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CONTENTS

PERSPECTIVES

Women’s Studies and Gender Studies in Central Asia: Are We Talking to One Another?, Marianne Kamp .......... 2

RESEARCH REPORTS

The Silk Route In Kashmir: Preliminary Research Findings, Debidatta Aurobinda Mahapatra ......................... 13
Ethnic Russians Converting to Islam in Tatarstan: Challenging the Status Quo?, Matthew Derrick .................. 16
Nineteenth Century Kazak Correspondence with Russian Authorities: Morphemic Analysis and Historical Contextualization, Talant Mawkanuli and Virginia Martin .......................................................... 21

CONFERENCES AND LECTURE SERIES

Workshop on Oral History of Tajikistan, OSCE Academy, Reported by Olivier Ferrando ............................. 29
Two Conferences on Bukharan Jews in Israel, Reported by Zeev Levin .......................................................... 30
Understanding International Security in the 21st Century, Reported by Muharrem Ekşi .................................. 34
Eurasian Perspectives — In Search of Alternatives, Reported by Suchandana Chatterjee ............................. 36
International Conference on Central Eurasian Studies: Past, Present, and Future, Reported by Timur Dadabaev and Gûljanat Kurmangalieva Ercilasun ................................................................. 39

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENTS

Introducing “Online Histories of Central Asia”: A Teaching Resource for Central Asian Studies from the Social Science Research Council, Shoshana Keller ................................................. 43
Why Central Eurasian Studies is Good for Sociology, Sarah Amsler ........................................................... 44

IN MEMORIAM (TRIBUTE TO A CESS HONORARY MEMBER)

Asom O’rinboev (1929-2009) ............................................................................................................................. 47
Women’s Studies and Gender Studies in Central Asia: Are We Talking to One Another

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When I was explaining my dissertation research — women’s oral histories, specifically about the unveiling campaign in 1920s Uzbekistan — to a colleague at the History Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan in 1992, she quickly responded, “Oh, you are studying ‘zhenskii vopros’ [the woman question].” Her implication was that she understood the subject clearly, because it had been done. In Central Asia, and in the Soviet Union in general, “zhenskii vopros” emerged from a Russian late imperial-period discussion of women’s rights and roles (Stites 1978). It became a shorthand way of referring to women’s ongoing inequality in Soviet society, and to studies that examined the social and cultural conditions of women. I looked at the Hujum (the 1927 “attack” campaign, most frequently thought of as the time when women unveiled) as a campaign that challenged hegemonic gender concepts in Uzbekistan, opening a moment when women’s gendered subjectivities changed (Kamp 2006). For my colleague, the idea that our social enactments of gender are not biologically ordained but are culturally and temporally specific, and can change, was something new. The term “gender” was just coming into use in Uzbekistan, but at that time, it was being used as a substitute for “women.” The “woman question” was now the “gender question” [gendernyi vopros] in newly opened workplace training sessions, but the new term did not yet contain the implications that it held for the broader field of women’s and gender studies.

This brief article asks whether the gender question has indeed replaced the woman question in Central Eurasia, and if so, where do we see that reflected? How is “gender” used in current studies of Central Eurasia by both insiders (scholars and activists from the region) and outsiders? To explore the state of the field of study, this article will first establish terms — women’s studies, gender studies, and feminism. Next, a brief historiography of the “woman question” in Central Asia will suggest continuities and discontinuities in assumptions, analyses, and questions that scholars are addressing. And finally, a survey of some recent scholarship will point to common themes and new critiques in Central Asian gender studies, focusing on both outsider and insider works about women and/or gender in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan — a geographical limit posed by my areas of concentrated reading, which I abbreviate as “Central Asia.” My survey of recent publications suggests that in many cases, we who study gender or women in Central Asia do not really read one another’s work. The development specialists read international development scholarship, but, with rare exceptions, do not read non-development work on Central Asia. The post-colonial gender studies scholars read post-colonial theory, but not the development studies of Central Asia. And those who write about women in Kyrgyzstan, for example, do not bother reading about women in Kazakhstan, let alone women in Uzbekistan. However, the “Central Asia Network for Gender Studies” [Tsentral’no-Aziatskaya set’ po gendernym issledovaniiam]¹ appears to be laying the groundwork for scholarly communication and interaction.

Terms: Women's Studies, Gender Studies and Feminism

In the United States, Women’s Studies began to emerge as an interdisciplinary area of academic enquiry in the 1970s. Scholars from many disciplines, including history, sociology, psychology, and literature agreed that their fields ignored women, and that the remedy was to create new scholarship that focused on women’s experiences, voices, and roles. From these beginnings, new theoretical explanations for women’s inequality arose, as did new thoughts on how to change the situation for women. Women's Studies in the US were, and remain, explicitly tied to feminist thought, and to feminist politics. However,

¹ Accessible at http://www.genderstudies.info.
in the 1980s, “gender” began to be used broadly as a term that would capture the concept that masculinity and femininity are categories that are socially constructed and mutually constitutive, and Gender Studies began to supplant programs and scholarly agendas that had been known as Women’s Studies or Feminist Studies. In the US, a debate over which terms to use persists, in part because feminists fear that calling the field “Gender Studies” rather than “Women’s Studies” reduces the explicit political commitment to gender equality, and legitimizes all studies of gender, whether their purpose is to help or to harm women (Connell 2009). In Central Asia, there never was a field called “Women’s Studies,” but there were many studies during the Soviet era that were framed under the topic “the woman question.”

“Gender” seems to have entered Central Asia as a term used in development programs. The United Nations had been using the “Gender in Development” paradigm to analyze socioeconomic situations in Third World countries, in order to direct attention to changes that will benefit women, such as increasing education for girls and providing lending programs so that women can enhance livelihoods. In the flurry of openings of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Central Asia in the early 1990s, many drew on international gender expertise, and focused attention on issues of importance to women. The slippage between the terms “women” and “gender” was not simply due to the direct borrowing of a term; it was in fact also found in the real work of international organizations that provided funding and models to Central Asian NGOs. Even international aid agencies differ in terminological choices: USAID refers to its set of programs as “Women in Development,” while the United Nations uses “Gender in Development.”

“Gender” work in Central Asia, then, emerged from practical concerns, and with practical goals, in nascent civil society organizations. Project funding for these “Women-NGOs” was often international donor-driven and directed at themes and needs that international gender experts had found to be important concerns in other parts of the world, such as domestic violence, contraception, and development of women’s business skills (Simpson 2006). For a scholar who was reading Western philosophical feminist theory, with its early 1990s emphases on “third wave” concerns, radical deconstructions, and literary critiques, the Central Asian NGOs’ concern with practical improvements for women’s lives seemed far removed from scholarly feminist thought.

In Russia and Ukraine, Gender Studies emerged in the scholarly realm in the 1990s, and began interacting with, and reacting to, European and US schools of feminist thought, beginning with the fraught and much debated use of the word “feminist.” In light of the connotations of “feminist” in the former Soviet sphere — masculine women, fighting women, women who have rejected femininity — the term “gender studies” occupied less politically charged ground (Ashwin 2000, Corcoran-Nantes 2005).

Although so-called gender experts often explicitly reject the term “feminist,” the work that most of them carry out seems to be feminist in its ethos and implications. Tajik scholar Sofia Kasymova writes:

In regard to the ideological make-up of the new women’s movement in Tajikistan, at first glance it seems that it is quite free of the idea of feminism. In any case, no one in Tajikistan publicly pronounces the word “feminism,” in spite of the fact that all of the women’s NGOs establish, as the foundation of their activities, the protection of the interests of women and resolution of their problems. An analysis of materials published by women’s organizations in Tajikistan shows that feminist ideas, in one form or another, are present in the women’s movement in Tajikistan. But this is not classical, Western feminism, but “another” feminism, based on return to national traditions. (Kasymova 2007: 60)

Gender studies takes the premise that gender is socially constructed as its starting point of analysis (an insight that has fundamentally changed women’s studies and feminist thought). Gender studies draws attention to the differing and changing ways that societies deploy concepts of masculinity and femininity in political, social, and cultural institutions, in arts, in labor — in short, in every sphere of life. Any particular culture’s gender concepts are hegemonic, and are reproduced in social interactions. In practice, analyses of gender in society have led in two directions. Among development experts, like Amartya Sen, using gender as a lens for analysis permits new thinking about how resources can be most successfully used to struggle against poverty and disease, and to increase capacity for creating improved living standards, by enhancing women’s equality with men (Agarwal et al., eds. 2005). In a seemingly less practical but perhaps more fundamental direction, Judith Butler’s radical questioning allows the possibility of analyzing the performance of gender,
and challenging hegemonic gender constructs (Butler 1990). Although the name “gender studies” is less overtly political than “women’s studies” or “feminist studies,” scholars who call their work gender studies do not simply analyze differences between masculinity and femininity, or between heterosexuality and other sexualities; gender studies scholars, too, usually express a commitment to shaping a more just and more equal world. In addition, the term “gender” has become mainstream in international organizations that operate in post-Soviet space (as well as in the rest of the world), who use it as a category of analysis, and create professional positions for “gender experts” (Hemment 2007). Gender Studies has become established in academic work in Russia and Ukraine, but not in Central Asia, where those who are trained in gender studies usually have positions outside academia, and where gender studies has barely begun to appear in university coursework or academy-based scholarship.

A very broad school of thought known as “Third Wave feminism” questions the older assumptions of women’s studies and feminist politics by pointing out that “woman” is not a unitary category (Lorde 1984). Biological sex (female) may be far less important a factor in women’s lives, and specifically in creating oppression, than is race, class, or status. Women and men have multivalent identities, and third wavers argue that analysis of gender should be intersectional, considering gender, race and class together. Furthermore, earlier versions of feminism assume that all women share the same concerns and want the same rights; third wave feminism and post-colonialism both stress that privileged first world women should not presume to know or speak for the needs of women who are not of their own class/race/nation. Unfortunately, this complaint often comes from “third world” women or men who themselves represent dominant social classes and present their own constructs as unchallengeable by outsiders, not acknowledging that they themselves cannot be challenged by members of other classes from their own societies who do not have the same access to scholarly arguments. In contrast to the third wave, proponents of a more universalist concept of women and of feminism (sometimes called second wave) fear that the third wave’s emphasis on difference, and on deconstructing “woman” as a category, removes from feminism any coherent political project, and even any ground for calling for equality.

Of most significance for Central Asian gender studies, scholars who combine post-colonial and gender studies argue that colonialism highlights the divide between women of the metropole and women of the periphery, and that colonizing states create new forms of gender inequality that enhance the dominance of colonizer over colonized. Colonialism means emasculation of the colonized, as Edward Said argued (1978). Leila Ahmed, Lata Mani and others have pointed out that European colonialism in the Middle East and Asia used discourses of feminist liberation to enhance the difference between “civilized” Europeans and “backward” Asians or Muslims, and to impose colonial power in intimate spaces and relations in colonized societies (Ahmed 1992, Mani 1987). Douglas Northrop drew on these insights in Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Central Asia, to analyze the Communist Party’s purposes and practices in the Hujum, and since the publication of his monograph, others have also found this argument productive (Edgar 2006; Northrop 2001, 2004; Tlostanova n.d.; Zubkovskaia 2007).

The insight that feminism accompanied colonialism has been used to silence or reduce current feminist critiques of misogynist practices, and especially those coming from outsiders. For example, following September 11, 2001 and the US invasion of Afghanistan, Western anthropologist Lila Abu Lughod expressed greater concern that the US was co-opting feminism in the interest of empire, by using women’s oppression in Afghanistan as a justification for war, than over the brutalization of Afghan women by the Taliban regime (Abu Lughod 2001). Post-colonialist scholars often seem to think that they cannot bring any judgment to bear on cultural practices that are abusive to women, positing that instead, inequality is in the eye of the ethno-centric colonialist beholder who advocates for women’s interests only as a cover for imperial designs. In this vein, the Hujum in Central Asia is interpreted as colonizers imposing their will on Central Asian societies, and all of its liberatory goals as mere rhetoric (Akiner 1997, Tlostanova n.d., Zubkovskaia 2007). From my own perspective as a feminist and a scholar of women’s studies, although I recognize the importance of post-colonial insight, I find that its primary concern with the colonizer-colonized power dynamic takes emphasis away from a woman-centered analysis of power relations that would lead researchers to far different ethical positions (Kamp 2007).
Historiography: The Woman Question in Pre-1991 Scholarship

Before 1917, Russian administrators, Russian and foreign travelers, and Central Asians themselves described Central Asian women in articles and books. Foreigners were most interested in writing about those aspects of Central Asian women’s lives that they found exotic, but several scholars, the Nalivkins and Annette Meakin, produced more extensive studies of lasting value (Nalivkin and Nalivkina 1886, Meakin 1915). These authors were interested in describing the lives of women and the social practices that shaped women’s lives, and they tried to investigate the inequalities that they observed between women and men. The “woman question” as it was posed in Russia, which asked what were the causes of women’s inequality, became a central issue for outsiders in Central Asia, mainly Bolsheviks, and some insiders as well, only after the 1917 revolutions (Aminova 1977, Kamp 2006, Stites 1978).

Among the most cited scholarly works about women in Central Asia is Gregory Massell’s The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Soviet Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929 (1974). Outside scholars from all fields of specialization and theoretical positions, and whose knowledge of English is sufficient, turn to Massell both for a description of the Hujum, and for the volume’s titular argument: that the Communist Party, lacking a real working class in Central Asia that could be relied on to support the revolution, engaged in “liberation” of women in order to make them into a “surrogate,” or substitute, proletariat. Through repetition, that thesis has become something of a verity, found as an interpretation not only of Soviet policy toward Central Asian women, in works by Northrop (2004), Ronald Suny (1998), Lewis Seigelbaum (n.d.), and others, but also as an interpretation of Soviet policy on women in general, for example, in Sarah Ashwin’s work (2000). I dispute that argument, drawing on Stites, who pointed out that the phrase was used only in one obscure article by the chair of the women’s division in 1929. I argue that very little in the Women’s Division’s actions in Central Asia, or in the conduct of the Hujum campaign, was concerned with making women into a substitute for a proletariat — a term that Massell uses in its Marxist sense, as the class that will support revolution, and not, as Ashwin and others writing in the post-Soviet period have interpreted his work, to mean a cheap labor force (Ashwin 2000, Kamp 2006). Moreover, the emphasis on Massell’s titular argument obscures his more important contribution to studies of the Soviet period, which lies in his careful examination of the process of policy making and implementation, richly contextualized with a thorough reading of the published sources on the Hujum.

Massell was able to write The Surrogate Proletariat because both the Communist Party and the Academies of Sciences in Central Asia published a significant body of material about women, in topics ranging across policies, demographics, health, labor, history, and literature. In the 1920s, Women’s Division activists in Central Asia were prolific publishers of booklets and articles: for example, Serafima Liubimova, who headed the Women’s Division of the Central Asian Bureau in the mid-1920s, combined promotion of Party policies with summaries of rather detailed studies of conditions among women (Liubimova 1928).

After the Academies of Science were established in Central Asia in the 1940s and 1950s, studies focusing on women (the “zhenskii vopros”) were included in the scholarly agendas of some of the social sciences and humanities divisions. History Institutes produced several collections of imperial and Soviet period government documents regarding women (Dzgurova and Astapovich 1971). The Communist Party published personal accounts written by women Party members (Finkel’shtein 1961). Anthropologists wrote about marriage and family, and in that context, discussed women (Bikzhanova 1959, Kisljakov 1959). Historians wrote accounts about women in the Soviet period (Aminova 1977; Alimova 1991; Nabieva 1973; Pal’vanova 1982; Gafarova 1969, 1987). In the 1980s, Uzbek historians published a wave of books and articles on the Hujum (Tursunov et al. 1987). Across Central Asia, scholars opened new topics in the Perestroika period, carrying out studies of social issues that were previously unacknowledged, which became the basis for works of Western scholars (Alimova 1991, Olcott 1991).

