies underlying them are evident in every country and are often a component of the construction of ethnic categories.

Modernities

Subfield analyses of modernity, modernities, and the modern have emerged in conjunction with larger disciplinary interest in excavating the constructions, meanings, and institutional projects of the modern across cultural and historical contexts.[6] The signal value of this work has been to challenge the notion that modernity both originates in and is determined by "the West," while recognizing the inescapability of entanglements with the West in shaping engagements with the modern for people in this region. These projects acquired particular urgency owing to the post–Cold War construction of the region as a threatening nonmodern other, which enabled intensified Western intervention. Works that engage with the modernity framework often focus on religion, gender, modern institutions, and/or cultural production. Other anthropologists, as well as academics beyond the subfield, often engage this scholarship, and it has been in productive dialogue with similar work on modernity in other world regions.

These examinations of modernity have drawn from a range of theoretical perspectives. South Asian, Caribbean, and African postcolonial theorists' decentering of European master narratives about history, progress, and subject-making processes and their critical eye toward the legacies of Western colonialism have been especially influential. The shift from interpretive or late structuralist approaches to poststructuralism, especially Foucault, inspired attention to the connections among history, discursive projects, and the knowledge/power nexus. Said's excavation of this nexus and how it operates in relationship to colonialism was especially important to the subfield.

The renewed visibility of religious ideologies and practices in recent decades has inspired work that grapples with the relationship of religion to modernity in non-Western and non-Christian contexts. Asad's emphasis (1993) on discourse, ethical subject-making, and institutions and his critique of Geertzian analyses of

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[6]We include multiple terms to remind readers of the debates around their analytic implications, with which modernity scholars grapple.

religion have had tremendous impact, both explicitly and implicitly. His approach was particularly influential in work on the formation of modern pious Muslim subjects (Hafez 2011, Hirschkind 2006, Mahmood 2005). Other scholarship examined how understandings and practices of modernity may be constructed through religion (Deeb 2006), how the state attempts to create modern subjects through disciplining religious practice (Schielke 2012, Starrett 1998), and how religious and scientific knowledge are coconstituted (Hamdy 2012).

Not uncoincidentally, several of these works at the intersection of Islam and modernity focus specifically on women, another area where scholarship in the subfield has taken modernity as a critical framework. Two key interventions inform the vast majority of works in the gender section below. One explores the ways that women's education, new family formations, and liberal feminism have not only shaped the experience of modernity for women, but also highlighted women's centrality to projects of modernity. Such work addresses the ways in which modern institutions and ideologies simultaneously benefit women and subject them to new forms of power. The second intervention focuses on the ways women are often positioned as bearers of tradition or barometers of modernity (Abu-Lughod 2009, Bernal 1994, Kanaaneh 2002).

Scholars also interrogate how modern forms of power are instantiated, cultivated, and negotiated via modern state institutions as well as via local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Many anthropologists examine how such institutions constitute categories of people and forms of knowledge on/through which modern disciplinary forms of power are applied and negotiated (Ali 2002, Elyachar 2005, Feldman 2008, Ghannam 2002, Starrett 1998).[7] Others working on cultural production tease out the relationships between modernisms and modernity, often taking into account modern subject-making processes vis-à-vis institutions. All these works show how cultural production is a key site for the working out of the contradictions of modernity in postcolonial societies (Abu-Lughod 2005, Armbrust 1996, Shannon 2006, Winegar 2006).

Gender

In 1989, Abu-Lughod referred to gender theory in anthropology of the region as "harem theory," (p. 287) highlighting its isolation from the rest of the subfield and its underdevelopment relative to feminist theory. Gender remains a key feature of ∼40% of the works we cite. Many of the reasons for its popularity as a topic two decades ago ring true today, including a desire to counter stereotypes about Arab and Muslim women (which have been amplified by War on Terror rhetoric) and the broader feminization of anthropology. The topical popularity of gender also reflects the welcome incorporation and desegregation of research on women more broadly. In the past decades, studies of gender have grown less isolated and now contribute to transnational feminist theory. Feminist theory has both inspired and benefited from Middle East anthropologists' analyses of the effects of colonialism and neocolonialism on women's lives and crucial interventions into liberal feminist discussions of key topics, including women's agency and violence against women.

