CHAPTER **1**

Enduring Concerns, Resilient Tropes, and New Departures: Reading the *Companion*

Deniz Kandiyoti

The reader perusing this volume will not fail to be struck by the dizzying array of topics, themes, and approaches characterizing the anthropology of the Middle East in the opening decade of the twenty-first century. Initially identified with the study of bounded cultures, the anthropological enterprise has become increasingly expansive, extending its reach to diverse manifestations of globalization. This expansive thrust now subsumes the study of phenomena such as neo-liberalism, development, humanitarianism, social movements, new media and cyberspace, popular culture, transnationalism, migration, forced displacement, and diasporas—all featured in the chapters to follow—within the remit of anthropological enquiry.

The breadth of this remit inevitably mandates a (possibly salutary) blurring of disciplinary boundaries. How do anthropologists of the state, for instance, manage not only to survive but to thrive on the established turf of political science? How do ethnographic sensibilities inflect and illuminate the ways in which we approach phenomena studied by political economists, legal scholars, sociologists, or, indeed, historians? The same questions apply to the fields of art and aesthetics, popular culture, poetry, biomedicine, urbanism, and many others. Does it come down to a question of methodology (assuming there is some agreement about the methods that characterize the field)? Or does it come down to remaining anchored in recognizable canons of the discipline (although these are also shifting, as Altorki reminds us in her comprehensive discussion of the important questions of structure and agency in Chapter 3)? I would like to suggest that, despite their diversity, the contributors to this volume are engaged in an ongoing conversation about how to do anthropology in the Middle East. They all

share preoccupations—some more explicitly articulated, and others more implicit—about the conditions of knowledge production, the choice of paradigms, and the methodologies that characterize anthropological enquiry.

It is not my intention to reprise or evaluate successive attempts at stock-taking of the state of play in the anthropology of the Middle East (Fernea and Malarkey 1975; Abu-Lughod 1989; Deeb and Winegar 2012), nor to comment on the field at large, but rather to tease out the enduring concerns that permeate the treatment of seemingly disparate themes in this volume and to identify both productive openings and the points at which theory risks congealing into conventional wisdoms that may inadvertently limit our field of vision.

TROUBLED LEGACIES: KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

No social science or humanities discipline has been more explicitly—or vocally—preoccupied about the grounds of its own existence than the anthropology of the Middle East—and for good reason. Involvement of European powers—France and Great Britain in particular—in colonial expansion from the eighteenth century onward, their encroachment on Ottoman lands throughout the nineteenth century until the demise of the empire, and their continuing grip up to decolonization after World War II have meant that knowledge of the languages and cultures of subject populations remained central to the arsenal of imperial governance. The various European schools of "Oriental studies" (with their distinct French, German, and British variants) harnessed academic knowledge, sometimes of remarkable erudition, to the task of consolidating spheres of influence and administering dependencies.[1] If the missionary was one of the key figures of the Spanish conquest of the Americas, the trained administrator was certainly an important player in the Middle East and North Africa.

Little wonder then, as Steve Caton points out in Chapter 4, that anthropology was the discipline that was most vulnerable to the Saidean critique of Orientalism (1978) and most painfully conscious of its potential collusion with centers of imperial power.[2] This "original sin" has not only haunted the discipline and its vexed politics of representation (a matter not necessarily remedied by the inclusion of a growing number of "native" anthropologists based either in Western academe or in universities in their own countries or regions), but has also fuelled passionate debates on the nature and effects of colonial encounters, post-coloniality, modernity, liberalism, secularism, and, more recently, neo-liberalism. These broader debates (drawing upon philosophy, history, metaphysics, comparative literature, and hermeneutics, among others) act as a meta-narrative that cuts across various sub-fields of anthropology and informs numerous contributions to this volume, whether they are dealing with law (Chapter 18), history (Chapter 22), biomedicine (Chapter 11), gender (Chapter 9), sexuality (Chapter 8), urbanism (Chapter 23), development (Chapter 19), religion (Chapter 7), political economy (Chapter 20), humanitarianism (Chapter 14), or aesthetics (Chapter 5).

