



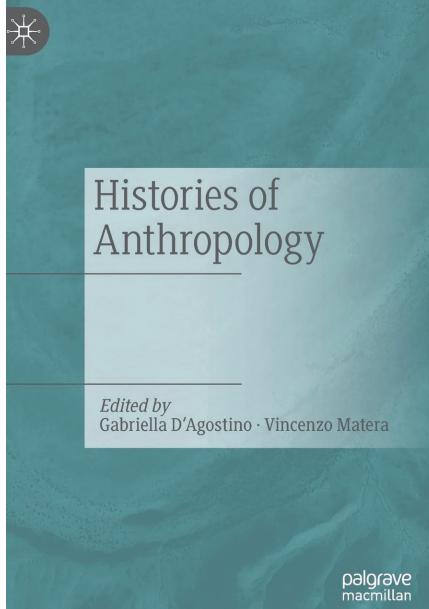
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Kitap Tanıtımı / Book Review

Gabriella D'Agostino & Vincenzo Matera (Eds.) *Histories of Anthropology*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023, 676 pp.

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With its twenty chapters plus an introduction by the editors, this massive volume is a collective exploration – and questioning – of the centre-periphery dialectics in the history of anthropology by a team of over twenty-five scholars. It is no detail that all but four of them are Italian.² Quite the contrary, the fact that this project “is certainly an Italian point of view about the stories of anthropology” (p. 16) is explicitly addressed from the start. Aware of the risks and limitations of covering a broad range of scholarly traditions from this situated if not “partisan” (sic) vantage point, D’Agostino and Matera boldly defend the joint venture in the following terms: “we intended to make a contribution to anthropological narratives on behalf of an academic context that is not given much widespread visibility in spite of its international exchanges” (ibid.) – witness, for example, the absence of an entry on Italian anthropology in Hillary Callan’s *The International Encyclopaedia of Anthropology* (2018). It is certainly no coincidence, the editors add, that the initiative came “from Italy, one of the world’s Souths” (p. 30). This remark subtly redresses the volume’s potential shortcomings by pointing out that it is no longer possible to uncritically reproduce George Stocking’s centre-periphery narrative according to which “anthropology at the periphery seems neither so nationally varied nor so sharply divergent from that of the center” (as quoted on p. 21) – the centre referring basically to the North American, the British, and the French anthropological traditions as the most influential internationally and arguably the most relevant. While this remains unquestioned to a point, there is room for an alternative, less hegemonic perspective in the wake of the world anthropologies paradigm.

The volume is not divided into parts, but it clearly follows a geographical structure. The first seven chapters are dedicated to seven European national traditions, namely to the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Russia. Two chapters are dedicated to anthropology in Africa, namely in French-speaking countries and in South Africa. Five chapters are dedicated to South and North American traditions, with two chapters on US anthropology, followed by chapters on Brazilian, Colombian and Mexican anthropologies. Asia and Oceania are covered in five chapters dedicated to India, Vietnam (spelled Viet Nam), Australia, the Pacific Islands, and China. One final chapter is dedicated to the frail situation of anthropology in Arab countries. The present review reshuffles the twenty chapters to help highlight selected themes, connections, and contributions – which are not only plural, as intended, but necessarily uneven. Some contributors follow the option to focus on recent developments, while others take older histories into account; some of them are acquainted with the studied contexts as contemporary anthropologists with fieldwork experience, while others are more

experienced as historians of the discipline; some resort mostly to secondary sources, others to primary ones. Fabio Dei's chapter epitomizes the second case, while resuming – and resolving – the issue of the invisibility of Italian anthropology. An illustration of the first case is the chapter dedicated to Spanish anthropology by María Rubio Gómez, F. Javier García Castaño, and Gloria Calabresi, who acknowledge their own lack of “historiographical specialty” (p. 184) but compensate it by listing and exploring the many works produced by Spanish historians of Spanish anthropology.³

Luca Rimoldi and Marco Gardini rise to the challenge of addressing British anthropology by avoiding a predictable summarizing of “a story that has already been extensively recounted” (p. 49). While evoking the many sources in question, the authors focus on chosen figures to tell the story differently. The message is that thanks to bridges built through biographical trajectories, British anthropology “has long been less ‘British’ than is commonly thought” (p. 70). This chapter is in dialogue with the one by Stefano Allovio addressing the intercontinental connections of South African scholarship – with a sensible understanding of the complex relations between Afrikaner ethnologists and metropolitan figures such as Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. A dialogue with the chapter dedicated to Australian Anthropology is also imaginable, since Dario Di Rosa evokes and relates both Australian and European (mostly British) anthropological actors during the colonial period – with a short but relevant section on decolonization.

One of the volume's gems is the chapter by Adriano Favole, who discards the possibility of a comprehensive study of the history of anthropology in the Pacific Islands but eventually gives an essayistic overview of a web that spanned in many directions for more than a century. While calling attention to the diverse origins of anthropologists having worked in Pacific Islands – not only English-speaking and French-speaking but also (largely ignored) Japanese, Italian or Spanish figures – Favole pays special attention to Indigenous anthropologies. He underscores the fact that the complex variety of ethnographic texts and sources were “influenced from the outset by the types of tangible and intangible exchange taking place in the field” (p. 571), thus bringing Indigenous agency to the fore. On the other side, he reveals how “the cumbersome presence of generations of anthropologists ‘from outside’ the Pacific is identified as the primary cause of the native ‘disillusionment’ with the discipline” (p. 584), as illustrated in ambivalent mode by the work and reflections of anthropologist of Tongan origin Epeli Hau'ofa (1939–2009).