Several long-standing themes in the anthropology of Arab-majority societies have continued to be important in gender studies of the region, with new twists. Scholars no longer treat honor as a static cultural determinant, but rather as a dynamic discursive practice related to other structures of power (Abu-Lughod 2011, Joseph 1994). Kinship is no longer simply a story of descent tracking and male power relations but is refigured in studies addressing patriarchal family formations, brother-sister relationships, family status law, and the relationship of kinship to the state (Jean-Klein 2000; Joseph 1993, 1994, 1997; Peleikis 2003; Shehada 2009; Slyomovics 2005). Research about women's sociality, morality,

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[7]Timothy Mitchell's work in this regard has served as an important inspiration.

and propriety takes larger political-economic social change into consideration (Bristol-Rhys 2010, Limbert 2010). By reanalyzing such long-standing themes, these works add to our knowledge about previously ignored women's lives. More importantly, they integrate concepts—for example, propriety, kinship, the economy, and the state—that were viewed as separate domains. In sum, work on gender now attends to power in multiple scales and forms.

We also see a strong dialogue with feminist research within and beyond anthropology. For example, Middle East anthropologists are key critics of notions of a gendered public/private divide (Hale 1996, Joseph 1997, Meneley 1996) and are analysts of how people negotiate urban public/private spaces in gendered ways (De Koning 2009, Ghannam 2011, Newcomb 2009, Winegar 2012). Transnational feminist concern about issues such as trafficking (Mahdavi 2011) and honor crimes (Abu-Lughod 2011) benefits from cogent anthropological intervention. Similarly, scholars of Sudanese and rural Egyptian women provide informed analysis of female genital cutting (FGC). Gruenbaum's (2006) well-rounded discussions of FGC in particular build on her earlier work to address political-economic reasons underlying its persistence, local organizing against the practice, and its relationship to sexuality.

The conjunction of gender studies with medical anthropology has opened another dynamic area of research. Prefigured by Morsy's (1993) analysis of sickness and healing in rural Egypt, much of this work concentrates on reproduction, paralleling broader trends in feminist medical anthropology. Inhorn's pioneering work on infertility among poor urban Egyptian women led to work on globalizing reproductive technologies in relation to local medical practices, kinship ideologies, and notions of sexual morality (Clarke 2009, Inhorn 2003). Ali's (2002) more Foucauldian approach examines how family-planning programs in Egypt create new kinds of selves in relation to the state. Kanaaneh (2002) addresses the politicization of population control through family-planning discourses among Palestinian

citizens of Israel, Israeli state policies, and Palestinian nationalist pronatalism. Moving away from reproductive health, we find research on historical campaigns to control women's health knowledge and bodily practices, whether via the medicalized interventions of colonial civilizing missions (Boddy 2007) or the limitation of women's access to sacred space under Wahhabi expansionism (Doumato 2000).

Important new areas of gender research stem from regional specificities and feminist interests in gender activism. The situation in Palestine, for example, has pushed scholars to address gender ideologies or gendered spatial practices in the context of conflict, nationalism, and violence (Abowd 2007, Hammami & Johnson 1999, Jean-Klein 2000, Kanaaneh 2002, Peteet 1991, Sayigh 1994, Wick 2011). Scholars now also pay attention to women activists, whether secular, Islamist, feminist, nationalist, or some combination thereof. Such work frequently analyzes gender activism in relation to ideologies about women's public participation and notions of agency (Al-Ali & Pratt 2009, Deeb 2006, Hafez 2011, Hale 1996).

Notwithstanding this flourishing of gender scholarship, there are surprisingly few studies of gender and development (Bernal 1994, de Regt 2007), although there are solid critiques of gendered representations in relation to international development discourses (Abu-Lughod 2009, Adely 2009) and several studies that address gendered aspects of household economies and property (Fadlalla 2007, Moors 1995, Mundy 1995). Few works focus on gender and cultural production (Abu-Lughod 2005, Goodman 2005), transnational feminisms (Hale 2009), gender and language (Hoffman 2008), or migration and labor (Mahdavi 2011).

Despite the greater use of a gender analytic in the subfield, most of these studies continue to focus on women, no doubt in reaction against previous decades of work that ignored women's lives and did not look at men's lives through a gendered lens either. The few publications on masculinity suggest that this may be changing, though masculinity has only been considered in relation to desire (Hawkins 2008), violence

and kinship (Kelly 2008, Peteet 1994), and infertility (Inhorn 2012). More work is needed to capture a fuller range of constructions and experiences of masculinity. Studies of sexuality in the region are rare, and most remain heteronormative. New work addresses queer male desire (McCormick 2011), and we anticipate future publications linking queer studies and anthropology of Arab-majority societies. Finally, whereas class is sometimes incorporated into gendered analyses of the region, race and ethnicity are generally not. Thus in three senses (women's lives as topic, heteronormative focus, and a neglect of an integrated race/class/gender approach), much gender theorizing in anthropology of the region remains isolated and underdeveloped in relation to both feminist anthropology and feminist theory more broadly.

