

Conferences and Lecture Series

The Fourth Annual Conference of the Central Eurasian Studies Society

Cambridge, Mass., USA, October 2-5, 2003

Reported by CESS Board and Publications Committee members: Laura Adams, Thomas Barfield, Gregory Gleason, Marianne Kamp, Shoshana Keller, Virginia Martin and John Schoeberlein, and **compiled by** Virginia Martin

With nearly 500 presentations on roughly 80 panels, it would be impossible to summarize the experience of the Fourth Annual Conference of CESS. These numbers in themselves say something. Not long ago, a gathering of so many specialists on Central Eurasia would have been unthinkable. Central Eurasian studies is gaining critical mass with growth and strengthening of the field. CESS has made significant strides in realizing its goals of building scholarly communication and strong standards of scholarship.

While we can continue to set our sights higher for better conferences in the future, it is worth reflecting on the point of development our field of study has reached. In the past, Central Eurasian studies has lacked some of the key institutional features which help to make scholarship strong — most notably here, the opportunity for scholars to hear feedback from others knowledgeable in their subject matter, which leads to higher quality publications and future work. Central Eurasian studies was riven into small enclaves of scholars operating in isolation among themselves or connected only to other fields of study, such as Middle Eastern studies or Slavic studies. In addition, Central Eurasianists were very few, there was a dearth of empirical research on the ground by non-local scholars, and Central Eurasian research made little contribution to broader thematic and theoretical discussions.

The situation for Central Eurasian studies, as represented at this conference, has changed. No more of the old complaints: that topics central to us are viewed by the audience as obscure; that it is necessary to devote half one's presentation to background information which scholars of other parts of the world can assume is basic knowledge. In

this year's conference, scholars in all fields of study, from all over the world — with 37 countries represented, including all of the countries of Central Eurasia — presented their work before knowledgeable colleagues, and whether the presentations were strong or weak they had the opportunity to receive to-the-point feedback and exchange ideas and information with others working on related topics.

In going forward, CESS is determined to continue to strengthen its conference by selecting, fostering and enabling better presentations and more useful discussion. We plan to continue to insist on prior submission of papers to ensure more polished work and more useful discussant presentations. We will continue also to encourage pre-organized panels, which provide for thematic coherence and a strong discussion. And we will work to have even better representation of scholarship in the full range of social science and humanities fields and scholars from all parts of the world. We welcome input on how we can achieve better participation and a stronger conference.

In this report we offer some selected summaries of a range of panels to give a taste of the conference. One can get another sense of the conference by visiting the website with the conference program and abstracts of all of the papers presented (see below). Of course we cannot convey the lively discussions that began in many of the panels and continued in the corridors, receptions, and restaurants of Harvard Square. Nor can we give a sense of all the valuable networking that came from this gathering (though presenters' contact information is available on the website, as well). We can only encourage you to come to this year's conference on October 14-17 at Indiana University

(see the Call for Papers at the back of this issue), and to assure you that it will be a rich experience!

Panels and papers addressing gender issues were surprisingly numerous. One of those panels, "Central Asian Women: History and Current Issues" (HC-06) stretched from women's history to contemporary activism. Nurten Kiliç-Schubel drew out issues of interpreting women's political roles from pre-modern sources, specifically the Humayun-nama, in her discussion of Gulbadan Begum's shaping of dynastic politics in Afghanistan. Leaping over several centuries, Chiara De Santi reviewed the Women's Division's mixed and conflicting efforts in the unveiling campaign in Central Asia in the 1920s, suggesting that this effort was at least in part the reason for the Women's Division's demise. Marianne Kamp presented recent oral history research exploring how farmers in Uzbekistan understood women's roles in farm labor before and after collectivization. Daria Fane discussed the possible lessons, positive and negative, that the *Hujum* campaign in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan might hold for reformers wanting to raise women's status in present day Afghanistan. And Sakena Yacoobi brought an activist's perspective on raising Afghan women's status, by discussing successes in opening schools for girls (and boys) in conservative Afghan communities.

