

ity: is the Interactive Village forever trapped in 2003? Is it updated, or does it now have live feeds? Are older story potentials archived and recoverable?

In sum, this book is not without interest; but its premises (and inferences, gaps, and leaps) are so far from those of contemporary visual anthropologists that it will likely be passed over, especially if one is looking for a book for teaching.

Shelly Errington

**Yalçin-Heckmann, Lale:** *The Return of Private Property. Rural Life after Agrarian Reform in the Republic of Azerbaijan.* Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2010. 225 pp. ISBN 978-3-643-10629-2. (Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia, 24). Price: € 29.90

Agrarian reform in a post-Soviet society might seem like a topic of interest to a select group of agrarian economists, but Lale Yalçin-Heckmann has written a fascinating account of rural life in Azerbaijan that captures complexities rarely explored in scholarly literature on Azerbaijan. She begins this book with the observation that many rural dwellers in newly independent Azerbaijan did not cultivate land that was distributed to them for free through agrarian reform programs. This situation runs counter to the liberal economic notion that land ownership is sufficient motivation for land use. Yalçin-Heckmann argues against monocausal explanations by combining economic anthropology, political economy, and a focus on individual decision-making to assess why rural households did not cultivate their land even in cases of rural poverty.

Yalçin-Heckmann builds a solid, theoretical foundation for her study and cites three domains of explanation to frame her analysis. First, she asks how economic processes are embedded in spatially extensive economic and political structures. This focus directs her to assess the legacy of empires, state formation, Sovietization, patterns of economic development, and legal institutions of property in the region over time. Second, she asks how the composition and structure of rural households shape and motivate production and consumption at the household and village levels. This question motivates a survey of village households and their agriculture and other practices. Finally, she asks how ideologies of kinship and exchange influence land cultivation in ways not explained by rational, economic thinking. She weaves together a wealth of observation from her time in the field to address this question. She spent time predominantly in two areas: Təzəkənd and a settlement known as Pir in the Ismayilli region which is settled predominantly by Kurds.

Following an introductory chapter in which she lays out her theoretical framework, field methods, and data collection, in chapter 2 Yalçin-Heckmann takes a look at the historic role of agriculture, nomadic herding, and trade in Western Azerbaijan in pre-Soviet history. She recounts different interpretations of Russian penetration into predominantly Muslim areas of the Caucasus region and shifting policies of colonization and centralization. The predominance of the oil economy resulted in unevenly developed regions by the end of the nineteenth century marked in particular by the emergence of an industrial

city in contrast to a countryside that persisted in traditional ways.

In chapter 3, Yalçin-Heckmann carries the narrative from socialist structures to post socialist reforms. Here, she describes the Soviet policy of *korenizatsiia* the objective of which was to encourage non-Russian national identities. Later, in the 1930s, Stalinist policy aimed to break up regional entities and force dependence on vertical integration with the central state. In Azerbaijan, resistance to Stalin's policies took the form of tighter adherence to local networks and traditions. Around this time, many political refugees from Iran and deported Armenians arrived in Azerbaijan changing the population dynamics. Gorbachev's reforms in the 1980s included an antialcohol campaign and the destruction of viticulture there. In the early 1990s, Azerbaijan's independence brought the Karabakh conflict and widespread chaos in the countryside as systems of law and order disintegrated. Mandatory military service drew many young men from rural areas into the conflict often against their (or their families') wills. These turbulent times also saw the revitalization of vineyards and wine and cognac production to be sold illegally on a large scale. Opportunities also emerged for an expansion of trade and migratory movements from Azerbaijani villages to cities in Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. All of these processes affected the settlement patterns and identities of the rural Azerbaijani population. Despite maneuvering to acquire or use privatized plots of land, Yalçin-Heckmann points out that a lack of technical equipment, credit, transportation, and markets continue to limit the productivity of this land.

Yalçin-Heckmann shares the results of her village and household survey in chapter 4. She provides general information on her field sites: household size and composition, strategies for household plots (*məhlə* and *pay torpağı*), and general differences she observed in her rural field sites. Although almost all households cultivated their *məhlə* (household plot) as an important survival strategy, the size of these plots was not evenly distributed in the village. Also, the composition of produce grown on these plots had shifted toward fruits and vegetables for sale on national and international markets. In some areas, households gave sharecropping rights to others to cultivate their *pay* shares. These results provide some insights into variations among rural households and the cultivation of their allocated plots of land.

Chapter 5 takes a qualitative look at how and why households engage in a variety of strategies to mitigate vulnerability. Yalçin-Heckmann considers several female-led households to consider ways in which decision-making depends on a social context rather than individual goals. Each of the women whose story is told faces different challenges and has a unique social standing that shapes her decision-making. In each case, the role of kin, especially men, the availability or lack of capital gained during the Soviet years, and each woman's social capital all influenced whether or not or how these households used their plots of cultivable land. Social practices of conspicuous consumption, such as elaborate weddings, funerals, and gift-giving traditions influence decision-

making about the use of resources. Some young men in particular opt for the uncertainty of migration over the known difficulty of agriculture in rural Azerbaijan. Other vulnerabilities take the form of shortages: sufficient training but a lack of employment, sufficient land but a lack of capital to cultivate it, enough people in the household but not the right age and gender composition to enable cultivation of land, etc. Related to these issues are the moral economy of the village and solidarity among kin considered in chapter 6. The stories told throughout this chapter aptly illustrate the social norms and hierarchies, expectations, and value systems that dictate interactions among kin, the expenditure of time, energy, and financial or other resources all of which help to clarify meaning behind quantitative statistics of household practices.

