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Perspectives

A Petroglyph from Tamgaly

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This is a photograph of an evocative image engraved into natural stone found in the Tamgaly valley of southeastern Kazakhstan. The anthropomorphic figure with a large round head riding a bull has provoked much debate among scholars over the decades since its discovery in the middle of the twentieth century (e.g., Maksimova 1958, Kšica 1966, Kuz'mina 1986, Rozwadowski 2001, Samashev 2002). This rock art scene is undoubtedly connected to the worldviews of an ancient society and demonstrates the closeness of intangible realities associated with religious experiences.

The most recent archaeological evidence strongly suggests that the image dates to approximately the fourteenth century BCE, corresponding to the Andronovo period (Bronze Age) in Kazakhstan (Rogozhinskii 2004). The

Andronovo people spread across Central Asia and are believed to have spoken an early form of Indo-Iranian language. Thus, some researchers argue that the ancient texts of the Avesta (Iranian) and Rig Vedas (Indian) are potential sources in the reconstruction of the mythology behind this scene at Tamgaly (Kuz'mina 1986: 116ff). The radiating lines may indicate that this was a depiction of the Avestan god Mithra, who has some solar attributes or, perhaps, it could have been the Vedic god Indra who has associations with bulls and cows.

It is important to note, however, that the process of image-making would have also involved other dynamic facets that can be explored. In particular, the Tamgaly image can be seen as relating to visions or dreams. There are other figures in Tamgaly valley with enlarged heads that radiate lines or halos of dots, which strongly suggest they were visions of other worlds (Rozwadowski 2001, Lymer 2006). Our scene could have been the divine manifestation of a forgotten god carved into the rock similar to a Buddhist *thangka* [sacred image], or perhaps it was the representation of the personal experiences of an individual, such as a mystic or shaman, who achieved states of ecstasy.

Furthermore, the carving of this image into the rock surface may be akin to the role of tattooing the skin in indigenous societies, an atropaic practice of imbuing protective symbols that may have amplified the potency of the rocks in this special place. This image of power was perhaps drawn upon to access other extraordinary beings or used to activate the rock face as a veil separating other worlds. Therefore, this scene was not simply placed in the hillside to be aesthetically appreciated as a picture in a “primitive” art gallery, but instead played an active part in an ancient sacred landscape where interactions between people and other entities could have been performed.

All in all, we may never know the original use and meanings of this or other Tamgaly scenes, but

the Bronze Age artists have created unexpected worlds that go beyond traditional understandings of “primitive” art as the simplistic expression of aesthetics and yet, at the same time, immerse us into their enigmatic realms from the deep past.

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Theory, Like Mist on Glasses...”: A Response to Laura Adams

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Previously in *CESR* (Vol. 7, No. 1, Spring 2008), Laura Adams asked whether we, as specialists of Central Eurasia, can appropriately and usefully apply postcolonial theory to the study of our region since the collapse of the USSR. She further asked a series of history-laden questions about the nature of the Soviet Empire, nationalism, and modernity, all subjects of special complexity in their own right, but even more so when addressed together as Adams does. A social scientist herself with substantial training in the expansive realms of theory, she is nevertheless cautious in her analysis of postcolonial theory as it is applied to Africa and South Asia, preeminently by literary critics but also by sociologists, political scientists, and historians. She might have added East Asia, for which the journal *Positions* has led the way since 2000 as a vehicle for

the expression of theoretical and multidisciplinary methodologies in the explorations of postcoloniality.

In the spirit of a conversation, I would like to respond to some of the observations and comments that Adams, speaking for herself or relating her understanding of the writings of others, offered in *CESR*. As a historian of a certain age, I am not particularly well trained in either social or political theory, but I do appreciate the theoretical landscapes that many others have painted and traversed. And while Charlie Chan’s admonition that “theory, like mist on glasses, obscures facts” is fair warning, I am happy to wander among the pillars of Continental theorists, whether Parisian, Berliner, or Rigan, with forays along paths forged by Brits and South Asians as well.

That said, let me offer a few remarks. First, the natures of the Soviet Union as empire and

Central Asia as colon(y)ies are questions more vexing than substantive in that, as Adams remarks, “we are still developing our analysis of the Soviet Union as an empire” and we “need to understand more completely the ways that it [Central Asia] was colonial” (Adams 2008: 2). There may be few any longer who deny the fundamentally imperial character of the USSR, yet fewer still seem willing to pursue such research tasks as will broadly augment our understanding. More troubling is the declining number of younger scholars probing the histories and deeper cultural issues associated with the relevant communities, leaving the arena more and more to those with more current interests or lacking in the *Sitzfleisch* to devote time and energy to excavating the frequently half-buried texts in less-commonly learned languages dispersed in far off repositories. What good are newly opened archives or special library collections and their treasures if there is no one to reveal their contents? I still vividly recall in 1973 the occasion in the Lenin Library when, as I stood — with an obvious look of frustration — in the area where the public catalogues sat and I realized, once again as I had at the *Publichka* in then Leningrad, that what I needed to find was not in these drawers, a young woman staffer asked “May I help you?” Hearing of my simple desire, she beckoned me to follow, through a labyrinth of desks, staffers, and offices into the bowels of the library where, as the lighting grew dimmer and dimmer and the signs of activity literally disappeared, we arrived at the door to a darkened room. Throwing the entrance open, she flicked on the lights and there stood the secreted card catalogue that contained the records of all Turkic-language texts published in the Russian Empire! Has anyone been to that room since? Without the information contained in those texts, how can the Soviet experiment mean anything other than a view from the center? If only for the obvious and not-so-obvious transitions that were underway roughly eighty years ago, what can we say **broadly** about the 1920s and 1930s? An inclination toward postcolonial theorizing may be exciting, provocative, and enlightening, but does it work in the archives where excavation rather than extensive rumination is required? Theory **may** be an important part of how research is formulated and executed (perhaps it depends upon the nature of the research), but theory may also be improperly raised to a level of importance for particular research; it may be an excuse for arguing the importance of certain research; it may be wrong in pursuit of some

research; it may be unnecessary at many stages of research; it may produce results incommensurate with the expense dedicated to its application, and so forth. These are old arguments, but the fact that they continue to rile many is testimony to the tensions between beliefs in history as art and social studies as scientific pursuit.

Second, the postcolonial approach to the study of the post-Soviet is, it seems to me, inadequate without the application of its methodology to the study of the post-Tsarist, where it has seldom if ever found a subject. Does it mean nothing to communities of peoples that they have experienced colonialism twice in the same century, once classically monarchical and capitalist, the other totalitarian and Marxist? Whatever their differences, both Tsarist and Soviet administrators and policy makers were insistent modernists, seeking to drag their catches into a current and future lifeway that required them to divest themselves of — abandon — the fruits of their own long and deeply embedded commentary traditions. The emergence of ethnic/national identities on the eve of and especially after 1991 were not merely a dialectical consequence of the decades of Soviet rule, but were also, if we accept the argument, a dialectical consequence of decades and centuries of Tsarist rule. Partha Chatterjee — whose postcolonial theories (1993) Adams explores as possibly relevant for Central Eurasianists (2008: 2-3) — has no need to confront this double take, given his focus on the British Empire in India, so we need to be extremely cautious in looking to such scholars for theoretical guidance.

Third, postcolonial theory, despite or perhaps because of its lure, disguises as much as it reveals. Chatterjee and his colleagues insist on seeing colonial society as filled with imperial handlers and their indigenous subordinates on the one hand, and a mass of subalterns — who may or may not have voices — on the other. Ideological blinders securely in place, they are too comfortable with a nearly dichotomous world of bad and good, in which social complexity, cultural exchange, and real intellectual ferment are ignored. Why? Arguably for the sake of reinventing a past in which an entire layer of people — the indigenous venturesome, curious, talented — are themselves denied a voice because they joined, with conviction or reluctantly, the presumed enemy. To desire both modernity and nationalism for the masses or a more attractive cultural equivalency between West and non-West is not sufficient for either to occur globally as a phenomenon of multiple originations. To desire to mute the importance and

influence of the West in the global transformations continually underway (for good or ill) is not sufficient to suppose that either modernity or nationalism has anything to do with the organic evolution of non-Western communities. Signs of “capitalist sprouts” or other suggestions of emerging modernity are either nothing of the kind or a consequence of the already affective penetration of Western influence, making the argument for multiple modernities indefensible, unless one is talking about nothing more than the addition of cultural coloring and tone to the single epistemology and history that produced the possibility of modernity. Only in an intellectually wistful world, wherein political goals are preeminent, can desire rooted in ideology lead us so astray.

Dealing with elites is as tricky as dealing with the masses. We cannot trust that what they say and write is transparent. They certainly cannot be easily categorized. But these facts are not an argument for dismissing examination of their role in the evolution of societies, or conflating roles that ought to be differentiated. Thus, when Chatterjee and others claim “that colonial nationalism is first a cultural movement based on the defense of local sovereignty over an inner or spiritual domain” (in the formulation of Adams 2008: 3), they collapse categories of elites that emerge from within the colonial domain: that is, the category of pre- or non-nationalists, who typically ally themselves closely with the empire (British, Tsarist, Soviet) and are committed to its “universalizing discourse”; and the category of nationalists, who cannot ally themselves closely with the empire and still retain credibility. The pre- and non-nationalist elites minimize cultural difference for the sake of the homogenizing ideology of the modernizing empire, and politics is ignored for the sake of mobilizing resources for the general advancement of the empire, and, in a kind of “trickle down” mechanism, local society and its people as well. The nationalists view culture not as homogenizing but as a marker of difference, needing revitalization so that it can be turned against the empire. Thus, culture becomes the *sine qua non* not for joining the empire, but for defeating it, not an end in its own right, but the handmaiden of politics.

Finally, we encounter the dichotomy of the inner and outer worlds, the spiritual and material worlds, and the worlds of “ours” and of “theirs” that Chatterjee asserts (Adams 2008: 3). Historically, intellectuals from rather diverse cultures have employed these presumed differences to defend the autonomy and value of their own culture against the

pretensions of the West. Chinese intellectuals in the nineteenth century did so through the articulation of the conceptual tool “*ti* and *yong*” that allowed for the preservation of essential Chinese culture in the face of growing Western intrusion into the Sinitic world. It was unsuccessful in China as it has been elsewhere in the nineteenth century and now. The problem is not the West per se, but the “modern” culture that it evolved into and that seems unstoppable in its penetration across cultural borders despite the efforts, sometimes heroic, sometimes cruel, of many who would wish that reality were different.

Laura Adams asks “to what extent does this story fit the case of Soviet Central Eurasia?” (Adams 2008: 3) My answer is that it does not, and the reasons may be twofold: first, because the regional anti-colonial movements initially emerged in opposition to the Tsarist Empire, then continued in opposition to Bolshevik theory and policy that gradually revealed themselves after October 1917 as imperialist. The result might have been “typical” in other circumstances, but there was nothing typical about Bolshevik insistence that the ends justify the means or Bolshevik willingness to utilize any means to attain its ends. The second reason is that despite the enormous failures of the Soviet system, in one crucial way it was remarkably successful: in gaining the acquiescence of the largest part of its population to the necessity of modernity. It did so in part by permitting a modicum of nationalist “form” to surround the “socialist” content dictated from Moscow; it also did so by assaulting religion in all of its visible forms, thereby driving God either underground or into the private recesses of individual hearts and minds. Today one finds little if any resistance to modernity in post-Soviet Central Eurasia, and little energy for the kind of extremist religious revival one sees elsewhere among Muslims.

In the mid-nineteenth century, a debate ensued between European and Islamic intellectuals in Russia and elsewhere, and also among Russian Muslims themselves, over the relationship between Islam and progress (modernity). It was part of a much larger debate in European circles over the place, if any, for religion generally in the modern world. Among Russian Turks, beginning with Volga Tatars, Azerbaijani, and Crimean Tatars, this debate traveled further, toward a conviction that modernity’s path trumped the path long identified in the commentary tradition that they all shared and that required the immanence of God. A word was

coined to identify the movement to which the debate gave rise — jadidism, which can be defined in its simplest form as that which is modern (as explored more fully in Lazzerini 1988, 1992). A cultural phenomenon on the order of Chatterjee's description, by 1906 it would be replaced among intellectual elites by nationalist political movements representing the local interests of Turks dispersed across the Russian Empire, and then by World War I an internationalist political movement under the banner of Marxism/Leninism. The rest, they say, is history, the history of a long caesura during which the Soviet regime forced the pace of modernity's unfolding among its Central Eurasian and other subjects while fostering a kind of bipolar schizophrenia torn between nationalism and postcoloniality on the one hand, and unrelenting imperialism on the other.

History read this way — as concerned less with a date (1917) than with complex processes detached from the world of Lenin and the Bolsheviks — leaves us with different questions about pre- and post-1917 and pre- and post-1991, as well as with questions less reliant for their formulation upon theories than upon texts and less focused on abstractions than on local specifics. Some may argue that to apply a postcolonial approach to what came after Tsarist rule of Central Eurasia requires that one accept that the Soviet Union entailed a process of decolonization, a veritable unlocking of the “prison house of nations” that Lenin argued the Tsarist regime had built for its ethnic minorities. But specialists of South Asian history, for example, do not apply their postcolonial theories to the region only at some point in time when Britain was in the process of decolonizing its empire, which would have been rather late in the history of the dominion. The most extensive work on British India focuses on the work of the British Empire at its peak, its agents, and the dissenters to its presence. So, once again, I ask: Why do postcolonial theorists not find the Bolshevik regime a perfect target for their theorizing, and why is Britain a more appropriate object of postcolonial attention? I have an opinion that annoys almost everyone whenever I articulate it: that postcolonial theory is mostly rooted in detestation of Euro domination of what is essentially modern, and the sources of that detestation are mostly, on the one hand, nationalist aspirations, and on the other, a combination of liberal guilt and leftist ambition. The former supporters of Soviet imperialism have little audience these days, but they do have current allies

in those who refuse to write the history of that empire with the very theories that they more than eagerly apply to British, French, German, Japanese, or US imperialism. Caveat emptor!

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Editor's Note: Given that the author wrote this piece to stimulate a “conversation,” we highly encourage submissions that keep the dialogue going by expressing further issues, arguments, and positions on this topic. Please send your essays for consideration to elazzeri@indiana.edu and vmartin2@wisc.edu.

Research Reports

Reports on Research Findings

A New “Frontier Thesis” for the Northwest Chinese Borderland? The Reinvention of Xinjiang from a Place of Chinese Exile to a Land of Opportunity

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Dominated primarily by Turkic-speaking oasis dwellers, Xinjiang historically has operated as a crossroads — a diverse Eurasian land with alternating and shifting political, economic, and cultural ties to its many neighbors in China, Central Asia, and South Asia. Though Western scholars often refer to Xinjiang as such (Millward 2007), Chinese popular consciousness, reflected in scholarship, fiction, TV dramas, and informal conversations, seems to have given way to a new conception of Xinjiang that treats the Chinese migration of the post-1949 time period as an uplifting story, in which many people were able to reinvent themselves and capitalize on opportunities that were not available to them in “Inner China” [*Nei Di*], a commonly used term to refer to China Proper, which excludes Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Manchuria.¹ After interviewing many disgruntled settlers, reading published personal essays and autobiographies, and investigating the historical conditions of settlement through local histories and newspapers, I was struck by the disconnect between this idea of Xinjiang as a land of opportunity and the long-standing idea of Xinjiang as a cultural backwater that served as a place of either de facto or de jure exile, an idea which continued to resonate for Chinese immigrants to Xinjiang under Mao’s China. This report is an attempt to wrestle with some of the contradictions between the story of my dissertation about 1950s migration and the narratives that I encountered in my fieldwork. It is my hope that

¹ I encountered this idea in exactly those terms recently in the US during a conversation with a new Chinese colleague (Cincinnati, Ohio, September 2008).

these findings fit into a larger discussion about recent reconfigurations of the history of migration to Central Eurasia from imperial or national centers, the origins of these new narratives, and their significance and resonance in popular culture.

Over three trips taken in the summer of 2004, the fall of 2005, and the summer of 2007, I conducted fieldwork in Shihezi. While collecting textual material for my dissertation, I also conducted 46 interviews with original Maoist pioneers and their now adult children in the Manas River area of northern Xinjiang. I interviewed people within the city Party leadership, professors and journalists, students at the university, as well as farmers and vendors living on Bingtuan² farms as far as three hours away from the city center. Borders are often considered places of crossing and mixing, where diverse cultures rub up against one another, both irritating and marking the other. In my interviews I framed questions with the intention of investigating this idea of cross-cultural mediation among the Chinese settlers who are conceptually, ideologically, and often economically positioned between the center and periphery. To what extent do they straddle Chinese and Central Asian cultures? Do the places where they live and work function as a middle ground?³ Or, as James Reardon-Anderson

² “Bingtuan” is the frequently used short form of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Army Group (*Xinjiang Shengchan Jianshe Bingtuan*).

³ This term refers to Richard White’s (1991) description of Indian/White relations in the Great Lakes region from 1650-1815 as processes of accommodation. This accommodation takes place in a “middle ground,” a place

argues in his work on migration to Manchuria, do Chinese migrant communities operate less as middle grounds and more as transplanted Chinese settlements?⁴ Specifically, what is the relationship between “Han” and Xinjiang in Chinese settlements?

However, before I began to answer these questions, I realized that the way that Chinese settlers in Xinjiang were portrayed in the interviews was neither as intermediaries to Central Asian culture nor as transplanted Chinese communities. Whether or not these communities analytically fit a type of middle ground or transplantation thesis, they saw themselves in a way that was more reminiscent of Turner’s frontier thesis that an inventive and individualistic spirit developed among settlers out west in the context of isolation and physical hardship in ways that reinvigorated the core.⁵ The similarities between this understanding of the “frontier” and the current reconfiguration of Xinjiang by Han Chinese are discussed in the second half of the report. What are the characteristics of this new self-image? How prevalent is it among settler communities in Xinjiang? Why has it captured the imaginations of Han Chinese citizens whom I have encountered in the US, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and many places in Mainland China? The following report offers some preliminary observations based on these interviews, organized according to two distinctions that were asserted as central to Chinese immigrant communities in Xinjiang, those based on native place and those based on the idea of the borderland as a homeland for a pioneer culture.