The question of when and how the "colonial gaze" turned upon itself, putting its own discourses, institutional practices, and apparatuses of power at the center of anthropological enquiry, is undoubtedly important. However, a few words may first be in order about the material conditions of knowledge production that act as the backdrop to the intertwined histories of the fields of "area studies" and the anthropology of the Middle East.

The moment of decolonization in the aftermath of World War II coincided with the period of Cold War rivalry between the superpowers. This is generally assumed to have prompted the institutionalization of an infrastructure for "area studies" in the United States, although more nuanced accounts of these beginnings suggest a more complex history (see Mitchell 2002). This infrastructure, aptly described by Suad Joseph in Chapter 2, was consolidated through the Title VI of the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which launched the National Resource Centers for area studies, and the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961, which funded doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships. The influx of federal funding—reaching its peak in the 1970s—contributed significantly to the growth of research on the Middle East, and anthropology was among the beneficiary disciplines.

At its best, area studies served to "deparochialize" US and Eurocentric social sciences, but it also created tensions with disciplines over intellectual agendas and resources. Nonetheless, up until the fall of the Berlin Wall, area studies remained an established and well-resourced large-scale interdisciplinary project in the United States and across numerous European universities.[3] A prolonged crisis was triggered by the end of the Cold War, which occasioned a thorough "rethinking" about the utility of and need for area studies. This translated into declining Title VI funding and the diversion of resources into new international studies programs and initiatives. The advent of an apparently unipolar post-Cold War order gave impetus to the ascendance of the globalization paradigm and led to a reconfiguring of research priorities and initiatives. Yet, as Shami and Godoy-Anativia (2007) argued, the impetus toward internationalization that marked institutional debates of the 1990s was profoundly undermined by the 9/11 attacks in 2001. The most visible fallout was undoubtedly felt in the field of Middle East studies, which became the target of political attacks, especially from neoconservative quarters, both in terms of its intellectual agendas and its inability to foresee and account for key developments with implications for US security.[4] The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the unresolved Palestine–Israel conflict, the continuing fallout of the Arab uprisings, the ongoing wars in Syria and Iraq—all contribute to an inimical conjuncture for field-based scholarship. One of the most serious costs of this conjuncture has been a securitization agenda that now conjoins the study of Muslim diasporas and Islam with that of terrorism and radicalization, potentially placing anthropologists in invidious positions either as adjunct security experts or as spokespeople and apologists for Islamic communities and movements. In brief, the anthropology of the Middle East is currently faced with numerous challenges that necessarily influence knowledge production and the choice of paradigms and research methodologies.

POST-AREA STUDIES SCHOLARSHIP: SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Lest we conclude too hastily that anthropologists of the Middle East are operating in a bleak landscape of polarized discourses and deteriorating fieldwork access (a reality that may entrench textual and discourse analysis as a method of necessity, if not of choice), it is important to recognize the numerous productive avenues and areas of strength. The move away from area studies has encouraged a radical rethinking of the boundaries of the field, or the move to what Suad Joseph (Chapter 2) calls the "unbounding" of the Middle East. This is most evident in the anthropology of Middle Eastern diasporas (thoughtfully surveyed by Paul Silverstein in Chapter 15), with its

focus on transnational formations and territorialized modes of cultural belonging. This work, at its best, offers a capacious sense of culture where the movement of ideas, styles, and idioms finally transcend the categories of Self vs. Other.

Historical work on the "anthropology of mobility" has been key to reimagining the notion of "regions" and cultures. Engseng Ho's (2007) work, analyzed in detail in Chapter 3 by Soraya Altorki, represents an emblematic text that combines a focus on multiple sites (Hadramawt in southern Arabia, the Indian subcontinent, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and China, and back again to Hadramawt) over a time span of five centuries, illustrating how the diasporic was always intrinsic to the local.[5] Historical anthropology also enables a focus on groups and communities that elude both colonial categories and the majoritarian logic of the nation-state. Hakem Al Rustom (Chapter 22) shows, for instance, how focusing on Anatolian Armenians unsettles the boundaries between the Balkans and the Middle East in post-Ottoman lands, inevitably blurring the borders and expanding the boundaries of ethnographic inquiry. Ignored histories such as those that are traced through life stories, oral narratives, memories, songs, and other immaterial "archives" can serve to contest the colonial and nationalist construction of the "Middle East" since they bring to the foreground the social and political relations with peoples beyond that region. Without these openings, anthropology could fall into the trap of reproducing the nationalist bias of reading back history from the vantage point of ideologies that homogenize the nation and render minority populations invisible. The relative lack of attention to inter-communal interactions, mixed populations, and ethnic and religious minorities are indicative of these biases. More works on collective memory based on combinations of archival material, oral histories, musical traditions, culinary and material cultures, and ethnography would restore their full richness and complexity to Middle Eastern cultures that are often emaciated when apprehended through the limiting lenses of nationalism and Islam.

