



Historical and Contemporary Migrations of Central Asian Muslims: History, Culture, and Identity

Conference Programme and Abstracts

3–4 April 2024





Map of Central Asia

Organising Committee:

Central Asian Studies Unit
 The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Hakim Elnazarov (convenor)
 Yahia Baiza (convenor)
 Amier Saidula
 Muzaffar Zoolshoev
 Naushin Premji

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The Institute of Ismaili Studies

AGA KHAN CENTRE

10 Handyside Street, London N1C 4DN
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Welcome

Central Asia has witnessed intense movements of people across its vast terrain in the course of its history. These migrations have been instrumental in shaping the cultural composition of Central Asian nations. The consequent intersection of various civilisations and cultures has deeply influenced the traditions and practices of Muslims in the region. The mobility and interactions of Central Asians with their neighbouring nations has also created cultural bonds and affinities which express themselves through art, culture, languages, and literary traditions.

In the contemporary period, we observe the emigration of Central Asian Muslims which is triggered by various socio-economic, political, and environmental issues. Migration is a global phenomenon that has been at the centre of public and political discourse, particularly in the West, the primary destination of migrants and asylum seekers from economically deprived countries. In recent decades, we have also witnessed an inflow of migrants and refugees from Central Asia, including Afghanistan, and their settlement in Russia, Europe, and North America. While much of the public and scholarly discourse focuses on the impact of migration on the welfare of Western societies, less attention is paid to the transformations of the migrant communities, their cultures and identities, their challenges, and their contributions to the host countries.



This conference aims to explore and analyse the trends of transformations experienced by Central Asian migrant communities in various contexts. It brings together scholars from various disciplines and countries to exchange ideas on a wide range of topics related to the historical and contemporary, regional and transnational migrations of Central Asian Muslims. The presentation of research by scholars from different disciplines will provide insights into the migration and mobility of Central Asians, including the challenges of integration and identity preservation of migrants, their educational experiences in host countries, their relations with other faith communities, their creative arts, and connectivity with their homeland. We hope that the conference will enhance our understanding of the history, culture, and traditions of Central Asian Muslims within the region and abroad, fostering knowledge of migration in its various manifestations.

HAKIM ELNAZAROV

Head of the Central Asian Studies Unit
The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Day 1:

Wednesday, 3 April 2024

10:00 – 10:15

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Zayn Kassam, Director of The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Hakim Elnazarov, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, UK

10:15 – 11:15

Keynote Address

Mohamed M Keshavjee, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, UK

The Perennial and Elusive Quest for Identity: An Understandable Human Instinct

11:15 – 11:30

Health Break

11:30 – 13:00

Panel 1: Historical Migration, Mobility, and Settlement.

Chair: Yahia Baiza

The 'Story of Arrival': Migration, Settlement, and Identity Formation in Shughnan, Badakhshan

Nourmamadcho Nourmamadchoev, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, UK

Trans-Regional Mobility and Central Asian Connections in Medieval South Asia

Kashshaf Ghani, Nalanda University, India

Dynamism and Identity: The Wakhi Settlers of South Xinjiang

Amier Saidula, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, UK

13:00 – 14:00

Health Break and Lunch



Day 1:

Wednesday, 3 April 2024

14:00 – 15:30

Panel 2: Migrations of Central Asians during the Colonial Period

Chair: Abdulmamad Iloliev

Migration and Displacement of the Central Asian Mountain Communities during the Colonial Period

Hakim Elnazarov, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, UK

Paper Borders, Boundaries, and Bazaars in Colonial Central Asia

Malika Zehni, PhD student, University of Cambridge, UK

Migration Processes in Central Asia in the 19th Century: The Case of the Khanate of Khiva

Nizomiddin Gulboev, Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, Republic of Uzbekistan

15:30 – 16:00

Health Break

16:00 – 17:30

Panel 3: Challenges of Migration, Integration, and Identity Preservation

Chair: Kashshaf Ghani

Ismaili Muslim Refugees from Afghanistan in Canada: Their Settlement and Identities

Mir Baiz Khan, Independent scholar, Canada

Migration and its Challenges for Central Asian Muslims in Russia: A Case Study of the Tajik Labour Migrants in Ekaterinburg

Abdulmamad Iloliev, University of Central Asia, Tajikistan

The Repatriation of Afghan Migrants from Pakistan and its Impact on Pakistan and Afghanistan: A Critical Analysis

Khurshid Sana Khan, Independent scholar, UK

Day 2:

Thursday, 4 April 2024

09:30 – 11:00

Panel 4: Cultural, Social, and Economic Transformations

Chair: Amier Saidula

Back to the New Land: The Return of Peasant Refugees to Sovietised Eastern Bukhara (mid-1920s)

Isabelle Linain, Sciences Po Centre for History (CHSP), France

Migration and Community Building among the Ismailis of Qumsangir, Tajikistan

Sultonbek Aksakolov, University of Central Asia, Tajikistan

The Crisis of Humanities in the View of Labouring Tajik Poets in Russia

Yan Minjia, PhD student, Moscow State University, Russia

11:00 – 11:30

Health Break

11:30 – 13:00

Panel 5: Integration of Migrants within Host Countries and Inter-Communal Relations

Chair: Hakim Elnazarov

Immigration and Muslim-Jewish Relations: Immigrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus in Israeli 'Mixed' Jewish-Arab Cities

Chen Bram, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Uri Rosenberg, Heidelberg University, Germany

At Home but without a Homeland: Tales of Migration of Afghan Ismailis in Germany

Yahia Baiza, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, UK

Safeguarding Afghanistan and its People. Displaced Afghan Migrants in London: Representing the Lost and Missing Narratives in Search of Peace

Assiya M. Amini, PhD student, University of London, UK

13:00 – 14:00

Health Break and Lunch



Day 2:

Thursday, 4 April 2024

14:00 – 15:15

Panel 6: Educational Experiences of Central Asian Immigrants

Chair: Zamira Dildorbekova

The Integration of Tajik Labour Migrants into Russian Society through the Provision of Education: A Case Study of the Regional Public Organisation (RPO) 'Noor' in Moscow

Tohir Kalandarov, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia

Post-Soviet Immigrant and Refugee Educational Experiences in Canada: Challenges, Opportunities, and Implications for Policy and Practice

Sarfarozi Niyozov, OISE, University of Toronto, Canada

Stephen Bahry, OISE, University of Toronto, Canada

Max Antony-Newman, OISE, University of Toronto, Canada

15:15 – 15:45

Health Break

15:45 – 17:15

Panel 7: Relations of Migrants with their Homeland

Chair: Chen Bram

Bridging Worlds: The Impact of Financial and Social Remittances Sent Back by the Afghan Diaspora on the Evolution of Social Values and Cultural Concepts in the Country of Origin

Abdul-Hakim Hamidi, National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilisations (INALCO), France

Why a Mother Tongue Matters: The Ethnocultural Heritage of Pamiri-Speaking Communities in their Homeland and in their Diaspora

Leyli Dodykhudoeva, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia

Nostalgia in a Time of Extended Mobility: Remembering and Reimagining Home in the Tajik-Isma'ili Diaspora in Russia

Guldastasho Alibakhshov, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, UK

17:15 – 17:30

Closing Remarks

Hakim Elnazarov and Yahia Baiza

Abstracts and Biographies



Sultonbek Aksakolov

Migration and Community Building among
the Ismailis of Qumsangir, Tajikistan

This presentation explores the history of the migrant Ismaili community of Qumsangir district in Khatlon Province, located in the south-west of Tajikistan. By exploring the detailed history of their migration and settlement in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, the presentation highlights the ways community members understand, negotiate, and construct their religious identity while living among different religious and ethnic groups. The main sources for this presentation come from the author's ethnographic case study and observations of daily life and interviews with various individuals representing the community.