Until the late Perestroika period, this Soviet scholarship on women in Central Asia is noteworthy and useful more for its collection of data, and its use and reproduction of archival material, than for any critical perspective. Many of the 1960s to 1980s scholarly works on women framed accounts in Soviet political-speak: socialism brought about necessary and beneficial change; problems and inequalities are anomalies, the result of backwardness that has not yet been exposed to sufficient enlightenment. Within this framework, scholars who were genuinely proud of Soviet
accomplishments and concerned about the failures of Soviet promises to women, presented information based on archival and social research within the limits set by political discourse. These works remain useful to, but underutilized by, post-Soviet scholars, who are deterred by the heavy ideological framing, by questions about what was deliberately left out of these works, but perhaps also by ignorance of their existence.

Post-Soviet researchers who use Massell as a foundational work often seem less familiar with other Western scholarship that discusses women and gender in Soviet Central Asia with some depth (such as Lubin 1984, Sacks 1992, Bacon 1966, Rorlich 1986, Tolmacheva 1993).

Recent Scholarship

Recent scholarship on gender in Central Eurasia is, in fact, about women. Occasionally scholarly discussion emerges about what constitutes masculinity in Central Asian cultures, as in Collette Harris’s ethnography of gender relations in Tajikistan (2004), Lori Handrahan’s work on bride-kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan (2004), David Abramson’s article on gender and citizenship in Uzbekistan (2004), Sofia Kasymova’s volume on gender relations in Tajikistan (2007), and Kamp on discourses of labor in Uzbekistan (2005). But most publications that use the term “gender” are about women, about social constructions of femininity, about the interaction between state and women, about women and economic conditions, or other similar topics that leave masculinity out of gender (Acar and Ayata 2000, Hämerle et al. 2008, Tartakovskaia 2006). Studies that use women or feminist in their titles are rarer, but perhaps more direct in naming their real topics (Samiuddin and Khanam 2002). As to queer studies, or examinations of gay and lesbian life in Central Asia, I have heard several conference papers, but as yet have seen no publications. Insider scholars of gender studies, focused as they are on women’s issues, generally do not include sexuality or gender orientation within their inquiries, and outsider scholars lack the empirical base to do more than ask a few questions.

Recent works draw more heavily on the economic and social analyses of the “gender in development” school of gender studies, than on philosophical gender studies associated with Butler (1990), de Laurentis (2007), Kristeva (1989) and others, although some convergence is found in work by Kasymova (2007) and Beknazarova (2006). Much of the scholarship on women and gender emerges from development-oriented, international donor-funded projects; this body of work focuses on questions of rights, poverty, employment, domestic violence, migration, and similar topics. Most of the research projects have been produced through collaboration between international gender-and-development experts and insider researchers. Reviews of bibliographies for these publications show a reliance on international gender-in-development scholarship for the development of fundamental paradigms and interpretive frameworks, while Central Asia provides the ground for research (Kanji 2002, Haarr 2007, Hämerle et al. 2008, Maksakova 2006, Kuehnast and Nechimais 2004, Tartakovskaia 2006). Many of the Central Asian gender scholars read theoretical works on gender that are published in Russian and which the Russian school of gender studies deems central, especially the works of Russian ethnographer Igor Kon, and a translation of Australian feminist Raewyn Connell’s 1987 volume entitled Gender and Power (Kon 1988, Connell 1987). One exception to this tendency is Meghan Simpson’s discussion of NGOs in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which is overtly informed both by philosophical feminist theory and gender-in-development scholarship (Simpson 2006).

Many enquiries about gender are grounded in discipline-specific theories, usually drawing more heavily on ethnography than on feminist theory. Examples include sociologist Irina Liczek’s discussion of policy-making in Turkmenistan (2005), legal scholar Edward Snajdr’s work on domestic violence in Kazakhstan (2005), and anthropologist Cynthia Werner’s work on bride-kidnapping in Kazakhstan (2004). Perhaps the topic that commands the most attention is women and Islam, or women and religious practice in Central Asia, or Islamic practice with a strong emphasis on women (Aitpaeva 2007, Fathi 2007, Kandiyoiti and Azimova 2004, Kleinmichel 2001, Krämer 2002, Peshkova 2005, Samiuddin and Khanam 2002). Carole Blackwell’s volume on women and song in Turkmenistan (2001), and Mary Doi’s book on women and dance in Uzbekistan explore aspects of cultural production (2001).

Recent scholarship on women and gender in Central Asia is very heavily present-focused, though a few historians have expanded on Massell’s foundation. Although insider scholars were prolific writers of women’s history during the Soviet period, they have paid little attention to historical studies since independence. Anara Tabyshalieva’s brief volume is based on a re-reading of published works, and presents an overview of women in Central Asia.
from the Russian Imperial period until the 1990s (1998). Marfua Tokhtakhova’s books present new research, based on oral history and other primary sources that the author has worked to bring to light (1992, 2008). Mara Shakirova examines Kazakh women’s biographies from the Soviet period (2002). While Central Asian academic attention to women’s history has been in decline, outsider scholarship grew after the break-up of the Soviet Union; these historical studies focus mainly on the 1920s and 1930s (Edgar 2004, 2006; Heyat 2002; Kamp 2006, 2007; Kandiyoti 2007; Keller 1998; Michaels 2001; Northrop 2001, 2004). Thus far there is little attention to women and gender in Central Asia in the pre-Soviet period, although İsenbike Toğan (1999) and Azade-Ayşe Rorlich (2002) have published some of their findings, and many items on Central Asian women in pre-modern and modern periods appear in the Encyclopedia of Women in Islamic Societies (Suad and Najmabadi 2003-2007).

Conclusion: The Need for Interaction

In Central Asia, the “gender question” has replaced the “woman question” in name, but not in substance. Gender studies in Central Asia, as a growing area of research and publishing, does, in fact, focus on women and on inequality.

There has been a veritable explosion of publishing about women and gender in Central Asia in the past decade, but nonetheless, scholars working in this field frequently seem quite unfamiliar with the body of existing literature, instead posing their work as “the first time” that anyone has asked their question. Obstacles to good research, or at least to research that builds on what has already been done, are both structural and inherent in individuals. Wonderful scholarly articles are published in hard-to-find book collections, in journals that researchers would not think of looking at, or in books that do not achieve wide distribution. For example, Deniz Kandiyoti’s very rich discussion of gender in Uzbek villages, found in an article entitled “Poverty in transition: An ethnographic critique of household surveys in Central Asia,” published in the journal Development and Change, is unlikely to emerge in any but the most careful literature search, and yet should be mandatory reading among gender experts (Kandiyoti 1998). Anara Tabyshalieva’s book on gender in Central Asia is entitled Torn Out of Time (1998), and only a handful of copies can be found in libraries outside Kyrgyzstan. Many potentially important works are in-house publications of organizations or institutes in Central Asia, and are distributed only within republic borders. Articles published in Western journals are just as inaccessible to colleagues in Central Asia, as are Central Asian journal publications to outsider scholars. And of course, language barriers often mean that insider scholars are familiar only with the outsider works that happen to have been translated into Russian, while outsiders imagine an absence of scholarship because they either do not read Russian (in the case of many development experts) or they do not read Central Asian languages. But an individually-based obstacle to good research is often the lack of thinking imaginatively and comparatively about research, so that those researching gender in Kazakhstan do not necessarily think to ask about looking for articles on women in Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan, for example.

The “Central Asian Network for Gender Studies” website, established by gender studies scholars in Kazakhstan, seems to provide a potential solution for creating awareness and communication among scholars working on women’s and gender studies in Central Asia. The site makes available the full texts of many articles that Central Asian scholars themselves have written about gender-related themes, but predominantly re-publishes works on gender by scholars from Russia, making that body of literature widely available. Outsider scholars who publish in English and in European languages, in addition to using the website to familiarize ourselves with the work that the Gender Studies network already makes available, should perhaps seek to cooperate with this web-based network’s coordinators, providing summaries of our work, or seeking permission from our publishers for republication of our work on the site, as one way to facilitate greater intellectual interaction.

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1992 Between the Slogans of Communism and the Laws of Islam. Translated from Russian by...


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The post-Soviet world witnessed a flurry of research activities in Central Asia, among which the study of the Silk Route emerged as a crucial one. Numerous studies on the Silk Route trace its origin, spread, and geopolitical and economic dimensions (Brotton 2003, Foltz 1999, Liu 1996, Nebenzhal 2004, Wood 2003). In this context, the Silk Route in Kashmir — the roads that have historically allowed the movement of goods and peoples throughout Central Asia and within this border region that is now controlled by India, Pakistan, and China — assumes renewed significance. The Munshi Aziz Bhat Museum located in Kargil town of Ladakh region of Kashmir testifies to the role the Silk Route played in trade and interactions in the past. The route still holds promise for regional cooperation between the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, and China.

The research for this report was conducted in the Ladakh region (which includes both Kargil and Leh districts) of the Indian state of Kashmir in July 2006 and May 2007 as part of a broader study of the Silk Route’s significance for India, Pakistan, and the other Silk Route countries. The 2006 study was conducted under the Project on Kashmir, which I headed at the University of Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir. The study focused on the prospects of opening the Kargil-Skardu branch of the Silk Route in Kashmir, as it had been closed due to the division of Kashmir between India and Pakistan in 1947. The 2007 study was facilitated by the Scholar of Peace Award by Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace, a New Delhi-based non-governmental organization supported by the Dalai Lama Foundation. In this study I focused on the issue of families divided when borders were redrawn after the Indo-Pakistani wars in 1948, 1965, and 1971. Some of the findings of these studies are incorporated in my recently published book on Central Eurasia (Mahapatra 2008) and many others will be used as a basis for further research.

One of the important aspects of the research both in 2006 and 2007 was to make a preliminary study of the Silk Route in Kashmir and to interview local people to ascertain their views on the route. Keeping in mind the continuing turmoil in the region and lack of relevant statistical data, I used the method of random sampling to interact with 110 respondents from the border villages of Hunderman, Hunderman Brok, Kirkit Badgam, Latoo, and Kaksar in the Kargil district of the Ladakh region. None of these villages are accessible to outsiders due to security reasons. I obtained special permission from the Senior Superintendent of Police in Kargil to access these sensitive areas. The interviews were unstructured in order to make people comfortable. In addition to the interviews I used informal conversations and observations to collect data. The interview questions focused on the Silk Route in the region, its utility, problems, and prospects of opening it. Mohammad Afzal from Kaksar and Ghulam Rasul Dar from Kirkit Haral in Kargil district accompanied me throughout the surveys in the mountainous terrains and worked as interpreters to translate the Balti and Shina languages spoken by the people of the region.

The historical importance of Kargil as a link in the Silk Route trade motivated me to conduct the preliminary research there. The Indo-Pakistani border dispute and heavy presence of security forces on the Line of Control (LOC) posed serious difficulties in accessing the entire route in Kashmir. I confined my research to the Indian side of Kashmir as the current border disputes make it difficult to conduct research on the Pakistan side of Kashmir. I explored two branches of the Silk Route in Kashmir: one branch that extends from Kargil to Skardu then onwards to Central Asia, and the other branch that extends from Nubra valley in Leh towards Tibet.

The trip from Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir on the Indian side of the LOC, to Kargil is about 250 km, but six kilometers before Kargil town one has to turn north by crossing the Singo River on a route closed to all public access except border
people with identity cards. Along the bank of the Singo one has to travel six kilometers further to the last post of the Indian army, which indicates the end of India’s side of the state of Kashmir. The route moves onward to the Gilgit-Baltistan region (called Northern Areas by Pakistan) of the undivided state of Kashmir that is currently under the control of Pakistan. From the last post of the Indian army to Skardu, the nearest town on the Silk Route in Gilgit-Baltistan, is 169 kilometers. I found despite long years of negligence and non-use, the route is still intact, and with minor expenditure and repair the route can be ready for use. Currently, only the army uses this route.

My interviews with the border residents of Kargil identify their overwhelming interest in seeing this branch of the Silk Route open. As many as 90 percent of the respondents said they want this route to open, the other ten percent chose not to respond to the issue. I also interviewed Sheikh Mohammed Ahmedi, the Vice President of the prominent Islamia school and a highly venerated Shia leader, to ascertain his views on the route.1 Ahmedi told me, “the opening of the Silk Route is one of my childhood dreams, as it was closed when I was a child. We have kith and kin across the LOC.” He along with other respondents explained that after the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947-48, the Kargil-Skardu route was closed. Opening of the route was publicly discussed after the peace process was initiated by India and Pakistan, under which they agreed to open border routes as part of confidence building measures. While two intra-Kashmir routes were opened in 2005 and 2006, this route has not been opened so far. The majority of the respondents expressed discontent at the absence of progress toward opening this route and blamed it on the slow peace process between India and Pakistan.

Answers varied as to why this route needs to be opened. Seventy percent of respondents argued for opening the route as it would accrue economic benefits to them. They could bring apricots from Gilgit-Baltistan (respondents stated that the Skardu variety of apricot is one of the best varieties), raisins, and other fruits having medicinal value for personal and commercial purposes, while they could sell sugar, tea, garments, and vegetables to the people of the other side of Kashmir. However, in my fieldwork I observed that many of the apricot fields lying on the Silk Route on the LOC, such as the Brolmo area between India and Pakistan, have gradually become barren; the fields there were either neglected due to fear of war and military intervention, or used for landmines. Many respondents also argued that the opening of the route can help revive tourism: resorts could be opened and roadside stalls could sell local products. This would provide employment opportunities to them. As their villages lie near the Silk Route on both sides, it could be a good source of income for them. The respondents suggested that the utility of the route also lies in its durability in winter months. During the winter the Kargil region is cut off from the main Indian land due to heavy snowfall on the Srinagar-Leh national highway. The Zojila Pass that connects Ladakh to Srinagar remains impassible for about six months (October-March), thus bringing immense suffering to the people as they remain almost cut off from the outside world. And yet the Kargil-Skardu route, which lies in a cold but arid region, remains passable even in these harsh months. Mohammad from Hunderman, who has a small shop in Kargil town, told me, “If this route is opened we can go to Skardu in winter for marketing and other business purposes.” Aziz, the Numbardar [elected village head] of Hunderman Brok, a village nestled on top of a mountain near the LOC, told me that it becomes difficult in winter months to get rations and other necessary items for the people of his village.

The responses to my interviews painted for me a broader picture of how a revived Silk Route could provide opportunities in all seasons of the year for India, Central Asia, and China to conduct trade: the undivided Kashmir touches Afghanistan and China, and the Karakoram highway from China to Pakistan passes through this region. Forty percent of the respondents mentioned the Munshi Aziz Bhat Museum in Kargil as a witness to the Silk Route trade between India and Central Asia. I visited the museum on July 26, 2006. Located on a hillock at the outskirts of the town, the museum inaugurated in 2003 is a rich storehouse of the Silk Route trade. I found collections such as shoes, caps, headgear, machetes, guns, overcoats, cottons, and utensils, which date from the medieval period until the 19th century. Some of the collections were from Samarkand, Ashkhabad, and Bukhara. Evidence of this past Silk Route trade raises the prospects of forming a regional Silk Route economic cooperation organization. The idea of such organization has also been highlighted in some studies (Asian Development Bank 2001, Suri 2008, United Nations Development Programme 2005).