With regard to theories of agency, however, studies of gender in the region are at the forefront of feminist theorizing. The analytic conjunction of gender with Islam has produced important critiques of liberal feminist ideas of emancipation and agency, prefigured by Peteet (1991). Most prominently, Mahmood's (2005) critique of liberal feminist notions of agency has had major reverberations outside the subfield within feminist studies and in other disciplines. Studies of the relationship of piety to subjectivity, activism, and participation in Islamic movements also challenge notions of an emancipated feminist subject (Deeb 2006, Hafez 2011). Other important foci at the gender/Islam nexus include law (Dahlgren 2010, Shehada 2009), education (Adely 2012), and shifts in generational hierarchies (Meneley 2007). Attention to the breadth of work generated in the conjunction of gender and Islam—especially that addressing activism, law, desire, education, and rights—would further enhance feminist discussions of both this nexus and Muslim women's lives.

Despite the fact that most studies of gender in the region are not foundationally related to Islam (~20% of work on Islam takes gender as its focus and vice versa), this combination has come to dominate knowledge about the subfield among non–Middle East anthropologists

and other scholars. This association of the subfield with the combination of Islam and gender is undoubtedly related to greater public interest in the status of women in the region and the use of women's liberation as justification for US military misadventures in Muslim-majority societies. Such visibility simultaneously facilitates broader disciplinary engagements for scholars who work at the gender/Islam intersection, while inadvertently reproducing the notion that "Muslim women" are representative of the region as a whole. A similar double-edged sword exists for scholarship on Islam, the second most frequently addressed topic in the anthropology of Arab-majority societies.

Islam

About one-quarter of the works we cite discuss Islam in a substantial way. The War on Terror's focus on Islam-as-enemy has prompted scholarly interest in debunking stereotypes about the religion and its practitioners and in correcting the stream of misinformation about Muslims that emanates from US corporate media and government rhetoric. Scholarly interest in Islam also stems from the Islamic revival, including the rise of various forms of political Islam or Islamic movements across the region. In this sense, anthropologists join those working on religious revivalism globally, for example on Christianity in Africa and the Pacific.

Most recent anthropological research about Islam concentrates on revivalist piety, subjectivity, and ethical ways of being in ways both inspired by and in tension with Asad's foundational discussions of religion and authoritative knowledge (1993, 2003). Indeed, piety has become the key trope through which Islam is defined. Some of this work prioritizes embodied practice as a process of ethical self-making, providing significant insight into the interweaving of subjectivity, piety, agency, authoritative knowledge, and the senses (Hirschkind 2006, Mahmood 2005). Other scholars are beginning to critique this model, arguing that it tends to isolate religion from other aspects of life, requires more

ethnographic depth, centers mainly on the urban-middle/upper-middle classes, and, most critically, assumes religiosity as coherent and uniformly dominant. They call alternate attention to the multifaceted and intensely socially embedded nature of subjectivity, embodiment, and moralities (Deeb & Harb 2012, Hafez 2011, Pandolfo 2007, Schielke 2009). Varisco (2005) has also called for more ethnographic attention to religion within social worlds, in a critical response to Geertz's representations of Islam different from that of Asad (1993).

Asad's notion of Islam as a "discursive tradition"—when understood as highlighting the relationships among institutions, texts, histories, communities, and everyday experiences and practices—also informs recent discussions of Muslim publics, modernity, and forms of knowledge in useful ways that highlight the complex interplay between piety and authority (Agrama 2010a, Deeb 2006, Mittermaier 2011). The focus on institutional forms of authoritative knowledge also undergirds work addressing law as well as youth and education (Adely 2012, Starrett 1998) in ways prefigured by Eickelman's (1992) earlier article on Islamic knowledge and mass education in the Arab world. Several strong recent works on fatwas, personal status law, and shari'a courts provide important insights into the connections among personal, religious, legal, and institutional authority (Agrama 2010a, Clarke 2009, Dahlgren 2010, Messick 1996, Rosen 1995, Shehada 2009).

Most of this research understandably centers on urban and revivalist forms of Islamic practice because these have become hegemonic throughout the region. These studies provide crucial insight into the relationship of middle-class or elite urban populations to revivalist processes and to broader religious and social change. Few scholars, however, focus on nonhegemonic, especially provincial or rural, practices that may not fit completely within revivalist ideas (notable exceptions include Boddy 1989, El-Aswad 2002, Mittermaier 2011, Schielke 2012). Given that many Arab-majority countries continue to have relatively high illiteracy rates and rural populations, neglect of practices that may be in tension with dominant forms amounts to a significant omission. Treatments of ritual have also narrowed such that it is generally addressed in relation to revivalist self-disciplining or opposition to nonauthenticated practice. The current configuration of research on Islam also lends itself to assumptions of homogeneity. Egypt is often taken as the defining site for revivalist forms of knowledge and practice, which may dilute our understanding of differences in these movements related to various sectarian and national histories.