Yalçın-Heckmann's examination of IDPs in chapter 7 offers an insightful and thought provoking look into Internally Displaced Persons and their experiences of identity, homeland, and citizenship. She carefully considers legal definitions of IDPs and forcibly displaced persons and the political role that they serve in Azerbaijan's position in regards to the Karabakh conflict. All of these points come into play on the issue of agrarian reform as Yalçın-Heckmann observes their significance in Azerbaijani laws concerning IDPs. Of one legal article, she notes, "this article is important, for it guarantees that the state will take responsibility for providing not only lodging but also a plot of land, of which the size and location will be decided by the local executive authority. This was the central argument of the IDPs in Pir for occupying the agricultural land around them" (172). Here, IDPs embody the importance of territory.

Yalçın-Heckmann's book is well-written, carefully argued, and demonstrates the importance of field studies in advancing an understanding of complex dynamics of human societies. This book would be useful for students and scholars of Azerbaijan, but it would also appeal more broadly to those interested in the Caucasus.

Shannon O'Lear

**Yetman, David A.:** *The Ópatas. In Search of a Sonoran People.* Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2010. 332 pp. ISBN 978-0-8165-2897-4. Price: £ 30.50

Since more than 50 years the social scientist David A. Yetman (Southwest Center, University of Arizona, Tucson) is doing his fieldwork in the Mexican border state of Sonora. His previous publications were mainly concerned with ecological and ethno-botanical studies in the border area. Now he uses his long experience in the field and his knowledge of colonial and early independent documents to summarize the history of the Ópatas, an indigenous society of the Mexican Northwest, from the pre-Columbian epoch to the present. The questions "how they lived, how their lands were, why they appear to have vanished, and what traces remain today" (15) are of the most concern. While colonial sources speak of many different ethnic groups, Yetman prefers the term Ópatan, embracing three groups: the Teguiamas (later called Ópatas), the Eudeves, and the Jova. They had their home in the Opatería, which

is roughly the area extending between the Sierra Madre Occidental in the East and the modern cities of Nogales and Hermosillo in the West; a semidesert area, but very fertile land due to the rivers of Sonora and Moctezuma. The modern town of Moctezuma (formerly called Oposura) is its major urban center.

The work is divided into six chapters, introducing in chapter 1 a broad picture of the area and its people. The second chapter describes the landscape of the Opatería, its natural characteristics, and the use of natural resources by indigenous people. In order to present possible paths of life of the Ópatan people before European influence, the author combines ethnobotanical and anthropological knowledge with research results from the archaeological site of Casas Grandes. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the Spanish conquest and the perception of the Ópatans by Spanish conquerors and missionaries. Yetman brings together the bits of pieces referring to Ópatans' reactions towards the invading Spaniards. According to the author, conquest failed in the beginning because of Ópatans' warfare strategies. But the invaders finally took advantage of the devastating effects of the numerous epidemic diseases spreading in the Opatería since 1530. Early colonial reports describe the Ópatans as a sophisticated sedentary agricultural society that was capable of surplus production and had far-reaching trading networks to the Southwest (USA). They lived in small towns and *rancherías*. Their houses used to be of wattle-and-daub-construction. Women wore elaborate long skirts made from deer skin, which the priests described as soft as silk while men wore only long skirts. Similar to neighboring societies, Ópatans had various religious rites and were avid beer brewers and drinkers. One has to say, however, that the picture of the Ópatans drawn in chapters 1 to 3 remains vague and mainly general, probably due to the few data available, but very similar to neighboring societies. The question arises if Ópatans in their customs and way of living were indeed so similar to Pima, Yaqui, Mayos, etc., or if the colonial writers simplified and equalized due to prejudices or poor knowledge. In both cases, a critical source analysis might have helped to better understand the origin of some of the statements, for example, by looking for stereotype expressions.

"The Jesuits" are topic of chapter 4, starting with the development of their missions in the Opatería and the introduction of cattle breeding leading to various conflicts between farmers (Ópatan) and cattlemen. Further sub-themes are: ethnic mixing and frequent diseases in the mission centers, conflicts with Franciscans on the "first right" of mission, the expansion of Jesuits' relation and power, the Ópatan rebellion in 1681–82, Ópatan-Jesuit relations, and Jesuit's struggle against witchcraft and sorcerers. As already signalled in the summary of chapters 1 to 4, the author structured his work chronologically and selected historic developments with large-scale consequences for the inhabitants of the Opatería. The fifth chapter concerns miners and mining industry – mainly silver and gold – which were most prominent in the colonial epoch but always short of labor force. Besides of working conditions for Ópatan and other workers, Yetman puts an