1 Interview at Islamia School on 25 July, 2006.
The humanitarian dimension of the route’s opening was emphasized by 70 percent of respondents. They argued strongly, often with an emotional tinge, that the reopened route would facilitate the meeting of members of divided families on both sides of the LOC. Sixty-five-year-old Mariam from Badgam village expressed grief, as she had not been able to meet her husband for the last 38 years. Her husband went to market to Skardu and the 1971 war took place, thus restricting his mobility until after the war, when the ceasefire and related restrictions made his return almost an impossibility. She exchanged occasional letters with him through the postal service, but this stopped in 2000. The border in the Ladakh region between India and Pakistan has been redrawn three times due to the wars in 1948, 1965 and 1971, and this has made the repeated divisions of families a harsh reality. I met 40 people like Mariam who have their near and dear ones living across the LOC. There are about seven hundred divided families in the Ladakh region. The opening of the route can be a blessing for these grieving families.

The other branch of the Silk Route, Nubra-Tibet, is in passable condition as well. Though my primary research was mainly focused on the Kargil-Skardu branch of the Silk Route, I also interviewed 28 people in Nubra valley. I selected them randomly. All of them were aware that this route was used by traders in the past. They told me that caravans coming from Tibet halted and rested in Nubra valley in Ladakh region before confronting the Karakoram passes towards Central Asia. Eighty-two-year-old Haji Khuddam told me, “the valley provided medicinal hot water springs and rich and fresh supplies of food to the travelers.” Legacies of the past are passed down the generations: Haji Khuddam told me he learned from his grandfather that the two-humped camels that are found in this region were brought from Central Asia. Sonam Norbu pointed out that besides trade, this route provided the shortest road connection to the Hindu religious site of Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar situated in Tibet. At present, due to the closure of this route, the pilgrims have to take a long detour through the Indian state of Uttarakhand, which is highly prone to landslides.

This preliminary research brings into focus the economic and humanitarian dimensions of a potential opening of the Silk Route in Kashmir. The route’s potentials for tourism and local and regional trade provide the rationale for a deeper study and detailed survey on the reopening. I will use these preliminary findings as the basis for a detailed study of these two branches, discovery of other possible branches of the Silk Route in Kashmir, and prospects for their opening in order to promote trade, peace, and political stability in the region.

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Ethnic Russians Converting to Islam in Tatarstan: Challenging the Status Quo?  
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Tatarstan is host to a two-decade-old Islamic revival that is being articulated in increasingly complex ways. Attesting to this complexity is the phenomenon of ethnic Russians converting to Islam. The approximate number of Russian Muslims in Tatarstan cannot be determined, though they undoubtedly constitute a very small minority. The significance of Russian converts, however, lies not in their numbers but rather in their contestation of the status quo. In Tatarstan, where Tatars account for a little more than half of the population and Russians make up about 40 percent, Islam traditionally has been synonymous with Tatarism. Correspondingly, Russian Orthodoxy perennially has been central in defining Russianism. Thus, Russian conversion, it is suggested, has the potential of upsetting the interethnic accord that has evolved between the two groups over their centuries-long cohabitation in the Middle Volga region (Tul'skii 2003).

Russian conversion also poses a challenge to the development of Islam itself in Tatarstan. Regional authorities, including the Muslim Spiritual Board of Tatarstan, support what might be termed Tatar traditionalism. Associated with the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, this official Islam is a moderate version of the Muslim faith and is seen as a key component of Tatar ethnic identity (Mukhametshin 2005). The primacy of Tatar traditionalism is contested on two fronts. The first is an indigenous reform movement seeking to liberalize the Tatar faith, and thereby modernize the Tatar nation, by reopening the gates of *ijtihad* [independent interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah] (Iskhakov 2006). Reformers and traditionalists are united in their goal of redeveloping Tatar culture (they are divided over the means); the two camps are also united in their opposition to Islamic fundamentalism, generally attributed to Wahhabism, which has established itself in Tatarstan over the past decade or so. This strict version of Islam is said to be imported from abroad and aggressively politicized in its pretensions to universalism (Mirqazizov 2001). And it is often claimed that Russian converts find Wahhabi fundamentalism most attractive.

Research Content, Questions, Methods

In recent years, an active discussion in Russophone print, and especially electronic media, has surrounded the phenomenon of Russian conversion, but the dialogue mainly has been polemical, lacking in empiricism (see, e.g., Golubitskaia 2009, Mukhamedova 2008, Mel'nikova 2008). The aim of this report, which is one part of a doctoral dissertation research project examining the relationship between Islam and political-territorial circumstances in Tatarstan, is to contribute an empirical context to this discussion. Specifically, this research seeks answers to the following questions: Who is converting? What version(s) of the Muslim faith do they claim? And why do they turn to Islam? In pursuing answers to these questions, this research addresses two common assumptions. The first holds that Russian converts can be divided into two main groups: women who have accepted the religion of their husbands, often Muslim foreigners living in Russia; and young men attracted

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1 A version of this report was presented at the 2009 Regional Policy Symposium on “Prospects and Challenges for the First Post-Soviet Generation: Young People Today in Eurasia and Eastern Europe,” hosted by IREX and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars’ Kennan Institute, Washington, DC, April 1-3, 2009.

2 Expert interview subjects offered rough estimates of no more than a few hundred. For Russia as a whole, estimates are wide-ranging. Some have put the number of Russian Muslims countrywide as high as 80,000, while sources sympathetic to Russian Orthodoxy suggest figures as low as 2,000 to 3,000 (Steshin 2006, Eliseev 2007).

3 Mufti Gusman Iskhakov, chairman of the Muslim Spiritual Board of Tatarstan, publicly expressed his disapproval of Russian conversion: “As a mufti, I am not heartened that Russians are accepting Islam. I’m against the conversion from one religion to another … the examples of Russians who have converted to Islam are not very encouraging. They are usually highly aggressive and their mentality is completely different” (quoted in Tul'skii 2003).
to the perceived “anti-systemic” nature of Islam. The former makes up the majority, while the latter minority is substantially more active in its religiosity and inclined toward fundamentalism (Soldatov 2005, Artemov 2003). My research confirms that Russian converts mainly are drawn from the younger generation, but they are more rational and nuanced in their religious choice than is assumed. A second assumption posits that Russian conversion, like the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in general, largely is a product of “alien elements” — i.e., foreign missionary activity. My research indicates that, while foreigner activity indeed plays a role, other factors related to the region itself are just as salient in the development of Islam among ethnic Russians.

Research directly contributing to this report began in January 2009 in Kazan, the political, economic, and cultural capital of Tatarstan. This research is preliminary and will continue throughout the months ahead. Fieldwork consists, first, of semi-structured interviews with Russian converts. These interviews, in addition to collecting relevant personal profile information, are designed to understand the factors associated with subjects’ decision to accept Islam. Interviews generally last from 45 to 90 minutes. Interviews are conducted in Russian; all subjects are guaranteed anonymity. Because this group, relatively few in number, can be considered a hidden population, a snowball method is used to locate interview subjects. To date, 22 interviews with Russian Muslims have been conducted. Second, fieldwork includes semi-structured interviews with religious and intellectual leaders. The purpose of these interviews is to elicit elite evaluations of Russian conversion. To date, seven expert interviews have been conducted. And third, fieldwork involves participation. Over the past few months, I have been attending prayer sessions, Friday sermons, and public lectures at two local mosques where the primary language of communication is Russian. Active participation allows a unique opportunity to become acquainted with the affective and performative aspects of religion, in addition to providing unmediated insight into the tone and substance of the Islamic thought targeting Russophone audiences.

Finally, it is important to note that this report is informed by a geographer’s point of view. Human geographers, although drawing on themes and methods familiar to other social scientists, are explicitly interested in the spatiality of social, cultural, and political phenomena. Whereas sister disciplines traditionally have assumed that space is a blank slate, a mere platform across which social processes take place, geography holds that space itself plays a role in shaping those processes. In short, society and space are co-constitutive. In the case at hand, Tatarstan’s historical development as a distinct place/region, along with efforts to influence or control its current and future development, affects Islam’s social expression within its boundaries.

Preliminary Research Findings

In examining personal profile data, preliminary research indicates relative parity in the numbers of men (n = 10) and women (n = 12) Russian converts and an overall tendency toward youth. All but one subject was between the ages of 22 and 31 years old, the average being a little older than 27. Looking at how long ago conversion occurred for each individual, we see a spectrum, from one to twelve years ago, though a majority converted between three and six years ago; on average, subjects converted just over five years ago. Russian converts as a whole are well educated: About 90 percent have either completed university (n = 15) or are currently pursuing a degree (n = 5).

Half of all subjects (n = 11) claimed a second ethnicity. Of those, eight — more than a third of all subjects — claimed Tatar as their second ethnicity. This may indicate that conversion to Islam is associated with a shifted emphasis in ethnic identity. Indeed, three of my Russian-Tatar interview subjects reported that their conversion coincided with an increased interest in Tatar culture; however, even though all claimed some degree of proficiency in the Tatar language, they still recognized Russian as their primary ethnic identity.

The assumption that Russian women convert to Islam after marrying foreigners is not supported by my preliminary research. In fact, none of my subjects, women and men alike, reported converting

4 This was communicated to me by several expert interview subjects and is often repeated in Kazan-based press.
5 I have informed the mosques’ Mullahs of the nature of my research and obtained their approval.
6 See Agnew (1993, 1989) for authoritative statements on why social science traditionally has underappreciated space and place, geography’s foundational terms. In recent years, however, a general “spatial turn” in academia has attuned many social scientists beyond geography’s disciplinary walls into the need to factor space into their research (see especially Sayer 2000).
as a result of marriage. Only four — one woman and three men — were married prior to conversion, all to other Russians; all but one of their spouses has since converted. As a rule, interview subjects raise their children as Muslims.

About 85 percent (n = 19) claimed adherence to Russian Orthodox Christianity prior to conversion; the remainder (n = 3) previously were atheist. When queried about previous religiosity, about 40 percent (n = 9) reported they were religious to a “high” degree; 36 percent (n = 8) reported “medium” religiosity; and 23 percent (n = 5) reported “low” or “no” religiosity. Considering that more than three-fourths of all respondents claimed “medium” or “high” religiosity before conversion, we might tentatively posit a positive correlation between significant previous religiosity and the decision to embrace Islam.

Two general themes emerged as subjects explained their acceptance of Islam. First, many identified what they saw as a rationalism in Islam, which they perceived as lacking in Russian Orthodoxy. For example, 29-year-old Abdullah said:

I always wondered why my parents had so many icons at home. I asked myself, “Are they God? Is God in them? Why do we kiss icons?” I had a lot of questions. I would go to the priest and he would answer, “It is not for us to understand.” But when I went to the mosque, I found answers to all my questions. I would ask the Mullah and he would show me the answers in the Quran. All answers are written in the Quran.

Several said they actively compared Islam and Orthodoxy, analyzing the relative merits of the respective holy texts, before converting. Second, finding in Islam a demanding code of behavior, subjects expressed dissatisfaction with what they viewed as permissiveness and disorder in Russian society. For instance, in discussing her decision to wear the hijab, 22-year-old Aisha expressed disapproval of her peers’ behavior:

Most Russian girls my age dress like prostitutes. They wear short skirts, high heels, and makeup. In Islam, we dress modestly. We do not show off our bodies. Men see us first of all as a person, not just a body.

Fifty-year-old Nuriia was convinced that Islam saved her husband, who followed her in converting:

My husband drank every day for six years. He was a good man but couldn’t stop drinking. It nearly destroyed our marriage. I prayed for him every day to turn to Islam. Finally, he accepted Islam and since then has not had a drink. That was eight years ago. If more Russians accepted Islam, we wouldn’t have such a problem with alcoholism in our country and our families would be stronger.

It should be noted that interview subjects still felt “Russian” after converting, although most reported that their circle of friends changed after becoming Muslim to comprise mainly religious Tatars.

When asked which version of Islam they followed, about 85 percent (n = 19) claimed adherence to the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam traditionally practiced by Tatars in the Middle Volga region. Two claimed Sufism. Only one, a 24-year-old man, admitted to adhering to Salafism, a fundamentalist version of Islam associated with Wahhabism, but he divulged this only after subsequent meetings, reversing his previous claim to follow Hanafism. In retrospect I am not surprised by these results, since, as expert interview subjects warned me, adherents to fundamentalist creeds would be unlikely to identify themselves to me as such, given the government’s official censure of them.

If subjects generally do not claim adherence to an officially recognized fundamentalist Islam, without exception they claimed a “high” degree of religiosity. All reported strict observance of salat [five daily prayers] and Islamic strictures. For these converts, it seems, faith is an either-or proposition — “you either believe or you don’t,” as a 30-year-old woman insisted. But their religious intensity is not necessarily reflected in mosque attendance. Half of all subjects reported attending the mosque either “rarely” (n = 3) or only “sometimes” (n = 8); the other half attended either “regularly” (n = 7) or “often” (n = 4). In explaining his rare attendance, a 30-year-old man who converted twelve years ago said, “I needed the mosque, the support, when I first

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7 All names are pseudonyms. Upon converting to Islam, Russians generally take Muslim names.
8 All women I interviewed wear the hijab.
converted, but I’ve been a Muslim for a long time now. The mosque is no longer necessary.” An inverse correlation between years as Muslim and mosque attendance might be assumed, but preliminary research does not appear to support such a correlation. A better explanation of the split in mosque attendance may be the fact that Tatar is still considered by many, most importantly by political and religious authorities, to be the language of Islam in Tatarstan, and Russians generally do not know the Tatar language. Indeed, many subjects complained that most mosques were closed to them due to language.

Several of my interview subjects told me they attend or have attended the Burnai Mosque, which is said to be the only mosque in Kazan where Friday prayers are regularly conducted in Russian. Central to Burnai is Kamal Al Zant, a popular figure who, along with other Arab students, came to study in Kazan in the early 1990s. Although Arabic originally was the language of worship of this group, by the latter half of the decade, after young Tatars, Russians, and others had joined them, Al Zant began delivering prayers and lectures in Russian. Al Zant, who expert interview subjects accuse of Salafism, today attracts very large crowds at Burnai and other mosques where he is invited to speak. Compared to gatherings at other (Tatar) mosques, the crowds at Burnai are larger, significantly younger, and much more ethnically diverse. Russians, according to Al Zant,\(^\text{10}\) make up only a small portion of Burnai’s faithful; most are young Tatars and other traditionally Muslim ethnic groups. Many are migrants from former Soviet republics.

Conclusion

For the duration of the 1990s, while the leadership of Tatarstan asserted its claim to territorial autonomy, Islam in Tatarstan was central to the Tatar ethno-national revival. But in recent years it has diverged from the national discourse and is increasingly recognized as a supranational faith. A new generation of Tatarstanis is attracted to Islam’s message of internationality and morality, elements seen as missing from society in the first post-socialist decade. With the end of the Cold War, forces associated with globalization have allowed new forms of the faith to be introduced to the region, competing with traditional interpretations. Regional authorities, putting their weight behind an ethnic version of Islam, not only set up an oppositional dichotomy of official faith versus fundamentalism but also attempt to narrow the field of competition to approved sects. Russian converts are rational in their religious choice and, though not necessarily compelled toward fundamentalism, will seek spiritual sustenance from available resources. They, along with young Tatars and members of other ethnic communities, are open to more fluid identity constructions and work to redefine what is considered traditional in Tatarstan — and Russia.

This preliminary research summarized in this report is part of a dissertation research project, supported by a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship and a Social Science Research Council International Dissertation Research Fellowship that began in September 2008 and will continue through December 2009. The fundamental goal of my research is to problematize the notion that Islam is primarily a cultural phenomenon by showing how it is shaped and altered by shifting political-territorial circumstances. Specifically, my project seeks to answer the following question: How has the historical competition between Moscow and Kazan, between Russians and Tatars, for control over territory affected the social expression of Islam in Kazan?\(^\text{11}\)

Data presented here will contribute to a dissertation chapter illustrating how efforts by Kazan-based authorities to define and control what is considered “traditional” in the region are part of a broader campaign to assert and maintain its territorial autonomy amid recent recentralization of the Russian Federation.

