

observing the political, economic, and cultural boundaries that maintain diversity. Perhaps at this moment the most salient of these global concerns involves terrorism and the production of terrorist states. Globalization might have the imagined effect of creating a cohesive and orderly world (therefore, *functional*), but the *conflict* over the maintenance of a national identity, still seen as a valued goal by many territories, makes this an intriguing area for social scientists, given that the exploration of order versus progress has long been one of the most salient contributions of sociology. The perspectives of contemporary global sociologists such as Beck, Habermas, Sklair, Wallerstein, and Ritzer are easily understood because we can see their work from the standpoint of our own era. Attempts at understanding the perspectives of the classical sociologists require a more focused analysis of the world and era in which they lived, which requires a temporal rather than geographic understanding.

This book should be of interest to those interested in the study of methodological nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and globalization in general, and would be of particular interest to sociologists interested in political sociology and classical sociological theory. It is a thorough examination of early theorists' perceptions on emerging globalization issues during the classical period. David Inglis defined the essence of this volume succinctly when he posed the question: '[C]an [the classical sociologists] still plausibly be presented as the foundation of a sociology that today seeks to examine a highly globalized world?' (p. 42). *Classical Sociology beyond Methodological Nationalism* answers that question by affirming the relevance of the classical theorists in the chapters by the eight contributors to this volume.

Author biography

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Sari Hanafi, Nouria Benghabrit-Remaoun and Medjahdi Mustafa (eds), *Mustaqbal al-'Ulum al-Ijtima'iyyah fi al-Watan al-'Arabi* [Knowledge Production in the Arab World: The Impossible Promise. Routledge: London: 2016], Center for Arab Unity Studies: Beirut, Lebanon: 2014; 478 pp.: ISBN 9789953826905, US\$25.00

Reviewed by Lisa Taraki, *Birzeit University, Palestine*

Keywords

Arab sociology, Arab world, history of sociology, social science

This Arabic-language volume consists of papers presented at a conference held in Wahran (Oran), Algeria in 2012, convened by the Center for Arab Unity Studies (Beirut, Lebanon), the Center for Research in Social and Cultural Anthropology (Wahran, Algeria), and the Arab Sociological Association (Tunis, Tunisia).

Because most readers of this review are unlikely to access the Arabic-language volume, this review is primarily an introduction for international sociologists to issues in the social sciences in the Arab world.

The volume provides an insight into the concerns, dilemmas, and preoccupations of social scientists writing from different locations in the Arab world, and includes important essays on the state of the social sciences in the Arab world, and from the perspectives of its practitioners. It should be noted that although the title of the book suggests that the social sciences as a whole are examined, most of the contributions are focused on the state of sociology and anthropology. The geographical scope of the book is wide, but certain parts of the Arab world, such as Yemen, Libya, and most Gulf countries, are not covered in the various contributions. Algeria claims the lion's share with eight contributions, followed by three on Egypt and three on Tunisia. The Algerian focus can perhaps be explained by the Algerian location of one of the organizers of the conference (the Center for Research in Social and Cultural Anthropology) and its accumulated experience in organizing similar gatherings of Arab social scientists since the late 1980s.

The 17 chapters of the volume are described in the volume's subtitle as research papers, but some are in the form of essays where the writers reflect on their personal experiences or present anecdotes from their observations. Two reflective biographical pieces complete the volume.

The contributors include some well-known figures in the Arab social science landscape, such as the veteran Egyptian sociologist Sa'd El-Din Ibrahim and the Tunisian sociologist al-Tahir Labib, the Palestinian sociologist Sari Hanafi, and the Tunisian sociologists Muhsin Bouazizi and the late Abd al-Qadir al-Zaghal.

As expected, the contributors to the volume are critical of the state of the social sciences in the Arab world. In fact, this volume – and the conference that generated it – is part of a rather long series of Arab interventions about the shortcomings and failings of the social sciences in the Arab world, a trend that continues to this day in conferences, workshops, journals, and even the media and on the Internet in blogs and other forums.

In this volume, the shortcomings of Arab social science can be summarized as follows from the perspective of its practitioners: the poverty of theory and the inability to generate theory; the absence or weakness of a social science community; the 'problem-solving' and applied orientation of the social sciences (or what one could term the social engineering approach) and the related predominance of consultancy work; the influence of international funding agencies; the absence of public sociology/social sciences; and the failure of the Arab academy to nurture a culture of research. On a related issue, several essays address the factors that continue to determine social science production in the Arab world, such as the colonial heritage, especially in North Africa.

Before exploring some of the themes mentioned above, it may be worth noting that many of the essays historicize the social sciences and as such provide concrete examples of the influences that played decisive roles in shaping the contours of the social sciences (especially sociology and anthropology) at different points in their historical trajectories. As would be expected, the influence of the colonial state and later the postindependence modernizing national state and national universities are highlighted in many of the essays.

