

## Beyond Oil and Radical Islam: From Classifications to Links of Economy and Religion in Central Asia

Tuesday, January 10th, 2012, 5 pm

### Tengiz Crude and the Making of a Nation-state in Kazakhstan

Lecture by Dr. Saulesh Yessenova

When the Soviet Union went into its death throes, no one thought of Kazakhstan, the last socialist republic to break away, as a state that would make a major breakthrough in economic development, outpacing Russia and the countries of Eastern Europe. Initially regarded as a soap bubble blown by global ambitions in the energy-rich Caspian Basin, its success has revealed sound economic and political strategies that paved the way for continued economic growth. This is how nation-building and crude oil, the key projects Kazakhstan launched upon independence, have taken shape as closely related endeavours.

This lecture attends to the processes the multinational oil projects set in motion across the country in the wake of post-socialism and to the role of transnational dynamics in constructing the national realm. The expansion of multinational oil corporations into the Caspian Basin, visualized in Western imagination as a resource frontier after the Cold War, is an important measure of global engagement; economic globalization, however, is treated in the present analysis as a function of a broader structure of transnational power relations that have informed economy and culture in this newly established state. How has the expansion of the global paradigm shaped the complex relationship between the state, society, and its new-found wealth? And what implications can be drawn out from this relationship for the future of this newly emerged petro-nation?

**Saulesh Yessenova** earned her PHD in Anthropology from McGill University in 2003. The same year, she was awarded with a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council post doctoral fellowship which she took to the University of British Columbia. In 2005, she joined Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology as a postdoctoral research fellow. And since 2008, she has held a position of Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Calgary in Canada. In recent years she has completed her book based on her doctoral research on urban migration and national narratives in Kazakhstan. Since 2003, she has been working in Kazakhstan's Caspian Basin, conducting fieldwork on the relationship between the oil industry, state and society.

This lecture series is a cooperation between the Zentrum Moderner Orient ([www.zmo.de](http://www.zmo.de)), the Querschnittsbereich Islam in den Gesellschaften Asiens und Afrikas, Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin ([iaaw.hu-berlin.de/islam](http://iaaw.hu-berlin.de/islam)) and the Competence Network Crossroads Asia ([www.crossroads-asia.de](http://www.crossroads-asia.de)).

During the Soviet era, religion and economy were conceived as distinct, even mutually opposed spheres with their own rationales (such as 'rational actors' on the one hand and 'irrational' 'otherworldly' motivations on the other). A focus on the impact of religious ideas and practices on economic processes - and vice versa - serves to question the common perception of Central Asia as a region determined by either dangerous religious movements or lucrative oil and gas reserves. The lecture series interrogates how 'religion' and 'economy' are shaped and negotiated through everyday strategies and practices. How are separations, links, cross-overs and mutual constitutions of 'religion' and 'economy' conceived and put into practice by Central Asian actors? The lecture series seeks to foreground Central Asian debates on the relationship between religious and economic domains in order to query these social, political and social science categories.

#### Venue:

Zentrum Moderner Orient  
Kirchweg 33

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