Another panel on gender issues, "Gendered Economy in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan: Separate and Unequal" (EC-03), presented new empirical research on women's entrepreneurship and business activity in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. From this panel it was clear that research paradigms on women in Central Asia have shifted. While in the Soviet period Communist objectives for social change defined what would be studied, now international development organizations have set forth new research templates. Social scientists from Central Asia have been working with Women in Development standards to examine the seeming contradictions of women's labor participation in Central Asia. While women have education that equals men's, their advancement in business and entrepreneurial activities is hindered by a number of factors. Liudmila Kim, Dinara Alimdjanova, and Yelena Istileulova presented substantial new survey research examining barriers to women's advancement in workplaces and businesses in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Gulnora Makhmudova also addressed obstacles to women's career development in Uzbekistan, drawing on experiences as a businesswoman and with women's NGOs. Each

of the presenters focused on social attitudes towards women's advancement and employment. Istileulova and Makhmudova examined women's success in establishing independent businesses, but noted that woman-owned businesses, in spite of support from micro-lending programs, still constitute no more than 15 percent of all small enterprises in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Alimdjanova and Kim explored the roles of women in a number of fields, management attitudes that prevent their advancement, and noted the anomaly of women's prominence in the expanding field of banking and finance.

The papers on the panel "Local Responses to Global Intervention" (SO-08) all dealt with the ways that ideas originally coming from an outside source are accepted, rejected or adapted by local actors. Catherine Poujol's paper on confronting modernity was highly speculative and covered a vast history of the assimilation of new ideas in Central Asia. Alex McKay's paper on the introduction of biomedicine in Tibet delved into some interesting historical sources and hinted at some of the ways that the English were transformed by their experiences in the empire, as well as why they were bent on transforming their colonial subjects. Nancy Rosenberger's paper gave a preliminary but engaging look into the lives of women NGO leaders in Tajikistan that accounted for material as well as cultural factors, and Soviet as well as international influences. Sada Aksartova's paper on NGOs in Kyrgyzstan contributed a solid empirical case to a growing theoretical literature on how international assistance shapes local contexts and pointed out the dangers of local NGOs losing touch with their actual and intended constituents as they assimilate to the culture of international donor organizations.

The papers on the panel "Reinventing the Self in a Post-Soviet World" (SO-11) took a variety of approaches to the reinvention of the self in relation to larger identities. Gönül Pultar's paper analyzed the diasporic self that was created through Ayaz Ishaki's *Idel-Oural*. Ishaki's work was suppressed during the Soviet period, but is now being recovered by intellectuals in Tatarstan who wish to reinvent their own ethno-national identity. In Zulaikho Usmanova's provocative paper on Tajikistan the individual is given identity through the public display of national ideology which she argues is an exercise in mythmaking. In Jeff Sahadeo's paper on the researcher's experience of working in the archives in Uzbekistan the self being invented was that of the researcher as well as that of the historical

subject. And in Mesut Yeğen's paper, a civic (and ethnic) self is created and recreated through the constitutional definitions of citizenship in recent historical periods in Turkey.

On the panel "Sufism and Shrine Culture in Central Asia" (HC-02) discussant Ali Asani connected the five papers by observing two major themes: the shifting and fluid identities of Sufis and shrines, and the changes over time in Sufi doctrine regarding what it meant to belong to a *tariqa*. Jo-Ann Gross' stimulating paper, presenting the foundations of new research she is undertaking on understudied Islamic shrines and local circles of Sufi shaykhs in Tajikistan, discussed ways in which Naqshbandi and Hamadani-Kubravi shaykhs of the 14th-15th created alternative organizations in Khuttalan, Chaghaniyan, and Hisar to those centered in the urban milieu of Bukhara. Beatrice Manz, through her research on the Sufi shaykhs Isma'il Sisi in Tabriz and Zayn al-Din Khwafi in Herat, argued that many Sufis studied with numerous shaykhs of different orders in the course of their education and that the links forged and maintained outside the order of their primary affiliation continued to matter throughout their lives. Thus when seeking lines of influence and cooperation we should look at circles of shaykhs in close contact, as well as at the actual *tariqa* affiliations. Florian Schwarz demonstrated through an analysis of the shrine of Baha' al-Din Naqshband in Qasr-i Arifan that shrine histories are defined and redefined by changing political and intellectual discourses. The shrine of Naqshband took on an identity as a "dynastic shrine" under the early Manghits and eventually was redefined and castigated as a symbol of the oppressive rule of Bukharan emirs in the 20th century. Today its identity is shaped by Uzbekistani nationalist politics. Two final papers examined Sufism in descriptive ways: Habibeh Rahim analyzed the writings of the 11th century Sufi, 'Abdallah al-Ansari, and Vahe Boyajian examined the changing identities of Sufi *tariqa* in Iranian Baluchistan.

