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Rewriting History: Emerging Identities and Nationalism in Central Asia

July 19-30, 2003

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under the Kazakh Academy of Sciences, Almaty

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Touraj Atabaki, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam
H. B. Paksoy, Texas Tech University
Colin Mackerras, Griffith University, Australia
Ágnes Birtalan, ELTE University, Budapest
Anuar Galiev, Kazakh Academy of Labor and Social Relations, Almaty

Dru C. Gladney

Professor of Asian Studies and Anthropology at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. He earned his Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the University of Washington, Seattle. He has been a Fulbright Research Scholar in Turkey and China, and has held faculty positions and post-doctoral fellowships at Harvard University, the University of Southern California, and the Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton. He has most recently served as Dean of Academics at the Asia-Pacific Center. He conducts research on ethnic and cultural nationalism in Asia, focusing on issues of identity, economy, nation-state formation, transnationalism, national security and political development. He has served as a consultant to the World Bank, the UN High Commission for refugees, UNESCO, the Smithsonian Institution, and the National Academy of Sciences. His works include *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Harvard, 1991; 1996), *Ethnic Identity in China: The Making of a Muslim Minority Nationality* (Harcourt Brace, 1998), *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, China, Korea, Malaya, Fiji, Turkey, and the U.S.* (Ed., Stanford, 1998). His forthcoming book is entitled *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities, and Other Sub-Altern Subjects* (Chicago).

Touraj Atabaki

Professor of History of the Middle East and Central Asia at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam. He acquired Ph. D. from Utrecht University. He has been visiting professor at the Academy of Sciences of the Republics of Central Asia and Caucasus, as well as at the Middle East Center, St. Anthony's College of the University of Oxford. He has been president of the European Society for Central Asian Studies (1998-2002), member of editorial board of the *Journal of Azerbaijani Studies* and other Academic Journals on Central Asian Studies. He has published *Azerbaijan, Ethnicity and Autonomy in the Twentieth-Century Iran* (London, 1993), *Centraal Azië* (Amsterdam, 1994), *Post Soviet Central Asia* (London, 1998), *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and the Struggle for Power in Iran* (London, 2000), *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernism in Turkey and Iran* (London, 2003).

H. B. Paksoy

Adjunct Professor of History and Unit Head at Texas Tech University. He earned his D. Phil. from Oxford University and taught at the Ohio State University, Franklin University, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, the Central Connecticut State University. He published numerous articles and books *Alpamysh: Central Asian Identity under Russian rule* (Connecticut, 1989), *Central Asian monuments* (Istanbul, 1992), *Central Asian reader: The Rediscovery of History* (New York, 1994), *Essays on Central Asia* (Lawrence, 1999), *Identities: How governed, who pays?* (Lawrence, 2001), etc.

Colin Mackerras

Foundation Professor in the School of International Business and Asian Studies, Griffith University, Australia. He was a Co-Director of the Key Center for Asian Languages and Studies at Griffith University and Head of the School of Modern Studies, later Asian and International Studies (1996-2000). He has published *The Uighur Empire According to the Tang Dynastic Histories, A Study in Sino-Uighur Relations, 744-840* (Canberra, 1972) and numerous articles on medieval History of Inner Asia. Currently he works on different aspects of ethnic minorities of China. His third book on the subject was *China's Ethnic Minorities and Globalization*, and it came out with Routledge Curzon in London in April 2003.

Ágnes Birtalan

Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Inner Asian Studies at Eötvös University, Budapest. Her academic interests cover Mongolian, Manchu and Tibetan languages, folklore, culture, religious beliefs. She had completed her Ph. D. dissertation at the Department of Inner Asian Studies with Prof. G. Kara. She has held Humboldt Fellowship in the University of Köln, Germany, and Szechenyi Fellowship (2001). She was director of the course "Oriental Religions in Central-Eastern Europe. Religious Renaissance and Multiculturalism" at the Summer School of Central European University (2000). Her publications among others include *Őseink nyomán Belső-Ázsiában II. Hitvilág és nyelvészet [On the Traces of our Ancestors II. Belief and Linguistic Studies]* (Budapest, 1998), *Why summer follows the winter? Mongolian ethnological myths* (Budapest, 1998). She is currently editor of the academic journal *Keletkutatás* "Oriental Studies" (Budapest).