“Native Place” in the Borderland

When the Chinese Communist Party came to power in 1949, leaders in the People’s Liberation Army

between cultures and peoples, and between empires and non-state villages (White 1991).

⁴ While White’s middle ground thesis was intended as a corrective to Frederick Jackson Turner’s (1906) description of the role of the American west in US history, Reardon-Anderson (2005) argues that neither thesis fits the late imperial and republican periods of Chinese settlement in Manchuria. Instead he offers the “transplantation thesis,” according to which the transformation of people, practices, and institutions does *not* occur in the midst of migration, settlement, and interaction with people in the northern borderland.

⁵ See the first chapter in Turner (1921) for the explanation of this idea, which he first presented in a paper at a special meeting of the American Historical Association in 1893.

continued an imperial policy of populating military-agricultural settlements in distant borderland regions with soldier-farmers, poor peasants, and prisoners or exiles from the imperial core in central and eastern China (Perdue 2005). The Chinese Communist Party sent a variety of groups in the first two decades of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to closed-off military-agricultural oasis towns, including former Nationalist Army soldiers, rural women recruited into the Xinjiang branch of the PLA to serve as potential marriage partners, veterans of the People’s Liberation Army who were transferred to civilian life as part of massive demobilization efforts in the years after the Korean war, rural young people who were part of a large national movement to build up state farms in the borderland (which was overseen by General Wang Zhen and the recently established Ministry of State Farms and Land Reclamation beginning in 1956), and urban youth from cities such as Shanghai and Tianjin.⁶ These pioneers in Mao’s China were largely unwilling participants, having been directly assigned, deceived through false information about the length and terms of settlement, or pressured through the deprivation of job and housing opportunities in their hometown.⁷ As I conducted research for my dissertation on this topic, I explored the question of how settler communities were built to reflect ideas about “new China” in Xinjiang. Along the way, I also encountered, and still encounter, efforts to rewrite the personal stories of these pioneers as part of a new narrative that portrays Xinjiang as a land of opportunity and reinvention of oneself.

Fifty years ago Xinjiang was a place known in eastern and central China for its barren and hostile landscape and nominal Chinese presence. Today most train tickets to the capital city of Urumqi are sold out. The present-day train ride is a drastic improvement over the weeks or months that it would have taken several decades ago, particularly before the tracks were laid in the early 1960s. Even up through the 1970s, the trains offered only hard seats and the journey took four to five days.⁸ My most recent journey in 2007 was a little over 40 hours as I traveled through many different provinces and stopped briefly in over two dozen cities. During one conversation, a middle-aged Chinese woman mentioned that she resided in Xinjiang while most of

⁶ For the most recent analyses of early PRC migration, see Amy Kardos (2008) and James Z. Gao (2008: 184-204).

⁷ For examples, see chapter two in Kardos (2008).

⁸ Interview, Ithaca, New York, January 2005.

her family was in Shanghai, a product of the government-sponsored migration of the Mao era. Her bunkmate's situation was the opposite: she resided in Shanghai but was born in Xinjiang to parents that had been sent during the Cultural Revolution. Though her entire family had moved back to Shanghai, she was going to visit childhood friends who were still in Xinjiang. More importantly, she had a son who had never been to Xinjiang and she wanted to show him her place of birth. I asked them if they were Xinjiang people or Shanghai people, using a common classification of regional identity. The two women responded that they were both.⁹ How can two women, one of whom lives in Shanghai and one of whom lives in Xinjiang, claim that they are both Shanghai and Xinjiang people?

Some scholars have posited that native place identity in China has often operated as an ethnic identity, one that is inherited rather than simply a designation of birthplace (Honig 1997). The term "Xinjiang person" can refer to a place of residence or a place of birth, but it does not necessarily refer to a Chinese "native place," which is a place associated with parents or even grandparents that they may have never visited. Because of this, "Xinjiang person" and "Shanghai person" do not necessarily contradict one another; regional identity can be flexible with individuals choosing to express different regional affiliations in different situations. The question of regional identity is therefore less useful for understanding changing Chinese ideas about Xinjiang. However, burial practices are one context in which people may have to make a choice between regions. An interesting recent development is the growth of a number of Chinese cemeteries in the Shihezi area. Many of the Maoist pioneers who did not return home after the 1980s are choosing to be buried in Xinjiang. When I asked what influences this decision, one informant indicated that it was largely based on where the children of the settlers lived.¹⁰ Since their children were in Xinjiang, the original migrants were buried in Xinjiang despite the fact that it is not their native place or even their place of birth.

A diverse group of regional identities has produced some degree of mixing within the Chinese community, though certain groups are privileged while others experience discrimination. Most of the

settlers in the state farms of the Shihezi area in the 1950s were from Henan Province. As a result, the farms in the Shihezi area are full of people who speak what is referred to as "Henan Mandarin," which is not the same as the Henan language spoken in the Henan Province but rather a unique version of Mandarin [*putong hua*] that has emerged as a result of large-scale migration and includes influences from Sichuan and Shanghai as well.¹¹ In the nearby city of Kuitun, Hunan people and Sichuan people also spoke a modified version of the Henan language. In one particular case, a man went to visit his parents in Henan after decades of living in Xinjiang. When he was there, his family asked him why he was not speaking the Henan language, but he thought that he was.¹²

So many Henan people came to the Shihezi area that many Chinese settlers in other parts of Xinjiang associate people from the Shihezi area with Henan people. One informant, Mr. Chen, mentioned that his mother-in-law would not let her daughter marry him. She knew that Mr. Chen was from a farm in Shihezi and did not believe that he was from Gansu instead of Henan. Only after having a conversation with his father did she come to accept that he was not a Henan person and then she allowed her daughter to marry him.¹³ Many Henan people are looked at unfavorably, which is why the informant's mother-in-law was only reassured once she discovered that he was a Gansu person, understanding of course that he was actually born in Shihezi, Xinjiang. This example indicates that native place remains important in social relationships in the Han Chinese community in Xinjiang.

Native place also functions as an important relationship linking the original Maoist pioneer community and the recent economic migrants. An informant by the name of Mr. Gao is one such recent migrant who works within the Bingtuan. Having come from Henan Province in 1994 in order to find a better job, he set himself up as a small-time trader, taking goods from the surrounding farms to the markets. His knowledge of Xinjiang's economic opportunities and ability to move was due to

⁹ Interview, Shanghai, August 2007.

¹⁰ Interview, Shihezi, Xinjiang, August 2007.

¹¹ A series of interview with Gong Yuan, Xinjiang University language professor, who discussed the results of her recent research. Urumqi, Xinjiang, October 2005.

¹² Interview, Xinjiang University, Urumqi, Xinjiang, October 2005.

¹³ Interview, Xinjiang University, Urumqi, Xinjiang, November 2005.

connections that he had among the large population of fellow Henan people who had come to Xinjiang as part of Mao's movement of youth to build up the borderland (the *Zhibian* movement). Mr. Gao had also married a "Henan person" by traditional Chinese conceptions of native place, but she was actually born in Xinjiang. Her parents had been government-sponsored settlers and she had grown up within the Bingtuan. Mr. Gao, Mr. Gao's wife, and Mr. Gao's brother are all Henan people, a designation that remains important in linking people of different birthplaces and economic positions.¹⁴

Not all recent migrants come to Xinjiang through native place connections. One such informant, Mr. Wang, opened a recycling factory that turns layers of white, shredded plastic bags into small plastic pellets to be used in a variety of manufacturing plants in other places in Xinjiang and elsewhere in China. When he came from Anhui Province in eastern China in 1997 he brought his brother and nephew to start the business. Most of his workers who are not family members are also recent migrants from Anhui or Henan. They only work for him for a few years before moving on. He has moved several times himself. Before he came to Xinjiang, he went to other distant border regions including Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia looking to improve his financial situation. He does not plan to go back to Anhui when he retires. He states that Shihezi is his home now.¹⁵ Both Mr. Gao and Mr. Wang plan to stay in Shihezi, but the recent economic migrants also include many sojourners, who plan to return to their hometown after making what money they can in Xinjiang.¹⁶

Many of the children of the Maoist pioneers were born in Shihezi and plan to raise their children in Xinjiang, though they hope that their children can find better economic opportunities in China Proper or abroad. Most of them have visited the birthplaces of their parents in Innerland China, understand the dialects of their parents, though they may not be able to speak them fluently.¹⁷ These second and third generations also expressed another layer of Xinjiang Han identity that transcends native place: one that is based on degree of "frontier" culture.

¹⁴ Interview, Shihezi, Xinjiang, August 2007.

¹⁵ Interview, Shihezi, Xinjiang, August 2007.

¹⁶ Conversation with Prof. Stanley Toops, Seattle, Washington, 2007 CESS Annual Conference, October 2007.

¹⁷ Interviews, Shihezi, Xinjiang, 2005 and 2007.

Borderland as Homeland: Pioneer Identities

Expanding upon his work on the role of the Western frontier in US history, Frederick Jackson Turner stated,

The men of 'Western waters' or the 'Western world,' as they loved to call themselves, developed under conditions of separation from the older settlements and from Europe. The lands, practically free, in this vast area not only attracted the settler, but furnished opportunity for all men to hew out their own careers. The wilderness ever opened a gate of escape to the poor, the discontented, and the oppressed [...] Grappling with new problems under these conditions, the society that spread into this region developed inventiveness and resourcefulness, the restraints of custom were broken, and new activities, new lines of growth, and new institutions were produced (1906: 39).

Five points in this passage offer parallels with the stories of Maoist pioneers related in the course of interviews by various Chinese settlers in Xinjiang: 1) the development of new towns in physically remote and isolated settings; 2) Xinjiang as a place with an abundance of land and wide-open unoccupied space; 3) the idea that any person of any background could find a job and a career in Xinjiang; 4) the "wilderness" creating opportunities for social mobility and personal reinvention; and 5) the emergence of new characteristics such as inventiveness and resourcefulness in response to new problems, which eventually became part of the borderland settlement culture and supposedly reinvigorated the core.

Many second and third generation Xinjiang Han asserted their identity according to the time period when the family came to Xinjiang and thus their degree of "frontier" culture. In a version of rugged individualism, they stressed their knowledge of the local landscape and ability to brave the harsh environment.¹⁸ Several informants said that Bingtuan people in particular are known throughout China for being hard-working, though some admitted that their reputation was due to their desire to escape the poor conditions of the Bingtuan farms.¹⁹

¹⁸ Interview, Shihezi, Xinjiang, August 2007.

¹⁹ Interview, Shihezi, Xinjiang, October 2005.

In the interviews, many Xinjiang Han also emphasized multiculturalism. One informant stated that the thinking of Xinjiang Han is more open because many different kinds of people live in Xinjiang, from both other parts of China and other nationalities.²⁰ She argued that Xinjiang's economy may be more backward, but the thinking there is more open-minded and advanced. She also attributed this openness to the fact that the Chinese community in Xinjiang is relatively new and therefore more open to outside ideas and influences, and is less constrained by traditions. This idea is consistent with the idea of Turner's "frontier" as a place of rebirth and new opportunities, an idea that was less true for the Maoist pioneers who largely did not choose to go to Xinjiang, but perhaps has more relevance for the more recent economic migrants. However, it is interesting that Maoist pioneers were often discussed in similar terms despite the understanding of Xinjiang as a place of exile when they were sent in the Maoist period.

Not all Xinjiang Han saw this idea of multiculturalism as an asset. One such informant asked me why I wanted to study Shihezi, arguing that it was not an interesting place because it had no history.²¹ I responded to his question by stating that I wanted to learn about Xinjiang's history, to which he replied that I should study Kashgar or Hetian [Khotan] or the ancient Silk Road. I then stated that I wanted to learn about Chinese culture, to which he replied that I should go to Shanghai or Beijing or Guangzhou.²² To him, Shihezi was neither representative of Xinjiang nor of China. It was considered backward on both cultural fronts. This idea of being marginalized both within Xinjiang and within China was also mentioned by a university professor, who referred to the Xinjiang Han as second-class citizens.²³ When I asked if this was a term that other Xinjiang Han used, she said they often expressed the sentiment in terms of being "children without a mother" or "children raised by a stepmother" in order to describe the position of Xinjiang Han in Xinjiang and in China, which is ironic considering that Uyghurs in Kazakhstan expressed similar sentiments in Sean Roberts'

documentary, "Waiting for Uighuristan."²⁴ She stated that many Xinjiang Han feel that Uyghurs do not respect the Han in Xinjiang, particularly Uyghur taxi drivers, while people in China Proper think that people from Xinjiang are more backward than them.²⁵ For this woman and many others, they thought of themselves as having particular attributes unique to the borderland experience, such as the ability to thrive in harsh environments, to work hard and persevere with limited resources, to negotiate a multicultural landscape, and to be open and adapt to outside influences.

It is important to note that this pioneer identity in Shihezi in many ways is superficial. Most of my informants admitted that they did not know many Uyghurs personally and that they do not speak Uyghur. Perhaps historical experience, local knowledge, and degree of frontier culture are being increasingly emphasized as the Han Chinese communities of the Mao era come into contact with the post-1980s economic migrants, and as travel between China Proper and Xinjiang become more commonplace. Such characteristics have also been explicitly promoted by the Bingtuan leadership through both print and digital media, one of the least subtle examples being the website www.neoasis.com. Yet, it seems as though the content of that "frontier" culture has little to do with redefining "Han" in terms of Xinjiang's culture. My fieldwork experience thus far seems to indicate that embracing a pioneer identity that incorporates the desert and semi-desert landscapes of Xinjiang has not meant also embracing the Turkic-languages and Central Asian culture of Xinjiang into daily practices and social relationships. In my post-doctoral stages of research, I plan to continue to investigate these questions about Chinese culture through more fieldwork and archival research, focusing on the use of history of the Maoist experience in constructing Xinjiang Han identity in post-Mao Xinjiang.²⁶

²⁰ Interview, Shihezi, Xinjiang, October 2005.

²¹ Interview, Urumqi, Xinjiang, September 2005.

²² Interview, Urumqi, Xinjiang, September 2005.

²³ Series of interviews, Xinjiang University, Urumqi, Xinjiang, October 2005-November 2005.

²⁴ Sean R. Roberts, "Waiting for Uighurstan" [a Documentary, English Version]. Los Angeles: Sean R. Roberts & The Center for Visual Anthropology at the University of Southern California, 1996.

²⁵ Series of interviews, Xinjiang University, Urumqi, Xinjiang, October 2005-November 2005.

²⁶ Comments and continued discussion of these preliminary findings are welcome. Please email me at kardosa1@nku.edu.

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Community Governance and State Building in Rural Afghanistan

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Since 2001, the international community and the Afghan Government have embarked on a massive "state building" project, the purpose of which is to create institutions at the local and national levels to govern a country that has rarely seen authority extend far beyond Kabul. The first step in this process was the ratification of a new Constitution in 2003, followed by Presidential elections in 2004 and Parliamentary and Provincial Council elections in 2005. Both academic debates on state-building and policy efforts to create new institutions focus heavily on the creation and establishment of these national-level institutions. Despite significant strides toward constructing national institutions, there has been little discussion of the future of village or community governance in Afghanistan. My research seeks to fill part of this gap by investigating sources of formal and informal governance in Afghanistan through in-depth field research conducted in 32 villages across rural Afghanistan in 2007. The research described in this paper is part of my dissertation, *The Microfoundations of State*

Building: Informal Institutions and Public Goods in Rural Afghanistan.

Another motivation for this study is to provide systematic analysis of the nature of local governance in Afghanistan from the perspective of individuals at the very lowest level of organization — the community or village level. During years of warfare, scholars speculated about the stability of customary organizations such as village councils (*shuras*, *jirgas*), religious leaders (*mullahs*, *imams*) and village executives (*maliks*, *arbabs*, *khans*, *qaryadars*). While warfare and migration have altered these organizations, I find that they remain vital to governance at the village level. Emphasis on their "traditional" features conceals their "modern" capacities to govern. This research does not make a normative argument about the role such organizations should play in political life. Instead, it considers their ability to provide public goods, in an increasingly crowded institutional landscape at the community-level. I find that neglecting the role of these organizations in the diagnostic phase of state

building increases project costs as well as enhances risk of policy failure.

Donors and other external actors engaged in local governance in Afghanistan focus their attention on the more than 20,000 newly-minted, donor supported Community Development Councils (CDCs) created by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), with nearly \$1 billion in funding from the World Bank and other bilateral donors. CDCs are to provide a platform where communities can map out development priorities and then receive a grant of up to \$60,000 per community (\$200 per household) for infrastructure or other projects. In principal, members of CDCs should be both men and women and should be elected by villagers through secret ballots. MRRD contracted more than 24 (mostly) international NGOs to create the CDCs, rather than implementing the project directly. Despite the wealth of reports describing the impact of CDCs, almost none of the research on this had been conducted independently, without the support or accompaniment of the implementing NGOs. Through discussions and interviews in the pre-fieldwork stage, it was clear that MRRD sought to replace the “traditional” system with a more “modern” form that included women and other marginalized groups. I investigate the prospects of these new organizations by examining how they fit into the existing rural institutional landscape.

State-builders and the associated state-building literature focus on non-customary political organizations that are typically *endogenous* to the state or state collapse such as organized crime syndicates, networks of warlords and commanders, or other armed entrepreneurs. These organizations emerge with the purpose of capturing rents or seizing control of the state. Customary political organizations, on the other hand, are typically *exogenous* to state breakdown: they do not owe their existence to the emergence, breakdown, or reconstruction of the state. In most cases they do not seek to capture the state and they often coexist peacefully with formal governments: throughout history they have been largely indifferent to the state as the state barely grazed the countryside. Customary organizations in Afghanistan are ubiquitous, though as diverse in name as the landscape in which are found. These organizations are pervasive, especially in rural areas where more than 80 percent of the population resides.

