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Book translation review

Каролина Бјеленин-Ленчовска, Шпагети со ајвар. *Транслокално секојдневије на муслиманиите во Македонија и во Италија*, Скопје, Македонско студентско етнологско друштво, 2025, 349 стр., превод од полски на македонски јазик Каролина Бјеленин-Ленчовска.

(Karolina Bielenin-Lenczowska, *Spaghetti with Ajvar. Translocal Everyday Life of Muslims in Macedonia and in Italy*, Skopje, Macedonian Student Ethnological Society, 2025, 349 pages, translated from Polish into Macedonian by Karolina Bielenin-Lenczowska).

Originally published in Polish in 2015, Karolina Bielenin-Lenczowska's book remains highly relevant today, and the long-overdue Macedonian translation is a welcome contribution. Two applications have so far been submitted to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of North Macedonia for the translation of this book. The first application fell short of the necessary funding, and given the rarity of external sponsorship for book projects, the project was unable to move forward. The second application did not receive any funding at all. Thanks to the author's persistence and ambition, and the dedication of the staff at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, the translation was completed despite no funding. Consequently, Karolina Bielenin-Lenczowska is credited not only as the author but also as the translator of this edition.

Robert Rydzewski from the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnology at the Center for Migration Studies of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland, has already reviewed the book in EthnoAnthropoZoom no. 24 (2024), discussing its contents and central arguments in detail.¹ At the end of his review, he also emphasizes the importance

¹ Rydzewski Robert. 2024. Book review: Karolina Bielenin Lenczowska. Spaghetti z ajwarem. *Translokalna codzienność muzułmanów w Macedonii i we Włoszech* [Spaghetti with Ajvar. Translo-

of a Macedonian translation: “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 to offer unique ethnographic perspectives” (Rydzewski 2024: 219). The good news is that, besides the Macedonian translation, the book will soon also be available in English.

In this review, I will not summarize the book’s contents, as this has been done elsewhere. Instead, I will highlight several key aspects that underscore the importance of translating foreign research on Macedonia into Macedonian—especially studies that can inspire a rethinking of local research trends.

Karolina Bielenin-Lenczowska’s long-standing interest in Macedonia dates back to 2006, while the fieldwork forming the core of this book was conducted between 2009 and 2014. Her fieldwork spans both Reka and Centar Zhupa in Macedonia, regions where labor migration is not only a traditional practice but, in current circumstances, often the only viable option. As she notes, these places live from labor migration, while the majority of the population permanently resides in Italy. Therefore, her “field” also extends to Ravenna and Fonte, Italy, where Macedonian speaking Muslims from Reka typically migrate. The ethnographic insight into both settings (Macedonia and Italy) offers vivid portrayals of the book’s main theme.

Applying anthropological concepts of mobility, the book examines the migrant experiences of Macedonian-speaking Muslims in Italy, highlighting gender and generational differences, as well as the ways in which experiences vary according to duration of residence abroad and degree of socio-cultural integration in the host society.

In Macedonian-language scholarship, studies on migration remain scarce, despite increasing labor migration among young people from Macedonia. The Macedonian translation of this book addresses this gap, offering an anthropological perspective on migration and contributing to debates on transnationalism, social change induced by migration, and local conceptualizations of diaspora.

A particularly important insight of the book is its use of the concept of translocality: for Macedonian-speaking Muslims, the main point of reference is not the state of Macedonia as a whole, but the western regions from which they originate. Their activities, discourses, and representations are therefore localized to the region of origin and the places of settlement. This regional focus, rather than national belonging, reflects the historical marginalization of Macedonian-speaking Muslims—a phenomenon often highlighted by foreign, particularly Polish, researchers².

I am writing this review during the local elections in the Republic of North Macedonia, and the election reports for the municipalities studied by Karolina Bielenin-Lenczowska are highly indicative in this regard. In the local elections of October 19, 2025, in Centar Zhupa, the required voter turnout of one-third of the electorate was not

cal Everyday Life of Muslims in Macedonia and in Italy]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2015, 273 pages. EthnoAnthropoZoom 24, Skopje, IEA (214-222).

² See also Лубаш, Марчин. 2021. *Разноверци, меѓурелигијској соживој на село во зајпагна Македонија*. Скопје, МСЕД.

reached, while during the presidential elections in May 2024, only 12.73% of registered voters cast their votes—according to a news report titled “Why hold elections in Centar Zhupa when hardly anyone remains to vote?”³ These figures illustrate both high levels of emigration and the long-term marginalization of Macedonian-speaking Muslims—issues of profound significance for scholarly research and policy alike.

Bielenin-Lenczowska’s approach to Macedonian-speaking Muslims offers a fresh perspective compared to traditional Macedonian scholarship. The Macedonian translation will introduce new voices and inspire a rethinking of research approaches in this context. Equally notable is the researcher’s position toward the people from her “field,” whose perspectives are central to the book. Bielenin-Lenczowska treats them not as mere “informants” but as partners in research.

Finally, the book demonstrates remarkable ethnographic skill, weaving together multiple perspectives: gendered experiences of women and men, children and adults, generational differences, identities tied to ethnicity and religion, as well as dimensions of food, prestige, activism, and the natural environment. These insights vividly depict the complexities of everyday life straddling two worlds, making the book both theoretically significant and highly engaging for readers.

3 Милошевски Михаил, Акифи Хекуран, 5 мај 2024 година, *Чуму избори во Центар Жупа кога речиси и да не остана кој да гласа?*, 360 степени, available at: <https://360stepeni.mk/vid-eo-chumu-izbori-vo-tsentar-zhupa-koga-rechisi-i-da-ne-ostana-koj-da-glasa/> (last visited on 19.10.2025).