Ethnic identity is often assumed to be more fixed than it really is and may result in a misapprehension of the historical past or contemporary politics. This was an idea underlying the papers on the panel "Nation and Invention among the Mongols and Tajiks" (HC-01). Johan Elverskog ("The Fragmented Mongol Nation in the 16th Century") and Mark Elliot ("The Mongol Subaltern") both argued that Mongols did not see themselves as a single group historically. Rather, divisions among various Mongol groups in the past

and the variety of political roles they played in Qing China produced a much more fractured political structure in which ethnicity played a relatively small role. Similarly Michael Hall ("Viewing the Nation through a Fractured Lens") demonstrated that for the contemporary Tajiks of Tajikistan a common ethnic identity did nothing to prevent regional divisions from serving as the basis for a violent civil war, although most analysts of post-Soviet Central Asia took it for granted that it was ethnic division that caused conflict. Eva Fridman ("Rebirth of Shaman Initiations in Dornod Province, Mongolia") and Maduhai Buyandelgeriyn ("The Spirit of My Homeland is Calling Me") both documented through ethnographic studies the importance of ritual connections and ceremonies that produced strong connections to specific places and created a common identity even among nomadic people.

The common theme among the papers on the panel "Cultural and Political Spheres Intersecting" (HC-15) was the study of national identity as depicted in artistic or print media. Zahra Faridany-Akhavan showed slides of a dozen or so paintings and archaeological drawings done by Englishmen in Afghanistan in the early 19th century. These men came for a variety of reasons, from army service to personal curiosity, and made detailed records of Afghanistan's landscape and archaeological heritage, including the first ethnographic map. While these records were mostly made in the service of British imperial expansion, Faridany-Akhavan emphasized their exceptional historical importance, since many of the buildings, landscapes and artifacts depicted have been destroyed in the last 25 years. Ali Igmen discussed the intersections between the life of Chingiz Aitmatov, growing up in a family of strong women, and the role that women play in his fiction. Igmen focused on the tensions in Aitmatov's work between his desires to preserve Kyrgyz tradition and to please Soviet literary officials. Nouchine Yavari d'Hellencourt focused on the problem of conflicting public and private identities that Tajiks developed to survive the Soviet system. Private space — the realm of home, family, and religion — was where Tajiks nurtured a national identity under defensive conditions. That realm was also one of complete patriarchal control over women's lives. Yavari d'Hellencourt argued that because of Soviet pressure, Tajik society "stopped working upon itself," with the result that Tajik women, who gained public rights under the Soviets, experience severe oppression in their private lives that is justified as Tajik tradition. Tsetsenbileg

Tseveen discussed current efforts at a self-narration of national identity among the Mongols. National identity is a knotty problem for modern Mongols because they are divided among four ethnic groups living in three different countries. They are also extremely poor, regardless of where they live, and have made attempts to create national images that can attract foreign tourists and aid money (capitalizing on Chinggis Khan, most prominently). The complex and far-from-finished process presented by Tseveen attracted intense discussion that extended well into the lunch period.

“Current Legal Topics in Central Eurasia” (LS-01) was a heavily attended panel session that featured four scholarly papers and commentary by Philip Nichols of the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business. Artie McConnell presented a paper entitled “Secession, Intervention, and Multilateralism: International Legal Perspectives on the Abkhazian War” in which he argued that while Soviet law may have provided a valid legal basis for Abkhazian independence, international law does not support Abkhazian claims of statehood.

Peter Maggs, doyen of American legal studies of the post-Soviet world, contributed a paper entitled “The Civil Codes of Central Eurasia: A Comparison.” Maggs’ vividly illustrated discussion of the past decade of legal reform pointed out that while the countries of Central Eurasia shared the Soviet legal tradition, they differed widely with respect to the amount of local drafting talent, attitudes toward a market economy, and susceptibility to foreign donor influence. Maggs argued that the civil codes adopted reflected these differences. Ainash Alpeissova, an independent scholar conducting research at Harvard University, analyzed how bilateral tax treaties for the avoidance of double taxation on income and capital have played an important role in Kazakhstan. Eric Sievers provided an analysis of the largest enforcement action in the history of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

For more information on these and other panels, with presenter names and affiliations, paper titles, contact information, and thematic indexes, consult the CESS 2003 conference website at http://cess.fas.harvard.edu/CESS_Conference.html.

