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INTERNATIONAL  
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## On methodology and epistemological situation in humanities and social sciences in Central Asia\*

*Valery Khan*

*Fulbright Research Scholar, Center of Russian, Eastern European and Eurasian Studies, University of Kansas*

\* The editors apologize for having published a first version which was not accurate, and, offer to the reading this new version.

### Key Points

- After the collapse of the Soviet Union, humanities and social sciences in Central Asia have undergone tremendous changes.
- Although the situation is different in each country of the region, all humanities and social sciences share similar features: they still merge scholarly standards with political ideology that come from the authorities, offer a dichotomous thinking (“positive – negative”, “true – false”), continue to use emotional and axiological vocabulary coming from Soviet phraseology, claim objective knowledge, and lack interdisciplinary approach.
- In the current ideological constructions, the past in a certain interpretation acts as a natural and logically justified bridge to an outlined future.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the humanities and social sciences (H/SSs) in Central Asia have undergone changes that can be systemized as follows: many Soviet doctrinal elements have been abandoned; new ideas and methodological approaches have been outlined; new, previously undeveloped areas have become topics for study; and a large body of new archival documents, including those that were previously closed, has become available. In the years following independence, virtually all textbooks and scientific publications embodied a new form of H/SSs based on fundamentally

serve to move the “wheel of history” —such as those on strategic orientation of the new states, and, most importantly, the ideology of state-building—are considered scientific), therefore, the development of H/SSs becomes linked with the tasks of state-building.

- Scientific criteria are softened and lowered (“revolutionary” and ideological arguments gain more importance as they begin to define basic ideas and empirical material in H/SSs), whereby science becomes a field of public activity (any official may determine what is “correct” or “wrong” in certain scientific views).

## The past legitimizes the present, e.g. statuses of ethnicities and public policy

different methodological approaches. Therefore, a discussion of these approaches and epistemology in Central Asian humanities and social sciences is relevant and urgent. The findings of this paper are based on the author’s knowledge of the situation in historical science, philosophy, sociology and ethnology. As for regional differences, regardless of what country a specific example refers to, the article’s findings are applicable to the entire Central Asian region. In other words, the situation described in this paper has no regional variations, although each of the countries of Central Asia has its own specifics.

- Eclecticism appears as a consequence of theoretical and methodological uncertainties.
- Radicalism or other excessive ideologies appear as a consequence of these same uncertainties.
- Some links with the old science heritage are maintained.

### Relations with old H/SSs

Recognizing all the changes that H/SSs have undergone, as described in the introduction, more consideration should be given to *what extent* and *in what ways* modern H/SSs in Central Asia have changed from the Soviet sciences. This question is not arbitrary, as the region’s the post-Soviet H/SSs are officially alienating themselves from Soviet sciences and even diametrically opposing them.

## Development of humanities and social sciences in the transition period

The main characteristics of the development of H/SSs in post-Soviet Central Asia and the methodological characteristics of transition in H/SSs in a changing socio-political environment can be described as follows:

- A vacuum or methodological uncertainty emerges in the early stages of transition period (abandonment of old paradigms and lack of new ones).
- The methodological vacuum is filled with political and ideological elements (works that

Many concepts have been erased from the academic vocabulary such as socialism, scientific communism, socio-economic system, class approach, proletarian internationalism (or just internationalism), friendship of nations, religious and feudal remnants, and so on. In scientific publications and conference presentations, social scientists emphasize that they have moved away from Marxism-Leninism and developed new methodological approaches. The general thrust of these statements is that the H/SSs in the Soviet Union were ideological, while in the years of independence they have been based on “objective” and “scientific” approaches, according to “modern world” science standards<sup>1</sup>.

Because such statements are widespread, it can be questioned whether the methodological approaches and conceptual apparatus of the Soviet H/SSs no longer exist. After all, a declaration of abandonment does not necessarily mean that this has been actually accomplished. It seems that, despite all declarations of opposition to the Soviet science and ideology, clear traces of the Soviet legacy -- both in form and content -- can be still found in modern H/SSs of the Central Asian countries.

“Marxism”/“Marxism-Leninism” was at core of the Soviet ideology and H/SSs. These concepts

who uses Marxist *phraseology* may be interpreted as “Marxist”, regardless of how it is consistent with the views of Marx himself. Although some differences within Marxism are acknowledged, they have no principle value. Thus, Stalin, Kim Il Sung, Georg Lukacs, and Theodor Adorno are all in the same boat. Such interpretation of Marxism is usually derived from *non-acquaintance* of the works, which set a certain “Marxist” tradition, whether these are the works of Marx, Lenin, Mao Zedong, Kim Il Sung, the Frankfurt School, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, etc.