The Pamiri Ismailis in Qumsangir, also known as *Mardumi Badakhshon* (people of Badakhshan), constitute a tiny minority of the population of the district, almost all of which is Sunni Muslim. At present, most of the Pamiri Ismaili neighbourhoods are concentrated in three *mahallas* (settlements) and the centre of the district. Most of them are the remnants of the population who migrated in the early 1950s from various villages in the Rushan district of the GBAO. In the Soviet period, like the rest of the migrant population in Southern Tajikistan, the Pamiris experienced many state-driven changes that impacted them ideologically and economically, such as the promotion of Soviet nationalities, families of mixed international backgrounds, and the need to supply manpower for the cotton industry in the Vakhsh Valley. At this time, the Pamiri migrants enjoyed an improved quality of life and peaceful coexistence with other migrant groups in the area.



The sharp decline of living standards in the post-Soviet period, however, exacerbated existing socio-economic and political tensions, finally leading to civil war in Tajikistan (1992–1997). At that time, most of the community was forced to flee their homes in zones of conflict in the Vakhsh Valley and took refuge in their homeland in Gorno-Badakhshan and other places. With the stabilisation of the political situation from 1997 onwards, most of them returned to their homes in Qumsangir, where they organised themselves as *jamoats* (villages) and continued to practise their religious and cultural traditions in ways similar to their relatives in Badakhshan.

Like the rest of the Ismailis of Tajikistan, the community in Qumsangir witnessed a revival in their religious practices in the post-Soviet period due to their connection with international Ismaili institutions. Living as a minority within the larger Sunni Muslim community, the Pamiri Ismailis often try to negotiate their religious identity by participating in common celebrations of Muslim festivals and life-cycle related festivals.

SULTONBEK AKSAKOLOV is a member of the History Faculty at the School of Arts and Sciences of the University of Central Asia (UCA) and served as a Chair of the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities at UCA. Sultonbek received his MPhil in Modern Societies and Global Transformations from the University of Cambridge (UK) in 2002, followed by a PhD in History from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, in 2014. Previously, he attained a BA in Tajik Philology from Khorog State University in Tajikistan and completed the Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, UK.

Dr Aksakolov's research focuses on the history of Islam in Soviet Badakhshan, intellectual history, environmental history, and heritage sites in Central Asia. He has also led a research project on the creation of a Repository for Historical, Cultural, and Natural Sites, supported by a grant from the International Development Association of the World Bank Group (WBG). He has published articles on the history of the Ismailis of Central Asia, Islamic education, and development initiatives in Central Asia.



Guldestasho Alibakhshov

Nostalgia in a Time of Extended Mobility:
Remembering and Reimagining Home in
the Tajik-Ismaili Diaspora in Russia

‘When we are at home, we don’t need to talk about it.’

Svetlana Boym

The Tajik Ismailis experienced the post-Soviet years as a period of unprecedented mass migration and displacement due to the Tajik civil war and the resultant economic hardship. Over the past three decades, their journey has taken them across borders in search of better prospects within and beyond the post-Soviet regions. This constant state of movement has upended their once-familiar modes of territorial and cultural belonging. Yet, while being on the move, they carry fragments of their material and cultural heritage, seeking to reinforce community ties across diverse socio-cultural landscapes. Foremost among these fragments is the Pamiri traditional house, known as the *cheed*, which migrants have built in the cities such as Moscow, St Petersburg, Ekaterinburg, and Novosibirsk. While some Russian scholars view these practices as acts of self-exoticising and self-otherising, this paper contends otherwise. It argues that the *cheed* serves as a locus of nostalgia for the culture, practices, and traditions left behind by migrants because it is both a living place imbued with memories and feelings and a ritual space charged with symbols and meanings.



Firstly, this paper delves into the significance of the cheed in the Tajik Ismaili community, exploring how its physical structure evokes a distinct sense of place and the spatialisation of their cultural and religious rituals and practices. Secondly, it examines how, amidst extended mobility and deracination, the built environment provides an ‘existential foothold’ or ‘existential space’ connecting migrants to their place of origin. It argues that for the community, the act of building the traditional house while on the move extends beyond nostalgia; it is about recreating spiritually significant spaces where rituals can be performed, traditions upheld, and a sense of belonging affirmed. Moreover, this paper contemplates the broader concept of nostalgia and prompts reflection on how diverse forms of nostalgia might shape a future trajectory, urging migrant Tajiks to engage with nostalgia critically and imaginatively to reconceptualise their identities in the modern world.

GULDASTASHO ALIBAKHSHOV, currently serving as a Policy Research Analyst at the Muslim Council for Britain, brings over five years of hands-on experience in intervention and policy research in the international development sector in Central Asia. His research is primarily focused on Ismaili Muslim migration, exploring themes of diasporic memory and nostalgia at the nexus of anthropology, Islamic studies, and migration studies. Alibakhshov holds an MSc in Social Anthropology from the London School of Economics and Political Science, an MA in Islamic Studies and Humanities from the Institute of Ismailis Studies, and an MA in Economics from the Russian-Tajik Slavonic University.



Assiya Majgan Amini

Safeguarding Afghanistan and its People.

Displaced Afghan Migrants in London: Representing the
Lost and Missing Narratives in Search of Peace

For almost five decades Afghanistan experienced numerous foreign invasions, regime changes and internal unrest, displacing its people internally or forcing them to seek refuge externally. The people of Afghanistan inside the country, as well as many in the international Afghan community, continue to experience difficulties and undergo profound mental pressures and repressed trauma. Throughout the years, government agencies and NGOs have directed much of their attention to the political and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and the Afghan refugees in neighboring countries. Most recently, following the return of the Taliban in 2021, the focus has turned more to the new influx of Afghans in Western countries, while previously traumatised Afghans have received less attention, in particular the elderly Afghans who belong to the previous waves of Afghan refugees. Support for those with war-related experiences remains limited, and their emotional experiences is under-studied in the UK. Because of the restrictive social and political positioning of the refugees in hostile environments, their stories are not articulated and so are lost. Alongside separations from family members, they also face derogatory media rhetoric and dehumanising living conditions, which prevent them from feeling any sense of security. They recall a so-called 'simple life without any worry' back home and remember it as a time of great peace, perspectives which have thus far been missing in discussions about the migrant situation and the future of Afghanistan. There is an urgent need to capture these lost and missing narratives, preserve them and establish intergenerational and cultural links. In my research I try to fill this gap. Drawing on my background and insight into the Afghan community and using my filmmaking practices, as well as employing novel interviewing methods and oral history my research explores the experiences of Afghans who have undergone war and deprivation.



My participants are long-term survivors whose reflections and testimonies provide insights into their hardships and means of survival, as well as how different ethnic groups used to peacefully cohabit in the past. My talk will also highlight the various safeguarding measures and ethical considerations needed when engaging with such individuals, such as empathetic media representation and a more humanised approach to reporting. I also aim to present a few minutes of the film I have made as part of my research. This will permit a showcasing of the importance of creative and artistic expressions used as part of my experimental filmmaking approach and how it can honour, represent and dignify the Afghan migrants.

ASSIYA MAJGAN AMINI is a doctoral candidate at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her research focuses on lost and missing narratives and memories, particularly those of the elderly displaced Afghan migrants in London, UK. She is also the Co-founder of Afghan Academy International and has simultaneously initiated a range of interactive projects and platforms designed to promote peace, education, culture, arts and community cohesion. Examples include organising the annual Afghan International Peace Conference & Festival and establishing the first Afghan Library and Peace Centre in the UK. These endeavours have engaged, and received support from, prominent academics, writers, artists as well as other stakeholders, while opening up an active discourse on Afghanistan.



