

Abstracts:

Historical study of Mobility and Translocality in Central Asia during the early period of Soviet rule

Kamoludin Abdullaev, Tajik-Russian (Slavic) University, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

The study of the migration of almost one million Central Asian "exiles of Bolshevism", to mostly Afghanistan, Iran and China in the 1920s and 1930s, is primarily constrained by general political trends and peoples' movements as well as grand histories, albeit exciting and significant, of elite actors, that is those who headed the people's movements, and heroic (for some: criminal) insurgents, including emirs, military leaders, political activists etc.

This study is focused on non-elite emigres' subjective motivations, aspirations and experiences. It is not simply about survival of the defeated and humiliated. It is about a process of sociability that is interaction of migrants with other individuals, groups, and institutions and creating bonds with a society they live in.

Why the majority of the exiles moved to a poor Afghanistan? There are several answers: the geographical location, an open frontier free of troops, as well as historical and ethnic identity, but the strongest factor was religion. For many Muslims, after the fall of the Turkish Khalifat in 1918, Afghanistan, in accordance with Muslim tradition, became the heart of 'Dar-ul-Islam.' For that reason Central Asian *muhajees* and exiled *mujaheds* saw religion as a source of agency and emancipation as it helped them to receive a safe haven in Afghanistan and helped them to socialize with local Tajiks, Uzbeks and other Afghan groups. Their Muslim faith and piety, as symbolic capital, strengthened their social status and self-confidence in exile. At the same time the Afghans continued to treat them as people of *pori darya* (*beyond the river*). Belonging to a translocal, imagined Uzbek-Tajik (Bukharan and/or Ferghanan) community ensured cultural continuity and emotional balance among refugees and émigrés.

War time migration in fact provided major actors with more social power and more options and enhanced their ability to realize various life schemes and societal goals. The migration never left them as helpless refugee and defeated insurgents.

A translocal approach helps us to understand the role of mobility in connecting and transforming places. In the second part of the 1920-s the Soviets launched an irrigation campaign in the Vakhsh valley of Tajikistan, adjacent to Afghanistan. To produce much needed "strategically important" cotton there, thousands of Uzbeks and Tajiks from the Fergana Valley and other parts of the region were resettled by the Soviets to the Vakhsh. Hundreds of thousands of these skilled agriculturalists soon escaped to Afghanistan. They brought to foreign locale new goods, knowledge and skills that changed Afghanistan's economy, environment, culture, politics and demography. Among new goods were not seen before in Afghanistan thin-fiber cotton, corn and sugar beetroot breeding, as well silk-making and a famous Hissar sheep farming. Interestingly, many of the novel and progressive agricultural products, skills, technologies and experiences that Central Asians brought to Afghanistan, were in turn, taken and learned from Russians, who colonized Central Asia in the second part of the 19th century. Also, the exiled educated Bukharan elite supported Afghan King Amanulla Khan in his efforts to modernize Afghanistan. The second generation of them had ensured Afghanistan's cultural progress in the 1960-s. As we can see, people, ideas, localities, symbols and competences related to one another in social practice and created contexts that transgressed conservative "civilizational", national, regional, technical and other boundaries.

The Dubai Business: Translocal Networks and Livelihoods of Tajik Entrepreneurs in the United Arab Emirates

Abdullah Mirzoev, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

The aim of my research is to explore the translocal lifeworlds of Tajik entrepreneurs in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). More specifically, I am interested in identifying influences of the Islamic World on Tajik migrants and entrepreneurs during their residency in the UAE. In how far are these influences affecting their everyday lives and have further impacts on their (visions of the) future? By analyzing the translocal networks of Tajik traders, I refer to the concept of "translocal livelihoods" (Schroder and Stephan-Emmrich 2014), in order to portray the connectedness of Tajik traders in-between their

Central Asian 'home' and the business sectors in the UAE. Furthermore, I concentrate on the mobility and connectivity of Tajik traders to their relatives in Russia, whom they are introducing into the new 'business availabilities' offered in the UAE. However, the trading activities of Tajiks in the UAE are not only expanding within networks to Russia, but as well to Tajikistan. Hence, Tajik entrepreneurs are using the opportunity of being residents in the UAE, while having business connections to Tajikistan through their families, and therefore are competing in markets such as Dushanbe with their potential for distribution and the sale of commodities. Considering the integration into the 'Dubai Business', Tajik entrepreneurs benefit from their historical ties to Russia. By being familiar with the Russian language and culture, they can serve as a bridge between local entrepreneurs and Russian tourists/customers. Research was conducted in different business sectors of the UAE, such as tourist areas, wholesale and retail markets, restaurants and the real estate domain. My presentation will illustrate the activities of Tajik entrepreneurs, who are arriving from Russia or Tajikistan in winter during the tourist peak season, and leave again in spring. Their main sources of income are tourists and wholesale traders from Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Some of my illustrations will depict, for example, how Tajik entrepreneurs collaborate with Iranian tourist companies, Afghani mobile phone shops, or Turkish and Greek fur trades. Besides, I also intent to discuss some of the challenges and barriers that Tajik entrepreneurs have to face in the UAE. These vary from questions of legal residence and how to obtain visas to disadvantages because of not speaking Arabic.

