

BUCHOWSKI MICHAŁ (ed.) 2019. *Twilight Zone Anthropology: Voices from Poland*. Canon Pyon: Sean Kingston Publishing. 250 p. ISBN: 9781912385065 (hardback).

The aim of this edited volume is to shed light on how anthropology is practiced in Poland today. By focusing on Polish anthropology, the book responds to an urgent need to grant more visibility to anthropological voices from the periphery and promises to contribute to the redefinition of the global hierarchies of anthropological knowledge. The key claim of the book is that Polish anthropology constitutes a 'twilight zone' of contact between dominant discourses of the center and an Eastern European political and intellectual legacy, which provides a fruitful ground for the evolution of novel anthropological practices and concepts. The book is organized into three thematic parts, preceded by a short introduction. The first four chapters offer historically grounded insights into the development of Polish anthropology. The second part includes chapters on anthropological engagement, ranging from urban activism to gender and queer studies. The final part comprises two ethnographic chapters, on the concept of democracy among the Highlanders in the Southern Poland and on the refusal of blood transfusions by the Jehovah's witnesses in Germany.

The book is excellent in introducing the genealogy of Polish anthropology and its political and institutional entanglements, and offers a topography of some of the main themes and problematics discussed by Polish anthropologists. It shows that there is more to Polish anthropology than the fact that Malinowski was born in Poland. The book recognizes the

sometimes contradictory approaches to practicing anthropology in Poland and shows that Polish anthropology, as the book's subtitle suggests, is an anthropology of many voices.

The first chapter, written by Michał Buchowski, is one of the best in the book. Buchowski provides a compelling narrative of changing currents in Polish anthropology and gives the sense of a historically vibrant scholarship which has been attentive to both international anthropological trends and local sociocultural contexts for most of the time. He shows that the isolationist tendencies of the Polish 'ethnographism' of the post-Second World period were merely an episode in the history of Polish cosmopolitan anthropology. Buchowski's argument is well illustrated by the next chapter, in which Lubaś discusses the internationally overlooked intellectual legacy of Józef Obrębski, a student of Malinowski at the London School of Economics in the 1930s. Lubaś shows that Obrębski's ideas on ethnic diversity, processes of ethnic exclusion, and nation-state making (with the focus on the Polish state) predated future trends and theoretical developments in anthropology. He analyses the revival of Obrębski's work in the research of contemporary Polish anthropologists and calls for Obrębski's visibility on the international anthropological stage. Noteworthy are also the chapters on Polish anthropology of gender by Grażyna Kubica (Chapter 3), Monika Baer (Chapter 8), and Kościańska and Radkowska-Walkowicz (Chapter 9). Kubica and

Baer write in an auto-ethnographic style and point to the challenges of adapting a gendered perspective in Polish anthropology. Baer stresses that the increased anthropological interest in gender has been possible due to the 'political turn' in Polish anthropology in the last decade. Kościańska and Radkowska-Walkowicz provide an overview of contemporary scholarship. All the above chapters point to the importance of gender research against the conservative atmosphere dominating the public and political life in Poland. Perhaps because of this, the authors offer a limited critical view of Western gender scholarship, focusing rather on how Western ideas have found their belated articulation on Polish ground. From their accounts one can infer that Polish anthropology of gender does not have a historical trailblazer akin to Józef Obrębski in the anthropology of ethnicity and nationalism.

The issue of engaged and politically relevant anthropology is further elaborated in the chapters by Brocki (Chapter 5), Červinková (Chapter 6), and Pobłocki (Chapter 7). Brocki makes a persuasive argument on the theoretical pitfalls of engaged anthropology, but he foregrounds Western research while relegating an in-depth discussion of Polish research to the footnotes. In contrast, Pobłocki's chapter on action anthropology offers a 'thick' example of an engaged anthropologist who actively makes his own field in Poland. Although his chapter does not analyze what we can learn from engaged anthropology as it is practiced in the Polish twilight zone, Červinková's chapter hints at possible answers to this question. She argues that the Polish anthropologists' effort to combine engaged practice with theoretical developments constitutes a process of emancipation of Eastern European anthropology from the Cold War shadows and a deparochialization of established research ethics.

Other themes pursued in the book regard the concepts of memory (Kaniowska), democracy (Malewska-Szałygin), and religious aspects in medical anthropology (Rajtar). The latter chapter offers an interesting ethnography of Jehovah's witness in Germany, however, one could ask to what degree it fits into the theme of the volume. The chapter is posited as an example of Polish anthropology conducted away from home, but the research was conducted under the auspices of a German academic institution and the argument refers little to a 'decentered' perspective from the Polish borderland. Whether Rajtar's current Polish affiliation is enough to render her chapter as an example of Polish anthropological practice is an open question. This issue links to a wider question of how to define national anthropologies in times of academic hyper-mobility. What makes a given anthropology a national practice? Is it the nationality of the researcher, funding, institutional affiliation or perhaps a way of locating oneself in a particular research tradition? Buchowski recognizes this contentious issue in the first chapter, arguing that Polish anthropology is also an anthropology of peers, 'hybrids', and 'halfies'. Thus, we can treat Rajtar's chapter as a signal of the blurring of the boundaries of national anthropologies in their making of 'world anthropologies' (Ribeiro and Escobar 2006), where a nationally-specific perspective becomes increasingly difficult to define.

Overall, the book is an interesting contribution to the decentering of anthropological knowledge. It brings worthy insights from the borderlands and provides a rich reference to works of other anthropologists in Poland. However, not all the chapters give equal grounds to the book's main tenet about Polish anthropology as a twilight zone. Similarly, not all of them foreground the Polish or Eastern European intellectual legacy to the same

degree. Nevertheless, the idea of a 'twilight zone' warrants attention. It encourages a new way of looking at Polish (and other peripheral) anthropology and is worth pursuing further, with the promise of making the anthropology's world a 'flatter' place, to use Ulf Hannerz's (2010: 113–130) metaphor. The book is a recommendable read for anybody who is interested in the decentering of anthropological thought as well as the legacies and contemporary advancements of anthropology in Eastern European.

## REFERENCES

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ANNA MATYSKA  
INTEGRATION, MIGRATION AND  
MINORITIES RESEARCH CENTER  
KU LEUVEN  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
TAMPERE UNIVERSITY  
anna.matyska@kuleuven.be