

CASCA

CENTRE FOR ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES ON CENTRAL ASIA

[Eds Peter Finke and Günther Schlee]



FRAMING THE RESEARCH,
INITIAL PROJECTS

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FIELD NOTES AND RESEARCH PROJECTS VI

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MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
DEPARTMENT 'INTEGRATION AND CONFLICT'
FIELD NOTES AND RESEARCH PROJECTS VI
CASCA – Centre for Anthropological Studies on Central Asia: Framing the
Research, Initial Projects

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Series Editor's Preface	iv
Introduction	v

A COMPARATIVE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Patterns of Identification and Ethnic Differentiation in Central Asia: the case of the Uzbeks (Peter Finke)	1
Fulbe and Uzbeks Compared (Günther Schlee with Martine Guichard)	25

CURRENT PROJECTS

Contested Identity of Kalmaks in Contemporary Kyrgyzstan (Aida Aaly Alymbaeva)	63
The Re-Negotiation of Local Identity under Global Influences: the case of Tajikistan's Pamir communities (Małgorzata Maria Biczuk)	71
The Kazak <i>Oralman</i> : comparing migratory decisions, integration patterns and transnational ties in three different settings (Tabea Buri and Peter Finke)	75
"Moscow Was Not Built at Once": on how squatter settlement residents in Bishkek organize their life (Eliza Isabaeva)	85
Cultural Adaptation of Dungan Migrant Communities in the Multi-Ethnic Context of Kazakstan (Soledad Jiménez Tovar)	93
Khoja in Kazakstan: identity transformations (Azim Malikov)	101
Those Left-Behind: mobility and immobility in the Tajik countryside (Meltem Sancak)	109
Disputing Amidst Uncertainty: procedures of dispute management in 'post-war' times – disputing parties' accounts, Bamyan/Afghanistan (Friederike Stahlmann)	117
Pastoralism in Western Mongolia: current challenges and coping strategies (Linda Tubach and Peter Finke)	123
Index	133
Book Publications	139

SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

(GÜNTHER SCHLEE)

ABOUT THE SERIES

This series of *Field Notes and Research Projects* does not aim to compete with high-impact, peer reviewed books and journal articles, which are the main ambition of scholars seeking to publish their research. Rather, contributions to this series complement such publications. They serve a number of different purposes.

In recent decades, anthropological publications have often been purely discursive – that is, they have consisted only of words. Often, pictures, tables, and maps have not found their way into them. In this series, we want to devote more space to visual aspects of our data.

Data are often referred to in publications without being presented systematically. Here, we want to make the paths we take in proceeding from data to conclusions more transparent by devoting sufficient space to the documentation of data.

In addition to facilitating critical evaluation of our work by members of the scholarly community, stimulating comparative research within the institute and beyond, and providing citable references for books and articles in which only a limited amount of data can be presented, these volumes serve an important function in retaining connections to field sites and in maintaining the involvement of the people living there in the research process. Those who have helped us to collect data and provided us with information can be given these books and booklets as small tokens of our gratitude and as tangible evidence of their cooperation with us. When the results of our research are sown in the field, new discussions and fresh perspectives might sprout.

Especially in their electronic form, these volumes can also be used in the production of power points for teaching; and, as they are open-access and free of charge, they can serve an important public outreach function by arousing interest in our research among members of a wider audience.

INTRODUCTION

(PETER FINKE AND GÜNTHER SCHLEE)

CASCA

Centre for Anthropological Studies on Central Asia

This is the first joint production of CASCA, the Centre for Anthropological Studies on Central Asia. CASCA was established in 2012 by the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Department Integration and Conflict, in Halle and the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Zurich, to create a forum of distinguished anthropological engagement with the region.

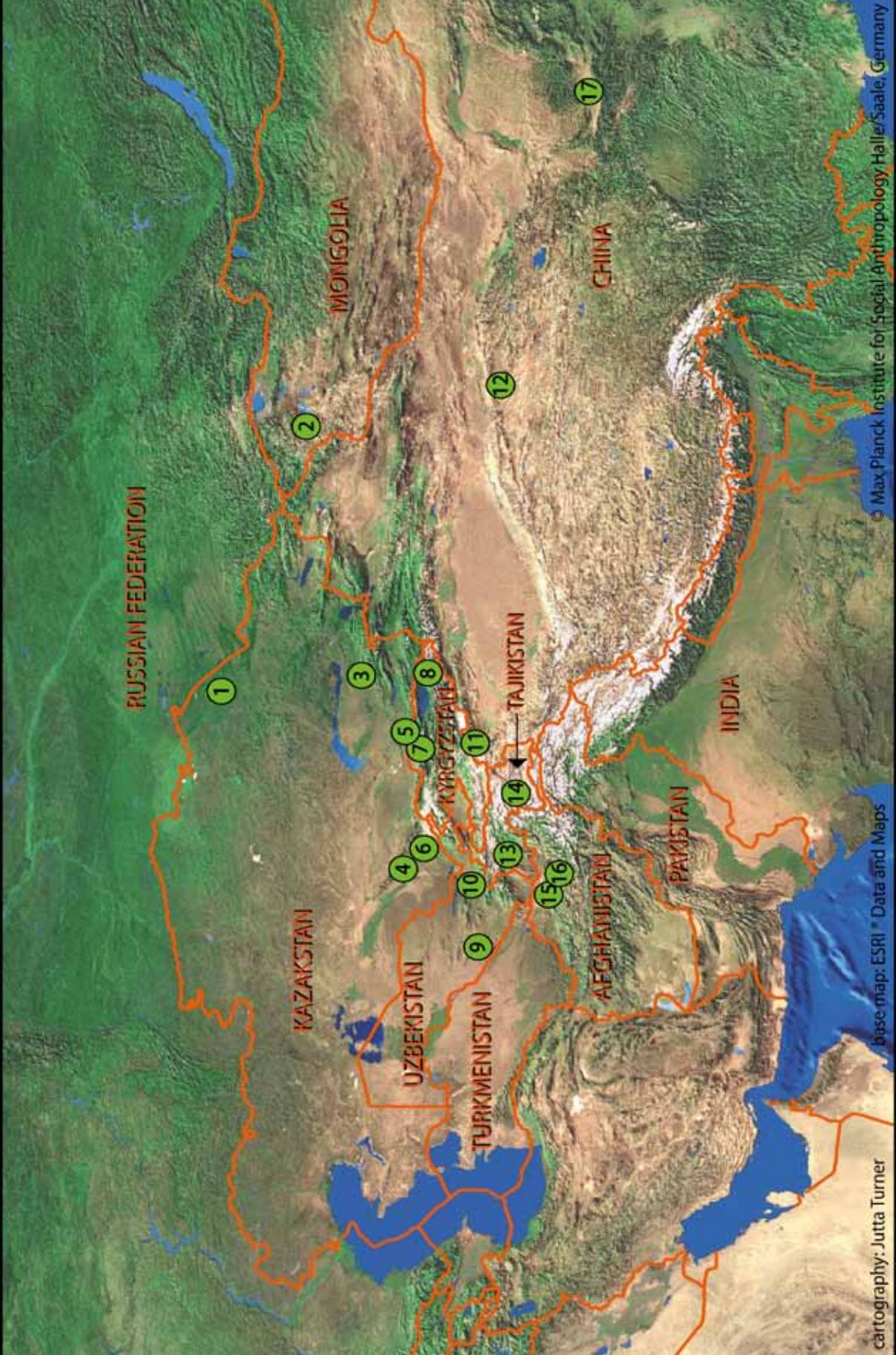
But in many ways the history of CASCA goes much further back. With the foundation of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in 1999, Günther Schlee, director of the Department Integration and Conflict, decided to make Central Asia one of the three regional foci of his research program, besides Western and Eastern Africa. The reasons for this are partly outlined in his contribution to this volume on 'Fulbe and Uzbeks Compared'. Among the first to take up work on Central Asia at the Institute were Peter Finke and Meltem Sancak, both also present in this volume. A few years later this regional focus was institutionalised as a Research Group on Central Asia within the Department Integration and Conflict, headed by Peter Finke. This collaboration has continued ever since his move to Zurich in 2006 where he established a chair for social anthropology again with Central Asia as the main, though not exclusive regional focus.

We use the term Central Asia in a rather broad way including the former Soviet Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, the Autonomous Region of Xinjiang, as well as the Mongolian and Tibetan-speaking areas occasionally labelled as Inner Asia. Research is equally conducted in adjacent regions in northern Afghanistan and Iran or southern Siberia as well as among the new and old diasporas of Central Asians living in places like Moscow or Istanbul. This gives credit to the many similarities in geographical, historical and cultural terms that have shaped the life of people in the region, including a continental and arid climate, an economy traditionally based on irrigated agriculture, pastoral nomadism and trade as well as parallels in social organisation and religious practices. As a crossroad between various parts of the Eurasian continent, Central Asia has always been a source as well as a destination of cultural and political influences far beyond its boundaries. Once a cradle of world empires like the various Turkic and Mongolian statehoods it later became a colonial backwater subdued to Russian and Chinese dominance before taking part in one of the largest human experiments, the creation of socialist systems and their more recent reversals.

In academia as well as in public Central Asia is still a little known part of the world. This is particularly true for empirical disciplines like anthropology because access for research was highly limited during the socialist period and, in many parts, beyond. This has changed to some degree in recent years and a number of studies on the current transformation processes and the need for people to adopt in economic, social as well as cultural terms have been conducted. From an anthropological perspective, we give particular attention to the local perspective of people who, in a world of changing geo-political strategies and national power struggles, try to create new meanings to their lives. This includes, for example, issues of economic relationships and stratification, new forms of social cooperation, ethnic identification and alliances as well as the revival and reconfiguration of religious schemes.

The aim of CASCA is therefore to foster empirically grounded research on these and related topics from an anthropological perspective and to strengthen its position within the discipline as a regionally defined sub-field. It does so in close cooperation and as part of a global network of colleagues and academic institutions both in the region and beyond. In addition to its research agenda CASCA is also committed to developing teaching facilities on the level of BA-, MA- and PhD courses as well as international summer schools and regular courses, mainly based at the University of Zurich.

With this booklet we would like to introduce CASCA and its objectives. It will start with a summary of a larger research project on Uzbek identity by Peter Finke, including the outline of its expansion on the Uzbek diasporas. The latter is, in fact, the first joint project within the framework of CASCA, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the German Research Board (DFG). Following on this is a longer essay on comparisons between Central Asian and African societies by Günther Schlee. In the second part of the booklet, some of the current projects and research activities of members of CASCA are introduced, demonstrating the regional and thematic scope of work done at the two constituting institutions in Halle and Zurich.



RUSSIAN FEDERATION

MONGOLIA

CHINA

INDIA

KAZAKHSTAN

UZBEKISTAN

TURKMENISTAN

AFGHANISTAN

PAKISTAN

KYRGYZSTAN

TAJIKISTAN

1. Pavlodar, Kazakhstan (Peter Finke)
2. Khovd, Mongolia (Peter Finke, Linda Tubach)
3. Taldykorgan, Kazakhstan (Tabea Buri)
4. Turkestan, Kazakhstan (Azim Malikov)
5. Sortobe, Kazakhstan (Soledad Jiménez)
6. Shymkent, Kazakhstan (Indira Alibaeva)
7. Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (Elisa Isabaeva)
8. Karakol, Kyrgyzstan (Aida Alymbaeva)
9. Bukhara, Uzbekistan (Azim Malikov)
10. Jizzak, Uzbekistan (NN)
11. Osh, Kyrgyzstan (Baktygul Karimova)
12. Aqsai in Gansu, China (Tabea Buri)
13. Southern Tajikistan (Wolfgang Holzwarth & Meltem Sancak)
14. Pamir Mountains, Tajikistan (Matgorzata Biczuk)
15. Balkh/Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan (Kadija Abassi & Azim Malikov)
16. Bamyan, Afghanistan (Friederike Stahlmann)
17. Xi'an, China (Soledad Jiménez)

PATTERNS OF IDENTIFICATION AND ETHNIC DIFFERENTIATION IN CENTRAL ASIA: THE CASE OF THE UZBEKS¹

(PETER FINKE)

Profile

Peter Finke is a Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Zurich and one of the co-directors of CASCA. He holds a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Cologne and a postdoctoral degree (habilitation) from Leipzig University. From 2000 until 2005, he was a Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology and in 2005 became Head of the Research Group on Central Asia. In 2002/2003, he was a Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of New Hampshire, U.S.A., and from 2004 until 2006 at the Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey. He has conducted long-term fieldwork in various parts of Central Asia, particularly Mongolia, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. His main research interests include economic anthropology, social transformation processes, identity and human cognition.

On the night of June 10th, 2010 riots broke out in the city of Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan leaving several hundred people dead, the majority of them Uzbeks. This outburst of violence soon became described as the result of old animosities and hatred between two ethnic groups, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, that unloaded itself in a time of crisis. At the same time a multitude of concurrent factors seemed to have triggered the events. Most prominent among these, so a common view, were the political vacuum in the country after the preceding new ‘revolution’ in April of the same year and control of the drug trafficking routes that cross southern Kyrgyzstan. As important, however, the June riots seemed closely to resemble the clashes in 1990 between the two groups in question, which had to a large degree shaped the image of Central Asia as a crisis spot since then (Balci 2010; Beyer 2010; Petric 2010; McBrien 2011).

As always, things were much more complicated on the ground and a final answer to reasons and consequences can hardly be provided by now. An

¹ The following is in large parts a summary of arguments laid out in more detail elsewhere (cf. Finke in press). I would like to thank Günther Schlee, Wolfgang Holzwarth, Jürgen Paul, Alessandro Monsutti, Baktygul Karimova and Indira Alibayeva for their inputs on earlier incarnations of this.

analysis of these and similar events is, however, of tremendous importance for a better understanding of the region in a period of rapid change after the collapse of the socialist regimes. And they will have an impact on the development of the region and far beyond. Ethnic tensions and inter-regional competition within and among the new independent states are key issues in this respect and have been much debated. Many observers during the early days of independence held that the largely artificially created former Soviet Republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan corresponded only roughly, if at all, to any pre-existing states. Therefore, ethnic tensions and inter-state rivalries were expected to soon break out and endanger regional stability. Fortunately, in spite of events like the one mentioned above these prophecies proved to be unfounded for the most part. Nevertheless, they have shaped the image of the region as one of imminent clashes and potentially failing states to a large degree.

This is partly due to the fact that the study of ethnic identity, nation building and conflict in Central Asia and Afghanistan has so far largely remained on a macro level of national politics, international relations, and intellectual elites (see, for example, Akiner 1996; Smith et al. 1998; Jones Luong 2002; Sengupta 2003; Yalcin 2002). Their impacts on people's lives in the context of new independent statehoods and the massive irruption of transnational organizations such as NGOs are less well known. To achieve a more balanced view, it is essential to look at the meanings ethnic and other social identities have for people in everyday life as identity games always take place in the context of national politics on the one hand and pre-existing concepts of identity on the other.

This project wants to do just that. Building on earlier research on the different configurations of Uzbek identity within the state bearing that name, the focus is on processes of ethnic relations and conflict management in contemporary Central Asia and northern Afghanistan where the same group forms a sizeable minority. The aim is thus to examine processes of identity formation in Central Asia by taking one example, the Uzbeks, and following the differences and changes in a variety of settings as titular ethnicity or as diaspora. Each of these settings represents a distinct case in terms of ecological and economic conditions, political configuration, and ethnic composition. In each case, mutual demarcations and inter-ethnic relations also differ in response to the respective situation. With this we envision this project to help gaining a better understanding of ongoing processes in the region. While some of the crisis scenarios for Central Asia and Afghanistan are obviously well founded, the reasons and mechanisms behind are less clear and plagued by an essentializing view on ethnicity in itself as a source of conflict.

This project starts from a Barthian perspective that identity markers and inter-ethnic relations differ according to the particular setting, as they are shaped by the respective local ethnic configuration, economic options and

national politics (Barth 1969). Depending on the overall setting, people employ distinct ways of understanding Uzbekness. What is important is that this diversity is not harmonised in local and national narratives, but rather part of the very concept. Uzbeks of different provenience are expected to differ in behaviour and to share patterns more with other local groups, in particular with Tajiks. Widespread bilingualism, a high proportion of mixed marriages and more or less identical cultural patterns are the basis for this. Common residence and shared socialization rather than descent are thus perceived as the basis for collective identity (Finke in press).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Because of their size and central location, the case of the Uzbeks is a particularly sensitive as well as instructive one. With some 30 million people they form the largest ethnic group in Central Asia. More than 20 million of these live in Uzbekistan while the remaining settle primarily in adjacent regions of the neighbouring states of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, where they often form regional majorities (Landau and Kellner-Heinkele 2001; Schetter 2003). These diasporas are not the result of any large-scale migration during recent times. Rather, the arbitrariness of the boundaries established during early Soviet times resulted in artificial entities that often cut through ethnic as well as geographic units (Vaidyanath 1967; Schoeberlein 1994; Szporluk 1994; Hirsch 2000). These are usually long-established Uzbek communities that happened to end up on the other side of a state border and usually form larger regional clusters with groups on the other side.

But the Uzbeks constitute not only the largest indigenous group, they also occupy an intermediary geographical and cultural position, inhabiting the heartland of the oases belt in Central Asia. Linguistically as well as culturally, their formation as a distinct group can be interpreted as the result of the intermingling between the original Iranian population and the Turkic-speaking pastoral nomads that entered the area in succeeding waves since the sixth century. Speaking a Turkic language the Uzbeks strongly resemble the cultural patterns of their Persian-speaking Tajik neighbours and many of them are presumably the descendants of Turkified Iranians (Allworth 1990, Golden 1992; Baldauf 1991; Ilkhamov 2004; Finke in press). Their evolution as a group thus epitomises two processes that have shaped the history of Central Asia more than anything else, namely, the interaction between nomads and sedentaries (and the integration of the former into the latter's social and cultural patterns), and the gradual Turkification of the formerly Iranian population.

It has been frequently stated that there exists a mismatch between the contemporary name of the group and its linguistic and cultural heritage. This is

certainly true in some respects. Although the name as such had existed before, it had been used for self-designation only by a fraction of the ancestors of the present population (Baldauf 1991; Roy 2000). The vast majority of Uzbeks, at least within the boundaries of Uzbekistan, speak today a Qarluq, or Eastern Turkic dialect, have largely given up a tribal kinship system (if they ever had one) and all in all are representatives of a sedentary cultural schema that has characterised the oases in the region for several millennia. Their ancestors would rarely have denominated themselves as Uzbeks. The later nomadic invaders, the Qipchaq-speaking Uzbeks, merely gave their name to an already existing amalgamation of groups whose identity was based primarily on locality. Indeed, for a long time, in some regions until the early 20th century, the term Uzbek was reserved for the remaining semi-nomads that were conceptualised as the local other towards the sedentary population, irrespective of linguistic closeness (Karmysheva 1976; Shani-jazov 1978; Zhdanko 1978; Baldauf 1991; Fragner 1998; Ilkhamov 2002, 2004; Schoeberlein 1994).

Thus, so the concluding argument, the Uzbeks of today are primarily the product of the so called Soviet national delimitation process (cf. Baldauf 1991; Hirsch 2000; Suny and Martin 2001), which resulted not only in the creation of a number of ethnic entities that until then had hardly existed, but also in the establishment of corresponding administrative units. The process of creating an Uzbek *natsionalnost* ('nationality') has been described as particularly artificial and as a deliberate act on the part of the authorities with little justification in pre-existing patterns of identity. Because of the ambiguous connotations of the term 'Sart' and the Pan-Turkic associations that might have been implied with the term 'Turk', the selection of 'Uzbek', however, made political sense, Baldauf suggests, even though it seemed arbitrary with regard to the self-identification of people. For Allworth (1990), a more convincing and successful choice would have been a common Turkestan identity. This, however, was discarded by the authorities for ideological and strategic reasons. Yet, it seems doubtful whether the political unity of Turkestan or a larger Muslim entity had ever been a viable option, considering that the mutual opposition of the major groups in the region often outweighed their common interests (Gross 1992; Schoeberlein 1994; Landau 1995; Roy 2000).

Of the five republics, Uzbekistan had territorial boundaries that seemed to have been drawn in a particularly arbitrary and generous way, including most of the fertile agricultural zones of Central Asia. To make them look reasonable, many people inside were forced to register as Uzbeks (Allworth 1990; Schoeberlein 1994; Subtelny 1994). This included not only the incorporation of distinct groups such as the Qurama and the Turk (as well as the highly ambiguous category of Sart) but also numerous Tajiks, Kazaks and Turkmens. Not all of this, however, came about as the result of force. Some groups adopted the label of Uzbek for opportunistic reasons (Baldauf 1991).

It is known from archival material of the period that local and regional negotiations, not exclusively initiated from above, played an important role in determining ethnic and administrative boundaries (Vaidyanath 1967; Baldauf 1991; Slezkine 1994; Keller 2001; Martin 2001; Suny and Martin 2001; Edgar 2004; Hirsch 2005).

The question is, of course, to what degree categories introduced by the Soviet nation-builders were able to replace pre-existing ones. While there is a multitude of answers to this in the literature, little of that is based on empirical observations. On the one hand, the Soviet creation of nations looked like a relatively successful and readily accepted process. Among the mechanisms that contributed to this was the creation of literary languages, usually on the basis of those dialects that were most distinct to each other. In the case of the Uzbeks, these were the Iranianised dialects of the Ferghana Valley, which lack – in contrast to other Turkic languages – vowel harmony (Allworth 1990: 237). The practice of stating one’s national or ethnic affiliation on passports and identity cards also played a role. Such affiliations also had an impact on one’s professional life, as it allowed both discriminative and affirmative actions (Khazanov 1993: 187). National culture as defined by the state was highly celebrated, which not only contributed to stronger feelings of separateness but also to the degradation to folkloric traditions. On the other hand, many observers thought that such artificial processes could not have a deep impact on the people and that traditional patterns would survive as a form of resistance (Bennigsen and Broxup 1983; Allworth 1990: 3–16). While there is little evidence for the latter, the earlier research for this project indicates that, indeed, the impact of Soviet nation building on local ethnic configurations has probably been exaggerated in much of the literature, as will be indicated below.



Photo 1: (Former) Kolkhoz workers on a cotton field in the Ferghana Valley
(P. FINKE, 2001)

Following independence, many authors predicted a reversal of the existing hierarchy in that the formerly colonised would try to suppress their former colonisers. Therefore, tensions between Russians and the various Muslim groups were soon to be expected (cf. Bremmer 1994; Smith et al. 1998; Schatz 2000). Issues would include conflicts over resource distribution or changing access to key political positions. The relations between various indigenous groups seemed to be another potential source of conflict. As national and state boundaries had been designed more or less arbitrarily, they would soon be questioned by ethnic, or indeed linguistic, entrepreneurs (cf. Fierman 1991; Landau and Kellner-Heinkele 2001). It was thought that non-members of the titular nation would ultimately have to perceive themselves as second-class citizens.

All of the new states are indeed engaged in various projects of national identity politics affecting Uzbeks and other minorities as well. And this has impacts on internal as well as inter-state relationships. While the current borders have existed for decades, they have never been an obstacle to circulation during Soviet times and were perceived as a simple demarcation line between administrative entities. Often families ended up on different sides of the border but this had very little meaning in everyday life. Borders were hardly noticed when crossed. Today, they constitute an all too obvious reality. Villages and streets have been cut through, and in the border regions there is hardly anyone without relatives who have now become foreign citizens. In this way, the contemporary borders became a part of people's identities, although often against their will (Sancak 2012; Finke in press). All states, however, carefully avoid questioning existing geographical borders. Except for marginal calls for realignment, the structure inherited from early Soviet times has been readily accepted. Everyone is apparently afraid of opening a Pandora's box, as minorities can be found on each side of every contemporary boundary. Thus, conflicts have been avoided so far, although a closer regional cooperation has not evolved either.

Internally, all states oscillate between the promotion of one ethnic group, the so-called 'titular nation', and broader appeals to the richness of a multi-ethnic state inherited from the Soviet Union. The latter is particularly emphasised in Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan, both states where minorities form a large part of the population and ethnic interaction is characterised more by opposition and distribution conflicts than by assimilation pressure (Svanberg 1994; Eschment 1998; Schatz 2000; Surucu 2002; Gullette 2010). It is less pronounced in Uzbekistan, where the numerical strength of the titular group seems self-evident in defining the national character. Here, within a multicultural framework, the commonalities shared by all local groups are stressed, under the obvious umbrella of the Uzbek majority.

The case of Afghanistan is slightly different and will thus serve as an important control case in the project. Influences have been rare, as the northern

border with Central Asia has been difficult to cross during the seventy years of existence of the Soviet Union. What is more important, ethnic groups in Afghanistan have not taken part in the described national delimitation processes and thus show different patterns of identification. While some Uzbeks have lived there for centuries, many others are the descendants of people who escaped from the Soviet regime and forced collectivization in the early 20th century. After several decades of interruption, some timid cross-border exchanges have become possible. In northern Afghanistan, Uzbeks coexist with Tajiks and Pashtuns, the latter having established a political hegemony in the 19th century that has been shaken during the series of civil wars, which have been tearing the country apart since 1978 (Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont 1988; Rasuly-Paleczek 1998; Monsutti 2005).

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF UZBEKNESS

According to the historical and anthropological scholarship, traditional identity in Central Asia and Afghanistan did not have much of an ethnic nature. It is held that people often identified themselves either by larger units (such as Muslim or Turki) or by smaller ones like tribes or local communities (see Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont 1988; Atkin 1992; Gross 1992; Schoeberlein 1994; Akbarzadeh 1996). This is believed to have been particularly true for the traditionally sedentary population, while among the former nomads a stronger sense of larger ethnic unity may have been the case (cf. Svanberg 1994; Finke 2004). The settled Turkic-speakers – whose descendants call themselves Uzbek today – had by then largely given up their tribal organization and identified as the neighbouring Iranian-speakers primarily by spatial closeness. Overarching ethnonyms like Uzbek or Tajik were of minor significance – if they existed at all. Instead regional denominators like Bukharalik or Ferghanalik, which typically included other local groups as well, were of far greater importance (Schoeberlein 1994; Fane 1996; Roy 2000). Until today, in most parts of the region Uzbeks and Tajiks consider each other as particularly close in spite of the linguistic difference (Finke in press). This is as striking in Afghanistan, where both groups are confronted by the historically dominant Pashtuns whom they see as outsiders (Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont 1988; Roy 1992; Rasuly-Paleczek 1998).

