

International Uyghur Studies 2025

Land, Life and Labour:

Narratives and Infrastructures in the Service of Colonial and
Capitalist Development of the New Frontier

September 4-5th



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Location: Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

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Land, Life and Labour: Narratives and Infrastructures in the Service of Colonial and Capitalist Development of the New Frontier

Day 1: Thursday 4th September

9:00-09:30 – Registration and Introductory Remarks

9:30-10:30 – Keynote 1: Guldana Salimjan (University of Toronto) – “Land, Labor, and Settler Innocence: A Comparative Analysis of the Pioneer Myths in the US and China”

Chair: Léo Maillet (University of Geneva)

10:30-11:00 – Coffee Break

11:00-12:30 – Panel 1. Political Transformations and the 1949 Turn

Chair: David O'Brien (Jagiellonian University)

Włodzimierz Cieciora (University of Warsaw) – “Uyghurs, Hui, and the Chinese Nation-State: Political Visions from Beijing’s Young Muslim Movement in the 1930s”

Nabijan Tursun (Independent Scholar) – “Transformation of State System: From East Turkestan Republic to People's Republic of China”

12:30-2:00 – Lunch Break

2:00-3:30 – Panel 2. Narratives Dis/Placing Land and Labour

Chair: Dilnur Reyhan (Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences)

Léo Maillet (University of Geneva) – “The Uyghur Share of Bingtuan Labour: Questioning Han-Centred Narratives of Frontier Construction in Maoist China”

Zarina Mukanova (University of Warsaw) – “Land, Life, and Broken Promises: Testimonies of Kazakh Landowners Amidst State Extractivism in Xinjiang”

3:30-3:45 – Coffee Break

3:30-5:00 – Uyghur Oral Literature and Visual Art

Organisers: Rabigül Erkmén (Warsaw Observatory of Culture) & Sonia Imin (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

Day 2: Friday 5th September

9:00-10:00 – Keynote 2: Benno Weiner (Carnegie Mellon University) – “The Ethnopolitics of Great Nationality Chauvinism in Socialist China: A View from the Tibetan Plateau”

Chair: Eleanor J. Hart (European Uyghur Institute)

10:00-10:30 – Coffee Break

10:30-12:00 – Panel 3. Narratives and Infrastructures in Colonizing Cultural Spaces

Chair: Melissa Shani Brown (Jagiellonian University)

Rune Steenberg (Palacký University Olomouc) – “Cultural Substitution as Colonial Eradication. The Xinjiang Museum restructuring and “Cultural Enrichment” Policies as Settler Colonial Strategies”

Tim Grose (Rose Hulman Institute of Technology) – “From Pilgrims to Punch-Cards: Tourism and Desecration at Uyghur Sacred Sites”

12:00-13:30 – Lunch Break

13:30-15:00 – Panel 4. Exploitation through Forced Labour and Re-education

Chair: Nyrola Elimä (Independent Scholar)

Emily Upson (Newcastle University) – “Colonial Echoes in Uyghur Advocacy: Strategic Framing, Organisational Hierarchies, and the Politics of Forced Labour”

Soumya Simran (Jawaharlal Nehru University) – “Harvesting Obedience: Cotton, Labour Re-education, and the Disciplining of Uyghur minority Bodies”

15:00-15:30 Coffee Break

15.30-18:00 – Roundtables

15.30-17.00: Roundtable 1. “War, Occupation, Colonisation and Genocide”

Chair: Eleanor J. Hart & Léo Maillet

Invited Participants: Tetiana Boriak (Vilnius University), Tetiana Storozhko (University of Warsaw).

17.00-18.00: Roundtable 2. “Competing Narratives and Conflicting Interests: Within and Beyond the Region”

Chair: David O’Brien

Invited Participants: Samantha Botica Fuentes (University of Salamanca), Besmillah Taban (Jagiellonian University), Joanna Nawrotkiewicz (University of Lodz), Piotr Kwiatkowski (Jagiellonian University).

18:00-18:30 – Concluding Remarks: Nyrola Elimä & Dilnur Reyhan