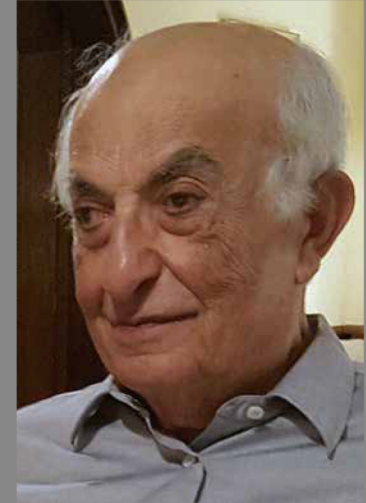


Jamil M. Abun-Nasr

First Holder of the Chair of Islamic Studies with Focus on Africa

Jamil Abun-Nasr, the first holder of the Chair of Islamic Studies with Focus on Africa at the University of Bayreuth, passed away on 10 April 2021. Born in 1932, in al-Bassa, Palestine, he was forced to flee to Lebanon along with his family in 1948. After a stint at Beirut University College he moved to Oxford in 1958, eventually becoming a true citizen of the world while remaining Palestinian at heart. At St. Antony's College he embarked on his first research, which focused on the history of the Tijaniyya Sufi order in the Maghrib and West Africa and earned him his Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies in 1961. Thereafter, Jamil Abun-Nasr worked as Assistant Professor at the Center of Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University (1962) before moving on to the University of Ghana. Further teaching positions followed at American University Beirut (1963–1966), Fourah Bay College in Free Town/Sierra Leone (1966–1967) and at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria (1968–1974).



In September 1974, Jamil Abun-Nasr came to Berlin, where he first worked as an Alexander von Humboldt research fellow and later received a Volkswagen grant. In September 1980, he was invited to teach Islamic Studies at the then emerging University of Bayreuth and asked to set up a teaching programme for this discipline. In 1985, he was appointed to the newly established Chair of Islamic Studies with a focus on Islam in Africa, which he held until his retirement in 1997. He also played a prominent role in founding the Institute of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth, where he acted as managing director from 1991 until 1993. Through the emphasis on empirical research in various projects initiated at his Chair, as well as through his regional focus on Africa that was long marginalized in German Islamic Studies, Jamil Abun-Nasr was instrumental in opening up a field that was formerly dominated by text-based approaches and a Middle Eastern bias.

Text: Roman Loimeier