Yahia Baiza

At Home but without a Homeland: The Tales of Migration of the Afghan Ismailis in Germany

This paper, on the migration stories of Afghan Ismailis in Germany, highlights both the struggles and triumphs that come with seeking refuge in a foreign land. Community members left Afghanistan for various reasons, ranging from political persecution to economic hardship. Many were forced to flee due to the ongoing conflict in their homeland, while others sought better opportunities for themselves and their families. Through resilience and community networks, the Ismaili migrants have been able to create new lives for themselves in Germany while maintaining strong ties to their cultural heritage and religious identity. Their stories serve as a testament to the human spirit's ability to adapt and thrive even in challenging circumstances. The author explores and analyses the Ismailis' diverse tales of migration, shedding light on reasons for leaving Afghanistan, the challenges faced on the journey to Germany, and how Ismailis have settled in Germany and integrated into German society.

A strong sense of community and community institutions have been among the key factors that have helped the Ismailis of Afghanistan feel at home in Germany. Additionally, the welcoming attitude of many Germans towards refugees and immigrants has played a significant role in helping the community feel at home in their new country. Despite a strict bureaucratic system, government programmes aimed at promoting integration have provided resources and support to help them adjust to life in Germany.



YAHIA BAIZA is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, UK, researching education, history, and Islamic and Afghanistan studies, as well as the refugee and diaspora communities in Europe, and Central Asian Persian Ismaili manuscripts. As Bloomsbury Education and Childhood Studies Regional Editor for Afghanistan, he also develops and publishes digital resources on all stages of education and childhood and youth studies in Afghanistan. Yahia is a member of the Academic Council of the Hazara Encyclopaedia, and the President of the Executive Council of the Hazara National Congress.

Dr Baiza is the author of more than 80 academic articles on various subjects, published in multi-author volumes, academic journals and online media in English, German, Persian, French, and Norwegian languages. He has published a monograph, *Education in Afghanistan: Developments, Influences, and Legacies since 1901* (2013), and an edited volume, *Education in Troubled Times: A Global Pluralist Response* (2022).



Zamira Dildorbekova

Zamira Dildorbekova is the Programme Leader for the Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) at the Institute of Ismaili Studies and is an associate staff member at University College London. She is a member of the University of Exeter's Central Asian Studies Network and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Zamira received her MPhil in Development Studies from the University of Sussex's Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and her PhD in Islamic Studies from the University of Exeter. Dr Dildorbekova has previously had a number of positions in the field of education, including with the University of Exeter's Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies and worked for the Aga Khan Foundation (Education). Her main areas of academic interest include contemporary Islam and Ismailism in Central Asia.



Leyli Dodykhudoeva

Why a Mother Tongue Matters: The Ethnocultural Heritage of Pamiri-Speaking Communities in their Homeland and in their Diaspora

This paper explores the use of the mother tongue by the Pamiri-speaking communities of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and China in their homeland as well as in the diaspora. Considering language ideology as part of a complex of ethno-religious and cultural features, it outlines the linguistic priorities of the Pamir-language speaking diaspora communities, including the use of heritage languages, highlighting how these priorities originated and evolved. I will show how Pamir languages, along with other socio-cultural factors, strengthen the solidarity and common identity of community members, as well as communication between different subgroups of the dispersed populations.

While analysing the functioning of Pamir languages, their main sociolinguistic features and patterns, I will demonstrate how these native languages constitute a central component of cultural heritage and a significant marker in the life of these communities. The paper will also look at the prospects for the preservation of these languages by scrutinising the dynamics emerging in the context of linguistic diversity, and by examining the work of grassroots organisations and language activists who are taking a dynamic stance towards language and culture.



LEYLI DODYKHUOEVA is a linguist specialising in Iranian Studies. She is a Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Iranian Languages in the Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow. She graduated from the Department of Iranian Philology at the Institute of Asian and African Countries, Moscow State University, and subsequently joined the Departments of Classical Literature and Pamir Studies at the Rudaki Institute of Language and Literature in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, before taking up her current position at the Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences.

Dr Dodykhudoeva is the author of more than 200 academic papers on linguistics, ethnolinguistics, sociolinguistics and linguacultural studies in the Pamir-Hindukush region and is currently working on a research project ‘Minority Languages: Their Contribution to History and Culture (based on the Pamir languages and Tajik dialects)’. She has collaborated with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, UK, translating a number of the IIS publications into Russian.



Hakim Elnazarov

Migration and Displacement of the Central Asian Mountain Communities during the Colonial Period

Migration and mobility have been important characteristics of the socio-economic and political situation of the Central Asian Mountain societies. Despite harsh climatic and geographic conditions, down the centuries the Pamirs and Hindukush Mountains attracted and sheltered people of various ethnicities, religious affiliations and political orientations, who were escaping slavery, intermittent wars, court intrigues, ethnic cleansing, religious persecution, and natural disasters.

The advance of the Russian and British empires to the Pamirs and Hindu Kush Mountain regions at the end of 19th and in the early 20th century and their engagement with regional and local rulers intensified internal movements and migration among the mountain communities. The rivalry of the two powers and the demarcation of their spheres of influence across the Amu and Panj rivers in 1872/1873 and 1895 resulted in the disintegration and fragmentation of indigenous political structures, the intensification of internal struggles and intermittent warring across the lines of demarcation. In the process of delimitation, the Emirate of Bukhara (1785 to 1920) lost part of its land in the south and was compensated with Shughnan, Rushan and Wakhan on the right bank of the river Panj. The British induced the Amir of Afghanistan to accept a border between Afghanistan and British India and instead extend his control over the semi-independent principalities in the north. The new arrangements deepened the internal struggle between local powers and a historical resentment of various branches of Islam in the region leading to migration and displacement of the local population which then settled in other countries, such as, China, where a substantial number of the inhabitants of Wakhan found a permanent home.



The subjugation of indigenous communities and their involvement in confrontations against the rival power undermined the internal organisation of the mountain societies resulting in atrocities committed by regional rulers, the displacement and migration of segments of these societies and the formation of new political order on the ground. Both migration and control of the new borders also disrupted social, economic and cultural bonds and the orientation of religious structures and hierarchies in the mountain region.

Drawing on archival material and oral narratives, this paper will present the dynamics of migration in the mountain region during the colonial period and highlight the causes and consequences of this migration for the mountain communities. It is contended that the rivalry of the two powers and their strategies of engagement with local rulers and communities were the main factors in the destabilisation of the region and the displacement of the local population, with far-reaching implications for socio-economic and political developments in the region.

HAKIM ELNAZAROV is Head of the Central Asian Studies Unit in the Department of Academic Research and Publications of the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS). He holds a PhD in the History of Empires from King's College, London. He also obtained an MEd in Teacher Education from the Aga Khan University, Pakistan and a BA in Arabic language and literature from the Tajik State University. Dr Elnazarov has been engaged in number of projects, including the oral traditions of the Central Asian Ismailis as well as the history, intellectual traditions, and languages of the mountain societies of Central Asia. Dr Elnazarov has edited several books, authored and co-authored articles and book reviews on various topics, including the history and traditions of the Central Asian Muslims, religious education, endangered languages and gender issues in Central Asia. He is Chief Editor of the IIS's Russian and Tajik publications and is an Associate Editor of the Endangered Languages Yearbook, published by Brill.



Kashshaf Ghani

Trans-Regional Mobility and Central
Asian Connections in Medieval South Asia

Beginning in the 13th century CE, South Asia served as a resort for the establishment of large Persianate polities. The Delhi Sultanate, an early form of such a state, owed its foundation and consolidation to the presence of great numbers of Persianised elites and Islamised ethnic Turks as administrators, military slaves, scholars, chroniclers, scribes, artisans, and important Sufi saints, who had migrated from distant Central Asian lands. The latter was being drawn into the fold of Persianate culture beginning from the early second millennium.