Method:

This research supplements my current doctoral research, consisting of an ethnographic case study based on the notion of 'translocality', conducted through a multi-sited ethnographic approach. The findings presented during the workshop will primarily be based on about 75 conversations and interviews conducted with Tajik entrepreneurs and migrants in the UAE, i.e. in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah, during the tourist high peak season of 2014/2015. These conversations were held mostly in their shops, working places and hostels.

Migration "rural-urban" in the Context of Gender and Translocality in Tajikistan

Sophia Kasymova, Gender Education Centre, Dushanbe

In the post-Soviet space, Tajikistan is the country with the lowest urbanization rate. So-called 'rurals' make up a third of the country's population, which already in the Soviet and (pre-Soviet) period had showed weak migration dynamics. Since the early 1990s, however, a growing tendency of mobility among the rural population can be observed. In the beginning, this was due to the political situation in the country (civil war), while afterwards economic reasons have dominated (the collapse of the previous economic system and rural mass unemployment). Currently, the main destinations of rural outmigration are urban settlements either within Tajikistan or in Russia.

Within the last two decades, this process has led to the following results:

- 1) The socio-demographic situation has changed in the rural areas (women and children under 18 predominate the composition of the rural population).
- 2) The socio-professional structure of the rural population has changed (former rural workers, *kolkhozniki*, transit to the class of qualified workers and employees).
- 3) Cultural boundaries between rural and urban settlements and lifestyles have been blurring. The arrival of many rurals in urban settlements has led to new qualitative characteristics of modern Tajikistan's urban population. This can be observed through gender displays (appearance, male and female clothing styles where "national, rural" features prevail); through architectural designs of dwellings (the building of "tandyr" in courtyards of apartment buildings); and through food consumption (for instance, the traditional rural dishes of "kurutob" and "shakarob" are served in public food places in Dushanbe and Khudjand).
- 4) The traditional discourse on the concept of migration has changed. This means that nowadays moving from a village to the city (abroad) is not anymore considered as a "sad event" (context of "gharibi"). Related to this is that the spread of modern technologies (transport, phone, Internet) removes physical borders between rural settlements and cities. In this way connectivity to relatives in the countryside can be upheld (through frequent phone calls, visits), meaning someone who relocated not necessarily becomes a "stranger" who drops out of the "native socio-cultural circle".
- 5) Physical (geographical) space of a rural person is expanding now, he is not constrained to ranges of his small village. He can move between multiple "locations" independently by creating his own "mobility space". In this "mobility space" an individual or a group of people become the carriers of spiritual and material culture between different locations and spaces.
- 6) All these points listed here eventually create something similar to a virtual copy of a "native locality

(kishlak)", of a group of connected people in distant geographical spaces. This can be seen from the example of "mahalla darvaztsev" or other places in Dushanbe, or the formation of "Central Asian cultural ghettos" in Russian cities.

In my presentation, I will examine these aspects of internal (rural-urban) migration and external labor migration through the prism of gender. This will allow me to adequately reflect the depth and magnitude of the ongoing changes in the context of Tajik translocal migration. The empirical base of this study consists of 50 in-depth interviews with Tajik women, who have moved to Dushanbe from rural areas within the last 20 years. Interviews were conducted in April-May 2014 as a part of a research conducted within the framework of the project "Translocal Goods - Education, Work, and Commodities between Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, China, and the Arab Emirates".

Sacred lineages in Central Asia: transethnic links and identity

Azim Malikov, The Institute of History the Academy of the Sciences of Uzbekistan, Tashkent

In pre-Soviet period the intra-ethnic identities (tribal, clan, locality, family, etc) were more important for the Central Asian population of the region in determining loyalties than ethnic origin. The religious elite groups (Sayyid, Khoja, Ishon, etc.) formed a particularly privileged group in the social hierarchy of Muslim communities and were very well respected by the believers. They were part of a wider phenomenon of Muslim elites claiming Alid descent, who are called Sharif and Sayyid all across the Muslim world.