Data Sources

This research into local governance combines both original qualitative and quantitative data sources. However, I benefited tremendously from extensive anthropological and historical accounts of village governance structures in rural Afghanistan that were conducted prior to the Soviet invasion in 1979 as a vital point of departure (Barfield 1984, 2007; Dupree 1973; Emadi 1996; Shahrani and Canfield 1984; Shahrani 1984, 1998; Tapper 1983). The original qualitative component of this research sought individual perspectives on governance at three levels of analysis: within communities, between communities, and between communities and the lowest level of government. These data were collected in 2007 while I was employed at the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) as part of a project funded by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA). I was able to collect more than 300 semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a team of Afghan researchers. We interviewed community-identified village leaders, CDC members, and citizens in 32 villages across 16 districts in six provinces. The provinces included Bamiyan, Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kunduz, and Nangarhar. There is obvious selection bias in the areas where we could conduct research, as we could not travel to conflict prone areas, particularly in the south. However, the sample attempted to represent the diversity of Afghan communities. Forty percent of those interviewed were Pashtun-speaking including Kuchis and Arabs. The sample also included Dari-speakers, Hazaras, Uzbek, and Turkmen populations. In addition to the community-based interviews, I also interviewed officials from relevant ministries, donor agencies, and NGOs involved in community governance and development issues at the national, provincial, and district levels.

There is great confusion as to the state of customary governance structures in Afghanistan. In Kabul, donors and ministries both claim they have broken down, yet at the same time maintain that they are an obstacle to development. To gain a clearer understanding of the role of these organizations, I designed interview guides so that individuals could answer open-ended questions about specific public goods and services provided in their communities. The interview guides did not solicit information about a particular leader or organization at the community level. Instead, individuals could discuss to whom they turned to resolve disputes or engage in other collective activity. Because this research is not

part of a larger panel, I can only speak with relative certainty about their current status. Naturally, these organizations have evolved during periods of war and fighting. They are not static.

In order to reinforce the qualitative data analysis, I analyzed two nationally representative surveys. The first survey, the 2005 National Rural Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA), is a household survey of rural livelihoods (Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and Central Statistics Office 2007). The second survey is a public opinion survey conducted in 2007 by the Afghan Center for Socio-economic Opinion and Research (ASCOR) that was designed by the Asia Foundation with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (Asia Foundation 2007). Analyzing these two surveys allowed me to investigate whether the patterns I observed at the local level held for nationally-representative samples.

Findings

Perhaps the most important finding from the interviews, focus group, and limited non-participatory observation is that customary organizations have endured decades of fighting. Most significantly, I found a pattern of local decision-making that transcends ethnicity, tribe, or region. While other scholars have detailed these organizations in specific settings, cross-regional examination of village governance allowed me to examine the rules that govern communities rather than focusing on titles of particular organizations. In almost every community where I conducted research, I found evidence of a coherent constellation of village organizations that include a village council [*shura* or *jirga*], village arbiter [*mullah* or *imam*], and a village executive [*malik*, *arbab*, *khan*]. While the names of these organizations differ across the country and the responsibilities of each organization vary somewhat from region to region, this constellation is present in almost every part of the country. I define each organization not by a specific title, as they vary across the country, but by the rules which govern their behavior. A village executive is the individual who represents community interests to the government, a village council aggregates individual preferences at the community level, and the village arbiter is responsible for interpreting religious law and resolving related disputes.

Through analysis of qualitative interviews and the two nationally representative surveys, I find that the presence of customary organizations has a significant impact on the provision of local public goods such as the resolution of individual and community-level disputes (including land disputes) and the prevention of localized forms of crime such as robbery and murder. From a theoretical perspective, I argue that customary organizations are able to provide such public goods because they are able to raise locally sustainable sources of revenue, which often take the form of tributes for services or the right to redistribute resources from one party to another when resolving a dispute. I find that local accountability mechanisms present within the customary system of governance serve to limit predation and expropriation of individual wealth. Each of the three organizations derives its authority from separate sources. Thus, local power is separated. However, there is an informal system of checks and balances among the organizations which prevents one organization from transgressing citizen's rights.

This system of local accountability is enabled by relatively egalitarian landholding patterns, long noted by observers and scholars of Afghanistan, that seem to promote consensual decision-making at the village level (Elphinstone 1839; Rubin 2002; Tapper 1984). When landholding is concentrated, one individual is able to dominate all three branches of village governance. Decades of war seem to have further distributed land, as many wealthy landowners migrated outward or were driven out by Communist governments in the 1980s.

I find that non-customary organizations such as warlord networks as well as CDCs, are far less likely to provide such public goods. While warlords and networks of commanders also rely on sources of local revenue, they are not subject to local constraints, thus allowing them to engage in predatory behavior at will. CDCs also fail to measure up to their promise as they behave as "rentier" community organizations: they are not able to raise sufficient local funds to sustain their activities and they are not subject to meaningful local constraints. Thus, both types of non-customary groups are less accountable than customary organizations and ultimately less equipped to provide many community-based public goods.

Customary organizations are not a panacea and they can be limited in their provision of public goods. Specifically, they are less successful in

providing capital or human-capital intensive public goods that require inter-communal cooperation. The provision of these goods requires individuals to contribute funds to an organization larger in scope than their own community. These public goods include larger scale infrastructure such as schools, electricity grids, health clinics, teacher training, and many others. Individuals are willing to contribute to their village leaders, but they are less willing to contribute to inter-communal authorities for the simple reason that they are unable to monitor their use of funds and hold them accountable (Olson 1971; Ostrom 1990). While local public goods, such as dispute resolution, are important for fostering local stability, capital and human-capital intensive goods provide the foundations for human development and livelihoods.

In some areas, patterns of village organization did break down. Instead of leaving a vacuum, communities themselves recreated new systems of governance under new names that seemed to mimic previous systems. For example, individual accounts of village governance in both Hazara as well as “Tajik” areas of Bamiyan Province describe a fragmentation of the village executive [*arbab*] system. In this area, many of the previous *arbabs* were large landowners driven out by Communist regimes. While the *arbab* system disappeared, individuals replaced it with a new system. The name of the organization changed: villagers refer to their consensually selected village executive as a *nomayenda* [representative]. But according to villagers, the rules which govern the organization are based on the old system. I found that the breakdown of customary governance structures was most acute in settled mountainous areas that had little arable land. In these areas, most of the population migrated elsewhere searching for economic opportunities, with little desire to return. However, despite this displacement, I found significant evidence that local decision making was quite similar to that which I observed in other areas, with village authority allocated between the three main organizations.

Individuals did recount how local, customary organizations became subsumed by warlords and other commander networks during the jihad and periods of fighting. However, once peace was brought to an area, customary leadership was able to reassert itself. While I was not able to do research where fighting is currently taking place, based on this research it may be safe to assume that a perceived “breakdown” of customary structures is merely a temporary punctuation whereby other

organizations dominate the local landscape, rendering customary organizations less effective.

There are several policy implications of this research. Customary organizations can serve as a source of organizational capacity that complements, rather than threatens the nascent state. Problems with the existing state-building paradigm seem to begin in the diagnostic phase of the process when donors assume that in the absence of coherent state authority, there is an institutional *tabula rasa* at the village level (Weinbaum 2006). State-builders, both in Afghanistan and elsewhere, should reconsider the *tabula rasa* assumptions that usually accompany such endeavors. In this case, the informal organizational capacity offered by customary organizations may serve to strengthen, rather than impede, state capacity. A second policy implication is that creation of new institutions is most needed at the inter-communal level where cooperation and coordination between citizens break down, rather than at the community level where assistance is typically targeted.

In Central Asia, there is a wealth of household and other types of surveys that remain largely unexplored by area experts. I hope that this research project demonstrates the value of looking at a variety of data sources, to help us answer questions related to political and economic development. Also, I believe this project highlights how researchers can explore the importance of a particular organization — whether it is a clan, tribe, warlord network, or ethnic group — without necessarily privileging the role of the organization in our research. The ultimate purpose of this project is to explore sources of public good provision in a failed state. I attempted not to privilege the role of customary organizations in my research, but by asking questions about the provision of a wide variety of public goods and services, I was able to ascertain more specifically how they maintain their legitimacy despite political and societal upheaval.

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Historiography of Local and Regional Studies in Western Kazakhstan: An Alternative to National History?

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Many scholars have pointed out that histories written in non-Russian parts of the former Soviet Union are

largely confined within the borders of today's national republics, focus on their titular nations, and tend to be ethnocentric. This phenomenon is usually

explained by nationalism in the newly independent states and the autonomous entities within them, and also by the legacy of Soviet historiography that sought to prove the legitimacy of the policy to create national republics (cf. Shnirelman 1996, Slezkine 1996, Uyama 2002). What kind of research, then, can contribute to the development of non-ethnocentric views of history? One of the possible alternatives to national history is local and regional history, especially the history of border regions, where many cultures and ethnic groups interact with each other.

This paper, which is part of an ongoing research project on local history of Central Asia,¹ examines some aspects of the history of local and regional studies in Western Kazakhstan. Although scarcely populated, Western Kazakhstan has been a zone of close interaction between Kazakh, Russian, and Tatar cultures. I will first examine the history of the Bökey Horde where cross-cultural phenomena could be observed even more vividly than in other parts of Western Kazakhstan, and analyze why the history of the Bökey Horde has largely been treated as merely a part of Kazakh national history. I will then touch upon the attempts of present-day historians to transcend the narrow framework of national history.

Cross-Cultural History of the Bökey Horde

In 1801, a part of the Kazakhs of the Junior Zhuz [Kíší žüz] led by Bökey Sultan received permission of the Russian Tsar Paul I to move to the area between the Ural and the Volga Rivers that had been almost abandoned by the Kalmyks who fled to Jungaria in 1771. In 1812, the Tsar approved Bökey as a khan, and his territory became a khanate inside the Russian Empire. It was the sole Kazakh khanate that kept its official status recognized by the Russian government after the abolition of the title of khan in

¹ “Local History of Modern Central Asia: Regional Identities and Interactions,” Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. In Kazakhstan, I worked in libraries in Almaty and the archive in Aktobe [Aqtöbe, Aktiubinsk] met with historians in Aktobe, Uralsk [Oral], Atyrau, Almaty, and Astana, and visited museums in former Khanskaya Stavka, Zhímpití, and Saraychik. Another focus of this project is to explore the relations between historical consciousness and the memories of the civil war in Tajikistan, where I conducted field research in Dushanbe, Gharm, Jirghatol and other towns in the Qarotegin Valley, Tavildara, Vanj, and Xorugh, but I will not include this topic into this paper.

the Junior Zhuz proper (east to the Ural river) in 1824. It became an object of keen interest of Russian scholars and administrators when Žängír Khan (r. 1824-1845) actively promoted education and culture. Even after his death and the abolition of the khanate, the administrative system of the Inner Horde (former Bökey Horde), with the “Provisional Council for Administration” as its head, remained distinct from that of the other parts of the Kazakh steppe, and its educational tradition continued to produce prominent intellectuals up until the early Soviet years.

The history of the Bökey Horde has many elements that reach beyond the bounds of purely Kazakh history. During its first years its borders were vague, and regulation of conflicts and trade among the Kazakhs, Kalmyks, and Kundrovsky Tatars (Karagash Nogays) was a matter of concern for the Russian government (Zhanaev et al. 2002: 44-47, 59-84, 104-109, 129-130, 133, 184).² Land disputes between the Kazakhs of the Inner Horde and the Ural Cossacks remained hot well after the death of the last khan, Žängír (Babadzhanov 1996b).

On the positive side, we can find a number of cross-cultural phenomena in the Bökey Horde. Its capital, Khanskaya Stavka (Khan Ordası), and Žängír Khan himself, were symbols of the symbiosis of Kazakh, Russian, and Tatar cultures, and also of nomadic and sedentary cultures. Žängír was brought up at the home of the Astrakhan governor, and knew Russian, Arabic, Persian, and other languages. He was married to the daughter of the Tatar mufti of the Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Assembly, and as she experienced difficulties in wintering in nomadic tents, he decided to build a permanent residence and a capital town (Kittary 2001: 6-8). The town of Khanskaya Stavka had a semi-sedentary character: in spring and fall, when seasonal fairs were opened, a large number of merchants came to the town from various parts of Russia, but in summer, not only merchants were gone, but also local people went out to summer pastures (Kittary 2001: 24). Tatars, Kazakhs, Russians, and Armenians lived in the towns of Khanskaya Stavka, Novaya Kazanka, and Talovka. Even the composition of the Kazakh population was heterogeneous: there were from 500 to 2,000 households of Noghay-Qazaqs (Viktorin

² Relations between the Kazakhs of the Bökey Horde and their co-ethnics living east to the Ural River were no less problematic.

2006),³ and about 200 Qožas who were believed to be descendants of the first four caliphs (Frank 2001: 279).⁴

The administrative, economic, and educational system of the Bökey Horde was also specific and cross-cultural. Bökey Khan and Žängir Khan introduced *zakāt* (Islamic tax). Although *zakāt* in the Bökey Horde was deprived of the original function to distribute wealth to the poor and was spent for the needs of the khan's court, this was the most systematic taxation in the history of the Kazakh khanates (Evreinov 2001: 65-66; Ivanin 2001: 101-102). Semi-sedentarization and land privatization, phenomena that were either absent or slow-paced in other parts of the Kazakh steppe, were better developed here, partly under Russian influence (Zimanov 1982: 43-66). Semi-sedentarization, together with Žängir Khan's devotion to Islam, created a favorable condition for building mosques and Islamic schools. Mullahs were recruited from among both the Volga Tatars and the Kazakhs, and Kazakhs went to study at various *madrasas* of the Volga-Ural region and Bukhara.⁵ Even the criminal world was transboundary: some Kazakhs in the Bökey Horde, together with Kalmyks, Bashkirs and others, formed a network of horse thieves that covered a vast area from the Urals to the Caucasus and Central Russia. These thieves quickly drove stolen horses from one to another distant place and sold them (Ivanin 2001: 139-140).

Why Does National History Prevail?

All these facts, however, are scattered through the writings of nineteenth-century Russian authors. The central themes for these authors were, besides natural settings of the Bökey Horde, deeds of the khans and the administrative system they created, and above all, ethnographic description (pastoral life, customs, tribal structure, etc.) of the Kazakhs there, which did not significantly differ from that of

the Kazakhs in other regions.⁶ Thus, contemporary writings on the Bökey/Inner Horde constituted a part of the general writings on the Kazakhs, and in this sense resembled national histories to be written later in the Soviet republics.

There were several reasons why these writings rarely went beyond the framework of Kazakh history. First, while until the mid-eighteenth century Western Kazakhstan was a place where the Kazakhs, Kalmyks, Karakalpaks, Bashkirs and others often migrated and intermingled, the Tsarist administration gradually separated these ethnic groups, limiting the freedom of seasonal migration and prohibiting intermarriage, and settling Cossacks along the lines that separated the Kazakhs from the Bashkirs and Kalmyks. Although towns in the Bökey Horde were multiethnic, the steppe was almost exclusively inhabited by the Kazakhs, who constituted about 95 percent of the population of the Horde.

Second, the Bökey/Inner Horde was the Kazakh region closest to Central Russia, and Russian scholars and administrators visited here to learn not only the specific features of this Horde, but also general characteristics of the Kazakhs. Third, ethnography, a budding branch of learning that strongly influenced the writings on non-Russians in the Russian Empire, was designed to elucidate customs and characters of a specific ethnic group, rather than to illuminate interethnic links. Fourth, Russian policy in the Kazakh steppe in and after the mid-nineteenth century aimed at reducing the Tatars' influence on the Kazakhs, and both administrators and scholars tended to either demonize or minimize the interaction between the Kazakhs and Tatars.

These features were largely present as well in the writings of Kazakh intellectuals. Mükhammed-Saliq Babažanov (1832-1871),⁷ an administrator and author of ethnographic works, wrote that the Tatars' influence on the Kazakhs was harmful, especially highlighting cruelty of mullahs to children, while admitting the positive side of the Tatars' activities in spreading literacy (Babadzhanov 1996b). The title of

³ Noghay-Qazaqs are descendants of Nogays assimilated into the Kazakhs. Viktorin assumes that most of their ancestors came from Kuban in the eighteenth century, while Vostrov and Mukanov (1968: 107-108) assert that they lived along the Volga from the fifteenth century.

⁴ Qožas migrated from the Middle Syr-Daria to Western Kazakhstan and were sometimes not considered to be Kazakhs.

⁵ For more about Islamic culture and institutions in the Inner Horde, see Frank (1998, 2001).

⁶ For example, Evreinov (2001) consisted of the following sections: 1. Historical point of view; 2. Geographical and statistical surveys; 3. Administration of the Horde; 4. Overview of the mode of life of the Bökey Horde Kazakhs, their manners and some customs.

⁷ He was a Qoža and the son of Qaraulqoža Babažanov, an enormously influential landowner and merchant who was the main source of people's discontent that led to the revolt of Isatay Taymanov.

his correspondence to the newspaper *Severnaia pchela* (1861), “A Kazakh’s notes on the Kazakhs,” may indicate the expectation of the Russian press for him to write from a purely Kazakh point of view. In the late nineteenth century, not only in the Inner Horde but also in other parts of the Kazakh steppe, Russian administrators and Kazakh intellectuals shared anti-Tatarism and the concern for preserving “pure” Kazakh culture, as evidenced by articles of the Kazakh-Russian newspaper *Dala ualayatining gazetı* (Uyama 2003). Later, in the 1920s, Khalel Dosmūkhamedov (one of the former leaders of the Alash Orda autonomous government) argued that intervention of Tatar mullahs and Qožas in state affairs had strengthened people’s dissatisfaction with Žāngır Khan, and that Žāngır Khan himself, who was oriented toward Tsarism and [Islamic] religion, knew nothing about the Kazakhs (Dosmūkhamedūli 1998: 30, 36).

In the Soviet period, the history of the Bökey Horde was studied almost only as a background of the revolt of Isatay Taymanov (1836-1837). Exceptions were the works of Bīlāl Aspandiyarov and Saliq Zimanov. Aspandiyarov’s work, “The Formation of the Bökey Horde and Its Abolition” (1947), is negative about the Tatar influence and ambiguous about the Russian influence.⁸ Zimanov’s concise but well-researched work, *Russia and the Bökey Khanate*, contains a number of facts about cross-cultural phenomena, but it emphasizes that Russian influence did not make the Bökey Horde an exceptional case in Kazakh history, and “the processes that would later embrace the whole of Kazakhstan were manifested here in the most concentrated form” (Zimanov 1982: 170). Thus, Zimanov puts the Bökey Horde in the framework of Kazakh national history.