As much as migration of such human capital remained a critical factor for the rise of sultanates, a larger set of events determined the direction and flow of this movement – namely, the Mongol eruption across Central Asia and into the Islamic heartlands. Individuals were not only torn away from their land of birth but also, rather interestingly, they came to view a predominantly non-Islamic territory like India as the land of Islam helmed by a new sultanate. One such individual was the earliest chronicler of the Delhi Sultanate, Minhaj al-Din Siraj ‘Juzjani’, whose work *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, an important account of the early history of the Delhi Sultanate, allows us to have a critical insight into this transition.

Apart from political elites, the charismatic Sufi saints constituted a major social class in the sultanate of Delhi, most of whom were trained in the lands of Central and West Asia. Their constant presence in north India, as well in far-off regions like Bengal, make us aware of varied expressions of spiritual piety which influenced social classes – on many occasions irrespective of their religious affiliation – as well as resulting in complex relations with political elites. Many of these saints are memorialised in later hagiography as undertaking migration driven by the mandate of planting the Islamic faith in India, thus being instrumental in establishing local Muslim communities.



Finally, immigrant artisans and architects from Central Asia played a critical role, through the introduction of a material culture, in the rhetoric of the Delhi Sultanate being the ‘sanctuary of Islam’ in the eastern hemisphere – particularly after the disappearance of Baghdad as the seat of the Caliphate. The earliest architectural project, the Qutb Minar – inspired by the Ghurid minaret in Firozkoh – combined with the Qubbat al-Islam congregational mosque (Sanctuary of Islam), projected a hegemonic, yet adaptive, image of the state through a thoughtful re-use of local materials. The layout of the complex, in the vicinity of the revered migrant Sufi saint Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki’s dargah, was intended to convey a visual message to the immigrant as well as the resident population.

By focusing on a specific historical development driven by Central Asian mobility, the essay aims to explore three interconnected processes of textual writing, Sufi piety, and architecture. In bringing together these complex practices, the essay is concerned with a closer study of the outcomes of such movements, which can only be achieved through reading the layered meanings that emerge from Central Asian migrations into pre-modern South Asia.

KASHSHAF GHANI specialises in pre-modern South Asia covering the period 1000–1800 CE, focusing on the history of Sufism, its practices, interactions, networks, and regional experiences. He is also interested in Indo-Persian histories, interreligious interactions, the history and culture of the Persianate world, and Asian interconnections. Dr Ghani has held research positions as Sir Amir Ali Research Fellow in Islamic History and Culture at the Asiatic Society, Kolkata, Perso-Indica Visiting Fellow at the Sorbonne-Nouvelle, Paris, Visiting Fellow at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, and Fellow at the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata. Currently he teaches History at Nalanda University, India.

His publications include *Exploring the Global South: Voices, Ideas, Histories* (2013) and as co-editor, *Imagining Asia(s): Networks, Actors, Sites* (2019) and *Sufi Rituals and Practices: Experiences from South Asia* (2023).



Nizomiddin Gulboev

Migration Processes in Central Asia in the 19th Century.
The Case of the Khanate of Khiva

Migration processes in Central Asian countries in the 19th century were complex and extensive and were influenced by various factors. Forced relocation of the population from a certain area by different dynasties that ruled the region or those who by their own decision settled in a certain area and effected the social, economic and political life of the local population living in the area. This situation has an important significance in the formation of ethnocultural make-up of the population of the Khiva Khanate, which professed Islam. The study of migration processes allows one to determine the role of migrant communities in the history of the region, the changes in their cultures and their impact on local populations. In particular, during the migration processes in the Khiva Khanate, the nomadic population played an important role in the political and military, religious and cultural life of the region. The Uzbek tribes were mostly settled in the wetlands of the river which were suitable for agriculture. Turkmen tribes mainly occupied the lower reaches of the rivers and became largely dependent on the authorities in matters related to the distribution of water. The tribes from the interior regions of Khurasan also settled in the territory of the Khanate. In the process of this migration, certain diasporas were formed, based on the specific history and culture of various immigrant communities.



The local rulers also played role in the displacement of the people. In 1804–1806 Eltuzar Khan, moved the Turkmens to Muzqumgan, Yimral to Yangariq, and Olloquli Khan (1825–1842) moved the people of Akdarband (Iran) to the vicinity of Khiva in 1826 and in 1828 to Ali-eli Buldumsoz in North Khurasan.

The exploration of the migration of different clans in Khiva allows one to observe the mixing of nomadic and settled populations. The immigrants adopted the customs and traditions of the local population and were integrated into the dominant strata of the society. Based on studying various sources, travelogues and archival documents related to the Kungirat dynasty's era ruling the Khiva Khanate, this paper identifies the factors that caused migration in the khanate and explores the dynamics of adaptation and settlement among the migrant communities in the region.

NIZAMIDDIN GULBOEV is a Senior researcher at the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.



Abdul-Hakim Hamidi

Bridging Worlds: The Impact of Financial and Social Remittances Sent Back by the Afghan Diaspora on the Evolution of Social Values and Cultural Concepts in the Country of Origin

Over the past few decades, especially from 1978, the successive political changes and events in Afghanistan have triggered substantial waves of mass migrations (6.4 million, 48 per cent women and girls; and 45 per cent children (Afghanistan Situation, n.d.). From the perspective of a state-centred realist approach in international relations, the substantial scale of this immigrant population, akin to a profound historical crisis, has sparked concerns among numerous countries, both globally and within the region. However, concurrent with the burgeoning literature on migration studies, remittances, and transnationalism in the 1970s, a perspective has emerged, suggesting that a substantial percentage of the immigrant community (henceforth referred to as the ‘diaspora’) can play a pivotal role as vectors of development, agents of sociocultural and political change in the country of origin (Chauvet et al., 2018).

This potential is seen through the avenues of both social and financial remittances. For example, in 2020, an estimated USD 788.9 million in remittances were received in Afghanistan. Remittances accounted for nearly 4.1 per cent of Afghanistan’s GDP, making it the fifth highest recipient country in Southern Asia in terms of a share of national GDP (Ratha et al., 2021a). If one includes the Hawala system as well, this number could be dramatically increased (Remittances to Afghanistan Are Lifelines, 2022).

Migration as a personal and family strategy has existed since ancient times, and the Afghans have engaged with countries across the globe through diverse channels, including commerce, religious pilgrimage, and educational pursuits. In addition, numerous and protracted conflicts have greatly contributed to the survival and development of Afghan migration networks. As highlighted by Monsutti in 2004, migration evolved into a pervasive aspect of life for numerous Afghans integrating into ‘the networked society’, where they actively contribute to the establishment of diverse social networks to sustain their ties with their places of origin. These repercussions have probably not always had a positive impact, contributing, in some cases, to social inequalities and political instability.



This paper investigates the profound and intricate relationship between the Afghan diaspora and its home community, exploring the dynamic flow of financial and social remittances over an extended period. Focusing on the evolution and transformation of local social values and cultural concepts, including life, loyalty, trust, solidarity, commitment, responsibility, family, marriage, and patriotic feeling, the research here offers a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted impact of diasporic connections.

This study not only sheds light on the evolving nature of cultural values within the Afghan diaspora but also offers insights into the reciprocal influences on the home community. The findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between diasporic networks and local cultural dynamics, providing valuable perspectives for policymakers, community leaders, and scholars interested in the social and cultural dimensions of diaspora studies.