In addition to paying more attention to Islamic ideologies and practice across classes and regional geographies, anthropologists should push their analyses of religion in the region beyond the dominant paradigms. It is noteworthy that little anthropological work exists on Christians or other religious minorities in the region (one exception is Shenoda 2012). Such scholarship would disrupt assumptions about Sunni Islam as universally representative. One can also examine transnational circulations of religious commodities and of people on pilgrimages (Pinto 2007, Starrett 1995). Research on Sufis and saint veneration offers other perspectives on power and subjectivity, as well as on the tensions between revivalist and other conceptions of Islam (Hammoudi 1997, Mittermaier 2011, Reeves 1995, Scheele 2007, Schielke 2012). Work on new kinship formations (Bargach 2002, Clarke 2009) and medical/health concerns (Doumato 2000, Hamdy 2012, Spadola 2009) productively takes up the convergence of religion with these topical trends in the subfield. Islam will, and should, remain an important area of research for anthropology of Arab-majority societies, in keeping with the interests of many of our interlocutors as well as broader geopolitical and anthropological trends.

Nationalism and the State

A rich new area of scholarship examines nationalism and the state, particularly in Egypt, Palestine, and the Gulf. Indeed, most works

on these locations often concentrate on these topics, perhaps because Egypt has the largest state apparatus in the region and a particularly intense history of developmentalist interventions, Palestine persists in an anticolonial nationalist struggle for a sovereign nation-state, and Gulf monarchies are relatively unique forms of rule globally with rentier economies. Such analyses reflect disciplinary interest in how the nation is constructed, experienced, and represented in everyday life, including through engagement with visual, discursive, and material culture. They also reflect interest in the role of the state in disciplinary processes (especially related to gender, ethnicity, and class) and the ways that state power and practices are shifting in relation to neoliberal globalization. Most scholars examine nationalism and the state as coconstitutive. For example, research on citizenship, mobility, and sovereignty nearly always examines nationalism as a part of these processes. Work on governmentality, bureaucracy, and NGOs engages less with questions of nationalism, reminding us that nation and state are separate analytic categories that should nonetheless be held in productive tension with one another.

Egypt, Palestine, and the Gulf inspire the most work on nationalism and/or the state but with different topical foci. Anthropologists examine how the Egyptian state tries to manage, suppress, or discipline religious activity or how people engage state projects vis-à-vis religious practice (Agrama 2010b, Hirschkind 2006, Starrett 1998), as well as how nationalism and the state are constituted through cultural production/consumption (Abu-Lughod 2005, Armbrust 1996, Winegar 2006). Palestine anthropologists focus on how Israeli state structures and practices curtail Palestinian mobility, sovereignty, and citizenship and shape Palestinian nationalism (Abowd 2007; Bowman 2007; Jean-Klein 2000; Kanaaneh 2002, 2008; Sa'ar 1998). Gulf anthropologists critically examine the legal structures governing citizenship and migrants' lives and mobility and their effects on nationalism (Gardner 2010, Longva 1997, Mahdavi 2011, Nagy 2000). It is curious

that few studies on these topics exist elsewhere; one of the most notable exceptions is Shryock's (1997) analysis of the relationship of Jordanian state nationalism to tribal historical narratives. Considering this work together suggests that we should expand our approaches to nationalism and the state by reading outside of country contexts to see how insights from one might be fruitful in another.

Future research should explore how state power is reproduced, subjectivated, or resisted in practice in state institutions themselves, rather than just assuming coherent state projects via analysis of state discourses. Feldman's (2008) examination of bureaucratic work and its materiality is one example of such inquiry. Other innovative work reminds us to think more about the absence or margins of the state, when it breaks down or cedes responsibility for some areas of society as the result of wars, sectarianism, neoliberalism, or sovereignty struggles (Elyachar 2005, Kosmatopoulos 2011, Obeid 2010). There appears to be less work on development than in other world regions, a notable lacuna given long-standing regional rhetorics and forms of state development, the recent efflorescence of development NGOs and microcredit, an influx of Western development money after 9/11, and the United Nations' problematic framings of what it calls "Arab human development." Additional new lines of research to follow include gender/health-development projects (Ali 2002, de Regt 2007); historical and contemporary links among gender, capitalism, and development (Bernal 1994); urban planning (Kanna 2011, Nagy 2000, Totah 2009); NGOs and governmentality (de Cesari 2010, Elyachar 2005); and the connections among international aid, local bureaucracies, and applied anthropology (Chatty 1996, de Regt 2007). Finally, the existence of migrant and diaspora communities in most Arab-majority countries and the lack of state sovereignty in Palestine serve as opportunities to analyze further the relationships between nation and state, and nation and geography. Nationalism and the state should remain major areas of inquiry,

especially in this era of popular uprisings and global financial crisis, when nationalisms are reinvigorated/reframed and states are facing new challenges to their legitimacy, sovereignty, and economic solvency.