Working from the "margins" is clearly an important asset for anthropologists of the Middle East. Amira Mittermaier (Chapter 6), for instance, suggests that, as fields of inquiry, "dreams and visions can help us think beyond national, regional, confessional, and secular/religious dividing lines as they tend to exceed linear space and time and draw attention to in-between-ness" (p. 110). If dreams and miracles are understood as spaces for "meaning-making, negotiation, and (re)imagining," they can certainly lead us to a richer language to talk about politics and utopia. Likewise, rethinking what counts as politics through the unexpected medium of poetry (Chapter 10) opens up promising and creative avenues of defining the political. In this vein, the "refugee camp" appears to be an excellent space from which to engage with concepts such as citizenship and sovereignty. As Dawn Chatty illustrates in Chapter 13, anthropological studies on refugees and forced displacement gave rise to pathbreaking debates on deterritorialization, liminality, and belonging. Finally, the "spatial turn" in the anthropology of the Middle East, presented by Kamran Asdar Ali in Chapter 23, appears to provide an excellent point of entry for an engagement with the complexities of global neo-liberalism and its effects on local space-making and cultural production. This field has been uniquely successful at integrating political economy with the study of culture and also reaches across to works on gender, poverty, collective memory, and social movements.

Close attention to the apparently mundane aspects of everyday life is what injects dynamism and creativity into the numerous fields of the anthropology of the Middle

East and what makes practitioners of other disciplines gravitate toward its methods. One may recall, for instance, how the minutely observed coping mechanisms of *sha'bi* Cairenes in popular quarters by a political scientist (Diane Singerman in *Avenues of Participation*) led the way to a new approach to state power and resistance to it. These insights were further elaborated upon by Asef Bayat's *Life as Politics*, giving us his seminal concepts of "quiet encroachment" and "non-movements." These, in turn, became insights that anthropologists of social movements in the Middle East drew upon in their analyses of the Arab uprisings (see Chapter 17). Salwa Ismail (2006a) has also been fully alert to the need to attend to the everyday lives of micro-level actors (in *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters*) in order to make sense of their insertion into the broader political field in Egypt. Indeed, what makes anthropological explorations of the state (Chapter 21) so compelling is their ability to unpack the notion of the state, to attend to "the intimate spaces in which the state comes to life" (p. 447). Interestingly, while ethnographic methods made significant inroads into numerous social science disciplines, some anthropologists were dismissing insistence on ethnography as an instance of "empiricism" and "fetishization of everyday life" (see Chapter 7). It is worth reflecting on the meaning and implications of these bifurcations.

THE POWER OF PARADIGMS AND THE PLACE OF ETHNOGRAPHY

I alluded earlier to a key moment in the anthropology of the Middle East when the "colonial gaze" turned upon itself, placing the discourses, institutions, and practices of the West at the center of anthropological enquiry. Following Said's *Orientalism*, there were several important scholarly interventions that consolidated a powerful paradigm that now acts as a template for the treatment of a variety of sub-themes in the anthropology of the Middle East. Timothy Mitchell's *Colonising Egypt* (1988), for instance, took on the task of "anthropologizing" the nature of modern orders through the ingenious device of "provincializing" nineteenth-century Europe and analyzing it much as the Orientalists had done with the cultures of the Middle East. His approach extended Foucault's and Said's modes of enquiry to an analysis of the colonial shaping of institutional arenas such as modern schooling, the creation of a modern army, the regimentation of rural Egypt, urban planning, and public health, placing the modern practices of ordering, disciplining, and enframing under the microscope. The field of post-colonial studies, more generally, led to sophisticated analyses of modernity that had a profound effect on the anthropology of the Middle East across all fields of enquiry.