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\(^\text{11}\) My investigation into this question will contribute most directly to the geographical literature on human territoriality, which, as defined by Robert Sack in his authoritative work on the subject, is “the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area” (1986: 19, original italics).

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Nineteenth Century Kazak Correspondence with Russian Authorities: Morphemic Analysis and Historical Contextualization

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This report presents results of the first steps of a long-term collaborative project that joins linguistic and historical analysis of documents written by Kazaks to Russian imperial officials in the period from the late 18th through the early 20th century. The dual purpose of our project is to give an account of the language and of the historical context in which the documents were written, as both evolved over time. Documents written by Kazaks to Russian imperial officials are valuable data for the study of the history of Kazak literary language, yet no comprehensive study of the language of these documents has yet been undertaken.

In the first stage of the project, exemplified by the analysis in this report, we focus only on documents from the early 19th century, predominantly the 1820s and 1830s, when the Russian government opened the first locally-staffed administrative offices within the Kazak steppe territory. We investigate in detail the language of these documents and give a comprehensive account of the morphosyntactic properties of the language from a synchronic perspective. Accompanying a morphemic analysis and English translation of each document is historical information, such as information about the author and addressee and a descriptive analysis of the document’s contents. We provide the official Russian translation as well, so as to highlight the divergences in language and meaning between the texts and therefore the challenges to historians’ interpretations when working only with the Russian translations. The results of the synchronic investigation of this particular written language will lay a foundation for further diachronic and comparative study of the Turkic languages in the steppe region in order to provide an account of the development and changes to them through time.

The documents that we are analyzing in this first stage of our project come from archives in Omsk, Russia (the administrative center for Russian rule over Middle Horde Kazaks beginning in 1822) and Almaty, Kazakhstan. They were handwritten in Turkī2 and include vernacular Turkic forms as well as Russian loan words, making them linguistically rich and challenging sources of analysis. The authors of the texts were generally Kazak töre — a stratum of elites that included “Sultans” with Chinggisid administrative center of Russian rule over Little Horde Kazaks, and in Moscow. In each case, one object of her work will be to collect more samples of these Turkī-language documents to supplement the twenty or so that she has in hand. Based on past research, she expects to find hundreds more from this particular era and will endeavor to make copies of representative samples.

Turki is used here to refer to a variety of Chagatai that has typical Kipchak features and that reflects the spoken varieties of the steppe region.

Facsimile of the Original Turki Document

1 These are locations where Martin has conducted historical research. In the near future, she expects to return to Almaty and Omsk, and also plans to work in archives in Orenburg (Russia), which was the

2 Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan [TsGA RK], f. 338, op. 1, d. 751, ll. 9-9ob.
lineage — who had gained positions in the newly formed Russian imperial administration in the Kazak steppe region in the 1820s and 1830s and who corresponded with officials as prompted or required by their positions. The contents of the documents are generally local-level administrative and political topics, and the language in them reflects the local origin of both the author and his/her concerns. In terms of the history of written Turki, they demonstrate an evolution beyond the “old-Tatar official written language” in earlier eras of diplomatic correspondence between Russian rulers and neighboring Turkic/Tatar leaders (Khisamova 1999), in that they now contain vernacular words and localized subject matter, and the authors and addressees are local political figures. They appear in the archival record along with Russian translations.

The present research report analyzes a letter written by Sultan Chingis to Cossack Commander Shvabskii in October 1832. It consists of the following pieces: 1) a facsimile of the Turki document, 2) a morphemic analysis of the Turki document, 3) historical information about this specific document, 4) a facsimile of the Russian version, 5) an English-language translation of the Russian document, and 6) brief observations on some differences between the Turki and Russian versions.

**Morphemic Analysis**

The text of the letter from Sultan Chingis to Ivan Markovich Shvabskii is presented here in five lines. The first line presents it in the Turki orthography used in Kazak correspondence at the time, as seen in the original, handwritten document (see facsimile). The second line is a transliteration (original spelling in the Arabic script) and the third line is a morphophonemic transcription (reconstruction of the language in the text). We used both transliteration (as used in the morphemic analysis) and phonemic transcription of the text in order to highlight the divergences between each Arabic letter (grapheme) used in the text and the various phonemes that each letter denotes. The fourth line provides a morphemic analysis in the form of morpheme-by-morpheme glosses, and the fifth line offers an English-language translation that is as close as possible to the original literal meaning. The symbols and abbreviations mainly follow the conventions used in “Eighteenth Century Kazak Glossary” (Mawkanuli 1993). Morphological categories are represented in small capitals and lexical glosses are in ordinary type.5

5 The symbols and abbreviations of grammatical and linguistic terms used in this report are: - morpheme boundary, <> Infixed element, A Arabic, ABL ablative case, ACC accusative case, ADJ adjectival suffix, CAUS causative, COND conditional, CV convorb marker, DAT dative case, EXIST existential, GEN genitive case, IMP imperative, LOC locative case, PST past tense, PSTPRT past participle, PF present/future tense, P Persian, PL plural, POL polite, POSS possessive suffix, NDER noun/nominal deriving suffix, NEG negative, R Russian, SG singular, VN verbal noun maker, 1 first person, 2 second person, 3 third person.

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### Transliteration and Phonemic Transcription

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<th>Grapheme</th>
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4 When inflectional suffixes are not connected to words in the original text, morpheme boundaries are marked by underline marks in our transliteration.
Morphemic Analysis of the Turki Text

To you, superior, esteemed and honored Mr. Major Ivan Markich, residing at Qara Oba (Lake).

I, Sultan Chingis, son of Wali Khan, send my greetings.

and herewith I inform you that,

on the 22nd day of the October month,
Uwaq people-2SG.POSS good Biy-PL-3SG.POSS be-CV

the good biys of the Uwaq people gathered,

in order to make us the district Sultan

placed their seals and signatures.

I will submit (it) to you.

Please inform us if there are any disputes related to the Uwaq.

7 Volost’ means district. In the early 19th century, Russian administrators used it as the term to refer to groups of nomads who were or would eventually be organized into administrative units at the local level. Chingis is making use of the Russian terminology to describe this grouping of nomads, even though they are not yet officially integrated into the imperial structure. In other regions of the Middle Horde territory after 1822 (and beginning in 1834 in this particular area), volost’ Sultan was the official title of the Kazak head administrator of a district within an okrug [sub-provincial unit, larger than a volost and smaller than an oblast’].
If other Kazak töres and Russian töres

make aggression, please do not let them make aggression (provoke violence).

Please do not forget us.

And also our maternal relatives, Qožas, have some disputes.

If you think of us, please resolve that dispute well.

Sultan Chingis Vali Khanuv

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8 The name appears as a rather unsteady, handwritten signature in Cyrillic script.
**Historical Background**

The document analyzed linguistically above was written by Chingis Walikhanov (1811-ca. 1896), son of Khan Wali (1781-1821) and Ayğanîm (1783-1853), Wali’s second wife. In 1832, when Chingis wrote this letter, he was enrolled in the Asiatic section of the Omsk Cossack School as one of its first Kazak students. He completed three years of schooling, officially to train as a translator, and then in summer 1834, he was elected and confirmed to the post of Elder Sultan [starshii/a ğa Sultan], the main Kazak administrator of a new sub-provincial administrative unit [okrug] named Aman-Qarağay, which was located in the northwestern corner of the Middle Horde steppe territory. He would continue to serve the imperial Russian government in several different capacities for 34 years, until major reforms in the steppe region in 1868 forced him to retire (Martin 2004).

In 1832, the Aman-Qarağay territory from which Chingis wrote his letter had not yet been structured into a separate administrative unit, formal administrators were not yet in place, and Russian authority was only present in the form of a Cossack military detachment. This meant, among other things, that only some of the Kazak nomads migrating within the territory had proclaimed their allegiance to the Russian Tsar and requested that administrative order be created there, while others refused to acknowledge Russian rule. Among the latter were the “Uwaq people” mentioned in Chingis’ letter.

Rather than submit to Russian rule, these Uwaq people submitted to Chingis. In some ways, this was simply Central Eurasian nomadic politics. Chingis was a Chinggisid, the nomadic political elite of the Eurasian steppe who claimed aristocratic status based on genealogical descent from the Mongol empire-builder, Chinggis Khan. The wealthiest and most powerful Kazak Chinggisids controlled patrimonial lands and the people and livestock that migrated on those lands (Martin 2007). These Uwaq nomads “belonged” to Sultan Chingis: they were among the tülengüts [loyal servitors] of his father, and now they professed allegiance to Chingis. Probing more deeply into the archival record, we find their purpose here was to proclaim that they were a group of Uwaq distinct from other Uwaqs who had submitted to a different Sultan in neighboring Kökshetau district in 1828, that they had never professed loyalty to the Tsar, and that they therefore were not obligated to pay iasak [in-kind taxes]. In the early 1830s the imperial administration in Omsk was attempting to enforce for the first time since 1822 the collection of iasak from among the Kazaks who had become subjects of the empire.9

Chingis’ letter is addressed to the commander of the local Cossack military detachment, Captain Ivan Markovich Shvabskii, and it entered the archival record when Shvabskii sent it on, with attached Russian translation, to his superior, the commander of Omsk Province.10 Shvabskii and his men were stationed as imperial border guards in a territory not yet formally incorporated into the administrative structure of the empire. Chingis apparently viewed Shvabskii as the imperial official to whom he should turn in his attempt to protect his claim to this group of Uwaq Kazaks.

The letter is very brief; we chose it for presentation here in part because of its brevity. Its contents may seem terribly mundane and unrevealing. Yet as the above background information hopefully conveys, we can learn important details about nomadic politics and the people who practiced it; indeed, it is just these sorts of documents, used as one piece of evidence among many other types of sources, which reveal to the historian otherwise little-known features of the social, cultural, political, and linguistic history of the steppe from a distinctly Kazak nomadic point of view.

**The Russian-Language Version in English Translation**

Letter of Sultan Chingis Valikhanov, October 28, 1832

To Mr. Major Ivan Markovich, residing on the Kara Ob:

I hereby convey my esteem.

With this I inform you that last September 22nd, honored people of Uvak district, having

9 This topic of collection of iasak, and the accusation that Uwaq were evading their obligations, takes up the entire file in which Chingis’ 1832 letter is found (TsGA RK, f. 338, op. 1, d. 751, 139 ll.). By 1835, an investigation involving numerous Kazak and Russian officials resulted in the determination that all Uwaq owed some level of iasak payment, and at least some of it was extracted from them.

10 Omsk Province [oblast] was administratively part of the Governor-Generalship of Western Siberia at this time; Middle Horde nomads (called Sibirskie Kirgizy in Russian statutes) fell within the jurisdiction of Omsk officials.
made a common agreement shown by their signatures and affixing of their stamps, chose me as their district administrator, and so I ask you, if there are any disputes among the Uvakovtsy to let me know. In case any Kirgiz [Kazak] clan leaders or Russian officials inflict harm on my Uvakovtsy I request to defend them. I ask not to leave me to your resolution, [for] after this my uncles, Khozhi, have several claims. I request that you resolve them better.

Sultan Chingis Valikhanov, signed
Titular Councilor Dabshinskii, translated

Notes on the Russian Translation
We have provided the above translation of Sultan Chingis’ letter in order to reflect briefly on the subtle but important differences in language and meaning in the Turki and Russian texts. While there are in fact a number of differences in the Turki and Russian versions that can be noticed in our literal English translations of the two texts, here we will pause to note just three examples. First, the Uwaq are identified as a “people” [el] in the Turki, but as a “district” [volest], i.e., an imperial administrative unit, in the translation. Second, in the Turki original Chingis chooses to use “bolïsnay,” a form of the word volest, when identifying the position that the Uwaq wish him to hold, and he retains the title Sultan, whereas in the Russian translation, we learn that the Uwaq chose him as a district “administrator.” Finally, and very tellingly of Kazak versus Russian perspectives on their political relationship, in the Turki original Chingis refers to both Kazak and Russian elites with the word “töre,” thus signaling that he considers them equals, but the Russian version uses words signifying specific positions that cannot be compared directly to each other: Kazak “clan leaders” [rodonachal’niki] and Russian “officials” [chinovniki]. The liberties taken by the Russian translator, identified as an official with rank named Dabshinskii, are very typical of 19th century imperial representations of nomads: a

11 The imperial Russian administration referred to Kazaks as “Kirgiz” and the neighboring nomadic Kyrgyz as “Kara Kirgiz.”
12 TsGA RK, f. 338, op. 1, d. 751, ll. 8-8ob.
13 The question of the role of translators/interpreters and scribes is of course germane to our analysis. Beginning in the 1820s, each district office in the Kazak steppe had one or more interpreter or scribe assigned to its salaried staff. We intend to compile profiles of these individuals and consider the extent to which their identities may have influenced the language of these documents.
language of evolutionism is employed to create a hierarchical relationship in which the nomadic political elite occupy a political space lower than the Russian imperial powerholders on a developmental scale (see, e.g., Sneath 2007). This exercise should signal to historians that original language documents may hold keys to understanding identity issues in steppe nomadic politics, and should be used whenever possible. Comparing the original and translated versions can provide insights into the politics of the empire builders as well.

**Conclusion**

Our project opens a unique window on the Kazak steppe of the past. The documents reveal striking evidence of the complex linguistic identity of literate Kazak elites, which should be of substantial value for comparative philology; at the same time, they provide historians with clear voices of those Kazaks who asserted power and authority within the imposed structures of Russian imperial rule in the steppe. This is a long-term project that will have many components. We intend to add to our collection of archival documents, so that the source base is sufficiently broad. Documents from Little and Middle Horde Kazak töre, including men who held official positions, men who were active in politics outside of imperial structures, and women who maintained positions of power and respect, as well as high-level non-Chinggisid administrators, are among representative groupings that we expect to analyze. The goals of the linguistic research for the project are twofold. First, we are planning to create a database of interlinear glossed texts from this corpus in order to represent morphosyntactic information and to enable research into the morphosyntactic and syntactic properties of the language. Second, we will investigate how Kazak has been used and how other languages have influenced it, both historically and sociolinguistically.

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1999 *Tatarskii iazyk v vostochnoi diplomatii Rossii* [Tatar language in the oriental diplomacy of Russia]. Kazan': “Master-Lain.”

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Sneath, David
The OSCE Academy is designed to promote and enhance the principles and values of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) in Central Asia. Located in Bishkek, it provides the youth of the region with post-graduate education, capacity building, research and regional dialogue. Through 2007 the OSCE Academy conducted a large scale Oral History Project in Tajikistan (OHT). The aim was to collect memories from all parts of Tajik society and preserve popular experiences and perceptions of developments in Tajikistan since independence in 1991.

The OSCE Academy invited participants from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, as well as scholars from Europe, to take part in a two-day workshop in Bishkek on May 22-23, 2008. Its goal was to publicize the outcomes of the research to a larger academic audience, as well as to determine prospects for application and development of the findings of the research.

In the first session, Faredun Hodizoda (Tajikistan program manager), Tim Epkenhans (OSCE Academy director) and Chris Whitsel (Indiana University) gave a general introduction to the OHT. The project started in early 2007, when the staff was selected and trained. Interviews took place from April to December 2007 in various regions of Tajikistan — mostly Dushanbe, Khatlon and the central region under republican supervision (RRS) — with a clear sampling procedure. In terms of methods, the project used native interviewers to interview individuals from their home regions, in their mother tongues (Tajik, Uzbek, or Russian) and with a special focus on gender (13 of 21 interviewers and 62% of respondents were women). According to the project leaders, the most prominent feature of the oral history methodology was to allow respondents to tell their own life stories, their own personal experiences, with interviewers using probes to better understand the subjects and events. In total more than 900 interviews were recorded.

