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ÖZBEK

1 AHMET SAÇKESEN, Özbek masallarının tip ve motif yapısı, Ege Üniversitesi, Doktora, 2010

Review Essay: Viewing Uzbek Islam from the Field

Maria Louw

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Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan: The Morality of Experience. By Johan Rasanayagam. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, xiv, 281pp. ISBN 978-1-107-00029-2
Why do Uzbeks Have to be Muslims? Exploring Religiosity in the Fergana Valley. By Irene Hilgers. Edited by Chris Hann. Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2009, xi, 177pp. ISBN 978-3-643-10176-1

In the first decade or so after the breaking up of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Central Asian states there was an explosion in literature dealing with Islam in the region. Very little of it, however, was based on extensive fieldwork. Furthermore, most of these studies tended to be guided by security and geopolitical concerns and mainly focused on the question of whether there was a risk that militant or radical Islam might gain a foothold in the region. People's everyday religious practice and experiences and their ideas about Islam, on the other hand, were very much neglected.

The field of Central Asian studies is still in the making, but in recent years we have started to see the outcome of the research of scholars who conducted fieldwork in the region in the 1990s and 2000s. The two monographs reviewed here are good examples of the new, more experience-near direction the study of Islam in the region has recently taken. Both books are based on anthropological fieldwork focusing on Islam as practiced and understood in Uzbekistan, and both books are written by researchers connected with the former 'Religion and Civil Society' focus group at the Max Planck Institute in Halle. Common to these studies is also a focus on how people in Uzbekistan explore and debate what it means to be Muslim and seek to constitute themselves as good Muslims under conditions where public debate is stifled by an authoritarian Uzbek state. The state seeks to monopolize the answer to what it means

M. Louw (✉)
Department of Culture and Society, Aarhus University, Moeagaard, 8270 Højbjerg, Denmark
e-mail: ctnolouw@hum.au.dk