Asad, in his *Genealogies of Religion* (1993), took issue with the then fashionable insistence on the agency and creativity of the non-European world in the name of cultural autonomy and proposed instead a historical anthropology that takes the cultural hegemony of the West as its object of inquiry. Having done so, however, he also refused to reduce other traditions to epiphenomena of the expanding influence of the post-Enlightenment West. More specifically, he argued that orthodox Islamic criticism must be understood with reference to its own discursive logic, emanating from a different tradition than that of the post-Enlightenment West. He set himself the complex task of theorizing both the effectivity of the West and the simultaneous existence of traditions of reason and political debate emanating from "non-Enlightenment societies" (ibid., p. 207). Here, again, the distinction between the West (and its legacies of secularism and liberalism) and "non-Enlightenment societies" remains crucial.

Since, in Mittermaier's terms, "an openness to engaging with other modes of reasoning and imagining" is key to the anthropological endeavor, it is easy to see why Asad's concept of Islam as a "discursive tradition" had an extraordinarily productive life. The anthropology of Islam, meticulously surveyed by Nada Moumtaz in Chapter 7, draws a great deal of its dynamism from this paradigm. It is worth attending to some of the debates raised in this chapter, however, because these also address the critical issue of the relationship between theory and method in anthropology.

Moumtaz reminds us that Asad's concept of tradition—which encapsulates both debates over orthodoxy and practice as embodiment—has opened the way to a new field centered on ethical self-cultivation. Aside from contributing to a new "anthropology of ethics," this has enabled anthropologists to concentrate on "taking seriously the expressed desires of their subjects to be better Muslims, to achieve certain goods in this life and the hereafter" (p. 133). It has also revived debates on the question agency and its allied trope of resistance (see Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion), put firmly on the agenda by Saba Mahmood's (2005) work on pious women in *da'wa* groups in Egypt, showing how their cultivation of virtue points to a different register of selfhood (and agency) than that predicated by feminist theory. To the extent that the intended target of Mahmood's critique was the feminist notion of agency (with its emphasis on freedom from relations of subordination) and ultimately the liberal secular tradition itself, this was not merely an ethnography centering on the life worlds of a particular group of women who chose to foreground their faith in their everyday lives, but a statement about the incommensurability of their sensibilities with those of the secular West (and presumably with subjectivities touched by it, such as those of Egyptian secular feminists, apparently incapable of grasping pious women's reasoning). Simultaneously uncovering radical alterities and engaging in a critique of Western epistemologies held a significant appeal for the anthropology of the Middle East, feeding as it did into two powerful seams of influence: critiques of secular modernity and the search for the "non-Enlightenment" subject.

What is noteworthy about the criticisms that followed was that they were of an essentially empirical character: their contention, broadly speaking, was that other frames of reference can be equally important to the conduct of numerous Muslims' everyday lives, and that foregrounding faith and observance does not exhaust the complex articulations between their diverse, context-specific identities (for a selection of such perspectives, see, e.g., the chapters in *Articulating Islam* by Marsden and Retsikas [2013]).

This is not to suggest that the concept of tradition and interrogations of the secular have not led to excellent ethnographies, as is plainly evident in the contribution from Hussein Ali Agrama (Chapter 18), working at the interface of *Sharia* and liberal law. The co-habitation of these frames of reference in Egypt constitutes an ideal setting for the examination of their imbrications and tensions, and Agrama illustrates lucidly how *Sharia* was subsumed under civil law's conceptual and institutional forms. And, indeed, as Nada Moumtaz suggests in Chapter 7, further refinements and elaborations of the core concepts of tradition and orthodoxy are both possible and desirable.

