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*Leah Utyasheva*

## **RE-EXAMINING THE UZBEK NATION AND IDENTITY: THE NEXUS BETWEEN MIGRATION, ETHNICITY, LANGUAGE, AND BELONGING**

**Turaeva R. (2016) *Migration and Identity in Central Asia: The Uzbek Experience*. New York: Routledge, 219 p. ISBN: 978-1-138-91349-3**

Who are We? Who are the Others? What is the difference between Them and Us? These are the questions asked in Rano Turaeva's book *Migration and Identity in Central Asia: The Uzbek Experience* published by Routledge. Through the exploration of the inter-ethnic relations among internal Uzbek migrants in the capital city of Tashkent, the book discusses such issues as the elements of the Uzbek national identity, collective identification, and the influence of linguistic intricacies in the identification processes. The book undertakes an ambitious task of exploring the meaning of Uzbek ethnicity and identity (and different layers of it), analysing survival and networking strategies, identification processes, and *de jure* and *de facto* boundaries encountered by internal migrants from periphery to the capital. It provides a detailed analysis of the relations, communication, networking strategies, connections, dependencies and interdependencies that form survival techniques among internal migrants in this post-Soviet state. On the theoretical level, in discussing politics of belonging and identification among the groups living in Uzbekistan, the author examines collective identification/identity and making of the Other.

Each part of the book presents rich ethnographic material, based on the author's research among Khorezmians who moved to the capital city of Tashkent – a highly desirable place for all internal migrants in Uzbekistan. The book provides thick descriptions of everyday lives, survival strategies, prejudices and

stereotypes, and examples of tribalism (*mestnichestvo*) among Khorezmians living in Tashkent. The research is enriched by the author's personal connection to it – she herself is a Khorezmian whose parents grew up in Turkmenistan, and who at some point experienced migrant life in Tashkent.

Part I outlines the social, political and economic past of the region with an overview of migratory processes, the historical implications of Soviet geopolitical decisions, and social structures of the region. Here the reader is provided with a concise review of the history of the creation of the Uzbek nation. We learn about population movements throughout Central Asia, the linguistic background of local languages and their dialects. Khorezm is an area that inherited the territory of the Khwarizm oasis state, which was known for its sophisticated urban life and outstanding works of art with existing records dating from as early as late third century BC to the eight century AD.

In laying the background to the discussion that unfolds in the book, the author provides an overview and the far-reaching influence of the Russian/Soviet presence in the region. Expanding on Peter Finke's research (2014) on the formation of Uzbek identity during the Soviet times, the author notes the continuing influence of the Soviet past on the region, including its identity. In her analysis of identity politics in Uzbekistan, Turaeva looks into different aspects of identity markers, examining the current situation of the Uzbek nation and collective identification of Uzbeks in Tashkent. Here, she scrutinizes state policies related to mobility of population, specifically noting the effect of the *propiska system* on migration and identity. Turaeva argues that the *propiska* created artificial boundaries among the population and among the nation, dividing people into Tashkentis as opposed to the other, providing the political foundation on which identity politics evolve. Developing this idea, she insightfully calls *propiska* a *de jure* marker of 'otherness' among Uzbeks making the patterns of internal migration resemble those of international migration. As a result of *propiska*, individuals have to rely increasingly on kinship and ethnic networks in order to find opportunities to move and resettle safely.

Part II sheds light on linguistic issues and concentrates on the analysis of social division based on language and the place of origin. Following John Gumperz's (1997) interpretive sociolinguistic approach the author describes social attitudes and behaviours of various social groups (mainly Khorezmians who migrated to Tashkent), including linguistic techniques of differentiation, derogatory and polite terms, issues of prestige, stigma, and dependence. In this part the author discusses how 'we-code' and 'they-code' in a linguistic sense are used to communicate collective and social identities and belonging. She emphasises that in parallel within regional differences within Uzbekistan, inter-regional and inter-group differences exist on the basis of district division, with the division of the Khorezmian dialect into sub-dialects. The intra-group differences among Khorezmians are less visible in Tashkent, as all Khorezmians strive to stay together despite the regional differences.

Part III discusses different layers of identification and belonging in the context of contemporary Uzbekistan. Here, the author touches upon the theory of group self-identification and group ascription (identification by others), reviewing the work of other scholars (Gumilev 1989; Harneit-Sievers 2006; Finke 2014). In constructing belonging and identity politics, constant renegotiation of the content (ways of defining We) and boundaries (defining the Other) is ongoing. It is a continuous relationship, interaction and dialogue with the Other. Ethnic identity is not monolithic or homogeneous. The boundaries of being Uzbek vary, and take different shape in different settings, incorporating elements of local languages, cultures, and social organizations.

Discussing the theories of autochthony and belonging, the author draws parallels between Uzbekistan and post-colonial Africa. She argues that the nexus of autochthony and ethnicity, and the further linkage of these concepts with the theory of nationalism is useful for understanding of contemporary Uzbekistan. Turaeva adheres to the idea of successive scales of autochthony, which include 'ethnicity, geographical divisions, nationality and mega ethnicity' (pp. 142–143). The level of scale of autochthony provide means and ways to make difference and exclude the Other. There are of course 'fundamental differences in the content and dynamics of the politics of belonging' between Africa used as a reference to uncover these levels and post-Soviet Central Asia (pp. 143–146). The fact that the government of Uzbekistan does not support autochthonous movement and even prohibits it by law is one of them.

