Uyghur Neighborhoods in Kazakhstan

with

Sean Roberts
Associate Professor and Director, International Development Studies Program, GWU

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the Uyghurs of Kazakhstan, like many others in the former USSR, began to resurrect and re-invent traditional cultural practices that had been repressed during the Soviet period as either contrary to socialist atheism or as remnants of a “feudal past.” These traditions included daily practices and rituals based in local communities as well as the informal structure of neighborhood governance that regulates such practices.

Since the 1990s, the importance of these neighborhood structures and practices to Uyghur daily life in Kazakhstan have gradually increased, and most recently the informal structure of neighborhood governance has even been scaled up to create a Republic-wide organization that represents Uyghur interests to the government of Kazakhstan. This lecture will discuss the evolution of local Uyghur neighborhoods in Kazakhstan over the last twenty years, focusing on these communities’ roles in both cultural resurrection and political mobilization.

Sean R. Roberts, PhD is a professor at the Elliott school and the Director of the International Development Studies program. He is a cultural anthropologist who has done extensive fieldwork among the Uyghur people of Central Asia and China, and worked for USAID in Central Asia on democracy programs. In 1996 he produced a documentary film on the Uyghur people titled, Waiting for Uighurstan.

Wednesday May 16, 2012
5:00-6:30pm
1957 E Street N.W., Room 505
Please RSVP at http://tinyurl.com/Uygherneighborhoods

This event is on the record