However, dismissing alternative readings or observations on the grounds that they rely on a model that allegedly opposes theory and observation, or treats them as different moments of the research process, implies that any set of observations not *already* informed by the concept of tradition must remain open to charges of empiricism. This does not only invite unnecessary closure but, more importantly, it devalues one of the main engines of creativity and discovery in the anthropology of the Middle

East—namely, the irruption of the unexpected and the un-thought-of in the complex play of inter-subjectivities that characterizes the experience of anthropological field-work. Thus, "insistence on ethnography" and on methods of observation—despite the well-rehearsed provisos about the limitations of experience as a guide to knowledge about the social world—is something that anthropologists would be foolish to jettison. The reflexive turn may have dismantled the implicit positive science bias underlying the research process and refined our understanding of the effects of positionality and power relations, but it did not annul the necessity for painstaking empirical investigation. I had argued in an earlier work on Turkey (Kandiyoti 2002a) that keeping our gaze fixed on a hegemonic West and devoting our energies to increasingly sophisticated restatements of its colonial and post-colonial entanglements may inadvertently displace (or replace) more vigorous ethnographic engagement with local cultural forms and with idioms of aesthetic, religious, and political expression that inform everyday life, and, crucially, nascent social movements.

MIND THE GAP: INTEGRATING POLITICAL ECONOMY

More intriguingly, even the critics of the Asadian paradigm often gravitate toward the tropes of Muslim personhood, subjectivity, or identity as areas of predilection. Structural factors that may install or consolidate certain manifestations of Muslim identity or piety over others and that actively shape the political fields of different ethnographic settings may be acknowledged but are rarely made a central part of the analysis. This does not necessarily denote a lack of interest in structural or macro-level phenomena on the part of anthropologists. On the contrary, as the contribution by Julia Elyachar in Chapter 20 clearly indicates, the study of neoliberalism is not only well established in anthropology but has also started to make significant inroads into the anthropology of the Middle East, especially since the Arab uprisings. However, the anthropology of Islam and the study of political economy (including more recent works on neoliberalism) still appear to occupy parallel universes. Some exceptions come from Turkey, where the simultaneous deepening of neo-liberal reforms and the ascendance of a new pious bourgeoisie occasioned important works such as Cihan Tugal's *Passive Revolution*, providing a sensitive account of the accommodations of Islamic politics with the neo-liberal market in the transition from the Welfare Party to the ruling Justice and Development Party. Jenny White, also a close observer of grass-roots Islamic mobilization in Turkey, commented on women's Islamic fashion in Istanbul as follows: "Adopting Islamic dress has become a major sign of status, more than a marker of personal devotion but less than a political statement" (1999, p. 80). This suggests that, while understandings of modesty and piety inform the choice of Islamic dress, these choices may also be freighted with other meanings and finalities. The articulations of neo-liberalism with changing processes of class formation and the analysis of how these, in turn, feed into new codes of distinction, consumption, and taste that inflect modes of Islamic observance (and, possibly, subjectivities) open up a rich ethnographic field that remains relatively under-researched.

   In general terms, social inequality, social stratification, and class appear to have fallen off the agenda of the anthropology of the Middle East, as Suad Joseph points out in Chapter 2. This was undoubtedly due to a broader reaction to economistic and reductionist modes of explanation of social phenomena, including approaches to Islam.

While the corrective influence of the concept of discursive tradition is incontrovertible, we do not seem to have found a way back from Muslim personhood and the cultivation of ethical dispositions to an anthropologically informed understanding of the imbrications of Islamic actors with the circuits of global capital and geopolitical influence—whether we are talking about the role of Gulf finance, the politics of Shi'i *maraji'*, recruitment to *jihadi* madrassas, or indeed militarized and sectarian expressions of dissent and conflict. The flows of finance, goods, or personnel relating to Islamic state and non-state actors, NGOs (government assisted or otherwise), Islamic charities, or, indeed, transnational organizations, such as the OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission, feature weakly in anthropological work. By contrast, anthropological approaches to neo-liberalism (and neo-liberal governance) appear to be saturated with the study of multi-lateral and bi-lateral donors, how these operate in different contexts, the ideologies they export, and how they shape agendas at the local level (see, e.g., Chapter 19).[6] There is relatively little corresponding attention to institutional fields of power—national, regional, and transnational—that condition and define the contours of struggles over Islam.[7]

In terms of broadening our vision, anthropological studies of migration and diasporas continue to perform crucial services, focusing as they do not only on patterns of remittance and trade, which elucidate some of the economic dimensions of migration and mobility, but on the circulation of tastes, styles, and idioms. Paul Silverstein (Chapter 15), for instance, draws our attention to "a larger Islamic fashion scene, consumer goods industry (including, notably, entrepreneurial ventures such as Mecca Cola and halal fast-food chains), and entertainment world specifically oriented toward the Muslim diaspora in Europe and North America" (p. 296). This serious engagement with material and popular culture opens up new vistas for an exploration of the negotiation of identities and the formation of different publics.