Cultural Production and Consumption

There is now a rich body of scholarship on cultural production, which reflects its emergence as a popular topic in anthropology, especially as a part of capitalist globalization processes. Whereas poetry, songs, and storytelling in un-mass-mediated, often rural, and nonelite contexts have unfortunately received less attention of late, scholars now examine film, video, television, radio, recorded music, and art worlds, taking commodification and global cultural and technological circuits as key elements of analysis. Several frames dominate: regional/global circulations of art forms and mass media (Bishara 2008, Goodman 2005, Shannon 2003), the production of nationalist modernities and modern subjects (Abu-Lughod 2005, Armbrust 1996, Furani 2008, Salamandra 2004, Scheid 2009, Shannon 2006, Winegar 2006), the relationship between aesthetics and the senses (Allen 2009, Miller 2007), and governance and authority (de Cesari 2010, Miller 2007).[8]

Most of these works consider consumption of cultural production, and consumption studies have multiplied in response to the spread of global media technologies, increases in migration, shifts in social class formations, and the rise of tourism studies in anthropology. Drawing on a classic anthropological theme, these scholars often focus on how people construct distinction through their consumption practices. Yet they do so by addressing the intensification of consumer logics as neoliberalism has spread, and they also consider the concomitant facilitation of new forms of distinction. Three approaches stand out. The first

connects consumption with space, including sites of consumption (e.g., malls, coffee shops) and changing notions of the public/private (de Koning 2009; Meneley 1996, 2007; Peterson 2010); how people's movement (e.g., through migration, shopping trips) influences consumption and modes of distinction, sometimes via the manipulation of space back home (Forte 2001, McMurray 2001); and links between consumption, urban preservation, and heritage (Kuppinger 1998, Salamandra 2004, Totah 2009). The second approach sees tourism as intimately tied to the creation of commodified notions of nation and history (Kuppinger 1998, Salamandra 2004, Shryock 2004, Wynn 2007), sexuality (McCormick 2011, Wynn 2007), and religion (Pinto 2007). Finally, anthropologists are attending to how religious media reshape communities and knowledge production (Hirschkind 2006, Moll 2010, Starrett 1995). Starrett's early theorizing on religious commodities, especially their political economy and materiality, and Hirschkind's and Moll's attention to consumption and the sensorium, contain seeds for future research. As with other topics, consumption is usually examined in urban middle-class communities. Expanding this scope, as the work of Abu-Lughod (2005), Ghannam (2002), and McMurray (2001) suggests, will foster greater understanding of how consumer logics overlay or chafe against other social values and forms of community. All this work shows the centrality of cultural production and consumption to unraveling the main challenges and tensions of social life in contexts of intensifying capitalist logics.

Violence

Violence forms the backdrop for anthropologists who work in Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq, several of whom go further to address violence as an integral part of their work, linking it to abiding scholarly themes in ways that offer new perspectives on them. In this vein, scholars have analyzed narratives of violent events as both constitutive of and constituted by social relations (Gilsenan 1996, Hage

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[8]See also the essays in the special issue of *Visual Anthropology* edited by Walter Armbrust in 1998.

2009), the impact of violence on women's lives (Al-Ali & Pratt 2009), and how violence reconfigures space (Al-Mohammad 2007, Allen 2008, Bornstein 2002, Monroe 2011, Peteet 2005, Sawalha 2010). Scholarship on activism and resistance is another key theme in this area, as anthropologists provide cultural rereadings of violent resistance against the Israeli occupation (Abufarha 2009) and examine nonviolent forms of social and political activism (Hermez 2011, Peteet 1991).

New approaches to violence examine its routinization (Allen 2008, Kelly 2008) and relationship to constructions of masculinity (Peteet 1994). Because anthropologists are aware of the difficulties of writing about and experiencing war and occupation with one's interlocutors, witnessing is a powerful theme in these writings. Although some anthropologists reflect sensitively on fieldwork in and writing about violent conflict (Caton 2005), more frequently witnessing takes on overt political meaning, especially in situations that are mis- or underreported in the US media, namely the US invasion and occupation of Iraq (Al-Ali & Pratt 2009; Al-Mohammad 2007, 2010), the Israeli occupation of Palestine (Abufarha 2009, Allen 2008, Bornstein 2002, Peteet 1994), and the Israeli invasions of Lebanon (Hage 2009, Hermez 2011). Whether explicitly or not, writing about US and Israeli state violence against one's interlocutors becomes a political act.