The second session was dedicated to papers reflecting the use of oral history in academic research in Tajikistan. Payam Foroughi (OSCE Centre in Dushanbe) introduced the issue of war and peace, prosperity, and human rights in the context of Tajikistan’s nation building. Sophie Roche (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany) addressed the link between individual narratives and collective memories in post-Soviet Tajikistan, with a special focus on the perception of the civil war. In her very well illustrated and fascinating paper, Sophie Roche pointed out that individual memories are difficult to change while social memories are more easily subjected to transformation. She also addressed the role of memory in the process of reconciliation or division of the society. Olivier Ferrando (Institute of Political Studies, Sciences Po Paris, France) focused on the narratives of refugees during the Tajik civil war and their perception of the “other” in their region of exile, either within Tajikistan or in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. He argued that in numerous cases, the refugees from southern Tajikistan perceived their exile as a travel back to the native homeland that their ancestors had left several generations before. Narratives from the refugees provided an original picture of their confrontation with a largely mystified homeland. Narratives from the hosts shed light on how the refugees were perceived in local popular memory.

During the third session, all participants had the opportunity to listen to a sample of interviews and to browse through the OHT materials, which included transcriptions and translations that had been prepared thus far. This practical session allowed participants to assess the quality of the recordings and the huge quantity of information that the OHT project has collected.
The last session was dedicated to open discussions and brainstorming between the project staff and the researchers on the use of such materials and the future of the OHT project. All participants came to the conclusion that oral history is a valuable source of information at a time when the history of independent Tajikistan has still to be analyzed and written. Oral history has multiple uses and values. It provides stories “from the street” or “from the bottom” as opposed to processes usually better known “from above.” It can inform in unique ways future studies and understanding of the concerned society from anthropological, sociological, psychological, and other perspectives. Access to the OHT material is therefore expected to be organized with key academic institutions. An editorial and managerial board was set up with OHT staff and voluntary researchers to help in developing institutional cooperation and to follow the development of the project. A first task is to improve the use of the database with a search engine, as well as to draft a code of ethics in the use of the recordings. Up to the time of this writing (March 2009), the board has been focusing on standardizing key-words that will be used to label each interview and run the search engine. A second task is to organize the new phase of the OHT project. It seeks to complete the existing material with interviews conducted in new areas, particularly in the northern province of Sughd and in Mountain Badakhshan Autonomous Region. New interviews were collected in both areas in fall 2008 and are currently being processed.

The workshop was very effective in that it gave rise to lively discussions. Participants drew in historical, sociological, economic, and political sources to develop their understanding of oral history. The workshop succeeded in enlarging and enriching the OHT project from various social science perspectives and contributed therefore to making it an unprecedented tool of research that the regional and international academic communities will be able to use in the near future.

Two Conferences on Bukharan Jews in Israel

Tel-Aviv, Israel, December 8, 2008
Jerusalem, Israel, February 4, 2009

Reported by: Zeev Levin, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Tel-Aviv University’s Rosenberg School of Jewish Studies, levinzv@gmail.com

Two conferences on the history and folklore of the Bukharan Jews in Israel were held in late 2008 and early 2009. The first conference was held at Tel-Aviv University on December 8, 2008, and was organized jointly by the Center of Iranian Studies and the World Congress of Bukharan Jews, an organization which was established by the famous Israeli philanthropist Lev Levaev. The aim of the World Congress is to establish cooperation between various Bukharan Jewish organizations and communities on a worldwide basis. Since its inception in 2000, the organization has contributed to the establishment of Bukharan Jewish community centers and synagogues in many localities all over the globe. The second conference, held in Jerusalem on February 4, 2009, was organized and hosted by the Ben-Zvi Institute, a leading research institute in Israel for Oriental Jewish communities, which develops educational programs and, through its own publishing house, annually issues scholarly journals and books on related topics.

Two conferences on the same topic were held within such a short period of time can be explained by the competition between various organizations in Israel that claim to represent the Bukharan Jews and wish to gain primacy in addressing their community issues. This competition gained new relevance in 2008 when the Israeli Parliament passed a law on “Preservation of the Bukharan Jewish Heritage.” In this law the government mandated the formation of a special governmental committee and allocation of governmental funds to encourage documentation and research. The World Congress of Bukharan Jews has taken a leading role in implementing this law, but the Union of Bukharan Expatriates [Brith Yotsei Bukhara], which claims to have primacy over all others as the oldest Bukharan Jewish organization in Israel, is ambivalent about the role that the World Congress has assumed and seeks to ensure that the World Congress serves only as a supervisory body, not ultimate decision-maker. Finally, the Ben-Zvi Institute will be active as
The Tel-Aviv University Conference on Bukharan Jews

The Tel-Aviv University conference was opened by two members of the Israeli Parliament, Mr. Amnon Cohen and Mr. Robert Elatov, both of Bukharan Jewish descent, but from different factions of Israel’s political spectrum. These parliamentarians initiated the law on the Bukharan Jewish heritage mentioned above. Both spoke of the special characteristics of Bukharan Jews and the unique position this sub-group holds, which deserves to be studied and documented, especially as few Bukharan Jews remain in Central Asia. Mr. Avraham Pinhasi, from the World Congress of Bukharan Jews, spoke about the central role of the World Congress in the communal and cultural “rebirth” of the Bukharan Jews in Israel and the world. Prof. David Menashri, head of the Center of Iranian Studies (CIS) at Tel-Aviv University spoke of the center’s research projects and its great interest in developing studies of the Persian region and Persian-speaking Jewish communities. He mentioned that Bukharan Jewish history was the focus of a project carried out by the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at Tel-Aviv University sponsored by the German-Israeli Research Fund (GIF), culminating in the publication of a volume of essays (Baldauf 2008), and also the acceptance of a PhD thesis (Levin 2008).

The first session was dedicated to the history of Bukharan Jews at the turn of the 20th century. In this session, Semion Gitlin, who for many years was a professor at the Uzbek Institute of Communism and Leninism in Tashkent and recently published several studies on Jewish history in Central Asia, talked about the problems of research of Bukharan Jewish history. His main focus was on the importance of archival sources and the ways they should be treated by modern historians. Gitlin presented some documents from Moscow and Tashkent archives and described the problems of text, context, and sub-context related to them and the different ways that they could be read. Yefim Yacubov, an independent scholar, presented findings from the Central Archive of Uzbekistan about the establishment and development of the early Soviet press (1920-1922) in the Bukharan Jewish language. He talked about the enterprise of his grandfather, Rahmin Badalov, who was the founder and editor of the first Bukharan Jewish Soviet newspaper, Rost [this is the Russian abbreviation for Rossiiskoe telegraficheskoie agenstvo (Russian Telegraph Agency); in Tajik it means “truth”]. Mark Myers, from Haifa University, talked about the findings in his MA thesis on Jewish refugees in the predominantly Muslim republics of Central Asia during the Second World War. He started his presentation by describing the historical content in which East European Jews arrived in Central Asia and the many difficulties these refugees faced. Then, he stressed the unique role Bukharan Jews played in aiding the refugees and the special relations that developed from this interaction between the Bukharan Jews, who had lived under the Communist regime for more than a decade, and Ashkenazi refugees, who managed to reorganize local religious communities and to educate a new generation of local religious leaders.

The second session of the conference was dedicated to the cultural and religious heritage of Bukharan Jews. In this session, Eduard Yakubov, dean of the Kiriat-Ono College, talked about the first academies from the Bukharan Jewish community, their origins and their input to the Soviet Union and the world. He presented a book that included many hundreds of biographies of Bukharan Jewish scholars. Viktor Bohman, an independent scholar, classified and compared various studies and chronicles of the life of Rabbi Shimon Hakham (1843-1910), who was the initiator of more than a hundred translations and print enterprises in the Bukharan Jewish language in Jerusalem (including a translation of the Bible). Bohman also talked about the uniqueness and importance of this pioneering enterprise, which served as the foundation for the written Bukharan Jewish language which, due to a unique set of conditions, was set far away from the Bukharan Jewish premises in Russian Turkestan or in the Khanate of Bukhara. Yaacov Ro’i, Professor Emeritus from Tel-Aviv University, presented his research on Soviet religious persecutions in Central Asia and the ways in which the Bukharan Jewish religious communities and their activists strove to preserve their faith and not allow it to perish. He showed that Soviet policy was neither constant nor
solid on this issue, but adjusted according to specific circumstances, tightening or easing state control over the Jewish religious communities of Uzbekistan. Ro’i also stressed that in many cases local authorities choose to ignore various violations of Soviet law in order to keep problems from arising.

The third session of the conference was dedicated to linguistic developments. It was opened by Zeev Levin from Tel-Aviv University, who discussed linguistic transformations and adaptations in the Bukharan Jewish language (Judeo-Tajik) during the 20th century. His emphasis was on linguistic developments during the early Soviet period (1910-1938), with examples from a variety of Bukharan Jewish newspapers. According to Levin, during this time the Bukharan Jewish language underwent two major script transformations, from the Hebrew script used before the Communist revolution to the "Reformed Hebrew" script developed and adopted in the early 1920s, which was finally transformed into a Latinized version in the late 1920s and early 1930s. These graphic adaptations were part of a deeper transformation that led to Sovietization and Russification of texts and vocabulary. In this session, Chana Tolmas, an independent scholar, spoke about Hebrew and Aramaic influences on the Bukharan Jewish language. Her main argument was that Bukharan Jewish language borrowed from Jewish religious writings and adopted into a Tajik-based phonetic system many Hebrew and Aramaic words. Tolmas presented various examples from the spoken language, such as greetings, words about life cycle events, and traditional “nicknames,” some of which became Bukharan Jewish family names.

In between the sessions the participants in the conference could view an exhibition of pictures, folklore, and Bukharan Jewish arts and crafts from Central Asia and Israel. Books written by Bukharan Jewish authors and a community newspaper, Menora, issued by the World Congress of Bukharan Jews, were on display as well.

The Yad Ben-Zvi Conference in Jerusalem

The second conference, held on February 4, 2008, by the Ben-Zvi Institute, was also opened by parliamentarian Amnon Cohen, who reiterated his personal commitment to encouraging historical and cultural research on the Jewish community. Mr. Yitzhak Bar-Nathan, President of the Brit Yotseai Bukhara, congratulated the center and stressed that his organization had offered cultural activities and sponsored scholarship among his community members for more than 30 years. The head of the Ben-Zvi Institute, Prof. Yom-Tov Asis, underscored the Institute’s commitment to research on Oriental Jewish communities. He emphasized that the grant to be received from governmental funds will provide further opportunities to develop academic research and publications and will encourage students to engage in research on this topic.

This conference was divided into two sessions. In the first session, Giora Pozailov of Bar-Ilan University presented his research on Bukharan Jewish rabbinical dynasties as well as contacts between Bukhara and the Holy Land in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He described the contacts and interrelations between emissaries from the Holy Land who came to Central Asia and became local community leaders. Pozailov also stressed the reasons and factors behind the central role religion and religious leaders traditionally held among Bukharan Jews. Whereas most of the documentation available on this topic originates from emissaries’ reports, it somehow neglects and minimizes the role and place of local Central Asian elites, a central question of this research. Zeev Levin, from the Tel-Aviv University, presented his research on Jews of Uzbekistan during the interwar years (1918-1939). The presentation described cultural, occupational, and social transformations and adaptations of Bukharan Jews following the Communist revolution and the delimitation of Turkestan into national Soviet Republics, with Bukharan Jews becoming a unique minority group within them. The research stressed the specific conditions that were present in Central Asia and in the USSR at the time, which made Bukharan Jews a minority group. Levin further suggested that Bukharan Jews as a group were promoted by affirmative action as a native nationality, while Ashkenazi Jews were not. He also pointed out that in 1938 the Bukharan Jews lost their unique position. Benyamin Ben-David, editor of ABA, the journal of the Association for the Study of Jews from Iran, Bukhara and Afghanistan, talked both about the economic enterprises of Bukharan Jews in Russian Turkestan and the dual-edged policy implemented by the Tsarist administration towards them. In his presentation, Ben-David focused on economic development of the region, which limited the rights of Bukharan Jews, given a clear anti-Semitism and favoritism towards the Russian merchants on the part of administrators. As a concrete example of this argument, he mentioned
the economic trial initiated against Yosef Davidov (his grandfather), which was conducted in Tashkent between 1910 and 1912. Another argument raised in the presentation was about settlement of Russians in the region, resulting in anti-Semitism as seen in a case in 1911 in Osh of blood libel against Jews. Yehoshua Ben-Tsion, a writer and independent scholar, talked about his personal experiences in Uzbekistan in the early 1990s, when he was serving as the Consul at the Israeli Embassy in Uzbekistan. Ben-Tsion stressed that when he arrived in the region, he found members of the Bukharan Jewish community who, due to seventy years under the Communist regime, knew very few of their faith’s religious practices, although their spirit was high and they were eager to learn.

The second session of the conference dealt mainly with the Bukharan Jewish folkloristic heritage. It was opened by Elena Raiher, an independent scholar, who talked about the traditional role of Bukharan Jewish women musicians. She described the unique traditions of singing and dancing women in Central Asian societies and the central role of women performers (sozonda) in them. She stressed the developments and evolution in this institution during the Soviet period, when the lyrics of the songs mixed tradition and conservatism with Soviet ideological content. Zoya Arshavski, an architect from the Center of Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, presented the unique characteristics of Bukharan Jewish houses in Bukhara and Samarqand. She pointed out some of the marked differences in architecture between Jewish and Muslim houses, such as the absence of the division of houses into male and female sections in Jewish homes, and the use of the same style ornaments with different titles and texts in them, all of which were the result of different traditions, social roles, and religious practices. Arshavski stated that there was also a difference among several Bukharan Jewish neighborhoods (mahalla) which originated from different social and demographic development patterns: in Bukhara the houses in the Jewish quarter were usually built higher and smaller then in Samarqand, mostly due to the lack of available land. Ruth Yaacobi of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, talked about Bukharan Jewish religious ornaments of the 19th century. She compared different Bukharan Jewish art styles with other Jewish communities of the wider Iranian diaspora and with those of traditional Central Asian craftsmen. She further stated that after the Russian conquest of the region some religious attributes were imported by Bukharan Jews from the East European Jewish centers such as Warsaw, Lublin, and Vilno. Yefim Yakubov, an independent scholar, presented his findings on the cultural and educational activity of Bukharan Jews in the governmental structures of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (1919-1924). He stressed that during this period the Soviet regime did not have a coherent policy towards the Bukharan Jews: it issued a newspaper in a Bukharan Jewish language, Rost, while at the same time proclaiming that Hebrew was the national language of the Bukharan Jews; it also closed traditional (religious) schools, but failed to prepare an alternative education system, as it did not train teachers or publish new text books for Soviet schools.

Quite a few scholars in Israel have engaged in researching various aspects of Bukharan Jewish history and culture, and most of them took part in these conferences. Most of the participants lacked academic affiliation and financial means, thus relying solely on their personal enthusiasm and experiences. Some of the topics targeted specific events in Bukharan Jewish history from a quite narrow (personal or communal) point of view and were missing a wider comparative approach, which would put Bukharan Jews into their regional perspective. Much remains to be done. The establishment of a permanent research center for Bukharan Jews and the Central Asian region would be highly welcome, since no such center exists in Israel. Such an organization could bolster cooperation with other similar institutions and scholars outside Israel, who deal with parallel topics of religious, ethnic, and national minorities of Central Asia.

For further information see: the Center of Iranian Studies (http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/iranian_studies/past-events.eng.html), the World Congress of Bukharan Jews (http://www.buchara.org.il), the Ben-Zvi Institute of Jerusalem (http://www.ybz.org.il), and the German-Israeli Research Fund (http://www.gifres.org.il).

References
On December 20-24, 2008, a workshop entitled “Understanding International Security in the 21st Century” was held at Ilgaz Security Academy with contributions from scholars and analysts at the International Relations Council Organization, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Republic of Turkey, the Public Diplomacy Unit of NATO, and Ankara University. The general subject of the workshop was Turkey’s immediate security environment as well as security in the Middle East and Eurasia within the general framework of international security.