Finally, as suggested earlier, a field of research that has been at the forefront of integrating political economy with the examination of intersections between the global and the local is the anthropology of space and the study of cities (Chapter 23). New studies on the re-fashioning of urban space under regimes of neo-liberal governance have uncovered processes of marginalization and dispossession that, coupled with an understanding of forms of popular participation and resistance, are indispensable to any meaningful work on social movements in the Middle East.

CROSS-OVERS AND CROSS-FERTILIZATION

I would like to conclude this necessarily brief and selective overview with some observations on the anthropology of gender, not necessarily because it is, as Suad Joseph puts it in Chapter 2, one of the most "densely populated sites" in the anthropology of the Middle East, but because it has acted as a key "node" traversed by changing theoretical influences. It has also become an area of dense cross-fertilization among sub-fields of anthropology and other disciplines. Situated at the confluence of a social movement (feminism) and an institutionalized field of study (for nearly four decades, mainly but not exclusively in Western academe), research on gender in the Middle East had to speak both to the changing canons of gender and women's studies and to the approaches to post-coloniality, Islam, and modernity referred to throughout this text (Kandiyoti 1996).

These interactions are clearly illustrated in Jessica Newman and Marcia Inhorn's (Chapter 11) excellent overview of medical anthropology. In its early stages, medical anthropology had become a *de facto* node of empirical work on women in the Middle East (focusing on topics such as female circumcision and women's participation in possession rituals and shrine visitation), animated both by feminist and post-colonial scholarship taking up "issues connected to women's marginalization in contravening patriarchal, biomedical, colonial, and religious systems" (p. 210). Gender became a key point of entry for a critical examination of ethnomedicine vs. biomedicine (especially in relation to women's syncretic practices in the fields of reproductive and mental health). While the issue of commodification of health services (and their impact on access) necessarily addressed the workings of neo-liberal policies, the biotechnological turn (and new infertility treatments) forced attention to the realms of state regulation, religion and bioethics.

Such cross-overs and interactions abound in other areas as well. Once freed from the shackles of a narrow focus on women and the limiting tropes of oppression vs. liberation (often articulated through critiques or apologias of Islam),[8] the anthropology of gender was able to make new inroads into a variety of fields such as the study of labor markets (see Chapter 9), the state and citizenship, law, development, governance, social movements, revolution, violence, and conflict. The post-structuralist turn did not only problematize the category of "women" but also flung the field wide open to new interrogations of the production of masculinities, femininities, and sexualities (Chapter 8). As pointed out in Chapters 2 and 4, queer studies (and a currently muted sexual liberties movement) also started to make inroads into the region, raising a host of new questions on the regulation of sexuality in the Middle East. These questions inevitably brought attention to the issues of representation, governance, surveillance, and coercion. My brief incursions into the world of transsexuals in Istanbul (Kandiyoti 2002b) forced me, for instance, to consider the place of the coercive apparatuses of the state and the medico-legal establishment. Thus, each new twist in the field of gender forced us to work across a host of disciplines and frameworks.

Harking back to my earlier observations on the potentials unleashed by working on the "margins," I believe the field of gender (in anthropology as well as other social science disciplines) was at is most creative when it could make critical incursions into "malestream" territory, such as the study of the state, militarism, conflict, and violence (alongside the important continuing efforts, presented by Suad Joseph in Chapter 2, of coming to grips with the workings of kinship, family, and patriarchy).

Changing realities sometimes challenge the power of our explanatory frameworks and force a rethinking of our most cherished premises. The events of the Arab spring, and the Gezi protests in Turkey, displaying as they have done both new forms of gender-based violence and new instances of cross-gender solidarity among youth, impelled me to reframe (if not altogether jettison) the concept of patriarchy (Kandiyoti 2013). Did we have an adequate language to understand the sensibilities animating the actions of protesting youth? Or enough ethnographies of youth set in different spatial and class settings? Probably not.

