

and close themselves into some kind of local autonomy. Rather, they should engage in an “on-going struggle with state and capitalist actors”, as Cumbers (2012, 137) recently suggested. Nevertheless, as Eizenberg admits, there are good reasons for the conviction that capitalism is best fought from its margins (p. 170). Therefore to link politically conscious practices— this is to say resistance – to the process of institutionalization might be an unnecessary restriction. The independent character of urban social movements appears even more precious if one considers Lefebvre’s vision, according to which our most important political task is to imagine “a totally different kind of city” (Harvey, 2012, xvi).

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BEDOUIN OF MOUNT SINAI: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF THEIR POLITICAL ECONOMY, by Emanuel Marx, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013.

This unique book of Marx is based on a long period of in-depth ethnographic research conducted among the Bedouin of Mount Sinai (between 1972-1982 the author spent 12 months in field research). The book is divided into an introduction, seven chapters, conclusion, references and index.

Marx indicates that this study is dominated by one central theme: the reflection of global and regional politics and economics on the social forms and behaviors of the Bedouin. Alongside, Marx stresses that this study examines economic and political issues from an anthropological viewpoint.

The Introduction explains how Marx came to work with the Bedouin tribes of Mount Sinai, and how the book gradually took its shape. Following this, Chapter

One deals with the growth of a concept of nomads and cities. It tells how the Bedouin of Mount Sinai not only take part in an urbanized social order, but also that this urbanism is reflected in their complex specialized economy.

Chapter Two analyzes the political economy of Bedouin societies, and in doing so is devoted to a wide-ranging theoretical discussion of the political economy of Bedouin societies. This chapter shows that Bedouin are extremely efficient producers of various products (meat, milk products, hides, wool), and make an important contribution to their nations' economies. In exchange for their livestock and animal products the Bedouin acquire cereals and other staples, as well as other consumer goods essential for their lifestyle (such as tent cloths, clothing, bedding, cooking utensils, coffee, tobacco, and soap, as well as weapons and jewelry, which are all purchased in the marketplace).

Chapter Three describes the oasis in the desert. This chapter deals with the impact of the physical environment of Mount Sinai on the Bedouin population, as well as with the Bedouin's efforts to control their natural environment. For example, Marx argues that when Bedouin plant orchards in the mountain, they put more emphasis on inaccessibility than on the availability of soil or water.

Chapter Four discusses labor migrants and deals with balancing income and social security among the Bedouin. This chapter shows how labor migration completely transforms Bedouin men into cosmopolitan proletarians. Labor migration takes people out of their accustomed surroundings, separates them for long periods from their families and friends, places them in the lowest and least secure ranks of the host-economy, and exposes them to the whims of authorities and employers and to harsh living conditions. As migrant labor is rather involved in insecure work in distant regions, the Bedouin invest great efforts in building up a network of social security at home. Although labor migration has for generations played a major role in their lives, Bedouin have also engaged in horticulture, smuggling, commerce, trades, and crafts. Labor migrants who lost their jobs in town were soon fully integrated into less lucrative work at home, raised goats and camels, and engaged in agricultural work, enjoying the warmth and security afforded by their families, kinsmen, business associates, and fellow tribesmen. Further works might also want to question if and how the image of Bedouin masculinity is affected by the circular route from tribe to city and back.

Chapter Five examines illegal drug trade, and how the Bedouin became involved in the great international hashish trade in the 1950s; why drug trafficking stopped during the Israeli occupation which began in 1967, and how it resumed after the Sinai Peninsula was restored to Egyptian sovereignty in 1982. Following the restoration of Sinai to Egypt, the Egyptian State employed only a small number of Bedouin men, and even the formerly thriving Bedouin guest-lodges lost some of their customers. This resulted in a rapid deterioration of the Bedouin's economic situation. The hashish trade was revived soon enough, but this time with a difference: now the Bedouin smugglers not only conveyed drugs to the Nile Valley, but also sold them locally, both to the tourists and to fellow Bedouin, with the drug dealers and other men were gradually becoming drug consumers (interestingly, Marx implies to a gender-based, male-only drug consumption among Bedouin). The ancient Arabic

proverb is applied in such situation: “*tabbakh al-samm bidhugah*”: One who cooks poison tastes it.