Two factors, so the argument developed out of earlier research, were crucial in this respect. One was the intermediate position that a sedentary Turkic speaker occupied between nomadic tribes and sedentary Iranians. This also allowed for a larger number of partners in economic and social interaction (Finke in press; see also Fagner 1998 for similar argument). Thus, the concept of ‘Uzbekness’ exerted an attractiveness on members of other social groups over the course of time and which gained a new impetus by being as-

sociated with independent statehood in recent years. While political pressure, both during Soviet times and after independence, is an undeniable factor in this respect, the process of Uzbekization is also part of a general Turkification, which started more than a thousand years ago. In some way, the Uzbeks of today can be understood as a culmination of larger processes that have been taking place in Central Asia for centuries, namely the interaction of nomads and sedentaries, and the continuous encounters between and blending of Turkic and Iranian speakers.

A second important factor in this process is the relative permeability of the concept of Uzbekness as it was by and large sufficient to speak the language and behave in a particular cultural way (which includes, amongst others, being a Muslim). I have labelled this a territorial concept of group membership and transmission (Finke in press) – in contrast to schemas as among Kazaks or Kyrgyz that rely primarily on the idea of genealogical relationships (Hudson 1938; Finke 2004). Thus, one cannot become an accepted member of one of those groups that easily. The concept of Uzbekness is more flexible in this regard and includes a definition of locality that acknowledges regional variation and the possibility of membership by voluntary decision. Therefore, almost by definition, it takes on different shapes in various settings, incorporating elements of local languages, cultures and social organizations. And within each locality people share specific cultural patterns irrespective of their ethnic or linguistic affiliation. Thus members of other groups living in the same place are often considered closer to oneself than co-ethnics in other parts of the country. The concept is thus based on a territorial idea of identification indicating that common residence and socialization are conceptualised as key variables in shaping an individual's personhood and identity.

This particular model of Uzbek identity is not only specific within Central Asia. It also carries implications far beyond purely academic explanations into contemporary social and inter-ethnic relations. As is true with other republics in the region, Uzbekistan has a population that is far from homogeneous and largely a product of Soviet politics. Many of its newly refurbished old heroes and national symbols have also been claimed by other Central Asian nationalities. In this model, the Uzbeks become the fulfillers of thousands of years of sedentary cultures in the region and as such are the descendants of previous statehoods, like Timur, as well as cultural legacies of various kinds as the Avesta, the sacred texts of Zoroastrism (Sievers 2002: 118). It should be emphasised, however, that these historical figures and events are not necessarily declared to be Uzbek in an ethnic sense; rather, they are put forward as a legacy that is bound to the territory of the state. In contrast, or rather in line with this, comparatively little reference is made to the first Uzbeks in the literal sense of the term, i.e., Muhammad Shaybani and his Qipchaq-speaking followers – who, in contrast to the Timurids, were indeed conquerors from outside –, nor to the early intellectuals of the twentieth cen-

tury, such as Fayzulla Khojayeov, who played an important role in the design of the Uzbek SSR (Kurzman 1999: 83).

At the same time, minority languages have been increasingly pushed to the margins as education becomes more and more ‘Uzbekised’. This implies an invitation to become Uzbeks if people are willing to assimilate into the mainstream culture. Many authors believe that relations with the Tajik minority are particularly precarious and may prove decisive for the future of the whole region (Subtelny 1994; Foltz 1996; Roy 2000). According to this view, Soviet elites had always favoured the Uzbeks over other Central Asian groups, particularly the Tajiks, as can be inferred from the allotment of cities such as Bukhara and Samarqand to Uzbekistan. Other authors, however, ascribe the ongoing Turkification or Uzbekization to the ambiguity or fragility of Tajik identity (Atkin 1992; Chvyr 1993; Akbarzadeh 1996b; Fragner 1998; Roy 2000; Wennberg 2002). On the other hand, or in line with this territorial idea, the fate of the Uzbek ‘diasporas’ is not a big concern neither in academia nor in politics, in contrast, for example, to Kazakhstan where the government has invited all Kazaks living abroad to join their native country (see Buri and Finke this volume).

REGIONAL VARIATIONS

In a first phase of this project, the local understanding of Uzbekness was examined in four different settings within Uzbekistan, looking in particular at the conceptualization of group boundaries, spheres of social interaction, as well as change and transmission of group affiliation and identity. This demonstrated that different regional answers exist to the issues just addressed. For example, while in some settings the two categories of Uzbeks and Tajiks tend to conflate and almost form one bilingual entity, in others they perceive each other as more or less close but distinct ethnic groups.

The first of these settings was the oasis of Bukhara and in particular, the district of Romitan. Here, the close-knit mixture of Turkic and Iranian speakers has reached a point where boundaries are not only virtually non-existent but also instantly denied. In many parts of rural Bukhara, bilingualism and mixed ancestry is the norm and also a central part of local identity. Therefore, the implementation of the national delimitation process proved particularly complicated here so that in many cases brothers ended up with different ethnicities (Naby 1993). This resulted in a population where almost everyone could be labelled an ‘in-between’, claiming of themselves to be ‘one people with two languages’ (Finke and Sancak 2012). Other groups settling in the same region are incorporated into this cultural complex to various degrees: Turkmens and Arabs who settled in the oasis several centuries ago are rather more integrated, while others such as Kazaks, Ironi, Russians, or Tatars that



Photo 2: Village scene in the Bukhara Oasis

(P. FINKE, 2002)

arrived at a later date are considered culturally more alien. One reason for that was apparently ecology, as the oasis and its hinterland did not allow a close coexistence between nomads and sedentaries. Those who settled down had to do so at the edge of existing village clusters. As intermarriage increased, they were soon culturally integrated but at the same time became agents of the ongoing Turkification. As identity is strongly conceptualised as the result of common residence, this is not perceived of changing ones group affiliation. At the same time, Tajiks or Uzbeks from other parts of the country or beyond are perceived as being more distant. The dominant cultural schema is thus that people adopt the language and customs of their social environment – and therefore may change their identity during their lifetime rather than being determined by birth.

The situation in the neighbouring oasis of Khorezm is rather different. Research had concentrated on the district of Xo‘jayli, today part of the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan. Here, turkification had been more or less completed by the thirteenth century and today the region is characterised by the coexistence of various Turkic groups that all became official nationalities in Soviet times, namely Kazaks, Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, and Turkmens. In contrast to Bukhara, differences are clearly pronounced and assimilation in either direction only takes place on a low level. Historically, the antagonism between the sedentary population and tribal groups played out very differently. Livestock rearing was much more important than in Bukhara, as ecological conditions allowed larger groups of pastoralists to settle down. This is reflected in traditional settlement patterns characterised by smaller hamlets

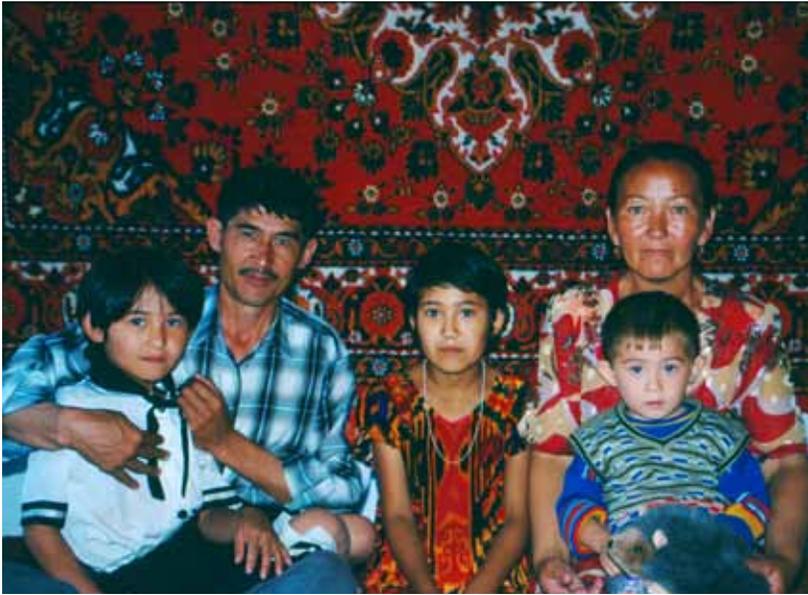


Photo 3: A Kazak family in Xo'jayli district, southern Karakalpakistan (P. FINKE, 2002)

and individual homesteads spread over a larger area (Bregel 1999). Because these are usually mono-ethnic, this creates a physical distance between the various groups. In spite of the common Turkic background, the linguistic situation is quite complex as the four main languages belong to different subdivisions, namely the Qipchaq, Oghuz and Qarluq branches. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the local Uzbek dialects show strong Qipchaq and Oghuz influences, respectively. This distinction in itself demarcates also a cultural boundary within the Uzbeks. Bilingualism does exist but usually people speak their respective language and expect the other one to understand it. More distinct, linguistically and culturally, are the Turkmens and interaction with them is limited. Mixed marriages are rare, especially with the latter. All groups exhibit a distinct self-understanding and a sense of a unique history. Ethnicity thus has a more primordial character here than in Bukhara. At the same time, particularly among the local Uzbeks, a regional identity is strongly developed.

The third site had been the district of Marhamat in the southern Ferghana Valley, which has in the literature become a synonym for tensions and violence in Central Asia. This is primarily due to a series of bloody conflicts since the late 1980s, one of which was mentioned in the beginning of this paper, and the fact that the valley is divided rather arbitrarily among three successor states of the Soviet Union. In ethnic terms, the region today is profoundly Turkic, or indeed Uzbek, with sizeable scattered Tajik pockets. The Turkic groups, however, divide into a number of distinct entities. This includes official ones, like the Kyrgyz, as well as non-registered groups, sub-

sumed within the larger category of Uzbek. Some of these consider themselves closer to Tajiks than to other Turkic speakers and are often labelled as ‘pure’ (*taza*) Uzbeks. Others such as Qipchaq and Turk, the latter probably descendants of tribes who arrived in pre-Shaybanid times, have traditionally led an agro-pastoral livelihood thanks to a steppe zone in the interior of the valley and the nearby pasture areas in the surrounding mountains. Although all of them speak standard Uzbek today, they are less part of the cultural mainstream, which is defined by ‘pure’ Uzbeks with Tajiks as minor partners. Ethnically mixed marriages do exist and are in fact not uncommon between Uzbeks and Tajiks. In contrast, marriages with Kyrgyz or former tribal Uzbeks are discouraged due to their alleged nomadic background. The conceptualization of groups and boundaries is thus quite different from Bukhara and Khorezm. Here, it does make a difference for people whether someone is an Uzbek or a Tajik, and switching languages is much less common. On the other hand, one can be a Tajik, or a Kyrgyz, without speaking the language, a situation that would not make much sense in Bukhara. Again a strong regional identity exists that includes the neighbouring provinces in the valley, both within and beyond state boundaries, as well.

The final research site was the oasis around the twin cities of Shahrisabz and Kitob in the north-eastern part of Qashqadaryo province, the birth place of Timur. This is a region of lush pastures and historically it was much easier for pastoralists to graze their herds in the vicinity of sedentary communities than in the other three sites. As a consequence, many of the Qipchaq-speakers that have invaded Uzbekistan since the sixteenth century and given their name to



Photo 4: Wedding party in a village of jokchi Uzbeks, Qashqadaryo province

(P. FINKE, 2002)

the ethnic group of today have survived culturally and linguistically. As in the Fergana Valley, the long sedentary Uzbeks often prefer interaction and marriages with Tajiks rather than with Turkic groups who had been engaged with pastoralism in the not too distant past. In contrast, however, the local Tajiks in Upper Qashqadaryo are a rather marginalised mountain population. At the same time, the inner-Uzbek division is far more pronounced than in any of the other sites, although there does not even exist a proper name to express it. In popular speech the former pastoralists are usually referred to as ‘joqchilar’ (‘those who say *joq*’) after a consonant they pronounce decidedly than other Uzbeks – who are consequently called ‘yo’kchilar’ – when in initial position. The former, although the native tongue of the original Uzbeks, is neither officially recognised nor locally perceived as a distinct language, not even as a dialect, but rather as substandard linguistic behaviour. Bilingualism is therefore usually a one-way street towards standard Uzbek. The number of ethnically mixed marriages is apparently rather low but, again, those between Tajiks and yo’kchi Uzbeks are regarded as more appropriate. Both are considered as forming the cultural mainstream while the joqchilar, as former nomads, are described as less civilised and rude. Each of the groups is characterised by somewhat distinct behaviours that are accepted but the more one acts like a yo’kchi the better and as the ethnicity of children is again decided on by residence more than by genealogy a change is possible.

THE DIASPORAS

These earlier findings are tested and expanded in newly beginning research looking at Uzbek diasporas in four different neighbouring states. Three of them, namely Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, have in recent years experienced conflicts of varying scale, in which Uzbeks have been more or less strongly involved. Kazakstan, which so far has been spared from severe inter-ethnic tensions, will serve as a kind of control case. The aim is to compare besides concepts of identity and patterns of inter-ethnic relations also cases of conflict and political mobilization in the name of ethnicity. It will be asked when, why and how ethnic differentiation becomes relevant for social and political action, how this is shaped by national politics and the distribution of resources, and how this influences individual behaviour and the composition of social networks on the ground. In particular, we intend to inquire on the relationship between strategic behaviour, social expectations, historical and political frameworks as well as cultural models that influence how people perceive the world and structure their interaction accordingly. Another issue to be addressed is how the above described characteristics of Uzbekness, namely its adaptability and its attractiveness play out in minority situations as this represents an additional variable for issues of identity and

inter-ethnic relations. People may view the state line both as an obstacle as well as an opportunity, depending on the specific situation and the options each side and systems may have to offer them.

The Uzbek minority in Kyrgyzstan is of particular interest in this regard. Living almost exclusively in the Ferghana Valley, they have been affected by some of the most violent inter-ethnic encounters in recent decades. With 14% (ca. 650,000 individuals) they constitute the largest autochthonous minority in the country. Only Tajikistan has a higher proportion of ethnic Uzbeks. As in the other case studies, settlements concentrate in the border region to Uzbekistan, in the southern provinces of Osh and Jalalabad. Both provincial capitals, the second- and the third-largest cities in the country, have in fact an Uzbek majority population. The two provinces are separated from the rest of the country by a series of mountain ranges, which are impassable for most of the winter. The local population, Uzbek as well as Kyrgyz, frequently expresses a feeling of neglect by the central government. Tensions about resource distribution and access to political power have been reported, although it is unclear to what degree these are ethnic in nature. Some Uzbek intellectuals regard the cities of Osh and Jalalabad as a natural part of Uzbekistan but most locals on both sides of the border do not seem to bother much on this until recently. They rather complain about restricted access for kin visits and trading trips. But in many cases, the recent conflicts led to a change in local ethnic compositions as many Uzbeks left the predominantly Kyrgyz villages and moved to the regional centre, while the rural areas became more and more Kyrgyz in character.



Photo 5: On the market in Uzgen, Osh province. As with other cities in southern Kyrgyzstan, the majority of the population here is Uzbeks. (P. FINKE, 2001)

The Uzbeks in Tajikistan also constitute a theme of particular importance within the project for several other reasons. Firstly, they form by far the largest proportion of Uzbek diasporas in regard to the population of the respective country, namely 25% (or 1.5 million), although the government's decision to officially recognise groups like the Laqay, so far registered as Uzbeks, has decreased their proportion. The second reason is equally significant. Precisely because Uzbeks and Tajiks share many cultural commonalities, the ethnic distinction is often ambiguous. For centuries, both groups lived side by side, with each of them sharply differentiating between the categories of lowlanders and highlanders rather than thinking much in ethnic or linguistic lines. In contrast to Kyrgyzstan, however, many of the Uzbeks in Tajikistan – as tribally organised and/or Qipchaq speakers – belong to categories that would in Uzbekistan not form part of the mainstream culture. On average, Uzbeks seem to do relatively well within the national economy but as the rest of the population have been heavily affected by the civil war and its aftermath that hampered economic and political developments severely. A strong Tajik nationalist discourse in independent Tajikistan, along with the rising role of Tajik as national language challenges Uzbek identities.



Photo 6: A Laqay chest maker in southern Tajikistan. The decoration shows similarities with those on chests made by Kazaks in China (cf. Buri and Finke this volume) (W. HOLZWARTH, 2010)

Uzbeks in Kazakhstan number approximately 400'000, most of which live in the southernmost province around the cities of Shymkent and Turkestan. This is yet another example of Central Asia's more problematic borders regions. As with other field sites, this used to be one conjoint region. With a similarly mixed population on both sides, the region was highly disputed during the separation into two distinct republics in early Soviet times. Kazaks demanded the city of Tashkent to be theirs, as especially they dominated the neighbouring rural districts. On the other hand, Uzbeks considered areas north of the border, where the main population was Uzbek, as their historical possession. Both, Shymkent and Turkestan contain significant Uzbek minorities and in some of the rural areas Uzbeks even form a local majority. Officially, they enjoy minority rights such as school instruction in their native tongue, cultural associations, and political representation. In practice, a growing trend towards Kazakization is observable. Inter-ethnic relations tend to be peaceful and the diaspora in Kazakhstan therefore also serves as a control case with the conflicts mentioned above. Still, some degree of competition and mutual prejudices exists. In recent years, border crossings have become increasingly difficult, especially for citizens from Uzbekistan who are not issued exit permissions anymore. This has also impacted negatively on cross-border social relations. The reason is primarily a response to growing numbers of Uzbeks who take up work in Kazakhstan, where wages are much higher, although reports about ruthless exploitation and almost slave-like conditions of labour migrants have increased in recent years.²

Statistics in Afghanistan are notoriously unreliable so the proportion of Uzbeks can only be estimated roughly. In total, they make up less than ten percent but being concentrated in the north of the country, they can locally represent the most numerous group. Still, with close to three million individuals this makes them the largest of the four diasporas in absolute terms. Since the 19th century, many Pashtuns settled in this region and colonised some of the best lands with the support of the central government. Partly for that reason, Uzbeks played an important role in the fight against the Taliban. As such, they often formed alliance with local Tajiks and others. Again, ethnic distinctions are from clear-cut and especially the category Tajik is of limited use in ordinary life. What is crucial for the comparative aspect is that people in Afghanistan were by and large unaffected by the national delimitation process in the early Soviet period so that ethnic labels per se have a rather different meaning. In everyday life, other categorical divides, as between nomads and sedentaries or between Sunni and Shia, may still be more important. As a result of the war, however, the country seems to be undergoing a process of ethnicization (Schetter 2003).

² At the same time, southern Kazakhstan has also become a prime destination for Kazak return migrants originating from Uzbekistan (cf. also Buri and Finke this volume).

In theoretical perspective, this project combines classic approaches to ethnicity, usually summarised under the umbrella of primordialism and situationalism, with ideas borrowed from rational choice theory, cognitive anthropology and political economy. Following Barth and others, ethnic groups are not seen as natural entities and cultural differences may persist in spite of intensive social interaction among groups. For this reason, identity markers of an ethnic group are often most clearly articulated not in the ‘centre’ but at the group’s margins, where interaction with others is most intense, as in diaspora settings. Thus, the main criterion becomes the self-ascription of actors to specific groups and recognition of this on the part of others.

As a consequence, ethnic boundaries are always exposed to individual shifts and active manipulations. Most significant is probably the linguistic choice. The current retreat of Tajik and other minority languages is not so much actively enforced from above but the accumulation of individual decisions made by parents for their children (in light of a cost-benefit ratio that is framed by state policies). This is by no means a new phenomenon. As mentioned, the adaptation of a sedentary and nontribal Turkic-speaking identity – no matter how this might have been labelled at various times – has been a highly advantageous choice in Central Asian history for much of the past thousand years or so. Furthermore, bilingualism presumably has been advantageous for a long time, because of ongoing relationships with Iranian-speakers. In fact, the data indicates that Uzbeks indeed seem to have a larger pool of potential marriage partners than Tajiks as the latter less often give their daughters to villages inhabited by people with a pastoralist background (Finke in press). On the other hand, as the case study of Khorezm indicates, in the absence of Tajiks ‘Uzbekness’ lost its structural advantages and thus also its attractiveness.

The underlying hypothesis is thus that groups owe their existence to the benefits they can provide for individuals, in particular their ability to reduce transaction costs. They achieve this by constituting institutional frameworks within which people can make reasonable assumptions about future strategies of other actors. Groups attract new members when, in particular political environments, they are more successful than others in providing such frameworks. As institutions, social groups also constitute a kind of charter or a set of general guidelines for proper behaviour both within and outside of their boundaries. As such, they prescribe particular forms of conduct (including linguistic behaviour). It is a precondition of the group’s ability to function that members are recognizable and predictable in their behaviour. In this case, the previous experiences of individuals within the group are to some degree applied to those members with whom no history of interaction exists. As institutions, their main function is to establish expectations about the fu-

ture behaviour of other actors and to create some degree of predictability in social interaction (North 1990). At the same time, self-interested individuals always have the incentive to change institutional designs to promote their own interests (Knight 1992; Ensminger and Knight 1997). Any change of individual belonging or group boundaries may thus be seen as a disregard of institutional compliance and potentially a change of the overall framework. Therefore, while people may often have good reasons for switching, others equally have an interest in preventing them to do so as any change in group size and power distribution will affect some others adversely.

A rigidly instrumentalist or rational choice approach, however, tends to underestimate the emotional strength that group membership may exert, irrespective of the factual degree of difference. Ethnic boundaries often show remarkable stability, in spite of changes of personnel, and in many cases individuals retain their established identities, even in cases in which it would be both possible and advantageous to change them. To switch affiliation may involve substantial costs, and often risks cutting into existing networks, to the detriment of one's own interests. In many situations, people are repelled by some of the new prescriptive behavioural patterns that would result from a change of group affiliation. In other cases such a switch may be prohibited or greatly hampered by the requirements that acceptance and membership in other groups entail, such as a tribal genealogy or, more generally, ideas about 'us' and 'them'. In addition to 'exit' costs there are 'entrance' costs, which also vary. Becoming an Uzbek involves less expense than, for example, becoming a Kyrgyz, because it does not necessitate an invention or manipulation of genealogical ties that constitute lineage-based societies. Other factors that may hamper a change of group affiliation are ideological ones, e. g., perceptions of superiority or backwardness. Any model of identity is thus also based on people's cognitive models, or schemas, which are transmitted as part of socialization. And as the property of individuals, identities still have to be recognised by others to make them meaningful. However, whether and how external ascriptions become internalised – influencing human behaviour and creating an emotional attachment to social groups or categories on the part of the individual – must be explained rather than taken for granted.

As cultural models, or schemas, ideas about ethnic groups and boundaries are ultimately properties of an individual, but are shared to a large degree by those who have experienced a similar socialization. They build on memories of past events and are activated when specific situations are encountered, to which they provide the interpretative frame (D'Andrade 1996). The images of a 'typical' Uzbek, Kazak or Russian are schemas that people unconsciously have in mind most of the time when they interact with each other. These schemas are again made up of connected sub-schemas: the one for ethnicity or for a particular ethnic group also activates ideas about intelligibility, religious affiliation, marriageability, trustworthiness and the like. How

detailed and extensive the connectedness of the schema for a particular other is depends to a large degree on the frequency of encounters. In contrast to claims made by evolutionary psychologists, however, the insights gained in Uzbekistan do not indicate a universal primordialism in the human brain.³ On the contrary, ideas about social groups and boundaries appear to be culture-specific. This was demonstrated by the opposing models of a territorial versus genealogical concept of identity. These two models are, of course, first and foremost analytical categories and do not necessarily present themselves in clear-cut opposition in real-life settings.

In the context of Uzbekistan – with the possible exception of Khorezm – schemas about appropriate behaviour are primarily grounded in an understanding of locality. Those who originate from the same place are expected to be and act similarly. Therefore, a local Tajik and a local Uzbek may represent the same schema. At the same time, putative co-ethnics from different provenance not only behave differently, they are expected to do so. This is very different from the ‘Kazak’ model, where a strong belief exists that everyone between the Caspian Sea and the Altay Mountains speaks and acts more or less the same, irrespective of the actual closeness or distinctiveness of behavioural patterns. Differences are conceptualised as the result of outside influences (such as Russification, Uzbekization or Sinicization) and understood as deviations from the norm, not as part of the basic make-up as in the Uzbek case. Of course, both these perceptions are social constructs but both may also become self-fulfilling prophecies to some extent.

What is more, cost-benefit ratios of group membership are never calculated within a neutral space; rather, they are strongly influenced by political configurations. In particular, the state is able to affect the attractiveness of belonging to a specific group tremendously and can also increase the costs of leaving and entering groups by legal provisions and ideological manipulations as shows the case of Uzbekistan. Cultural schemas, however, cannot be changed and manipulated arbitrarily; they have an impact on both the conceptualization of national ideologies by members of political elites and their reception ‘on the ground.’ Thus, local identities and concepts of the nation state stand in a kind of dialectic relationship with one another. The formation of an ethnic group may have the character of a politically induced process and of an ‘invented tradition’, but it has to be grounded in some historical configurations in order to achieve plausibility and legitimacy.

The definition of boundaries, of majorities and minorities, all impose costs on actors that influence their decision-making process. The same is true for state-supported views of proper linguistic or cultural behaviour. A manipulation may go as far as preventing people from making decisions by excluding all but one option, though this does not in itself determine the identity

³ For such a view see Gil-White (2001).

that they apply to themselves – people may follow rules without necessarily believing in them. Furthermore, as schemas constitute the background information upon which identities are based, they are not always conscious and thus not open to arbitrary manipulation. It is probably no coincidence that the concept of nation state is different in Uzbekistan than in other parts of the region and correlates with general ideas about group affiliation and the transmission of personhood that are, to a large degree, shared by the national elites and the rest of the population.

Culturally as well as biologically the Uzbeks of today are primarily the descendants of the representatives of the sedentary cultures who originated in this territory, rather than the children of former nomads from the steppes. This may appear to confirm the government position (and indeed, the earlier Soviet explanation of Uzbek ethnogenesis). The argument here is, however, that this is not so much the result of political calculus but of elites sharing an understanding of ethnic processes as a basic cognitive model that is the product of socialization with everyone else. This is not to say that identity politics are not present in the manipulation of ethnic boundaries. However, such politics are played out within the framework of a shared cultural model that defines how humans are believed to become affiliated with one another.

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FULBE AND UZBEKS COMPARED

(GÜNTHER SCHLEE IN COLLABORATION WITH MARTINE GUICHARD)

Profile

Until 1999, Günther Schlee was Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Bielefeld, having studied anthropology, romance languages and general linguistics in Hamburg. He received his doctorate for research on the belief and social systems of the Rendille, an ethnic group in northern Kenya. Alongside widespread fieldwork trips in Kenya, Ethiopia and Sudan, he was also guest lecturer in Padang (Sumatra) and at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Science Sociales in Paris. Typical of the research of Günther Schlee is the 'inter-ethnic' procedure and the combining of historical, sociological and philological methods.

The research of the Department 'Integration and Conflict' is based on the principle of cluster formation, not exclusively¹ but overwhelmingly. To have several researchers working in the same region is meant to facilitate controlled comparisons, that is comparisons between variations that are limited in one way or another. Unlike comparisons between highly different situations, comparing cases with only a limited number of differences while other variables can be kept constant, allows us to discern which changes in some variables entail alterations in other variables. Looking at variation and co-variation yields knowledge about how things are connected, which is the kind of knowledge theories are made of.