ABDUL-HAKIM HAMIDI is a PhD student in Sociology-Anthropology at Inalco National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations, where he also serves as an Education Coordinator. He obtained his BA in History from Herat University. In 2014, Mr Hakimi undertook a fellowship at the University of York in the United Kingdom before relocating to Paris, France, as part of the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) programme. He completed his Master's degree at Sciences Po, Paris, and subsequently worked with the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) and the Collège de France. In addition to writing articles primarily in Persian, he also volunteered with Afghan-focused associations on human rights with particular emphasis on women's and children's rights.



Abdulmamad Iliiev

Migration and its Challenges for Central Asian Muslims in Russia: A Case Study of the Tajik Labour Migrants in Ekaterinburg

Every year Russia receives a substantial number of labour migrants, mainly from the lands of the former USSR, due to its huge demand for cheap labour, its non-visa regime and its cultural connections with these states based on their shared Soviet past. The expansion of immigration to the Russian Federation is dramatically changing its ethno-demographic status by transforming it into a more multi-cultural society on the one hand and confronting it with the challenges of accommodating peoples of diverse cultures, religions, and regions on the other.

According to official statistics, there are more than a million Tajikistani migrants currently living in Russia. As observed in Ekaterinburg, most of them are subject to a variety of forms of exploitation, abuse, ethno-racial profiling, discrimination, and violence. It is argued that the nature of anti-migrant sentiments and radicalised practices, including outright racism and xenophobia, are complex and manifold. In many cases racism against labour migrants is produced by restrictive immigration policies and the scapegoating of migrants as criminals and being the cause of unemployment. Working mainly in Russia's economically advanced cities, such as Ekaterinburg, the migrants live under constant pressures, political, economic and emotional, generated by the high living costs, social and racial discrimination. The migrants are often harassed by nationalist groups and become the victims of scams operated by dodgy employers and their mediators. The vast majority of the migrant workers are not protected by health and safety measures at work. As a result, there are many deaths caused by accidents at work, the effects of hard labour and chronic illnesses.



This paper is based on the findings of the author's several fieldworks conducted in Russia, where various groups of labour migrants from the Badakhshan region of Tajikistan were observed and interviewed.

ABDULMAMAD ILOLIEV is the Director of the Aga Khan Humanities Project at the University of Central Asia's Graduate School of Development. Previously, he worked as a Senior Research Associate, translator and lecturer at the IIS in London. He had also held a number of research and teaching posts in Canada and the United Kingdom including research fellowships at SOAS, University of London and the University of Sussex's School of Global Studies. He holds a PhD and an MPhil in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies from the University of Cambridge (UK) and a Diploma with distinction in History from the Dushanbe State Pedagogical Institute. His primary research interests focus the history, literature, folklore and mysticism of Central Asia. Dr Iloliev is the author of four monographs, seven translated book volumes and several peer-reviewed articles and book chapters.



Tokhir Kalandarov

The Integration of Tajik Labour Migrants into Russian Society through Education: A Case Study of the Regional Public Organisation (PRO) 'Noor' in Moscow

This paper focuses on a civil society institution and the role it plays in integrating different socio-economic migrants into society through education. It specifically examines how the Regional Public Organization Noor (RPO) Noor supports the Tajik labour migrants and their families in successfully integrating into Russian society. Using a case study method, the study analyses the impact of education on the integration process. The organisation, through the Education Committee of RPO Noor, plays a key role in integrating newly arrived migrants from the Republic of Tajikistan. The committee implements several projects targeting all age groups. For children, the committee offers programmes such as Play and Develop for ages 3 to 5, and a programme for ages 5 to 7 that prepares children for school. Junior and senior pupils benefit from preparatory courses for exams.

Additionally, RPO Noor conducts summer training camps in Russia for students aged 13 to 16, aimed at helping them integrate into Russian society while preserving their ethnic, religious, and cultural identity. It is argued that the success of migrant integration is significantly influenced by their level of education. Unfortunately, proficiency in Russian remains low among Tajik migrants. Therefore, migrants and their children require additional support from civil society institutions such as RPO Noor, which can assist them in improving their education and effectively integrating into the host society.

TOHIR KALANDAROV is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He received his PhD in history at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow. His main research interests include the culture of the Pamiri Tajiks, their religious beliefs, pre-Islamic belief systems, cults, customs and religious syncretism. The primary research interest of Dr. Kalandarov is the subject of Tajik labour migration to Russia and, the status and living conditions of Tajik migrants, which has become one of the most essential issues of recent decades in the Russian Federation. Kalandarov is the author of three books in Russian: *Shugnani (Historical and Ethnographic Research)* (Moscow, 2004); *Journey into the World of Rubi Mountains* (Moscow, 2006), co-author with Viktor Terekhov; and *Ismailis of the Pamir* (St Petersburg, 2022).



Mohamed M Keshavjee

Keynote Address

The Perennial and Elusive Quest for Identity
- an Understandable Human Instinct

The keynote will highlight the fact that identity is always a work in progress and no individual traverses through life with only one fixed identity. Individuals embrace different identities as they undergo acculturation. The speaker will relate the experiences of the Asians of Africa in the aftermath of decolonisation and his experiences with the Central Asian Ismailis in the wake of the dismantlement of the Soviet Union to demonstrate the complexity of identity and its implications for communities in transition and those having to migrate as a consequence of change.

MOHAMED M KESHAVJEE is a lawyer, author, and an international cross-cultural specialist in Mediation. He is a graduate of Queen's University, where he did his LLB, and London University, where he attained his LLM and PhD. He has practised law in Kenya, Britain, and Canada. Dr Keshavjee is a member of the Advisory Panel to the Secretary General of the International Social Service of Switzerland, and a consultant to The Hague Conference on Private International Law on the role of Mediation in addressing cases of cross-border child abduction where The Hague Convention of 1980 is inapplicable.

Dr Keshavjee was the first Canadian to receive the Gandhi, King, Ikeda Peace Award, conferred upon him for his work in peace and human rights education. From 2000 to 2010, Dr Keshavjee was Director of International Training Programmes at the Secretariat of His Highness the Aga Khan in France and conducted programmes in mediation training in some 25 countries within Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America. In 2022 he was appointed on the Steering Committee of Ugandan Asians at 50 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the Ugandan Asians in Canada and the UK.

Dr Keshavjee presently is a Senior Scholar at the Institute of Ismaili Studies. He is the author of several books including *Islam, Sharia and Alternative Dispute Resolution: Mechanisms for Legal Redress in the Muslim Community* (2013); *Into That Heaven of Freedom: The Impact of Apartheid on an Indian Family's Diasporic History* (2015); *Diasporic Distractions - New Faces in New Places* (2017). *Understanding Sharia: Islamic Law in a Globalised World* (co-author with Raficq Abdulla) (2018).

Khurshid Sana Khan

The Repatriation of Afghan Migrants
from Pakistan and its Impact on Pakistan
and Afghanistan: A Critical Analysis

This paper presents a critical analysis of Pakistan's current repatriation policy for Afghan migrants with a focus on the impact of repatriation on the neighbouring nations, particularly Pakistan itself. It discusses the factors that influence and shape these migration policies for migrant Afghans living on its soil, which have consequences beyond its borders. The paper analyses the scale of ongoing repatriation actions for Pakistan and debates the feasibility of repatriation for the country. It asks whether Afghanistan and the international community are ready or willing to welcome back millions of Afghans to a homeland undergoing economic, political, and social challenges in addition to the isolation of its Taliban rulers on the world stage.