Anuar Galiev

Professor of History at the Department of Oriental Studies, Kazakh Academy of Labor and Social Relations, Almaty. He obtained Ph. D. from the Institute of History, Ethnography and Archeology at the Kazakh Academy of Sciences (1988). He has been Head of the Department of History of Culture and Religion in the Institute of Oriental Studies and Senior Research Associate at the International Center of Kipchak Studies. He also was a visiting lecturer at the Summer School of Central European University, Budapest (2000). His numerous publications focus on Semiotics and Culture, Kazakh Folk tradition, Mythologization and rewriting of the History in Central Asia, Kazakh religious beliefs. His main publications are *Models of the Socium and Cosmos of the Kazakhs* (Almaty, 1994) and *Traditional concept of the World among the Kazakhs* (Almaty, 1997; both in Russian)

Ablet Kamalov

Associate Professor at the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Oriental Studies (Center of Uyghur Studies), Kazakh Academy of Sciences in Almaty, Kazakhstan. He earned Ph. D. from the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russia (1990). He has been a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Washington (Seattle, 1997-1998), a visiting scholar at the University of Oxford (2001-2002), and the J. W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress. He has published *Drevniye Uigury, VIII-IX vv. [The Old Uighurs. VIII-IX cc.]* (Almaty, 2001), *Taribi umumi Uiguristan [General History of Uiguristan]* (Tehran, 2002) and numerous articles on History and Culture of Central Asian peoples, especially the Uyghurs. He is Executive Board Member of the Central Eurasian Studies Society, Harvard University. Currently he holds the Central Asian Research Initiative Fellowship (CARI), Open Society Institute.

Course objectives

The course will use an interdisciplinary perspective to examine the phenomenon of Revising and Rewriting of the History in Central Asia. It will examine the roots of this phenomenon going back to the colonial time of print-capitalism, which fostered the emergence of 'imagined communities' in Central Asia and look at the problem from a theoretical point of view placing it rightly within theoretical concepts existing in Historical Anthropology, Post-colonial and Area studies.

The course will focus among others on such problems as the complex interplay between the Invention and Mythologization of the History and Ethno-Nationalism as well as emerging new Nation-State Identities. The role of Historiography in social and cultural life of the societies during the transition period will also be examined. The course will introduce the multifaceted debate on the nature of

invention of the History and reveal its correlation with state building, politics, and political regimes and show the role of the History writing process in social and cultural life of societies during the transition period. The comparative analysis of Rewriting of History in different Central Asian states with those in other post-Communist societies (Caucasus, Mongolia) as well as in Xinjiang (Chinese Central Asia) will enable to describe general tendencies in this process. The course will give participants the skills necessary to apply academic theories to researches in Central Asian Studies. Upon completion of the course, participants will be equipped with an interdisciplinary toolbox of research in Contemporary History Writing and Nationalism in Central Asia and be able to apply the methods and concepts to their own research and curricula.

Course level, target audience

The course is primarily intended for advanced graduate students and young faculty members teaching History and Anthropology, but prospective participants could be those teaching and doing research in Central Eurasian Studies. Preference will be given to those applicants who do have some previous knowledge in Central Asian history and culture, but in-depth knowledge of topics discussed will not be required.

Course content

As a first approach to the topic we will raise some general problems concerning the process of Rewriting of the History in the post-Soviet countries including Central Asian newly independent countries and its relationship with Nationalism and Identity issues. In this preliminary discussion, we will raise some of the questions the course intends to refine, enlarge and perhaps tentatively answer.

The individual courses held by the different resource persons will then explore various aspects of the phenomenon of Rewriting, Revising and Rethinking of the History both from theoretical and regional perspective. The major topics to be discussed will cover such problems as invention of history and state building, history and politics, mythologization of history, ethno-nationalism and history writing, elements of identity and public memory, interethnic and international relations and reconstruction of the historical past of peoples and states. They will explore theories such as those of Ernest Gellner on “Nations and Nationalism”, Walker Connor on “Ethno-Nationalism” and Benedict Anderson on “Imagined communities”, as well as that of Will Kymlicka on the rights of minority cultures, which are particularly important in discussions of history-writing.