Since the founding of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in 1999, research focussed particularly on three regions: West Africa, Northeast Africa, and Central Asia. West and Northeast Africa have meanwhile been connected as research areas by a number of projects, first the research by Andrea Behrends on refugees in the eastern Chad and then also by Regine Penitsch on Darfur². The recently completed project *Travelling Models in Conflict Management: A Comparative Research and Network Building Project in Six African Countries (Chad, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Sudan)*, financed by the

¹ Exceptions are a number of classic, well-documented conflicts such as Northern Ireland (Olaf Zenker 2013) or the Balkans (Rozita Dimova), whose inclusion aims to create connections (via criticisms, supplements, or other) to the dominant discourses of the discipline. Complementary diaspora studies were and are being conducted in countries of two regional clusters, namely West Africa: Ghana (Boris Nieswand 2011) and North East Africa: Somalia (Günther and Isir Schlee 2012), Nuer (Christiane Falge 2009), and Anywaa (Dereje Feyissa 2011).

² Behrends and Schlee 2009

Volkswagen Foundation, also includes projects on Darfur³ and one concerning the Chad with participation of the Department 'Integration and Conflict'.

The three regional project clusters show similarities not only for internal comparisons but also for comparisons among them. They are not arbitrarily scattered across the globe, nor do they aim for particular contrast. The three research regions have a number of things in common. Much of their territories lies in the arid belt of the old world, Islam plays an important role as either the religion of the group under study or of their relevant Others, and they are or were being shaped by the interaction between nomads and the settled population.⁴ It is thus reasonable to use research findings based on African examples first as tentative generalisations to be tested in Central Asia, and *vice versa*.

While the department itself provides a framework for interregional comparisons, the work of colleagues from other departments or work groups at the Institute also provide inspiration. In a previous report⁵, Brian Donahoe (Siberian Studies Centre of the Institute) and I looked at the role of interethnic clan relations in Tuva in comparison to East Africa (Donahoe/Schlee 2003), another contribution together with Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi (Department 'Socialist and postsocialist Eurasia' of the Institute) uses African and Asian examples of pilgrimages (Kehl-Bodrogi/Schlee, 2007). Other such department-overlapping topics are revivalism movements (Pelkmans/Vaté/Falge 2005) and transnational relations (Glick Schiller et al. 2005).

This contribution's topic originates from comparative research on Africa and Central Asia. Its aim is to compare Fulbe and Uzbeks and to present research findings, on the basis of which the theoretical framework on identity, ethnicity, and interethnic relations can be further developed.

At first glance, the comparison between Fulbe and Uzbeks seems arbitrary. One might say, everything can be compared to anything, but, as explained above,

³ Mutasim Bashir Ali Hadi is the project researcher, Musa Adam Abdul-Jalil the attending supervisor, and Richard Rottenburg the German partner. Richard Rottenburg is a professor at the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology of the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg, a former Max Planck Fellow at our Institute, and this programme's leader. Other projects are (in parentheses the researcher/localsupervisor/ and German partner): Sierra Leone (Sylvanus Nicholas Spencer, Lena Thompson/ Joe A. D. Alie, Ahmed Dumbuya/Jacqueline Knörr), Liberia (Sylvanus Nicholas Spencer, Lena Thompson/ Joe A. D. Alie, Ahmed Dumbuya/Veronika Fuest), Chad (Laguette Dionro Djerandi/Khalil Alio/Andrea Behrends), Ethiopia (Dejene Gemechu/Tadesse Berisso/Günther Schlee), South Africa (Tinashe Pfigu/Kees van der Waal/Thomas Kirsch)/Behrends et al. (eds), forthcoming.

⁴ This is the topic of the special research group 586 'Difference and Integration. Interaction between nomadic and settled forms of life in the civilisations of the old world', which the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology takes part in (project B6 [Schlee], researcher Kirill Istomin) next to the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg and the University of Leipzig.

⁵ Older reports are not rendered obsolete by new publications, rather they are often complimentary. All reports are still in print and can also be accessed via our website <http://www.eth.mpg.de>.

better insights can be gained from controlled comparison, in which not all variables change at once so that it becomes impossible to discern how they are interrelated. Comparisons should thus always include a number of similarities or constants. Precisely such similarities exist between the Fulbe and Uzbeks:

- 1. In both cases there is a differentiation level far above the clan or the village but below the ethnic classification as ‘Uzbeks’ or ‘Fulbe’. This level may be called that of sub-ethnic groups.
- 2. Practically all Uzbeks and all Fulbe are Muslims, at least nominally.
- 3. Despite this fact, particularly the real or ascribed levels of religious orthodoxy serve to distinguish different sub-ethnicities.
- 4. Both Fulbe and Uzbeks are scattered across numerous nation states, albeit for different reasons. Fulbe groups crossed the entire width of the African continent on their pilgrimages to Mecca before the modern nation states even existed. After the Nation states has come into existence, these same migrations of pilgrims, nomads and wage labourers acquired a transnational character. Uzbeks, on the other hand, have a long sedentary tradition. Their scattered presence is mainly the result of their settlement area being divided among different Soviet republics, which went on to form different independent states. So, with some simplification, one can say that the presence of these groups in different nation states is due to two quite different processes, namely that the Fulbe crossed boundaries while in the Uzbek case it was the boundaries which crossed the Uzbeks.
- 5. Both Fulbe and Uzbeks are ethnic groups at the edge of language families. The linguistic next of kin of the Fulbe are the Wolof and Serer in Senegambia, together with whom they form the West-Atlantic branch of the Niger-Kordofanian language family.⁶ Across Africa, the Fulbe live as neighbours with groups belonging to different branches of their own language family or ones whose language has no ties to Fulfulde at all, such as Afro-Asian (Berber, Hausa, Arabic, Oromo) or Nilo-Saharan (Kanuri, Dinka, etc.) languages. Some variants of Uzbek are Turkic languages influenced by an Iranian (Indo-European) substrate. The phonology and the absence of vocal harmony suggest that these are varieties of Turki which developed while spoken by Iranian speakers. We will return to the coexistence of language and language variants and their respective prestige in the context of Peter Finke’s work (see below).

The Fulbe research in Halle is based on DFG financed projects (‘Ethnizitäten in neuen Kontexten’ [Schlee 186/9-1, project span 1996-1998] and ‘Ethnizitäten im Vergleich’ [Schlee 186/8-1, project span 1995-1997]) that were realised at the University of Bielefeld. The first of the projects led the

⁶According to Greenberg 1963.

author to the Sudan for fieldwork. The second project was in the hands of Martine Guichard und Youssouf Diallo.⁷ Guichard's research covered Benin and Cameroon, while Diallo worked on the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso. The theoretical outset for these projects was to find particularly significant test cases for Barth's ethnicity theory among populations, whose settlement area is scattered over great distance and who have a history of migration.

Since Barth's *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969) it is established that the most concise mould of an ethnicity is not to be found at its centre or among its typical members but rather at its edges. Almost all older, classic studies in ethnology and social anthropology, with few remarkable exceptions such as Leach (1954), followed the monographic tradition of examining the respective foreign culture as a balanced, functional system represented by its typical members, thus examining the system as it was 'meant' to be. This research tradition provided a direction that always strove to find the centre or supposed centre of an ethnicity. Since Barth, we now know that ethnicity plays a relatively minor role in ethnically homogenous areas and that the study of ethnicities yields far better results when conducted in border areas, where a particular ethnicity is faced with other ethnicities.⁸

Reflecting in these processes of border demarcation, a number of interesting analogies to biology arise. Biological processes may take place in a different medium, i.e. the genetic transmission of information, than learned and acquired culture, but from an abstract and structural point of view there are similar processes involved. For the differentiation of single species out of a heterogeneous population with yet ineffective species barriers it was found that sub-populations near borders exhibited the greatest differences in certain communicative characteristics such as plumage colour or song.⁹ Another seemingly important aspect for ethnic differentiation in human culture, namely economic specialisation (overlapping of ethnicity and occupational castes), also has a formal equivalent in biology in the form of the ecological niche. That is why biological metaphors are often used to describe the social sphere.

Ethnicity is articulated the edges of an ethnic group through its dealings with other ethnic groups. This process may be antagonistic or take on a cooperative form such as the partitioning of occupational niches and different specialisations. The material, which ethnicity is made of, is culture, itself a sediment of history.

⁷ For previous presentations of these projects see Schlee 1997a.

⁸ The following contributions to recent ethnological and social anthropological research support this finding: Anderson 1983; Appadurai 1990; Asad 1986; Ashkenasi 1990; Balibar/Wallerstein 1990; Beck 1989; Braukämper 1992; Clifford 1988; Dench 1986; Elias/Scotson 1990; Elwert 1989; Engman et al. 1992; Gellner 1983; Giddens 1985; Giesen 1991; Glazer/Moynihan 1975; Heckmann 1992; Hobsbawm/Ranger 1983; Horowitz 1985; Hurreiz/Abdel Salam 1989; Lentz 1988; McCready 1983; Mies/Streck/Theis 1985; O'Brien 1986; Roosens 1989; Schlee 1989, 1994; A. Smith 1981, 1993; Tetzlaff 1993; Waldmann/Elwert 1989.

⁹ See White 1978.

The passing of time creates ever more new events, which are selected and shaped by tradition and thus provide an image of their past for each human group and sub-group. The passing of time effects the development of language and causes gradual or sudden changes also in other sub-systems of culture.

As ethnicities are shaped at their borders, we can expect that new borders will create and shape new ethnicities. According to this theory, a collective identity that has formed in a specific surrounding and neighbourhood and is then transferred to a different locale cannot persist without changes. Rather, the characteristics of ethnicity must be newly formed in the new context after a migration, regardless of whether the migration is a result of flight or economic or religious reasons (pilgrim groups who settled in new areas). New surroundings require different means of differentiation. This is not the case for individual assimilation. However, if a group continues to exist as a group in a new context, this can only be achieved by adapting to the new circumstances, and the forms of adaptation must be different from those of already present groups and develop their own specialisations and symbolic representations. Thus, the real test case for Barth's theory is an ethnicity in a new context.

For my own research, I chose an area along the Blue Nile in the Sudan, where almost the entire population has a migration background, among others (Arabs, Oromo, etc.) these are different groups of Fulbe. I specifically wanted to study a region and not a group or ethnic group, as was already detailed in the DFG project application. The research questions were dependent on the ethnic articulations to be found in that region and could thus not be specified beforehand. Guichard's and Diallo's research was based on a very general ethnic categorisation: i. e. to examine Fulbe in different contexts. The numerous different contexts, in which the Fulbe – and also the Uzbeks – live, make them such interesting objects of controlled comparative research.

In the Sudan, the valley of the Blue Nile was chosen as research area. Over the past centuries and in particular also the last decades, this valley with its newer and older irrigation cultures has been the destination (or endpoint, if the intended destination lay elsewhere) of many migrations. The same is true for the upper stretch of the Atbara and Gash rivers, though this text cannot cover them in detail.

West African migration to the eastern Sudan has been going on for centuries. The most recent immigrants, however, also comprise many West Africans, so that there are different groups of West African descent who may face relations as established groups and newcomers. Gallabat (al-Qalabat), to the southeast of Gedaref (al-Qadarif), is a community of long-settled 'Takrur'¹⁰ from West Africa.¹¹ Duffield (1979: 283f.) distinguishes between an early

¹⁰ On the origins of the name, see Braukämper 1992: 92; Krieger 1952: 87; 'Umar al-Naqar 1969: 365ff.

¹¹ See 'Umar al-Naqar 1989.

immigration wave from Bornu (the so-called ‘Beriberi’) and of ‘Fulani’ (also Fulfulde-speaking West Africans or Fulbe) that lasted from the late 17th to the mid-19th centuries and a more recent immigration wave at the beginning of the 20th century, which was understood as a *hijra*, the ‘holy flight’ from the rule of non-believers, and was connected to the British conquest of the Hausa-Fulani emirates in North Nigeria. Said *hijra* took place at almost exactly the same time as the Anglo-Egyptian recapture of the Sudan from the Mahdiyya, and so it was a flight from the British in one place that led right into their arms in another. For the early migration movement, the so-called *Muwalli-d[un]* (the ‘ones born [on the land]’) Duffield differentiates between groups of nomadic herders and groups of scholars, who moved up quickly in the ranks of officials at the Sudanese ruling courts or received lands for settlement and thus strengthened Islam along its border regions.¹² However, Duffield completely excludes the strictly nomadic Fulbe, the ‘Umbororo’ (Mbororo or Fulbe-Mbororo).

Historic accounts of this earlier migration wave suggest that the West Africans often entered the local societies ‘from above’ or were able to find very comfortable niches, while the immigrants from the last century – after the *hijra* at the end of the Mahdiyya – had a very different lot. At some point during the first decades of the new *turkiyya*, the Anglo-Egyptian administration, the attitudes towards immigrants must have changed, perhaps due to the settlement of large numbers¹³ of West African agricultural workers in the new irrigation areas. As West Africans in “older traditions often [appear] almost as culture bearers”¹⁴, e.g. in a number of episodes quoted by Braukämper 1992¹⁵, the term ‘Fellata’, presently used for West African immigrants, no longer carries any prestige with it.¹⁶

¹² Braukämper confirms this pattern for Darfur (1992: 193): “Sultan Ahmad Bukr (ca. 1700–1720) pursued a deliberate policy of enticing Muslims from West Africa with material incentives and privileges and particularly of convincing Mecca pilgrims to stay and settle in order to strengthen Islam in Darfur and very likely also his own power in the ruling system.”

¹³ Braukämper (1992: 96) explains: “In the six regions of southern Darfur, east of the Nuba Mountains, the Gezira, along the Blue Nile, the area of El-Gedaref, and the Gash delta, the number of immigrants rose from about 30,000 in 1912 to 250,000 in 1947. Recent estimates suggest that more than one million inhabitants of the Republic of the Sudan are of West African descent.”

¹⁴ Braukämper (1992: 96) names the Fulbe wave one of the two big waves of Islam proliferation in the area of the Sudan. The opposite (east-west) ‘Afro-Arabic’ wave is more significant in the eastern Sudan. And yet the first wave has only been insufficiently considered so far.

¹⁵ Fulbe as proliferators of Islam in Wadai: Braukämper (1992: 86f.); settled by Darfur’s ruler in the early 18th century in order to strengthen Islam: *ibid.*, S. 87; Torooße – Fulbe well-known as Qur’an scholars: *ibid.*, S. 90.

¹⁶ On the changing connotation of the term: “the Kanuri term Fellata, which the indigenous population of Darfur came to use for the Fulbe, certainly did not comprise the pejorative connotation of ‘foreigners from the West’ back then [beginning of



Photo 1: Fulbe-Mbororo near Damazin in East Sudan

(HASSAN SCHLEE, 1996)

The differing acceptance of immigrants at different times might also be seen in connection with the assimilation speed. “The striking difference between the Muwallid and modern Fulani settlers is the rapid indigenisation of the former. By the end of the 19th century the Muwallid had, in general, lost their original languages and culture. The reason for this relatively rapid indigenisation is that in many cases the Muwallid secured their livelihoods as clerical or religious figures, thus their absorption and reproduction of the cultural milieu in which they settled was a necessary factor to their social existence. Modern Fulani settlers, on the other hand, not only came from a wider range of social backgrounds but they settled in a system in which tribal divisions were purposely elaborated and maintained by the colonial regime” (Duffield 1979: 284 according to ‘Abdel Ghaffar 1976: 17-26).

However, cultural assimilation is not solely dependent on the acceptance an immigrant group finds in its host culture. In case of the Sudanese Fulbe-Mbororo, strictly nomadic herders of proverbial mobility, one isolating factor next to their low standing as people of the ‘bush’ certainly is their own exclusive attitude. They place little value in the acceptance by others. They also show no interest in the cattle of their neighbours. As long as their red and black long-horned zebras¹⁷ remain pure-bred and distinguishable, lost

the 18th century]. It was most likely during this time period, when the Fulbe in Darfur adopted the term as their ethnonym.” (Braukämper 1992: 193)

¹⁷ These are called *kuuri* in the Sudan. The black-and-white sheep of the Fulbe-Mbororo, called ‘Uda’, are also a breed of their own. (Braukämper 1992: 98) In other parts of the Fulbe area, the typical large zebra of the Fulbe are being cross-bred with other

animals or ones embezzled or stolen by their neighbours can be easily identified. More mobile than the Arabic-speaking Baggara cattle nomads, the Fulbe-Mbororo have, over the last couple of generations, gradually moved from their West African regions of origin across the Sudanese belt to the Ethiopian Highland, where an eastern drift overlays the seasonal north-south-rhythm. Their external characteristics (“[...] blue face tattoos, often colourful cloths and braided hairstyles for the men, bows and poisoned arrows as main weapon” [Braukämper 1992: 98]) make them a visible foreign body in the area.

Concerning the Fulbe-Mbororo, the research conducted from Bielefeld found its continuation in Halle in a joint project with Dereje Feyissa on the Fulbe-Mbororo on both sides of the Ethiopian-Sudanese border (Feyissa/Schlee, 2009) and in the dissertation of El-Hadi Ibrahim Osman at the University of Khartoum, which the author also has supervised. The project title is *The pastoral Fulbe in the Funj Region: a study of the interaction of state and society* (see also Schlee/Abu-Manga 2001; Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Report 1999-2001, p. 59f.; http://www.eth.mpg.de/subsites/schlee_tagebuch_02/index.html).

Some Fulbe in the Republic of the Sudan, and in particular certain Fulbe-Mbororo moving far into Ethiopia on their seasonal tracks, can be seen as the extreme eastward extension of the Fulbe, while a different movement of Fulfulde-speaking populations can also be witnessed at the same time. This latter movement also has a tendency that independently influences different Fulbe groups in different places, i. e. the southward movement into the semi-humid zone. This tendency is represented by the next regional example, the Ivory Coast, and comparisons to other West African examples of Fulbe migrations are to follow. As mentioned before, this is Youssouf Diallo’s project, the outline of which and its results I will summarise here.

Fulbe living in Ivory Coast come from Mali and Burkina Faso (mostly the region around Barani). Their migration to the Ivorian wet savannahs (Departements in the north of the country) represents a phenomenon as it only really began in the 1960s and only gained significance due to the worsening ecological conditions in the Sahel since the early 1980s, which is also when the Ivory Coast increased measure to end their dependency on imported foreign meat. Since these Fulbe migrated to the Ivory Coast, they mostly settled close to the Senufo, a group that is rumoured to have a pastoral past¹⁸ but who are mostly farmers today. Considering this supposed past and the fact that the Senufo often own cattle, the research focussed on the significance of

breeds in order to raise the resistance towards the tsetse fly. This is of particular importance for the recent southward movement of the Fulbe into areas with denser vegetation. Very often, Fulbe insist that part of their herd remains pure-bred. (see Diallo 1995)

¹⁸ See Roussel 1965: 73.

cattle breeding in the inter- and inner-ethnic discourse. It was thus examined, if the Fulbe, who are still strongly associated with the label ‘nomad herders’, use their advanced knowledge about cattle breeding as an important distinguishing characteristic to differentiate themselves from the Senufo and, if so, which specific skills are utilised in this context.

Another research focus was the role of religion as a determining dimension of collective identity and as an important factor for the assimilation at a locale that is dominated by other ethnic groups. Concerning the peaceful integration of immigrating Muslim Fulbe into new contexts, there is evidence suggesting that such processes are most easily achieved in villages of Islamised groups.¹⁹ This assumption was confirmed in the field. It could also be proven that Islam is used as an important distinguishing element, when the long-settled groups are ‘animistic’, as the administrative jargon puts it. At the same time, the particularities of their own mould of Islam undoubtedly play a role in the relations to other Muslims. These particularities persist because the Ivorian Fulbe continue to maintain contact with the Islamic scholars of the religious centre from where the early proliferation of the Tijjaniyya brotherhood began originating from the Barani region.

In Burkina Faso, where the Fulbe presence dates back to the late 17th and early 18th century, the processes of assimilation into the autochthone population were much more diverse than in Ivory Coast. Research in the Boobola province (in the west of the country) showed that such processes involved certain Fulbe groups more than others. This concerns particularly the Sidibe and Sangare, namely members of those clans who created the nation-like entities Barani and Dokui during the 19th century, which lay within the influence sphere of Maasina (Mali). Among the Fulbe of these clans, we can see similar tendencies as with the leading groups in Nigeria. Following the claims to rule, the members of the new elite adapted their cultural characteristics to those of the population they now dominated.²⁰ For the Boobola province this meant Fulbe in leading positions often becoming Bwa and Bobo. The identity change was effected by using the language and adopting the customs and traditions of the subdued population as well as through exogamous marriage. In some cases, the ethnonym and/or patronym were changed, sometimes also the clan name.

Later than the elite members were ‘ordinary’ cattle breeders from the Sidibe and Sangare clans accepted into the Bwa and Bobo societies and then became weavers and farmers. For these Fulbe, the identity change and ensuing settlement was certainly facilitated by impoverishment and the loss of

¹⁹ See Frantz 1978.

²⁰ See M. Smith (1960) on Nigeria. One main difference to the situation in Nigeria lies in that the Fulbe’s claim to rule in Boobola is not justified through Islam but legitimised by the control over the wells (see Diallo 1997).

their herds. Such a change is also often a sign that the Fulbe had once been welcomed by the farmers and had had good relations with them. In light of this fact and the on-going importance of the interdependence of neighbouring ethnic groups, it would thus be beneficial not to consider farmers and cattle herders as solely competing groups engaged in rivalries over resources but also as complementing each other. It is, for example, well-known that the Bwa and Bobo, who consider investing in cattle a sort of savings account and sign of wealth, often prefer to have their cattle tended by Fulbe. Next to this case of complementarity, Diallo found other forms of dependency of different dyads of professional groups while examining their everyday relations, including the ritualised joking behaviour between them.²¹

Martine Guichard followed the same approach in Benin, where the Fulbe represent an ethnic minority. They are neither well-integrated into the nation state nor the market economy, the majority of them living in Borgou, a north-eastern province of the country. In this province we can see that both agro-pastoralists and their immediately neighbouring farmers, the Bariba, made otherness the official code of their interethnic communication and they accentuate it with the rule that individual relations between members of the groups must remain in the 'hidden'.²² Furthermore, Fulbe living in this region marry almost exclusively among themselves and hardly ever adopt others into their ranks. They do differ from a large Fulbe group that Guichard examined comparatively in northern Cameroon, i. e. the group whose members sometimes call themselves 'Fulbe-Huya'.

Guichard's research project in the south-eastern part of the Adamaoua province (Departement Mbéré) compared two Fulbe sub-ethnicities. The first one is characterised by strongly hierarchical socio-political organisation forms. Considering historical aspects, they can be sub-divided into two status groups that are subsumed here under the category Fulbe-Huya. Today, they both claim to have had a large part in the *jihad* that resulted in the founding of the Sokoto Caliphate and the Adamawa-Emirate. Furthermore, they had a collective identity that held high prestige for a long time, so that many Islamised non-Fulbe and converts from other ethnic groups once subordinated under the cover of Islam also used said identity for themselves. Since the mid-1980s the compatibility of being Muslim and maintaining one's own identity as a non-Fulbe have grown in northern Cameroon, but

²¹ Youssouf Diallo supervised a number of articles on this topic published in the journal *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* (volume 131/2, 2006). The collection includes contributions from Alice Bellagamba, Youssouf Diallo, Sten Hagberg, and Tal Tamari.

²² This applies also to personal friendships, a topic that Guichard researched extensively over the course of the Volkswagen Foundation financed interdisciplinary project ('Freundschaft und Verwandtschaft: Zur Unterscheidung und Relevanz zweier Beziehungssysteme', see Guichard 2007).



Photo 2: Misaje, North West Cameroon
 In honour of two Fulbe-Mbororo children who successfully finished their Qur'anic school, a festival is celebrated on which occasion Fulbe-Mbororo and Hausa children recite Qur'an passages. (M. PELICAN, 2001)

there are other groups who increasingly adapt to the Fulbe-Huya. These are the Jafun, Aku and Wodaabe, also Fulbe sub-groups that are known as Fulbe-Mbororo²³ and are often associated with pastoral nomadism and rudimentary Islamisation. The equalisation of the Fulbe-Mbororo with being half-hearted Muslims is also fuelled by the assumption that they did not take part in the *jihad*. This assumption is problematic as it is based on the evolutionist idea that Islam succeeded paganism. This two-tiered idea has been refuted a number of times²⁴ and it cannot be denied that syncretist and re-paganisation processes took place in many areas.²⁵ There is also ample evidence that the general distinction between the Fulbe-Huya and Fulbe-Mbororo as favouring Islamisation or paganisation, respectively, lacks a historical basis. Still, the research area of the Fulbe-Mbororo displays a lesser degree of Islamisation than that of the Fulbe-Huya. This can, as Guichard noted, be seen as a sign that re-paganisation processes were quite common among the Fulbe-Mbororo.²⁶

²³ In northern Cameroon, the category Fulbe-Mbororo is far more inclusive than in the Sudan.

²⁴ See Bah 1993: 69; Bonfiglioli 1988; Hiskett 1984; Labatut 1973: 31; Last 1987; Stenning 1959: 87 ff., 1980: 196.

²⁵ See Amselle 1990: 181-208.

²⁶ See Braukämper 1971: 111.

Islam also plays an important role in identity change dynamics that are expressed in the increasing orientation at the Fulbe-Huya sub-ethnicity. These ‘Huyaisation-’ of ‘Transfulbeisation’ processes, supported by poor and well-off Fulbe-Mbororo with a tendency towards sedentarisation, favour restricted freedom of movement for women. Due to the seclusion of women, such processes lead to changes in the gender-specific earning possibilities and to significant need for economic-ecological adaptation: a shift from predominantly dairy to meat production in cattle husbandry. Another characteristic of these Transfulbeisation processes is the hardly modified marriage practices: intermarriage between Fulbe-Mbororo and Fulbe-Huya is still very rare. However, Fulbe-Huya often marry Islamised non-Fulbe or converts, who underwent Huyaisation processes, thus displaying a quite particular assimilation policy. This policy furthers the integration of ethnic others much more than that of



Photo 3: North Cameroon
 Before her moving to her husband’s residence, wedding gifts of the newly wed woman of the Fulbe-Mbororo group are exhibited. (M. GUICHARD, 2004)



Photo 4: On the day of the naming. A ritual shaving of a one week-old baby of the Fulbe-Mbororo group. (M. GUICHARD, 2004)

ethnic kin, with whom the Fulbe-Huya still share classic elements of collective identity such as language, real or supposed common descent, and belonging to Sunni Islam. Guichard's analysis of assimilation processes also showed that Huyaisation is not dependent on a close spatial proximity to the Fulbe-Huya. In some cases, the proximity to a sub-group of the Fulbe-Mbororo, whose members exhibit a significant tendency towards Huyaisation, has a far greater influence than co-residence with the Fulbe-Huya. One example are the Aku, whose Huyaisation was and is actually realised by way of Jafunisation.

