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« Les traductions arabes de Pierre Bourdieu »

This paper will analyse the introduction of contemporary social sciences in the Arab intellectual field through a case study, namely, that of the Arabic translations of Pierre Bourdieu's works. This introduction took place, starting from the 1980s, in a publishing market marked by the weakening position of the previously hegemonic centres of Beirut and Cairo and the emergence of a national publishing sector in various other Arab countries, as well as the development of the French state's support for the translation of the national written production into other languages. Compared to that of other French writers belonging to the great structuralist and post-structuralist generation, especially

Barthes and Foucault, Bourdieu's introduction in the Arab intellectual field has been somewhat late and selective, mainly because of the different status of sociology on one hand, and literary studies and philosophy on the other, within the Arab academic field. Starting from 1995 and Bourdieu's newly acquired position of "great intellectual", his translation into Arabic gains momentum and mobilises a growing number of publishers and translators whose project can be described as both didactic and militant. However, the reception of his thought remains thwarted by the poor conditions of editorial work and the bad circulation of the book within the Arab-speaking region, but also by the current sociolinguistic situation of the Arabic language: the translations' readability is jeopardized by what is referred to by the Arab intellectuals as "the terminology chaos", and by the translation norm currently dominating the translation into

Arabic, to which I shall refer as “deferent
literalism”.