Nowadays the Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Turkmens and Tajiks in Central Asia share some distinct religious elite groups - Khojas some lineages of which occur in two or more of them. The concept of being Khoja provides an excellent case for studying the trans-ethnic character of the group. The term Khoja has been taken to imply, variously, descent from "Arabs", descent from the Prophet or Ali, descent from the first caliphs, or descent from Islamizing saints. Khojas fulfilled eminent religious and social duties in pre-Soviet Central Asian society and were held in very high esteem. They performed the religious services at ritual celebrations, acted as healers, and were addressed to settle disputes. In addition, the Khodjas have been the care-takers of Sufi shrines. In the last decades post-Soviet Central Asian countries have experienced rapid and profound political and social changes which forced the government to redefine national identity and reshape the relationships with ethnic minorities.

I will trace the flow of ideas among Khoja in-between two different localities: Bukhara province of Uzbekistan and Turkestan region of Kazakhstan in the last 100 years. My choice of Bukhara province and Turkestan region as my object of study is far from random. Bukhara was one of the famous religious and cultural centers of Central Asia. Various religious elite groups (Khoja, Ishon and etc.) lived in the city and rural areas. Turkistan lay on the frontier of the settled oasis culture of Transoxiana to the south, and the world of the Kazakh steppe nomads to the north. Turkestan is a homeland of outstanding Sufi leader Khodja Ahmad Yasavi, who lived here during the 12th century and is buried in the town.

Turkistan was inhabited by various religious elite groups, including Khoja. Main part of Kazakh-speaking Khodja groups were concentrated in Southern Kazakhstan, including the Turkestan region. Main objective of research is the comparative analysis of culture of Khoja of the Bukharan oasis and the Turkestan region. Despite the Soviet ideology some Khoja families communicated concerning the last, symbolical capital (shrines, genealogies) in the 1980-1990s. I plan to review some examples of such interchanges by information which is an important source in formation of identity of Khoja. The main attention will be paid to Khoja of Kazakhstan and their communications. I want to access the complex entanglements and micro-level negotiations between competing and complementary, between local, national, regional and global ways of identification. In this way, the ethnographic case study of my project offer innovative angles to complement the existing research on Islam, ethnicity and other identity markers that recently have been of significant influence in both the Uzbek and the Kazakh society.

Explicating translocal organization of everyday life: Stories from rural Uzbekistan

Elena Kim, American University of Central Asia

The proposed presentation will aim at sharing empirical insights for advancing scholarly discussions and understanding of 'translocality' as an analytic concept. Adopting theoretical and methodological framework called institutional ethnography (D. Smith, 1987) and its conceptualization of translocal

social relations, the offered analysis will focus on making visible the processes of how everyday lives of rural Uzbeks become invisibly but powerfully shaped from outside.

The presentation will discuss my recent research project concentrating on the events taking place in a village located in the north-western part of Uzbekistan. Similar to many other places in Central Asia, most of the Uzbek families living in this rural territory have been 'left behind' as a result of large-scale out-migration of male population for waged labor to urban areas of the country or abroad. Female-headed households predominate in precarious conditions – the remittances from their male partners are unreliable and often insufficient while their own sources of livelihood coming from small-scale agriculture are continuously endangered by the desiccating irrigation resources and a challenging access to them. How do these rural women put together their lives, negotiate their material and immaterial resources and what influences their experiences, choices and coping strategies? On the basis of my theoretical framework, I understand that local activities do not happen in social and institutional isolation but are always coordinated from outside, i.e., translocally. The aim of my research is to explicate how this coordination is accomplished and which consequences such translocal coordination achieves for these rural groups. Beginning from and in the women's stories I will identify discursive traces of translocal coordination and track them further into their original institutional sources. Recognizing that globalized discourses and ideologies infiltrate many local settings in implicit but identifiable ways (Smith, 2005), my study will focus on making visible these mechanisms and technologies of infiltration.

This research will use ethnographic methodology and data for analysis, including interview transcripts, observational field notes and documentary analysis. Findings will be presented in the form of analytic maps demonstrating how rural livelihoods in Uzbekistan are translocally organized.