Rewriting of the History in the former Soviet Republics will be studied in the context of the colonial past of these countries. The course will discuss how the theories existing in Post-Colonial Studies can be applied to the trends in the development of the Central Asian Historiography. Central Asia has been a part of the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union during several centuries in the past (while the Chinese Central Asia still remains an ‘inner colony’ of China). The cotemporary Central Asian Historiography goes back to and to certain extent continues traditions of the Soviet historiography. The Soviet authorities strictly controlled history writing process, which was subjected to the Communist ideology and the Soviet worldview. In this context the course will explore if invention of national histories in the Soviet Union was a part of the colonialist agenda, like ‘divide and rule’, or it was a result of the Soviets’ more or less genuine adherence to the principle of national self-determination. Other questions to be discussed here include: How can we understand the irony that Soviet versions of national histories were “usurped” quickly by nationalist intellectuals, and later by political elites of the newly independent states? Are Russo-centric worldviews and historical perceptions still retained by Central Asians? Is ethno-centralism of Central Asians a mirror of Russo-centrism, does it have other origins? The Soviet theories on History and Ethnology that regulated Central Asian historical studies to be discussed here include the theory of “Marrist” ethno-genetics, theories of Bromlei and Gumilev, which played crucial role in writing the History of Central Asia and fostering Ethno-Nationalism.

The course will study the formation of a series of notational and territorial identities in Central Asia following the demise of the Soviet Union. It will outline the process of state building, where a collective identity often is formulated and disseminated in order to foster the collective memoirs amongst the citizens of the new states. It will further examine the practice of collective imagination, the reconstruction and reinterpretation of history, the invention of necessary historical traditions, which

intend to justify and give coherence to the emerging modern state by bringing groups of people together and strengthening or even forming their common sense of identity and political solidarity. We will look at the complex interplay between ethno-nationalism, which is a direct outcome of the peculiar type of Soviet ethno-federalist administration, and territorial nationalism, which is refashioned to introduce a sense of territorial attachment for all citizens of the new states, including the non-indigenous and non-titular ethnic groups. We will then discuss the dichotomy between ethno-nationalism and territorial nationalism, the possible conflict of interest between the new states, identified by new citizens, and the titular ethnic groups in the context of the process of transition of these countries, which are contested by localized ethno-religious conflicts.

Case studies will include among others the current process of Rewriting of the History in Mongolia. The formation of contemporary Mongolian historiography, falsification of the Mongol History in the 20th century and historical debates on the importance of the period of Mongol empire will be examined.

Another case study will be devoted to Chinese Central Asia, focusing on the region known as Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Eastern Turkestan). It will look at the ethnic makeup of those areas and explore how notions of identity and nationalism have affected Chinese Central Asia. The history of the Uyghurs living in Eastern Turkestan and Central Asian Republic has been interpreted differently in the Chinese and Soviet academic literature. The Soviet-Chinese relations very much affected the cultural development of the Uyghurs on both sides of the border and the Uyghur History has always been a political issue in China, where the Uyghurs endeavor to establish their independent state, and in the former Soviet Union, where they were involved in the Soviet policy toward Xinjiang/Eastern Turkestan.

The course will further focus on Mythologization of the History in Central Asia, reveal its roots and look at in a broader theoretical and regional context providing examples of how invention of historical myths became an important part of History-writing in different countries of Central Asia and Caucasus. Mythologization of the History includes such aspects as glorification of so called “golden ages” in the history of peoples, making the history of peoples ancient and portraying them as ancient peoples existing since ‘immemorial times’, invention of National Heroes and new traditions, etc. All this makes the History of ancient and medieval periods very important issues in current Historical Studies in Central Asia, which shape ethnic, territorial and national identities. Mythologization of History also serves the ruling groups, even persons legitimizing their right to power. Local historians construct new myths and legends on genealogical links between the present political leaders, founders of new states and outstanding historical leaders of the past as Alexander the Great, Chingis-Khan, Amir Timur etc. We will explore how mythologization of History is being exploited in the educational process and how falsification and invention of Mythologized History can deform the peoples’ consciousness.

The course will also examine the elements of identity and discuss how the history writing process reflects the formation of new identities in the post Soviet area. While identity constructions entails many facets, such as gender, class-consciousness, personality formation, and socialization, the rise of ethnic nationalism can represent a response to issues of nation-state incorporation, oppositional power hierarchies, and questions of modernity and identity in contemporary societies. Ethnic and national identity issues can be discussed as the primordialist-circumstantialist debate, ‘imagining of tradition’, invention of tradition, ‘religious’ nationalism, colonialist and post-colonialist discourse etc. The topics to be discussed here will include Leavening of Identity, Uses of Identity and Identity of Governance.