Part IV proceeds to explore what binds people together in the ethnic networks that internal migrants form in Tashkent, discussing concepts of dependency, power, agency, and autonomy. Turaeva describes the community life of Khorezmian transplants in Tashkent, rife with relations of dependency and power, with *katta* (big) and *kichkina* (small) Uzbeks referring respectively to people with high and low social status. The author uses the term 'ethnic trap' (p. 182) to describe the dynamics of playing the ethnic card for short term benefits and subsequently becoming bound within the ethnic community without further opportunity to escape. Ethnic support relationships require reciprocity, and the author uses both *mestnichestvo* (local politics) and *zemlyachestvo* (regional solidarity) to explain these relations with reference to common regional affiliation. Not surprisingly, family and kinship ties play a vital role in preparation for and assistance to migration and resettlement. The book provides thick descriptions of such powerful kinship/family strategies to facilitate migration as arranged marriage, brides' and grooms' schools, and bonded labour.

In conclusion, the author argues that collective identities appear not simply as a result of contact with the relevant Others. It is rather a dialectical process of communicating a collective identity to others and perception of those identities by Others. The 'difference between "Us and Them" does not emerge solely from the contacts with the relevant Other but is also determined by external structures and processes related to state policies, economic situations and the like' (p. 209).

Rano Turaeva has done a fine job explaining identity politics, ethnic interrelations, linguistic intricacies and power structures related to internal migration in Uzbekistan. Providing a wealth of analysis based on first-hand experiences and research, the book contributes to understanding Uzbek collective identity and ethnic and sub-ethnic relations. It offers an insightful description of everyday life in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, historic and anthropological background, complete with rich ethnographic detail. One indisputably attractive aspect of *Migration and Identity in Central Asia* for a migration scholar is the fact that in addition to the comprehensive arguments, clear language and the overview of existing scholarship on the topic, it provides a window to the realities of migration, as well as everyday lives in post-Soviet Central Asia. In discussing internal migration and its influence on the making of ethnic identity in Uzbekistan, the author provides rich details, gained from first-hand personal experience and observation. The description of people's migration journeys from Urgench (the main city in Khorezm) to Tashkent, and the strategies people employ to ensure successful establishment (including marriage) is revealing.

The discussion of gender issues in conjunction with migration and resettlement strategies sheds light on the challenging realities women face in Uzbekistan. The author clearly shows that already limited mobility is even more restricted for women. The only way for many women to move from the province to Tashkent is marriage, entailing life-long duty to serve in the house of her parents-in-law. Fascinating is the description of family structure and age- and gender-determined social status where each person has an assigned degree of maturity connected to their lifecycle events or marked by their achievements. Unlike men who reach maturity after marriage, women reach maturity after they have married children of their own – entering the time in life when one can finally expect to be taken seriously (pp. 195–196).

Although the author claims that she has 'little interest' in discussing ethnic relations between Uzbeks and non-Uzbeks (P. 11), for many scholars of the region such a discussion may be of interest. Considering the history of the region within Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union and the current independent state, the formation of ethnic identities and nations (see, Sabol 1995; Roy 2000) and the nexus between migration and sense of ethnic belonging across ethnicities is an issue deserving further exploration. The impact of inter-ethnic relations on the development of nations, identities, and migration patterns – internal or external – in the region would be of interest to those studying migration and anthropology.

In contrast with other ethnic identities of the region, the Uzbek ethnic identity category is generally accessible (Isaacs, Polese 2015). However, '[o]ne should be cautious when attempting to broadly summarise what it means to be Uzbek in contemporary Central Asia' (Hierman 2015: 536). Turaeva's book is a valuable contribution to understanding this issue. This book is for anthropologists, ethnicity researchers, scholars of Uzbekistan, post-Soviet countries, and Central Asia in general. Anyone with interest in migration, identity politics,

and gender issues in Central Asia and post-Soviet states will find it stimulating and insightful.

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## НЕ ДОМА И НЕ В ГОСТЯХ: ПРОБЛЕМА САМООПРЕДЕЛЕНИЯ МИГРАНТОВ

**Wocagni P. (2017) Migration and the Search for Home. Mapping Domestic Space in Migrants' Everyday Lives. Hampshire: Palgrave, 136 p. ISBN 978-1-137-58801-2**

«В Европе крайне правые возвращаются к радикальным действиям» (Stéphane 2018), «Папа вновь осуждает высылку мигрантов» (Le Figaro 2017), «Мусульманские мигранты: почему евреи в Германии снова боятся» (Spiegel 2017) – с подобными заголовками выходили европейские газеты в период, когда была издана книга Паоло Бокканы. Мигрантов осуждают и защищают, идеализируют и боятся – в их отношении используется вся палитра эмоций. А представленное исследование не только отвечает на вопрос относительно поиска мигрантами своего «дома», но и продолжает дискуссию относительно возможностей их адаптации к условиям жизни на новом месте.

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