The first paper of the workshop, entitled “The Past, Present and Future of International Security Studies,” was presented by Dr. Pınar Bilgin from Bilkent University’s Department of International Relations. According to Bilgin, one of the biggest challenges in security studies is to come up with a common definition of the concept. Different societies and even different groups within the same society give different answers to the question “What is security?” After analyzing the concept of security in a historical context since the 1940s, Bilgin elaborated on the recent problems in security studies from the perspective of globalization. According to her, there are several new challenges in the era of globalization, such as the rise of non-state actors using force (as was the case in 9/11), increasing severity of global environmental problems, and the fierce struggle over depleting and scarce resources. Despite all these new challenges, however, we do not see globalization in a wider context and hence, we do not clearly understand how it has an impact on global security. We are the actors of this complex process of globalization and we should not “reduce” the concept only to the issue of terrorism in order to fully understand security. Bilgin concluded her presentation by suggesting that we need to give clear answers to two questions in order to better understand and deal with the security issues in a global world: 1) Whose security are we interested in? 2) What is or who is the threat?

Dr. Ali Nihat Özcan, a researcher from the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey [Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı] began his paper, entitled “The Reality of the 21st Century: Asymmetrical War and National/International Security,” with the observation that over the course of the last 50 years, the weaker sides have been winning the wars. According to Özcan, the stronger and wealthier parties showed reluctance to enter into full-scale wars mostly due to factors like increasing costs, moral and legal limitations regarding the utilization of full-scale power and different meanings given to the concept of war itself. MFA Deputy Secretary Ambassador Ünal Çeviköz, in his presentation, entitled “Turkey’s Security Problems from the Perspective of Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” grouped Turkey’s security problems under four headings: 1) several conflicts and clashes in the wider Black Sea and Middle East basin; 2) asymmetrical threats; 3) the search for a new enemy in the post-Communist era, as the thesis of clash of civilizations suggested; and 4) energy and water security in the region. Under such pressures, according to Çeviköz, Turkish foreign policy has shifted and now the country plays a “facilitator” role, which should not be confused with a “mediator” role.

Dr. Nurşin Ateşoğlu from the Department of International Relations of the Yıldız Technical University emphasized in his presentation, “The Problem of Expansion of Nuclear Arms Today: Is NPT [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty] a Solution?” that nuclear weapons were seen as a means of deterrence and a solution during the Cold War period. However, in the post-Soviet era, as the cases of North Korea and Iran have indicated, the reliability and efficiency of a NPT became questionable. As NPT does not have any sanctions and is riddled with various double standards, it is not a solution to the problem of expansion of nuclear weapons.
Dr. Mert Bilgin from Bahçeşehir University’s Department of International Relations made a presentation entitled “Energy Security.” In it he drew attention to the close relationship between energy security and sustainable development. According to Bilgin, there is a move towards a new energy regime on a global scale, which has a “hegemonic tendency” without any “hegemonic stability,” and which therefore will be more competitive and confrontational. Bilgin especially emphasized instability in the triangle of Pakistan, Iran, and Turkmenistan. In this new period, however, energy security will be part of the agenda of international politics and the countries that contribute to the process of building a more secure energy policy will be the new influential actors. Bilgin also emphasized that there will be new parameters regarding energy policies and energy security in Eurasia and Europe, especially for Russia, Turkmenistan, the EU, Iran, and Turkey.

Dr. Çağrı Erhan, head of Ankara University’s European Union Application and Research Center [Avrupa Toplulukları Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi], identified the main “Security Problems in the Middle East” as being linked to the Arab-Israeli conflict, although several other socioeconomic problems also have a negative effect on the politics and security of the region. Finding a solution to this conflict will have a “facilitative effect” on the other problems as well. According to Erhan, the European countries and the United States (through the Greater Middle East Project) are also very much part of regional dynamics, sometimes creating new conflicts themselves. On the other hand, the regimes of regional countries display many double standards, as their basic concern is to continue their power. All these factors have prevented the emergence of a viable, effective solution for the Middle East.

Dr. Çınar Özen, an associate professor from the Department of International Relations of the Ankara University and the Academic Advisor to the Turkish General Staff’s Excellence Center for Defense against Terrorism [Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Terörle Mücadele Mükemmeliyet Merkezi], made a presentation entitled “Securitiy Agenda of Trans-Atlantic Relations.” Özen emphasized that today there is a deadlock within NATO, as the organization is gradually turning into a kind of “EU-US Council.” This development puts Turkey in a difficult situation and as the recent developments in the Black Sea indicated, Turkey has now become more marginal for NATO. The issue of conflict management in Turkey’s relations with NATO will gain more importance in the future. Özen also stated that the rapprochement between Turkey and Russia is observed with some anxiety in the Western countries as they realize that Turkey has started to become alienated from NATO.

Dr. Mitat Çelikpala, from the Department of International Relations of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey and University of Economics and Technology (TOBB/ETU), presented a paper entitled “Security in Eurasia.” In his presentation, Çelikpala suggested that among the most important security problems in the region were the authoritarian and weak states, delayed nation building processes, the existence of several separatist groups and areas, de facto independent states such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, problems of transition economies and the “resource curse.” According to Çelikpala, one of the main problems for the future of Eurasia is how leadership change will take place, considering the fact that the dictatorial leaders in the region are getting much older. The presentation also focused on the impact of the Russia-Georgia conflict and Russia’s decision to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Çelikpala suggested that this process may, in the long run, result in a change of the political map of Eurasia. To that, Çelikpala added the challenge coming from al-Qaeda’s shift from Iraq to Eurasia, which will also create further security problems for the region. He also suggested that with Obama’s presidency, the United States may reactivate its ties with the region, complicating once again the dynamics of the never-ending Great Game.

Once the presentations and discussions were completed, a report was prepared under the chairmanship of Dr. Mustafa Aydınlı, the head of both the International Relations Department of the TOBB/ETU and the International Relations Council Organization. According to this report, the main security problems for Turkey are terror, the situation in Iraq, border security, identity politics, social cleavages, sharing of natural resources, energy and water security, global economic recession, the rise of the Black Sea basin as a center of global competition, the possibility of breaching the Montreux Convention regime, de facto state formations such as the Kurdish administration in Northern Iraq, armed conflicts in Caucasus and the general instability and armament in neighboring areas, the rise of Iran as a nuclear power, the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, and future
uncertainties in the foreign policy of the United States.

One of the most important results of this workshop was the emphasis put on the necessity of developing a methodologically holistic and interdisciplinary approach in Eurasian security studies. This workshop, by focusing on international security issues in general, and security threats in Turkey and its surroundings in particular, clearly indicated that security problems go beyond the borders of individual states and that no country can regard itself immune to such problems. Unless the international community cooperates on dealing with the security issues, there will not be any effective long-term solution in this field.

**Eurasian Perspectives — In Search of Alternatives**

Kolkata, India, February 4-6, 2009

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The international conference “Eurasian Perspectives — In Search of Alternatives” was held in Kolkata on February 4-6, 2009. An initiative of the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, the conference sought to discuss Central Eurasia, taking into account Russia and its Asiatic borderlands, and highlighting a broad range of research questions in the realm of culture and anthropology, history, politics, economy, and international relations. The aim of the conference was to broaden the field of scholarly engagement by highlighting historical and cultural links in the Central Asian region. In his opening remarks, the Director of the Institute, Professor Hari Vasudevan emphasized the need to historicize those connections and contemplate issues that are not exclusive to Central Asia. It is with this purpose that the institute has extended its research activities since 2007, organizing seminars and expanding scholarly networks in Bishkek, Almaty, Tashkent, Novosibirsk, Ulán-Ude, and Irkutsk. It was hoped that these contacts would set the tone of future interactive meetings. Two books, *Asiatic Russia: Partnerships and Communities in Eurasia* (Delhi: Shipra Publications, 2009) and *Rossiia v Azii: perspektivy partnerstva v vzaimodeistviia* (Novosibirsk: Sova, 2008) were released during the inaugural session.

The four presentations in the first academic session, “Reflections on Alternatives,” contemplated Eurasianism, the concept of “heartland,” and debates that have emerged within that framework. Vladimir Boyko (Barnaul State Pedagogical University, Russia) argued that the rhetoric of a Eurasian “heartland” was lopsided because it revolved around the internal geopolitics of the Central Asian region while regions like the Altai hardly received attention. Farhod Tolipov (National University of Uzbekistan) was of the opinion that bilateral relationships are almost non-existent in the Central Asia region and indicated the necessity to concentrate on regional integration projects that are multidimensional. Roy Allison (London School of Economics and Political Science) elaborated on the idea of “virtual regionalism” which signifies functional cooperation as far as the Central Asian states and Russia are concerned, but hardly any substantive commitment on their part in terms of regional integration. The disinclination towards integration emanated from a series of internal constraints as well as suspicion about the regional policy-making of their neighbors. In Allison’s opinion, despite its framework of regional coordination, protective integration1 has on the whole remained illusory. Sattar Mazhitov (Chokan Valikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology, Almaty, Kazakhstan) discussed the Eurasianists’ world community approach, which tries to integrate the Asian and non-Asian parts of a historical-cultural space. Speaking of the reverberations of Eurasianism in Kazakhstan, he highlighted the Kazakh authorities’ inclination towards the Eurasianists’ principles of moral judgment and pragmatic behavior.

The second session, “Local Histories and Cultural Expressions,” represented a variety of ideas about history and culture in the Eurasian region. Uyama Tomohiko (Slavic Research Center, Sapporo, Japan) presented a post-Soviet profile of

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1 Protective integration is form of collective political solidarity with Russia and China offered by regional organizations like the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as alternatives to international agendas.
“autonomy” in several regions. First, he asserted that “small areas,” for instance of the Bokey Horde, were marginalized in the meganarratives of Kazakh national history, and indicated that there were cross-cultural elements in the Horde structures that were rarely treated in Russian imperial historiography or in the nationalist historiography of the Kazakhs. Recent trends in history writing in Aqtöbe (Aktobe, Aktyubinsk) and Oral (Uralsk) have filled this gap to a certain extent. (See also Uyama’s research report on this subject in CESR Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 16-22). Uyama also considered regions of the former Soviet space, such as the Mountain Badakhshan Autonomous Region, where the Pamiris, who have a tradition of intellectual activity, played a prominent role in the Tajik civil war and reconciliation in the 1990s. Recently, Mountain Badakhshan has been able to reassert itself as a development-oriented region, courtesy of the Aga Khan Foundation. This is also true, Uyama suggested, for Abkhazia, a Caucasian stronghold that maintained its autonomous stance throughout the 19th and 20th centuries; in current reappraisals of Caucasian history the group identity of the Abkhaz has been a prominent focus of analysis. Another historian from Sapporo’s Slavic Research Center, Naganawa Norihiro, explored interregional contacts as he profiled hajjis [Hajj pilgrims] as a source of contact between the Ottoman Empire, India, and Central Asia since the 19th century. Naganawa unraveled the components of hajji activity, reflecting on their travel, the places they visited and their diplomatic contacts in the region under review. Naganawa’s broader research agenda was to locate the new development of the hajj in contemporary Russia. Marina Baldano (Institute for Mongolian, Buddhist, and Tibetan Studies, Ulan-Ude) reflected on the Geser epic tradition in Buryatia, describing how this tradition became the marker of national identity and national culture. Baldano recollected the contributions of her father, Namzhil Baldano, who in the 1940s was entrusted with the study and collation of different textual variants of the epic Geser. In the course of her presentation Baldano talked about links between Buddhism in Mongolia and in India. The epic has a Tibetan Mongolian version and has over the years been widely circulated throughout Buddhist-populated realms to the north of India. In a similar vein, Jeta Sankritayana (North Bengal University, India) spoke about the writings of his father, Rahul Sankritayana, the Indian scholar-traveler who also traveled in the region where Buddhism once enjoyed predominance in the 1940s. Both scholars focused on the multicultural linkages that existed between South and Central Asia for centuries, something that this Buddhist link reflects. There is today a renewed desire to search for these links between cultural traditions, which is what was emphasized in the inaugural session. Cultural representations continued with Judith Beyer (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany), who made a presentation on the changing character of law and authority in Talas Province, Kyrgyzstan. Beyer’s paper explored social interaction between elders and the general population, indicating biased approaches about chaotic change on the one hand and the “order” of legacy or tradition on the other, both of which seem to dominate post-Soviet writings about transition in Central Asia.

The third session, “Linguistic Transformations,” analyzed the domain of language and politics in Central Asia and Russia. Maria Gritsko (Institute of Philology, Siberian Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences, Novosibirsk) focused on the problem of linguistic security, noting that despite its utility for inter-ethnic communication, the Russian language faces a lot of problems in the autonomous territories of the RSFSR, especially in the North Caucasus, Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, and Sakha (Yakutia). Presentations by two Kazakh scholars, Saltanat Meiramova and Anna Yessengalieva, educationists associated with L. N. Gumilev Eurasian National University in Astana, implied that language is considered to be a source of mobilization and a major aspect of the socialization process in Kazakhstan.

In the fourth session, “Migration and Demography,” the audience reacted to Muzaffar Olimov’s presentation on “reorientation” in Tajik foreign policy. Olimov, Director of Dushanbe’s Sharq Research Center, projected Tajikistan’s new interest in China, while keeping its military partnership with Russia, cultural contacts with Iran, and institutional commitments with the West intact. Sharad Soni (Central Asian Studies Division, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) dealt with the character of the Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia, tracing their origins to the border movements across Xinjiang and the Russian Altai region into Mongolia and back. Soni argued that the Mongolian-Kazakh diaspora remains a key factor in diplomatic relations between the two countries.

In the fifth academic session, “Economy and Politics,” the emphasis was on Eurasia’s political
economy and viable alternatives for economic integration. P. L. Dash (Center for Eurasian Studies, University of Mumbai) highlighted Yuri Krupnov’s vision of the “New Middle East” that seeks to form a “macreregion” that integrates Siberia and Central Asia with South and West Asia, especially India and Iran. Sreramati Ganguly (Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata) considered energy security as an important guideline for alliance-building in Eurasia.

Madhavan Palat’s special lecture, “Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Historian of Decline and Prophet of Resurrection,” was a sophisticated presentation of Solzhenitsyn’s intellectualism and his moral prescriptions about Russia’s future. The vision of modernity in Soviet Russia needed redemption and for Solzhenitsyn, the moment of self-limitation only came in 1991. Formerly a historian of the Center for Historical Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi), Professor Palat is a leading Russian studies expert in India. His presentation portrayed the depths of Solzhenitsyn’s revolutionary message.

The theme of session six was “Strategic Perspectives.” It dealt with the multiplicity of security issues in the Eurasian region. The first speaker in this panel was Sanjay Chaturvedi (Punjab University, Chandigarh), who focused on climate change in Northern Eurasia, which has negatively affected the Arctic ecosystem. According to expert analysis, the effect of glacial melting in the polar regions on marginalized communities creates doubts about scientific management of land resources and shipping routes. Spatial geography, Chaturvedi argued, needs to be reassessed through new agendas that are related to environmental justice and making human security and climate matters crucial to critical geopolitical thinking. Abdomajid Eskandari, the Deputy Director General of the University of Teheran, studied the new contours of strategic defense, pinpointing the axis of alliances centering on Iran. Eskandari examined the option of building an energy transfer structure via Iran. The Caspian energy shelf is, according to Eskandari, the new West Asian alternative for sustainable development of Eurasia. Ajay Patnaik (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) also looked into the energy profile in the Caspian sector, one of the prime areas of American engagement that Iran has been trying to thwart. Finally in this session, two Uzbek scholars from Tashkent, Mirzohid Rahimov, who is Head of the Contemporary History and International Relations Department of the Academy of Sciences, and Oybek Mahmudov, who is a political scientist and head of Young Political Scientists, engaged in discussions about the challenges and complexities of regional organizations and the interim measures that have hardly augured well for the Central Asian republics. In his discussion about regional options, Rahimov pointed to the new priorities of the Central Asian regimes. According to him, the present concern is about economic stability, which was not seriously addressed by the regional organizations in the past. In their search for regional stability, the Central Asian states have become more and more receptive to the trans-continental transport and communication projects that promote connectivity among neighboring countries such as Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and China. Mahmudov also addressed the new priorities from a security perspective. In his opinion, policy analysts should make an attempt to understand the compulsions of the authorities and try to be aware of the options that the present situation offers. One has to take into account the entire range of traditional and non-traditional security threats that are jeopardizing the prospect of Central Asian regional integration. Mahmudov is enthusiastic about a Central Asian regional security agenda that needs to be addressed more specifically.

