

Berichte aus der Ethnologie

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**Anthropology in Jordan**

A New Phenomenon in the Twentieth Century?

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## **Anthropology in Jordan**

Darwinism, Orientalism, Colonialism, and the rise of “Arabic” and “Islamic” anthropology have been widely seen as obstacles to flourish anthropology in the Arab-Islamic countries (Middle East in particular). Although these issues have been treated insightfully in different publications, I focus in this study on an example from within the region, Jordan, where “a better understanding of anthropology” has smoothed the path for Socio-cultural, Physical and General anthropology to grow and develop since the establishment of the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, then the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, at Yarmouk University of Irbid. What distinguishes this Institute, however, is the manner in which Physical Anthropology M.A. program is taught there since 1990. It is no secret that evolution theory is part of physical anthropology and that neither evolution theory nor physical anthropology are favorable subjects to be integrated into the higher educational systems of the Arab world. Therefore, it is reasonable to ask for the various factors (political, economical, social – religious as well as educational) which enabled such a process and acceptance in Jordan. My goal was to discover what models or lessons there might be helpful for those who have taken unusual paths. Simply put if there is success of one example in Jordan, hopefully there can be success for many in the neighboring countries. Yet, if this study stimulates a serious discussion of the teaching of anthropology at all levels of instruction, and encourages increased awareness of the importance of researching the history of anthropology as an anthropological problem in the region, I should be most pleased for the involvement in both areas of concern.

Furthermore, this book was compiled to facilitate the identification of particular works and to more quickly view the contributions of particular individuals who made of anthropology teachings and research in Jordan an excellent example to be followed by interested Arab Universities—with the aim of flourishing its education and projects. The basis of this investigation is a representative corpus of primary (archival sources, official reports, documents, and statistics) and secondary sources (books, articles, newspapers, and websites). The study adopts the historical context, analytical and interpretative methods to approach the variables which helped the academic circles in Jordan to better integrate the field of anthropology in its higher educational system. Linked to the analysis and comment on these factors is the hope that the Jordanian experiment might become a paradigm for other Arab and Muslim universities, and thereby eventually pave the way for the institutionalization of anthropology in the region. And finally, the study reaches the conclusion that a promising indigenous anthropology should take into consideration the historical context of the emergence of both, Western and Islamic/Arabic anthropology. This contextualization will provide the basis of a critical assessment and positive comparison of both concepts. A further conclusion confirms that the Jordanian experiment with anthropology differs from former anthropological studies not so much with respect to the selected research topics, but in the way, the field studies are organized and practiced.

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