

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

Wednesday, November 30th, 2011, 5 pm

The Boom, the Bust and the Mediating State: Housing Bail-outs and the Discourse of Fairness in the Wake of Financial Crisis in Kazakhstan

Lecture by Dr. Alima Bissenova

In this lecture, Alima Bissenova discusses how the Kazakh state and Kazakh society have been dealing with the excesses of the housing and construction boom period (2000 and 2007). If during the boom times, the imperative of accumulation and possession seemed to be overwhelming, in the times of the crisis, the questions of "moral economy," moral legitimation of wealth, social value, and social needs have been creeping back into the public discourse. Put bluntly, in a time of crisis, somebody has to lose, and often, it is a matter of politics to assign moral blame and then to decide who should lose (for instance, speculative investors in apartments, bankers, construction companies). The moral blame game then becomes an opportunity for a political discussion about how to differentiate between stable sustainable development, which addresses real human needs, and speculative "bubbles," which feed on a combination of predatory financial schemes and groundless expectations.

Dr. Alima Bissenova is a faculty member at the Nazarbayev University School of Humanities and Social Sciences. Since October 2011 she is a post-doctoral fellow with the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne. She has recently finished her doctorate studies in Anthropology at Cornell University and defended her dissertation "Post-socialist Dreamworlds: Construction Boom and Urban Development in Kazakhstan." She has Bachelor's degree in Kazakh Language and Literature from the Karaganda State University and Master's degree in Middle East Studies from the American University in Cairo.

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:

Zentrum Moderner Orient
Kirchweg 33

14129 Berlin-Nikolassee
www.zmo.de

GEFÖRDERT VOM