Teaching methods and assessment

The course is composed of lectures and seminars looking at the phenomenon of the Rewriting of History in Central Asia from different angles, in both disciplinary and geographical terms. Each seminar will include lectures and combine it with discussion and interactive teaching methods. Readings for all classes will be provided to participants before the course begins and the materials included in readings will be discussed during the Seminars. Each seminar will end with a half-hour discussion session, which will link the days’ material with presentations in previous seminars, and clear up questions raised during the lecture. After each seminar participants will be provided with the possibility to consult their supervisors and discuss important issues of their research papers. For this, lecturers will use their office-

hours. Participants are advised to look at the research fields of instructors before arrival and identify in advance instructors they will want to talk with. In addition to lectures, teaching modes will include group discussions, participants' presentations (case studies), work in small groups, demonstrations of slides and printed materials, film screening and individual consultations with instructors.

On the last day of the course each participant will present a two-page research paper on the subject of his/her interest. The paper can be either a revised version of the one submitted before the course or a different one. The papers will be discussed by the class and instructors. The performance of participants will be evaluated based on the final version of their paper and the 'defense' of their ideas. The papers must be written in the format of grant proposals and will be discussed by instructors and participants. Instructions on requirements for grant proposals will be given in the course of lectures. This assignment will not only show how participants acquired knowledge on the topics discussed, but also help them in gaining experience in proposal writing. Presentations will be assessed by instructors and participants.

Tentative course syllabus

Introduction. Goals and Expectations Ablet Kamalov – 2 hours – Lecture and panel discussion

Rewriting of History in Central Asia Touraj Atabaki – 3 hours – Lecture

Discussion points:

- State building in Central Asia, emerging identities and rethinking and rewriting of History.
- Role of Historiography in shaping of new National identities in the post Soviet area.

Nationalism and Identity: Theory and Practices Dru Gladney – 2 hours – Lecture

Discussion points:

- Contemporary theories of ethnic and cultural nationalism.
- How is the eurocentric theory on ethnic and cultural nationalism relevant for understanding social and political processes in the newly independent Central Asian States?

History Writing: Post Colonial agenda Touraj Atabaki – 2 hours – Seminar, discussion

Discussion points:

- Colonial past of Central Asia. Modern historical and anthropological theories and Historical studies in the post Soviet countries.
- Invention of national histories in the Soviet Union was a part of the colonialist agenda or it was a result of the Soviets' more or less genuine adherence to the principle of national self-determination.

Theory of Ethno-genesis and imagined communities Dru Gladney – 3 hours – Seminar, discussion

Discussion points:

- Theory of ethno-genesis and creation of public memory through reinterpretation of the History.
- The role of religion, ritual, and representation in constructing nationalist ideologies in Central Asia.

Muslims in China: Making Majorities and Minorities Dru Gladney – 2 hours – Lecture

Discussion points:

- Chinese Nationalism, the State regulations and Ethnic identity of the Uyghurs, the Kazakhs, and the Hui (Dungans) in China.
- Religion as a core element of self-consciousness.
- Imagined and real History of the Chinese Muslims.

Historical Anthropology on the phenomenon of Invention of History Colin Mackerras – 3 hours – Seminar, discussion

Discussion points:

- Anthropological theories and conceptions on Nations and Nationalism (E. Gellner, B. Anderson, E. Hobsbawm).
- Nation building process and the role of History in constructing of 'imagined communities' in Central Asia. History writing and print-capitalism.

Ethno-Nationalism and Territorial Nationalism Touraj Atabaki – 2 hours – Seminar, discussion

Discussion points:

- The complex interplay between ethno-nationalism, which is a direct outcome of the peculiar type of Soviet ethno-federalist administration, and territorial nationalism, which is refashioned to introduce a sense of territorial attachment for all citizens of the new states, including the non-indigenous and non-titular ethnic groups.
- Dichotomy between the new states, identified by new citizens, and the titular ethnic groups in the context of the processes of transition of these countries, which are contested by localized ethno-religious conflicts.
- History and justification of territorial claims.

