

Hazan, Haim and Esther Hertzog (eds.). 2012. *Serendipity in Anthropological Research*. Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate. xiii + 332 pp. Hb.: £65.00. ISBN: 9781409430582.

Very often things do not go the way they were expected to, something unpredictable changes the course of the pre-planned fieldwork, unexpected circumstances bring new dilemmas to face and choices to make. These unpredictabilities are inextricable from the experience of the anthropologist during and also after the fieldwork. Each of these unexpected situations is left to us to interpret whether the situation was a failure or an opportunity. We are rationalising it in the same way as we are interpreting our experiences in the field before arresting them on paper. The story that we tell then is either the story of mishaps and irreversible obstacles, or the one of lucky sudden encounters and serendipitous insights. The latter is exactly the path that the authors and editors of the current book undertake. In their nomadic wanderings, moved by serendipity, they provide a wide range of described experiences, reflexive contemplations, styles and genres. The book gives a good overview of the textualisation of the polyphony of voices and perspectives on the Israeli 'desert of the real' in Žižek's terms (p. 2).

The articles in this edited volume are stirred by the influential works of Emmanuel Marx, who introduced social anthropology to Israel, and was committed to his profound study of Bedouins of Sinai. His major interest pivoted upon the people on the move – nomads, immigrants, refugees. Likewise, the current collection of articles places nomadism as a reference point. It traces the innate nomadic faculty of the anthropologist that guides him through his fieldwork and back, transcending boundaries of understanding, up to the moment of publishing the text and even afterwards.

Most of the articles of this book refer to materials gathered in Israel. However, they transcend the territorial bounds and set the nomadic routes guiding the reader from Bedouin "unrecognized villages" to the cities, from Japanese school to the Israeli army, from the memories of Holocaust to the spiritual travels and emotional involvement, and from the women's prison to the Israeli-Palestinian space. The keynote of all articles is the 'serendipitous dialogue between the hetero-logoi of the field and the accommodating logic of the anthropologist' (p. 4).

The articles in the first section navigate and set the course for the reader addressing the process of transmuting the ethnographic encounter into the printed text. Evoking the notion of serendipity, Ugo Fabietti retells the story of the three princes of Serendip, showing that the serendipitous or abductive method so peculiar to anthropology is often reduced by the transition between "field" and "theory". The article by Emmanuel Marx exemplifies how too much of a relying on the previous research experience may lead to error, such as implementing Western ethnocentric constructs, or not noticing that the Bedouins are at the same time immersed in and dependent on the urban civilization. Haim Hazan demonstrates in his article the conceptualizations of reality and shows how "community" is an image.

The second section, *Mirage*, starts with the discussion of self-critique in the dynamics of participant-observation by Eyal Ben-Ari. Shifra Kisch projects her manoeu-

vres between different versions of reality as a serendipitous faculty of her anthropological journey. Her article is followed by a written confession and contemplation of Reuven Shapira about his own society kibbutz, showing how his career mistakes and obstacles were a part of discovering the unexplored parts of the field both in the kibbutz and in the academic society. The topics of romanisation of the under-empowered as well as different heritage politics are addressed by Harvey E. Goldberg. The section closes with an elegant essay of Cédric Parizot who sets his emotional involvement in the field as a methodological target facilitating a deeper understanding of the complexities.

The third section, *The Journey*, opens with a description by Susan Rasmussen of an arranged spirit possession ritual from the point of the construction of knowledge. Raquel Romberg describes her spatio-temporal journeys with a healer from Puerto Rico. In her article, Dana Siegel advocates the use of ethnographic methods in cultural criminology; Longina Jakubowska, after conducting her research on the Bedouins, introduces her study of elite reproduction in post-Soviet Poland.

The book also aims at extra-disciplinarian social claims, which are concentrated mostly in the fourth section, *Wandering*. Nigel Rapport's article adds the analytic perspective on the liberal universalism with its ideal openness and multiplicity, and views city as an embodiment of 'global guesthood' (p. 199). Dale F. Eickelman provides an insight into the situations when the researcher does not comply with the expectations of sponsors or politicians. Esther Herzog together with her mother explores the memory landscapes of Holocaust experience and the ways her mother constructs her past and uses it in the present.

The final section, *Oases*, starts with the Aref Abu-Rabi's analysis of the significance of colours in Bedouin society, followed by Frank H. Stewart's structuralist analysis of Bedouin society in Negev. The article by Alex Weingrod provides a good overview of the political significance of reburials in Israeli society. Lastly, Ofra Greenberg's essay gives the book a fine final touch, presenting a kaleidoscope of complex and vivid encounters with the destinies of her informants from the women's prison long after the termination of her research project, and her discovery of their more complex figures.

This book will be a good help for anthropologists and social scientists interested in the Middle East, particularly in the complexities and layers of Israeli realities. This collection of articles succeeds to address theoretical and methodological questions, the paradoxes of representation and accumulation of knowledge. The variety of writing styles and genres adds a particular touch of multiplicity of contexts, perspectives and narratives arising from these serendipitous encounters.

POLINA TŠERKASSOVA
University of Tallinn (Estonia)