Symposium: Customary Law (*Adat* Law) between State and Society: Caucasus/Central Asia in Comparison to Other Regions of the Islamic World

Bamberg University, Germany, September 26-28, 2003

Reported by: **Michael Kemper**, Seminar für Orientalistik der Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany, Michael.Kemper@ruhr-uni-bochum.de and **Maurus Reinkowski**, Visiting Professor, Institut für Geschichte und Kultur des Nahen Orients, Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, München, Germany, reinkom@gmx.com

The symposium took place between the 26th and 28th of September, 2003, at Bamberg University (Germany) and was financed by the Volkswagen Foundation within the framework of a special Central Asian program, which aims to enhance scholarly exchange between the CIS countries and Germany.

Adat law, which existed prominently in all regions of the former Soviet Union with a predominantly Muslim population, came to be seen in the 20th century as a mere remnant of the past which would finally be superseded by modern Soviet state legislation. Soviet research into *adat* law therefore was merely understood as no more than the preservation of local folk customs. The resurgence of customary practices since the 1990s is testimony

to the dogged persistence of *adat* law into the present and the need to better understand its functioning both in the past and in contemporary societies.

When convening the symposium, organizers Michael Kemper (Bochum) and Maurus Reinkowski (Bamberg) had four major questions in mind. First, in which respects can *adat* law in the Caucasus and Central Asia be compared to the customary law of other regions (Northwest Africa, Iran, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Albania/Kosovo) of the Islamic world, particularly in the field of mediating institutions and procedures (such as compensation in blood feud cases and fines being paid to the community)? Second, what is the relationship of *adat* law to other simultaneously functioning legal systems, i.e.,

colonial, state, and Islamic law? Third, how are legal claims negotiated? What kind of strategies are mobilized and what kind of economic and political interests are pursued by the groups involved? And finally, how can the general resurgence of customary practices in recent decades (in Central Asia and beyond) be explained?

The symposium, during which German and Russian were used alternately, was opened by Keebet and Franz von Benda-Beckmann (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle) with a paper on legal pluralism based on theoretical considerations and many years' fieldwork in Indonesia. Sergei Abashin, Irina Babich, Olga Brusina, Vladimir Bobrovnikov (Moscow), Zhaylagi Kenzhaliev (Almaty) and Timur Aytberov (Makhachkala) delivered papers on various aspects of customary law in Central Asia. Besides Michael Kemper's paper on Daghestan and Ildikó Bellér-Hann's on Xinjiang, all other contributions dealt with regions beyond the Caucasus and Central Asia. In some cases adjacent regions were discussed: for instance, Afghanistan by Christine Nölle-Karimi (Munich), and Iran by Michael Werner (Freiburg) and Bert Fragner (Vienna). All other papers, by Ralf Elger (Bonn), Tilmann Hannemann (Bremen), Christian Müller (Paris), and Christoph Rauch (Bochum), concentrated either on the Arab world or — in the case of Karl Kaser (Graz) and Maurus Reinkowski — on the Balkans.

As expected, the interdisciplinary composition of the symposium (specialists in law, Middle East Studies, sociology of religion, anthropology) raised some questions on the heuristic value of the term "customary law." Ralf Elger, for example, argued that customary law might finally be nothing more than the "refuse bin" of all those elements that would not be acknowledged or ejected by the powerful specialists who are in charge of defining and enacting state law and religious law (Sharia) respectively. Franz and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann pointed to the position still upheld by jurists that law in order to be law has to be promulgated by the state and that therefore law in its real sense was introduced into many societies only

with the coming of colonial rule. Whereas all could agree on the judgment that local *adat* law can be perfectly well defined as law, Zhaylagi Kenzhaliev came rather close to a "statist" position by arguing that Kazakh customary law since the 17th century had been enacted exclusively by the Khan. Iran was identified as a special case since there *adat* (and the synonymous term *urf*) had always been conceived as part of state law and seen as far apart from the tribes' customs.

Sergei Abashin contributed an important observation by stressing the ritual and formulaic traits of *adat* law. He argued that negotiations on dowry — conceived as a central feature of present-day Uzbekistan's customary law — do not imply actual payments, but that they are part of the ritual preparations before the wedding ceremony.

The basic intention of the symposium — to approach the phenomenon of customary law from a comparative perspective — proved successful. For example, the parallels of Albanian customary law to those in the Caucasus and Central Asia turned out to be particularly noteworthy. The comparative approach was especially rewarding for the questions of gender, colonial collections of *adat* law, and the revival of customary law since the 1990s. Furthermore, numerous papers converged on the issue of arbitration courts and methods of consensual conflict resolution. In various instances it was shown that in societies that have known consensual processes of conflict resolution — with no party being formally defeated — the introduction of democratic electoral systems may have disastrous results in that the losers will be threatened by expulsion or even physical annihilation.