The current change in Pakistan's migration policy is a direct reflection of its changing political, economic, and social landscape as well as deepening security challenges. The paper looks at past repatriation drives and argues that despite the majority of political parties, the general public and the powerful army of Pakistan currently take the same stand on repatriation of undocumented Afghan migrants. The results of the recent elections in Pakistan and newly emerging dynamics of power within and between provinces and their degree of influence in Islamabad, will ultimately set the policy for both documented and undocumented migrants in the future. Last year, the caretaker government determined 1 November 2023 as the deadline for 1.7 million undocumented Afghan migrants to leave the country or otherwise face deportation. While about half a million Afghans have left Pakistan so far, the state still must complete a challenging task of finding and sending back a much bigger number, over a million undocumented Afghans currently in Pakistan.



The paper argues that the impact of the repatriation drive will be great, and it will require serious international support to ensure the successful resettlement of returning Afghans as drought, poverty and problematic laws and order have already internally displaced about a million people in Afghanistan itself. The paper maintains that since the migrant issue facing both Pakistan and Afghanistan is rooted in four decades of turmoil neither nation-state can manage the issue exclusively. In addition to this, the paper ends the discussion by suggesting the ways which could make repatriation and resettlement of returning Afghans a logistically, economically, politically, and ethically balanced act for all the stakeholders.

The paper uses various sources, secondary and primary. Secondary data sources as well as interviews with returning Afghans are used for the critical analysis of various dimensions of their repatriation.

KHURSHID SANA KHAN is an independent scholar who worked as Gender Consultant for the UNDP, UN Women Afghanistan, the Ministry of Women's Affairs of Afghanistan and other NGOs based in Afghanistan. She holds an MPhil in Education from Cambridge University and a PhD from Edinburgh University. Her PhD is on the migration, education and community life of Gilgit-Baltistan Ismailis in Karachi. She is working on various projects including research projects on the Lasi Community in Sindh, Pakistan. She is also a Regional Editor for Pakistan for Bloomsbury Education and Childhood Studies and has published and reviewed academic articles on various subjects.



Mir Baiz Khan

Ismaili Muslim Refugees from Afghanistan in
Canada: Their Settlement and Identities

Political changes in Central Asia, as elsewhere, during the past fifty years have caused instability, and the displacement of people within the region, forcing them also to seek safe places as refugees in other countries outside Central Asia. This research focuses on Afghanistan. When King Muhammad Zahir Shah was deposed by Sardar Dawood on 17 July 1973, a tragic spiral of violence ensued. Soon, the internal political crisis led to external forces being engaged. Since its initiation fifty years ago, the crisis is nowhere near resolution. Afghanistan has been home to a large population of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims since ancient times. Like other communities in Afghanistan, the Ismailis have been displaced, have suffered and have sought refuge in different countries. Over the years, Canada has opened its doors to thousands of them. This research focuses on Ismaili refugees from Afghanistan who have been settled in Canada during the past thirty years and the role of the Institutions of the Ismaili Imam in Canada in their settlement. It explores the challenges of settlement in the early stages of arrival, the transformation of refugees, and their new identities. The findings of this research will be a valuable reference for the settlement processes and their impact on the lives of the refugees and their families. They will highlight the critical role that faith-based communities play in Canadian civil society.



MIR BAIZ KHAN holds two MAs, from the University of London and the University of Karachi and obtained his PhD in theory and policy studies in education from the University of Toronto. He studied advanced Islamic Studies at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, and advanced Arabic language at the University of Jordan. Dr Khan has held various positions, including Head of the Curriculum Department of the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board (ITREB), Pakistan, and its Education Advisor for Chitral and the Northern Areas, Chief Academic and Operation Officer of the Aga Khan Education Service Pakistan in the Northern Areas, Chief Commissioning Officer and founding Principal of the Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, Gilgit, and Head of the Research and Knowledge Mobilization Department of ITREB, Canada. Currently, he is an independent scholar. Over the years, Dr Khan contributed papers to academic journals, and written book chapters. His latest article ‘Wilāyah and Ethical Excellence in Islam, An Ismaili Perspective’, *Islamic Studies*, 62 (2023) has recently been published by the Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University,

Isabelle Linais

Back to the New Land: The Return of Peasant Refugees to the Sovietised Eastern Bukhara (mid-1920s)

The downfall of the Bukhara emirate in the autumn of 1920 followed by the creation of the Bukharan People's Republic put the region into disarray with civil war and a bad harvest. Thousands of people took to the roads, going to Northern Iran and Afghanistan. By the mid-1920s, 200,000 people had left the former emirate, with 25 to 33 per cent of households in Eastern Bukhara having fled to Afghanistan. However, as early as 1924, the Tajik Soviet authorities reported that thousands were coming back across the Panj river. Why did those *muhajirs* head for Afghanistan? Why did they decide to return and how were they met by the Soviet authorities they had run away from?

Drawing on the early Soviet sources and various secondary and primary materials, my paper sheds light on why so many refugees decided to return to a newly sovietised land and how their claims for recovering their property, if any, were supported by the Tajik authorities concerned about the effects of civil war and massive depopulation.



Firstly, I show that the exile from former Eastern Bukhara took place in a context of growing discontent with taxes starting long before 1920, intensifying emigration on both sides of the Panj river. Indeed, settled progressively by the Manghit and Barakzai rulers since the mid-19th century and again in 1895 with the Anglo-Russian border settlement, Panj was a border delimiting the power of Bukhara and Kabul under the authority respectively of the British and the Russian empires, the latter imposing a protectorate on Bukhara in 1873. Thus, Bukhara gained major borderland territories extending its fiscal leverage to remote highland possessions known as Eastern Bukhara, with a few locals moving away. But with the outbreak of revolution, the population dwindled. Secondly, I argue that starting in 1924, massive returns to the abandoned Eastern Bukhara challenged the ability of the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Tajikistan, established in the same year, to rule through the chaos of civil war. Aimed at attracting peasant returnees by securing land and tax rights for them, documents of amnesties and registries found in the National Archives of Tajikistan give a unique view of subaltern migration in the Tajik-Afghan borderlands.

ISABELLE LINAIS is a PhD candidate in History at Sciences Po (Paris), supervised by Professor Sabine Dullin (CHSP) and Professor Stéphane Dudoignon (CNRS). Isabelle explores the emigration of peasants, merchants as well as religious figures from the Emirate of Bukhara and its Soviet successors to Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia from the late 19th century to the 1990s. She uses vernacular literature, oral history and state archives to reconstruct the experience of family separation in the wake of exile and to grasp the economic consequences of emigration and homecoming on both banks of the Amu-Darya and the Panj.



Yan Minjia

The Crisis of Humanities in the View of the Labouring
Tajik Poets in Russia

This research reveals how the Tajik poets working as migrant labourers in the Russian Federation view the Humanities and knowledge generally as factors of individual job-seeking, on the one hand, and of social development, on the other. Enriching literary creativity in New Persian with individual observations on the social phenomena of recent decades, Tajik migrant poets have depicted the discrepancies between their specialties and their actual work. Their tragic experience of job-seeking both at home and abroad, disproportionate to their qualifications, has aroused in this milieu a sceptical attitude to the meaningfulness of an education in the Humanities.

The Persian-speaking ethnos has respected wisdom and knowledge at least since the New Persian literature emerged in the 9th–10th centuries CE, illustrated by the proverbial line of the most celebrated epic poet, Ferdowsi, ‘Mighty is he who has knowledge’. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the labourer Tajik poets the value of knowledge has degraded. The ‘crisis in the Humanities’, to some extent, may reflect the consensus in Tajik society, since a large corpus of contemporary Tajik poetry has been composed by the authors who make their living in Russia, maintaining strong ties with their family members and relatives in Tajikistan – the country, where the remittance comprises a significant portion of the annual GDP.



