

Central Asian Platform Seminar Series 2018

16. 11. - 22. 11. 2018 (Národní 3, Praha 1, room 108,205,206)

Government and rule: producing and engaging with authority since the 19th-century in



Central Asia

16. 11. 2018 15:00-17:30 (Národní 3, Praha 1, room 108)

Chair: **Malika Bahovadinova** (Oriental Institute, Prague)

15:00-15:15, Opening remarks and introductions.

15:15- 15:45 Botakoz Kasymbekova (Technical University, Berlin)

Food and Politics: How some Central Asians started to eat Pork in Soviet Central Asia

In this talk, I will consider the relationship between the everyday lives and politics in Soviet Central Asia. I propose to re-consider the division between private and public through a vantage point of a dinner table. By looking at how people make food choices, I ask whether they make decisions that tied to the process of identifying. Reconsidering concepts of „modernity“, „development“ and „imperialism“ that are used to analyse Soviet Central Asia, I propose to examine and experiment identity-construction through bodily and symbolic experiences and choices of food consumption.

15:50- 16:20 Madeleine Reeves (Anthropology Department, University of Manchester)

Destruction, decay, repair: on the time(s) of infrastructure in Central Asia

Infrastructures are often intended to materialise particular visions of the future through their form, their substance, or the socio-material relations that they elicit. This session considers how particular infrastructural forms become invested with particular temporal capacities: how a road, for instance, comes to stand for ‘modernity’. It also considers what happens when such infrastructures fail, whether through dramatic events or the invisible erosion of the elements through time. Drawing on ethnography from Central Asia, this talk asks:

how can attention to temporality help hone our analysis of infrastructural governance? And how can consideration of infrastructural destruction, decay and repair shed new light on the anthropology of modern time, in Central Asia and beyond?

16:20-17:00 Final discussion

19. 11. 2018 15:00-16:00 (Národní 3, Praha 1, room 205)

Chair: **Olaf Guenther** (University Palacký Olomouc)

Paulo Sartori (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna)

Of Saints, Shrines, and Tractors: Writing Muslim Religiosity into Soviet History

In this paper I suggest that in the Soviet period Central Asians cultivated and conceptualized Islam as an episteme, and that they did so by reaching beyond the often ephemeral and alienating categories that were offered to them by the state. I submit that the constitution of an Islamic culture was made possible, among other things, by Central Asians' encounters with the past, and most notably with what they perceived as an Islamic past. We observe the curious phenomenon of Central Asians' continuous interaction with the Islamic historical sites that escaped the bulldozers of the Soviet campaigns of religious repression. For some, encounters with the past might be accidental. But for many others, the exploration of the past represented a purposive, self-conscious, and reiterated emotional act. I want to show, then, that Central Asians in the post-WWII period were still able to access the past through the surviving *architectural* presence of Islam. Monumental sites, however, were not enough for Muslims to understand the past and use it to construct their own identity. Such artifacts acquired meaning only through an interpretive framework. And this framework was provided by Sufi narratives about saints and their miracles. Therefore, shrines represented for Central Asia a collective memory space, i.e., a place in which the past was mobilized in the present by means of narration.

22. 11. 2018 14:00-16:00 (Národní 3, Praha 1, room 205)

Chair: **Veronika Zikmundová** (Charles University, Prague)

14:00-14:45 Ines Stolpe (University of Bonn)

Integrative Powers of Native Land: Rural-to-Urban Migration in Mongolia and the Role of Nutag-Councils

Mongolia is commonly represented as a country of nomads, even though two thirds of the population live in urban areas, most of them in the capital Ulaanbaatar. Urbanisation started during the socialist era, yet politics in the Mongolian People's Republic opened up inclusive ways to combine spatial with social mobility. When the post-socialist transition started in the 1990s, the countryside has been largely neglected by state politics. The lack of institutional support for remote areas resulted in the emergence of *Nutag*-Councils, dynamic multi-local networks of people who had migrated from their birthplaces to towns, cities or abroad. A strong emotional identification with the natural, social, and cultural-historical characteristics of their native regions (*nutag*) constitutes unique dynamics of rural-urban integration. These networks are highly diverse and do not follow any preconceived agenda, though all of them support their fellow natives both inside and outside their places of origin and creatively cope with dilemmas of asymmetry on various scales.

The talk will discuss findings of field research and explore these intersections between spatial, social and mental mobility in contemporary Mongolia.

14:50-15:35 Ute Wallenboeck (University of Vienna)

The Mongol "princedom" (qinwang guo) of Hequ, Southeast of the Kokonor Lake

The Sino-Tibetan borderlands are usually portrayed as a transitional region between Tibetan and Chinese cultural realms, neglecting the strong Mongol influence in especially the Amdo area for centuries. In fact, as early as in 1252, the first Mongol settlers arrived south of the Yellow river and established a postal and military station. Later, with the establishment of the Khoshut authority over the Kokonor region under Gushri Khan, the

Mongols gained power all over Kokonor region until 1723. However, after 1723, the Hequ grasslands were integrated into the Manchu Empire. The local power remained in the hands of the Mongols with a *qinwang* – a Manchu title with the meaning of prince of the first order – as the main local authority until the incorporation into the modern Chinese state in 1954. This Mongol enclave within the Tibetan cultural area of Amdo has been addressed by only few researchers, moreover, previous work has only focused on modern and contemporary issues, but not on the historical aspects.

15:35-16:00 Final discussion