The Economics of Translocality - Epistemographic Observations from a Fieldwork on Traders in(-between) Russia, China and Kyrgyzstan

Philipp Schröder, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

My current research project attempts to capture the 'translocal livelihoods' of Kyrgyz business(wo)men who are involved in the trade with consumer goods 'made in China'. In times of Central Asia's 'New Great Game' and post-Socialist capitalism, I engage with bazaar traders in Novosibirsk (Russia), middlemen in Guangzhou (China) and local entrepreneurs in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan). My aim is to follow how these Kyrgyz earn their everyday living at home and abroad, but also how their senses of well-being and identity are shaped by the myriad cross-border flows of things, people and ideas they encounter. In my contribution to the workshop, I want to expand the analytical gaze of economics - which is said to be about the production, distribution and consumption of something more or less valuable - into the domain of epistemology. To arrive at an understanding of what my research 'can know' about current trading in Eurasia, I will present different ethnographic vignettes that illustrate some particular methodological potentials and limitations. In that regard, I return to the original Greek etymology of the term economics, which referred to the 'rules of a house' (*oikos* = house and *nomos* = rule/law). Examples of such vernacular house-rules that came to guide my approach to 'the field' were: to respect the covert aspects of my interlocutors' trade performances by refraining from undue ambitions for participant observation; to turn to social media for re-constructing the rather virtual 'homing desire' among 2nd generation Kyrgyz migrants in Russia; and to adjust to the local implications of differently 'sized' and 'rooted' Kyrgyz diaspora groups abroad. Eventually, my contribution will conflate two genres that conventionally are kept apart in Social/Cultural Anthropology: the so called 'professional ethnography', i.e. a researcher's (re-)presentation of the lifeworlds as his or her interlocutors express it, and a more self-reflective commentary on how this same researcher assesses such self-induced processes of knowledge generation. Returning to economics, such 'epistemographic notes' - blending personal epistemology and data description ('graphy') - give insights into my ways of producing knowledge together with my interlocutors, i.e. on how information is selected, distributed and tailored for (scientific) consumption in different translocal fields.

Ethno-nationalism as a Translocal Practice

Svetlana Jacquesson, American University of Central Asia

My project focuses on the “kurultay movement” in Kyrgyzstan. Kurultay is a Turkic word for “general assembly.” According to the existing historical sources, as scarce as they may be, kurultay as an institution played an important role among the nomads of the Eurasia and it is often represented as the pillar institution of the so-called “steppe democracy.”

The “kurultay movement” in Kyrgyzstan took shape around 2002-2004 in the south of the country. Since its establishment, the movement has been through ups and downs but one fact seems indisputable: from an intellectual ethno-nationalist trend it turned, within the spell of ten years, into a relatively popular political movement. Taking up the fact that according to the Constitution power belongs to the people (el biylik eesi) the movement struggles for the revision of article 52 of the Constitution in order for the kurultay to be recognized as the supreme organ of power. The movement has also elaborated a program for a “Kyrgyz way of development” (Önügünün Kyrgyz jolu) as well as a draft for a constitutional reform. According to this draft, the supreme organ of state power in the Kyrgyz republic should be the Kyrgyz people represented by the People’s Kurultay.

In most of the existing scholarship on Central Asia ethno-nationalism and its manifestations are analyzed within the frame of state- and nation-building and the related process of history rewriting. Within this project I approach the “kurultay movement” as a translocal practice and discourse and I investigate how social actors, in this case the leaders and the common members of the movement, deal with competing local and global notions of democracy, identity and ethnicity. I focus more particularly on how social actors in Kyrgyzstan have been interacting since independence with both the “liberal West” and the “Muslim South” and I try to identify the translocal practices that have played a major role in shaping the very categories, or representations, of a “liberal West” and a “Muslim South”. I do the same while analyzing the ideas of kurultay and “steppe democracy,” i.e. once again I try to identify the interactions and practices that made possible the birth of these ideas, their popularity and their attractiveness. I show how the value system and the ethnic identity endorsed by the kurultay movement are fashioned by the rejection of both the “liberal West” and the “Muslim South” and how, in spite of the movement’s deep engagement with the past, it is much more sustained by contemporary translocal practices than by history.

I argue that a translocal perspective on ethno-nationalist movements such as the kurultay movement in Kyrgyzstan allows us to apprehend better the dynamism and the “modernity” of these movements instead of ignoring them as “traditional”, or as the unwanted outcomes of nation-state building.

A sense of translocal belonging: Narratives of Chinese and post-Soviet development among a Dungan community

Henryk Alff, Freie Universität Berlin

My current research deals with the impact of increasing socio-cultural and -economic interaction across the borderlands of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang (PRC) in the past two decades on the constitution of places and people’s lives. In particular it attempts to capture, from an actor-based perspective, the dynamics in flows of goods and ideas of entrepreneurial development that shape and have been shaped by patterns and networks of trade on hub bazaars in Almaty (Kazakhstan) and Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan).

This paper will focus on a major side aspect of this research agenda exploring the translocal practices and notions of belonging of Dungans, or Chinese-speaking Muslims, in Kazakhstan. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, many of them have managed to position themselves favourably in crossborder trade and exchange processes between China and Central Asia.

