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BOOK REVIEW

Karolina Bielenin-Lenczowska, *Spaghetti z ajwarem. Translokalna codzienność muzułmanów w Macedonii i we Włoszech [Spaghetti with ajvar. Translocal everyday life of Muslims in Macedonia and in Italy]*, Warsaw, Warsaw University Press, 2015, 273 pages.

Karolina Bielenin-Lenczowska's book focuses on the microcosm of the Torbeši community in Reka and Center Župa, a municipality in Western North Macedonia. In this region, migrants invest their savings, constructing opulent houses and returning to organize significant family events, thereby upholding and cultivating familial prestige. These returns entail exchanging and transferring knowledge concerning diverse lifestyles and practices, along with a reciprocal exchange of products. The book is written in Polish and by an author based in Poland, reflects the enduring interest of Polish researchers in this region (see: Lubaś 2007, 2011; Majewski 2013; Engelking, Rękas, Upalewski 2022) while simultaneously limiting its audience.

This monograph endeavors to portray how Macedonian-speaking Muslims navigate their lives between their places of origin and emigration, specifically Emilia Romana and the Veneto region in Italy. Its ambition lies in scrutinizing the contemporary manifestations and implications on the local community of the historically known phenomena of gurbet or pečalbar - a seasonal circular migration. The author promises to examine the migration experience of Macedonian-speaking Muslims in Italy, delving into variations along gender and intergenerational dimensions. Additionally, the analysis encompasses the impact of duration spent abroad and immersion in the socio-cultural context of the host country on the migration experience. The book aspires to be an ethnographic exploration of changes in daily activities due to migration, evolving family roles, shifts in prestige, and alterations in intergenerational transmission.

Simultaneously, it harbors an ambition to scrutinize certain notions, practices, values, and perceptions engender conflicts and tensions within families, especially between parents and daughters. It seeks to illustrate interviewees' evolving perspectives and attitudes in contrast to those who have never emigrated from North Macedonia. The

book promises to deliver engaging insights based on extensive multisided ethnographic research conducted between 2009-2014, supplemented by media analysis

Indeed, this is an ethnographic book focusing on migration, mobility studies, and social changes. The author's theoretical lineage directs us towards widely recognized terms such as "transnational ways of belonging," coined by Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller (2004), and "transnational social spaces," defined by Thomas Faist (2000). However, Bielenin-Lenczowska takes a critical stance towards these terms and develops theoretical arguments against them. She contends that these terms inadequately capture the socio-cultural phenomena of the studied community. Bielenin-Lenczowska's rationale for navigating through these terms and the dilemma of selecting the most fitting one for observed practices arises from the recognition that having a local cousin who enjoys Turkish coffee or eats ajvar does not necessarily imply a conscious identification with the countries where such products are consumed. Accordingly, the author asserts that more suitable concepts would lean towards "translocality," which is associated with another set of terms that are locally bonded and not less important, such as Jasna Čapo Zmegač's "medudržavna translokalnost" or Robert Pichler's "transterritoriality" (2009).

Concerning translocality, Bielenin-Lenczowska argues that practices and imagery linked to two countries strongly pertain to locality rather than the state within the Macedonian-speaking Muslim community. The term "translocality" serves to avoid conflating the nation with the state and enables the demonstration that certain practices and discourses are deeply rooted in the region of origin and the place of settlement rather than in the country of origin. Consequently, the focus shifts towards the social and culturally constructed locality rather than fixating on states and transnational spaces.

The initial six chapters out of the total eleven, along with the summary, are predominantly theoretical and might prove challenging for those aspiring to engage in ethnographical writing. After navigating through the meticulous definition of central concepts in Chapter One, methodological challenges in Chapter Two, engagement with the ethnographic field, and the author's evolving positionality in Chapter Three, as well as the ethnic and political entanglement of the Torbeši in Chapter Four, we gradually transition to the tangible results of the field research. While these introductory chapters might seem extensive for those familiar with the history and cultural characteristics of North Macedonia, they could be intriguing for readers who are newly exploring the rich mosaic of religions, languages, and cultures in this region.

Chapter Nine, titled "Translokalna codzienność – dolu" [Translocal everyday life – dolu], particularly captured my attention. This chapter discusses Torbeši's seasonal returns to their hometowns and villages. These places come to life in the hot summer as migrants reunite with relatives and friends. Restaurants, bars, shops, and service venues operate around the clock, and in the evening, the air resonates with the music of wedding celebrations. Drawing on this case, Bielenin-Lenczowska delves into the concept of prestige. In this context, prestige is not solely constructed through lavish weddings and flashy cars, as highlighted by Ivaylo Markov's illustration of contributing to the survival and welfare of relatives (2015: 114). It also encompasses "tainting" the Macedonian, Turkish, or Albanian language with Italian words and constructing unverifiable narratives about enjoying Italian life (uživanje).

The impact of migration on the local community in North Macedonia and, more broadly, in Southeastern Europe has been subject to extensive analysis. These studies have primarily focused on the exposure of national symbols (Pichler 2009), the influence on ethnic relations (Markov 2013), the impact on the economic and social balance (Rydzewski 2022), and economic and patterns of consumption (Dimova 2007). However, none of the above works has provided as much ethnographic evidence as Bielenin-Lenczowska, especially in linking these impacts to gender sensibility.

In the subsequent chapters, the author weaves the threads of gender and age, demonstrating how both factors emerge as crucial elements for comprehending the migratory experience. Through her multisided ethnography, she illustrates how women's reliance on their children's assistance significantly influences their status and authority within the family. Simultaneously, these women are eager to acquire new skills, employing various strategies to expand their knowledge base.

Another noteworthy chapter is the final one, "O mobilizacji i zmianie społecznej" [On mobilization and social change]. Here, the author analyzes issues of intergenerational tensions and changes linked to the political participation of migrants. The focus is on the activation of the diaspora due to a growing sense of abandonment by the North Macedonia state and concerns about plans to construct two hydroelectric power plants that threaten the Macedonian Mavrovsky National Park. The diaspora members collectively take action to halt the project. Interestingly, the growth of the "Rekan" Diaspora is not rooted in activism on behalf of the state and nation; rather, it stems from a feeling of marginalization by state institutions. The actions of this diaspora are deeply embedded in Western Macedonia, connecting its members through the region, both culturally and naturally (appreciating the beauty of pure, unpolluted nature), as well as the shared experience of multiethnic, multireligious coexistence and life abroad.

"Spaghetti z ajwarem" provides an ethnographic account of a mobile community dividing its life between North Macedonia and Italy. Bielenin-Lenczowska's rich ethnographic research offers solid evidence for theoretical arguments and provides insight into Torbeši community life. The substantial emphasis on the theory of migration and methodology in the book's first half makes it particularly suitable for anthropology and migration studies students. However, the downside of this book is its Polish language, significantly limiting its audience. Despite being published nearly a decade ago, the book continues to address important questions and offers unique ethnographic perspectives.

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