In the post-Soviet period almost no fundamental work on the Bökey/Inner Horde has been published, although six volumes of works of nineteenth-century Russian authors and a voluminous collection of documents were published to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Bökey Horde (Kul’kenov 2001, Zhanaev et al. 2002), and they are undoubtedly useful for further research. The Islamic dimension of the Inner Horde continues to

⁸ This work, “Obrazovanie Bukeevskoi ordy i ee likvidatsiia,” written as a dissertation, was not published, but some parts of it are available on the web: http://www.nklibrary.freenet.kz/elib/collect/statyii/obrazov_bukeev.htm; <http://prstr.narod.ru/texts/num0301/asp0301.htm>.

be underestimated. For example, Ghūmar Qarashev, a prominent intellectual from the Inner Horde who was elected as one of the *qādīs* of the Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Assembly in 1917, is admired as a poet and participant of the national movement,⁹ but rarely as an Islamic scholar.

On the regions of Western Kazakhstan other than the Bökey Horde, historical and ethnographic works written in the Tsarist period included L. Meier’s *The Kazakh Steppe under the Jurisdiction of Orenburg* (Meier 2007) and İbīray Altınsarin’s works on Kazakh customs (e.g., Altınsarin 1976). Scholars who gathered around the Orenburg branch of the Russian Geographical Society, established in 1867 (Masanov 1966: 168-178, 235-246), and later around the Society of Kazakhstani Studies (1920-1932),¹⁰ as well as those who participated in expeditions organized by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR,¹¹ also engaged in regional studies. However, they usually treated regions as a part of the Kazakh steppe, and did not pay much attention to regional specificities or transboundary phenomena. From the 1930s onward, under the Soviet ideological constraints, local studies [*kraevedenie*] survived as semi-amateurish research and school extracurricular activities.

Historians in Western Kazakhstan Writing Transnational History

Now I focus on the present-day schools of historical studies in Western Kazakhstan. The most remarkable school is the one at Aktobe State Pedagogical Institute, led by Gülmira

⁹ For example, see Kenžāliev (2004). Qarashev was a Noghay-Qazaq.

¹⁰ Regrettably, I have not yet succeeded in fully investigating the activities of the Society of Kazakhstani Studies because of the temporary closure of the rare books section at the National Library during my stay in Almaty in May 2008. Many of the founding members of the society were Russians, but Akhmet Baııt rsinov (one of the former leaders of the Alash Orda) and other Kazakh intellectuals also participated in it. According to Esenalina (2006: 15), the society studied not only Kazakhstan but also Bashkiria and Tatarstan in 1920-1925, but later it confined its research to the territory of Kazakhstan.

¹¹ The results of the expeditions included Baronov et al. (1927). One of its authors, Älikhan Bökeykhan, was the former top leader of the Alash Orda autonomous government. The contribution of the participants of the Kazakh national movement to local and regional studies deserves further study.

Sültanghalieva. Sültanghalieva studies various aspects of the role of Tatar mullahs and translators in the Kazakh steppe in great detail, analyzing their cooperation and conflicts with the Tsarist government, and their close (though not always harmonious) relations with khans and ordinary Kazakhs. Her research is devoid of the anti-Tatar and anti-Islamic preconceptions that characterized much of the Tsarist and Soviet period scholarship. She also engages in comparative research on Tsarist policies toward the Kazakhs and the Bashkirs (Sültanghalieva 2000, 2003, 2008). Her students also study subjects that exceed the framework of Kazakh national history, such as the history of networks of academic societies in Western Kazakhstan and the Volga-Urals, and the role of *madrasas* and Russian schools in the South Urals in raising Kazakh intellectuals (Esenalina 2006, Koishigarina 2007).

In Uralsk, the West Kazakhstan Provincial Center for History and Archaeology, established in 2002, studies the history and archaeology of Western Kazakhstan in close cooperation with research institutes in Orenburg, Volgograd, and Moscow, paying much attention to transboundary phenomena. Its director Mūrat Sīdīqov is a historical demographer who studies migration between Kazakhstan and Russia (Zaionchkovskaia and Sdykov 2002). Overall, historians in Aktobe and Uralsk, cities both situated near the Russian border, are more eager to surmount the framework of Kazakh national history than those in Almaty and Astana, although some Almaty historians have also begun to take new approaches. For example, Žanat Qūndaqbaeva (Kundakbaeva 2005) compares Tsarist policies toward the Kalmyks and the Kazakhs, and studies relations between the two peoples in the region north to the Caspian Sea.

It is worth adding that scholars in Russian cities near the Kazakhstan border are also active in studying regional history that covers Siberia and northern and eastern Kazakhstan. Historians in Omsk, famous for their research on the Asian part of the Russian Empire, study the history of Tsarist policies toward the Kazakhs together with scholars in Karaganda [Qaraghandī], Kokchetav [Kökshetau], Astana, and Almaty (e.g., Suvorova 2004, Sorokina 2008). Historians in Barnaul, in Russia, are more interested in the history of international relations in the Kazakh steppe, Xinjiang, and Mongolia (e.g., Moiseev 2001, 2003).

The findings of this paper suggest that the framework of national history has deeper roots than

post-Soviet nationalism and Soviet historiography; it is related to the Tsarist policy to separate ethnic groups and the Russian (more broadly speaking, Western) intellectual trend in the nineteenth century to elucidate characteristics of each ethnic group.¹² Therefore, regional history easily fits in the framework of national history, but recent works of historians in Aktobe and Uralsk indicate the possibility of studying regional history from a transboundary point of view. The relatively high interest in transboundary issues among scholars in Kazakhstani and Russian cities close to the mutual borders may be related to political and economic cooperation between the border regions of the two countries,¹³ but cross-cultural and transboundary approaches would be viable also in southern and southeastern Kazakhstan. The history of these areas has much in common with that of neighboring Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Xinjiang.

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¹² The policy to treat each ethnic group individually and the Orientalistic intellectual view were closely interrelated. See Uyama (2007).

¹³ Border regions of Kazakhstan and Russia have close contacts with each other in trade, industry, security, and other spheres based on a number of agreements on transboundary cooperation (Golunov 2002).

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A Research Note on Mass-Market Islamic Literature in Russia and Central Asia

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Mass-market Islamic publishing in the former Soviet Union remains little studied as a historical or cultural phenomenon. This is somewhat surprising because any observant visitor to that former country's Muslim regions can attest to the remarkable quantity of mass-market Islamic literature in markets and bookstores, and around mosques and shrines. At first glance their appearance can easily be interpreted as something "new" that has emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and their accessibility makes them an appealing topic of study. Although my interest in Islamic pamphlets goes back many years, when I began collecting them as sources for lexicographical projects,¹ I began systematically collecting and analyzing them in 2002, during a visit to Turkmenistan. Since then I have managed to travel to Kazakhstan (2005) and Tatarstan (2006) to collect these materials, and also to conduct research in archives and libraries regarding the Imperial Russian antecedents of this literature. Such field research is essential when examining mass-market Islamic materials because it is rarely acquired by libraries in any systematic fashion; very little has been published on it. Mass-market publishing also appears to be particularly dynamic in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Dagestan, and especially in Moscow. The materials in all of these places await methodical study. While this research report deals primarily with printed materials, it should be pointed out that this sort of literature also circulates on the internet and on audiocassettes. However, because of relatively low rates of internet access in the former Soviet Union, especially in Central Asia, printed materials remain one of the main sources for Muslims for acquiring Islamic knowledge. Audiocassettes of sermons and lectures are also very common, and are often sold alongside pamphlets in bazaars, around mosques, and at shrines. That medium requires a separate study. The purpose of this research report is to present some broad generalizations about the printed literature I have

examined, and hopefully to encourage its further study.

What is Islamic mass-market literature? Or better yet, what is an Islamic pamphlet? First of all, this literature needs to be distinguished from Islamic newspapers, which address political and social current affairs. For the most part, Islamic mass-market literature consists of inexpensive pamphlets that provide information to believers on a wide range of specifically religious issues, particularly ritual, such as daily prayers, burial, circumcision, rules for Ramadan and the Hajj, and so forth. The largest single category is prayer books that provide believers the texts and the context for prayers [*du'a*]. They also include doctrinal works on creed and theology, the role of women in Islam, Sufism, Islamic ethics and etiquette, Hadith, epic literature, genealogies, shrine catalogs, sorcery and divination, dream interpretation, and Islamic history. Over time Islamic publishing in Russia and Kazakhstan has become more specialized. Before 1992 "mainstream" publishers sought to capitalize on an emerging market for this literature, but since then Islamic publishing has devolved mainly to specialty publishers that focus almost exclusively on Islamic books and pamphlets.

Islamic mass-market literature provides a welcome corpus of empirical data for the field of modern Islamic studies in Russia and Central Asia, a field too often characterized by undocumented generalizations, unsubstantiated assumptions, and insufficient grounding in the region's Islamic history. My own approach to the subject has focused on three main themes. These are 1) the bibliographical documentation of the pamphlets, 2) the genealogy, historical antecedents, and sources of the pamphlets, and 3) the theological and ideological currents evident in the literature.

As previously noted, libraries have not systematically collected or catalogued mass-market Islamic literature, and the absence of adequate bibliographical documentation has been a major obstacle to those seeking to use these works. This applies particularly to literature from the modern era, but also to pre-Revolutionary mass-market Islamic

¹ Islamic pamphlets contain a wealth of religious vocabulary absent from standard Soviet and even post-Soviet dictionaries of the Turkic languages.

literature, although in the latter case several useful bibliographies and studies have been published. The sheer scale of mass-market Islamic publishing also necessitates bibliographic documentation. The volume of Islamic publishing is difficult to ascertain.

In Kazakhstan in 2006 I succeeded in obtaining in the cities of Almaty and Turkistan copies of approximately 120 Kazakh, Uzbek, and Russian titles, although catalogs indicated many more titles were in print. How many titles were out of print is difficult to determine, but in 2005 Islamic publishing had been underway for at least 15 years.² In Tatarstan my focus was more narrowly on Tatar-language literature, and in 2006 I collected approximately 125 titles in Kazan. The scale of Tatar-language publishing is broad. In Kazan the largest publisher is the Iman Press. Between 2000 and 2005 Iman Press issued 473 titles, approximately half of which are in Tatar (Shagayiev 2006). Several other publishers of mass-market Islamic literature exist in Kazan, and in Naberezhnye Chelny.

In Turkmenistan Islamic publishing, along with publishing in general, is far more limited. In 2002 I was able to collect approximately 25 titles, virtually all in Turkmen. Islamic publishing appears to have peaked in the early 1990s in Turkmenistan, but as of 2002 a substantial proportion of titles appears as home-made booklets sold in bazaars. Print-runs of pamphlets also vary considerably. The largest print-runs were from the early 1990s, when a print-run of 100,000 for a single title was common. Currently, in Kazakhstan the typical print-run of a new pamphlet is 1,000 copies, and in Tatarstan somewhat less, between 200 and 500. At the same time, far more titles are available today in Russia and Kazakhstan than in the early 1990s. The scale of mass-market Islamic publishing today is certainly substantial, but it is by no means a new phenomenon. The publication in Imperial Russia of inexpensive Islamic pamphlets, written not only in Arabic, Persian, and Turki, but also in vernacular languages, especially Kazakh, peaked on the eve of the World War I. As dynamic as Islamic publishing has been since 1991, I suspect it has yet to reach the scale that existed before 1917.

The bibliographic documentation of this literature also brings to light some of the geographic and linguistic aspects of this literature. In Russia and

Kazakhstan strong regional variations are evident in the publishing and marketing of Islamic pamphlets.

In Kazakhstan the vast majority of Islamic pamphlets are in Kazakh. Almaty and Shymkent are the two centers for Islamic publishing. Smaller Islamic publishers also exist in the cities of Turkistan and Astana. In Almaty the largest publishers are “Shapaghat-Nur” and “Rayimbek Islam Birlestigi.” The latter is closely linked to the Muftiate. In Shymkent the largest publisher is “Zhibek zholi baspası,” which publishes primarily in Kazakh, but also in Uzbek. The latter publisher appears to reflect the linguistic and Sufi-oriented peculiarities of southern Kazakhstan.

In Russia there are at least three major centers for Islamic publishing. Perhaps the most dynamic is in Moscow, which focuses mostly on Russian-language Islamic publications, and can distribute its pamphlets throughout Russia and the former Soviet Union.

Daghestan is another major center for Islamic mass-market publishing, and Daghestani editions frequently appear in Kazakhstan either in Russian or in Kazakh translation. Daghestani publishing comprises both Russian-language editions and native-language editions, especially in Avar. Finally, Kazan was the historical center of Islamic publishing in Russia, and remains active in publishing Russian- and Tatar-language Islamic pamphlets. Pamphlets from Tatarstan also appear in Kazakhstan, both in locally produced editions and as imports. Presumably, local Islamic publishing exists in Bashkortostan and in the North Caucasus. In Turkmenistan, virtually all Islamic publishing is in Turkmen. The small sample makes it difficult to determine regional peculiarities. The center of Islamic publishing is certainly Ashgabat; however, some publishing takes place in Dashhowuz as well. Imported editions, primarily from Turkey and Azerbaijan (for the Shia community), are also in evidence. While Turkish and Saudi pamphlets, mainly translated into Russian, are widely encountered in Tatarstan and Kazakhstan, they form only a small proportion of the available literature, virtually all of which is locally produced. “Foreign” pamphlets are most likely to come from countries within the former Soviet Union. In southern Kazakhstan, where a large Uzbek-speaking population resides, a substantial number of titles are Uzbek-language editions from Uzbekistan.

² For a bibliographic and thematic overview for Kazakhstan see Frank (2007)

Along with bibliographic documentation it is also essential to examine the histories of the individual works. The corpus of pamphlets I examined included new locally produced original works, as well as translations, transcriptions, and reprints of pre-revolutionary works. I also examined translations of “international” works from outside the former Soviet Union, primarily from Turkey and Saudi Arabia, but also works from South Africa, Egypt, and other countries. “International” literature was by far the smallest of the three. A surprisingly large share of titles consists of reprints of pre-revolutionary titles, particularly in Kazan, but also in Kazakhstan, and even Turkmenistan. The reprinting of pre-revolutionary titles is especially intense in Kazan, where the older publishing tradition is also understood as an exclusive aspect of the Tatar national heritage. For example, one universally encountered title is *Nurnama*, a Sufi work first printed in Kazan in 1847, and later in Tashkent in 1911. It was condemned by the reformist Tashkent Muftiate during the Soviet era, and is still controversial, yet the work continues to circulate in Turkmen, Uzbek, Tatar, and Kazakh editions. The home-made Turkmen edition is in fact a translation of an Uzbek edition from the early 1990s (Frank 2007: 85-90, 141-163). One peculiarity (among many) of Islamic publishing in Turkmenistan is that a substantial proportion of works is based on local manuscripts, demonstrating the continued relevance of the manuscript tradition to Muslims in the region. Examining the history and continuity of these works is essential because it demonstrates a direct link between pre-Revolutionary religious traditions and the modern era, showing that Islamic publishers, and the Muslim community as a whole, are conscious of a type of historical continuity of which modern observers too often ignorant.

Mass-market Islamic literature can also illuminate the theological and ideological debates underway in the respective countries. Although these issues are usually addressed more directly in Islamic newspapers, it is common for individual publishers to maintain a particular theological or ideological orientation. In some cases, the orientation might appear to reflect peculiarities of a regional market, but in other cases theological and ideological orientation is more of a defining factor for one or another publisher. In the case of Tatarstan’s Iman Press ideological orientation is stated quite forthrightly. The press, headed by Valyulla Yakupov, who served as Deputy Mufti of Tatarstan, publishes polemical works critiquing Islamic

reformism, and defending what I term “Tatar Hanafi traditionalism” as a manifestation of Tatar Islamic and ethnic values (Frank 2008). By contrast, the Naberezhnye Chelny-based Tatar publisher “Islam Nuri” appears to have a more reformist orientation, featuring numerous works by Idris Galiutdin (whose works also have been printed in Astana in Russian-translation).

In Kazakhstan theological debates in Islamic pamphlets appear to be more muted. Local Islamic publishers also reveal distinct theological orientations. In Almaty, for example, the Muftiate-linked publisher “Rayimbek Islam Birlestigi” reveals a clear reformist orientation. By contrast, the “Zhibek Zholi baspasi,” appears more eclectic, publishing a wide range of Sufi-oriented pamphlets, alongside, for example, a treatise on creed [*aqida*] by the Saudi Salafist theologian Muhammad ibn Jamil Zinu (Frank 2007: 51-52). Generally, publishing in Almaty is more reformist or Salafist in orientation, and works are typically published in Kazakh. Pamphlets from Shymkent and Turkistan not surprisingly are more likely to reflect a stronger Sufi orientation (including sacred histories of local towns, Sufi hagiographies, shrine catalogs, genealogies of local *qozha* communities). Publishers in southern Kazakhstan also routinely publish Uzbek-language titles.

Islamic mass-market publishing constitutes a particularly useful corpus of sources for examining various aspects of Islam in Russia and Central Asia. These materials are generally quite inexpensive (costing typically between 25 cents and one dollar each), and ubiquitous. My own approach has been to focus on these works as literature; that is, emphasizing their bibliographic documentation, their sources and influences, and their ideological and theological peculiarities. This literature can be approached in many other ways, for example, emphasizing its significance and uses for its “consumers,” how it is produced and marketed, and so forth. Examining this literature more broadly might also provide a useful corrective to some of the existing literature on Islam in the former Soviet Union, and an empirical basis for its critique.

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Reports on Research Conditions

Archival Research in Kyrgyzstan

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The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the holdings of the archives in the Kyrgyz Republic with which I worked from April 2005 to March 2007. The subject of my study is the process of political and ethnic reorganization of the Kyrgyz nomads in the western Tian Shan region (also called Jetïsu, Semirech’e) from the end of the eighteenth century, after the collapse of the Jungar empire, through the conquest of the region by the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century, to the 1930s under Soviet rule. I pay particular attention to the period from the mid-nineteenth century to 1917, and to the *manaps* [chieftains] of the Kyrgyz tribes. Their generation, development, transformation, and extinction are important keys to understanding political reorganization among the Kyrgyz nomads in this period. To explore this subject, I have focused my study thus far on unpublished archival sources. These documents are scattered across Eurasia in three rough groupings according to their location: Central Asian countries, Russia, and China. So far, I have focused on the archives of the Central Asian countries.