## The style and terminology of modern texts, especially in modern history, sociology, and political science, are very close to the Soviet phraseology

are put in quotation marks because the authenticity of Marxism and Soviet Marxism-Leninism is not an easy issue. Marx himself said with regard to the views of a number of his followers who had declared themselves to be Marxists: “All I know is that I am not a Marxist.”

<sup>2</sup> As for Soviet Marxism-Leninism, Erich Fromm, one of its competent critics, wrote: “Russian Communists appropriated Marx’s theory and tried to convince the world that their practice and theory follow his ideas ...although the opposite is true.”<sup>3</sup> The same assessment of the Soviet Marxism-Leninism can be found in other works of Western experts.<sup>4</sup> In other words, there are different versions of “Marxism” that are distant enough from each other (western neo-Marxism, Maoism, the North Korean Juche, Christian Marxism, Freudo-Marxism, etc.) that it is questionable whether they are a part of the same doctrine.

Thus, there exist various views of Marx and versions of “Marxism”. This distinction is focused on because when social scientists from Central Asia declare that they have abandoned Marxism/Marxism-Leninism, *most of them* are referring to the entire intellectual tradition, from Marx himself to the works of Soviet, Chinese, North Korean and other “Marxists”. In other words, Marxism is seen as a *homogeneous tradition* with only slight variations. Anyone

To take philosophy as an example: even in the Soviet era, many Central Asian teachers of Marxist-Leninist philosophy did not read the works of the founders of Marxism and prepared their lectures using textbooks. This tradition is still maintained, especially as ignoring or criticizing Marxism became a tacit norm. However, Soviet textbooks on philosophy are still in demand; there is a saying that an old horse will not spoil the furrow. Lecture courses in philosophy that have been taught in the years since independence have many topics that are still close to the Soviet textbooks, both in spirit and terminology. Such (undeclared) commitment to the Soviet philosophy is explained by the fact that many university professors did not know and mostly still do not know the works of modern Western philosophers.

In this regard, I recall a story from my experience of teaching philosophy at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Tashkent State University (1988-1997).<sup>5</sup> In the early 1990s, I read a course in Western philosophy of the 20th century to a group of professors from various universities. At the first class I found out that a whole group was present. As I praised this absolute attendance, one of the students explained to me that everyone wants to learn about modern Western schools, since universities were instructed to update lecture

courses in accordance with “requirements of the time,” stop teaching Marxist-Leninist philosophy, and provide educational material according to “modern trends in the world of philosophy.”

After a lecture on neo and post-positivism, a group admitted that they did not understand much and asked if there was any “easier” philosophy. After lectures on existentialism, an elderly teacher spoke from a group and asked: “Could you tell us about philosophy, which is

In fact, a rejection of “Marxist-Leninist” philosophy, which most of the Central Asian philosophers had declared after the collapse of the Soviet Union, had a *formal* character. They just abandoned the use of the names of Marx, Engels, and Lenin as well as the categories of “scientific communism.” However, many of the concepts and methodological approaches, albeit in greatly simplified forms, have been kept and continue to be used in the style of Soviet philosophy.

## In the case of Central Asian history, all historians of the region claim objectivity, which in most cases proves to be their ethnocentric narratives

similar to Marxism, but is actually not. After all, we were Marxists throughout our lives and taught only Marxist-Leninist philosophy, we do not know other philosophies. It is forbidden to teach it now, but if there was a similar philosophy, but not a Marxist one, it would be easier.”

Thus, people who considered themselves to be followers of a certain philosophy were ready to easily exchange it for another. Therefore, I was curious about the nature of this request and wondered to what extent these teachers were familiar with the Marxists and “first hand” Marxism. I asked the audience if anyone had read the classic works of this doctrine such as “The German Ideology”, “Holy Family”, “Anti-Dühring”, and “Materialism and Empiriocriticism”. Surprisingly, less than a third of the entire group raised their hands. When I asked if those who raised their hands know these works well enough to be able to discuss them, half dropped their hands. Then I asked whether there are people in the group who read “Capital”, Marx’s main work. There were two. When I asked what the first chapter of “Capital” was about, these two hands dropped.

Here is a paradoxical situation. Professors, who had been teaching “Marxist-Leninist philosophy” in the universities throughout their careers, were not familiar or not familiar enough with the works of their classics. As they acknowledged, they taught their classes using the textbooks and occasionally some of the works of Soviet authors.