A wide array of questions was posed during the conference, focusing on the engagements of the present and experiences of the past. Case-based analyses of continuities and discontinuities, symptomatic of the challenges and opportunities within, reflected manifold perspectives about the region. The discussions revealed that the word “transition” has become questionable in many ways. Participants’ perceptions about Eurasian alternatives, especially in the case of Siberia and the Caucasus, the infrastructural reorientation in these regions, the emergence of regional migration patterns and development have seldom been

2 Organizations like the Central Asian Cooperation Organization, Partnership for Peace Program, EAEC, SCO, and CSTO have theoretically offered great scope for multilateral cooperation but have been limited by several contradictions. The differing regional security interests of the Central Asian states have affected collaboration, especially after the balance of power changed in Afghanistan. The West struggled to assess the differing strategies the Central Asian regimes to adopt that were based on their economic potential, governance issues, and distinct foreign relations. The renewal of competition between the US and Russia over routes of access in the Central Asian region also had a harmful effect on the integration process.
discussed in high profile conferences. Such forums often are extremely attentive to Central Asia-specific issues but overlook fresh possibilities and initiatives outside the dominant rhetoric of regional integration. Speaking about a West Asian or a South Asian reach, participants pointed to new directions of research. The idea of an Indian footprint in the region was also a new way of expanding research about the Central Asian region.

Some of these questions were specifically addressed in the half-day symposium, “Contemporary Challenges of Official Policy and Globalization in Siberia and the Russian Far East,” which immediately followed the conference. Composed of panelists from Siberia who addressed issues of economic integration and migration issues, the symposium not only discussed issues about globalization and policymaking in Siberia and the Far East but also pointed out comparable situations in various other regions of Asia. Questions were raised from the audience about using East Asian resurgence as a reference point for other developing economies of Asia. The development of a macroregion on the basis of Asian values was debated. Vladimir Lamin (Institute of History, Novosibirsk) spoke about the necessity to widen the scope of historical studies on the economy of the Siberian region. Denis Ananiev (Institute of History, Novosibirsk) spoke on geographical determinism and its usage among enthusiasts of sibirovedenie (Siberian studies). Viktor Diatlov (Inner Asian Studies Center, Irkutsk) examined the perceived threat from Chinese migrants and the irrational phobia among the settled population that became the deciding factor in migrant-related questions in Eastern Siberia, and Marina Baldano supplemented this with data about Schengen Buryats and their transnational links with China and Mongolia. Responses from Indian, Russian, and Central Asian scholars revealed the tenacity of debates about Asian regionalism and globalization.

To sum up, both the conference and the symposium were productive in terms of the institute’s growing interest in expanding the scope of Central Asian studies.

International Conference on Central Eurasian Studies: Past, Present and Future
Istanbul, Turkey, March 17-19, 2009
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On March 17-19, 2009, Maltepe University in Istanbul hosted a multidisciplinary “International Conference on Central Eurasian Studies: Past, Present and Future.” It was co-organized by the Center for Eurasian Studies of Maltepe University, the Islamic Area Studies Program of the University of Tokyo, Japan, and the Central Asian Studies Program of the University of Tsukuba, Japan, with additional support by the Cambridge Central Asia Forum, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency [Türk İşbirliği ve Kalkınma İdaresi Başkanlığı], and various other organizations. The Marma Convention Center of Maltepe University provided an excellent venue for hosting the three-day event. The conference brought together senior academics and advanced graduate students, analysts, policymakers, and NGO members from Central Eurasia (including the Russian Federation and Central Asian countries), Turkey, Japan, Sweden, France, United Kingdom, Israel, United States, and a number of other countries who have academic and practical concerns about Central Eurasia and a desire to share research experiences and discuss innovative and diverse approaches for studying Central Eurasia. Such wide representation provided for an opportunity to discuss issues regarding Eurasia both from local and international perspectives.

The main themes of the conference were designed to be flexible enough to allow a wide range of general topics and, at the same time, specific enough to constitute a framework for theoretical discussions of the defining features of Central Eurasian societies from a regional as well as local perspective. Given the challenging nature of proper reflection on the real situation in and around Central Eurasia, this conference attempted to combine cultural-historical and sociopolitical approaches with
alternative ones offered by developmental and environmental studies, enriching the Eastern, Central Eurasian and Western perspectives. The cosmopolitan city of Istanbul and Turkey in general as a venue for this conference were particularly symbolic in this sense. This disciplinary and methodological openness allows for diversification of an overall approach to the study of this fascinating region and has great potential for opening up new and original avenues of intellectual enquiry.

Organizationally the conference was structured into two plenary sessions (key note and concluding) and several parallel sessions (disciplinary and problem-focused). The plenary sessions offered holistic overviews of the issues in the Central Eurasian region, because many of these issues in the literature need to be discussed from multiple standpoints and disciplines in order to accurately reflect the complexity of the situation in the region. These discussions were then continued in the format of smaller, specialized parallel sessions, with more focused and more interest-oriented audiences and more time for detailed discussions. Each panel consisted of three to four presenters, each of whom were allocated 15-20 minutes for presenting the summary of their full papers. In contrast with a conventional format when discussants are nominated, this conference followed the format of the previous, similar conference at the University of Tsukuba and placed the audience in the place of discussants. This approach sought to not only allow those designated as presenters in each of the sessions to express their academic views, but also to give the audience greater than usual participatory space. Such composition also allowed for a wider cultural and disciplinary flexibility in discussing many complicated issues.

To start off the conference and to provide a framework for a comparative perspective, Komatsu Hisao’s keynote speech outlined Japanese approaches to Central Eurasian studies, emphasizing linkages between Japanese and Eurasian scholars and outlining the connection between Central Eurasian and Islamic Area Studies currently seen in Japan. Komatsu outlined five main directions of this work: re-Islamization in modern and contemporary Central Asia, studies on Muslim periodicals published at the beginning of the 20th century, thought and activities of Uyhur nationalists in the first half of the 20th century, dynamic changes in Muslim societies in the Ferghana Valley in the modern and contemporary periods, and the study of memories of the Soviet past in Central Asia, which is the dominant theme within the Eurasian group of the Islamic Area Studies project at the University of Tokyo.

The keynote speech was followed by the disciplinary and problem-centered parallel sessions, which consisted of around 70 presentations. Scholars from international relations, political science, and history (including both written and oral) were particularly noticeable. Some of the particularly interesting presentations on international relations approached the field of Eurasian studies from various perspectives. Pınar Akçali (Middle East Technical University, Ankara) in her presentation titled “Eurasianism in Turkey: Different Perspectives and Challenges” (in the disciplinary session on political science), suggested that Eurasian orientation as a foreign policy option in post-Soviet space is being favored by some in Turkey, but there are some problems to be overcome in order for this notion to become functional. These include Turkey’s mainly pro-Western orientation; increasing involvement of big players in Central Eurasia leaving little space for Turkey; and the presence of a secondary group of players like India, Iran, Japan, and the EU, which also complicate Turkey’s involvement. She suggested that although at the moment developing a Eurasian orientation is not of immediate concern, it can become an important foreign policy objective for Turkey in the long term, provided that Turkey would engage constructively and pragmatically with the region. Bringing in China’s perspective and zooming in on the Central Asian region, Sébastien Peyrouse, (SAIS, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C.), speaking in the session on Society, presented a paper on “The Chinese Presence and Its Social Reception in Central Asia,” which was based on interviews with local specialists on their perceptions of China. His analysis reconfirmed that regardless of the region’s future geopolitical evolution, nobody envisages returning to an iron curtain that would again sever China from Central Asia. He concluded that China currently lacks the symbolic means to compete with Russia for the conquest of the Central Asian mind. According to Peyrouse, the majority of experts continue to think of Moscow as the main ally, whose partnership is the most natural and least dangerous. The same attitude is demonstrated when the debate is expressed in terms of “civilization,” as China continues to be conceived as the very embodiment of strangeness and of foreignness, while Russiastill
belongs to the familiar and known world of Central Asia’s everyday reality. And yet, Peyrouse concluded, Central Asian elites and societies will still have to work out how to minimize the negative Russian influences (if any) on their societies without losing the advantages of their historical linkages with Russia.

A number of papers on regional integration in Eurasia and Central Asia were also the focus of several panels. Hasan Ali Karasar (Bilkent University, Ankara), in the session on Regional Cooperation) in his paper on “Problems of Regional Integration in Central Asia: 1991-2001,” and Klara Makasheva (Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan, in the session on International Relations) in her paper on “Integration Processes in Central Asia: History, Factors and Prospects,” outlined several reasons for failure of integration schemes, including the personal ambition of leaders as well as institutional and political reasons. Marianne Laanatza (Stockholm University, Sweden, in the session on Regional Cooperation) in her presentation on “Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]: Trends and Tendencies,” analyzed issues of Eurasian regionalism in a wider sense by looking into the strengthening role of the SCO grouping. Such arguments were complemented by Sattar Mazhitov (Institute of History and Ethnology, Kazakhstan, IR session), who concluded in his paper on “Kazakhstan in the Geopolitics of Central Eurasia: Retrospective, Realities and Prospects” that some form of integration is still possible, and is the inevitable alternative for countries of Central Eurasia, if they are to be considered important geopolitical players in the Eurasian region.

Another set of papers explored new methods for going beyond the accepted terms and discourses to look into how these terms and discourses came into circulation. For instance, Mieste Hotopp-Riecke (PhD candidate, Institute for Turkology, Freie Universität Berlin, in the session on Russia), in his presentation titled, “Tatar Images — a Changing? The 21st Century as an End of a ‘Longue Durée’ of Pejorative Tatar Stereotypes,” used the case of the image of Tatars in Germany to call for a break from stereotypes and pejorative images. He pointed out a curious trend in Germany of inadequate representation of Tatar people, depicting them as exotic phenomena rather than “normal” neighbors. Such image formation was heavily influenced by the military confrontations of the past and literature of foreign writers from Eastern Europe, which supplement stereotypes in German folk culture, pulp fiction, and diffuse Tatarophobia in oral tradition. In a similar attempt to present local debate on international relations of Eurasia, Anita Sengupta (Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata, in the Political Science session) in her presentation on “A ‘Central Asian’ Geopolitics,” examined Central Asian representation from within the region focusing on one such discourse presented by an Uzbek political scientist, Farhod Tolipov, in which he talks about his own conceptualization of the geopolitics of the region. This, according to Sengupta, was part of an attempt to emphasize the need for an alternative way of examining the geopolitics of the region. It is essentially a study of a discourse that emerges in the context defined by the application of a preconceived geopolitical theory and contemporary concerns and identity interests. According to Sengupta, Tolipov’s writings are replete with references to the Central Asian (and not Russian) space as the “heartland,” although together with the reminder that the concept now requires re-examination. It is therefore illustrative of how received geographical knowledge informs an understanding of global processes and is subsequently transformed into geopolitical reasoning with foreign policy implications. Accordingly, Sengupta concluded that geopolitical articulations of space were inextricably linked to the circumstances in which they are articulated and Tolipov’s writings reflect the contradictions of the era.

The same kind of attempt to deconstruct, reconstruct, reconsider, and conceptualize terms anew was undertaken by other presenters who looked into issues of governance and state policies in the region. In particular, in his presentation titled “Impact of Remnants of Tribalism and Regionalism on the Formation of Modern Political Elites of Kyrgyzstan,” Anvarbek Mokeev (Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, Bishkek, in the Society session) called for paying stronger attention to the importance of regionalism in Kyrgyzstan and argued that the ruling coalition in Kyrgyzstan represented a balance of power between the elites of northern and southern clans and that was the only major political means to avoid a civil war. Through a detailed analysis of clan leadership and tribal affiliations, Mokeev argued that the remnants of clan/tribe divisions obtained a political character and will continue to play a significant role in the formation of a modern political elite in Kyrgyzstan. Mokeev also stressed that such regionalization, if not dealt with properly, may entail serious threats to the national
security and the territorial integrity of Kyrgyzstan, and over time may turn into a serious obstacle to a cohesive and viable domestic policy. Jacob M. Landau (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in the Society session) explored changes in language policy in his paper, “Language Policies as a Factor of De-Russianization in the Ex-Soviet Muslim States.” He emphasized the need to understand the strong tendency in many government circles in the former Soviet republics towards the promotion of the titular language, explained as a patriotic act of the majority group to foster a new identity in the shaping of the independent nation-state. Landau discussed this by looking at the gap between laws, decrees, and declarations concerning language policies on the one hand, and the day-to-day carrying out of those policies on the other. He then offered some tentative explanations for the differences in linguistic policymaking and policy application in the six states, as well as variations in the response of ethnic communities, including Russian, to governmental language policies and their application during the post-Soviet years. He concluded that language conflict is a political problem that is perceived by many elites as an issue to be settled basically by political conflict management leading to accommodation, even though times of transition are often times of ethnic tension when a hegemonic ethnic group is prone to exclusivist nationalizing policies that can nourish interethnic rivalries.

Such a policy-related paper fit well with those that focused on how peoples and states of Eurasia regard themselves and their past. For instance, Marlène Laruelle (SAIS, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., in the session on National Identity), in her paper “Academia and the Rewriting of National Identity in Central Asia: A Political and Intellectual Issue,” underlined the trend towards questioning the notion that Central Asian citizens are living through a “spiritual decolonization” with the massive and brutal pauperization, the sentiment of humiliation linked to the loss of great power status, the anxieties over the real or imagined Islamist threat, all contributing to reinforcing these ambiguities. She argued that in local discourses, the population regards the Soviet experience to be a legitimate moment of its national past, and not a mere parenthesis. It therefore has to come to terms with both the pride of independence and the mediocrity of its realizations (the sole exception here being Kazakhstan), with both an ideology of national rebirth and a personal memory of the Soviet Union from which the majority of individuals still today believe to have benefited. The importance of memory was demonstrated by Güljanat Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun (Maltepe University, Turkey, in the Oral History session), in her paper “Oral History Studies in Kyrgyzstan: Perception of Stalin's Death.” Ercilasun presented a variety of conflicting accounts of how elderly Kyrgyz people regarded the death of Stalin, who is still regarded by many to be a father of the nation. The paper by Timur Dadabaev (University of Tsukuba, Japan, in the Oral History session), “Memory of Soviet Migration Practices in Central Asia: Between Traditionalism and Cosmopolitanism in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan,” which was based on interviews with elderly people in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, further developed Laruelle’s argument by emphasizing the notion of a shift from Soviet internationalism to Soviet cosmopolitanism, which has served as a useful tool of adaptation to the new realities of post-independence. Hence, he argued that while the efforts to create the New Soviet Man and cosmopolitanism are normally depicted in a negative manner in official historiographies, their advantages are being actively exploited by many in the post-independence period for rebuilding their lives and identities.

This three-day event also included two receptions, the screening of a documentary film on the oral history of Kyrgyzstan (produced and directed by Şahin Karasar and Peyami Çelikcan, Turkey), an artistic performance by Evren Erbatur, and a concert, co-organized by the Maltepe University and TURKSOY, dedicated to Nawruz (celebration of the beginning of spring).