Memory/History

Memory/history is another newly rich topic, prefigured by Webber's (1991) research on memory work in Tunisia. Some anthropologists bring ethnographic methodologies and insights into social history when writing historical ethnographies on myriad topics, including British colonialism in the Sudan (Boddy 2007), Wahhabi conquest of the Arabian peninsula (Doumato 2000), centuries of Hadrami migration across the Indian ocean (Ho 2006), French colonial legal interventions in Morocco (Hoffman 2010), mandate-era governing practices in Gaza (Feldman 2008), and the transnational construction of taste in mandate-era Lebanon (Scheid 2009). Others interrogate the relationships among memory, memorialization, oral histories, and historiography (Davis 2011, Sayigh 1994, Shryock 1997, Swedenberg 1995).

Contests over memory and history and the often fraught relationship of memory to "official" historical discourse are significant arenas of research. Shryock (1997) suggests that the impulse among Jordan's tribes to write history must be understood as a response to nationalist historical discourse. Several works on Palestine emphasize struggles over historical representation as articulated through memory, nationalist, and Zionist discourses, including Swedenberg's (1995) analysis of competing representations of the 1936–1939 peasant revolt, Slyomovics's (1998) discussion of Jewish and Arab constructions of memories of place through narrative and material culture, and Davis's (2011) ethnography about how Palestinians understand and write the histories of their villages of origin. Scholarship on memory in Palestine also highlights everyday forms of commemorative practice (Davis 2011) or memory's inscription into landscape (Peteet 2005), a thematic link also important in work on memorialization in postwar Lebanon (Sawalha 2010, Volk 2010).

In places where contestations of memory/history are less obvious, scholars examine a wide range of issues, including experiences of temporality in a context of rapid change produced by oil wealth (Limbert 2010), memory in relation to dreams and subjectivity (Pandolfo 1997), memoirs of disappearance and torture in recent Moroccan history (Slyomovics 2005), and how elites employ acts of memory-making to alleviate their loss of status (vom Bruck 2005). As interest in the history-memory nexus continues in anthropology, new work bridging the thematic emphases of different locations may highlight contestations over history/memory in places where it is less expected and may shed new light on how war, violence, and revolution are experienced and commemorated.

EMERGING AREAS AND LACUNAE

Emerging topical and theoretical interests that will push the subfield toward new directions include race/ethnicity, embodiment, space/mobility, science and technology, emotion, youth, secularism, and law. Research on these topics has been motivated by broader theoretical shifts within anthropology, scholarly political commitments, critiques internal to Middle East studies, and changing political and economic conditions, agendas, and events in the region.

Studies of constructions of race/ethnicity, racialization processes, and racialized social hierarchies constitute a small but important topic. In Morocco, Boum (2010) and Levy (2000) examine how Jews become ethnicized, and Ilahiane (2004) shows how Berber, Arab, and Haratine (black) ethnicities are constructed through agricultural practices. Others analyze how Berber ethnicities are politicized in ways that create raced and gendered notions of homeland (Goodman 2005, Hoffman 2008, Silverstein 2011). Fabos (2008), Fadlalla (2007), and Smith (2009) discuss how ethnic minorities in Egypt and the Sudan are racialized and how they construct identity by making women the bearers of authenticity. Gulf scholars examine how migrants and ex-slaves are racialized and ethnicized via legal systems, the built environment, histories of transnational connection, and interpretations of rapid social change (Chatty 2010, Gardner 2010, Kanna 2011, Limbert 2010, Longva 1997, Nagy 1998).

Notably, it remains unusual for Middle East scholars to consider these issues unless they work directly with populations understood as racial/ethnic minorities, such as Asian or sub-Saharan African migrants, Berbers, or Nubians. Such a perspective could be productively expanded to countries beyond North Africa and the Gulf. It could also be useful to understanding many other situations of structural hierarchies and stereotyping, as in recent research about the racialization of Palestinians through the built environment (Rabinowitz 1997).

Anthropologists could also investigate racialization processes among Arabs, e.g., how Syrians in Lebanon or southerners in Egypt are racialized via phenotypical or linguistic assumptions and stereotypes, or how religious minorities, including Chaldean, Maronite, and other Christian groups, are figured as "ethnic." This is one area where anthropology of Arab-majority societies lags behind the discipline and where it could benefit from engagement with critical race theory. We caution against any simplistic application of theoretical paradigms of race developed from other geographic and historical contexts. At the same time, more attention to racialization processes in the Middle East will bring new questions to anthropological theorizing about race and ethnicity more generally. Scholars should maintain a critical tension between our analytic categories and local practices/categories; often there is no local category of race and/or no acknowledgment of racialization processes. It is still crucial, however, to pay ethnographic attention to the role (sometimes hidden or denied) that racial ideologies and categories may play in the constitution of difference.

