

Beyond Oil and Radical Islam: From Classifications to Links of Economy and Religion in Central Asia

Tuesday, May 29th, 2012, 5 pm

Clean Fake: Authenticating Documents and Persons in Migrant Moscow

Lecture by Madeleine Reeves

This lecture explores what it means for Kyrgyzstani migrant workers in contemporary Russia to be legally legible to the state in a context where multiple informal agencies now market fictive residency documents and “clean fake” work permits. Reeves argues that the space of uncertainty around being “authentically” documented provides an insight into a mode of governance in urban Russia that thrives less on rendering subjects legible than on working the space of ambiguity between life and law; a dynamic that has significant social consequences for the way certain bodies come to be scrutinized as particularly untrustworthy, particularly liable to fakery—and thus particularly legitimate targets for document checks, fines and threats of deportation. Such spaces highlight the need to explore how documentary regimes, structures of feeling and racializing practices coincide.

Madeleine Reeves teaches Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester, where she is an RCUK Research Fellow at the ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change. Her interests lie in the anthropology of place and space, the anthropology of borders, experiences of mobility and immobility, and the anthropology of the state. Her publications include a co-authored book of case studies of schools and schooling in independent Kyrgyzstan (2006), a guest edited double issue of *Central Asian Survey* on ‘*Movement, Power and Place in Central Asia*’ (2011) and recent articles in *Europe-Asia Studies*, *Society and Space* and *Slavic Review*. A monograph based on her doctoral research, ‘*Border work: spatial lives of the state in Central Asia*’ is under preparation for Cornell University Press.

This lecture series is a cooperation between the Zentrum Moderner Orient (www.zmo.de), the Querschnittsbereich Islam in den Gesellschaften Asiens und Afrikas, Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (iaaw.hu-berlin.de/islam) and the Competence Network Crossroads Asia (www.crossroads-asia.de).

During the Soviet era, religion and economy were conceived as distinct, even mutually opposed spheres with their own rationales (such as ‘rational actors’ on the one hand and ‘irrational’ ‘otherworldly’ motivations on the other). A focus on the impact of religious ideas and practices on economic processes - and vice versa - serves to question the common perception of Central Asia as a region determined by either dangerous religious movements or lucrative oil and gas reserves. The lecture series interrogates how ‘religion’ and ‘economy’ are shaped and negotiated through everyday strategies and practices. How are separations, links, cross-overs and mutual constitutions of ‘religion’ and ‘economy’ conceived and put into practice by Central Asian actors? The lecture series seeks to foreground Central Asian debates on the relationship between religious and economic domains in order to query these social, political and social science categories.

Venue:

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