Soviet Historical and Ethnological theories and construction of Central Asian History Anuar Galiev – 3 hours – Lecture

Discussion points:

- Russian and Soviet conceptions of the origin of ethnic groups, nations, nationalities. V. Shnirelman's conception on the role of mythologized History in politics.
- Theory of M. Guboglo on 'de-infantilization of ethnicity' and the role of leaders and 'ethnic mobilizers' in this process.

Mythologization of History in Central Asia Anuar Galiev – 4 hours – Seminar, film screening, discussion

Discussion points:

- Mythologization of History.
- Historical myths and legitimization of power, sacralization of the supreme power.
- Glorification of "Golden ages", creation of genealogical myths on the origin of state-founders, creation of National Heroes, making the History ancient.

Elements of Identity H. B. Paksoy – 6 hours – Lecture, seminar, discussion in small groups

Discussion points:

- Leavening of Identity. Uses of Identity. Identity of Governance.
- The role of different elements of identity (culture, language, religion) in the process of Rethinking of the Historical past.
- Religious, Ethnic and National Identities.

History, Identity and Nationalism in Chinese Central Asia Colin Mackerras – 2 hours – Lecture

Discussion points:

- Theories interpreting the rights of ethnic minorities and appropriate response of states (ideas of Will Kymlicka on the rights of minority cultures) and perception of History.
- History of Minorities in Chinese Central Asia.

State, Politics and the writing of History in China Colin Mackerras – 2 hours – Seminar, small groups, discussion

Discussion points:

- Political regulations of the History writing process in China during the Republican periods and in Peoples' Republic of China.
- Traditional Chinese imperial history writing and its contemporary modification.

Contested History of the Uyghurs in Central Asia Ablet Kamalov – 2 hours – Lecture

- Contested History of the Uyghurs on both sides of the Chinese-Soviet/Central Asian borders.
- Rewriting of the Uyghur History in Central Asia.
- Pan Turanism and Ethnic Nationalism of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia.
- Continuity between ancient and modern peoples, cultural heritage and ethnic identities.
- History as a core element of National/ethnic identity in Central Asia. History of Xinjiang or History of the Uyghurs?

International relations and Historiography: Being a Stateless nation Ablet Kamalov – 3 hours – Seminar, film screening

Discussion points:

- The ‘Great Game’ in Central Asia and the Russian/Soviet policy towards Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan). The Soviet Uyghurs and the Soviet-Chinese relations. The Soviet-Chinese debates on History of Central Asia and Uyghurs.
- Eastern Turkestan Republic (1944-1949) and the rise of historical Studies on Eastern Turkestan and Uyghurs.

The trends of the formation of an Inner-Asian Empire. The example of the Great Mongolian Empire Ágnes Birtalan – 2 hours – Lecture and discussion

Discussion points:

- The 13th century history of the Mongols became the ideological example for the following centuries in the vast territories of the North-Eurasia. Main historical trends of the formation of nomadic empires will be reviewed. Various sources on the Mongol History will be described

From ‘Secret History’ to Mongol National Historiography Ágnes Birtalan – 3 hours – Seminar and discussion

Discussion points:

- The example of the native Mongolian historiography is the Secret History of the Mongols, but after Buddhist conversion the Mongolian chronicles (starting from the 17th century) became influenced by the Indo-Tibetan narratives, which particularly transformed the original empire ideology. This combination of Buddhist and original nomadic native historiography presented the ideological basis even for the Theocratic Mongolian State at the beginning of the 20th century and traces of it can be found in the ideology and historiography of the socialist Mongolia (from the thirties of the 20th century).

Revisiting the history during the time of socialism and after the political changes Ágnes Birtalan – 2 hours – Seminar and discussion

Discussion points:

- The 20th century historical view changed several times and the principles of pan mongolism and nationalism used the Chingisid ideology, while depending on the ideology of the neighboring countries (USSR, China) even the national history became interpreted as a “shame” for the Mongols. However after the political changes this situation changed and as it is usual it went somehow from one extreme to the other.

Presentations Á. Birtalan, A. Galiev, A. Kamalov – Participant presentation and discussion

For more detailed biographies, updated course description, syllabus, reading lists please check <http://www.ceu.hu/sun/index.html>

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