Research on the body and embodiment—in relation to ritual, colonial, and/or modern projects to shape the body, and movement and temporality—suggests promising new directions, many prefigured by Boddy (1989). In different ways, Peteet (1994) and Mahmood (2005) examine how embodied ritual (e.g., torture of male Palestinians and prayer among female Egyptians) works to create gendered moral selves. Mahmood, Hirschkind (2006), and Hamdy (2012) explore the connections between Islamic ethics and modern forms of power as they shape embodied subjectivities as well as notions of the body itself. Ali (2002) and Boddy (2007) focus on how modern forms of power control women's bodies via "civilizing" medical interventions. Exciting new studies rework Bourdieu's theories of embodiment to reveal complex relationships among inherited/cultivated bodily practices and space/mobility, class, gender, and temporality (Elyachar 2011, Ghannam 2011).

Studies that examine space are opening new ways to understand exclusions and social group formation. Ho (2006) and Pinto (2007) examine transnational community-making via religious or kin-based movement. Ghannam (2002), McMurray (2001), and Peleikis (2003) show how transnational migration reshapes class, gender, and community back home. Monroe (2011) and Kuppinger (1998, 2004) examine how urban spatial organization creates class enclaves and hierarchies in Lebanon and Egypt, respectively. Many scholars explore the Israeli state's power by attending to its manipulation of space, and specifically restrictions on Palestinian mobility and practices of ethnic enclaving (Abowd 2007, Bornstein 2002, Bowman 2007, Rabinowitz 1997, Wick 2011). Future work could pay more attention to the intensifying practices of security and surveillance in relation to space in the region, for example in refugee camps, migrant worker camps, virtual spaces, gated communities, postconflict cities, and public space more generally.

Contrasting with popular media depictions of angry Arab men, scholars have also begun to explore the connection between emotion and political subjectivity in ways that bear further scrutiny. Abu-Lughod (2005) built on earlier work on sentiment among the Bedouin to examine how television melodrama constructs individuated national subjects. Focusing on boredom, exasperation, and the ordinary, Allen (2008, 2009), Kelly (2008), and Winegar (2012) underscore the relationship between affect and how people stage political claims or acquire political agency. Al-Mohammed's work in Iraq (2007) connects bodily processes and shame with people's experiences of state-sponsored violence, Pandolfo's (2007) discussion of Moroccan youth's experiences of despair integrates an analysis of religious subjectivity with a psychoanalytic model, and Hage (2009) reflects on emotions shared between anthropologists and their subjects, in his case hatred of Israeli state violence. Moving away from negative emotions, Schielke looks at joy in saint celebrations (2012) and conflicting desires for love and piety (2009), and Deeb & Harb (2012) consider leisure and

fun. There is still little research on love, an emotion with extraordinary elaboration in regional popular culture.

Anthropologists are now turning their attention to Arab youth, partly as a result of new interest in youth in the broader discipline. For the most part, these scholars maintain a critical stance toward the construction of youth as a category in scholarly and political discourses and projects. Youth and their interpellation as a category are a key aspect of many of the works discussed in earlier sections, including those on Islam, education, and emotion. Significant new approaches include explorations of how youth reorient space through religious and leisure practices and negotiate different moral aspirations (Deeb & Harb 2012, Meneley 2007, Schielke 2009), how youth negotiate demands for authenticity and cosmopolitanism (Peterson 2010), and the construction of youth as a category in development projects (Sukarieh & Tannok 2008). Starrett (1998) and Peterson (2010) turn needed attention to youth material culture. No doubt the current international fascination with Arab youth and their visibility in the ongoing uprisings will foster much future research in this area, but it will need to develop strong approaches to youth (perhaps drawing on theories of generations) to avoid the thinness that characterizes media frenzy on the topic.

Attention to Islamic revivals has reinvigorated concern with the secular and secularism. Work that addresses feminism and gender activists in relation to both Islamism and the state provided an early challenge to the assumed dichotomy between Islamist and secularist ideologies and practices (Al-Ali 2000, Hale 1996). Criticism of this assumed dichotomy has continued in analyses of the inseparability of religion and secularism in Islamic women activists' subjectivities (Hafez 2011), the piety movement's focus on reforming "popular" rather than secular practices (Elyachar 2011), and shared notions of modernity underlying Islamist and secularist responses to mulid festivals (Schielke 2012). Other work explicitly builds on Asad's (2003) call for anthropological study of secularisms and the secular as a

category in its own right. Such investigations analyze law to show how secularism's power actually derives from its blurring of religion and politics (Agrama 2010b) and poetry to reveal the secular-modern relationship (Furani 2008). Few of these studies provide ethnographic insight into how secularism is lived and experienced (exceptions are Al-Ali and Hafez), and the vast majority focus on Egypt (exceptions are Furani and Hale). Starrett's (2010) critique of recent scholarship on secularism highlights the weaknesses of using secularism as an analytic concept, rather than one that is produced and contested in social life.