However, enduring preoccupations with different understanding of women's rights and the nature of feminist agency (key to feminist discourses about emancipation) never left the agenda. These were the "hardy perennials" of the field, not least because of the continuing role of global standard-setting instruments for women's human rights (identified by some as "governance feminism") and the profusion of gender-targeted

development initiatives implemented by donor-funded NGOs. Concerns initially articulated in the language of cultural or national authenticity resurfaced in treatments of pietistic identities and their critique of the liberal grounding of the notion of agency. It would be fair to say that the leading tropes of the anthropology of Islam, discussed earlier, have come to dominate numerous works in the anthropology of gender in the Middle East. As Steve Caton thoughtfully observes in Chapter 4: "Most probably, this outpouring of research on pietistic gender identities is due to the way trends become popular as part of a cycle in academic scholarship, but it also reflects the attention that public media shed on the subject, and most likely is connected to a broader politics of reception on gender in the Middle East that is barely scrutinized within the academy." Texts such as Abu-Lughod's *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (2013) must be clearly understood in this context as a scholarly intervention into the politics of reception.

This brings me full circle to the point where I started: a consideration of the conditions of knowledge production on the Middle East. Caught between breathlessly trying to capture the fast-moving landscapes we work in, invested in diverse paradigms, methodologies, and explanatory frameworks, and aware of our responsibility to contribute to ongoing discussions about interpretation and meaning, we do the best we can. The contributors to this volume offer us a veritable feast of anthropological perspectives on the Middle East and provide us not only with an essential guide to understanding the present but also to imagining the future.

ENDNOTES

1 In an early writing on this question, Asad refuted the simplistic notion that social anthropology was primarily an aid to colonial administration or the simple reflection of colonial ideology; rather, he argued, it was a product of "bourgeois consciousness … that has always contained within itself profound contradictions and ambiguities—and therefore the potentiality—for transcending itself" (*Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, London: Ithaca Press 1973: 93). It was nonetheless firmly located in historical relationships of power between the West and the third world.

2 These concerns, already alive in the context of the Vietnam War, finally reached their climax when the embedding of anthropologists in the controversial Human Terrain System (HTS) of the US Army's Counter-Insurgency Program was put on the agenda, to help combat units on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan to fight Taliban and other forces. The AAA and other professional organizations responded vigorously, both on ethical grounds and over concerns about access and safety for those wishing to conduct anthropological fieldwork.

3 It is beyond the scope of this chapter to elaborate on the establishment and evolution of area studies across Europe and Australasia. However, these distinct histories are significant and deserve separate attention.

4 Such charges were not new; the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the events of the "Arab spring" elicited similar reactions, but none as sharp as the 9/11 events. More worryingly, organizations such as Campus Watch developed systems of surveillance targeting individual scholars of the Middle East as well as entire institutions deemed to be biased and unpatriotic.

5 World historical anthropology was eclipsed since key works such as Eric Wolf's (1982) *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press) or Sidney Mintz's *Sweetness and Power* (1986, Penguin Books), focusing on *longue duree* circuits of trade in commodities and people were not followed by works in that vein. Post-area studies scholarship may encourage a revival of historical anthropology of a newer vintage.

6 This has been a particularly fertile field of enquiry in the anthropology of gender, especially in relation to donor-funded women's NGOs and their women's rights platforms. These are often treated as an adjunct to neo-liberal policies when they are not presented outright as assisting imperialist policies (as was the case in justifying military action in Afghanistan to "liberate" Afghan women).

7 The little that we have on these questions focuses, yet again, on the role of Western-based institutions and their investment in crafting a "moderate Islam" to suit their own ends or in "demonizing" what they consider as radicalism. The concept of tradition, however, need not *a priori* be inimical to a project of better integration of institutional factors. There are successful examples of how this could be achieved. See, for instance, Tugal's *Passive Revolution*, cited earlier, and Salwa Ismail's *Rethinking Islamist Politics* (2006b).

8 Steve Caton (Chapter 4) points to a paradox between "on the one hand, the impulse to combat widely held stereotypes of downtrodden Middle Eastern women being always subordinate to men—either because of the patriarchal society or Islam (with the two often conflated), or both—stereotypes that often served the political interests of Western projects; and on the other, the critical impulse to expose such domination where and when it actually occurred, in order, hopefully, to better women's lives in the region" (p. 76).

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