For two years, from April 2005 to March 2007, I based myself in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and periodically made expeditions to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. These trips, on one hand, took much of my time and energy, but on the other hand, gave me a broad range of valuable experiences and adventures. Archives in Kazakhstan (*Tsentral’nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Respubliki Kazakhstan* [TsGA RK] in Almaty) and Uzbekistan (*Tsentral’nyi*

gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Respubliki Uzbekistan [TsGA RUz] in Tashkent) hold the majority of the pre-revolutionary documents on my topic; they contain a range of evidence and voices that reflect the reality of interactions in the colonial context of the Russian Empire. TsGA RK covers the documents regarding the history of the Kazakh Steppe and the northern edge of the Tian Shan region under the rule of the Russian Empire and the Soviet regime.¹ Meanwhile, in TsGA RUz a large portion of the materials covers the history of the sedentary areas, as well as a number of documents about the nomadic peoples (Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Karakalpaks, and others).²

¹ In this archive I have read documents from the following *fonds*: “Nachal’nik Alatavskogo okruga [Chief of the Alatau Region]” (Fond 3), “Semirechenskoe oblastnoe pravlenie [Semirechie Provincial Administration]” (Fond 44), “Kantseliariia Stepnogo general-gubernatora [Chancellery of the Steppe Governor-General]” (Fond 64), “Pogranichnoe upravlenie sibirskimi Kirgizami [Border administration of Siberian Kirgiz]” (Fond 374), among others.

² In this archive I worked with the following *fonds*: “Kantseliariia Turkestanskogo general-gubernatora [Chancellery of the Turkestan Governor-General]” (Fond I-1), “Syr-Dar’inskoe oblastnoe pravlenie [Syr-Darya Provincial Administration]” (Fond I-17), “Ferganskoe oblastnoe pravlenie [Ferghana Provincial Administration]” (Fond I-19), “Voennyi gubernator i komanduiushchii voiskami Turkestanskoi oblasti [Military Governor and Commander of Troops of the Turkestan Province]” (Fond I-336), “Sobraniiia

General Conditions of Usage

In Bishkek's downtown, along Toktogul Street, running east-west, directly south of Alatoo Square, stands the quiet stone building that houses the Central Archival Administration (on the first floor) and the Central State Archive of the Kyrgyz Republic (on the third floor). To gain archival access, a reference letter must be presented to the administration. The letter does not necessarily have to be from a local organization. To facilitate admission to the archives I recommend supplying the administration with a brief research plan, basic personal information, topic of study, and a tentative list of documents to request. In the archives I was allowed to use electronic equipment — laptop, digital camera, and scanner. Due to occasional power failures, I recommend carrying a backup battery.

The archives of Kyrgyzstan primarily hold documents issued after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Most of the documents of the early Soviet period are typescript in Russian. Some manuscripts, particularly documents issued by local organizations, are written in the Kyrgyz language using Arabic or Latin script. Many of the documents were handwritten or sometimes even “dashed off” with a pen or pencil, and these require a long time to decipher completely. In such cases digital camera or scanner can be very helpful.

Central State Archive of the Kyrgyz Republic

The Central State Archive of the Kyrgyz Republic (TsGA KR) holds 508,950 documents (organized in 2,383 fonds [inventories; collections]) dating from the Russian Empire up to the present day. The number of pre-revolutionary documents is small — 6,657 items in 147 fonds. One of them is titled “*Kolleksiia dokumentov po teme ‘Prisoedinenie Kirgizii k Rossii’*” (Fond 75); it is not a primary source in a narrow sense, but rather a compilation of documents collected by local historians in Moscow in the 1950s. An overwhelming majority of the documents (502,293 items) at the TsGA KR belongs to the Soviet period.

podgotovitel'nykh materialov k publikatsii, podgotovlennoi polkovnikom Serebrennikovym na temu ‘Istoriia zavoevaniia Turkestanskogo kraia’ [Collection of preliminary materials for publication prepared by Colonel Serebrennikov on the subject of ‘The history of conquest of Turkestan Territory’]” (Fond I-715), among others.

Among the fonds that I worked with were Fond 20, “*Ispolnitel'nyi komitet Sovetov rabochikh, dekhkanskih i krasnoarmeiskikh deputatov Kirgizskoi avtonomnoi oblasti (1924-1927)*” [Executive Committee of Soviets of Workers, Peasants and Red Army Deputies of the Kirgiz Autonomous Province (1924-1927)] and Fond 21, “*Tsentral'nyi ispolnitel'nyi komitet Kirgizskoi ASSR (1927-1937)*” [Central Executive Committee of the Kirgiz ASSR]. They contain documents on such interesting topics as the land-water reform, “*korenizatsiia*” [nativization] policy, deportation of *bai-manaps*, the Basmachi movement, border settlement between the republics, among others. Many secret documents are still off limits to researchers, unless the director of the TsGA KR gives permission to access them.

The TSGA KR still retains a significant number of fonds of local soviets [councils], despite the recent plan to transfer them into the possession of local archives. Besides unpublished archival sources the TsGA KR has an excellent collection of local newspapers dating from the revolutionary era, both in Russian and in Kyrgyz.

The Central State Archive of Political Documentation of the Kyrgyz Republic (TsGAPD KR)

The Central State Archive of Political Documentation of the Kyrgyz Republic [*Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv politicheskoi dokumentatsii Kirgizskoi Respubliki (TsGAPD KR)*], also known as “The Presidential Archive,” contains vast amounts of documents regarding the Communist Party in Kyrgyzstan. TsGAPD KR is located on Frunze Street, standing diagonally across from the building of the Supreme Assembly [*Jogorku Kengesh*]. It has a collection of 567,999 documents (in 2,915 fonds) dating from 1917 to 1999. As a result of a recent reorganization, some documents were reassigned to different fonds, while other documents were consolidated or eliminated. It might well be that a number of documents cited in monographs or articles are not in the catalog [*opis*] anymore.

At the TsGAPD KR, I mainly read documents from Fond 10, the “*Komitet Vsesoiuznoi KP(b.) Kirgizskoi Oblasti (1924-1937)*” [Committee of the all-union CP(b) of the Kirgiz Province (1924-1937)], which corresponds to Fonds 20 and 21 of the TsGA KR. In a nutshell, the documents consist of two parts: “Protocols” [*protokoly*] and “Materials”

[*materialy*]. Protocols includes meeting minutes concisely recording the hearing and the decision (*postanovlenie*) on a given topic. Materials includes detailed reports, letters, petitions, and even anonymous tips on the topics. Unfortunately, only the Protocol documents are accessible when it comes to the comparatively recent documents dated after the 1960s.

The State Archive of Naryn Province

In addition to the TsGA KR and TsGAPD KR, local archives exist in each province: İsik-Köl, Naryn, Talas, Chüi, Jalalabad, Osh, and Batken. The staff at the Central Archival Administration in Bishkek has information on the accessibility of these archives. During one of my field trips to Naryn Province I worked at the State Archive of Naryn Province [*Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Narynskoï oblasti (GANO)*].

Naryn is a small city, located roughly in the center of Tian Shan mountain region, whose scenery reminds me of a cowboy movie. I will treasure through my life the noble sight of the Tian Shan mountains and pasturelands. When I visited Naryn in November, it was already so cold I could see my breath. A small two-story building of GANO is located near the intersection of Lenin and Kurumbaev Streets. Without any heating equipment in the reading room, I had to work with my down coat on. GANO has documents regarding Naryn Province from 1917 to the present, about such topics as the establishment of kolkhozes, each of which has its own fond. One of the fonds that I read in GANO is titled “*Narynskiï kantonnyi ispolnitel'nyi komitet soveta deputatov trudiashchikhsia Kirgizskoi ASSR*” (Fond 2), which contains a variety of documents showing the interaction between Frunze (the capital, now called Bishkek) and Naryn.

Other Archives

The Institute of Manas Studies [*Institut Manasovedeniia*] (called the Institute of Literature and Language in the Soviet period) of the National Academy of Sciences houses a manuscript collection [*rukopisnyi fond*]. Similar to the admission process at the archives, the administration requires a reference letter to work in this collection. The collection contains a huge quantity of manuscripts collected by local intelligentsia, poets [*akin*], historians, and ethnographers from the early Soviet era to the present, involving genealogies [*šanjira*] of

the Kyrgyz tribes. They fall into three categories: Manas studies, folklore, and history. Among them I was especially attracted by the manuscripts of the early Soviet ethnographers, such as İbiraim Abdırakhmanov, Belek Soltonoev, and Saul Abramzon, whose research activities were closely connected with the establishment of Soviet authority in the region. These manuscripts serve not only as primary historical sources, but also as documents demonstrating the formation of Soviet ethnography and historiography in Kyrgyzstan.

Photographs also provide evidence of the past. The Central State Archive of Documentary Films, Photographs and Audio Recordings [*Tsentrāl'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv kino-foto-fono dokumentov*] collects audio-visual materials and contains various photographs of Kyrgyz nomads taken in the imperial and Soviet periods, which not only helped to imagine the past graphically, but also allayed my fatigue. Unfortunately, the origin of many of the photographs in this archive is unclear, and so their historical value is, of course, greatly diminished.

In addition to the documents housed in state institutions, I had the fortune to use one private collection, the family archive of Shabdan Baatir [*Semeinyi arkhiv Shabdana Baatyra*] in Bishkek. Shabdan Baatir (1840-1912) was one of the influential manaps from the tribe of Sari-Bagish. His life is key in understanding the political and ethnic reorganization processes in the western Tian Shan. His great-granddaughter, Jangı Abdıldabek kızı, manages this collection, which contains a great compilation of primary sources such as messages from Russian colonial authorities, photographs, manuscripts, and even an old map of Mecca that Shabdan Baatir bought at the time of his pilgrimage in 1904.

Conclusion

In this report I recount my personal experience of working in archives in the Kyrgyz Republic. A researcher with a different subject of study would find another collection of sources. There is tremendous potential for conducting research in Kyrgyzstan, particularly on the Soviet period. While this report is not intended to be an exhaustive guide, it would be an honor for me if it were of some help to the readers.

Conducting Interviews with Labor Migrants in Moscow

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In this report I describe some aspects of research conditions in Moscow based on my two field trips there in December 2007 and February-March 2008. The field trips were conducted as part of my MA thesis on Central Asian labor migration to Russia with a focus on Kyrgyz labor migrants. The field trips offered many interesting findings but also big challenges.

My MA thesis is designed to illuminate a global phenomenon that has recently been reshaping the post-Soviet space. Labor migration to Russia, which involves today approximately 350,000 Kyrgyz citizens, is having a significant effect on the sending society, and yet its social and political implications remain largely unexamined. Migrants send annually over 481.2 million US dollars, a figure higher than the official development assistance and aid received by Kyrgyzstan in 2006 and roughly equal to one-fifth of the country's GNI (World Bank 2007). The infiltration of new financial flows and consumerism practices into Kyrgyz society, during the difficult transition of the Kyrgyz state from a welfare state to a neo-liberal one, contributes to the transformation of notions of money, labor, and international travel. Furthermore, social relations within rural communities, which are home to 66% of the total population, are being modified due to the departure of youth and professionals. Gender relations are also subject to change due to increasing mobility and financial autonomy among women.

Through my research, I analyze multiple implications of this migration on the sending country. An abundant literature comprised of findings of US anthropologists and of recent migration theories (Brettell and Hollifield 2000, Castles and Miller 1993, Massey 1994) set up my first theoretical and interpretative framework. This scholarship provides, for instance, significant insights on the theories of social networks as migration facilitators and of the impact of democratization and promotion of human rights on migration processes. As for empirical data on Central Asian migrations, publications are much fewer. Although labor out-migration has been heavily covered since 2000 by local mass media, empirical research is conducted by a reduced

number of scholars. It worth citing Elena Sadovskaya from Kazakhstan, Saodat Olimova from Tajikistan, Liudmila Maksakova from Uzbekistan and researchers working in the Social Research Center at the American University in Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan). Marlène Laruelle and Madeleine Reeves are foreign scholars who are contributing to this topic as well. Even in more empirical and more numerous Russian sources,¹ the analysis of migrations is focused on the host society and less on the sending ones. The overview of the existing data and literature has led to the necessity to conduct field research, with interviews as a major research tool.

This research method, frequently used in anthropology and sociology of migrations, is not only a response to the scarcity of comprehensive statistics but also a complementary information source. As Massey and his colleagues stipulate, the use of statistics alone does not take into account the individuality of migrants' motivations (Massey et al. 1994). Semi-directed interviews gave individuals the opportunity to express themselves freely while answering key questions. My questions addressed living and working conditions of migrants in Moscow and their impact on sending to, and spending money in, the home country. It is important to note that I used no recording device during my survey, because most of the migrants were illegal and thus hesitant to participate in the questionnaire. The presence of a recorder could intimidate them even more.

Although Kyrgyzstan offers a great opportunity to meet returnees, both definitive and non-definitive, since many families have members working in Russia and since returnees are more open to conversations in the safe environment of their homes. I chose to carry out my main field research in Russia despite an alarming nationalist movement of "skinheads" and abusive actions by local police. This choice allowed me to investigate, at individual

¹ In Russia, post-Soviet migrations have been largely explored first as the USSR's disintegration effect and lately as an economic consequence of a difficult transition period experienced in CIS countries (Zaionchkovskaia 2003, Vichnevski 2005).

and group levels, the migrants' experiences of living and working in a country where human rights are barely observed. Choosing Moscow as a location for my interviews helped me to explore how individuals and households approached economic, legal, and social milieus of this big agglomerate and former center of the Soviet empire. I paid special attention to their survival strategies and choices.

I selected Moscow as the research destination because of the presence of large migrant communities (one third of migrants of all nationalities to Russia settle in this city), which is due to its economic allure and the existence of historical ethnic networks. Despite the large number of migrants, it was not difficult to locate Kyrgyz migrants. In the Russian labor market, they tend to specialize either in wholesale trade in markets such as Cherkizov, or in the services and construction sectors. I spotted my first respondents at restaurants, construction sites, and markets. I also was able to engage in limited conversations with labor migrants in a queue at the Consular Section of the Kyrgyz Embassy in Moscow, which was actively involved in labor migration issues. Specifically, the Representative of the Committee on Migration and Labor at the Kyrgyz Embassy conducts negotiations with Russian companies and the government in order to secure employment for Kyrgyz migrants. It also aims to develop networks to promote migrants' rights in the Russian regions where Kyrgyz settle.

My interviews were rarely successful when conducted at the migrants' job sites. Recruited without formal contracts or on the basis of fictitious contracts, Kyrgyz labor migrants often declined to spend long talking with me due to their fear of losing their jobs. In some cases, the nature of the migrants' job responsibilities did not allow long conversations. Outdoor gatherings after working hours were unsafe due to constant police ID checks. Even those with legal papers and work permits face exploitation by some policemen. As an example, a regular check at the subway station or on the street costs an illegal migrant anywhere between 50 to 100 rubles depending on his or her capacity to "negotiate." To avoid police ID checks, workers curtail drastically their activities in the city center. On the other hand, "skinheads" represent a real physical threat to non-European looking foreigners,²

² According to the Sova Information-Analytical Center, well-known in Russia, 632 foreigners were attacked and 67 of them were killed by xenophobes in 2007 (Kozhevnikova 2008).

which also encourages the logic of ethnic confinement. The spring season, with its peak in April, when the members of the movement celebrate Hitler's birthday, is especially dangerous for migrant workers. Some of the migrants who make long, daily trips to work stop working during this period. Lastly, my own Kyrgyz ethnic background greatly limited my freedom of movement to carry out this study. I was frequently stopped by the police for no reason and questioned for long periods of time on my status and the purpose of my stay in Moscow. Strikingly, many law enforcement officers have poor knowledge of the Russian laws regulating migration. A good command of the Russian language, of current legislation, and of my rights helped me to deal with the police better than the traditional method of paying a bribe. But such knowledge is lacking among Kyrgyz migrants born in rural areas and less exposed to the Russian language and culture after the fall of the USSR.

The densely populated apartments [*kvartiry*] where migrants lived came as an intermediary solution to the problem of finding safe places for interviews. Typically, there might be up to 20 migrants, usually of the same nationality and of different genders, in a meager space of 40 square meters. Such apartments represented at first an ideal place to carry out semi-participatory observations and semi-directed interviews. I visited three similar places and stayed in each one for a couple of days. During these short visits I recorded a number of life stories and made observations about group logic and everyday strategies.

Nevertheless, the extremely constricted space and constant physical presence of group members did not allow frank conversations with my respondents. For example, people were reluctant to disclose how much money they earned and sent home if other migrants were close by. In fact, jealousy of others' success created an environment of secrecy in the apartments. Also, these groups proved to exaggerate dangers, to mention only the inconveniences of the host society, and to show little interest in new ideas. For instance, the attacks of the skinhead movement have fostered among them only a negative image of Russian society, rejecting positive aspects that it offered to other migrants.

In rare cases some migrants quit these places of high concentration as soon as they acquire better jobs, or move to more comfortable apartments with newly arrived family members. A statement of a young man is very explicit:

Even though an apartment helps to survive upon arrival to Russia, it creates an unhealthy environment and does not encourage individuals to improve their situation by going beyond the group and searching for new opportunities. Some of my compatriots have to stay there because they do not have enough money to rent an independent flat and because it is convenient for short or seasonal jobs.³

I realized that a specific environment of migrant apartments, especially if moderated by a charismatic leader, most of the time the oldest and the most experienced of the group, influences the minds and modifies the behavior of the residents. I noticed that the same individuals were more cheerful when we met in private at a secure place. Apartments offer the most common settlement form for Kyrgyz migrants in Moscow. They provide a great opportunity to discover unpleasant and sometimes even underground lives of the labor migrants. But focusing research on apartments might limit or even bias the results of my research, as the narratives collected in the apartments reveal only a part of the story — i.e., the narratives tend to give mainly tragic examples of the migration experience. To balance my research, I looked for individuals with better living conditions, which turned out to be harder than I thought. Again, I faced the problem of finding safe places to conduct my interviews in privacy.

The specialization of upper class Kyrgyz migrants as medical doctors and engineers helped me once more to find my future respondents. The Kyrgyz Embassy has no comprehensive record of these individuals, while Russian public hospitals and private clinics do not disclose their data, as foreign staff is often recruited illegally. However, since success stories are rare and communication within social networks is very efficient, rumors about “wealthy” migrants quickly reached my ears. I could then carry out a number of interviews with medical doctors.