Drug organizations resumed operations in Sinai with a broader list of goods, which now included a wide range of illegal substances (hashish, ecstasy, cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and opium). In addition to smuggling drugs, illicit commodities such as diamonds and weapons were imported to Sinai. Militant groups set up their own smuggling organizations, and/or gained control over existing ones. This was done in order to finance their activities which included terrorist attacks on hotels in Taba, Sharm al-Sheikh, and Dahab, targeting tourists, Egyptian military camps and policemen stations, and other governmental institutions.

Chapter Six estimates roving traders and the Bedouin's lifeline, and how the mobile traders from al-'Arish supply the Bedouin with most of the necessities of life, including wheat and corn, (the Bedouin staple foods. Since the traders from al-Arish are peasants (*fellahin*), the Bedouin see them as 'strangers/others' who are both separated from them and uniquely different from them. This amounts to the fact that Bedouin largely distrust these 'strangers' and complain that they exploit them systematically, although they could hardly survive without their services. So, the traders should be viewed as indispensable members of Bedouin society.

Chapter even outlines personal and tribal pilgrimages. Titled 'Imagining an orderly social world', the chapter examines the Bedouin's periodical personal pilgrimages to saints' tombs, as well as their annual tribal pilgrimages. It shows how the pilgrimages conjure up an orderly and just social world, how the tribesmen's annual gathering at the tomb of the tribal patron saint embodies the tribe, and how the pilgrimages momentarily bring together members of widely dispersed social network.

The socio-cultural experience of the pilgrimage and its related customs is manifested in several ways, which may include the communal sharing of mutual experiences of the spiritual pilgrimage, rekindling old friendships, trading, match-making, and varied social networking (particularly amongst women, as reflected in forms of swapping 'overt' and 'covert' information).

The Bedouin go through a rite of passage during the saint's pilgrimage, beginning in a familiar place - the tribe- followed by a journey to a distant location - the saint's shrine- and returning ideally changed, to the original point of departure -their tribe. The use of saint's tomb as a symbol of tribal ownership indicates that territorial rights are protected by supernatural sanctions. Bedouin store property, such as tents and farming implements, inside or near the holy tomb, secure in the belief that it is protected by the saint. The saint's tomb is covered by a shroud made of white or green cloth, which is occasionally embroidered with Islamic creed and the saint's name. There are usually several layers of shrouds, for each time a shroud is worn and torn it remains in place and a new one is placed on top of it. The saint represents both the tribe as conceptualized by the Bedouin, and the wide external world. His function is to mediate between the two worlds which together sustain the Bedouin. The Bedouin of southern Sinai make their pilgrimages on a threefold-tie base: those

between the tribe members, those between the tribes of southern Sinai and those between the tribe members and all of Islam.

The Conclusion deals with the radical changes that occurred in Santa Katarina region, based on the author's short stay in the region in 2009. Marx found that the Bedouin villages in the area had become Santa Katarina City, the appointed mayor was an old man from the Jambalaya Bedouin tribe; the city had a government building and police station, telephone communication, small hospital, new shopping arcade, hotels, and numerous stores. The traders from al-'Arish had been displaced by local and mainland Egyptian suppliers and store-owners. Many Bedouin constructed permanent houses. Now (in 2009) most men remained at home, and were either employed locally or essentially unemployed. Women had lost much of their previous independence; they no longer controlled the purse strings, and spent less time working in the orchards. This change was reflected in the way they dressed: in public they still wore black dresses that enveloped their bodies, and hid the colorful dresses they wore underneath.

Tourism seemed to play a major role in the local economy. The Santa Katarina monastery had become a major international tourist site, visited by a daily average of a thousand persons from Middle East and Eastern Europe. The monks upgraded their guesthouse into a hotel, and local Bedouin had set up half a dozen guesthouses. Most of these enterprises were not flourishing. Furthermore, the drug trade had resumed in an earnest; hashish still appeared to be staple drug used by Egyptians, as well as by hotel guests in Sinai.

Marx's study is a valuable contribution to the ethnographic study on pastoral nomads, and is useful reference for universities, colleges, researchers, students and individuals interested in the Bedouin tribes in the Middle East, economy, sociology and anthropology.

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## SPATIAL QUESTIONS: CULTURAL TOPOLOGIES AND SOCIAL

SPATIALISATIONS, by Rob Shields. London: SAGE, 2013

I am advocating a topological sensibility against merely using topology as a physical geography reference, using it aphoristically, or as a metaphor. Topological approaches work to contextualize objects and states, including cultural objects. They set cultural understandings and social status into institutional context that become the 'neighborhoods' in which extremely complex totalities can be made sense of (p.155).