Under a section titled 'Questions of Sociology and Anthropology,' several contributions examine the major questions that preoccupy sociological and anthropological inquiry and teaching. An essay on sociological and anthropological inquiry into religion

and the sacred in Algeria by Muhammad Salihi raises important questions relevant to other countries as well: How to proceed with the study of religion within a sociological frame away from the influences of state ideology and 'correct' interpretations of Islam? How can sociologists and anthropologists study religious practices sociologically and using sociological tools of analysis?

Another essay in this section, by Sari Hanafi, deals with the absence of a proper 'public sociology,' where research agendas are determined by outside funders and unconnected with the actual concerns of social actors. How to be a critical public sociologist and to overcome the isolation of the ivory tower is certainly a common concern in most Arab countries and worthy of public discussion.

The Tunisian sociologist Muhsin Bouazizi, one of the more prolific Arab sociologists, takes Arab sociology to task for its unimaginative and tedious writing and language; he asks, rhetorically, whether there is such a thing as Arab sociological writing or language, and whether this language is actually rooted in the social experience of actors. Bouazizi concludes that Arab sociology has not produced a single concept or term related to its social origins; alien and instrumentalist language predominates, influenced by concepts derived from the Western social experience. This is why, in his opinion, no Arab sociologist was able to predict the Arab revolutions of recent years.

Another section, 'The Scientific Formation of Sociology and Anthropology,' consists of a critical essay by the Egyptian sociologist Ahmad Badawi on the institutional and epistemological impediments to sociological and anthropological research and teaching in Egypt and Sudan. Badawi concludes that weak research traditions, a dearth of theory, and lack of rigorous methodologies produce works that are impressionistic, descriptive, and lacking analytic vigor in Egypt; in Sudan, although research is still propelled by its 'golden age' founders' influence, it is increasingly compromised by ideological (presumably Islamist) influences.

On a related topic, it would have been important if the volume had taken stock of the various efforts toward the Islamization of the social sciences in the Arab world and had reflected on the future prospects of such efforts. Except for a short section on the Islamization of the social sciences in Algeria and some references to the Saudi Arabian experience in 'Islamizing' the sociology curriculum at Saudi universities beginning in the 1970s, reform of teaching in Sudanese universities, and the spread of Islamist thought in Jordan, the book does not take note of the many extra-university initiatives, including research centers and Internet sites and blogs across the Arab world devoted to the Islamization of the social sciences.

Likewise, the volume does not include reflections on the teaching of the social sciences during a time of heightened Islamist awareness among university students. Anyone who has taught sociology, anthropology, psychology, or any of the related social sciences and humanities to university students in the Arab world today is well aware of the challenges of Islamist thought to the canons of the disciplines and to prevailing theoretical perspectives. How these are worked out in the classroom are important subjects for consideration.

In an age of increasing interdisciplinarity in the social sciences, the book does not include commentary on future directions in interdisciplinarity in research and teaching. This is a reflection of the fact that the Arab academy's social science programs continue to be organized along traditional disciplinary lines, with the exception of some institutes

and centers engaged in a more broadly interdisciplinary focus (such as strategic analysis, policy research, and advocacy). These centers are often funded by outside sources, and the research produced is generally not theoretically informed.

Another absence in the volume is a discussion of the methodological and ethical issues in conducting research under conditions of state repression, university surveillance, and actual and ongoing conflict on the ground. This may be understandable given the lack of protection of academic freedom in many Arab states today, and the hesitance of academics to attract attention to themselves. At the same time, it would have been interesting to see how Arab social scientists struggle to navigate the dangerous terrain of conflict on the ground under highly volatile and changing conditions affecting field investigation into the dynamics of protest actions and movements.

On a related issue, it would have been interesting to have Arab social scientists reflect on their role as ‘native informants’ for the army of international researchers, journalists, and scholars who regularly make the rounds of Arab universities and research centers in search of information and analysis of Arab politics and society, especially in this time of social and political turmoil. The delicate issue of relations between Arab and Western social scientists is not touched upon in any detail, particularly the rather unequal nature of the relationship. This brings to mind the widely read article by sociologist Mona Abaza of the American University of Cairo at the height of the Egyptian revolution in 2011, ‘Academic Tourists Sight-Seeing the Arab Spring,’ where she comments on ‘the ongoing international academic division of labor whereby the divide between the so called “theoreticians” of the North and the “informants” who are also “objects of study” in the South continues to grow.’

Overall, this volume is a useful guide to the issues and dilemmas facing the social sciences in the Arab world. It would have been useful to include the perspective of more disciplines in the social sciences, particularly political science, given the increasing volume of research and writing generated by the ‘Arab Spring.’

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Diego Olstein,

Thinking History Globally, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2015; xvi+223 pp.: ISBN 9780230361027 (hbk), 9781137473387 (pbk)

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