The papers delivered at the symposium and important portions of the intense discussions will be published in German in 2004; a publication of the papers in Russian is also planned. A list of the participants and the program of the conference is available at <http://www.uni-bamberg.de/~ba4ts1/tagungen/gewo03.htm>. Additional information on the symposium and the papers to be published can be obtained from Michael Kemper or Maurus Reinkowski.

The 2003 Middle East and Central Asia Politics, Economics, and Society Conference

University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, October 16-18, 2003

Reported by: **Payam Foroughi** and **Kristian Alexander**, Department of Political Science and **Christopher Patterson**, Middle East Studies, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, middle-east@utah.edu and central-asia@utah.edu

The 2003 Middle East and Central Asia Politics, Economics, and Society Conference: Contemporary Affairs and Future Prospects, held at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, was sponsored by grants from 12 collegiate, departmental and other entities of the University of Utah, including the university's student government, the US Peace Corps and the Utah Humanities Council. Though a conference on Central Asia was held at the University of Utah in the early 1990s (see review in this issue of the resulting publication, edited by Korkut Ertürk), the 2003 conference with its theme and objective of bringing together scholars from the two area studies of Middle East and Central Asia is a very rare event in this country. The organizers have hope that this conference will be the first of many annual scholarly events with the objective of uniting the scholarship of Middle East and Central Asia in a conference setting.

In addition to nearly 85 paper presentations distributed within 32 theme-specific panels, the conference featured five plenary lectures. Guive Mirfendereski kicked off the conference through a timely presentation titled "Today's Fuzzy Frontiers of International Law." Mirfendereski analyzed the legal framework of the current US foreign policy with respect to the issues of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, spread of hazardous technologies, and terrorism, with special emphasis on the Middle East and the atmosphere of the emerging New World Order in the post-Soviet era. Part of Mirfendereski's argument was that what appears as a new "saber rattling" unilateralism of the United States is not necessarily a new phenomenon. The next plenary was that of Ravil Bukharaev, a historian, journalist and analyst for the BBC, who spoke on the theme of "Islam in Russia: A Personal Journey along the Volga." Bukharaev elaborated on the intricacies of Russian Islam and the mostly tolerant Islamic movements in various regions of the Russian Federation.

Majid Tehranian, the Director of the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research in

Hawaii, presented the third conference plenary titled "From Silk to Silicon: Communication and Globalization." Tehranian discussed the incorporation of post-Soviet Central Asia into the new world economy, with emphasis on the pitfalls and successes of the transition economies. The next day Tehranian presented another talk with the theme of "Pax Americana in the Persian Gulf," emphasizing the dangers of a new American hegemony in the Middle East and its ramifications for Central Asia. The final plenary lecture by Eric Hooglund was on a related theme: "The United States, Central Asia, and Iran: A Security Polygon or Unfateful Axis?" Hooglund gave a succinct overview of the triangular relations of Iran, the United States, and the broad region of Central Asia.

Conference participants came not only from various institutions in the United States, but from as far away as Kyrgyzstan, Israel, Sweden, Moldova, Turkey and Britain. Panels touched on a large variety of issues important to world affairs today. For example, three of the panels were related to Turkey, including its internal and external relations. Among the presenters in the Turkish panels was Hakan Yavuz, author of the recently-published book *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (Oxford University Press, 2003), who presented a paper entitled "Political Islam and the Kurdish Question." There were also two panels on Iran titled "Iran: Identity and Internal Affairs" and "Turmoil in US-Iranian Relations." In the latter, Masoud Kazemzadeh, who is working on a book on US-Iran relations, presented a paper titled "The Bush Doctrine and Iran: Alternative Scenarios and Consequences." Another noteworthy presentation was by Seyed Mohammad Mussavi-Rizi of Tufts University who presented a stimulating paper titled "Marriage Made in Heaven: Young Reformists in the Theodemocracy of Iran." In another session, Fred Lawson, the well-known expert on Syria, presented an analytical paper titled "Political Liberalization in the Middle East and Central Asia: A Synthetic Approach." Yet other panels included, *inter alia*, "Issues of Language and Identity,"

"Prospects of Conflicts in Central Asia," and "Pressing Security Issues in Eurasia." Some papers in the latter panel were Larissa Ousmanova's "New Security Environment in Central Asia: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization as Case Study" and Odil Ruzaliev's "Is the Unification of Central Asia Possible?" Please view the conference website at <http://www.hum.utah.edu/mec/> for a full program.

