

Central Asian Platform Seminar Series 2018

8. 10. - 22. 11. 2018 (Národní 3, Praha 1, room 205,206)

Government and Rule: Producing and Engaging with Authority since the 19th- Century in Central Asia

8. 10. 2018 10:00-13:00 (Národní 3, Praha 1, room 206)

Chair: Ondřej Klimeš (Oriental Institute, Prague)

Managing the „Others“: Governance and Control in Contemporary Xinjiang, PRC

10:00-10:40 Darren Byler (University of Washington, Seattle)

Spirit Breaking: Uyghur Religious Practice and "Terror Capitalism" in Northwest China

This talk addresses changing forms of Uyghur religious practice and attempts to reengineer Uyghur social life in Northwest China. Based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork among Uyghur and Han rural-to-urban migrants in Ürümqi, this talk considers post-2009 religious change among Uyghurs, the implementation of the "People's War on Terror," and the goals of increased securitization in the region. It argues that Muslim bodies and societies are now being used as a resource in the development of what I call "terror capitalism" – a kind of state-directed security industrial complex that is being integrated with China's global ambitions. It also shows that, for Uyghurs, this process has the effect of "breaking their spirit."

10:45-11:25 Tom Cliff (Australian National University, Canberra)

Ethnic Unrest and China's Multiple Problematic Others

Chinese authorities' sensitivity to and management of dissent and unrest among ethnic minority "others" reflect a deep-seated fear of dissent and unrest on the part of Han Chinese. Since central Chinese Communist Party leaders are not confident of their support among the Han population, they cannot brook any criticism from outside of that population. Even in the absence of protest by ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups, the spectre of "instability" is used by governing authorities as justification for securitisation—and thus even tighter control of the Han population. The diverse and fragmented nature of the Han, and their discursive role as the more-or-less homogenous ethnic core of the nation-state, make maintaining a semblance of Han unity and state-directed loyalty fundamental to the current political configuration of China. This conclusion is consistent with the notion that the minority problem will never be solved without first solving the Han problem. From the perspective of the ruling elite, China has multiple problematic others.

11:30-12:10 Rune Steenberg (University of Copenhagen)

Tradition and Religion, Good and Bad Customs. A Sociology of Transformation in Kashgar 2010-2018

This talk traces the shifts in the conceptual divides between "good customs//bad customs"; "religion//tradition" and "religion//extremism" in Uyghur language publications and quotidian discourse in Xinjiang in 2010-2018. These shifts were triggered by changes in government policy in 2014 and again in 2016 and are reflected in Uyghur intellectuals' books on local customs and in government propaganda publications. As a result of these changes many Uyghur intellectuals and commoners were imprisoned or detained for alleged extremism or separatism. The talk delivers a close reading of these processes and transforming discourses in Kashgar to present us with a much more differentiated field of actors and attitudes in Uyghur communities than often portrayed in simplistic dichotomies of Uyghurs in opposition to the Chinese government or Han-Chinese.

12:15-13:00 Final discussion