Another focus of Guichard's research was the 'weak' side of the Fulbe. For the Fulbe in northern Benin and Borgou, who feature an egalitarian organisation like the Fulbe-Mbororo and are not a particularly conflict-capable group in the sense of Schubert et al. (1993), it has been noted that they cultivate such a 'weak' side.²⁷ A comparison of the sub-ethnic Fulbe groups in northern Cameroon should reveal whether this 'culture of weakness' is the result of a long experience with political and economic marginalisation²⁸ or rather a general part of the pastoral ethos. Guichard's results confirm that the 'Fulbe archetype' (Amselle 1990) and thus the image of the warring Pullo (singular of Fulbe) needs to be revisited. Among the Fulbe-Huya, who nurse their *ji-haad* tradition and claim dominance and superiority over the Fulbe-Mbororo due to their more orthodox Islam, the element of 'powerlessness' also plays an important role for their internal and external image. In common with the Fulbe-Mbororo and the Fulbe of northern Benin, the Fulbe-Huya also often emphasise or even pretend ignorance and incompetence in order to better influence the actions of others as well as claiming that such forms of displayed weakness represent a Fulbe specific kind of sociability.

Next to our own research, we draw on the results of others for the comparison. A workshop in Bielefeld, with the participants Jean Boutrais, Miriam de Bruijn, Christian Delmet, Han van Dijk, and José van Santen, led to the book *L'ethnicité Peule dans des contextes nouveaux* (Diallo/Schlee 2000). A DAAD financed student research project for the diplom studies in sociology in Bielefeld (Wei-Hsian Chi, Boris Nieswand, Jens Rabbe) provided the basis for the collective volume *Ethnizität und Markt: Zur ethnischen Struktur von Viehmärkten in Westafrika* (Schlee 2004a), which also contains complimentary contributions from Jean Boutrais and Michaela Pelican. Both works include chapters on comparative research but can only be mentioned here in reference. Next, I will turn to those works I supervised since 1999 in Halle/Saale.

Youssouf Diallo's habilitation thesis *Les Fulbe des espaces interstitiels: pastoralisme, migrations et identités (Burkina Faso – Côte d'Ivoire)* (2004)

²⁷ See Boesen 1994, 1999; Guichard 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2000.

²⁸ On the marginal position of the Fulbe in northern Benin, see among others Lombard 1965 and Bierschenk 1990, 1997.

examines interethnic relations and those between states and ethnic groups. Although Diallo avoids references to current political events, connections to topics of a high media presence and societal relevance are obvious. In (post-) industrial immigration societies (of which Germany was and is one, albeit it was long denied) there is a lively debate between those who equate integration with assimilation and those favouring a multicultural society²⁹ in which inclusion in the political system and participation in economic life go hand-in-hand with maintaining cultural differences.

On the basis of different West African examples displaying contrary and contrasting tendencies, the thesis discusses the relation of participation in state and governance, i. e. the integration in the village community and the preservation or abandonment of linguistic and other cultural features, in such a way that can also be a fruitful approach for other parts of the world.

The world comprises zones of great ethnic and linguistic homogeneity where one linguistic community or speakers of related languages take up large cohesive areas. These sometimes border on other such regions of this kind or on heterogeneous zones, where several language families and/or old branches of a single language family with significant differences are crowded together in a confined space.

In the Caucasus, the very high linguistic heterogeneity is explained by the landscape, i. e. the mountains that provide easily defendable areas of retreat and geographical communication barriers. Another point of argument supporting this explanation is the Caucasus' position between two seas and the resulting myriad of through roads. The sum of these factors does, however, not necessarily lead to linguistic heterogeneity, and other mountains are indeed less heterogeneous.

As the Caucasus is not the topic of this paper, the credibility of these explanations is non-essential here. The Caucasus only serves as the exception from the remarkable lack theories. Although many scholars theorised about the Caucasus and how its heterogeneity is to be explained, there are almost no theories about the linguistic and ethnic patterns³⁰ in other parts of the world.

It is widely known and yet still unexplained, why Africa features a wide northern zone with only Afro-Asian (formerly 'Hamito-Semitic') languages, a South characterised by the rather recent expansion of Bantu languages with little differentiation, and in the middle lies the so-called fragmentation belt between the Atlantic and south-west Ethiopia, which contains not only three language families³¹ but also many of their furthest differentiated branches in

²⁹ Slogans purporting the position (e. g. in Ethiopia, Kazakstan, or Indonesia) are *unity in diversity* etc.

³⁰ This concerns large scale patterns of wider contexts and areas. Theories on the origin and movements of individual ethnic groups exist in abundance.

³¹ Niger-Kordofanian (i. e. Niger-Congo plus Kordofanian), Nilo-Saharan and Afro-Asian.

a tightly knit mosaic. I know of no attempts to systematically explain, which factors further large, homogenous expansions and which foster the formation of a small-scale mosaic. Also known to all social anthropologists working on Africa is that a particular ecological-economic niche, namely nomad cattle herding, provides for many ethnic groups with many different languages in East Africa, while in West Africa mobile cattle breeders are all Fulbe. Yet, the why remains unanswered.

Youssouf Diallo brings first light to this theoretical darkness of linguistic-ethnic expansion patterns with his thesis. He does not aim to solve the above-mentioned problem on the continental scale, but he does provide vital insights into the interaction of Fulbe and numerous non-Fulbe groups in West African countries³² and thus delivers an important building block for further studies.

The subtitle with only two countries mentioned is almost an understatement, as Diallo's findings go far beyond Burkina Faso or the Ivory Coast. He provides a wide overview of the Fulbe ethnogenesis, Fulbe movements, and forms of interaction with other ethnic groups that not only shed light on diachronic and transcontinental relations but also on comparisons of forms of interaction at different times and in different places.

We learn that the initial differentiation of the proto-Serer into Serer, Wolof, and Fulbe involved military, political, religious, and economic aspects. In some cases, today's ethnonyms are derived from the names of former states (e. g. Jolof > Wolof), which hints at a parallelisation or congruence of ethnicity and state very much like the idea of the modern nation state. In other phases or places, the stabilisation of ethnic borders within a polity seems to depend primarily on economic differentiation (including military, administrative, religious, or ritual niches of income).

The differentiation between Bobo and Bwa, on the one hand, and Fulbe, on the other, corresponds basically to that of farmers and cattle breeders. In other cases it requires more attention to detail to distinguish the mere language usage from forms of group affiliation and their further-reaching implications. If a herder begins to trade in the northern Ivory Coast, this action is called *dyulaya*, after the Dyula, ethnic group of the prototypical traders. However, if and to what extent a trading Pullo then becomes a Dyula or can count on the solidarity of other Dyula is an entirely different question. The same caution applies to the term Bambara (Bamana)/Fulbe. 'Fula', the Bamana term for Fulbe, may be used for Fulbe who are also recognised by others as such, or be used as a mere occupation title referring to anyone who herds cattle for himself or others.

The economic differentiation between Mossi and Fulbe was no present in the very beginning. The Fulbe did have a special religious role, were more strongly oriented towards cattle husbandry, and lived as a local minority *un*

³² The focus is on Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast, but one stretch of the route between the two countries leads across Mali.

peu partout between the Mossi villages, but the instrumentalisation of that difference and the further differentiation only developed after the increase of cattle ownership among the Mossi, which had the effect that wealthy Mossi no longer tended their cattle themselves but rather had the Fulbe tend to it.

Diallo points out that this case of congruence of ethnic group and profession can either be the result of the monopolisation of an economic niche by a single ethnic group or of the ethnisation of a professional group. Of course, both processes may also occur at the same time working towards the same end from different sides.

Although the overall map of the West African fragmentation belt shows predominantly differences that survived or developed, there are rare cases of assimilation. As a paradox, in situations with no written records, assimilation can only be detected if it is incomplete. There must be surviving signs of a former identity. The cultural whole of all learned practices and knowledge including the oral history must allude to a mixture or synthesis of formerly separate lines of tradition. Such older affiliations that are recalled next to currently foregrounded identifications establish interethnic bridges or cross-cutting ties. The old clan names, called patronyms by Fulbe scholars although they are exactly not that, can be found in many different sub-ethnicities of the Fulbe and other ethnic groups beyond them. Are persons by that clan name Fulbe, who have been partly assimilated by other ethnic groups but preserved their origin traditions? Diallo also found a reverse case, in which fulbeised Senufo from San (Mali) had adopted patronyms and cattle brand marks from Fulbe.

It is a reasonable and well-documented causality that maintained or newly formed or emphasised differences often also entail an economic differentiation and avoidance of competition.³³ The next interpretation step is more functionalistic: ethnic differences are attributed with the function of differentiating peacefully and avoiding competition in multi-ethnic systems. Yet, Diallo shows that complementary exchange relations and violent conflicts do not exclude one another. He names the Mossi as example and the Fulbe living in between the Mossi power centres. Fulbe occasionally raid the Mossi and sometimes they even conduct raids together with Mossi against other Mossi. The theorem 'Integration durch Verschiedenheit (integration through difference)'³⁴ thus requires reassessment and possibly limits to its validity. It should also be more strongly considered that next to war and peace there is a myriad mixed forms of interethnic relations and also more or less comfortable forms of mere co-existence (see Schlee 2003: 57ff.).³⁵

The power centres and the spaces in between bring us to the spatial circumstances and spatial imaginations that are also part of the thesis and find their

³³ See e.g. Haaland 1969, whom Diallo also refers to.

³⁴ So the title of Horstmann/Schlee 2001.

³⁵ See also Mutie 2003.

representation already in the title *espaces interstitiels*. Pre-colonial African kingdoms and the chiefdoms of the Mossi do not *define* themselves through their borders (*finis*) but by their power centres, whose influence decreases gradually with outward distance.³⁶ In these spaces with lesser state influence, the Fulbe remained semi-independent, formed changing alliances, or simply withdrew out of state reach.

Diallo examines forms of mobility and of spatial organisation, the relations of Fulbe with other ethnic groups and the state, and how the state influences interethnic relations over time and space up to the recent conflict situations and the problems that arise from modern-day development policy interventions.

Michaela Pelican's dissertation thesis *Getting along in the Grassfields: interethnic relations and identity politics in northwest Cameroon* also includes a Fulbe component.³⁷ The result of 14 months of fieldwork, the study is based on extended case studies from the years 2000 to 2002 including data collected via new methods, e. g. role play in theatre groups. This technique particularly highlights interethnic relations and those between stereotypical social characters, sometimes in a rather comic form.

The ethnic landscape of northern Cameroon can be divided into three communities. The biggest is comprised of grassland farmers, who live in small, local 'kingdoms' and speak Niger-Congo languages of those varieties formerly known as the 'Semi-Bantu' languages. The second largest community are the Fulbe-Mbororo (particularly Jafun and Aku), who combine cattle husbandry and farming. Linguistically, they are close to grassland groups,³⁸ but they do not use this closeness to build alliances, much like the third community. The third and smallest community comprises village dwellers of different ethnic origins, who are subsumed under the category 'Hausa' and often invoke their Muslim faith in order to ally with the Fulbe-Mbororo and at the same time distance themselves from the grassland groups.

In one of the extended case studies, Pelican presents the conflict surrounding the investiture of the present king of Misaje, the main research field site in northern Cameroon. Muslims protested out of religious reasons against that which was required for the coronation of the new king. Pelican explains that a heated political climate on the national level also influenced the situation. Group rights had moved closer to the centre of attention and were advocated more vigorously as had been the case before. For this 'religious' conflict, past avoidances (such as mutually ignoring characteristics that con-

³⁶ They share this characteristic with e.g. the Javanese kingdoms (Schiel 1989). See also Evers 1997, who brought the idea of unlimited and limited spaces into the modern urban context.

³⁷ Doctorate (2006) at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg.

³⁸ As mentioned before, Fulfulde also belongs to the Niger-Congo language family.



Photo 5: Misaje, North West Cameroon
Fulbe-Mbororo together with the Hausa celebrate the end of Ramadan.

(M. PELICAN, 2005)

tradict one's own norms) were abandoned. Both sides sought the confrontation, the test of power. Even worse, there were no rules in place (yet), how to deal with religious sensibilities for a coronation ritual. Regulated pluralism, as opposed to unregulated plurality, had not yet developed.

In this context, Pelican utilises the theorem 'integration through difference' (Horstmann/Schlee 2001). She presents an entire range of examples that confirm the theory *ex negativo*. The reduction of differences led to worse conflict situations. Ethnic and sub-ethnic groups left their economic niches over the course of income diversification and consequently entered into competition with one another.³⁹ The formerly clear religious lines were also blurred. Some grassland dwellers converted to Islam, and Muslims of other ethnicities (e. g. Hausa and Fulbe-Mbororo) were accused of ritual crimes that only non-Muslims had been thought capable of (see also below). Furthermore, emphasising religious similarities as 'Muslims' at the expense of emphasising the ethnic differences between Hausa and Fulbe-Mbororo did not prove conflict mitigating.

The lessening of differences leads to new conflict potential, although this is not the only effect. Under certain circumstances, conflict mitigating factors can also be strengthened by reduced differences. Connubium and reaffiliation cause cross-cutting ties, which are, according to Pelican, only an integrative force in times of peace and in the personal sphere. "In the face of

³⁹ See also Dafinger/Pelican 2006.

political or economic rivalry [...] individuals with cross-cutting allegiances are required to take sides and become favoured targets of criticism [...]. [C]ross-cutting ties, [though], facilitate the groups' reintegration after the conflict has passed" (2006: 435). This confirms earlier findings that cross-cutting ties have by themselves neither integrative nor divisive effect, but that the nature of the effect depends on the political rhetoric they are used for (see Schlee 1997b, 2004b).

The relation between 'integration through difference' and legal pluralism appears slightly more complicated. Does the coexistence of different legal forms further integration or act as a disruptive and divisive factor? Pelican gives an example of an individual who was all too successful in forum shopping in a plural legal system and was thus driven into social isolation. In Cameroon, the legal system shows particular plurality, as there are several corrupted variations to each form of law. Pelican states: "Considering Cameroon's plural legal framework and its corrupted variations, the question emerges of the degree to which procedural strategies, such as political lobbying and litigation, promote the opponents' reconciliation and social integration" (2006: 423). Next to the different forms of law exist no less forms of habitualised injustice – whoever plays best on this keyboard and wins the legal battle is by no means the just victor in the eyes of the community.

One decisive factor, whether a particular plural legal system has an integrative effect or not, is the existence of a meta-level, where the different legal forms are put in relation with one another. We can assume that clear relational rules might prevent the negative effects of legal pluralism as described by Pelican. Ultimately, both (or all) parties to a legal battle must accept the same law and the verdict of one specific forum. As this does not always occur voluntarily, there must be rules which law applies to which persons, on principle or on request, and how disputes between persons of different origin can be resolved. Naturally, there are different jurisdictions concerning different fields of law and classes of crimes and offences. However, as Pelican notes, situations in which one party with greater endurance simply continues forum shopping until it wins somewhere are unsatisfying and cause more conflicts. Along such differentiations, we should distinguish between such plural legal systems, in which the differences hinder integration, those in which they do not effect integration, and those in which legal pluralism might even further the peaceful integration of a society, perhaps because law is in general better accepted (especially where the alternative is lawlessness) or after the motto 'to each his own'.

Another focus of the study lies on magic-religious beliefs and practices. Over the last two decades, discourses on so-called 'occult economies' that allegedly use magic means to material ends (Comaroff/Comaroff 1999: 297) have gained significance in the research region. In her analysis of said development, Pelican rightly points to works on witchcraft and social inequality,

the most significant of which concern Cameroon.⁴⁰ She further documents that Muslim groups are increasingly suspected of taking part in ‘occult economies’. Her findings also suggest that members of the grassland groups no longer accept differences constructed along ethnic-religious lines to the extent to which they were accepted in the past. That Muslims never used certain kinds of magic before is an assumption, which is empirically as sustainable or unsustainable as the belief behind these phenomena. However, the belief in such distinctions can prevent certain suspicions and thus act conflict mitigating. Are such distinctions lessened, new conflicts may arise.

After the account about the Fulbe in different parts of Africa, we will now turn to the Uzbeks. Similar to the Fulbe, Uzbekness has many facets both inside and outside of Uzbekistan. As Peter Finke’s habilitation thesis (2005) shows, the comparison of different groups inside Uzbekistan already yields rich comparative studies. His thesis, *Variations on Uzbek identities: concepts, constraints and local configurations*, is a comparative study based on fieldwork in four regions of Uzbekistan. The field sites are spread across almost the entire West-East expanse of the country. They comprise the Khorezm, Bukhara, and Shahrissabz oases and the Ferghana valley.

The comparison of these research regions yields a typology of interethnic contact situations that will shed light on central research questions of our Department at the Max Planck Institute. One theory on social identifications in multi-ethnic scenarios that is being developed in the Department aims to answer questions such as: Which taxonomies are social identities placed in? Are there recurring patterns or schemes of identity changes? To what extent is social identification based on conscious decisions? Which considerations enter into such decisions?

Elwert (1989) calls the simultaneous existence of two different taxonomies for the placement of the same group in social space ‘polytaxis’. Within polytactic identification spaces, a group can place itself in a linguistic-ethnic and a religious taxonomy. Thus the population of a village might consider itself Uzbek as a sub-category of Turkic peoples and Sunni as a sub-category of Muslims. The change from one taxonomic frame of reference to another is one of the meanings that Elwert ascribes the term ‘Switching’ (Elwert 2002).⁴¹ Depending on the changing awarding of legitimacy according to the discourse type (Dench 1986; Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology 2001: 57 und 2003: 94), the identity discourse of one and the same group may at one time highlight religion, class, ethnicity, language, descent, region, or anything else. For such contexts, I use the term dimensions of identification and their change, e. g. when the discourse strategy turns from the religious

⁴⁰ See also Geschiere 1997.

⁴¹ The identity change of an individual, situational or in the sense of ‘(ethnic) conversion’, is ‘switching’ of a different kind.

dimension (with elements such as Sunni or Shiite, or on a higher taxonomic plane Muslim or Christian) to the linguistic-ethnic dimension (Uzbeks, Kazaks, etc.). The picture behind it is a three-dimensional⁴² coordinate system with an x-, y-, and z-axis, which allows for the allocation of a value for each of the three dimensions to every point in space. Much as for points in a coordinate system, for which any one of three questions may take the foreground, namely 1) how far up/down; 2) how far to the side; and 3) how deep in space lies the point, in the case of social identification one or another dimension may be addressed.⁴³

The advancement of knowledge consists of including the always supposed, the half-heartedly known, and the colloquially hinted-at rather than explicitly addressed into such models and schemes that might provide greater clarity. Another advancement of knowledge lies in the mixture of these models, in order to show that they cannot do justice to the complexity of the described topic.

In light of the mentioned models, some of Finke's findings are heterodox. Central Asians seem to lack the logic consistency, which these models presuppose. And since it is unlikely that Central Asians are particular in this respect, it begs the question to what extent people are prisoner to their logic at all or are able to set aside this logic on a case-to-case basis.

The models mentioned above assume that categorical inclusion also furthers group membership, even if it was membership in a rather vague large group. Thus, invoking Islam implies membership in the worldwide community of all Muslims, the *umma*, as well as admitting the belonging to the *umma* in front of all others who claim Islamic faith. According to Finke's findings, Islam is considered as a unifying and common Central Asian identity-establishing factor, but that does still not entail the inclusion of Chechens or Meskhetian Turks into the We group. It is thus a criterion used – in this case Islam – that would include others in the collective identity, who are meant to be excluded and are in fact treated as non-members in practice. This fact is ignored, however. Verbal statements (and possibly also explicit, conscious knowledge) show dissonance to the practical behaviour (implicit knowledge?).

⁴² As a picture, a three-dimensional system is far more easily comprehensible with visual imagination. In an abstract model, there are of course limitless numbers of dimensions.

⁴³ In explaining switches between dimensions of identification, I propose to focus particularly on the resulting group size and the inclusion of ones labelled the same/ exclusion of ones labelled the other. Do the proponents of a certain identity discourse aim to belong to a larger group or an alliance of likeminded groups (inclusion strategy) or to remain secluded (exclusion strategy)? Does the switch of dimension result in a narrower or wider reference frame (small language group/ big religion or vice versa)? Of course group size must be considered on the basis of qualitative aspects (power, wealth, status, etc.). See Schlee 2000, 2004b, 2006.

Much as the religious classification is not clean-cut, language families and degrees of affiliation and acceptance also overlap. As Muslims, the Meskhetian Turks fulfil one criterion of inclusion in Central Asia, albeit to no avail in practice, linguistically they also feel at home there and yet are still not welcomed by the other Central Asian ethnicities. The latter follow the academic classification of the language families. As speakers of a Turkic language, they consider themselves close to Uzbeks and Kazaks, who feel more proximity to the Tajiks, speakers of an Iranian language, who are – other than the Meskhetian Turks – considered true Central Asians (see Finke 2005: 295).

In three of four research areas, Finke found an ethnic hierarchy with two lead groups belonging to different language families. In upper-Qashqadaryya (Shahrisabz), the Bukhara oasis, and the Ferghana valley, both Uzbeks and Tajiks (both in the sense of language communities) are seen as the central representatives of the local identity and enjoy a very high status. Bicephalous ethnic hierarchies might be called the ‘Austria-Hungary-model’, they are much rarer than ethnic hierarchies with only one peak.

Upper-Qashqadaryya is of particular interest in this context. Here, different ethnicities are grouped around a ‘core’, which is comprised of Uzbeks of a certain dialect group and – with only slightly lower status – Tajiks. If one wants to claim high status, one must speak one very particular variation of Uzbek, or no Uzbek at all but rather Tajik. The two variations are only distinguished by one certain phoneme, which takes on the pronunciation /zh/ in one and /y/ in the other. Speakers of the Qipchaq dialect (‘the zh people’) have closer ties to a nomadic tradition and display remnants of a clan organisation that is reminiscent of the Turk-Mongolian military organisation during the Middle Ages. The speakers of the Qarluq dialect (‘the y people’) are the indigenous oasis farmers, like the Tajiks sedentary and according to their self-image part of the Tajik culture, i. e. descendants of a superior, empire-building, urban, and scholarly Central Asian, Islamic civilisation. Where Uzbeks and Tajiks are at the centre of local autochthonism and legitimacy, these groups are also especially interesting due to how they combine characteristics in their identity discourses. The most common operator for the combination of characteristics in identity discourses is *and*. To be a true Pole, one must speak Polish *and* be a Catholic. To be a mainstream American (WASP), one has to be ‘white’ *and* an Anglo-Saxon *and* a Protestant, to name but a few examples. Real authenticity is often created or claimed through the additive accumulation of affiliation characteristics. In the present case, however, the operator is *or*. One must either speak a specific dialect *or* its (linguistically speaking) radical alternative, Tajik. Bukhara is special among the three regions. While the Ferghana valley and Qashqadaryya maintained the ethnic differentiation between (‘y-’) Uzbeks and Tajiks, albeit with (almost complete) equality, Bukhara features *one*, largely bilingual population with high status, which resulted from a long history of intermarriage between Uzbek and Tajik speakers and frequent language switches.



Photo 6: A farmer at the oasis of Bukhara (G. SCHLEE, 2004)

Thus, the lead group in this local hierarchy is *one* ethnicity with two languages. This could only be called a dual lead from the perspective of the languages and their prestige, speaker communities, however, cannot be distinguished or ethnicised due to the high rate of bilingualism.

Meltem Sancak's (2012) research also provides findings on factors that further the local integration in Bukhara and strip the language divide of any divisive effects. The elaborate marriage and circumcision celebrations are only possible with the active support of all neighbours. Local endogamy prevails: Students studying away from home will meet their future spouses from their own or a neighbouring village, as students form regional groups in order to cook together and for joint journeys home.

Following this typology of ethnic hierarchies, we will now focus in the relation between diachrony and synchrony. I will not be able to summarise the history of Central Asia any better than Finke did. One empire of nomadic origin, that is the Mongolian empire and the kingdoms of the Diadochi that sprang from it, and many kingdoms with urban centres in an irrigation oasis alternated with one another and had complex interactions with tribal pastoralists or warring herders. The latter conquered the kingdoms, or worked for them as mercenaries. Sometimes, they were even transformed into peaceful

farmers. Large parts of the sedentary population speak Iranian languages, early forms of today's Tajik or languages of other branches of Iranian. The share of Iranian speakers was bigger in the past. There were many Turkification processes on both ends of the spectrum between oasis dwellers and herder warriors. The Mongolian rule brought the first Turkic influences as its agents were speakers of Turkic languages. Iranian farmers and city dwellers also adopted Turkic languages, and thus the modern Uzbek and Khorezmian came to be, both Turk languages with Iranian substrate, and in the case of standard Uzbek lacking vowel harmony.

Many of these processes are evident today in the spectrum of Turkophony. Turkic peoples preserved remnants of the Mongolian military organisation in their clan names and extensive patrilineal genealogies, such as locally unbound herders use to differentiate other and self, close and distant, or friend and enemy. Turk peoples also continue the heritage of Iranian farmers. This complex history lives on in the plurality of languages, dialects, forms of social organisation and modes of living *within* the sphere of Turk languages.

History is written chronologically towards the present. Since we, as observers, look at history from the present, it is a reverse perspective. Viewed from the present, Finke's historic results mean that the people of Central Asia carry their history around with them, it sticks to them. As the example of Shahrissabz showed, the pronunciation of /zh/ as /y/ indicates nomadic heritage, a shorter sedentary tradition, less legitimacy as members of the local group, a lesser degree of 'civilisation', etc. . . .

Lastly, I want to draw the line from the history to the decision theory as laid out in Finke's thesis. History itself can be seen as a succession of decisions made by more or less important actors with intended or unintended consequences. The sources do not always reveal the actors' calculations behind their decisions. Still, Finke very convincingly interprets a number of historic developments with decision theory. It made sense for the Iranian oasis farmers and traders to linguistically adapt to their nomadic surroundings. Such processes occurred time and again, and some of them lead to emergence of today's standard Uzbek and Khorezm.

Ordinarily, decision theorists will examine present actors and their choices between different options, as this provides them with opportunity to observe and possibly enquire after the reasons and motives.

Decision theory requires the examination of decision possibilities (options) and the modelling of the decision between these options. Of particular relevance are the cost-benefit-calculations, that is perceived cost-benefit components that represent new knowledge, which must first be acquired. Finke thus examines the concepts of similarity and difference for each local individual case. In order to conceptually introduce similarities and differences, ethnonyms are presented with the range of their meanings, which can differ from region to region. I refer to the example of Uzbeks and Tajiks, who can be seen as two ethnic groups or as



Photo 7: A group of girls in front of the mausoleum of Ahmad Yaswi at Turkistan, South Kazakhstan. They only wear headscarfs for the visiting of the islamic sanctum. The one with the colors of the American banner serves the purpose just as well as all the others.