This paper analyses the interviews of ethnographer T. C. Qalandarov with Tajik poets working as migrant labourers in Russia above all, and representative migrant poetry posted on public platforms. Having analysed the poetry of these migrant Tajik poets, Qalandarov attributes to them the nascence of a new literary tendency. Analysis of the writings of Nusratullo Boboev and Guli Murod, for example, reveals their scepticism not only in the prospects for subjects in the Humanities, but also in their self-assessment. Having graduated from the state university in the city of Khujand, Tajikistan, the poets have been working as a cook and a hawker respectively in the Ural Economical Region. While the former in the lyric ‘From the town of the Self I fled’ blames himself for failing to pursue a career in education in his hometown, the latter in the couplets, ‘I claimed that I’d be glad’, emphasises that, despite his confidence that he would be successful in finding employment, his experience pathetically attests to the irrelevance of his qualifications in his new job. A devaluation of the self is attested by the fact that many correspondents rejected the title ‘poet’ or ‘poetess’. While writing lyrics is satisfying for the migrant poets who enjoy the response from their audience, brain drain among Tajik teaching staff has probably set grave obstacles to the cultural development of the country.

YAN MINJIA is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in General History at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University. Her academic interests lie in medieval Persian historiography, which she pursued from 2015 as a postgraduate student at Peking University. During her doctoral studies in Moscow, she also learnt and practised Tajik. Currently she is investigating the political and social conditions of Central Asia and Eastern Iran from the 9th to 11th centuries CE.



Sarfaroz Niyozov



Stephen Bahry



Max Antony-Newman

**Post-Soviet Immigrant and Refugee Educational Experiences in Canada:
Challenges, Opportunities and Implications for Policy and Practice**

The educational experiences of immigrant and refugee children in the Global North have become more prominent in research and action in comparative, international and development education. Canada has long been active in research, policy and practice in this field. Canadian engagement with the educational challenges of immigrants and refugees has also included newcomers from post-Soviet countries. Research on this diverse and fast-growing population has been scant, focussing mainly on Russia and Ukraine, with little done on students and parents from other backgrounds, such as Central Asia. Correcting this gap, our presentation lays out the status of research, policy and practice in education of this understudied population and presents new findings.

Our presentation is based on the following:

(i) review of preliminary findings from our new project, a mixed method multiple embedded case study, exploring the educational experiences of children and adolescents from former Soviet Union countries and their families in Canada with data from classroom observations, interviews, focus group discussion, and surveys. Qualitative data have been collected from a range of stakeholder groups: teachers, principals and counsellors from public and private schools, students, parents, and community educators with Soviet and post-Soviet backgrounds.

(ii) previous research on the educational experiences of students from a Muslim background in the GTA, many being Central Asian Muslims, from a qualitative study on Canadian teachers' perspectives on the education of their Muslim students.



Our positions (as immigrants from the former Soviet countries) informed the research design, engagement with participants, and data analysis, as did a combined critical-constructive conceptual framework interweaving ecological, multicultural, and intersectional analytical frameworks. This approach allows us to identify challenges and opportunities at the micro, meso and macro levels and to illustrate how different aspects of the students' and parents' identities (e.g., language, race, religion etc.) are differently affecting the participants' educational and social actualities and aspirations.

Our analysis identified commonalities and differences in the participants' perspectives on their immigration to Canada, their relationship to Soviet and post-Soviet views on the comparative advantages and disadvantages Canadian and home-country curricula, pedagogy, and on teacher-student relationships. Using an asset approach towards our participants, our study also presents solutions and suggestions proposed by the parents and students from the former Soviet countries, as well as by Canadian educators.

Preliminary findings show tensions between perspectives on the academic and social aspects of education in Canada in comparison to the home country, and between generations. Parents found the curriculum insufficiently 'rigorous', while the youth enjoys a more humanities-based pedagogy. Students also experience difficulties adjusting to the new education system and its unwritten rules, which they see as implicit and vague compared to a more explicit and direct system in post-Soviet states. Coming from countries with more centralised education systems, the parents notice a lack of explicit character education in Canadian schools and are thus faced with managing their children's increased freedom to make educational choices in school and beyond.

SARFAROZ NIYOZOV is an Associate Professor of Curriculum Studies, Teacher Development and Comparative, International Education at OISE University of Toronto. He holds a PhD in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development from OISE, University of Toronto. He also received an MEd in Teacher Education from Aga Khan University (Pakistan), along with dual a BA and BEd degree in Arabic Philology from Tajik State University. He has held a number of education leadership positions at the University of Toronto and the AKDN affiliated intuitions. Prof. Niyozov has authored and co-authored around 70 publications, including books, referred journal articles, chapters, editorials and reviews. He has worked on policy-making and research capacity development and improving university pedagogy skills in Canada, Central and South Asia. His most recent and current research projects have included a SSHRC granted study of Educational Experiences of post-Soviet Students and Communities in Canada (2022–2025) and an AKF & Jacobs Foundation granted research on Quality of Education in Secondary Schools in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

STEPHEN BAHRY has lectured at OISE, University of Toronto, and in Kazakhstan on teacher development, culture and teaching, comparative education research; teaching second/foreign languages; and on multilingual and plurilingual education. He examines challenges for quality education for immigrant and refugee youth in the Greater Toronto Area, focusing on language(s) used at home and in school, and the need for multilingual and plurilingual education in Central Eurasia. His doctoral dissertation on perspectives of minority district stakeholders in Northwest China on non-dominant groups' languages and knowledge perspectives in the school curriculum received an award from the Language Issues SIG of CIES. He has completed a project with Prof. Niyozov on quality in education in Tajikistan and has many publications, most recently on Tajikistan's Language Ecology, and minority language use in Western China's anti-Covid campaigns.

MAX ANTONY-NEWMAN is a Lecturer (Assistant Professor) in Education at the University of Glasgow. Working from a critical sociological perspective, his main focus is on school-family partnerships, education policy, and teacher education with the overarching goal of moving from parent engagement as a source of social inequality to an opportunity for social justice. Max's work also centres on immigrant and refugee students and linguistic minorities in diverse classrooms. His current research focuses on immigrants and refugees with post-Soviet backgrounds in the North American context, and the role of teacher educators in preparing teachers for parent engagement in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia.



Nourmamadcho Nourmamadchoev

The ‘Story of Arrival’: Migration, Settlement, and Identity Formation in Shughnan, Badakhshan

The ‘story of arrival’ is a story of the migration to, and settlement in Shughnan of important figures whose genealogy links them to important families in Iran and the Middle East. Early records of migrants reveal the figures of religious mendicants or wandering darwishes who had left a comparatively prosperous life in Iran and taken up residence in the isolated mountain principalities of Shughnan and Wakhan. In this presentation, I problematise the opening paragraph of the *Tā’rikh-i Badakhshān* of Qurbān Muḥammadzāda (d. 1953) and Shāhfiṭūr Muḥabbatshāhzāda (d. 1959) and compare it to other such stories found in local genealogical works – *nasab-nāmas* – as well as those found in the oral tradition of Badakhshan. Although the story of arrival revolves around four main individuals, the focus of this paper will be Shāh Khāmūsh and Shāh Malang. I will endeavour to locate the arrival of these figures within an appropriate historical period. The contextualisation of these stories of arrival allows an examination of the interplay of politics, religion, and identity formation in the remote mountainous region of Shughnan.

NOURMAMADCHO NOURMAMADCHOEV is a Research Associate and Projects Coordinator in the Ismaili Special Collections Unit at the Institute of Ismaili Studies. He obtained his PhD in History from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. His doctoral dissertation is entitled *The Ismā‘īlīs of Badakhshan: History, Politics and Religion from 1500 to 1750*. He teaches in various educational programmes of the IIS and serves as a supervisor for Secondary Teachers Education Programme in the Department of Graduate Studies.