The program and other information about the conference may be accessed at http://cesmu.maltepe.edu.tr/main.htm.
In July 2009, the Eurasia Program of the Social Science Research Council will launch a website for university instructors who would like to include material about Central Asia in their classes. The project began in 2004 when SSRC received a development grant from the Department of Education to come up with broad themes to explore Central Asian histories from diverse angles. We used the plural “histories” deliberately, in order to emphasize that ours is an open-ended, comparative approach. SSRC’s idea was that while several general surveys of Central Asian history existed, these tended to be standard, political and military histories that were difficult for the uninitiated to use. They asked us to provide a “teaching resource tool” that instructors who are not themselves students of Central Asia can use to supplement the courses they already teach.

“Online Histories of Central Asia” contains three sections: “Mobile Identities Through Time” by Shoshana Keller (Hamilton College, N.Y.), “Islamic Cultural Movements” by Adeeb Khalid (Carleton College, Minn.), and “The Built Environment” by Robert McChesney (New York University, emeritus). Each section has embedded links to outside sites, images, and maps, and includes bibliographic resources. Keller, for example, provides six sets of lecture materials that explore the concepts of mobility, identity, and mobile identity in Central Asian communities since the 16th century. These provide extensive information on both the “Russian” and “Chinese” sides of Central Asia, and the ways in which Turkic, Persian, Russian, Mongol, and Chinese cultures have interacted to shape peoples in the region. Khalid writes on Islam and the pressures that religious practice and knowledge have been subjected to in the 19th and 20th centuries. Based on his recent book Islam After Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia (University of California Press, 2007), the section concerns Islamic practice and study in the Russian empire prior to 1917, the Jadidist reform movement, and the impact of Communist rule on Soviet Central Asian Islam. Khalid includes links to primary documents from government-supervised Islamic institutions. He also provides brief biographies of key figures in recent Islamic thought. McChesney discusses buildings, building materials, and the ways that Central Asians have arranged them to create a living environment. The section considers the design of villages, towns, and nomadic camps as well as the architecture of gardens, shrines, mosques, and homes. He also examines Central Asians’ economic abilities to create and sustain their environment through the Mongol, Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet periods, and pays particular attention to the forcible creation of modern urban designs in Soviet Central Asia and Afghanistan in the 20th century.

We invite teachers of world history, Asian history, Soviet history, and Islamic history to use the site as a basis for lectures, discussions, classroom exercises, and research assistance. Instructors can copy lecture material from here into their own notes, have students read units and use them as a basis for discussion or further research, or refer advanced students to the bibliographies attached to each section. By incorporating the experiences of Central Asians into larger studies of history, as the “Online Histories of Central Asia” aims to do, we can broaden our and our students’ understanding of the richness of Central Asia and its place in world history. The importance of nomadism in the history of the region, Central Asians’ fluid sense of identity, and their experiences under Communism can be used to push students to understand life-ways that are profoundly different from many other cultures. The site aims to help teachers communicate this, and to bring the histories of Central Asia to life in the classroom.
Why Central Eurasian Studies is Good for Sociology

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Over the years, many scholars have used the Central Eurasian Studies Review as a way to share experiences in teaching Central Eurasian studies — for example, introducing new educational resources in print and online (Wright and Salehi-Esfahani 2005), reviewing the public pedagogy of foreign museum exhibitions of Central Eurasian cultures (Waugh 2002), and exploring ways to increase students’ understandings of and engagement with both the subject and the region (Waugh 2003). Central Eurasian studies has done well to educate students and others who choose to explore it as a (variously defined) place. But why is it important for those who may not have this geographical affiliation? How might it help to facilitate wider debate within university classrooms about dominant interpretations of self and society; of the ways in which places and people are studied at all? In other words, what role might the study of Central Eurasia play beyond the disciplinary boundaries of Central Eurasian studies itself?

As a UK-based academic who has spent a decade teaching sociology in Kyrgyzstan, I have often found that my educational work in Central Eurasia is disconnected from my teaching outside. As I do not teach about Central Eurasia as a spatially bounded “area,” my aim is to work through research on Central Eurasian societies to broaden students’ understandings of social life; ground sociological theories of globalization, ethnicity, gender and culture; and offer alternative perspectives of and from one part of the global South. In principle this should be a straightforward task, particularly as I have access to a range of material in the sociology and politics of culture, social research and social theory which I have accumulated through developing sociology courses and programs within the region over the past decade. In practice, however, the Eurocentric character of mainstream sociology education in the UK makes it difficult to incorporate this material into courses in a way that is not tokenistic and does not reduce Central Eurasia to an “other.” In part, this is a problem of marginalization within education, for as Shoshana Keller once asked, “how does one provide a coherent account of 2000-plus years of events involving myriad peoples, languages, and religions, most of which are utterly foreign to the average undergraduate?” (Keller 2002: 36). Of course, students of sociology in the UK can engage with Central Eurasian societies without this level of historical detail. What often inhibits critical engagement, however, is a related and much wider problem. Increasing numbers of my undergraduate students were born in or after 1991 — the year that many scholars of Central Asia continue to take as a “recent” point of departure for making sense of contemporary post-Soviet societies. Some of my students do not know what it means, or meant, to be “Soviet.” Those who do often have limited knowledge about the global politics of the concept, or its complex role in present currents of socialist and anti-socialist thinking. When they encounter the idea of Central Eurasia at all, it is often through its derogatory representation in popular culture, such as Sacha Baron Cohen’s “Borat” character, or through stereotyped references to the “-stans” in the discursive contexts of international terrorism and security.

Deepening communication between Central Eurasian social scientists, scholars of Central Asian studies, and sociologists foreign to the region is thus an important task both politically and intellectually, and the chalkface pedagogical dimensions of this in universities should not be underestimated. For example, Central Eurasian societies offer rich resources for exploring the relationship between globalizing and localizing forces in contemporary society, and for raising critical questions about the way terms such as “globalization” are socially situated and interpreted. I have recently used photographs from Yalta to stimulate discussion amongst undergraduate sociology students about the history and politics of “globalization” and to critique contemporary theories of globalization. The pictures, taken against the waterfront, show a
monument to V. I. Lenin facing a McDonald’s restaurant. I have used these photographs to provoke discussion and inquiry, not specifically about Central Eurasia (although such discussions tend to develop organically), but about the limitations of simplistic, Eurocentric theories of political economy, cultural practices and ideology. In many conventional textbooks of sociology, students are taught about “McDonaldization” — the standardization, homogenization, and bureaucratization of everyday life, particularly as it has been embedded in processes of capitalist industrialization. It is something they are familiar with, and at first glance, the photographs also suggest an uncomplicated narrative of this sort: McDonald’s seems to symbolize the collapse of Soviet communism, advance of cultural colonialism and rise and spread of consumer culture, while the statue of Lenin seems to represent the historicization and memorialization of an opposing political and economic regime. However, this simple narrative can be usefully complicated by the introduction of some other basic texts, such as additional photographs of similar monuments to Lenin (e.g., the now-removed statue in Bishkek’s “new square”) and/or illustrative sections of the Soviet film Irony of Fate [Ironiia sudby] (a 1975 romantic-comedic satire of Brezhnev-era standardized architecture, in which a man who lives in Moscow accidentally travels to the same address in Leningrad, where the building is so similar that he is able to mistake it for his own apartment and open the door with his key). Both texts suggest that practices of cultural “standardization,” “homogenization,” and “bureaucratization” are not necessarily indexed to either European capitalist industrialization or the “consumer society,” as is often suggested in mainstream textbooks for sociology undergraduates, and thus allow for the productive disruption of these more simplistic narratives. Once thinking in this broad context, there is also a space created for students to raise questions about the politics of culture; the oft-used and seldom well-explained concepts of capitalism, socialism, and communism; the global significance of Soviet and post-Soviet history and its relationship to contemporary notions of “global society”; neoliberal economic transformations; and research methods in the critical sociology of globalization (including visual sociology and ethnography).

Another example illustrates how post-Soviet studies more generally may enhance a non-area-focused social science curriculum. Jeffrey Goldfarb, for example, is an American sociologist who has elaborated a theory of what he refers to as the “power of the powerless in dark times,” based on his experiences of cultural resistance in Central Europe during the 1980s. In The Politics of Small Things, he not only illustrates how the “microstructures of interaction” laid the foundations for grassroots challenges to the region’s Communist regimes, but extends this to theorize the foundations of political resistance in general, and to rethink the “theoretical implications of the global changes in our recent past” that “go beyond … large-scale transformations and geopolitical challenges” (Goldfarb 2006: 38). Goldfarb’s careful attention to the minutiae of everyday life in Poland — the ordinary debates of “kitchen table politics” and fleeting conversations in the street that were the “small things that constituted a major geopolitical transformation” (Goldfarb 2006: 34) — allows him to narrate the history of communism in fine detail without having to speak about it in grand theoretical terms; we encounter it, in other words, from the ground up. In other words, it may not always be necessary or appropriate to present students with a “coherent account of 2000-plus years of events” in order for them to be able to understand the significance of social life in Central Eurasian societies. Indeed, some of the newest ethnographic research on the region instead facilitates “engagement with processes and meanings of transformation as it is lived, experienced and negotiated everyday” (Hörschelmann and Stenning 2008: 343).

Attempts to integrate Central Eurasian studies into broader programs of sociology education in the UK and elsewhere do carry some risk, particularly that this knowledge may simply be used as a prop to affirm existing narratives or becomes a boxed-off comparative “example” that is used to diversify an otherwise familiar body of knowledge. But there is also great potential for the study of Central Eurasian societies to challenge traditional curricula and aid the development of a more “cosmopolitan” form of scholarship which “informs poststructuralist critiques of universal knowledge claims” (Hörschelmann and Stenning 2008: 340). In my experience, even introductory knowledge about elements of Central Eurasian societies can make powerful contributions to students’ broader understandings of social processes and everyday life. One task ahead, therefore, is to improve possibilities for making this connection.
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In Memoriam

Tribute to a CESS Honorary Member

Asom O’rinboev (1929-2009)

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It is with great sadness that I convey the news that the well-known Uzbek scholar, historian, honorary member of CESS, and member of the editorial board of the Journal of Persianate Studies, Asom O’rinboev (Asam Urunbaev),¹ died on Monday, April 13, 2009. Professor O’rinbaev was born in Tashkent on May 15, 1929. He graduated from Central Asian State University in 1950 with a major in Iranian philology. He served from 1950 to 1952 in the Soviet Army.

From 1953 until his death O’rinboev worked as a researcher at the Beruni Institute for Oriental Studies of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences. From 1987 to 1993 he was Director of the Institute. I first met him in 1987 when I started working at the Institute and I still remember how he had been elected as Director only a few weeks after I was hired. Asom O’rinboev won the ballot fairly; the majority voted for and preferred him to another candidate who was nominated by the Academy of Sciences. In the past, directors had simply been appointed by the president of the Academy of Sciences. But during the late 1980s and early 1990s the Academy, like other governmental institutions, had to follow Gorbachev’s Glasnost and Perestroika and give more freedom to ordinary citizens, and O’rinboev’s election was one such result.

Asom O’rinboev is the author of numerous books and hundreds of scholarly articles (see list of selected publications below). His publications mainly focused on Persian manuscripts related to the political, cultural, and intellectual history of Central Asia. His academic and research interests include two major areas in the study of manuscripts and archival documents. The first area is the cataloging of manuscripts and documents. Until recently, he was in charge of the Manuscript Cataloging Department and was one of the main contributors to the Sobranie vostochnykh rukopisei [Collection of oriental manuscripts], which includes descriptions of more than 7,000 Arabic, Persian, and Turkic manuscripts from the Institute of Oriental Studies’ collection. He also served as the chief editor of volumes 7-11 (Urunbaev 1964-1987). In addition, O’rinboev published a number of subject catalogs, among which is the catalog of the works of the great Persian poet, Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414-1492) (Urunbaev and Epifanova 1965). It contains descriptions of 531 manuscript copies of 46 titles. While working on this project, O’rinboev was able to identify four autograph copies, works in Jami’s own handwriting. O’rinboev also published in Japan an important catalog of juridical documents from Khiva (Urunbaev 2001).

The second and main area of his research interests was the critical edition, publication, and translation of medieval texts and manuscripts. Especially significant is O’rinboev’s work on the Majmu‘a-i mursalat (known as the “Nava‘i Album”), which is of great importance to scholarship. Contained with the “Nava‘i Album” are autograph letters of famous contemporaries of the poet Mir Ali Shir Nava‘i (1441-1501). These original documents addressed to the Timurid court of Herat offer valuable socioeconomic and historical information. The letters of Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414-1492) from the “Nava‘i Album” were translated from the Persian into Russian with notes and commentary and published by O’rinboev in 1982 (Urunbaev 1982). In 2002 he published with Jo-Ann Gross the remaining portion of the collection, which contains the letters of Khwaja

¹ Editor’s Note: O’rinboev’s name appears in his published works and in bibliographic entries as either Asom (Asomiddin) Örinboev (for works published in Uzbek in Cyrillic script) or as Asam Urunbaev (for works published in Russian), depending on the language in which it was written. Asom O’rinboev is the spelling of his name in current Uzbek Latin-script orthography. In the references, we list works accordingly.
Ahrar (1404-1490) and his associates (Urunbaev and Gross 2002).

Another of Örinboev’s valuable contributions to scholarship is the critical edition of Sharaf al-Din Yazdi’s (d. 1454) Zafarnamah, the history of Timur (1336-1405) (Örinboev 1972). Because of this publication Örinboev became the object of intense criticism by colleagues who were fervent followers of Soviet ideology. Instead of evaluating the work, they accused him of publishing a book that idealized the merciless and brutal warlord, Timur. The Academy of Sciences held a special meeting to discuss the publication, where only Professor Ibrohim Muminov spoke in support of Örinboev. It is ironic that those who called Timur brutal then contributed to making him the Uzbek national hero later in the 1990s.

Asom Örinboev was one of the few Uzbek historians who never changed his scholarly principles to suit the political situation and the governing ideology of the time.

Örinboev’s widow, Larisa Epifanova, a well known historian in her own right, worked alongside Örinboev and offered him great help in the editing of his works, including some that she co-authored.

Professor Asom Örinboev will be sorely missed by his colleagues, students and friends.

Selected Publications
Örinboev, Asom
2008 Abdurazzaq Samargandi: Matlai sa'dain va mazhmai bahrain [Abdurazzak Samarkandi: Rising of the two fortunate stars and meeting of the two seas]. Toshkent: O’zbekiston.

Urunbaev, Asam
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2001 Katalog Khivinskikh kaziiiskikh dokumentov XIX-nachala XX vv. [Catalog of juridical documents from Khiva; 19th-early 20th centuries]. Tashkent & Kyoto: Izdatel'stvo Mezhdunarodnogo instituta po izucheniiu iazykov i mira Kiotskogo universiteta po izucheniiu zarubezhnykh stran.

Urunbaev, Asam, and Larisa Epifanova

Urunbaev, Asam, and Jo-Ann Gross

Urunbaev, Asam, Rano Dzhalilova, and Larisa Epifanova

Urunbaev, Asam, Galiba Dzhuraeva, and Sandzhar Gulomov
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The CENTRAL EURASIAN STUDIES SOCIETY (CESS) is a private, non-political, non-profit, North America-based organization of scholars who are interested in the study of Central Eurasia and its history, languages, cultures, and modern states and societies. We define the Central Eurasian region broadly to include Turkic, Mongolian, Iranian, Caucasian, Tibetan and other peoples. Geographically, Central Eurasia extends from the Black Sea region, the Crimea, and the Caucasus in the west, through the Middle Volga region, Central Asia and Afghanistan, and on to Siberia, Mongolia and Tibet in the east.

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