

**"NEW MEDIA CONFIGURATIONS - CHANGING SOCIETIES? CURRENT RESEARCH  
PERSPECTIVES ON SOUTH ASIA, SOUTHEAST ASIA, THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA"**

**Panel 3: Changing Media and Religious Renegotiations**

**Dr. Jeanine Dageyeli** (Postdoc, BGSMCS, Germany)

***„Pious Admonitions – Middle Eastern Islamist Videos and their Pathways to Central Asia“***

**Abstract**

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many Central Asian Muslims were left with a feeling of religious inadequacy due to the limited access to Islamic canonical texts and an interrupted knowledge transfer during Soviet times. While missionaries of different Islamic denominations became active in Central Asia during the 1990s, Central Asians themselves travelled to the Middle East and Turkey to study or work. Middle Eastern scripturalist interpretations of Islam soon came to represent »true Islam« to many Central Asians and were employed to counter local religious interpretations and social hierarchy. Scripturalist knowledge from the Middle East – evaluated as superior to local knowledge – was mainly embraced by young males. By referring to Middle Eastern Islam (allegedly closer to the sacred origins and untainted by socialism), they managed to surpass social hierarchy and acquired a religious status allowing them to successfully challenge interpretative rights of those who traditionally held religious authority.

Quick to get acquainted with new technologies, they also introduced semi-professional religious video and internet material from the Middle East, mainly from Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates to Central Asia. It consists largely of pious admonitions, exempla stories and warnings of dire consequences in the afterlife. The material is disseminated via CD and, during the last years, also through MMS. Because of restrictions on access and insufficient supply, internet plays an inferior role in dissemination. From the mid-2000s onwards, governments in Central Asia adopted an increasingly critical attitude towards scripturalist Islam. CDs are now handled secretly and are increasingly destroyed after watching. The video material considered here is not used to voice political concerns or claims but rather serves as an authoritative backing to renegotiate social relations and hierarchies within families and larger village or city quarter communities.

This paper is based on field research in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and on the analysis of original video material.