During my search for success stories, I discovered that a new local specialization, though requiring fewer specialized skills, offers good conditions to live and save money. Concierge positions are becoming popular among Kyrgyz labor

migrants since the job provides free housing, easy work, and physical security, in addition to the fixed “migrant” salary of 15,000 rubles per month. All these conditions put together eased greatly my interviews as the individuals were free from external constraints and psychological pressure. These interviews turned out to be the most valuable sources of information.

Last but not least, I would like to mention some of the difficulties related to communication with the migrants. Most of the time, interviews were carried out in a hybrid Kyrgyz language mixed with modern Russian words and sometimes with an Uzbek dialect because many workers were originally from the south of Kyrgyzstan⁴. They constantly added special migrants’ terms when explaining the particular situation of police checks, border controls, or falsification of work and residence permits. For example, the use by migrants of the term “*propiska*” [residential registration] is inappropriate since this legal practice was forbidden in Russia in 1993 and was replaced by another one, the residence permit. The difficulty in obtaining the latter reminds the migrants of similar constraints related to the former, which explains the maintenance of the term “*propiska*.” The incorrect use of legal terms by labor migrants is due to a lack of knowledge of their rights and complex Russian laws. Thus, my command of the Kyrgyz language was not entirely sufficient to conduct interviews. Furthermore, knowledge of the historical context of Russian migration laws, of the informal police practices, and the migrants’ strategies were of great importance to my research.

To conclude, my field research in Moscow was designed to gain information about the living and working conditions of Kyrgyz labor migrants, which were often represented in the Kyrgyz media as deplorable. This is true, yet my interviews and observations give enough evidence to show that migrants are first of all economic actors. Far from being mere victims, the migrants have elaborate strategies and techniques with which to face the obstacles of Russian policy. Convinced of the durability of the economic and political crisis in Kyrgyzstan, they employ various means to secure and enhance their new mobile lives. Informal ethnic organizations and businesses help to set up an emerging transnational culture. The transnational space shared by migrants of the former Soviet

³ Interview with Ishen, 33, Kyrgyz migrant working in Moscow since 2003. Currently, he is employed as a driver and distributor in a private Russian company specializing in honey production. The interview was conducted in February 2008 in Moscow.

⁴ The influence of the Uzbek culture is stronger in the south of Kyrgyzstan, where a large ethnic Uzbek minority is concentrated.

territory, the diverse diasporas, and their economic organization deserve further study.

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Conferences and Lecture Series

Family and the State in Chinggisid and Post-Chinggisid Central Eurasia

Bloomington, Indiana, USA, September 4-7, 2008

Reported by: **Virginia Martin**, Honorary Fellow, Central Asian Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wis., USA, vmartin2@wisc.edu

Can we identify patterns, common institutions, or practices that reveal what it meant to be “Chinggisid” in Central Eurasia, both during the relatively brief era of a unified Mongol Empire in the 13th century and since its demise into the diverse realms that claimed connections to Chinggis Khan? Is it time to discard the long-standing paradigm of political formation in Eurasia that posits a dichotomy between nomadic, tribal pre-states and settled, centralized bureaucratic states? If so, what, if any, paradigm(s) should replace it? And how can we better frame our exploration of this multicultural Eurasian realm within which “Chinggisid” retains tremendous, if poorly understood, explanatory power?

These are some of the challenging questions that floated through the room of 14 invited participants during a three-day symposium on “Family and State in Chinggisid and Post-Chinggisid Eurasia,” which was held September 5-7, 2008 at Indiana University in Bloomington. It was a highly stimulating gathering of scholars (mostly historians) from disparate specializations and academic traditions. Perhaps the only commonality among them was their clear fascination with the theoretical and methodological questions posed and with the rigorous empirical scholarship presented, all of which challenged them to reconsider standard analyses of such themes as kinship/genealogy, nomadism, state-formation, and political and cultural legitimacy as applied to Central Eurasian history from the thirteenth to early twentieth centuries.

This report will offer brief descriptions of each of the papers presented at the symposium. A program of the gathering, which was sponsored by the Denis Sinor Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies at Indiana University (IU), and organized by IU’s Christopher Atwood and Edward Lazzarini,

will be available shortly on the host institute’s website, <http://www.iub.edu/~srfias/>.

One prominent theme that emerged in several papers was the resiliency, across time and place, of political institutions and cultural practices that we associate with Chinggis Khan’s empire. Bettine Birge (University of Southern California, USA) explored some of the challenges of governing a multiethnic society in her paper “Family Law and the State under the Mongol-Yuan Dynasty in China: Competing Visions and Moral Dilemmas.” Birge argued that no code for family law was ever promulgated by the Yuan government, after years-long attempts alternately to impose state visions of control over marriage, divorce, and other family issues, and to allow different local practices that assured stability within each ethnic group.

Maria Subtelny (University of Toronto, Canada) offered an analysis of the term *möchälgä* (binding pledge) in Ilkhanid Iran and Chaghatayid-Timurid Central Asia. The term was introduced in the Ulus Chaghatay under the influence of Perso-Islamic culture and in the context of its rulers needing a way to secure the loyalty of nomads in post-Chinggisid states. Her findings counter Rashid-al-Din’s association of *möchälgä* to the Mongol pledge of allegiance. It was, rather, a unilateral “binding pledge” given by subordinates in response to a specific ruling order, with the threat of fine or punishment if not fulfilled. She determined that there is no continuity of the *möchälgä* with the Mongol *yasa*; rather, it was utilized out of political necessity in the context of cross-cultural exchange of institutions and practices.

David Robinson (Colgate University, USA) demonstrated in the paper “The Ming Imperial Family and Mongolian Clothing” how important it is

for historians to view the Ming court within the larger context of post-Mongol Eurasian history. In his interpretation of paintings and statuary, Robinson showed that Ming emperors through the sixteenth century drew a connection to their Yuan predecessors by such as actions as wearing Mongol riding tunics, posing on horseback, and enjoying archery contests. These and other depictions point to the Ming imperial family's desire to be seen as both heirs to the Mongol Yuan and as distinct from Chinese scholar-officials and their prescriptions of propriety. Robinson's paper made a compelling argument for seeing the Ming emperors as claimants to a larger tradition of Chinggisid rulership.

These papers on laws, customs, and clothing give us windows onto the ways that the Mongol Empire acted as a zone of cultural contact among communities with diverse ethnic, political, religious, and other traditions. Donald Ostrowski (Harvard University, USA) offered a broader view on this topic, considering pre- and post-Mongol era Russian history in his paper on "Systems of Kinship Succession in Rus' and Steppe Societies." He asked: to what extent was there a common pattern or system of succession to rulership in Rus' and in the steppe? His ongoing research looks, for example, at whether *mestnichestvo* in Muscovy derived from a Mongol system of ranking and succession. Searching for patterns that span pre-Chinggisid and post-Chinggisid Eurasia is certainly a valuable endeavor. Bruno de Nicola (University of Cambridge, UK) advocated such a broad focus in his paper "Pre-Imperial *Khatuns*: The Role of Women and the Rise of Chinggis Khan." Here de Nicola suggested that we need to move away from a traditional focus in the historiography on the influence that women had on the young and mature Chinggis Khan, and instead analyze the status of elite women in pre-imperial Mongolia. His preliminary research into the stories of a number of such *khatuns* shows that they played an active role in society and politics, which, he argues, should be considered when assessing women's experiences in the Mongol Empire and post-Chinggisid Eurasia.

Several papers reflected rigorous empirical research and, based on scrutiny of documentary evidence, offered challenges to prevailing interpretations. For example, Matsuda Koichi (Osaka International University, Japan) gave a detailed analysis of "The Fief (Appanage) Allotment System in North China under Mongol Rule." Using census registers from 1233-35 and data on the

redistribution of households as seen in the 1236 fief allotment in the area north of the Yellow River following the Mongol conquest of the Jin dynasty, Matsuda demonstrated the exact replication from Mongolia of the pattern of fief allotments, as well as the size of commoner households in those allotments and the basic administrative institutions within them. His findings prompted speculation on the extent to which this system of property distribution and administrative rule may have been replicated in other regions under Mongol rule.

Liu Xiao (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing) shared with conference participants "A New Look at the Operation of the *Keshig* in the Yuan Dynasty." Liu's work challenges previous studies on this institution of imperial guards and the system by which they rotated duties. In his very close examination of Chinese-language documents, Liu found information about *keshig* who served not only the Yuan emperor, but also crown princes and other members of the imperial family. By thus expanding the political circle of players, Liu provides a new set of sources and information for interpreting Yuan politics in the 14th century.

Diplomacy and diplomatic relations in post-Chinggisid Eurasia is the area of research that Kim Hodong (Seoul National University, Korea) examined in his paper, "Aspects of Inter-Ulus Diplomacy in the Mongol Empire." Kim compiled and analyzed evidence of 45 named envoys and their missions among successor uluses between the 1260 dissolution of the Mongol Empire and 1332, and argues that there was in fact great unity in this Chinggisid realm. Not only was there important inter-ulus contact, but even what Kim called "package diplomacy," when several envoys representing different uluses traveled together on the same mission. Land remained the primary route for these missions. Kim's evidence demonstrates the persistence of a "Chinggisid charisma" long after Chinggis Khan's empire had dissolved.

In other areas, however, Chinggisid identity apparently failed to take root. Such is the preliminary finding that Edward Lazzarini offered in his paper entitled "Who Cares about Chinggisid Lineage? A Question for Tatars and Bashkirs of the Middle Volga," which presented some early thoughts on his larger project on elite identity formation in the Volga-Ural region. Here, in spite of the profound influence of Chinggis Khan's empire, Chinggisid identity did not take firm root as it did in other regions, whereas Bulghar identity, having

preceded Chinggisid rule, has been the enduring one for many Tatar and Bashkir elites.

This brings us to a set of theoretical issues that the lone non-historian at the conference, the anthropologist David Sneath (University of Cambridge, UK), offered for contemplation. In fact, in important ways Sneath's ideas set the tone for the conference proceedings as a whole. Drawing from his recently published book entitled *The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society, and Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia* (Columbia University Press, 2007), Sneath argued that Inner Asian nomadic polities formed out of aristocratic "houses," not kinship-based tribes or clans, and that these houses coordinated political activities and structure as "headless," decentralized states. This new model for considering Inner Asian politics rejects the evolutionist thinking of nineteenth-twentieth century social science: Sneath's analysis found that the standard presumption of genealogical descent groups as the foundation of social and political structures does not stand up to empirical evidence, and where we do have evidence of kinship-based society, it is mostly a result of state-imposed administrative organization. If we remove the interpretive strictures that formed from our presumption that genealogical descent defined nomadic polities, we leave room for the possibility of a different kind of state from the one most often postulated, following Weberian dichotomies of state and "pre-state" formations. Thus, Sneath sees an Inner Asian nomadic type of polity called the headless state, which represented the norms and customs practiced by aristocratic houses, who only converged under one central leader and administration in rare circumstances.

As Sneath admits, his theory needs testing with more empirical evidence, and four of the papers at this symposium may have served that purpose. Virginia Martin (University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA) engaged Sneath directly and explicitly in her paper "Kazakh Chinggisids in the Russian Empire, 1820s-30s." Based on archival documents on the political activities of Kazakh "White Bone" (i.e., Chinggisid) elites and their relations with other nomads and with the Russian state in the Middle Horde steppe territory, Martin found ample evidence of the decentralized, hierarchic aristocratic orders that comprise Sneath's "headless state." Just as compelling as a tool for interpreting political actions for Martin, however, is the notion of patronage, which is a typical feature of political relationships

among aristocratic elites. She offered several cases to show that these elites used both patronage practices and presumptions of aristocratic privilege in their efforts to maintain political power and authority.

Christopher Atwood, in his paper "What Were the Qonggirads in the Yuan: A Segmentary Lineage, a Descent Group, or a Principality?" provides clear evidence that genealogical kinship cannot be presumed to exist as real or fictive glue holding social groups together. Atwood dissected the term Qonggirad, one of the in-law [*quda*] families of the Yuan dynasty and an entity that predates the Mongol Empire and is found in post-Mongol khanates and realms, including among modern Kazakhs. Atwood provided evidence to assert that counter to the *obok* structure postulated by Bacon to have organized Eurasian nomadic lineage, Qonggirads and other Mongol "tribes" were at best only semi-lineal in organization, such that genealogy did not serve to prevent assimilation of outsiders. The lineages were, in fact, "built first and foremost around state institutions." This conclusion nicely supports Sneath's contention that what we have seen as lineages were actually aristocratic houses that emerged as sharers in the imperial state's administrative organization.

Two final papers examined elite lineages that existed outside of presumed genealogical tribal structures and the Chinggisid aristocratic houses that dominated politics in many regions of post-Chinggisid Eurasia. In his paper "The Northern Kirghiz Chieftains: A Black Bone Alternative to the White Bone Estate?" Daniel Prior (Miami University, USA) explored Kirghiz *manaps*, an elite nomadic estate that was successful for a time at asserting its power and authority by creatively and assertively acting in its own interests as it adapted to outside powers, specifically Qoqand (until 1867), the Russian Empire (1867-1917) and the Soviet Union (until 1930). Prior's research found that the term *manap* was rarely used in Kirghiz discourse and that it was not a title sought and claimed. The *manap* estate illustrates the crucial role played by expanding empires in defining the contours of what Sneath calls an Inner Asian aristocratic order.

Eliot Sperling (Indiana University-Bloomington, USA) in "A Ruling Clan on the Eastern Tibetan Periphery: The Lords of Co-ne in the Mongol and Post-Mongol Eras," focused on one lineage that emerged as prominent political and cultural figures at the time of Mongol conquests and

yet escaped direct domination. Sperling found no evidence of Chinggisid descent in Eastern Tibet, but we do see the maintenance of the Co-ne's legitimacy as a Tibetan elite. In the Ming and Qing periods, the Co-ne remained a ruling lineage in both state-sponsored frontier administration and within Tibetan culture.

During the concluding half-day of this conference, participants discussed the common themes of the preceding days' deliberations, and how to move forward. Almost everyone expressed an idea for a way to give the proceedings a scholarly

identity, and perhaps tellingly, almost all of those ideas were different. Perhaps this means simply that there is no single story to be told here; perhaps looking for a "Chinggisid" version of the past is misguided, given the huge expanse of territory and *longue durée* under consideration. But also tellingly, everyone around the table was eager for more discussion, with enthusiastic endorsement of a plan for a sequel conference on some aspect of the history of Inner Asian / Central Eurasian political structures, institutions, and cultures.

Mobility and Governability in Central Asia: An International Conference

Los Angeles, California, USA, October 18, 2008

Reported by: **Nile Green**, Associate Professor, Department of History, University of California-Los Angeles, Los Angeles, Calif., USA, green@history.ucla.edu

"Mobility and Governability in Central Asia" was organized by the Central Asia Initiative of the Asia Institute at the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA), with financial support from the UCLA International Institute and the Center for European and Eurasian Studies. This was the inaugural conference of the UCLA Central Asia Initiative, following a film series and the colloquium "Enforced Migration and Sedentarization in Modern Central Asia" in Spring 2008. The conference approached the theme of the linkages between mobility and governability from a historical perspective and the thematic perspectives of the arts and religions of Central Asia, seeking to explore long-term social or cultural characteristics in the region's social, political, religious and artistic formations. A special concern was the impact of Central Asia's distinctive geographical environments on the human scale of social and cultural activity. The basic parameters of the conference were framed by two key questions: Does mobility enable or disable governability?; and in either case, what is the nature of this interaction between governability and mobility in different times and places?

The conference opened with an address by J. Nicholas Entrikin, Acting Vice-Provost of the UCLA International Institute, who spoke with enthusiasm about attempts to increase the visibility of Central Asia at UCLA, drawing on his own expertise as a cultural geographer to highlight the

fluid nature of boundaries and the different ways in which ecological variables, systems of government or religion mark and define a space such as Central Asia. Opening remarks and an introduction to the aims of the conference were made by Nile Green, a historian of Islamic India and chair of the UCLA Central Asia Initiative. He first spoke of the Initiative's overall aims in fostering an "out of Asia" approach to Central Asia by which it hopes to bring scholars of the surrounding regions of Asia into conversation with specialists on Central Asia itself. Positioning UCLA as an intellectual "crossroads" rather than a "center" for Central Asian studies, he described the Initiative's aims as being to promote intellectual exchange between Central Asianists and specialists on China, India, Tibet, and the Near East. Green then expanded on the theme of mobility and governability, asking whether mobility should be seen as having perpetually defined experiences of governability in Central Asia or whether opportunities and constraints on mobility were themselves shaped by governance. He went on to emphasize the importance of carefully inspecting the particular "means of mobility" in different periods, noting the ways in which mobility could be understood through patterns of access to specific assets, natural or mechanical, which changed hands in different periods.

The morning panel, "Histories," was chaired by Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Department of History,

UCLA). The first speaker was Lothar von Falkenhausen (Department of Art History, UCLA) who presented an illustrated talk on “Archaeological Sidelights on Central Asia.” Von Falkenhausen described how conceptions of early Central Asian history have been shaped by archaeological discoveries which, despite their wealth and intrinsic fascination, leave many problems unresolved, such as the development and interaction of the distinct cultural sequences and the identification of specific ancient ethnic groups found in the region. Highlighting the archaeological difficulty of establishing a clear picture of the “dynamics of population change over long time spans,” he nonetheless emphasized the “mosaic nature of developments” from one oasis to another in ancient Central Asia. Painting a picture of limited mobility around a settled “mosaic” of sedentary population centers, he pointed towards neglected sequences of north-south mobility as well as the importance of localized forms of mobility based on regional transhumance and the patterns of market travel via bullock cart which also appear in the archaeological record.