The emergence of law and human rights as exciting topics of research is revealed in the aforementioned investigations of Islamic legal systems, family law, and their intersection with modern forms of power. More research is needed, along the lines of Hoffman (2010) or Messick (1996), to see how different legal systems interacted historically and how social actors negotiate(d) changes in the legal sphere. Another vibrant line of inquiry critiques the way that contemporary legal systems, particularly those concerned with rights, actually create/reproduce mechanisms of exclusion (Kelly 2006, Longva 1997). Other work directly examines human rights discourse, prefigured by Kevin Dwyer's early work on local variation in human rights. New scholarship focuses on performances of human rights by activists and detainees (Slyomovics 2005) and is increasingly interested in viewing human rights, humanitarianism, and international aid as part of a globalized regime of power deeply embedded in state politics (Abu-Lughod 2011, Allen 2009, Fassin 2008, Feldman 2007, Gabiam 2012).

In part as a result of the War on Terror, several anthropologists, including ourselves, have criticized global/Western discourses about the Middle East, Islam, and/or Arabs and have provided influential anthropological perspectives on Western discursive formations and practices (e.g., Asad 1993, 2003; Hirschkind & Mahmood 2002; Ho 2004). Other anthropologists deconstruct representations of the region and its inhabitants by examining how people use and manipulate notions of culture on the ground (Bishara 2003, Peutz 2011; see also essays in the winter 2009 issue of *Review of Middle East Studies*). Diaspora scholars also break bounded notions of culture by highlighting how diaspora politics and social relations shape those in homelands (Hale 2009, Ho 2006, Silverstein 2011).

We end by calling attention to a number of lacunae in anthropologies of Arab-majority societies, areas that are unexpectedly anemic even though they are important in the broader discipline or to the social lives of people in the region. These include finance, sports, environment, and labor movements. Initial writing on the Internet (spearheaded by Jon Anderson, Dale Eickelman, and Daniel Varisco) suggests that more research is needed to elucidate how it changes knowledge–power relations and shapes social activism and community-making. There are notably fewer works on language compared with other world regions (exceptions include Caton 1990, Goodman 2005, Haeri 2003, Hoffman 2008, Miller 2007, Peterson 2010, Riskedahl 2011), given that this is a disciplinary subfield. Although analyses of infertility have begun to incorporate insights from science and technology studies (STS) and Hamdy (2012) goes further to integrate STS, bioethics, and Islamic ethics, STS has yet to inform anthropology of the region adequately. There is a significant gap in our knowledge of how global technologies and science practices and ideologies are locally constituted. The intersection of queer studies and anthropology of the region is nascent, and we look forward to future ethnographic work on nonheteronormative practices, ideologies, and identities that focuses on both urban and rural areas and includes both self-defined queer communities and individuals and those for whom Western categories of sexuality are largely meaningless. Given historical associations of the region with exoticism and the difficulties of such research on the ground, researchers will have to tread carefully, but the benefits to feminist and queer theory and to ethnography will be great. The interest in

urban-middle-class life that has dominated the past decades has turned us away from developing analyses of how people handle extreme immiseration (but see Crawford 2008, Fadlalla 2007, Peutz 2011). Last, several new topical areas within anthropology have yet to take root substantially in the subfield, though we anticipate and hope that they will in coming years. These include multispecies and animal studies, disability (but see Kisch 2008), natural disasters, resource management and sustainability (including the natural environment and infrastructure), corporations, postsocialist perspectives, and, of course, revolution. As we go to press, journals such as *American Ethnologist*, *Cultural Anthropology*, and *Nations and Nationalism* have begun publishing anthropological work on the revolutions.[9]

We anticipate that many of these lacunae will be addressed soon, as some are currently being researched by graduate students who are poised to change the anthropology of Arab-majority societies once again. With greater attention to these research topics and theoretical tensions, the subfield has the potential to play a major role in shaping anthropology more generally. Insights gained from such an endeavor could also have a crucial effect on how Arab-majority societies come to be represented in scholarship and beyond. This is especially important if we are to advocate more complex understandings of the region and its communities—especially understandings that are not open to co-optation, intended or otherwise, within the logics of global capital and war.

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[9]One can also find excellent anthropological analyses of the ongoing uprisings via online e-zines, including Al-Jazeera English, Jadaliyya, and Middle East Report.

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