(G. SCHLEE, 2004)

one ethnic group with two languages. Next is the attribution of cultural characteristics and their evaluation (piety and hospitality are said to be Uzbek qualities, the Kyrgyz are said to be bad cooks ...). Some examples may state ambivalences (in present-day secular-autocratic Uzbekistan an all too pious Muslim is quickly suspected of being a bad citizen) or even sheer stereotypes, but they can hardly be excluded from the analysis as they also shape positive and negative attitudes towards and views of cultural proximity or distance and thus open up or block off paths to assimilation. Proximity or distance find their expression in the formation of clusters. In Khorezm, for example, the Uzbeks, Kazaks, and Karakalpaks feel closer to one another than to the Turkmen. The world outside Central Asia, if it is noted at all, also exists in clusters of similarities in the perception of the study subjects. As mentioned before, these perceived clusters can contradict the categories of proper classification systems. Although language and religion play a role in the discourse of similarities, Tatars and (Meskhetian, Anatolian, etc.) Turks are not included in the circle of proximity despite the pan-Turkic logic, in contrast the Tajiks are included. And despite considering religion and being Muslim a factor of cultural proximity, Muslims from outside Central Asia are not perceived as close.

For modelling the structure of the social space, cognitive anthropology and its methods (sorting cards on a table and recording the accompanying explanations ...) yields findings that differ distinctly from those presented above, ones based on categorisation systems (taxonomies, polytaxis, etc.).

Processes of changing ethnic identities are here often forms of assimilation. Self-determined isolation or dissimilation (e. g. to cope adequately with the trader's dilemma⁴⁴) seem to play no role. There is a strong tendency to become Uzbek, which can be done at relatively low cost (e. g. there is no necessity for a long genealogy and its convincing representation, as would be the case for a Kazak) and yields benefits such as newly opened communication spaces and education and advancement opportunities.

Finke's five local studies examine sub-ethnicities of Uzbeks in their respective settlement areas. In a complementary work, Rano Turaeva (2010)⁴⁵ studies migrants, who moved from one part of Uzbekistan to another. As for the Fulbe migrants in new contexts from above, who were examined as a Barth test case of how ethnicity is articulated at the border to other ethnicities, this study examines sub-ethnicities of Uzbeks in new contact situations and how they articulate new forms and relate to them.

Khorezm lies in western Uzbekistan and claims the proud heritage of a medieval empire, although it has a marginal position today and suffers ecological problems that also lead to health problems among the population.⁴⁶ Among other destinations, Khorezm migrants reach Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, where they form tight networks. Due to the restrictive practices of issuing residence permits in Tashkent, many of these migrants live as illegals in their own country. Men organise into squads of construction workers and also take contracts in the south of Kazakstan, where Uzbeks make up a significant part of the population (Darieva 2003). All this requires discretion and solidarity.

While the men usually seek employment together with other Khorezmians in this mixed ethnic surrounding, some women entrepreneurs find a pure niche existence within the Khorezmian enclave, but others are quite open and worldly. One such *Big Woman* organises construction worker squads, buys and renovates houses, finds accommodation for Khorezmian migrants, and arranges marriages among the Khorezmians in Tashkent. She has the Khorezmian workers 'under her arm', because the degree of entanglement of the sub-ethnic communities and their seclusiveness block off other alternatives for the workers outside the community. The possible seclusiveness of the other sub-ethnic communities further consolidates the situation. The wives of these men are 'friends' and 'helpers' of the *Big Woman*, i. e. they manage her household

⁴⁴ Evers/Schrader 1994.

⁴⁵ Turaeva's dissertation project is co-financed by the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen and also supervised by Wolfgang Klein.

⁴⁶ These problems are caused by salinisation and pesticide residues, both the result of intensive cotton cultivation on irrigation land. This situation also plays a role in Kehl-Bodrogi's research (Department 'Socialist and postsocialist Eurasia') on pilgrimage sites. These owe their stream of visitors partly to such health problems (in particular women's fertility issues) and the lack of affordable medical care (see Kehl-Bodrogi/Schlee, 2007).

and garden without regular employment. One might regard this as an ethnic trap⁴⁷. The security and protection of the sub-ethnic community are bought at the expense of freedom and advancement opportunities. Breaking free from this dependency might entail the small chance for a better income elsewhere, but it also bears the risk of complete impoverishment.

Those blocked off opportunities bring us to the problem of agency. In order to examine variation and co-variation we have to move beyond sterile dichotomies (freedom of choice/constraint, freedom/captivity) and also consider agency as a variable with many grades. Actors operate within tighter or wider spaces of agency or they work towards widening their own agency or curtailing that of others. For the example of the *Big Woman* it is clear that she has many more options than the people ‘under her arm’. And yet, her options are also limited. Even if she was no ardent Khorezmian regionalist and did not play the ethnic card (which she *de facto* does all too gladly), she would still be forced to do so. All other sub-ethnicities in Tashkent act the same way, most of all the native Tashkent population themselves, who look down on anyone not speaking the city dialect. The *Big Woman* protects her people from the authorities, finds accommodation for them in the Khorezmian neighbourhood, arranges endogamous marriages within the Khorezmian community in Tashkent to keep that community pure and to make it grow – all actions by which she proves that she has far more agency than e. g. her gardener, who is at the mercy of her whims.

A mosaic of ethnic niches represents a structure from which an individual, if so desired (as not all people are equally individualist as others), can only free herself with difficulty. Someone wanting to leave the seclusion of his or her own group, will be rebuffed and sent back to his or her own by the seclusion practiced by other groups. At times, ethnic and sub-ethnic borders will also be reinforced by the international discourse on group rights or by the national administrative divisions. As far as such an ethnic and sub-ethnic group mosaic leaves space for agency, decisions can be modelled by stating the advantages and disadvantages of the available options. In West Africa, Fulbe cattle herders are often allotted areas for their cattle production, they receive support in marketing their cattle, and they are protected from raids by other groups. This is not the case everywhere. But in such areas, the support concerns one niche existence within a particular branch of food production: extensive cattle grazing. This same niche existence hampers their access to education and participation in mainstream society. The same can be said for many such niches, whether it be Fulbe lorry drivers in the

⁴⁷ This is only one kind of ethnic trap. They exist in manifold forms in numerous places. Ethnic organisations, institutions protecting minorities, and niche economies present advancement opportunities, but they do not lead as far as opportunities in the mainstream societies do. While climbing the career ladder up the ethnic rungs, the aspirant may not realise that he chose a relatively short ladder. Even states may fall into ethnic traps by granting ethnic groups territorial rights in certain regions in the hopes of preserving a peaceful whole on the national level. However, this may also cause dynamics of violent disentanglement and ‘ethnic cleansing’.

Sudan (Abu-Manga, 2009) or Khorezm construction workers in Tashkent. Better internal integration is often achieved at the expense of external relations and the exclusion by others. In order for the relation between internal integration and external relations not to be a zero-sum situation, an actor must be able to play the keyboard of social relations very well. No doubt, there are persons, such as ethnic entrepreneurs or brokers of voting-packages in the parliamentary system, who can utilise their internal integration to strengthen their position to the outside. Then, both types of relations are added together and not, as in the zero-sum situation, subtracted from one another.

Another comparison reveals differences between Fulbe and Uzbeks but parallels with other parts of Central Asia. As Sancak and Finke have shown, Uzbek identity is significantly shaped by local references. The Fulbe, in contrast, have a segmentary system of lineages and clans that follows patrilineal descent models. Locality also plays a role in this system and it remains sometimes unclear, whether a group was named after a locale or a locale after a group, and if long co-residence and intermarriage might not also be reinterpreted as common patrilineal descent. Despite the mutual penetration of both forms of identification, genealogy does take the foreground for the Fulbe.

In this respect, they are more similar to the Kazaks and not the Uzbeks. Kazaks have a genealogical tree (*shajara*, derived from the Arabic word for tree), which encompasses the entire ethnic group and has since long been undergoing textualisation and standardisation processes. Next to the Kazak language, it is this genealogical tree, which defines the Kazaks as such. Functionality does not enter into consideration. Educated, urban Kazaks, who speak Russian among themselves, often give the impression that they drew their identity from a language they do not speak and a genealogy they do not know. The existence of these two reference systems, however, is of great symbolic importance.

Kazaks and Fulbe thus confirm the general finding that portable reference systems (genealogical knowledge that may be stored in memory or a simple notebook) are of great importance among nomadic or not yet long sedentary populations⁴⁸, while Uzbeks, in this regard only superficially Turkicised oasis farmers, preserved a strongly classificatory and emotional identification with their respective locales.

The marriage distance usually quite small among both the Fulbe and the Uzbeks, both follow a basic endogamous attitude. In the case of the Fulbe, the distance is a genealogical one⁴⁹, in case of the Uzbeks it is rather geographic. Someone who gives his daughter to a man living several kilometres away sends her abroad.

⁴⁸ See the section 'Social structures associated with pastoralism' in Schlee 2005a: 34 ff.

⁴⁹ For the Wodaabe (Niger), Schareika (2007) notes the coexistence of endogamous marriages and marriage by abduction, while the latter is also accepted as a legitimate form of marriage. The robbed group may fight back, but outside Wodaabe and the state may not interfere. The less distant connubium (arranged marriage) defines the small patrilineal group, whereas the more distant one (marriage by abduction from rival lineages) characterises the larger community of all Wodaabe.

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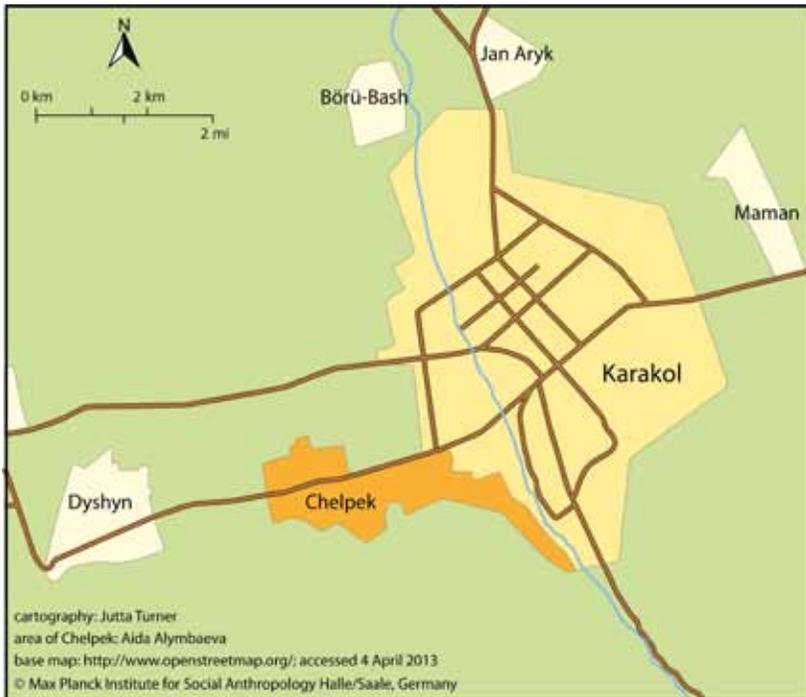
CONTESTED IDENTITY OF KALMAKS IN CONTEMPORARY KYRGYZSTAN

(AIDA AALY ALYMBAEVA)

Profile

Aida Aaly Alymbaeva studied Russian language and literature in Bishkek Humanities University, Kyrgyzstan. She was a senior researcher at the Aigine Cultural Research Center, Kyrgyzstan. Working for said organisation from 2005 to 2010, she was involved in studies of Kyrgyz traditional knowledge, particularly the phenomena of sacred sites. Her research experience includes the study of identity issues of Kyrgyz inner migrants, done in Kel-echek peri-urban area of Bishkek from 2003 to 2007. Between 2004 and 2006, Aida Aaly Alymbaeva taught at the Anthropology Department of the American University of Central Asia. Her courses focused on Ethnic Identity and Ethnographic Studies of Central Asia. Currently, she is a PhD candidate at the Max Plank Institute for Social Anthropology, Germany. Her project focuses on the identity politics in Kyrgyzstan.

My dissertation examines the processes of identification in Kyrgyzstan in the case of the village Chelpek. This village is known as Kalmak or Sart-Kalmak to most of Kyrgyzstan, at least, to its Kyrgyz-speaking population. Almost everyone who is connected to this village is called a Kalmak or Sart-Kalmak and ascribed with a number of characteristics. Many of the Chelpek inhabitants are themselves aware of and believe in these ascribed characteristics. Chelpek villagers would say they are Kalmaks, or Sart-Kalmaks, or Kyrgyz – depending on the situation. Due to age and gender, Chelpek’s people feel differently about these ascriptions – proud, hesitant, annoyed, or disinterested. The majority of publications, both academic and popular media, mention this village as Kalmak/Sart-Kalmak. Censuses contain the title ‘Kalmyks’ in the list of nations/ethnic groups. However, the village itself officially represents itself as Kyrgyz at the local level events. In my dissertation, I ask what constitutes the ethnic concepts ‘Kalmak’ and ‘Sart-Kalmak’ in contemporary Kyrgyzstan. And what role do they play under which circumstances as well as how they influence the current national politics of Kyrgyzstan? Through understanding the shifting boundaries of these ethnic concepts in one particular settlement I aim to analyse the dynamics of ethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan within the minority and state paradigm.



Map 1: Topographic map of Chelpek

In this short essay, I describe the field setting – the Chelpek village, its nature and all that is important for the scope of my study.

RURAL MEETS URBAN: KARAKOL'S INFLUENCE ON CHELPEK

Chelpek is an administrative unit consisting of three villages: Tash-Kyia to the east, Chelpek in the centre and Burma-Suu to the west.¹ It was established around the turn of the 20th century when Sart-Kalmaks (or Kalmaks; the two terms are used interchangeably with regard to the inhabitants of Chelpek) migrated from the territory of Xinjiang in China. According to figures provided by the local council *Aiyi Ökmöt*, Chelpek's present-day population is approximately eight thousand.

Chelpek is located near the town of Karakol (formerly Przheval'sk), an administrative centre of the Yssyk-Kol Province, along the east shore of Lake Yssyk-Kol in Kyrgyzstan. The territory of each of the three villages has grown extensively since the second half of the 20th century, so that today an outsider can no longer see a contour between Chelpek and Karakol, the east-

¹ 'Chelpek' hereafter refers to the administrative unit comprising the three villages, not solely to the central village of Chelpek.

ern part of the former now merging with the latter. Nor are there any signs posted that indicate a boundary between the two. Nevertheless, Chelpek continues to be separated administratively from Karakol and belongs to the Ak-Suu District.

Chelpek's proximity to Karakol has been an advantage for some of its inhabitants. For example, there are two secondary schools in Chelpek itself, both situated in the western part of Burma-Suu, but transportation within Chelpek is limited. It is much more convenient, particularly for those in Tash-Kyia to the east, to attend the closer schools in Karakol. Chelpek's intellectuals contend that the opportunity to study at schools in Przheval'sk during the pre-Soviet era benefitted those Chelpek villagers. The short distance to town allowed their grandfathers to work for Russians and Tatars on various jobs, for example, at the brick factory or in the mills. This also allowed them to learn the Russian language and, furthermore, when the Soviet government was established, to become leaders of the newly organised kolkhozes and sovkhoses. It also made them eligible for positions in the capital Frunze (now Bishkek). This last fact, according to my informants, was one of the causes of subsequent animosity displayed towards them by the Kyrgyz.

Chelpek villagers also assert that the proximity to town and thus to the cuisine of the Russians, Tatars, and Uighurs (groups who had lived in Karakol since its inception) enriched their own cuisine much earlier than it did the cuisine in other Kyrgyz villages. Currently, one of the main benefits of being close to town is the opportunity to open small businesses such as cafes and other shops, as well as to trade at the local bazaar, which is located centrally in this part of the province. Thus, they also have greater access to hard currency than those who live farther away from town. This proficiency in trade is often commented upon by outsiders as a distinguishing feature of the Chelpek villagers, i. e. the Sart-Kalmaks: "They are the ones who know trading", many of them say, linking it to the word 'Sart' in the name of the group.²

Relative proximity to or distance from the urban area is a way in which villagers distinguish themselves from one another. Those farther from Karakol contend that the villagers of Tash-Kyia (as mentioned above, now directly adjacent to the town) are more urbanised: "They do not communicate with each other, they do not invite visitors into their houses, [and they] do not share their bread".³ Those who are from Burma-Suu, the village most remote from the town, are considered better able to maintain their 'traditional' way of life. "We even have slight differences in how we speak", they say. It is easy to conclude that Chelpek is a place caught 'in-between' – i. e. between the rural and the urban.

² 'Sart' is an ethnic and cultural concept with its own historical implications and is subject to different interpretations, including 'settled population of Central Asia', or 'trading nomads' as Chelpek villagers understand the term.

³ The sharing of bread represents the traditional manner of honouring one's guest; in Kyrgyz, *nan ooz tiuu* ('to taste bread') means 'hospitality'.



Photo 1: Water (both river and channel): a key to spatial organization in Chelpek and one of the storylines in Chelpek memory narratives (A. A. ALYMBAEVA, 2011)

CHELPEK'S PROSPERITY: ADVANTAGES AND DEPENDENCIES

Chelpek's territory stretches for almost seven kilometres, comprising houses and cornfields nestled between the foot of the Teskey Ala-Too Mountains and the central highway that circles the lake. To the west, Chelpek's cornfields border the village of Yrdyk (known as the Dungan settlement), while Börü-Bash (also known as a Sart-Kalmak village) and Cherek (a Kyrgyz village) are to the north.

The Karakol River passes along the eastern side of Chelpek. A smaller river passes through Chelpek territory in the west, and a water channel crosses the territory from east to west. However, these sources do not provide villagers with abundant access to water for their cornfields. They must queue up for water, and they irrigate their plots of land during the night, not only to minimise evaporation, but mainly because they seldom reach their turn in the queue before night time. Furthermore, the village does not have an extensive public system for delivering drinking water. There are only a few public water sources along certain streets, but they provide the same unpurified water as the channel or the rivers. People have grown accustomed to these unfiltered sources, however, and usually drink the water without boiling. Nonetheless, according to the Chelpek narratives, being



Photo 2: Fruit gardens: a symbol of the village and an important means of income
(A. A. ALYMBAEVA, 2011)

close to the water (i. e. the rivers) was one of the crucial, decisive points in choosing this territory for settlement.

Nearness to water is also a vital factor in the cultivation of fruit gardens (primarily apples, apricots, and currants). This is one of the main activities and means of income in Chelpek. While many of the villages in the Yssyk-Kol Province cultivate fruit gardens, it is commonly said in and around Karakol that Chelpek is distinguished by the quality of its gardens and its verdancy. This is used by local people as an ethnic marker for Chelpek villagers.

Thus, the livelihood of the Chelpek villagers depends in large part upon favourable weather, and events such as the hailstorm of August 2012 that severely damaged the apricot and apple harvest inflict a heavy cost. However, the status of Kyrgyzstan's economic and political relations with neighbouring countries, especially Kazakhstan, has also become a vital concern of the villagers. Selling potatoes to Kazakhstan has been an important source of income, and when Kazakhstan closed its borders to goods from Kyrgyzstan in the autumn of 2011 and the winter and spring of 2012, Chelpek suffered. People blamed the export ban on the Customs Union, which includes Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, and on unresolved issues between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.⁴ The income of many Kyrgyz, including Chelpek villagers, took

⁴ The Customs Union was established in 2010. Kyrgyzstan is contemplating joining the Union.



Photo 3: A villager shows his “lost” income.

(A. A. ALYMBAEVA, 2011)

a significant hit, since the price per ton of harvested potatoes had fallen so low that it could not cover even half of expenses. People waited to sell in the hopes of higher prices in the spring, and when that failed to transpire, the potatoes rotted. For this reason, the autumn of 2012, usually a time of feasts and weddings, was very subdued in the village.

Despite the vagaries of weather and politics, Chelpek is still considered as one of the richest settlements in the area. This reputation was developed during the period of 1985–1990, when its inhabitants traded their fruits freely to Ust-Kamenogorsk (Öskemen in Kazak), Semipalatinsk (Semey in Kazak), Novosibirsk, and Barnaul (now cities in Kazakhstan and Russia).

Among the most obvious visual measurements of such richness are the settlement’s roads and houses. While the conditions of Chelpek’s roads are appalling by urban standards, they are typical for country roads: clay based, dusty in the dry season and prone to muddiness on rainy days. However, there are almost no abandoned houses in the villages, in which, according to residents, active building began as early as the 1960s. The majority of the houses are so-called Russian or Kyrgyz types. Included in the photos are two examples of houses, one belonging to a family of little means, the other to a family regarded as financially secure.

A short essay is by its nature limited in what it can depict and discuss. I have chosen two elements of Chelpek life: first, the phenomenon of ‘in-be-



Photo 4: An example of a house of a family considered prosperous, although its construction began twenty years ago and it remains unfinished (A. A. Alymbaeva, 2011)

tweenness', particularly in the east of Chelpek, where rural, village ways are increasingly influenced by the proximity to the urban town of Karakol; and second, the opportunities for and limitations to prosperity in Chelpek, as dictated by land, water, weather, and the impact of relations between Kyrgyzstan and its neighbours. Each of these elements provides insight into the everyday life and activities of the villagers and their identification processes. And this in turn inspires and furthers my research.



Photo 5: One of the oldest houses in Chelpek

(A. A. ALYMBAEVA, 2011)

THE RE-NEGOTIATION OF LOCAL IDENTITY UNDER GLOBAL INFLUENCES: THE CASE OF TAJIKISTAN'S PAMIR COMMUNITIES

(MALGORZATA MARIA BICZYK)

Profile

Malgorzata Maria Biczuk attended the University of Warsaw from 2002–2008 and the OSCE Academy in Bishkek from 2008–2009. Her interests range from social anthropology to political science with regard to the cultures of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Russia. Her field research comprises areas in Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and, recently, Tajikistan, where she focuses on religious and political transformation processes as well as identity issues within Central Asia.

The primary goal of my anthropological study of mountain communities in Tajikistan's Pamir region is to investigate how social and economic transformations have been experienced by the local population. In particular, this research assesses how change impacted the culture and identity of the people over the course of successive influential modernisation projects: during Soviet times, the neoliberal development, and the nation-state era. The analyses are conducted with respect to the province's autonomous status, historically within the Soviet Union and currently within the independent nation-state. I am specifically concerned with the Pamir Ismailis, who adhere to the Shia branch of Islam.



Photo 1: Traditional irrigation channels and a view of the Panj River valley.

(M. M. BICZYK, 2012)

The Tajik Pamir is a promising region for study, and yet has been underexplored in anthropological literature. My research area also goes by the name Badakhshan, referring to a province of the Republic of Tajikistan, administratively designated as the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province (in Russian, Gorno Badakhshanska Avtonomna Oblast, GBAO; in Tajik, Viloyati Mukhtori Kūhistani Badakhshon, VMKB). This province is part of the wider historical region of Badakhshan, situated among the mountain ranges of Pamir and the Hindu Kush (western Himalaya), between China, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. As such, it has recently gained the attention of researchers as well as tourists, the latter being drawn to its dramatic and relatively pristine landscape. The GBAO was created as an administrative unit in 1925, and as mentioned above, today constitutes an autonomous region of the Republic of Tajikistan. It is inhabited mostly by Pamiri Shia groups, Sunni Tajiks, and Kyrgyz; the most widely spoken languages, next to the nominal Tajik, belong to the East Iranian language group. Pamir Ismailis represent only a small fraction of the Tajik population, although their fellow Shia believers can be found in more than twenty-five countries worldwide.

The soaring mountain ranges of the Pamir, combined with seventy years of communism, have created persistent conditions of cultural and economic isolation in the region. Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union did the local people gain international attention, beginning with the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). Prince Aga Khan IV – the founder of AKDN and, at the same time, the spiritual leader of the Ismaili group – has influenced many spheres of social and economic life in the GBAO through his network of organisations.



Photo 2: The shepherds visiting the holy place ('oston') at the summer pastures.

(M. M. БИЦЫК, 2011)



Photo 3: Rushoni women in Afghan Badakhshan collecting wood. (M. M. Biczuk, 2011)

My research is based on fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the GBAO and Afghan Badakhshan among the Shogni-Rushoni speaking population. During my fieldwork, I spent an entire ritual year in a village, where I could observe the everyday practices and struggles not only with the economic transformations, but also with the exuberant nature of the high mountains. I also travelled to other village settings of Badakhshan and to the Afghan relatives of my respondents, following the family ties of respected families over the border. The community I researched comprised predominantly mountain dwellers, farmers, and seasonal shepherds. Due to the high unemployment rate, combined with inefficient mountain agriculture, almost every family in the village has one member who migrated abroad in search for work.



Photo 4: Rushoni family at the summer pastures.

(M. M. Biczuk, 2011)

My proposed research provides an opportunity to examine the correlation between, on the one hand, modernisation based on various development practices and, on the other, the construction of meaning and the defining of boundaries of identity. This correlation between the ‘global’ modernisation models and the ‘local’ patterns of living is of great interest to me, especially from the point of view of local cultural dynamics and transformations of identity. Throughout my thesis I also discuss the effects of Soviet modernisation and the autonomy status on the construction of collective identities. I seek to compare different modernisation patterns imposed on the Pamiri people during the last century. Thus, my research aims to understand both how the local people adapt to changes and how they resist them.



Photo 5: Shogni girls dancing at a folk festival. The color red is worn to signify celebratory occasions, such as weddings and traditional ceremonies. (M. M. Biczuk, 2011)

THE KAZAK *ORALMAN*: COMPARING MIGRATORY DECISIONS, INTEGRATION PATTERNS AND TRANSNATIONAL TIES IN THREE DIFFERENT SETTINGS

(TABEA BURI AND PETER FINKE)

Profile

Tabea Buri studied Social Anthropology, History, and China Studies at the University of Zurich (B.A. and M.A.). She is currently an assistant and PhD student at the University of Zurich. Her field research focuses on transnational relations, identity issues and migration patterns between Kazakhstan and Western China. Her current project focuses on the migration situation of the Kazak oralman.

The break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 has changed the world irrevocably and in many different aspects. Besides the transformation of the economic and political system it also gave way to large-scale migrations. Following the tremendous reshuffling of people during the socialist period, the emergence of new independent states out of its former republics have stimulated a flow of people, which seems to be in the first place triggered by people's diasporic attachments; Russians have migrated to Russia, Germans to Germany, and Kazaks to Kazakhstan.

The latter case is a very specific one in this context. Since the beginning of colonial rule and particularly during the Soviet period, the proportion of ethnic Kazaks had steadily declined due to the influx of Russian and European settlers on the one hand and emigration as well as the heavy loss of life among Kazaks as a consequence of famines during forced collectivization on the other. At the time of independence, in 1991, they made up barely 40% of the total population (Svanberg 1996; Dave 2007).