On to topic of ethnography/ethnology (cultural anthropology), in Uzbekistan, despite *surface* criticism of the Soviet primordial ethnic theory, this theory is at the core of academic literature. An attempt to study, for example, the origins of Uzbek ethnicity through the prism of constructivism<sup>6</sup>, which is prevalent in Western anthropology, had not only failed, but had been criticized by local academics.<sup>7</sup>

There are at least three main reasons why the teaching of H/SSs continues to maintain its links with the Soviet legacy, even in the period of independence.

The first reason, which has been already mentioned, is ignorance of foreign schools among most H/SSs teachers, especially in provincial universities. Some of them had heard only the names of the Western thinkers, and some had not even heard of these. Teachers do not know foreign languages; there is a deficit of Western literature even in the university libraries in the capitals of the countries, let alone libraries in provincial universities. For this category of teachers, the only way to study is to use Soviet literature or studies from contemporary local authors, which are written primarily on the basis of the Soviet-Russian sources. In most works on H/SSs there are no references to foreign scholars and foreign publications, or their number is negligible and formally present. Additionally, there are very few teachers of H/SSs who have a

sufficient understating of the contents of certain Western doctrines.

Because most social scientists are not familiar with Western theories, they do not use them, but play with words. Thus, the debates on well-known theories are not centered on their content, but only titles (“Clash of Civilizations”, “End of History”, etc.), which downgrades the level of academic discussions. At conferences one can often hear a criticism of the clash of civilizations theory by Samuel Huntington. The problem is that the discussants have not read the book itself (a solid work at 368 pages), but have heard about it from other sources. This undermines their “opinion”, because it has no relation to the text of the American theorist. At the same conferences one can often hear from various professors that they are no longer using a formation approach and have embraced a civilization approach instead (note that Samuel Huntington’s theory is based on the civilization approach). In reality, it turns out that these professors have a vague idea what the civilization approach is (as well as a formational one, if not simplified to a schematic “five-stage approach”) and have not read the works of Spengler, Toynbee, Sorokin, or Samuel Huntington.

Ignorance of foreign theories and methodologies stems in part from lack of demand. Many dissertations defended in H/SSs state that their theoretical and methodological basis lay in the works of the presidents of certain countries. For example, how can one discuss foreign theories in studying the history of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan when their presidents (Emomali Rakhmon and the late Saparmurat Niyazov) wrote historical articles and books? These works are devoted to specific historical issues, such as etymology of ethnonyms and toponyms, justification of historical dates, direction and composition of migration flows, and age ranges of origin of a particular people. Given the authoritarian nature of the political systems of these countries and the fact that the authors are national leaders, similar writings leave no room for discussions, hypotheses, or alternative visions of history. All historians can only confirm the views on history set out by the head of state.

The second reason is that older generations have a special role in local scientific communities, as was typical both in Soviet H/SSs and the knowledge system in pre-Soviet Central Asia. Today’s “patriarchs” made their careers in the Soviet era. Many of them did not know Western theories then. Requirements to use unfamiliar Western theories discomfort them and challenge their scientific authority (although even without this knowledge, many mediocre scholars had been able to get high administrative positions in scientific and educational institutions). Pushed by this situation, they may react by either blocking new theories and concepts, or simplifying them. Simplification affects theory’s integrity, reduces complexity, and ultimately instills these “simple elements” in its type of conventional (dogmatic) knowledge. Unlike scientific popularization, this simplification dilutes and vulgarizes initial knowledge. In the Soviet era, Marxism fell victim to dilution, vulgarization, and ultimate dogmatization<sup>8</sup>, and similar processes function today with only a change in the subject.

The third reason has to do with specifics of functioning of the education system and H/SSs in Central Asia. It is known that in the Soviet period, H/SSs had carried not only scientific and cognitive but also ideological function. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the elites of the new states needed to legitimize their new ideologies and policies. The old and streamlined method appeared to be best suited for these needs as it formed a loyal and rightfully oriented way of thinking through new concepts in H/SSs and then was implemented in education system and media.