Reflecting great investment by Matteo Aria, the largest chapter is dedicated to contemporary developments in French anthropology, a dense review of theoretical and

epistemological divergences within a tradition that is (and has always been) wrongly described in the singular. From the point of view of the pluralization of the history of anthropology, I find the chapter on anthropology in French-speaking West and Equatorial Africa, by Alice Bellagamba, more exciting. With a long experience in ethnographic and historical research in West African contexts, the author constructs a fascinating narrative that points up the colonial and missionary roots of the scholarly experiences of pioneering African ethnologists such as Yoro Dyao (c. 1847–1919) or Mamby Sidibé (1891–1977); at the same time, she explores the ways in which these historical foundations gave way to varied developments, both intellectually and politically, from anti-colonial stands to present day expressions of decolonization.

Dedicated to US anthropology, the shortest chapter, by Angela Biscaldi, is *too* short, if not disconcerting, not the least for its abrupt final paragraph on military anthropology; but a second chapter dedicated to US anthropology by Berardino Palumbo helps fill the gap, even if it is *only* dedicated to the more recent developments. Marco Bassi tries to give an (impossible) historical overview of German anthropology. Being himself a specialist on Oromo studies, the highlights in his chapter are, understandably, the passages dedicated to two German scholars who also worked in Ethiopia, Eike Haberland (1924–1992) and Ivo Strecker (1940–).

Notwithstanding the fact the first (Italian) edition of the volume was published in 2022 and the manuscript completed before the events of 24 February, the chapter on Russian anthropology is controversial, to say the least. Pietro Scarduelli reproduces an idealized version of Russian (and Soviet) colonialism, compares the end of the USSR experience to “what happened to the Aztec people when they and the *conquistadores* clashed” (p. 259), and mentions “an important issue for Russian anthropologists” in the post-Soviet era, that is, the “right” of the Russian homeland “to protect” (sic) Russian-speaking individuals who live in the “new foreign countries” (p. 266), the ex-Soviet republics. The absence of other chapters dedicated to Eastern European anthropological traditions, for example the Polish, may be noted. Ironically, a history of Ukrainian anthropology was published in Italy one year earlier (Mykhaylyak 2021).

In the chapter on Brazilian Anthropology, Valeria Ribeiro Corossacz identifies the historical and political ambivalence of the discipline’s long-lasting commitment “to studying and defending Brazil’s most historically oppressed populations” (p. 388). The prevailing whiteness of those who studied Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous communities was not an issue for a long time, she explains, while the recent introduction of quotas in public universities for students identifying themselves as Black or Indigenous has

provoked a still ongoing epistemological revolution. Colombian anthropology and Mexican anthropology, as stated respectively by Alessandro Mancuso and by Rodrigo Llanes Salazar, are also marked by colonial and post-colonial social inequalities, albeit in different ways. The authors explore the connections between government institutions such as museums and nation-building projects mostly in the first half of the twentieth century, while contrasting them with later Indigenist and Marxist-oriented anthropological approaches that address old and new internal conflicts and violence.

Sara Roncaglia unveils the past of what is arguably one of the oldest native anthropologies in the world. With due attention to the colonial foundations of anthropological studies under the British Raj, the author moves from the scholarly endeavours of colonial administrators to those of Indian pioneers such as Ananthakrishna Iyer (1861–1937) and Sarat Chandra Roy (1871–1942). She then follows the path of professionalization towards and beyond independence, with new themes or new approaches to subaltern groups in Indian society that, in one way or another, echo the history of this rich tradition. In the chapter dedicated to the Vietnamese case, Elena Bougleux calls the reader's attention to the fact that the turbulent political history of the country has engendered contrasting narratives and periodization formulas, depending on the historian's positioning within European or Asian perspectives, particularly within French, English, or Vietnamese perspectives. These, in turn, reflect the fragmented and multivocal forms of doing anthropology in Vietnam before and after the reunification in 1975. Ruptures in political history are also key to understanding the case of China, among other reasons because the foundation of the People's Republic in 1949 meant the abolishment of anthropology as a bourgeois pseudoscience. In one way or another, as Roberto Malighetti explains in the corresponding chapter, "Chinese anthropology and ethnology interacted, throughout their history, with the major paradigmatic changes that marked the evolution of the discipline" (595), the legendary exchanges between Malinowski and his PhD student Fei Xiaotong (1910–2005) serving as an instance thereof.

Irene Maffi authors the final chapter on anthropology in Arab countries, a topic of particularly difficult access for a number of circumstances, among which the lack of secondary sources, the difficult access to primary ones, the tension between literature in Arabic, on the one side, and literature in English or in French, on the other. To fill these "gaps and silences", the author turned mostly to interviews with colleagues having worked in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Mauritania, Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq, dedicating short sections to each of these cases.

Despite contextual differences, the situation is summarized by Maffi in the following terms: “Poorly institutionalized, marginalized, perceived as an instrument of colonial domination and censored because it is too critical, anthropology still seems little known or appreciated in the Arab countries considered in this chapter”. (p. 649)

In their introduction to the volume, Gabriella D’Agostino and Vincenzo Matera acknowledge that many scholarly traditions and their respective histories were left out of the picture, either because the representatives of peripheral anthropologies are often more focused on knowing the classics of hegemonic currents than their locally situated ancestors, or due to language and other barriers. A comprehensive, encyclopaedic view is unnecessary, though, to transform our understanding of the discipline’s past. This volume contributes to this goal in many ways, not the least for being an off-centre approach to the plural history of anthropology.

Endnotes

- 1 Or five. See note 3.
- 2 I avoid commenting on the chapter dedicated to Portuguese anthropology due to a discrepancy between the Italian and the English versions, namely as regards its authorship. See Saraiva (2023).

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