The next speaker, Devin DeWeese (Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University-Bloomington), addressed the theme of “The Missing Middle: Broad Brushes and Narrower Perspectives on the Historiography of Central Asia in the Islamic Period.” In his presentation, DeWeese challenged the conventional framing of Central Asia as a periphery or “transit zone,” emphasizing the importance of studying the “missing middle” period of Central Asian history. He framed the period as one of the interaction of Islamic frameworks for political activity with such Central Asian alternatives as the *Yasa* and the Chinggisid principle, which sustained longstanding patterns of diffuse, non-centralized political power through which nomadic groups continued to play an important role. DeWeese then spoke of how misunderstandings of these political structures led to a contrastive “illusion” of strong imperial structures in the Russian period. Neglect of the centuries immediately preceding the Russian conquests allowed for a historiography which conceives the coming of Russian rule as a transformative rupture in social and political structures rather than a sequence of continuity of diffuse state power and local power-brokers. The final speaker in this session was Nazif Shahrani (Department of Central Eurasian Studies and Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Indiana University-Bloomington), whose

paper was entitled “Mobility, Subjugation and States in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Central Asia.” Shahrani presented an overview of changing patterns in Central Asian mobility during the period of Tsarist and Soviet rule, preferring to speak in terms of a determined policy of “subjugation.” He outlined a pre-Russian model in which mobility could lead to conquest and subjugation, but not actual rule, such that as a governing mechanism mobility inevitably fails. This, however, held true so long as the state and its subjects shared the same locomotive technology, namely the human and animal forms of “muscular energy.” Pointing towards changes in the technology of mobility, he then described how Russian rule coincided with a fundamental change in this locomotive technology, allowing the state to increase the movement of soldiers and Slavic immigrants via railroads while restricting the movement of nomads and other indigenous groups via new techniques of border control. As a result, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed an increase in state subjugation in Central Asia concomitant with the control of new forms of mobility.

The afternoon session, “Cultures,” was chaired by Gregory Schopen (Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, UCLA). Françoise Aubin, of the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) presented the first paper in this session, entitled “Rambling Reflections about Mobility and Governability of Religious Phenomena and Systems in Inner Asia.” Aubin presented an elegant and elaborate survey of the ways in which mobility has intersected with shamanist, Buddhist and Muslim groups, drawing in particular on the extensive engagement of French scholars with Central Asian religions in recent years. Stressing the interdependence of the shaman and the hunt — itself a form of mobility — she nonetheless depicted shamanism as inimical to political organization, or at least to centralized politics. The spread of Tibetan Buddhism among the Mongols was then depicted as “a movement of conversion under the aegis of a political power.” Such conversion in turn brought the establishment of settled monasteries, a development which itself in turn saw the beginning of urbanization and sedentarization on the steppes. In the case of Islam, the adaptability of shamanic religious forms saw the evolution of a “shamanized Islam” in which “different layers of ritual or thought ... coexist” rather than blend together as in the model of “syncretism.” Finally, Aubin developed the idea that religious diffusion in Central Asia operated

on a north-south rather than a more familiar east-west axis.

The next presenter, Susan Whitfield (British Library, London), addressed the question of the mobile and the governable in a paper entitled “Reframing the Artistic Spaces of Central Asia.” Questioning a dichotomy setting the “arts of the governable classes” (such as urban factory-produced porcelain) against the “arts of the non-governable nomads” (such as animal-style metal goods), Whitfield went on to discuss specific examples of the intersection of mobility and governance with the arts. The presence of horses and chariots in royal burials points to the importance of the horse as a symbol of royal power, for example, while works of rock art in Central Asia point towards the importance of a stone-medium art of stability that is usually overlooked through an emphasis on mobile objects on the Silk Road. Pointing to the way in which scholarship has drawn on Eurocentric and Sinocentric political narratives that emphasize the governable spaces at either side of Central Asia, Whitfield showed how the political and artistic spaces of the region are as a result “squeezed into the interstices,” leaving the interpretation of art historical objects to “hang onto the coat tails of political history.”

The final paper turned towards the larger scale of the environmental or “big history” of Central Asia, by way of a presentation on “Mobile Army, Sedentary Tax Base: Mobility and Sedentarism in the Mongol and Russian Empires” by David Christian (Department of History, San Diego State University). Observing that the Russian and Mongol empires were not only the largest land empires ever created but also covered almost the same geographical space, Christian developed grounds for comparison between Russian and Mongol rule based

on their common responses to the same ecological circumstances. Combined with the region’s flat topography, the low natural productivity (and thence low population density) of “Inner Eurasia” allowed for rapid military expansion over wide areas, while at the same time demanding the use of highly mobile armies and tax collectors to generate income from a region of such widely and thinly dispersed resources. This geographically-enforced demand for governmental mobility led to parallels in the evolution of Mongol and Russian rule, which Christian summed up in the dictum “Mobile Army, Sedentary Tax Base.” This in turn made particular demands on Russian and Mongol society through the need to create an elite that was culturally cohesive but at the same time geographically dispersed.

A number of overall themes emerged from the discussion of the papers. One of these was the tension between creating an autochthonous historiography of Central Asia “in its own terms” and positioning Central Asia within a “connected” or global history that manages not to relegate it to a “transit region” on the road to elsewhere. A second theme was the importance of north-south interactions and movements within Central Asia, which appeared in discussion of patterns of material and religious diffusion. A larger set of themes concerned ideas of framing the intersection of mobility and governability in terms of access to technology; the dispersion of written *lingua francae* through paper circulation; the culture of the elite hunter; and the neglected roles of chariot and wagon transportation.

The program of the conference and a listing of other events organized by the Central Asia Initiative at UCLA can be found at <http://www.international.ucla.edu/asia/initiatives/centralasia/index.asp>.

The Fortieth National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, November 20-23, 2008

Reported by: Sean Pollock, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio, USA, sean.pollock@wright.edu

The 40th National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 20-23, 2008. The meeting attracted participants representing myriad countries, working in multiple disciplines, and pursuing research and teaching interests truly global in scope. With 48 panels per session, more than 570 panels, and well over 2,000 presentations, it would be impossible to summarize the experience of the conference. In selecting which panels to attend, the author was guided by consideration of the convention's organizing theme, the Central Eurasian Studies Society's statement of purpose, and his own research and teaching interests.

The theme of this convention was "The Gender Question." As many as 80 panels and well over 200 presentations reflected on past and current practices of incorporating gender into scholarship and teaching. Gender framed presentations exploring diverse subject matter: for example, empire-building in the Caucasus and nation-building in Eastern Europe; sports in the Soviet Union; out-migration in contemporary Georgia; representations of femininity, masculinity, and alternative sexualities in Russian and Soviet popular culture, literature, art, and film; Russian Orthodoxy in imperial Russia and religion in the post-Communist era; the Cold War; power in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; citizenship and emancipation in modern Hungary; demographic and health conditions in contemporary Central Asia; wars and revolutions; experiences of childhood and youth in contemporary Russia; capitalism and consumerism in postwar Eastern Europe; terrorism and dying; involvement of nongovernmental organizations in the post-Soviet space; memory of World War One in Yugoslavia; and the myriad ways that women have figured and been forgotten in the histories and historiographies of Eastern Europe and Eurasia.

In introducing the presidential plenary session, "Revisioning the Gender Question: Scholarship, Exchange, Experience," Beth Holmgren (Duke

University) invited panelists and audience members alike to consider several questions: How do we now define gender studies in our various disciplines and regional applications? Do we incorporate the newer fields of masculinity studies, gay/lesbian/transgender studies, or is gender studies still primarily related to women's studies and feminist activism in our teaching and scholarship on Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Eurasia? Marianne Kamp (University of Wyoming) observed that gender was not discussed in Central Asian historiography and ethnography until the 1990s, when it came into use not as an import of Western scholarly discourse, but with the arrival of development workers affiliated with Western nongovernmental organizations. Brian Baer (Kent State University) noted that gender studies has its roots in feminist activism, and that masculinity studies emerged directly out of gender studies as a corrective to the woman-centric approach that seemed to mark women as those people who have gender, as if men do not. Baer argued that in order to understand the reigning gender regime, it is necessary to attend to the construction of masculinity no less than the construction of femininity. Masculinity studies was feminist in organization, he asserted, with an assist from the men's movement of the late 1980s. Queer studies emerged as both an activist and theoretical movement. Yana Hashamova (Ohio State University) addressed the place of gender studies in Southeastern Europe, arguing that it is even more closely related to feminism and women's studies than it is in Central Asia, and related the comic story of how at the American University in Bulgaria a course on the Balkan image of masculinity attracted a number of body-builders, who in turn were surprised to learn that their appearance would be the object of critical investigation in that course. Helena Gosciolo (University of Pittsburgh) distinguished between gender studies as practiced in Eastern Europe and Russia, and gender studies as practiced by non-Slavists with their greater commitment to feminist activism. She has observed a curious "bifurcation" in Russia, namely, that there are many

women who actually live feminist activism without being aware of what feminism is, who simply believe that they can do anything men can do, and probably better. Panelists also addressed the extent to which Western theorists' works are available in Eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia, the institutionalization of gender studies programs in these regions, and the future of gender studies in general. Limitations of space prevent further discussion of what was one of the liveliest roundtables the author has witnessed in over a decade of attending AAASS annual meetings.

Although not framed specifically around gender questions, a panel titled "Self-fashioning at the Eighteenth-Century Russian Imperial Court," sponsored by the Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies Association, focused on the lives of three male members of Russia's ruling elites. Ernest (Eric) Zitser (Duke University) reflected on the autobiographical *vita* of Prince Boris Ivanovich Kurakin, best known for his role as the leading diplomat of Peter the Great. Whereas previous scholarship has tended to view the work as a first-person eyewitness account of the origins of modernity in the Petrine era, Zitser suggested it is best understood as an example of early modern Russian life-writing, a uniquely Muscovite example of baroque self-fashioning. Steven Usitalo (Northern State University, South Dakota) examined the ways in which Mikhail Lomonosov used the patronage of prominent men to fashion for himself an identity of a man of science, arguing that social legitimation preceded cognitive legitimation for Lomonosov at the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences and the court of Empress Elizabeth. Lomonosov's success in linking his reputation to that of established men of science in Europe and Russia served as vehicle for establishing his personal honor and status, thereby facilitating the molding of a scientific self. Elise Wirtschafter (California State Polytechnic University, Pomona) moved the discussion chronologically forward with her study of the role of Father Platon at the court of Catherine II. Wirtschafter mined Platon's autobiography for a sense of his identity, finding service to the empress to be the most prominent theme, while his court sermons reveal him to be a moralist to monarchs preaching at the crossroads of traditional Russian Orthodox theology and Enlightenment ideas. She showed how Platon in his sermons did not attempt to counter contemporary ideas emanating from Enlightenment Europe, but rather interpreted them for his listeners in traditional religious terms.

Douglas Smith (University of Washington) helpfully observed that in all the presentations self-fashioning involved the production of narratives of suffering, and agreed with the panelists who suggested that Stephen Greenblatt's work on Renaissance self-fashioning can illuminate eighteenth-century Russian court life. The problem of periodization, and of ideas of pre-modern and modern when applied to the Russian Empire in the eighteenth century, made itself felt in the subsequent discussion.

Moving from the culture of Russia's imperial elites in the eighteenth century to the lives of ordinary citizens on a former Russian periphery, a panel titled "Migration and Gender in the Caucasus" focused on the movement of populations within and outside Georgia today. Erin Hofmann (University of Texas, Austin) presented a paper co-authored with Cynthia Buckley (University of Texas, Austin) on gender norms and patterns of women's labor migration in Georgia since 2000. The presentation was based on interviews conducted with nine former migrant women in Tbilisi in 2007. It provided an overview of recent women's migration from Georgia, highlighted factors promoting the out-migration of women from Georgia, explored existing stereotypes regarding women and migration in Georgia, and examined the cognitive strategies Georgian women deploy to give meaning to their experiences. In the conclusion Hofmann argued that the realities of women's migration challenges traditional gender norms; that changes in the political and economic spheres have led to the feminization of temporary labor migration in Georgia; that Georgian women have used a variety of rhetorical strategies to legitimize their migration to both themselves and their families; and finally, that the disconnect between norms and actions can persist indefinitely. Beth Mitchneck (University of Arizona) presented a paper co-authored with Joanna Regulska (Rutgers University) on internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Georgia. Mitchneck supported Hofmann's claim that for Georgian women and female migrants, there is a disconnect between norms and actions, and suggested in addition that female IDPs can be seen as agents of cultural change. Theoretically based in feminist studies, the paper examined experiences of being a forced migrant, of becoming and living as an IDP, and argued that gender is a key component of migrant identity and that migration itself is a highly gendered process that entails changes in gender relations and in some cases "demasculinization." Ted Gerber (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

commended the presenters for drawing attention to gendered aspects of migration processes. The size of Hofmann's sample, however, gave him pause. He encouraged both presenters to think about how the characteristics of their samples might influence their findings, and to attend more carefully to the rhetorical strategies deployed by their interviewees, as these may reflect preexisting discourses of stigmatization and legitimacy. Finally, Gerber challenged Mitchneck's characterization of IDPs as agents of change, noting that narratives of suffering, passivity, resignation, fatalism, and victimization seemed to predominate in interviewees' stories about their experiences.¹

Remaining in the Caucasus but moving back in time, "Gender and Empire in the Caucasus" brought together three empirically rich and theoretically informed papers. Anna Aydynyan (Yale University) drew attention to Alexander Pushkin's *Fountain of Bakhchisaray* as an underlying theme in Iurii Tynianov's novel *The Death of Vazir-Mukhtar*. In this work, she argued, the texture of Orientalism and the politics of the Russian Empire are laid bare and parodied. Nineteenth-century Russian Orientalism bequeathed the concept of a voluntary and mutually beneficial "marital union" between Russia and Georgia, embodied in the marriage of Alexander Griboedov and Nina Chavchavadze. In her presentation, Kristen Collins (Ohio State University) explored the ways in which colonizers and colonized interacted in the nineteenth-century Caucasus by focusing on the tradition of bride abduction practiced by the region's Christian and Muslim peoples alike. The paper attempted to show that the views of indigenes and Tsarist officials concerning the practice of bride-stealing were determined by the norms and laws concerning gender and honor of their respective societies. At the same time, the paper demonstrated that while their initial positions on the matter diverged, the sides were ultimately able to come closer together through prolonged interaction. The paper demonstrated that Tsarist officials serving in the Caucasus could and did act as go-betweens advocating on behalf of Russia's colonial subjects before imperial institutions. Mikhail Mamedov (Georgetown University) explored how the imperial army, and military service in the Caucasus in particular,

sometimes served as a "school of manhood" for the wayward sons of Russia's ruling elites, turning Russians into Caucasians (*kavkaztsy*) in the process. Indeed, Mamedov argued that nineteenth-century Caucasia became the most important site for the construction of Russian masculine identities, a project reserved for Russian noblemen. In commenting on the papers, Nicholas Breyfogle (Ohio State University) argued that gender has not received the attention it deserves in studies of Russian empire-building; here, as in much else, students of the Russian empire are playing catch-up with colleagues who study the British and French Empires. He suggested, with a nod to Marshall Sahlins, approaching empire as a creative and transformative space where culture is both produced and changed, and encouraged the panelists to define more clearly such terms as masculinity and femininity, and to think more carefully about the relationship between literature and policymaking.

Not every panel and panelist engaged the gender question. Indeed, most did not. Many focused instead on questions of empire and nation. Rivaling the presidential plenary session in terms of liveliness of atmosphere was a roundtable discussion titled "Russian Nation vs. Russian Empire." Building on the growing body of recent empirical work, the panelists thought it useful to revisit the theoretical generalizations about the dichotomy between Russian nation and empire in light of this new work. Brief opening remarks were followed by discussion among panel members and questions and comments from the audience. Dominic Lieven (London School of Economics) spoke briefly about his recent work and its implications for the question of empire and nation. Having just finished a study of Russia in the Napoleonic Wars, Lieven emphasized that war provides much of the best material for nationalist mythology. The British, French, Spanish, Germans, and Russians have all mined the Napoleonic Wars for nationalist myths. Unlike their rivals, however, Russians who engaged in such myth-making have radically underestimated Russia's own achievement in these wars. Why is that, Lieven asked? The answer has to do with the fact that Western European states were "two thirds of the way there" in terms of national identity formation, while Russia remained a multiethnic, dynastic empire. As regards the study of empire in the West, Lieven distinguished between two distinct categories — empire as multiethnic community and empire as power — and argued that empire comprises a mixture of the two. Alexei Miller (Russian Academy

¹ A paper scheduled to be presented by Cynthia Buckley and titled "HIV, Male Labor Migration, and Female Risk Environments in the South Caucasus" was made available to audience members.

of Sciences and Central European University) expressed doubts about the applicability of Ernest Gellner's ideas on nationalism to imperial core powers, such as Russia, and urged historians to unpack the meanings and practices associated with the term Russification. He also stressed that when historians of Russia look for comparative contexts and entanglements, they need to look at empires that were building nations in their core areas, and to take into consideration the relative belatedness of Russia's nation-building projects. Nationalism was a big problem for the Romanov dynasty; government censors systematically attempted to suppress the usage of the word nation in Russian journalism and replace it with the word *narodnost*. He concluded by urging further study of the successes and failures of Russian nationalism and nation-building on the eve of the First World War. Alexander Semyonov (Smolny College, Russia) continued two of these themes, namely, the character of the Russian polity and society as distinguished by multiethnicity and the growing force of nationalism connected with the idea of political representation in the nineteenth century. He explored these topics by looking at the early days of the First Duma, arguing that the opening of the Duma was a symbolic event that showcased the diversity of the empire through dress and other local, confessional, linguistic, social, and political markers. To speak of Russia's multiethnicity, he seemed to be saying, does not begin to capture all the kinds of difference and diversity within the empire. Ronald Suny (University of Michigan) focused his comments on empire, nation, and emotions, stressing the importance of thinking about nation as not only an imagined community, but as an affective one as well. He argued that empire is about institutionalized hierarchy and the maintenance of difference between ruling metropole and ruled periphery, with rule being based on conquest, making empire fundamentally about unequal power relations. In contrast, nation-states and multinational states, Suny claimed, are based on civil equality of citizens under the law and ideas of popular sovereignty and democracy. Unlike an empire, a nation is not a state but a community of shared identity that believes it deserves political self-determination. Observing that over the past two hundred years nation has become the most powerful form of political solidarity, one that has almost completely replaced a world of empires with a world of nation-states, Suny asked how we account for the power of the nation. Suny finds the answer in the affective ties that bind

members of the nation together, or what he calls "affective disposition," a concept he elaborated further. The Russian Empire never succeeded, though the "Soviet Empire" managed to a greater extent, in forging a sense of national identification for the people as a whole. Lieven responded to Suny's presentation by suggesting that the power of nation has something to do with its metaphor of family, which puts a sentimental cloak around the bureaucratic state, and that European armies in the nineteenth century depended on the national sentiment of its conscripts to be effective. In addition to discourses of emotions, Semyonov suggested thinking about what he called "Weberian disenchantment" of the social and political space of empire.