## Characteristics of methodology and epistemology in H/SSs

Thus, H/SSs in Central Asia are still affected by the Soviet way of thinking and Soviet environment for functioning of H/SSs. More specifically, the Soviet social science heritage is expressed as follows:

**Scientific standards versus ideology:** As in the Soviet Union, H/SSs in post-Soviet Central Asia are strongly influenced by ideology. The

following may result from such close links between science and ideology (in case of the “Ruhnama,” one sees a complete substitution of science by ideology):

*First*, this may result in a loss of scientific independence and emergence of predetermined findings of the “scientific search” (of course, when findings are predetermined, scientific search is meaningless). Many works on social sciences in Central Asia, especially on recent history, sociology, and political science, are secondary in nature and mostly provide commentary but not groundbreaking research findings. They also retroactively justify current policies and speeches of the presidents of their country. This leads to the loss of instrumentality in science, making it heuristic and disseminating epigonism and plagiarism. Knowledge of foreign schools and trends is not required, which in turn leads to isolation and hence to provincialism of science in the country.

*Second*, it results in a declarative nature of scientific works, which is reflected in the wording of the dissertation titles.

*Third*, it substitutes research *topics* with research *areas*, making them explicitly conformist to ideological cliché. Therefore, a solution to scientific problems is replaced by empirical data collection in a certain area.

*Fourth*, it implants excerpts from presidential speeches and samples of worldly wisdom into the fabric of scientific reasoning. These are often used as the main arguments. Such forms of “evidence” were common in Soviet social science. From the point of logical form, this is a *direct deduction* of specific findings on specific scientific topics from general postulates (ideological cliché, citations of officials, proverbs), serving to legitimize these findings.<sup>9</sup>

*Fifth*, it undermines categorical apparatus and merges it with public (ideological) and everyday language as well as disseminates the use of stereotyped ideological clichés. Terminological simplicity makes H/SSs widely accessible and enables control of them, even if those who control them do not have the appropriate education.

*Sixth*, it transforms methodological foundations of research (substituting scientific theories by ideological constructs). The basis of any scientific methodology is a certain theory or set of scientific concepts. Their absence leads to the loss of one of the main features of modern science – its theoretical nature. As a result, descriptivism and surface inductive empirical generalizations begin to dominate in H/SSs.

The dissertations defended in Uzbekistan on relations with other countries and international organizations are exemplary in this regard, as their content is comprised of observations of empirical (as well as selective) facts such as signed documents, trade volumes, numbers of joint ventures, visits of government delegations, cultural days, etc. Thus, an extended information article becomes a scientific dissertation. There is no analysis of the problems; it all boils down to cooperation, and development and improvement of cooperation, which deprives this “research” of instrumental and prognostic function. A discussion of the known theories of international relations is usually missing, as is analysis of their applicability (or non-applicability) to foreign relations of Uzbekistan. Dissertations in ethnology suffer from same descriptivism, as they only describe various artifacts and rituals.

*Seventh*, this also leads to ideological selection of empirical material and their adjustment to the tasks set, which is also typical for Soviet science.

Taking an example from sociology, in studies on interethnic relations, a sample is often taken in proportion to representation (or an approximate proportion) of ethnic groups in the population of the country, city, or organization where research is conducted. This approach, where the majority of respondents represent the ethnic majority, which is 70-80% of population, can be justified in the study of transport or utilities services. However, in studies of national policy and interethnic relations, when it is necessary to identify a specific perception across different ethnic groups, this methodology does not suffice.

In one of the surveys conducted in Uzbekistan, the goal was to identify interethnic tolerance in Tashkent (2008). A total of 414 people were

interviewed: 74.6% of them were Uzbek, 10.5% Russian, 7% Kazakh, 3.5% Tatar, 2.6% Tajik, and 1.8% other nationalities.<sup>10</sup> The structure of the sample predetermined that any more or less consolidated response from Uzbek respondents would automatically translate to more than 70% of all the responses. On the one hand, this would be acceptable, if it was a study of the roads of the capital. But since the study was about ethnicities, it would be wrong to assume that the opinion of Uzbek respondents on this issue as a whole reflects the public opinion in this *multiethnic* city (here the term “multiethnic” has principal importance), as this sample predetermines. The methodological approach has a built-in distortion of representativeness of the results.

Apparently, the authors of the survey were not so much interested in getting a real picture of the processes, but wanted to convey an ideologically “correct” image. But *accurately* documented perception by ethnic groups of national policy and interethnic relations is a necessary empirical basis on which the analysis of ethno-political processes can be made and an informed national policy pursued.