Many considered this demographic situation as a threat to the stability of the country. As a reaction, the government of Kazakhstan officially appealed to Kazaks all over the world to join their 'homeland' (cf. Kuscu 2012). While the main aim of this call for repatriation was to raise the proportion of the titular ethnic group there was also the hope that the migrants would reactivate Kazak culture and language. Particularly the diasporas in Mongolia and

China were seen as more traditional, while the traditions in today's Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan had come under heavy pressure of Russification during the Soviet period. Even though the vast majority of the diaspora had been born outside Kazakhstan, the migrants are called oralman upon their arrival, meaning 'repatriants' in Kazak (Mendikulova 1997).

THE DIASPORA SETTINGS

The aim of this project is to compare the fate of Kazaks of different provenance who came or not came to Kazakhstan. At the time of the appeal, the diaspora comprised approximately four million in total. Roughly half of them were citizens of one of the Union's successor states, with each close to one million in Russia and Uzbekistan, and smaller groups in Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. More than 1.2 millions lived in China, mostly in Xinjiang, and some 130,000 in Mongolia (Benson & Svanberg 1998; Finke 1999, 2004; Bedunah & Harris 2005). Smaller groups lived in Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey and Western Europe (Svanberg 1989; Kassymova et al. 2012).

Until today, roughly one million people followed the invitation to resettle (Tazhibayeva 2010; Usupova 2012), with the bulk of them coming from Uzbekistan, Mongolia and China. This project will examine in a comparative way the motives of Kazaks in these three countries for and against emigrating as well as their integration in Kazakhstan and the developing transnational social networks with their places of origin. The three countries each represent a very distinct case in terms of historical and political background, economic incentives and social interrelations.



Photo 1: A pasture area utilised by Kazaks in Gansu province, China (T. BURI, 2012)

Mongolia was the major point of origin in the early years of this return migration. This was helped by the existence of a bilateral agreement with Kazakhstan already in the early 1990. Although in absolute terms they cannot compare with the diasporas in Uzbekistan, China or Russia, they are locally important as the largest minority in the country and today, approximately half of the Mongolian Kazaks has migrated (Finke 1995, 1999, 2004; Diener 2005, 2009; Werner & Barcus 2009; Barcus & Werner 2010). For many in academia as well as in public, they still represent the paradigmatic case of an oralman. Therefore the Mongolian case will serve as a basis of first comparisons in this project.

During the same period, the relations between the Union's successor states were marked by the ambiguity of political boundaries, and it was thus possible to move more or less freely between them. But relatively few resettled to Kazakhstan permanently. Since the end of the 1990s, however, Kazaks from Uzbekistan dominated the second wave of oralman, due to the dramatic decrease in living standards there (Tukumov 2000). Possibly more than half of the Kazak population has left Uzbekistan until today and with more than 600,000 individuals they make up the vast majority of the oralman (Kassymova et al. 2012). Still, their out-migration has hardly been studied at all.

While immigration from Uzbekistan and Mongolia continues, a third wave set in recent years with growing numbers of migrants from China. Due to an unwillingness of the state to let them go, emigration out of China was difficult for most of the 1990s and early 2000s and has thus been rather low scale until around 2005. The exception was a small group of Kazaks in Gansu, one third of which had migrated to the Almaty region during the 1990s (Finke & Sancak 2005; Finke & Buri forthcoming). In the Chinese case the state takes a significant role by setting incentives to stay or to leave for different parts of the local Kazak populations. Thus, on the one hand, those settling close to the border with Kazakhstan are now encouraged to leave while the area is resettled with Han Chinese. On the other hand, Kazaks settling in the interior province of Gansu are by all means persuaded to stay (Buri 2013).

MIGRATORY DECISIONS

Because of the rare situation of an official invitation for resettlement, the case of the Kazak diaspora is particularly interesting as it offers the possibility to observe the different variables that influence and restrict migration decisions, in other words when and under which circumstances people tend to migrate or rather stay. The decision-making process in the diaspora as well as the reasoning by migrants in retrospective is therefore the first core theme of this project. Apart from the bilateral agreements between the states, the respective situation in the places of origin shapes the decision for or against migration crucially.

In all three cases, economic and political motives seem to rank highly, although in different degrees. Kazaks in Mongolia, for example, did not face discrimination and most of those who stayed as well as those who left still praise the country for its unspoiled nature, democratic achievements and peaceful inter-ethnic relations. Their motivations to migrate were thus predominantly economic, leaving Mongolia in a time of crisis. As the first to arrive in Kazakhstan, Kazaks faced particular hardships and many decided to return. This has only changed with the beginning of an economic boom in Kazakhstan and it may well be that within the next few years the community in Mongolia will all but disappear (Finke forthcoming).

In Uzbekistan, the devastating economic situation since the later 1990s has been a prime motivation for migrating. In addition, in many locations people face extremely precarious ecological conditions with little access to drinking water and soils depleted by salt and pesticides. In political terms, Uzbekistan – in contrast to both Mongolia and China – shared a common regime with Soviet Kazakhstan and even today there is little visible discrimination of Kazaks (Finke in press).

Main reasons for emigration from China seem to differ somewhat from the other two cases. While a restrictive policy concerning land use was a major argument to leave in the 1990s (Bedunah & Harris 2005; Finke & Sancak 2005; Cerny 2010), today it is less immediate economic motives. In contrast, the situation in China is by most considered superior. However, cultural aspects play a major role. Other than in Uzbekistan or Mongolia, Kazaks in China see themselves as discriminated and labelled as less developed than the Han Chinese majority. They fear assimilation as a consequence of Chinese dominated school curricula and on-going sedentarization programs. Thus their motive is rather a hope for a better future of their kids, especially as many foresee a prosperous development in Kazakhstan after some years (Finke & Sancak 2005; Cerny 2010; Buri 2013).

PATTERNS OF INTEGRATION IN KAZAKSTAN

As a second focus of the project looks at the patterns of integration the migrants experience, how they differ according to place of origin and destination as well as what impact they had on the social situation in Kazakhstan. The situation for most of the migrants is far from ideal and the less than perfect integration of these old-new compatriots is one of the hottest debated topics in contemporary Kazakhstan. Few oralman have been able to successfully start a business and in social terms many of them experienced hardships and exclusion, exaggerated due to their limited knowledge of Russian. The bureaucracy, problems with housing and jobs, and the omnipresent corruption caused additional difficulties.

At the same time, the ‘authentic Kazak tradition’ they are supposed to represent is not equally high on everyone’s agenda and mutual encounters gave rise to fierce debates on what proper Kazakness is supposed to mean (Finke & Sancak 2005; Sancak 2007; Diener 2009). Today, cultural influences can be discerned with the Kazak language taking ever more prominence in daily life and selected issues of (allegedly) cultural traditions also gaining ground. Still, the impact of the oralman on society in Kazakhstan was initially rather limited, although it has slowly increased over the last 20 years.

In terms of numbers, however, the estimated one million migrants have changed the demographic composition of Kazakhstan radically and turned a minority of 40% into an estimated 65% of the total population. These are, however, distributed somewhat uneven throughout the country. The early migrants, in their majority from Mongolia, were settled predominantly in the country’s northern parts where Kazaks often constituted no more than 20% of the population. This way, it was intended to prevent claims of Russian nationalists to annex those territories (Finke 1999; Diener 2005). In the following years many of them resettled within the country and there is a tendency to concentrate in particular areas or villages.

The majority of the migrants from Uzbekistan live either in the southern provinces of Kazakhstan or in the oil-extracting regions along the coast of the Caspian Sea. There, existing kin relations across the border alleviate the integration to some degree as this formed a contiguous space before the drawing of modern boundaries. Nevertheless, tensions seem to be the case both



Photo 2: A family of Kazak oralman from China at their new home in south-eastern Kazakhstan. After their arrival they tried to sell the traditional handicraft brought along but met with little interest among the local population (P. FINKE, 1999)

with the local population as with Kazakstani officials especially for those who have not yet received citizenship. Compared with others, the integration of Kazaks from Uzbekistan is somewhat smoother due to their comprehension of the Russian language and existing kin relations. On the other hand, the southern provinces are already densely populated and suffer from the nearby border being far from easy accessible.

Oralman from China predominantly settle in the neighbouring south-eastern parts of Kazakstan and in particular in and around the provincial capital of Taldykorgan. Interestingly, many of the respective villages had been populated mainly by Russians until the 1990s and are advantaged in terms of soil and water, as these had been the sites the first settlers in the 19th century preferred. Thus, ecologically speaking migrants from China are often favoured towards the local population. They have also the reputation of being not only most traditional but also hardworking and entrepreneurial. Nevertheless, their situation is often far from prosperous. Although many of them belong to the same lineages as local Kazaks in the Taldykorgan region, namely the Nayman clan and its numerous sub-divisions, they usually lack traceable kin relations. Furthermore, their knowledge of Russian is usually poor or non-existent and most of them can hardly read Kazak in Cyrillic letters thus placing them at a disadvantage compared to those from Uzbekistan or Mongolia (Finke & Sancak 2005).

Many of the migrants face severe difficulties in adapting to their new environment and express a profound disappointment about the state of Kazakstan. They do not only feel openly rejected but experience discomfort as they are confronted with a distinct institutional settings where they do not know the rules of the game properly. To deal with this, migrants can either try to learn and adapt or make an effort to change the existing institutional framework. This is done, as was shown by previous research, by bargaining on what it means to be a proper Kazak (Finke & Sancak 2005). One's own disadvantages, like not speaking Russian, are thereby turned into an ideal of ethnic purity. These identity games, as we may call them, are at the same time the basis of mutual misunderstandings and processes of intra-ethnic differentiation without, however, questioning the fundamental attachment to the same group. The latter, as has been argued, is based on a cognitive schema that takes assumed genealogical, or indeed genetic ties as the defining criterion rather than common language or culture (Finke in press).

TRANSNATIONAL TIES TO THE PLACES OF ORIGIN

Closely connected to the issue of integration is the question about the transnational ties. For many of the migrants the relations to their place of origin is still very if not far more important than the social ties to local Kazaks. In the Mon-

golian case, the only one, which has been studied in that respect, transnational ties with the relatives left behind, are very intense (Werner & Barcus 2009; Barcus & Werner 2010; Finke forthcoming). One hypothesis is that the institutional unfamiliarity is one of the main reasons why transnational ties remained so important or, in fact, became ever more. It is with people from ‘home’, both those who came along with oneself and those who stayed behind, that one feels most comfortable. These relations are maintained by new communication technologies and back- and forth movements across the borders.

Thereby – to some extent – the concept of a Kazak nation-state as such is challenged and instead the connection to the land where one was born is emphasised (Dubuisson & Genina 2011; Finke & Buri forthcoming). More important for the transnational fields, we will argue, is a kind of ‘institutional familiarity’. People feel much more comfortable with their visiting relatives from Mongolia or Uzbekistan. This perception is obviously strengthened by a sense of being rejected by local society (Finke forthcoming). At the same time, these ties allow people to make strategic use of boundaries by commuting back and forth in a way locals are not able to.

Moreover, transnational ties are crucial for the flow of information from Kazakstan to the respective places of origin. The image of Kazakstan, which is thereby transmitted to the one’s left behind forms the basis of further decision for or against migration. At the same time, stories about the places left behind may influence the oralman’s satisfaction or disappointment about their current situation in Kazakstan and consequently the patterns of integration.



Photo 3: Taxis on the market in Olgii, western Mongolia, waiting for customers to be taken to Kazakstan (P. FINKE, 2011)

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‘MOSCOW WAS NOT BUILT AT ONCE’: ON HOW SQUATTER SETTLEMENT RESIDENTS IN BISHKEK ORGANIZE THEIR LIFE

(ELIZA ISABAEVA)

Profile

Eliza Isabaeva studied anthropology at the American University of Central Asia (B.A.) in Bishkek from 2001 until 2005 and at the Institute for Social Anthropology at the University of Bern (M.A., 2007–2009). She is currently enrolled as a PhD student at the University of Zurich within the URPP Asia and Europe. She has conducted field research in Kyrgyzstan on cultural ceremonies, the spread of the Islam as well as on migration issues. Her current project deals with a squatter settlement in the capital of Bishkek.

The famous Russian saying in the title of this essay was used by one of my informants to emphasize that ‘city building’ is a long and complex process. Kyrgyzstan’s capital and largest city, Bishkek, has been expanding rapidly in recent times, both physically and demographically. The city’s population is estimated to have surpassed one million, and in doing so has exceeded the capacity of Bishkek’s infrastructure. This explosive population growth, driven by migration within Kyrgyzstan in search of better economic opportunities, has led to the emergence of settlements along the city’s periphery. Locals refer to such settlements as *zhany konush* (Kyrgyz) or *novostroika* (Russian).

I distinguish among three types of internal migrants in Bishkek. The first type comprises those migrants who live in comfortable apartments in the city center. The second are migrants who live in the publicly recognized settlements of Bishkek, with access to both social and physical infrastructures. These settlements emerged during the final years of the Soviet Union and shortly after its dissolution (1989–91). Lastly, there are the migrants who live in the peripheral settlements, which appeared in the early years of 2000 and especially during the spring of 2005 in the aftermath of the so-called Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan. Significant areas of these ‘new’ settlements are illegal – that is, unauthorized and thus not recognized by the city municipality.

Most of the migrants cannot afford to reside in the city center because of the relatively high cost of rental property, nor even in the formal settlements, and thus are forced to seek low-cost accommodations in the informal settlements along the outskirts of Bishkek (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009). Balihar Sang-

hera (2011) argues that the shortage of public housing, the fragile rural economy, the rapidly growing urban population, and the weak capacity of the state all need to be taken into consideration when discussing the informal settlements in Bishkek and their proliferation.

This essay focuses on one such peripheral settlement, which is referred to here as ‘Kyzyl Zher’ for purposes of confidentiality. I begin by providing a brief narrative of the origins of Kyzyl Zher.

Extending the geographic range of the so-called ‘colour revolutions’, which began with the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, Kyrgyzstan was the third country in the post-Soviet sphere and the first in the Central Asian region to experience a popular revolt. Kyrgyzstan’s ‘revolution’ occurred in the spring of 2005 and later came to be known as the Tulip Revolution. As in the first two cases, political turmoil in Kyrgyzstan led to a change in power: the former president of the country, Askar Akaev, left the country in the midst of the unrest, and it took some time before the opposition decided on Kurmanbek Bakiev to lead the interim government. This political instability and the resulting power vacuum provoked chaos in Bishkek: While the city center was unceremoniously looted, Kyrgyz citizens – squatters in this case – took advantage of the unsettled situation and the fragility of state institutions to occupy land on the outskirts of the city and establish residence without waiting for any kind of formal recognition of their right to do so.

One such squatter settlement in Bishkek is Kyzyl Zher, which sprang into existence in the spring of 2005 in the immediate aftermath of the Tulip Revolution. The extensive territory previously had been leased for fifty years by a politician, who had planned to build a market there but never succeeded in the endeavour. The territory belongs to the Chui district, in which Bishkek is located, and not to the city of Bishkek itself, but the district administration disavowed responsibility for Kyzyl Zher, claiming to lack the financial resources to provide the new settlement with support and services. Thus, Kyzyl Zher has remained in an ambivalent position since its emergence, acknowledged neither by the district of Chui nor by the city of Bishkek.

While the current population of Kyzyl Zher is officially estimated at about seven thousand, unofficial estimates are closer to ten thousand. The residents of Kyzyl Zher are migrants from within Kyrgyzstan, most of whom had already been living in Bishkek for many years but did not have a house of their own. Instead, they had been renting small and poorly furnished rooms from house owners in the other formalised settlements (Sanghera, 2010). People refer to one of these small rooms as a *kvartira*¹, and those who rent a *kvartira*

¹ *Kvartira* is Russian for ‘apartment’. It implies an apartment in a multistory house. In the context of the settlements, *kvartira* denotes a small room or a shack that can be rented out to tenants.

are *kvartiranttar*. But renting a *kvartira* brings with it the constant threat of eviction for any number of reasons, such as a late rental payment, the inappropriate behaviour of tenants, new plans of a landlord, and so on. Thus, a *kvartira* cannot be regarded as a long-term dwelling. Moreover, in a *kvartira* most migrants feel constrained, living under the watchful ‘eye’ of the landlord. To list but a few of the numerous restrictions, the tenants are not allowed to host many relatives in their small rooms, their children cannot make too much noise, and they cannot overuse electricity by watching television until late at night. Therefore, the *kvartiranttar* have always wanted to have their own home – to be free from dependence on a landlord, from insecurity and fear, and from the intermittent, often unpredictable movement from *kvartira* to *kvartira*.

FACING DIFFICULTIES

From Kyzyl Zher’s beginnings in 2005 to late 2011, the residents of the settlement lived without any state-provided infrastructure to deliver the fundamental necessities, that is, electricity and drinking water. As a solution to the lack of drinking water, Kyzyl Zher inhabitants bought water from sellers who came to the settlement with minibuses full of water in containers. The cost of water was 50 tyiyns (ca. 1 US cent) per litre. Minibus drivers had a decided market advantage: by transporting water, a scarce resource, to the settlement, they could demand a high price for it.² The problem with electricity was more difficult to solve. The dwellers of Kyzyl Zher relied on private generators (*dvizhok*), which produced sufficient power to light the house during the evening but not enough to allow people to watch television or have a running refrigerator. Often, my informants referred to themselves as ‘backward’ because they were not up-to-date with the country’s news since they could not watch television. Similarly, they were also concerned for the future of their children, for whom life in Kyzyl Zher also led to ‘backwardness’. Sarcastically, people also joked that the lack of electricity was a driving factor of the population increase in Kyzyl Zher because they had no choice but to go to bed early.

Since there was no central heating in Kyzyl Zher, houses were heated using coal, which was expensive for the locals. An entire house could be used only in the warmer months; during the winter the family lived in the limited num-

² Water in Kyrgyzstan is not sold by the litre. Typically, at the end of each month, people receive a bill for the water they have used. The approximate price for water in Bishkek is 6 soms per cubic metre (one thousand litres); 6 soms are equal to about 12 US cents. The average amount of water per person is 3–3.5 cubic metres. If Kyzyl Zher residents use 30 litres of water per day, it will cost them 450 soms at the end of the month.

ber of rooms (usually one or two) that they could afford to heat. Furthermore, most houses in Kyzyl Zher lacked thermo-insulation, and thus the heat produced by coal escaped too easily through the walls. Cooking was done in a coal- or gas-powered oven. While such measures solved the basic problem, the settlement dwellers lamented the high cost.

Worn down by the lack of basic infrastructure and by their makeshift, expensive efforts to fend off the cold of winter and the heat of summer, Kyzyl Zher residents organised numerous demonstrations to meet with high-ranking state officials and explain their difficult circumstances in the hope of acquiring electricity and water. The promises by politicians they received in return proved empty, however, and the situation did not improve. The settlement residents even attempted once to block one of the main roads within Bishkek, which not only has internal significance but external as well, connecting Kyrgyzstan with Kazakstan and Uzbekistan; the state military used violence to quickly disperse the demonstrators.

In April 2010, Kyrgyzstan's second president, Bakiev, who as mentioned above had come to power in 2005, was overthrown. In June of that same year, so-called 'ethnic conflict' between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks took place, with tragic consequences for many. Even though this ethnic clash happened in the south, and not near Bishkek (located in the north), it still had an indirect influence on Kyrgyzstan as a whole because the country found itself in a precarious situation once again. In addition, increasingly frequent political protests in Bishkek posed the danger of even greater instability. During such a 'fragile' moment, Kyzyl Zher residents engaged in another large-scale political protest. Namely, in September 2011, they blocked the above-mentioned strategically significant road in Bishkek for several days, burning tyres in the middle of the roadway. The protesters demanded the provision of basic infrastructure and the formal recognition of their settlement. Fed up with past promises that had not been kept, they decided that blocking the road was the quickest and most effective way to force state officials to respond to their plight. 'If we had not blocked this road, we would not have gotten electricity and water even in twenty years', said one of my informants, who actively participated in the protest. Indeed, Prime Minister Almazbek Atambaev and Bishkek's mayor, Isa Omurkulov, arrived to meet with the protestors. Having listened to their complaints and demands, the officials promised the rapid resolution of their problems.

Following Atambaev's order, Kyzyl Zher residents gained access to electricity and water towards the end of December 2011. However, not every household could light their homes and some still transported water over a significant distance. The city's given reason for this continued lack of services, as explained to the locals of Kyzyl Zher, was inadequate finances in the city budget. One of my informants told me that the city administration had allocated 36 million soms (approx. \$US 80,000) for Kyzyl Zher: 16 million

for electrification, 10 million for water, and 10 million for paving the central road of the settlement. This amount was soon depleted, leaving the work only partially completed. The locals were told to wait until the finalization of a new budget, while ‘off the record’ it was suggested that they consider financing the rest of the work themselves.

CO-EXISTENCE OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL RULES

Given the neglect by the Kyrgyz state with regard to illegal squatter settlements on the one hand and its lenient policy towards them on the other, Kyzyl Zher residents have essentially been left to govern themselves. To do so, they have relied on formal rules and created their own informal rules. The resultant formal and informal practices have not come into conflict with one another, but rather have proven complementary and, most importantly, have achieved wide acceptance. Thus, these practices shape everyday life in Kyzyl Zher.

When speaking of informal rules, I refer to Helmke and Levitsky (2003: 724), who define them as “socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels”. The following provides some examples of informal rules in Kyzyl Zher and how they peacefully coexist alongside formal rules.



Photo 1: Electricians having lunch in the house of a Kyzyl Zher resident after their work in the settlement. (E. ISABAEVA, 2012)

One example concerns the buying and selling of a house in Kyzyl Zher and emphasises the crucial role of neighbours. Since residents lack official documentation verifying their house ownership, it is often problematic to sell or buy a house in the settlement. Thus, the function typically served by a property title is assumed by one's neighbours, whereby the potential buyer first consults with neighbours to make sure that the house to be sold in fact belongs to the seller. Once the deal is done, the new house owner receives from the former owner a *raspiska*, a document on a sheet of paper in which the seller records in his own words the sale and its terms. Sometimes both parties have the *raspiska* certified at a notary office, which reinforces the legitimacy of the *raspiska* and can aid in resolving disputes should they arise afterward. Similarly, the widely accepted practice of consulting with neighbours prior to the sale is undertaken primarily to avoid potential conflicts following the sale.

Another informal arrangement concerns electricity usage in the settlement. Since not everyone has gained access to electricity in Kyzyl Zher, those who have access kindly share with those who do not. For example, those households located far from the central street of Kyzyl Zher, where all of the electrical pylons have been placed, receive their electricity from households closer to the central street. In exchange, those borrowers either divide among themselves the bill for the electricity at the end of the month, excluding the share of the electricity-providing household, or all households share the payment equally. Needless to say, this has an impact on the amount of electricity used, and leads to frequent breakdowns due to the overloaded capacity of the high-voltage substations. When power is interrupted in the settlement, a team of electricians comes to Kyzyl Zher to repair the overwhelmed substations. Once power is restored, the residents show their gratitude by inviting the electricians to lunch or dinner in their homes, during which time they establish close relationships with the electricians, whose help is always in high demand in Kyzyl Zher.

Yet another example of informal rules concerns the 'big man' of Kyzyl Zher, who serves as the coordinator of the settlement and as its representative in meetings with state officials. He was chosen as the coordinator of the settlement during a general meeting in Kyzyl Zher by majority vote. He explained this choice of the people by the fact that, as opposed to other migrants, he was a knowledgeable person with work experience in the legal system. While conflict resolution is not among the established duties of the coordinator, residents of Kyzyl Zher first and foremost turn to him whenever they have a conflict. Conflicts are quite frequent in the settlement and quite varied – land disputes, family conflicts, criminal offences such as theft and physical altercations. The coordinator attempts to solve problems internally, i.e., without involving the police or the courts, both of which represent the state and its formal procedures. Only when conflicting sides do not agree to his proposed solution does the coordinator either call in the police or refer the

case to the courts. The coordinator is not paid by the state, and therefore at a general meeting it was decided by a majority of the settlement residents that each household would contribute a certain amount to serve as a salary for the coordinator and his assistants.

CONCLUSION

In this short essay, I have attempted to provide a glimpse into the everyday life of Kyzyl Zher, which remains a *de jure* illegal squatter settlement on the outskirts of Bishkek. There are many similar settlements in and around the city. Even though I do not assert that Kyzyl Zher is representative of all such settlements in Bishkek, there are many problems that most periphery settlements share. Despite all of the persisting difficulties in Kyzyl Zher, the residents have not become disheartened; on the contrary, they continue to hope for a better and brighter future. Because there now exists at least a basic level of infrastructure in the settlement, i. e., electricity and drinking water, and living conditions have comparatively improved, it is predicted by some that the population in Kyzyl Zher will increase in the coming years. In this struggle for a decent life in the settlement, Kyzyl Zher residents seek to achieve the status of fully recognised residents of Bishkek.

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CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF DUNGAN MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN THE MULTI-ETHNIC CONTEXT OF KAZAKSTAN

(SOLEDAD JIMÉNEZ TOVAR)

Profile

Soledad Jiménez Tovar studied Latin American Studies from 2000 until 2005 at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (B.A.) and Chinese Studies from 2007 till 2009 at the El Colegio de México (M.A.) in Mexico City. She is currently enrolled as PhD student at the Martin Luther University in Halle. Her field researches focused on the areas of Latin America, China and, recently, Kazakstan. So far, Soledad Jiménez Tovar's researches included history of communism, colonial narratives, as well as cultural and ethnic issues related to identity making and border experiences. Since 2013, she is part of the CASCA project currently working on adaptation strategies of Dungan migrant communities.

SUMMARY

The principal aim of this project is to carry out PhD research regarding the historical construction of social space and identity narratives in the inter-ethnic context of South-eastern Kazakstan and Northern Kyrgyzstan during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Specifically, I intend to study the cultural exchanges and adaptations by which Dungan (Muslim Hui) people established its territorial identities in the region of Kordai (Kazakstan) and Tokmok (Kyrgyzstan) following various migratory displacements which have brought them together at various moments between the 1870s and 1960s. In particular, I am interested in reconstructing the forms of self-representation among those Dungan groups who arrived in 1878 from the Chinese region of Shaanxi and arrived to Masanchi and Sortobe (contemporary Kazakstan), Tokmok, and the area surrounding Bishkek (contemporary Kyrgyzstan).

One of the main objectives of this research is to problematise existing ideas regarding the perceived ease with which Dungan and other ethnic groups are able to adapt to a multi-ethnic setting in a quasi-national context of shifting territorial identities. At a broader theoretical level, this analysis aims at contributing fresh insights and methods for the study of migrant communities and so-called stateless societies.