Modest conference fees covered two meals, one Bosnian and the other Persian, and a free concert "Music and Dance of Persia and Central Asia" organized by Eastern Arts and the Utah Character Dance Ensemble. Among the Central Asian performers was Anwar Yusuf of Washington, D.C., who performed music from East Turkistan. In order to improve on this year's conference, a short survey of open-ended questions was sent to participants. Based on incoming feedback, the conference

committee has been pleased to hear of the general success and the atmosphere of intellectual engagement of the 2003 conference. "The panel discussions," to quote Bukharaev, "were deep, thoughtful and, for the most part, of genuine academic value." Participants were especially pleased with the opportunity to network with their peers. For the 2004 conference, among other things the conference committee is planning to strengthen organization, encourage the formation of topic-specific panels by participants, and hold a general farewell session. The conference committee is already planning the 2004 Middle East and Central Asia Politics, Economics, and Society Conference, scheduled for September with the likely theme of "Inequality and Transition in the 21st century." The call for papers will go out in February 2004.

AAASS 2003 Annual Conference

Toronto, Canada, November 20-23, 2003

Reported by: **Shoshana Keller**, Associate Professor of History, Hamilton College, Clinton, N.Y., USA, skeller@hamilton.edu

The 2003 annual conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) was held November 20-23 in Toronto. Perhaps because of the large size and success of the Central Eurasian Studies Society conference in October, panels and individual papers on Central Eurasian topics were noticeably fewer this year than in the past, and attendance at these panels tended to be low. Approximately 16 panels out of 374 were devoted to Inner Eurasian topics, with a handful of individual papers appearing on other panels as well. The conference schedule did not work in presenters' favor: five of the panels were tucked into either the first or last sessions of the conference, in direct competition with each other and with travel schedules. All but one of the panels and papers focused on modern history and politics (18th century to the present) with the exception of one paper that touched on the 16th century.

Not surprisingly, current preoccupations with military security and Central Asian Islam dominated five of the Inner Eurasian panels. While I did not make it to all of these panels the general opinion seemed to be that Central Asia is not currently producing a serious threat to the United States,

although if its internal political and economic situation continues to deteriorate and the US continues to support oppressive governments, that may change. Pauline Jones Luong (Yale University) presented the early stages of a very promising comparative approach to analyzing the potential of Islamist militancy in Central Asia, looking for socio-political patterns across the entire Islamic world rather than focusing on artificially-defined regions in isolation. Her paper generated many questions and discussion about the limitations, as well as the utility, of statistical data. At a panel on demographic change in Central Asia, Cynthia Buckley (University of Texas at Austin) presented recent, sometimes raw, data on the alarming rise of AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases in Uzbekistan and Michel Guillot (University of Wisconsin at Madison) made the preliminary suggestion that Russians are dying disproportionately faster than are Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan. Both trends could have a large impact on political and economic conditions in the region.

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) sponsored a roundtable discussion on "Central Asia and the Caucasus: A Multilingual, Multidisciplinary Approach," featuring Seteney Shami of SSRC,

Cynthia Buckley, Marianne Kamp (University of Wyoming) and Scott Levi (University of Louisville). For Inner Eurasianists this was the highlight of the conference, with a lively discussion of the field's location between the cracks of Russian, Middle Eastern, and Chinese area studies and the problems and possibilities that this location affords us. While it is clear that we will not get the funding and infrastructure of Russian and East European Studies in the foreseeable future, we can still use that structure for our own benefit as we try to push the borders of traditional "areas" outwards. One difficulty that the AAASS conference illustrated clearly was getting Russianists (or Middle Eastern or

Chinese specialists) to listen to us; low attendance at the Inner Eurasian panels was a frustrating problem for everyone. One suggestion was to do more mixed panels with Russian specialists. We also need to keep talking up the importance of the field and to make new connections with the burgeoning field of world history. Cynthia Buckley emphasized that people working on contemporary topics need to learn the language of the World Bank, United Nations, and large international NGOs, since these organizations, not the scholars, are shaping general discourse around Inner Eurasia. In all the mood was hopeful, but there is a great deal of work to do.