*Eighth*, as rigorous scientific standards are lowered or erased, quasi-scientific elements and myths increase in quantity. Specifically, they have proliferated in historical studies.<sup>11</sup>

(1) *Past and Present*. The past holds a special place in modern ideological constructs and H/SSs of independent states. In a “correct” interpretation, it legitimizes the present, e.g. statuses of ethnicities and public policy. This was reflected in the concept of *absolute historic right* of a titular nation to dominate in the country. Although Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Turkmens, Tajiks, and Kyrgyz have lived for centuries on the territory of Central Asia, today the new states -- with the help of H/SSs -- substantiate an idea of the historical right of a titular nation to a given territory.

The preamble of the Constitution of Kazakhstan states: “We, the people of Kazakhstan, united by a common historic fate, creating a state on the indigenous Kazakh land...” The meaning of this idea of historical ethnic rights to “indigenous”

land equates to the legitimization of domination in the modern state.

Discussing Kazakhstan’s state ideology based on the “integrating role of the Kazakh culture” for all other ethnicities of the country, a well-known Kazakh scientist Nurbulat Massanov wrote: “Following this idea, public opinion of Kazakhs had firmly embraced the ideology, according to which Kazakhs being the indigenous ethnicity have an absolute right to political dominance in the territory of Kazakhstan. Their language becomes the official language and Kazakh culture plays an integrative role for “all ethnic groups in the country.” Consequently, representatives of the Kazakh nation have a “natural” and “historical” right to occupy senior government posts and receive preferences in higher education, career promotion, studies of their culture and history.”<sup>12</sup>

Of course, such an approach needs academic justification. In this regard, Japanese researcher Natsuko Oka wrote: “History has been mobilized to help support the idea that only Kazakhs have the right to claim the status of the indigenous people of Kazakhstan.”<sup>13</sup>

To justify the right to dominance, a concept was introduced of “indigenous population” or “indigenous ethnic group.”<sup>14</sup> The age of this ethnic group had to be artificially antiquated. A main argument is sought in the works and speeches of the presidents of the region. Thus, in “Ruhnama” one reads: “The Turkmens are a great people because they have managed to make local and foreign historians acknowledge their age—5000 years.”<sup>15</sup> In Tajikistan, the president said that Tajik history and civilization” is more than 5,000 years old.<sup>16</sup> It’s not hard to guess that these dates are then widely referenced in the textbooks and scientific publications. In this regard, a well-known Uzbek archaeologist Rtveladze writes: “However, this is completely contrary to all historical data and other scientific research. Until the 7th to 6th centuries BC, there was no confirmed data not only on the language which tribes of Central Asia spoke at that time, but also the names of the peoples who lived there. It first appeared in Avesta, in the writings of Greek historians and rock inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings. As for the names of the

modern nations of Central Asia, they appear only in the Middle Ages.”<sup>17</sup>

The past has become a point of contention. The same states of ancient and medieval history of Central Asia have become a subject of fierce debate among neighboring peoples who claim their ethnic origin. The same is observed with respect to prominent thinkers and politicians in Central Asia history. Ethnocentric models of Central Asia history have become basic elements of new state ideologies and academic theories.<sup>18</sup>

(2) *The past and the future.* In the ideological constructions of modern Central Asian states, the past in a certain interpretation acts as a natural and logically justified bridge to an outlined future. The idea of a *great future* is postulated as a logical consequence of the *great ideas of the past*. Ethnocentric thinking, A. Kusainov writes, is specifically focusing on the past, which has an image of a “bright future.”<sup>19</sup> The past somewhat legitimizes the claims of the nation to “a rightful place in world civilization.”<sup>20</sup> As the president of Tajikistan notes, “Honoring the past is one of our wings and the second wing is our current efforts to build the homeland of our ancestors and secure a peaceful life for the people, and these two wings will raise our nation flying high in a prosperous and dignified future.”<sup>21</sup> This legitimization takes many forms: from the concept of accelerated socio-economic development (Kazakhstan) to concepts of a prosperous and dignified future (Tajikistan), a great future (Uzbekistan), and the “Golden Age” (Turkmenistan).

**Dichotomous thinking:** Historical processes, especially the events of 19th to 20th centuries as well as recent history, are evaluated on the basis of “either – or” through the prism of black and white perception (“positive – negative”, “true – false”). Of course, this method of *assessing* perception was inherent in all historical periods. In the 20th century, it reflected the opposition of two global socio-political systems. Thinking from the times of the Cold War is inherently dichotomous. Dichotomy is a very specific feature of Soviet social science, where all historical processes were considered as either progressive or reactionary.