Photo 1: Dungan Bride,
Sortobe
(S. J. TOVAR, 2013)

HISTORICAL SETTING: DUNGAN MIGRATIONS OF THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

After the expansion of the Qing Dynasty towards its Inner Asian borders in the mid-eighteenth century, at the initiative of Emperor Qianlong (1711–1799), there were several local revolts against the Chinese presence in what came to be known as the Western Regions of the Middle Kingdom.¹ However, it was not until the expansion of the Russian empire into Central Asia, at the expense of the territories occupied by China, that China began to show concern about the destabilizing potential of these uprisings. By the mid-nineteenth century, there were clearly defined Russian and Chinese zones of influence in the territories referred to by imperial Russia as ‘Turkestan’. At this time, China began to consolidate its influence and authority in the region currently known as Xinjiang province (which was not officially named Xinjiang until 1884).

¹ By Western Regions (西域; xī yù), I refer generally to the territories that run from the central area of the current PRC to various parts of the modern nation-states of Afghanistan, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Mongolia.

In turn, Russia began to expand into the present-day territories of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

During this period – between 1862 and 1877 – there were a series of riots staged by some of the Hui and Uighur communities subject to Qing authority. These riots were precipitated by, and related more broadly to, the internal territorial reshuffling that followed the Tongzhi restoration, and took place during the time in which China was being subjected to the various strategies and positionings of the Western imperial powers (Wright, 1957; Perdue, 2005). It is within this context that some of the migrations mentioned above took place.

According to Svetlana Rimsky-Korsakoff Dyer (1992), during the nineteenth century there were two broad migratory movements undertaken by some Uighur and Chinese Muslim communities (the latter of which are commonly known as ‘Hui zu’ (回族) in China, and ‘Dungan’ in Russia and the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia).² The first of these movements took place after the Qing authorities crushed a Muslim rebellion in 1878, and shortly after the formal division of the Inner Asian region by Russia and China.



Photo 2: Dungan Women, Bular Batyr

(S. J. TOVAR, 2012)

² In order to differentiate the Hui ethnic group living in China, from the muslim chinese settled in the Central Asian countries, for the former, I use the term Hui or Huizu; for the last, I use Dungan.

PRINCIPAL AIMS OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

The main purpose of this research is to carry out ethnographic and historical field research in and around the townships of Masanchi and Sortobe, in Kazakstan, and Tokmok and Bishkek, in Kyrgyzstan, the descendants of the Dungan migrants mentioned above.

There are several reasons for having chosen these as my primary sites of interest:

First, in the case of Masanchi and Sortobe, these towns present a singular example of a minority inside the minority, since they are inhabited by Shaanxi Dungans and the Gansu Dungan language and culture were the ‘official’ during the Soviet period. This may indicate that local people’s relationship with respect to their surrounding social space is distinct from those who are the ‘canonic’. Nevertheless, both places are located in the ‘Dungan core area’, i. e. around Tokmok (Kyrgyzstan), and this factor let us think about a trans-border Dungan community. This situation may help to explain the linguistic continuity of Chinese and Russian as extant languages among the members of the Dungan community of Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan.



Photo 3: Dungan Groom,
Sortobe
(S. J. TOVAR, 2012)

The Dungan community of the Zhambyl Province has consistently shown a certain reluctance to coexist (e. g. intermarry, trade, enter into cultural borrowings) with other ethnic groups in the region. Thus, while other migrant groups, such as Uighurs, have absorbed the particularities of Russian, Kazak and Kyrgyz cuisine and clothing, and communicate often with these groups in their respective languages, the Dungans continue to hold to their own styles of clothing, cooking and oral traditions. It is for this reason that I am interested in comparing both of these groups and exploring the multifarious ways in which different ethnic groups in the China-Central Asia-Russian context adapt and coexist.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Dungans of Kazakhstan have never previously been the subject of detailed research, and have only been mentioned in the extant scholarly literature as part of other broader research regarding Dungan populations in the region (Allès, 2005), and there were no comparisons with the Kyrgyzstani Dungans case. Given the scant volume of publications regarding the history and self-representations of Dungan communities in Central Asia, I hope to produce novel and more detailed data that may allow for a more nuanced and critical analysis of the existence of these groups in such a multi-ethnic and shifting context. Importantly, I already had an opportunity to approach these communities and to begin to establish lasting and important ties with its members as a result of the work that I undertook recently (2007–2009) in relation to my Master’s dissertation (cf. Jiménez Tovar, 2009).

HYPOTHESIS

The main working hypothesis which I intend to put to the test throughout of this project is:

- Dungans have had greater difficulty in coexisting alongside the multi-ethnic contexts of the Kazak society, first, because the Dungans are ethnically and culturally more related to China. Hence, there are many cultural characteristics, or type features, that they appear to share with the major population of the PRC – such as ancestor worship, mythological references, language, dress, cooking, among others. Whether these shared cultural characteristics are relevant or not, Dungans certainly appear to have faced greater difficulties in learning and incorporating local Central Asian (mainly Turkic) languages into their everyday lives, and, conversely, they have focused more on retaining their original cultural archetypes. This practice of ‘cultural conservation’ may have encouraged Dungan groups to be less willing to coexist with the multi-ethnic communities of their host society. Consequently, some of the groups inhabiting the Zhambyl Oblast’ perceive the Dungans as alien, making it even harder for members of the Dungan community to enter more broadly into the multi-ethnic milieu of Kazakhstan.



Photo 4: Cooking *momo*,
Sortobe
(S. J. TOVAR, 2012)

In sum, the setting for this study will be Masanchi and Sortobe in Kazakhstan and Tokmok in Kyrgyzstan. The subject of my project will be those groups with origins in China who migrated within the past century and a half to multi-ethnic contexts in Central Asia. In this case, I am interested in the Dungan population that originated in Gansu and Shaanxi, and whose arrival in the region of study took place as a result of various forced displacements provoked, respectively, by the Muslim rebellions in China (1862–1877) and the founding of the PRC (1949).

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KHOJA IN KAZAKSTAN: IDENTITY TRANSFORMATIONS

(AZIM MALIKOV)

Profile

Azim Malikov received his PhD in History in 2000. From 2005 until 2010, he was an Associate Professor at the Department of History and Philosophy at Samarkand State University. His field research focuses on the area of Uzbekistan, Kazakstan and Afghanistan. So far, Azim Malikov focuses on identity issues linked to history and politics as well as transformation processes of urban and rural post-Soviet societies from the 18th century onwards. His current project deals with transformation tendencies of Khoja identities in Kazakstan.

Following the influential work of Fredrik Barth (1969), among others, many contemporary ethnicity debates revolve around how group boundaries are socially constructed. Understanding processes of identification requires familiarity with the contexts in which they occur (Donahoe [et al.] 2009: 10). While ethnic groups have been the main focus of study among ethnologists interested in social identity, the study of lower level social units, e. g. clans and lineages, is also important for understanding identity formation processes. The same clan can frequently be found in more than one ethnic group (Schlee 1994: 2–5).

Nowadays, Uzbeks, Kazaks, Turkmens, and Tajiks in Central Asia share a number of distinct groups – Khojas¹, some lineages of which occur in two or more ethnic groups. A lineage is usually taken to be a group of people, who trace their descent unilineally from a common ancestor through a series of links that can be enumerated (Holy 1998: 74–75). The purpose of my project was to investigate inter-ethnic relationships and identity options among the religious elite groups of *Khoja* in Uzbekistan, Kazakstan, and Afghanistan. In the pre-Soviet period, the religious elite groups (*Sayyid*, *Khoja*, *Ishon*, etc.) formed a particularly privileged group in the social hierarchy of Muslim communities and were much respected by the believers. The emphasis of the study lay on changes in identity and its expressions among different groups

¹ The term *Khoja*, *Khawaja* has been taken to imply, variously, descent from ‘Arabs’, descent from the Prophet or Ali, descent from the first caliphs, or descent from Islamising saints. The term *Khoja* (which means ‘master’ in Persian) was mentioned in written sources from the 10th century, when it was used for certain government officials. The term *Khoja* as the name of a religious descent group started to be used since the 15th century.

of *Khoja* in the abovementioned countries during the 20th century and the contemporary period. One can compare the transformation of identities in sedentary society, including the *Khoja*, in Uzbekistan. In Kazakhstan, I studied *Khoja* identity in a specific society of descendants of nomadic tribes. In Afghanistan, there is a society maintaining more traditional features than those in the post-Soviet Central Asian countries. The comparative research was valuable for the understanding of identity construction processes in Central Asia in the current period.

The project analysed different variables of the respective manifestation of *Khoja* identity and its variations. The concept of being *Khoja* provides an excellent case for studying the trans-ethnic character of the group. It enables a systematic comparison of the factors and variables that influence how group identities and social networks are formed and demarcated.

The genealogies (*nasab-nama*) of some *Khoja* groups make clear that the present genealogical charters of some *Khoja* communities typically emphasise descent from an intermediate saintly figure, from whom a particular *Khoja* group will often take its specific name (DeWeese 1999: 507–508). According to traditionalist Islamic doctrine, there can be no more prophets, however, in Sufi traditions the world and human society still require spiritual guides and guardians: *walis* ('friends' of God), each assigned a specific territory of the world to watch over (Ewing 1983: 254).

Khoja fulfilled eminent religious and social duties in Central Asian society and were held in very high esteem in the pre-Soviet period. They performed religious services at ritual celebrations, acted as healers, and were addressed to settle disputes. In addition, *Khojas* have been the care-takers of Sufi shrines. In the pre-Soviet period, the Kazak steppe priests – mullahs were almost always *Khojas*, and the *pir* (*spiritual leader*) of a Kazak clan or village would surely be only from among the *Khoja* (Privatsky 2004: 167).

I attempted to analyse these inter-ethnic descent group relationships and identity issues by a combination of two methods: the evaluation of historical accounts and cultural comparison. I undertook fieldwork in southern Kazakhstan. I chose the Turkestan region of Kazakhstan for obvious reasons, it is the famous religious centre where many *Khojas* of various lineages and ethnic affiliation are concentrated. I attempted to study not only *Khoja* identity expression but also the interplay of multiple identities in the process of interaction of various groups.

Categorising *Khoja* according to linguistic principles, one can find the following groups in Central Asia: the Uzbek-speaking, the Kazak-speaking, the Tajik-speaking, and the Turkmen-speaking *Khoja*. Some of them are bilingual speaking both Uzbek and Tajik or both Kazak and Uzbek. If there are enough other elements (political, economic, or cultural) on which a feeling of ethnic belonging and commonality is based, such an ethnic unit can tolerate a high degree of linguistic diversity. For *Khojas*, it is a real or imagined

or constructed idea of common origin, genealogies. In order to differentiate various groups of Khoja, I use two criteria: descent and language. My conclusion is that the group relationships between some lineages of the Uzbek-speaking, the Kazak-speaking, and the Tajik-speaking Khojas, i.e. the descent group relationships, are due to a real or believed common origin. The strongest arguments for a common origin have been derived from comparisons of group-specific cultural features. Common origins and subsequent splits are also reported by oral history, so the two utilised types of evidence confirm one another.

In order to understand the Khoja as a privileged social group, we need to shed some light on the concept of status groups. Max Weber defines status group as a group of people (part of a society) that can be differentiated on the basis of non-economical qualities like honour, prestige, and religion (Gerth 1958: 186–187). However, it was not possible to be a member of a Khoja descent group, which had hereditary rights.

Various identities become applicable in various situations. In a considered interval of time, we choose one or a limited number of identities as leading. In some situations we want to note distinction, and in others we look for something general or a general affiliation. Groups in certain conditions can keep their clan identity after an ethnic reaffiliation (Schlee 1994: 234). Collective identities are articulated with reference to various dimensions, (nationality, ethnicity, kinship, language, religion, local or regional origins, etc.), which are themselves complexly structured and may be combined in various ways. Within the range of options of identification, special attention has to be paid to the size of the groups or categories defined by alternative identity concepts. In my case studies, one can differentiate identities on various levels, which include ethnic identities (e.g. Kazak, Uzbek, Arab), civic identity (e.g. Kazakstani), or regional identities of various levels. There are also other levels of identities, which include tribal and clan identities or Khoja lineages and sub-lineages, particularly among Kazak-speaking Khojas. Locality, as well as other aspects, can be significant identity generating factors. Manipulation of the group size or alliances of groups have great value. I analysed the policy of size: inclusion and exclusion through marriage strategies and individual manipulations.

Following the conclusions by Schlee and Donahoe on how trans-ethnic groups came into being in Africa and Siberia (Donahoe/Schlee: 79–80), I found that interethnic Khoja identity in Central Asia was forming in three different ways: 1. Khoja predate the present-day ethnic groups Kazak, Tajik, and Uzbek. 2. After the boundaries between the modern ethnic groups had started to develop, individuals or groups have crossed them and affiliated themselves with another ethnic group. In the cases in which they nomadised with distinct cultural features, they did not give up their original affiliation. 3. In the course of the establishment of the Kazak khanate (starting in the 15th

century), non-Kazak holy lineages were allotted to certain Kazak clans on whom they became economically dependent. These collective adoptions did not supersede the older clan relationships by descent or putative descent, particularly in urban areas and adjacent territories.

In the pre-Soviet period, the identities like tribal, clan, locality, family, etc. were more important for the Central Asian population of the region in determining loyalties than ethnic origin. Along with the question of blurred boundaries between ethnic groups, there was the matter of multiple levels of identity. While discussing the role of the state in identity formation, Barth notes, “the state is a specifiable third player in the processes of boundary construction between groups” (Barth 1994: 19). In 1924, the existing political-administrative organisation was broken up by the national delimitation of Central Asia and replaced by ethnically defined republics. Language was viewed as the central criterion for affiliation to one or another ethnic group (Gero 2007: 21, 24). This laid the structural foundations for the reformulation of the parameters of identity. Tribal/regional designations were now subsumed under institutionalised ‘nationalities’ (e.g. Uzbek, Turkmen, Tajik, etc.) (Akiner 1998: 12–13).

In the 1920s and 1930s, Khojas were persecuted and expropriated. A significant number of Central Asian Khoja intellectuals were arrested and killed, especially if they were mullahs or Islamic scholars. It appears that the less distinguished and well-to-do Khoja families were more likely to escape persecution. Some generations later, Khojas joined the Communist Party, thus gaining the same high social status and prosperity that their ancestors had enjoyed as religious authorities. In my opinion, some Khoja groups suffered from cultural trauma in the early Soviet period. For privileged Khoja groups, the traumatogenic change was loss of property as a result of state policy and the breakdown of the political and economic regime.

The Soviet policy to homogenise the society in Central Asia and to create national identities could not eliminate some specific identities in the region. Since the fall of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Central Asian republics in 1991, Khojas, particularly in Kazakstan, have recovered some of their former prestige.

All Khojas I talked to in Turkestan had their genealogies. Some of them claimed to be descendants of the Prophet through his son-in-law Caliph Ali.² The purpose of genealogies was not simply to show the line of relatives, but also to show people who is a descendant of the Prophet or of Caliphs, whom they must respect.

Among Uzbeks in Kazakstan, internal differentiation has traditionally been organised according to regional origin, i. e. *Turkistonlik*, *Qarnoqlik*, etc. Regional identities still play a more important role. Most people preferred to

² Interview Turkestan, November 2010.

classify themselves primarily in local terms than as Turkestanian or depending on their origin within the province. The Uzbek-speaking Khojas of Turkestan city claimed to be descendants of Sufi leaders; Ali Khoja, Sadr ata, etc. According to the oral tradition, some Khojas came from Bukhara in the 19th century. Some groups of Uzbek-speaking Khoja of Turkestan intermarry with the Kazak-speaking Khoja. During the interviews, Khoja often were confused with ethnic categories. Some respondents doubted that Kazaks have Khoja groups, and vice versa some Kazak-speaking Khoja did not understand questions about 'Uzbek' Khojas. Turkestan Khojas had close relationships and marriages with Samarkand, Tashkent, and Bukhara Khojas in the past. In the 1930s, many of them left Turkestan for Samarkand and Tashkent. As one of my informants mentioned: "There are no Kazak or Uzbek Khojas, all of them belong to a single Khoja group. So-called 'Uzbek' and 'Kazak' Khojas are a result of the Soviet nationalities policy".³ I observed also another case. In elaborating the specific Kazak-Khoja qualities, some Khoja very often seek to distinguish themselves from Uzbek Khojas, as the following statement by an informant exemplifies: "The Kazak-Khojas know their seven ancestors; they have higher moral values and sincerity. The 'Uzbek Khojas' are completely different people."⁴ But this is not to say that Khojas distinguish themselves less from Kazaks, exactly the opposite is true. It rather seems that Kazak-Khojas feel more of a need to distinguish themselves from Uzbek-Khojas with whom they have much more in common. Next to the pure genetic explanation for the specific Khoja qualities, some Khojas also mention their particular history and also religious values.

Endogamous marriages prevail among the Uzbek-speaking Khojas contrary to descendants of nomadic, Kazak-speaking Khojas. This seems rather contradictory, when the Kazak Khojas discuss the fact that the Prophet gave his daughter to his cousin Ali. However, the influence of nomadic Kazak traditions is strong among the Kazak Khojas. Some Kazak-speaking Khoja like Akkurgan and Khorasan Khojas stigmatise endogamous marriages as 'the Uzbek custom'. The situation in Turkistan city is different because of long-term interactions between Kazak-speaking and Uzbek-speaking Khojas.

I also observed that in the Uzbek society in Qarnak village, which is near Turkestan, a local Khoja community had started to intermarry with non-Khoja groups since the 1970s/80s.

Although Khojas logically have an Arab as an ancestor, in Kazakhstan, only some of them consider themselves to be Arabs. Indeed, given the vast range of physical types and different native languages (none Arabic) found among

³ Interview, native of Turkestan, claimed to be a descendant of Sufi leader Khoja Ahmad Yassavi. December 2010.

⁴ Interview, Turkestan. Khorasan Khoja. November 2010.

Khoja in Central Asia, some Khojas claim Arab ancestry, but many of them reject this statement.

My conclusion is that the group relationships between the Uzbek-speaking and the Kazak-speaking, i. e. the descent group relationships on which this study concentrates, are due to a common or believed origin. The strongest arguments for a common origin have been derived from comparisons of genealogies despite some differences. Some of these, which are consciously used as group-identifying symbols (shrines, genealogies, etc.), are shared between 'brother' descent groups in different ethnic groups. Common origins and subsequent splits are also reported by oral history, so the two types of evidence used confirm each other. The state played a crucial role in the identity formation process in Central Asia during the Soviet period. I argue that the Soviet policy to homogenise society in Central Asia and to create the national identities could not eliminate some specific identities in the region. Despite the Soviet nationalities policy, some Khoja groups have preserved their identity. For some Khoja groups, ethnicity has been rather fluid while group identity is a comparatively conservative principle. Nevertheless, depending on the situation and context, various identities are applicable. In the case of Khoja groups, the variations of identities are more numerous and complicated.

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THOSE LEFT-BEHIND: MOBILITY AND IMMOBILITY IN THE TAJIK COUNTRYSIDE

(MELTEM SANCAK)

Profile

Meltem Sancak holds a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Zurich. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology and, starting from January 2014, holds a SNSF-funded research fellowship at Harvard University. She has conducted fieldwork in Uzbekistan and Kazakstan on questions of economic transformation, social change, migration and identity. Her new project is on the consequences of the mass migration of Central Asians to other parts of the world for those left behind.

While post-socialism has entered its third decade in Central Asia migration has become a primary answer to the often desolate conditions, in which people live. The main destination today is Russia, although since the beginning of the economic recovery Kazakstan started to attract some attention as well. Some migrants also move to places like Turkey, where most of them are working in the care business or are engaged in small-scale trade (Akalin 2007). The lack of perspectives due to a massive job loss in the state sector in connection with population growth motivated particularly young people to search for other options. In most cases, the aim is to improve one's living standards and save money for a house, a marriage or to establish a business (Olimova and Bosc 2003).

Migration has become one of the most researched issues in Central Asia in recent years. This is no surprise given the magnitude this phenomenon has reached and the consequences it has for the countries of origin. Apart from the dangers the migrants encounter abroad, this has far-reaching impacts on those who stayed, those left-behind. What is missing in the literature is, however, a look at these effects of migration. This project proposes to study mobility as well as 'immobility' in an integrative way rather than as separate phenomena. It proposes to see migration as one facet in larger social processes, as one possible option and not so much as a distinct happening. The objective is thus to understand its relation with poverty and stratification as well as its impacts on gender, generations or ethnicity.

Most studies on migration typically focus either on the motives that make people move or on the way they integrate into the host society and the degree

to which they maintain relations with their place of origin (Vertovec 2007). In the particular case of labour migration of Central Asians to Russia and other places, the latter is certainly of preponderant importance. At least in the beginning these stays abroad are defined as temporary and as a way to provide one's family with remittances. But while people migrate in order to keep things alive at home, they also aim at preserving what they leave behind, their houses, their land plots and their family structures. What has been less studied is this impact on home communities and more generally migration as one aspect of larger social changes. Besides those left behind there are also people who decide not to migrate. These will, however, be equally affected by the consequences of migration, at least when it is happening on a scale as is the case of Central Asia today.

Tajikistan is still a somewhat neglected part of the region. Surrounded by Turkic speaking countries, it forms "an enclave of Iranian language in a Turcophone area" (Djalali 1998:xi; see also Barfield 2010). The civil war, which lasted from 1992 until 1997, has put the country in a particularly difficult situation. Since 1991, the Tajik economy has been facing many difficulties that had short- and long-term effects on the life of rural households. As a landlocked and mountainous country with little arable land Tajikistan was already marginal during Soviet times (Rowe 2009; Harris 2004, 2006). It was little industrialized and has been highly dependent on the growing of cotton as in Uzbekistan. The basic needs of the population, like grain or energy, were in turn provided by other republics (Harris 2006). Still today, 70 percent of the total population in Tajikistan live in rural areas. Agriculture provides



Photo 1: Remnants of the socialist past in rural Tajikistan

(M. SANCAK, 2013)



Photo 2: A group of women working as street vendors along the road between Dushanbe and Qurghonteppa (M: Sancak, 2013)

the main employment facilities for 60% of the population and makes up for some 30% of the GDP. Within the CIS Tajikistan still has the lowest income per capita with \$1.750 – compared to \$15.000 in Russia (Lerman 2009:303, Kumo 2012). According to UNDP and the World Bank report of 2002–2003 average monthly salaries are below 10 US dollars (World Bank 2003).

Most Tajiks thus experienced fundamental changes in their lives. It started with the loss of jobs and the social security of the Soviet days, which is still today highly appreciated and remembered. The following civil war added to this the loss of beloved ones as well as mass displacement and poverty. Considering the economic and demographic trends it is easy to understand the out-migration from Tajikistan. The only abundantly available resource is labour because of the rapid population growth and the lack of other employment opportunities. According to Kumo “more than 5% of Tajikistan’s total population and over 16% of its economically active population have moved to Russia alone as international labour migrants.” (2012:89). Between 1989, when the last Soviet census was taken, and 2000, when the first in independent Tajikistan was conducted, the total population increased from 5.1 to 6.1 millions, or by 20% (Rowland 2005). For 2011, estimations run as high as 7.6 millions. Of all the former Soviet republics this is the most rapid growth rate. At the same time, between these two periods 437,000 people, mainly ethnic Russians and Ukrainians, left Tajikistan. In the rural areas, population increase is even more remarkable and accounted for 30%, even though the countryside lost 283,900 people due to rural-urban as well as international migration (Rowland 2005).



Photo 3: With the migration of men, women and children became the providers for all daily needs. Here they bring fuel back home (M: SANCAR, 2013)

Migration leaves traces in society in many different life spheres with different consequences for the individuals depending on gender and generational hierarchies. In the case of Tajikistan mostly men leave and women stay behind. This has not only economic but also significant social consequences for the life of the people as ‘staying put’ (cf. Reeves 2011). Those who stayed have to continue to shoulder the burdens of everyday life as left-behinds. These family members have not only new responsibilities, but are confronted with changing domestic arrangements and other types of obligations to carry out during the unknown period of absence of their husbands, sons and fathers.

Remittances, no doubt, have an economic remedy for the families and money transferred from Russia is often the prime source of livelihood (see also Isabaeva 2011 for Kyrgyzstan). But while remittances can mitigate the economic precarious situation, they can also cause new tensions, difficulties and restrictions in other spheres. While some women take more responsibility and are strongly involved in decision-making processes, others experience even more social control and restrictions. Especially for young women whose husbands are away or for girls whose fathers are absent, their behaviour is now more under control by their relatives since the honour of the family is strongly defined through their proper behaviour (Reeves 2011).

This is confirmed by preliminary findings within this project. Besides the morality and honour aspects migration also produces gender imbalances as many women experience a new type of seclusion. Some women become the second wife of another man, so that a relative protection from poverty is

provided, but mostly by an Islamic marriage and without legal rights. Absence of husbands can also put some women in a situation that leads them to accept otherwise unacceptable behaviour by others with whom they live under the same roof, like their mothers-in-law who often also control the remittances of their sons. Thus, while the status of the older generation is more consolidated, the status of younger females, and particularly that of daughters-in-law is weakened and becoming more vulnerable. In case of domestic tensions, the absence of the son can help to set the young bride adrift and force her back to her father's house where she will usually be not very welcomed either.

At a basic level, this project will thus look very generally at the impacts of this mass out-migration on those left behind and the social changes it triggers off. Other factors include the aftermath of the civil war, which has so fundamentally shaken the country, as well as population growth and land scarcity. Thus, migration is one option to deal with an overall precarious situation that needs to be included in the analysis. One further question is if migration really brings relief or if it actually accelerates poverty for different reasons. It is not unusual that men who left do not come back since they have 'second wives' in Russia or become victims of increasing racism there. In this case, for the partners who stay behind not only economic but also other problems emerge that one has to deal with as a widow or abandoned wife. This group of women are most confronted with severe poverty. In contrast, the successful migrants and their families who invest back home by, for instance, establishing business, building new houses or extending their networks, create not



Photo 4: A pile of handmade blankets and pillows for the dowry. The high costs of wedding ceremonies are one of the reasons for migration (M. SANCAK, 2013)

only economic-based stratification but also raise their position in society due to the experiences (and cultural capital, one might say) they gain abroad.

Apparently, the impacts of migration on society at home reach also into other spheres of life where one would not expect them in the first place. One emerging phenomenon observed is that especially those who have to deal with the absence of their spouses find spiritual relief and support in religion. It will have to be established empirically if and why this development may be related with the problems caused by migration. What seems clear is that religious types of gatherings for many left-behinds serve as a chance to socialise and experience exchange, as is the case also in Uzbekistan (Sancak 2012).