Imperial and national entanglements were the subject of another panel, titled "'Last Thrust to the South'? Russian Occupation Strategies in Southeastern Europe and Eastern Anatolia, 1878 to World War I." Peter Holquist's (University of Pennsylvania) paper examined Russia's liberationist program for occupied Austrian Galicia in the years between 1914 and 1915. He emphasized the virulence and sweeping nature of Russia's nationalizing agenda for this territory, as well as the interplay of forces — the Russian army, patriotic activist organizations, and government institutions chief among them — involved in the occupation of Austrian Galicia in these years. Michael Reynolds (Princeton University) reconsidered the role of Armenian revolutionaries in Ottoman-Russian relations between 1908 and 1917. Whereas the literature on the subject tends to take for granted the existence of symbiosis between Armenian revolutionaries and imperial Russia, Reynolds argued that Armenian revolutionaries presented challenges to the Ottoman and Russian empires alike. He downplayed the idea that common political goals and religious identities bound Armenian revolutionaries and Tsarist officials together in a harmonious relationship. Ilya Vinkovetsky (Simon Fraser University) explored the unintended consequences of Russia's occupation of Bulgaria in the 1870s. In these years the Russian government was intimately involved in the creation of a relatively liberal constitution for Bulgaria. Its officials often worked at cross purposes, however, leading to a Bulgarian policy that was "schizophrenic," and, surprisingly, the creation of a democratic constitution sponsored by an autocratic government. In his comments, Alfred Rieber (Central European University) emphasized themes

common to all three papers: imperial regimes' struggles over their borderlands; liberationist ideologies as justifications for the territorial aggrandizement of imperial regimes; the importance of diaspora politics for Bulgarians, Jews, and Armenians; and the importance of spy mania, intelligence agencies and conspiracy theories in exacerbating tensions within the empires, a Europe-wide phenomenon.

The Ottoman-Russian rivalry found reflection in papers for another panel, "Mobility across Empires: Muslim Travelers and the Russian and Ottoman States." Here religious and political questions predominated. Naganawa Norihiro (Hokkaido University) discussed the relationship between voyage and politics through the stories of Muslim travelers from the Volga-Ural region to the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. His research suggests that Russian Muslims abroad clearly distinguished between themselves and other Muslims and that pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism hardly resonated with his informants. The paper laid bare the multiple layers of the politics surrounding the voyages of Russia's Muslim subjects by demonstrating that the Russian government was concerned about its international reputation and was prepared to use its Muslim subjects as leverage in its relations with the Ottomans; that some of these subjects were willing to play an intermediary role between the Russian state and Muslim communities; and that the border-crossing experiences of Muslim travelers were sources of tension within their local communities. The paper presented by Lale Can (New York University) addressed similar issues but from the perspective of Central Asian hajjis and the Ottoman state. She began by quoting an 1893 petition submitted by three Chinese hajjis to Sultan Abdülhamid II complaining of Russian exploitation of Muslim pilgrims from Chinese Turkestan, and proposing that he appoint an official representative for these pilgrims. She argued that such petitioners used the language of rights to advance their interests and expressed the belief that it was the Ottoman ruler's duty to uphold these rights. She also argued that the Ottoman government was not interested in winning the hearts and minds of Russian and Chinese pilgrims. James Meyer (Columbia University) brought the Tsarist state back to center stage in his discussion of the place of Islam in the Russian Empire. Specifically, he focused on the ways Tsarist officials viewed pan-Turkism and attempted to respond to it. Addressing both Tsarist

foreign and domestic policy, Meyer noted a sharp divergence between how Tsarist officials articulated "a pan-Turkist threat" emanating from Istanbul and the methods they deployed to combat this threat. Observing that much of the scholarship on Russia's relationship with the Islamic world uncritically replicates the vocabulary and concepts of late Tsarist public records, Adeeb Khalid (Carleton College) commended the panelists for engaging with "Muslim sources," that is, sources produced by Muslims in their own languages. He argued that these sources make it possible to interpret Russian sources in new ways.

"Imperial Russian Diplomacy" was the title of a roundtable discussion of Russian foreign policy from the Napoleonic Wars to World War I. Dominic Lieven's presentation was based on a book he has recently completed on Russia's confrontation with Napoleon from Tilsit in 1807 to the arrival of the Russian army in Paris in 1814. While the book primarily concerns military history, the presentation treated Russian foreign policy and diplomacy under three headings: the possible different levels of analysis that one can bring to studying the subject; the collapse of the Tilsit settlement and the road to war; and the debate within the governing elite on grand strategy. David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye (Brock University) focused on the question of Russian expansion into Central Asia. He emphasized that studies of the question have generally not been based on archival sources, and that the latter are great in both quantity and quality. He stressed that to understand the ideas driving Russian expansion into Central Asia, it is necessary to study the institutions involved, especially the Foreign Ministry, its Asian Department, the Asian Office of the General Staff, and the Ministries of Finance and the Interior, but also affiliated bodies charged with reconnaissance, as well as public opinion. Jennifer Siegel (Ohio State University) spoke about the methods and the means of Russian foreign policy relating to her current book project that explores the importance of British and French bank loans to Russia in the late imperial period. The relationship between foreign policy and finance was the subject of her comments. Because Russia was the foremost debtor country in pre-World War I Europe, its finance ministers and entrepreneurs turned time and time again to foreign capital. French lenders held the bulk of Russia's debt. She argued that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs played little role in bringing Russia and France closer together, a rapprochement that was the achievement of the Ministry of Finance, and she

concluded by suggesting that Russia's financial dependence on foreign capital may have weakened the government's ability to pursue national interests through diplomacy. David McDonald (University of Wisconsin-Madison) rounded out the discussion with a presentation on the Austro-Russian rivalry on the eve of World War I. He stressed the ways that Russian foreign and domestic policies were intertwined, and argued the need to move beyond traditional questions concerning the war's origins (for example, the alliance system, British-German rivalry, and nationalism in the Balkans) and the image of the war as the great grinder of empires, to consider the collapse of empires as a factor contributing to the outbreak of the war.

Though also concerned with the ideas and institutions behind Russian policies and practices, another panel, "Ethnicity as a Category of Imperial Governance," focused on the government's use of the categories of ethnicity and religious confession in the late imperial period. Mikhail Dolbilov (European University, St. Petersburg) explored the ethnoconfessional taxonomies deployed in managing the western borderlands in the nineteenth century, and argued that there were clear limits to the government's toleration of the heterogeneity of the region's population. Charles Steinwedel (Northeastern Illinois University) presented conclusions from the last chapter of a book project on Russian empire-building in Bashkiria from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Noting that religious confession and ethnicity had become important categories of governance by the beginning of the twentieth century, he argued that the revolution of 1905 changed the government's perception of the people and altered the categories Tsarist officials used to organize them. State officials began to see Russian subjects as having an ethnicity [*narodnost'*], while nationality [*natsional'nost'*] gradually took on the meaning of a culturally distinct group that aimed at autonomy of some kind and as such was perceived by Tsarist officials as a threat to the state. The object of analysis in the paper was the interaction between these officials and the Muslim Spiritual Assembly before and after 1905.

If most panels provided opportunities for scholars to present their research, "Teaching Empire: Conceptual and Practical Issues" encouraged imperiologists to reflect on the challenges they have faced in the classroom. Eric Lohr (American University) discussed how he teaches empire and

nation in a course comparing the collapse of the Russian, Habsburg, and Ottoman Empires, and another titled "Russia and the Origins of Contemporary Eurasia," which requires students to "adopt a nationality" from Eurasia. Alexei Miller shared some of his experiences teaching empire and nation in Eastern Europe, where, unlike in the United States, the subject matter powerfully mobilizes students' existing national identities in ways that can frustrate attempts at scholarly analysis. He argued that the study of empire inevitably challenges the teleology of national narratives and intellectually disrupts students' received ideas concerning nationhood in highly productive ways. Alexander Semyonov argued that nationalizing historiographies cannot do justice to the complexity of empires. He shared the results of a sociological study that inquired into the reasons that students at Smolny College enrolled in history courses, and found that these students study history in order to learn how to govern, become educated members of society, better understand themselves, and feel comfortable in an increasingly interconnected world. Mark von Hagen (Arizona State University) observed that teaching empire requires that teachers remain students of the subject because of the quantity of material devoted to the topic. He discussed some of the materials he has used in teaching a course titled "Comparative Empire, Nationalism, and Postcolonialism." For him one of the main challenges has been reducing the complexity of empire to its salient features without losing a sense of that complexity.

What conclusions can be drawn from the above? One is that a growing number of scholars working in the social sciences and humanities have found gender to be a useful category of analysis in studying and teaching Eastern Europe and Eurasia, past and present. Their empirically rich and theoretically informed studies approach familiar topics — for example, Russian empire-building in the Caucasus, nation-building in interwar Eastern Europe, and World War I — from fresh angles. To judge by the titles of the presentations alone, there appears to be no limit to the kinds of topics that lend themselves to gendered analysis. Yet, if the gender question was "the hot topic" of the conference, as Beth Holmgren opined, it is also true that scholars' interest in questions of empire in relation to Russia has not cooled. On the contrary, the imperial turn in the historiography of Russia and Eurasia that occurred after 1991 has produced a torrent of research on the imperial dimensions of Russian and

Soviet history. Indeed, it could be argued that these dimensions have moved from the margins of the field to occupy center stage, and that the study of Russia's imperial peripheries is now central to the study of Russia itself. As a result, a more pluralistic, more fragmented picture of the Russian Empire is

emerging, with complexity and difference as perhaps its most salient features.

The full program for the conference is accessible at <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~aaass/convention/2008-program.pdf>.

Educational Resources and Developments

Humanities in the Plural: The Aga Khan Humanities Project and Central Asian Higher Education

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The Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP), an interdisciplinary and inter-cultural faculty, student, and curriculum development project headquartered in Dushanbe, has long had a low profile amongst external observers of educational developments in the region. Founded in 1997 as part of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, the project was incorporated within the University of Central Asia (UCA) in 2007. As such, the project has the distinction of being the first academic unit of UCA to begin teaching courses beyond the three UCA sites in Tekeli (Kazakhstan), Naryn (Kyrgyzstan), and Khorog (Tajikistan), working with university instructors and departments in public and private universities. AKHP's impact has been expanding: from 1998 to 2006, some 12,000 students studied in AKHP courses (Baker 2008); in 2007, over 6,500 students were enrolled in AKHP courses in 24 universities. An additional 600 have completed AKHP's "Humanities in English" program in Dushanbe since 2003. AKHP continues to reach out to university faculty, with 169 new faculty trained to teach using AKHP materials in the first half of 2008 (UCA 2008).

Such a mundane description fails to capture the uniqueness of AKHP, and the reasons for its low profile amongst international scholars of Central Asia. I write from my own experience, having lived and worked in Central Asia on higher education projects for four years before I stumbled upon AKHP while on a visit to Dushanbe in 2002, when I was told by a diplomat that if I was interested in faculty development work, I had to go see AKHP. This began a serendipitous engagement with the organization which eventually led to my managing regional operations for AKHP until 2005. In the ensuing years, as I have continued my own work on Central Asian higher education from within a Canadian university, my respect and recognition for the novelty and courageousness of the project's mandate has continued. The novelty, though, has too

often led to incomprehension amongst observers, because it does not fit the model of educational development projects.

This point was underscored while looking at a pair of journal articles. In one, a largely reflective piece on the difficulties of realizing Western university research ethics within Central Asia, the authors suggest that in lieu of individual consent forms authorizing participation in a research study, "verbal consent, for instance from tribal leaders or traditional authorities, is more appropriate" (Wall and Overton 2006: 64). The second piece takes a radically different approach, focusing on the legacy of Soviet higher education, and noting approvingly the strong links between higher education and the labor force, ensuring that graduates had practical work experience and that their degrees would be socially useful, a form of advanced technical training (Marks 2001). The pieces represent the oscillation between two fixed poles in international scholars' attempts to come to terms with educational cultures in the former Soviet Union, and Central Asia in particular. At one pole is positioned a fusion of Eastern/Islamic/Asian/traditional practices within which Central Asian education and research is assumed to operate, a tradition seamlessly re-sutured over the Soviet interregnum. At the other pole lies the assumption — one emphasized within the Soviet era — that only Soviet educational models have left a mark (Shebanov 1962), and that education must be positioned in a strictly utilitarian context, wherein the purpose of education is to provide "courses that should prove useful to the regional economies" (Shariamadari 2007: 10).

Educational reform projects in Central Asia, established by international donors, tend to operate along the axis of these poles, presuming the continuation of an autochthonous regional culture (in the singular) that must be retrofitted within university education to service the emergent capitalist economies. Central Asian "traditions" are

fixed, and must be integrated (or remade) within “useful” programs, measured through the statistical methods beloved of university administrators across the globe, such as employment rates. Lost with this move is the possibility of agency, and in particular, scholarly agency, amongst Central Asian faculty.

It is in this context that the radical originality of AKHP emerges. Established in 1997, AKHP’s foundational mission asserted plurality and internal transformation:

Central Asia is going through profound cultural change. New foundations for identity are emerging as the region faces broader political and economic horizons. Central Asians are reaching into their past for inspiration, and seek assistance in drawing upon the rich traditions of their societies to foster tolerance, ethics, and civic virtues (AKHP 2008).

The claim may seem banal at first, but within it can be found the components that made AKHP such a unique educational initiative: Central Asian culture is not static, it is not homogenous, and recognizing this complexity is not tangential to the “real” tasks of economic development. To the contrary, the humanities provide a necessary foundation for understanding the ethical and social implications of the post-Soviet era, and such an understanding must be an integral part of determining not simply *how* Central Asian development should best proceed, but *what* possibilities might be envisioned.

The scholars involved in AKHP sought to develop a series of university texts, focusing on key themes in the humanities. The working language of the project was Russian, since materials were being developed by Central Asian scholars for use in three different countries. “Materials” went far beyond the written text, including music and cinema as well as fiction, philosophy, and journalism. As part of a faculty-training initiative, materials were piloted in university classrooms in the metropolises and provincial towns, and revised according to student and faculty feedback. English translations were commissioned for international review committees, with further revisions following.¹

As well as revising the content of the material, faculty also restructured the material several times,

shifting from clearly defined courses intended to be taught at first-, second-, third-, and fourth-year levels, to a series of texts intended to be used for identical courses through AKHP partner universities, and concluding with a series of discrete textbooks organized within a “core texts” logic — historical and contemporary readings deemed of particular significance. Over 50 university faculty were involved in the initial development from 1997 to 2004. The textbooks were finalized in 2008 for use by faculty in their own classrooms in courses they themselves deem appropriate. Working with various genres and media, textbooks are thematically focused, centered around themes such as the individual and society, cultural change, social justice, music, and the visual arts. An *Introduction to Humanities* book seeks to orient students (and faculty) to what for many is a very different style of learning, and to the various academic skills necessary for a critical engagement with such themes. Teaching manuals for each of the texts have also been prepared.

The development of the AKHP curricular materials is the story of the development of notions of pluralism. The oft-cited claim that Central Asia is a crossroads of civilizations is taken seriously, placing works from Central Asia and other Islamic traditions alongside European, East Asian, and South Asian materials, as well as materials from the Soviet and Communist eras from Central Europe eastwards. Cultural pluralism, however, needed to go beyond presenting a series of homogenous cultural blocs; the internal diversity of each grouping is emphasized. The work of Sayyid Qutb, the intellectual force within the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, is placed alongside Abdullah Bubi, a modernist *Jadid*; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is read in conjunction with Ottoman *Tanzimat* documents and Ibn ‘Abd-al-Wahhab. Students read fiction by Chingis Aitmatov, Mikhail Bulgakov, and Flannery O’Connor. A major component of the development process was a shift amongst faculty themselves, moving from thinking in terms of “correct understandings” and what students “needed to know” to open-ended engagements with a diversity of materials and interpretations. The purpose is not simply to convey a dogmatic message — “pluralism is good” — but to insist upon a critical understanding of the nuances of pluralism within the cultural heritages that have shaped Central Asia.

Taking pluralism seriously also means taking seriously the diversity of the Central Asian

¹ An excellent account of the inception of AKHP has been written by Rafique Keshavjee, the founding director. See Keshavjee (2004).

classroom. AKHP texts are used in provincial universities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as in urban metropolises; anyone who has spent time in the universities in Central Asia is well aware of the differences in resources, infrastructure, and student and faculty backgrounds. For this reason, the AKHP materials cannot be considered as “courses”; such a presentation suggests a rigidity that denies the different circumstances in each individual Central Asian classroom. The texts provide questions for review, discussion, and analysis, all of which can and must be adapted to specific classes. The refusal to present a monolithic set of courses that can be mimetically replicated across the region has been seen as a weakness; I have always seen it as a strength, a recognition that the same issues of student diversity that exist within university classrooms in North America and Europe exist in Central Asia and demand a flexibility in classroom instruction that defies standardization (Biggs 2005).

AKHP’s internationally low profile thus derives from two sources. First, it operates within the hoary liberal arts model, suggesting that teaching students to think critically about their own worlds is the highest aspiration of education, and will better prepare them to face an uncertain future than any specialized technical expertise. Second, the project was developed by Central Asians, in Central Asia, and operates outside of the paradigms imposed within development frameworks. The most powerful lesson that has emerged from AKHP is the importance of such involvement and ownership, not by any single set of individuals or organizations, but by a broad Central Asian community of students and scholars. AKHP has gone through many metamorphoses, and has had many changes of personnel. After eleven years, AKHP has seen a new generation of teachers emerge, as former AKHP students have earned higher degrees and returned to teach in their old classrooms. Throughout this process, which was driven by Central Asian scholars and students, the needs of the actually-existing classrooms, students, and teachers have always been at the forefront of discussion. The resulting materials are not what would have been expected, and in many cases, not what any single individual (including myself) would have desired. But AKHP has recognized the need to work with a broad academic community, and has produced materials that can be used today and in the future as Central Asia continues its process of “profound cultural change.”

Further information about AKHP is available at http://www.akdn.org/uca_humanities.asp. Contact AKHP through the University of Central Asia: info@ucentralasia.org.

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