The cluster of predominantly Dungan-populated villages around Shortobe in Southeastern Kazakhstan’s Korday district stands out from neighbouring Kazakh-dominated settlements in different respects. While the latter have often fallen into decay, Shortobe has seen a sharp increase in population numbers and a boost in construction. Intensive, irrigated vegetable farming and the marketization of agricultural products since the foundation of the villages by refugees originating from the Shaanxi province in the late 19th century, has remained the key source of income for most families until today. Yet, since Sino-Soviet rapprochement in the late 1980s, Dungan entrepreneurs from Shortobe and surrounding villages have also been successful in establishing themselves in crossborder trade by drawing on dynamic socio-economic ties to Han and Hui partners in the PRC, which are based on their ethno-linguistic and religious affiliation.

In my proposed paper, I examine narratives of change among the Dungan entrepreneurs emerging from both their close engagement with 'China's rise' and their attachment to (post-) Soviet development in Kazakhstan alike. I argue that the flow of ideas inherent in interrelated commercial and socio-cultural exchanges of the Dungans across China and Central Asia has significantly shaped and continues to constitute Shortobe as a place. More than that, their interaction leads to a sense of translocal belonging, which is produced by the promises of Chinese modernity like innovation and 'social harmony', on the one hand, and historical remembrance as well as the challenges of everyday life in rural Kazakhstan, on the other.

Trans-[temporal]-locality: from "Botanika" to "KASI Jamaat"

Emil Nasritdinov, American University of Central Asia

This paper is a story of transformation that took place in one of the neighborhoods in Bishkek over the last two decades since the break-up of the Soviet Union. The narrative is built on individual life-stories of seven men who are now their late forties and early fifties and who maintained very close friendship with each other since childhood. They grew up in the Bishkek's neighborhood informally called "Botanika" (after the name of its main street - Botanicheskaya). "Botanika" was also the name of a local youth gang, which was quite famous during the Soviet times for being powerful and notorious and which all of these men were the members of. Today, two decades later, the neighborhood has changed significantly: the street was renamed, city gangs became a history, a large mosque was built in the park adjacent to the neighborhood, and what is the most fascinating - all these men who were brought up as Soviet atheists, became very pious practicing Muslims and they are now known to be the members of a local informal religious group called "KASI Jamaat" (KASI is the mosque, named after the university located nearby). These men remained close friends over all these years and it is through friendship and mutual influence that they were able to pull each other out of drugs, drinking and criminal activities into an active religious lifestyle. Talant-baike, who used to be one of the local gang leaders is now the "amir" - leader of this religious group. The "gang" regularly meets in his house for dinners and religious talks, travels outside the city for picnics and soccer, and joints various activities in the KASI mosque. The paper follows the individual life-trajectories of these seven men and trajectories of their group and of their neighborhood to show how the locality was able to transcend itself over time (thus *trans[temporal]locality*) and obtain fundamentally different qualities. This story is one of many fascinating examples that illustrate the unexpected turns and paradoxes of the post-Soviet urban transformations.

Tracing 'translocality' and the pious endeavours of mobile Tajik Muslims in the Middle East

Manja Stephan-Emmrich, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

Studies on translocality have sufficiently demonstrated that in the 'post-national' and 'deterritorialized' state of modernity locality still matters; i.e. place still occupies a major role in the ongoing constitution of meaning and identity for mobile subjects. Based on ethnographic case studies of Tajik Muslims, who work and study in the Middle East (UAE, Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia) as well as in their 'native home' in Central Asia (Tajikistan), the paper traces a dialectic process between mobility and 'place-making', focusing on how 'locality' is produced from the pious endeavours of these mobile actors.

Conceptually, I use the term 'emotional geographies' to subsume the complex range of feelings that emerge as a consequence of dwelling within and movement through places (see Conradson & McKay 2007). Based on that, I will follow how Muslim subjectivities are shaped by the 'multi-sitedness' of my interlocutors' mobile lifeworlds. By ways of tracking the usage, values and histories of certain objects (iPhones, clothes, food, paraphernalia), and by portraying the nostalgic narratives induced by them, I will illustrate how the 'social life' of material objects creates and expresses multiple forms of belonging, longing and an elusive 'homing desire' that is tied to Muslim places 'somewhere else'. These later places, however, play a crucial role in the ways how my interlocutors express their Islamic ideals, pious endeavours and hybrid Muslimness.

Considering the methodological challenges in the study of 'translocality', the paper also aims at re-thinking classical 'multi-sited ethnography' approaches and discusses the following question: Does the ethnographer really need to travel in order to grasp people, things and other aspects of his or her interlocutors' multi-sited realities?