The ongoing migrations of today pose a fundamental challenge for society in Tajikistan. While there is no physical force inherent, apart from the fact, that for most this is a question of survival, the 'free' movement of people is by some perceived as a threat. This is true first of all because, although there are also cases that women either accompany their husbands or leave by themselves, overall migration in Tajikistan is strongly gendered. At the same time, the out-migration especially of young male is seen as a threat to country's stability, in particular due to its geo-political location along the border with Afghanistan. At the same time, the mass migration of Tajiks and other Central Asians provides places like Russia with a reservoir of cheap labourers that fuel its economic growth.

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DISPUTING AMIDST UNCERTAINTY: PROCEDURES OF DISPUTE MANAGEMENT IN ‘POST-WAR’ TIMES – DISPUTING PARTIES’ ACCOUNTS, BAMYAN/AFGHANISTAN (FRIEDERIKE STAHLMANN)

Profile

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Photo 1: Remnants of an ancient Buddha statue and the late bazaar – both destroyed in the recent wars.
(F. STAHLMANN, 2009)

The present research concerns the realisation of procedures of disputing under the special circumstances of so-called ‘post-war’ times with a specific focus on primary disputing parties and their dispute management.

The city of Bamyan, located in the central highlands of Afghanistan, provides a setting that is well suited for such an interest: On the one hand, the last decades of civil and regional wars and regime changes caused recurrent large shifts in power relations and immense changes in the social order. In consequence, these changes led to a huge diversification on the socio-cultural, institutional and normative level, which adds to the plurality of ethnic and religious traditions. This diversification puts the order of disputing up for fundamental negotiation and makes it subject to a multitude of large- and small-scale legal and political interventions.

On the other hand, daily life has been peaceful and in practical terms safe since the ousting of the Taliban in 2001. At the time of fieldwork in 2009, the institutional landscape for offer in dispute management was relatively well established and supplemented by a wide range of (I)NGOs.

However, the large majority of people living in Bamyan assessed these conditions neither as secure, nor as just, and many would not even describe the current period as ‘post-war’. The research contributes to an understand-



Photo 2, 3: Different women, different legal authorities with very different policies.

Governor
Dr. Habiba Sarabi
(SOURCE: WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/KABULPUBLICDIPLOMACY/5656421203, 2011)

ing of such a ‘post-war’ setting by analysing the reasons for these emic assessments and the consequences they have on people’s dispute management. To do so, the project follows disputing parties through their dispute management and analyses their decision-making processes in regards to questions crucial for the realisation of procedures of disputing.

These questions include: who is regarded to be a party, how is the decision made to blame and by that to establish a disputing relationship, what defines the aims of the disputing process, how are third parties dealt with, and finally how are the results and at least temporary endings of disputing processes dealt with.

This detailed analysis not only confirms the general assessment of normative plurality and an unsettled legal order. It also points to the problem of present uncertainty that parties are confronted with in their decision-making: Uncertainty about the other parties’ means, interests and normative convictions, about institutional agendas and practices, as well as about the social relationships that disputing relationships are based on – in short, uncertainty about information crucial for decision-making in disputing. Uncertainty, however, not only concerns the present, but also the future. This future is by most expected to be the continuation of the past experience of recurrent fundamental socio-political change and even war, and therefor unpredictable.



Mother of 7,
Grandmother of 28
(F. STAHLMANN, 2009)



Photo 4: Discussing how to go on.

(F. STAHLMANN, 2009)

This expectation of fundamental future changes in the socio-political organisation has tremendous effects on dispute management on its account: It closes the time-frame disputing strategies are based on in a manner not envisaged by the available normative orders and does not allow for sustainable solutions based on the parties' interests. It further effectively inhibits the renegotiation of norms of legitimacy that a reliable order of disputing would require, even for those who engage in a negotiation of the future in normative terms. Disputing mechanisms such as retaliation, mediation, and punishment thereby turn into means of negotiating power rather than justice and are defined by those parties in power rather than those who might be legitimised on



Photo 5: Waiting for what there is to come.

(F. STAHLMANN, 2009)



Photo 6: New Year's celebration – hoping but not expecting a good one to come.
(F. STAHLMANN, 2009)

normative grounds. This is not only perceived as a continuation of the officially past war times, it also delegitimizes the current enterprise of state-building and inhibits peace-building in socio-legal regards, despite Bamyan being politically peaceful in 2009.

Analysing disputing parties' decision-making processes thereby not only contributes to an understanding of the realisation of procedures and mechanisms of disputing and the workings of a legal order in times of fundamental change. It moreover emphasises the importance of how actors interpret such circumstances based on their experiences with the past and expectations of the future.

PASTORALISM IN WESTERN MONGOLIA: CURRENT CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES

(LINDA TUBACH AND PETER FINKE)

Profile

Linda Tubach studied Cultural Anthropology and Sociology of Non-Western Societies at the University of Amsterdam. She is currently a PhD student and assistant at the University of Zurich. Her fieldwork focuses on Western Mongolia where she has conducted research on political and economic aspects of hunting processes among Kazaks in Bayan-Olgii. Her new project is on social strategies of pastoralists in situations of uncertainty among Mongolian herders in the Khovd area.

The steppes of Western Mongolia have been a place of pastoral nomadism for many centuries, which has shaped the life of its local communities in profound ways. And this life has always been one exposed to particular risks due to pastoralists' high dependence on dynamic natural and social conditions, including human and animal predators, epidemics and climate conditions. This is true for Mongolian pastoralists as much as for pastoralists anywhere in the world. In recent decades, these risks have, however, experienced new forms and have partly turned life into a state of uncertainty. This project follows these changes and analyses the strategies that pastoralists adopt to deal with them.

In the course of the 20th century, Mongolian pastoralists have experienced dramatic transformation processes starting with the collectivization and establishment of a socialist production regime since the 1930s (Rosenberg 1981; Goldstein and Beall 1994; Humphrey and Sneath 1999; Rossabi 2005). Through the pastoral cooperatives social and economic services like health care, free education and transportation, veterinary services, hay production and winter shelters were provided. The cooperatives also controlled most aspects of the pastoral production, including specialisations in herding and annual grazing cycles. What this also implied was a transfer of responsibility and risk from the individual producer to the state (Potkanski 1993; Finke 2004).

Once the Soviet Union and with it socialism suddenly collapsed in 1991, the situation changed again rapidly. Mongolia had to implement fundamental reforms towards a market economy that were followed by extremely high unemployment rates, increasing poverty and general uncertainty. The collectives in the rural areas were dismantled and livestock privatised turning herder house-

holds into small private enterprises again (Potkanski 1993; Finke 2003; Sneath 2003). The relapse of the formerly stable and subsidised economy caused a crisis of the existing political, economic and social institutions and radically cut people off from their secure and well-organised lives under socialism (Rossabi 2005).

We will look in this project at the impacts these changes had on pastoralists in the western parts of the country, more specifically in the northern part of the province of Khovd. The region is also known for its natural beauty, composed of the high mountain ranges of the Mongolian Altay on the one hand, and steppe lowlands, which include the world's most northern deserts on the other hand. In-between are some of the largest lakes in the country, although most of them salty. With annual average temperatures around zero and precipitation rates between 100 and 300 mm local ecology poses a serious challenge for human economic activities aiming to secure their livelihoods. Most of the area may only be used as seasonal pastures that allow the raising of sheep and goats, cattle, horses and a few camels. As vegetation is scarce, grazing cycles are very complex and in need of substantial space and flexibility. Agriculture as a supplement does exist along the lower course of some of the major rivers, and may locally be of high importance. In cultural terms, the region is considered the most heterogeneous in the country. Besides numer-



Photo 1: The statue of Galdan Boshigt, last ruler of the west-Mongolian Oyrats, in the city of Khovd (P. FINKE, 2011)



Photo 2: Summer pasture in western Mongolia, along the river Buyant
(L. TUBACH, 2013)

ous Mongolian groups like Khalkha, Zakhchin, Dörvöd or Ööld, Khovd province also harbours a large number of Turkic-speakers, primarily Kazaks and a few Tuvinians, as well as Uryankhai. This ethnic diversity has impacts on pastoral land allocation as well as on differences in economic and social strategies employed in dealing with the current challenges.

In spite of this, the region and its people have seen comparatively little scholarly attention. The challenges that pastoralists in Khovd – as in other parts of the country – face ground, first of all, in the on-going difficulties of adapting to a new economic regime. Problems of market access and high transaction costs were particularly severe during most of the 1990s (Finke 2004). In the case of the Kazaks, the main strategy to counter this was to broaden the basis of ones household by diversifying economic activities, particularly including agriculture and trade where suitable. This was to reduce risks among less well-off households while for the rich it provided a mean to accumulate and spread wealth. At the same time, increasing ones herd size was also designed as a risk-minimizing strategy while the shift to more goats was to take advantage of the only animal resource easily and profitably to be marketed, namely cashmere. The increase in livestock and the rise of transportation costs, however, resulted in a decrease in mobility and growing discontent regarding access to land rights. The redistribution of livestock in private hands and the return to multi-species herds also played a key role in this (Finke 2000). At the same time, a general mistrust in social institutions, and often in each other, did not make cooperative solutions easy to achieve (Finke 2004). In the meanwhile, due to the sudden uncertainty and economic



Photo 3: Milking goats

(L. TUBACH, 2013)

downturn of the early 1990s, many urban citizens took refuge in rural areas and picked up nomadic pastoralism as an alternative livelihood, since jobs and even food supplies were hardly to be found anymore. The number of herder households in rural areas thereby increased significantly (PALD 1993; Rossabi 2005). This was a marked contrast to the increasing sedentarization processes in other parts of the pastoralist world (Fratkin 1997).

However, since the end of the 1990s this trend started to reverse and pastoralism to lose on its long-term role as national economic backbone (Mearns 2004; Galvin 2009). While a certain flourishing of markets and rising demand for meat in urban places has benefitted pastoralists, at the same time, increasing risks detain people more and more to act upon those directly. One of these threats is natural disasters. Between 1999 and 2002 a series of severe droughts and harsh winter hazards (called *dzud* in Mongolian) caused enormous loss of livestock. Many pastoralist existences were tragically disrupted. Although animals had recovered by 2005, this was unequally spread among herders. Then, most tragically, another *dzud* hit Mongolia in 2009 and repeatedly in 2010, when again 20% of the total national livestock population was lost. The Western regions were in both cases among the most severely affected areas. Mongolian pastoralists traditionally used to have a very sophisticated knowledge of *dzud* and people are aware that those are part of their natural ecological environment. But the frequency in recent years is perceived as unnatural and assigned to climate change and global warming (Fernández-Gimenez et al. 2012).

A second challenge is related to land allocation rules. During the privatization process in the early 1990s pastureland was explicitly excluded. At the same time,

the Mongolian state steadily withdrew from its involvement in pasture regulations (Mearns 1993; Finke 2004; Upton 2012). This causes ambiguity and confusion among herders. In many places the concentration caused “overstocking, declined seasonal movements and out-of-season grazing” (Himmelsbach 2012: 165). Additionally, growing territorial conflicts prompted “a breakdown of pasture use norms, trust and cooperation amongst herders” (Upton 2012: 229). Trespassing for instance had become a significant problem and source of offence (Finke 2000, 2004). In part, ‘new nomads’ or ‘newcomers’ have contributed to such conflicts due to lacking awareness or acceptance of customary rules (Rossabi 2005; Upton 2012). New national land laws are on their way for some time and are expected to become implemented sooner or later. They consider Western neoliberal economic models that suggest privatization of land increases private responsibility and therefore stimulates economic growth effectively. This would, however, complicate the customary use of pastureland and reduce the herders’ mobility, since – as in other parts of the world – “land tenure changes from communal to private ownership often fragments grassland” (Galvin 2009: 186). Different scholars have argued that mobility in itself plays a key role in sustainable pasture management in Mongolia (e.g. Humphrey and Sneath 1999; Sneath 2003, Stumpp et al. 2005; Sternberg 2012). Still, Mongolian herders lack influence on governmental regulation matters (Sternberg 2012). Bottom-up approaches focus on herder-groups that were implemented through these projects for increasing resilience against natural risks. Advantages of the law would be a reduction of free-riding, decreasing transaction costs through enhanced interpersonal trust, and growing social capital through bottom-up unionism (Himmelsbach 2012). Such expectations are, however, mainly based on theoretical grounds and very little on actual empirical proof. It has been demonstrated that state regulations or privatization of commons from ‘outside’ are often less effective than locally organised cooperation (Ostrom 1990). Furthermore, relevant questions concerning the pastoralists’ membership, the levels of people’s actual participation and in- and exclusion processes prove to be rather ambivalent (Upton 2012). Mongolian, as well as Kazak, pastoralists appear to rather avoid formal associational groups and prefer participating within personal and informal networks (Finke 2004; Byambajav 2012). And, concerns are that enhanced group cohesion among established herder-groups might stimulate an exclusion of the poorest (Upton 2008; Himmelsbach 2012).

Finally, as a third threat, the growing legal and illegal mining sector in Mongolia is another strain on the herders’ customary institutions regulating pasture usage and their relationship with the government, but in fact also with one another. While the mining industry has been most beneficial for the national market value, on its downside it heavily pollutes and destroys pastureland. As a result, many herder households have been displaced without receiving appropriate compensation (Dierkens & Byambajav 2012). Collective resistance lacks sufficient social infrastructures and mainly depends on non-local, national and in-

ternational mediators. Collective action against illegal mining, commonly referred to as *ninja* mining, is even less cohesive due to growing conflicts of interests between herders and its ambivalent implications. It is not used to generate long-term wealth, as an alternative to herding, but is rather an expression of temporary autonomy. Money earned through illegal mining is perceived as ‘polluted’ and often immediately spent, mainly on alcohol, which makes *ninja* mining rather “an auxiliary economy to herding – not its replacement” (High 2008: 210). Herders are said to end up mining in the areas that they initially tried to protect, despite their awareness of the negative long-term effects on pastureland, in other words facing a problem of collective action. This additional pressure on local cooperation could enhance a ‘tragedy of the commons’ (Hardin 1968) by investing in short-term benefits while at the same time destroying the commons the herders depend on.

Prospects of a rural livelihood in Mongolia have thus arguably changed from a situation of calculable risks to menacing uncertainty. Hence it is doubtful whether Mongolian pastoralists’ traditional economic and social strategies are still sufficient. The intention behind this project is to come to understand the consequences and responses among Mongolian pastoralists, their actions and considerations from a micro-level perspective. At the core will be the various strategies, economic, social or cultural, that people employ to deal with a situation full of uncertainties. Also, little is known about people’s perceptions of such changes as well as their effects on formal and informal social institutions. At the same time, the on-going economic and social stratification among pastoralists has not been of help to increase coop-



Photo 4: Kazaks selling potatoes to a trader from Ulaanbaatar

(P. FINKE, 2011)

eration either. They have become a far less homogenous group and vulnerability becomes a more individualised matter. At the same time, obscurity about customary and formal rules that no longer apply trigger conflicts concerning territorial issues among pastoralists. Although by and large peaceful, ethnicity may also start playing a significant role in the way people create social loyalties and boundaries, especially within the context of a dominant ethnic Khalkh nation and state ideology (Bulag 1998).

What the crisis in the pastoral sector has also invoked is a return of the earlier urban-rural migration. Many who have lost their animals in the consecutive *dzud* have decided to move to town, either the regional centre, the city of Khovd, or to the national capital Ulaanbaatar. As livestock losses affected many of the 'new nomads' in particular, these are also prominent among the families seeking refuge in an urban setting. Decisively different is the situation among the local Kazaks. While there has also been a minor migration to Mongolian towns, the vast majority has decided to leave the country altogether and move to neighbouring Kazakhstan (Finke forthcoming). In combination with ongoing stratification, the temptation to move is expected to lower social cohesion and mutual trust making collective action an even more difficult to achieve task.

In theoretical terms, the project looks at issues of risk and uncertainty, property rights and institutional change as well as the decision-making processes related to that. Rapid socio-economic stratification processes and anxiety about the meaning and outcome of ongoing transformations inevitably will change social life. Institutional changes are significant since they are expressed through new formal and informal arrangements (Knight & Ensminger 1998). This applies to post-socialist Mongolia, where the state predominantly withdrew from its former responsibilities, in a very specific way (Finke 2004). Further, the lack of formally implemented regulations and sanctioning as well as ambiguity towards informal norms significantly increases the levels of uncertainty. However, risk can also be approached as a phenomenon that interrelates "cognitive frameworks people use to interpret misfortune and [...] strategies people adopt to cope with crises" (Bollig 2006: 9).

In an uncertain situation however decision-makers lack such information, which makes calculations even more difficult, especially when social and political institutions malfunction. Crucial in this regard are property rights. The meaning and credibility of land laws in Mongolia, however, are unclear due to the deficiency of the sanctioning of misbehaviour, like in the case of illegal gold miners, and lack of necessary time depth and reliability (Finke 2004). This perspective prevents the simplifying assumptions that firstly, social cohesion and social capital necessarily exists among people from the rural areas and secondly, that people's individual aims match with general pastoral group-interests. Instead, social institutions, actions and perceptions are approached as process-oriented and studied from within at an empirical level of everyday life.

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INDEX

A Bassi, Kadija ix

Adamaoua province

(Departement Mbéré) 34

Afghanistan v|ix|2–3|6–7|13|16|

101|114|117–118

Africa v|25–27|29–30|38–39|

44|51|103

North East Africa 25

West Africa 25|29–30|

39|51

Aga Khan Development Network

(AKDN) 72

Alymbaeva, Aida Aaly ix|63|66–69

Aku 35|37|41

Allworth, Edward A. 3–5

American University of Central

Asia 63|85

Arabs 9|29|101|105

B adakhshan 72–73

Gorno-Badakhshan 72

Baldauf, Ingeborg 3–5

Bamyan ix|117–118|121

Bariba 34

Barth, Fredrik 3|17|28–29|50|

101|104

Behrends, Andrea 25–26

Benin 28|34|37

Northern Benin 37

Biczuk, Małgorzata Maria ix|71–74

Bierschenk, Thomas 37

Bishkek ix|63|65|71|85–88|91|

93|96

Blue Nile 29–30

Bobo 33–34|39

Bollig, Michael 129

Boobola province 33

Borgou 34|37

Boutrais, Jean 37

Braukämper, Ulrich 28–32|35

Bregel, Yuri 11

Bukhara ix|9–12|44|46–47|105

Bukhara oasis 46

Bulag, Uradyn E. 129

Buri, Tabea ix|9|15–16|75–78|

81–82

Burkina Faso 28|32–33|37|39

Burma-Suu 64–65

Bwa 33–34|39

Byambajav, Dalaibuyan 127

C ameroon 28|34–36|41–44

Northern Cameroon 34–35|

37|41

Cattle 31–34|39–41|51|124

Cattle breeding 33|39

Cattle husbandry 36|39|41

Caucasus 38|71

Centlivres, Pierre, and Micheline

Centlivres-Demont 7

Central Asia v–vi|1–4|7–8|11|16|

21–26|46|48–49|52|63|65|71|

85|94–95|97–98|101–104|

106|109–110

Research Group on

Central Asia v

Cerny, Astrid 78

Chad 25–26

Chelpek 63–69

Chelpek village 63

China ix|15|64|72|75–80|93–95|

97|98|107

China Studies 75

Chui district 86

Clifford, James 28

Collective identity 3|29|33–34|

37|45

Customs Union 67D

Darfur 25–26|30–31
Diallo, Youssouf 28–29|32–34|
37–41
Diaspora(s) v–vi|2–3|9|13|
15–17|25|75–77
Diener, Alexander C. 77–79
Dispute management 117–120
 Dispute management
 procedures 117
Donahoe, Brian 26|101|103
Duffield, Mark R. 29–31
Dungan 66|93–98
 Dungan migrant
 communities 93
Dyula 39
Dzud 130

Elwert, George 28|44
Ethiopia 25–26|32|38
Ethnicity 2|13|17–18|26|28–29|
36|39|44|47|50|101|103|106|
109|129
 Ethnic boundaries 17|20
 Ethnic group(s) 1|3|6–7|13|9|
17–18|19|25|27–29|33|38–42|
48–49|51–52|56|63|75|93|95|
97|101|103–104|106
 Interethnic relations
 2|8|13|14|26|38|40|41|78
Evers, Hans-Dieter 41|50

Ferghana valley 44|46
Feyissa, Dereje 25|32
Peter Finke v|vii|ix|1|3|5|6|7–12|
14–17|27|44–48|50|52|75–81|
123–125|127–129
Fragner, Bert G. 4|7|9
Free University Berlin 117
Fulbe v|26–27|29–37|39|40–42|
44|50–52

Fulbe-Huya 34–37
Fulbe-Mbororo 30–37|41–42

Galvin, Kathleen A. 126–127
Gansu ix|76–77|82|96|98
Ghana 25
Goats 124–126
GBAO 72–73
Guichard, Martine 25|28–29|
34–37

Harris, Richard 76|78|110
Hausa 27|30|35|41–42
Herder(s) 30–31|33–34|39|
47–48|51|123|126–128
 Herder-groups 127
Hijra 30
Himmelsbach, Raffael 127
Hirsch, Francine 3–5
Holzwarth, Wolfgang ix|15
Horstmann, Alexander 40|42
Huyaisation 36–37

Iilkhamov, Alisha 3–4
Iran v|76
 Iranian (Indo-European) sub-
 strate 27|48
 Iranian language 46|48
 East Iranian language group 72
Isabaeva, Eliza ix|85|89|112
Islam 21|26|30|33–37|42|45|
71|85
 Islamic civilisation 46
 Islamic law 117
 Islamic marriage 113
 Islamisation 35
Ismaili group 72
Ivory Coast (Côte d’Ivoire) 28|
32–33|37|39|55|60

Jalalabad 14
jihaad 34–35|37
Jizzak ix

Kalmaks 63–65
Sart-Kalmak(s) 63–66
Karakol ix|64–67|69
Przheval'sk 64–65
Karimova, Baktygul ix|1
Kassymova, Didar 76–77|83
Kazakstan v|ix|1–3|6|9|13|16|38|
49|50|75–82|88|93|94–98|
101–102|104–105|109|129
Kazak diaspora 77
Kazak oralman 75|79
Kazak(s) 4|8–9|10|15–16|
45–46|49|52|75–80|82|101|
105|125|128–129
South-eastern Kazakstan 79
Southern Kazakstan 16
Khoja(s) 101–106
Khoja identities 101
Khorezm 10|12|17|19|44|48–51
Khovd ix|124–125|129
Knight, Jack 18|129
Kumo, Kazuhiro 111
Kvartira 86–87
Kvartiranttar 87
Kyrgyzstan v|ix|1–3|6|13–15|23|
63–64|67|69|71|76|85–88|
93–96|98|112
Kyrgyz 1|8|11–12|14|18|49|
63|65–68|72|85–86|88–89|97
Southern Kyrgyzstan 1|14
Kyzyl Zher 86–91

Livestock 123|125–126|129

Mahdiyya 30
Mali 32–33|39–40
Malikov, Azim ix|101
Martin, Terry 4–5|26|41
Masanchi 93|96|98
Mearns, Robin 126–127
Misaje 35|41–42
Mongolia ix|1|75–83|94|123|
126–129|135
Mongolian Altay 124
Mongolian Kazaks 77
Mongolian pastoralists 123|126
Western Mongolia 81|123|125
Moscow 23
Mossi 39–41
Muslim 4|6–8|24|33–34|41|
44–45|49
Muslims 27|30|33|35|41–42|
44–46|49
Muslim Hui 93
Muwallid 31

Nieswand, Boris 25|37
Nigeria 30|33|61
Nomads 3–4|7–8|10|13|16|20|
26–27|32

Oralman 75–79|81
Osh ix

Pamir ix|71–72
Pamir Ismailis 71–72
Pastoralism 82|123
Pastoralists 123–129
Pavlodar ix
Pelican, Michaela 35|37|41–43|55
Policy Alternatives for Livestock
Development in Mongolia
(PALD) 126

Potkanski, Tomasz 123–124
PRC 94|97–98

Qashqadarya 46
Qipchaq 4|8|11–12|15|46

Raspiska 90
Gabriele Rasuly-Paleczek 7
Reeves, Madeleine 112
Rossabi, Morris 123–124|126–127
Rottenburg, Richard 26
Rowland, Richard 111
Roy, Olivier 4|7|9
Russia 24
 Russians 65|75|80|111
 Russian language 63|65|80

Samarkand State University 101
Meltem Sancak v|ix|77–80|109–114
Sangare 33
Sanghera Balihar 85–86
Schatz, Edward A. D. 6
Schlee, Günther v–vi|1|25–28|
 31–32|37|40|42–43|45|47|
 49–50|52|82|101|103
Schoeberlein, John 3|4|7
Senufo 32–33|40
Shymkent ix|16
Sidibe 33
Smith, Anthony D. 6|28
Smith Graham 2|6
Smith Michael 33|61
Sneath, David 123–124|127
Somalia 25
Sortobe ix|93–94|96|98
Soviet Union 71–72|75|85|91|104|
 115|123
 Pre-Soviet period 101–102|104
Spencer, Sylvanus Nicholas 26

Stahlmann, Friederike ix|117|119|
 120–121
Stenning, Derrick J. 35
Sternberg, Troy 127
Sudan 25|28–32|35|51
 Eastern Sudan 29–30
Suny, Ronald Grigor 4–5
Svanberg, Ingvar 6–7
Swiss National Science Foundation
 (SNSF) 109

Tajikistan v|ix|2–3|13–15|
 71–72|94–95|110–115
Tajik(s) 3–4|7|9|10–13|15–17|
 19|46|48–49|72|101|111|114
Taldykorgan ix
Tashkent 16|50|51
Tash-Kyia 64–65
Tatars 9|49
Tokmok 93|96|98
Tovar, Soledad Jiménez ix|93–98
Tubach, Linda ix|123|125–126
Tulip Revolution 85–86
Turkestan ix|4|16
 Turk(s) 4|12|46|48
 Meskhetian Turks 45–46
 Turk languages 48
Turkey 76|83|109
 Turkic language 3|46
Turkmenistan 2–3
 Turkmens 9–11|101

Umar al-Naqar 29
Umma 45
University of Bielefeld 25|27
University of London 117
University of Zurich 75|85
Upton, Caroline 127
Uzbekistan v|ix|1–4|6|8–9|12|
 14–16|19–20|44|49–50|59|
 76–81|88|94|101|102|110|114

Uzbek(s) v|1-17|20|25-27|29|
44-46|48-50|52|88|101|104
Uzbek identity 2|8|52
Uzbekness 3|7-9|13|17|44

Werner, Cynthia 77|81
Wolof 27|39
World Bank 111

Xi'an ix
Xinjiang v

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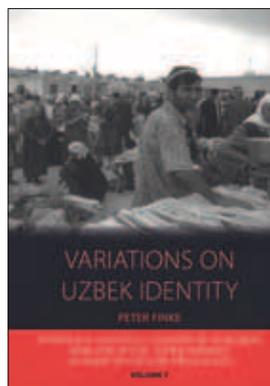


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