Chen Bram



Uri Rosenberg

Immigration and Muslim-Jewish Relations: Immigrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus in Israeli 'Mixed' Jewish Arab Cities

This paper will present a comparative study of intergroup relations between Jewish immigrants from Central Eurasia and indigenous Arab-Palestinians in two 'mixed' Jewish-Arab towns. Combining anthropological and historical perspectives, our research examines Jewish-Muslim relations before and after migration from Central Asia and the Caucasus to Israel.

Within the Soviet Union, Kavkaz ('Mountain') Jews and Central Asian ('Bukharan') Jews lived in areas with Muslim majorities. Both groups were largely recognised as 'fellow locals' by their Muslim neighbours. Following a mass migration in the 1990s, each group in Israel consists of about 150,000 individuals. In this paper, we examine the experiences of these migrants in two 'mixed cities': Ramle, in central Israel, where immigrants from Central Asia (especially from the Fergana Valley) settled, and Acre, in northern Israel, where immigrants from the Caucasus (especially from Azerbaijan) settled.

We argue that the experience of enduring past relations between Muslims and Jews could have different effects on the relations with local Arab-Muslims after migration, depending on specific contexts before and after migration. In some cases (such as the case of Central Asian migrants in Ramle), the memory of Jewish-Muslim relations in the diaspora creates a moderating effect on Jewish-Arab relations in Israel/Palestine. In other cases, however, positive memories of Jewish-Muslim relations in the diaspora are understood as a contradiction to current intergroup relationships with Arab neighbours, as exemplified in the case of 'Kavkaz' Jews in Acre. In such cases, the comparison with the past sometimes has a negative effect on the migrants' perceptions of ethnic relations with Arab-Palestinian neighbours in Israel.



We will discuss different factors that explain different post-migrational intergroup relationship patterns in mixed cities. Among them are factors connected to the situation before migration in Central Asia and the Caucasus following the collapse of the Soviet Union: social, economic, and political instability, and the rise of post-Soviet nationalism and ethnonational conflicts. We will also discuss how different formations of group identity (for example – different emphases on religion vs. ethno-nationalism) influenced intergroup relationships after migration. We will also highlight the influence of local contexts and the impacts of marginalisation vs. social-economic integration in the new society on intergroup relationships. Finally, Jewish-Muslim relations in Israel are not only to be found with indigenous Palestinian-Muslims, but also with former neighbours and friends from Central Asia and the Caucasus, through social media networks. The two cases we will focus on present contradicting possibilities of Jewish-Muslim relations. However, in both cases, it is clear that positive past relations between Jews and Muslims have the potential to influence everyday realities, even in the tense atmosphere of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

URI ROSENBERG is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow and lecturer at Heidelberg University, and previously a postdoc at the University of Potsdam. His work focuses on Turkish political Islam in the late 20th century (mainly on the discourse of the Milli Görüş movement), on historical narratives and nation-building in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, and on Turkish and Azerbaijani migrants in Germany and Israel. Dr Rosenberg is also the co-founder of Tech2Peace, a Palestinian-Israeli NGO dedicated to conflict-resolution dialogue, tech training and entrepreneurship.

CHEN BRAM is an anthropologist, with additional training in organisational studies, sociology and comparative religion. He is a senior lecturer in Hadassah Academic College, and a research fellow at the Truman Institute of the Hebrew University. Combining his academic interests with practical applications, he has worked for years as an engaged and applied anthropologist, focusing especially on social issues and multicultural policy in Israel (including various projects with the immigrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia). Dr Bram conducted field work in the Caucasus, Central Asia, Israel, and among Post-Soviet immigrant communities in New York. Bram served as academic manager of the research group, ‘Anthropological knowledge: relevance, use and potential’ (Van Leer Institute); as a Visiting Professor and research fellow at the Katz Center for Jewish Studies (U-Penn); at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Clark University; at the James Madison College of Public Affairs, MSU and at University of Florida.



Amier Saidula

Dynamism and Identity: The Wakhi Settlers of South Xinjiang

The Tajiks of Xinjiang are one of the fifty-six official nationalities of the People's Republic of China. As an ethnic, religious, and racial minority, they are considered geo-culturally, socio-economically, and numerically marginal in the national and regional context. Nonetheless, due to their long presence in eastern Central Asia, the Chinese state recognises them as one of the thirteen historical inhabitants of Xinjiang region. However, ethno-linguistically, Tajiks in China are slightly different from the Persian-speaking Tajiks of the broader Central Asia. Most of the Tajiks in Xinjiang speak Sariquli and Wakhi. Both language communities are native to the eastern Pamir region and have linguistic and ethno-religious ties to the people of the larger Badakhshan region.

Most of these Tajiks live in Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County. However, there are some scattered Tajik settlements outside Tashkurgan, known as Tajik ethnic villages. Many of the inhabitants are descended from Wakhi settlers who moved from Wakhan region in the preceding three centuries.

This paper examines the experiences of Wakhi settlers in Aktu and Guma counties in south Xinjiang. It looks at the socio-cultural context of the areas they gradually moved to and provides some insights into the political climate of the time. Examining the process of identity construction on the periphery of a contemporary nation-state, we draw on certain publications on local history and personal narratives captured using anthropological research methods. This paper contends that the Wakhi people's adaptation of Tajik identity appears to have served as a means to preserve and pass on the memories of their ancestors. Although most of them retained their Ismaili religious heritage, they also gradually adopted the Turkic dialects and cultural customs of their respective localities.



AMIER SAIDULA is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. He obtained his BA in Law, specialising in Chinese law, from Northwestern University of Political Science and Law in Xi'an. He holds a diploma in Chinese culture and language from Northwestern University of Nationalities in Lanzhou. He completed a two-year postgraduate programme in Islamic studies and humanities at the Institute of Ismaili Studies. He also holds an MA in Public International Law (LLM) from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Edinburgh. Dr Saidula has authored numerous peer-reviewed academic articles, book chapters, and reviews, examining Islam in China, particularly focusing on the Ismailis in the Xinjiang. He has translated and published several of the IIS's publications into Chinese and Uyghur. He is working on two monographs, one is about the history and culture of the Ismailis in the Xinjiang, and another is a sociological study of Chinese legal system, a case study of the Ismaili Tajik experience of PRC law.



Malika Zehni

Paper Borders, Boundaries, and Bazaars in
Colonial Central Asia

This paper examines the pivotal role of travel documents—passports, visas, and residence permits—in colonial Central Asia during the late 19th and early 20th century. It focuses on the creation of ‘paper borders’ and the trails left in the process of border crossing and migration, specifically between Russian Central Asia and its neighbours, including Qing Turkestan and Qajar Persia. The paper delves into the administrative and bureaucratic aspects of migration amid the division of Central Asia, highlighting the concept of legal belonging within imperial governance. It investigates the significance of being identified and documented during an era characterised by existing and emerging migration patterns. Utilising a historical approach, this study draws on archival documents, personal correspondences, and official records to construct a narrative of this period.

It explores how travel papers were more than mere administrative tools; they were instruments of control that influenced migration patterns and shaped identification processes. Yet, these documents also carried political and social significance, often serving as symbols of status and access. By incorporating the concept of the bazaar, the paper examines the socio-economic implications of these bureaucratic practices. The bazaar, as both a marketplace and a cultural hub, highlights the intricate interactions enabled by legal documentation. It becomes a space where identities are negotiated, transformed, traded, and forged, reflecting the broader socio-cultural landscape of Central Asia. This research contributes to the conference theme by providing a historical perspective on the role of documentation in migration and identification. It unveils the socio-political dynamics of Central Asia, emphasising the colonial administration’s impact on migration patterns and legal identification processes.



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