This type of thinking is based on formal logical laws of contradiction and the law of the excluded middle, formulated by Aristotle. However, back in the 17th century, Kant showed that with transition of understanding (empirical thinking) in the sphere of reason (theoretical thinking), the knowing subject encounters antinomies (conjunction of contradictory and at the same time equally reasoned judgments). After Kant it became clear that “there is incompatibility ... not only between the true and false but inside the truth and falsity themselves.”<sup>22</sup>

Hegel’s logic came as the next stage in the development of dialectics of antinomies, where the law of the excluded middle had been criticized.<sup>23</sup> According to Hegel: “The true ... meaning of the antinomies is this: that every actual thing involves a coexistence of opposed elements, consequently to know an object is equivalent to being conscious of it as a concrete unity of opposed determinations.”<sup>24</sup> Hegel thus showed that the construction of a theoretical system of thought is antinomic in its very nature, which has become one of the tenets of the modern methodology of science.

Studies on the history of science confirm that antinomies and their resolution by synthesis appear as a legitimate stage in the development of natural as well as social science. A classic example is recognition of the wave-particle duality of light. This finding goes beyond empirical thinking, which accepted either the wave or corpuscular nature of light. Later, wave-particle duality was discovered in electrons and other elementary particles. This led to a conclusion, which was impossible in empirical thinking, but which appeared as an important part of modern theoretical physics: a particle is a wave and a wave is a particle. In broader terms, on the level of methodological requirements, a necessity of this type of thinking in physics was postulated in Bohr’s *complementarity principle*.

Modern research shows that thinking along the lines of mutually exclusive dichotomies cannot explain the complexity of historical processes. From the point of view of modern methodology, there could be different answers to the question, what is true and what is not, as well as to the

question, what is good and what is bad, as this depends on the system of coordinates (epistemological, axiological, social) in which the issue is being discussed. It also depends on the scale of historical time frame as well as mega- and micro-trends. In other words, while foreign historical science had already embraced the idea of relativity and multi-valued logic back in the 20th century, historical science in Central Asia still operates with categories of dichotomous thinking.

**Soviet phraseology. Expressive and axiological vocabulary:** Dichotomous thinking inevitably generates a corresponding emotional and evaluative language. Each positively or negatively assessed fact (historical period, etc.) gets a certain expressive vocabulary.

The style and terminology of modern texts, especially in modern history, sociology, and political science, are very close to the Soviet phraseology. To name few: progressive development, progressive thinkers, in the fraternal family of nations, younger generations, high moral values, true values, certain shortcomings, spiritual oppression, age-old dream, radical changes, social consciousness, world community, peaceful creative labor, selfless work, vigilance, loyalty to the course, and wholeheartedly. It is stylistically normal to use a large number of terms in superlatives: huge, unprecedented, large-scale, prosperity, international recognition, inviolability, tremendous opportunity, all necessary conditions, etc. Scientific texts on modern Russian history and political science that claim to be academic often resemble newspaper editorials.

**Claims of objectivity:** Soviet science sought to obtain ideally objective historical knowledge, while Western historical science realizes that it may wish to obtain it, but practically this is not feasible. Different historians work in different methodological paradigms, be it Marxist, positivist, or postmodernist ones. In principle, it is impossible to have (fully) objective research in a separate work. Objectivity implies going beyond ethnic, geographic, religious, and public paradigms, while most studies are based on them. In the case of Central Asian history, all historians of the region claim objectivity, which in most

cases proves to be their ethnocentric narratives (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, and Uzbek).

Another methodological characteristic of H/SSs in Central Asia is a **lack of interdisciplinary research**.

## Conclusion

This paper describes methodological and epistemological situation, which according to the author's view, reflects the *general* state of the H/SSs in Central Asia. Of course, there are exceptions, as there exists elite stratum of social scientists whose work can satisfy the most demanding reader. The presentations of these scientists at international conferences often attract genuine interest. There also are young scholars in the countries of the region who have been trained or interned abroad, speak foreign languages, read foreign literature, and have managed to develop the skills of truly scientific, creative thinking, free from nationalism, outdated methodological approaches, and ideological clichés. The question is how to raise qualification and methodological level of the social science body in Central Asian countries in general, especially in the provincial universities. This is not a simple process involving political, economic, psychological components, etc. To advance this process, the author considers it most important to set up an effective evaluation and promotion system focused on high standards of scientific and pedagogical work.

## Endnotes

1. No one explains what this notion means, but many have their own interpretations of it.
2. K. Marx, and F. Engels, *Works* (Moscow: Nauka) 2nd Edition, vol 37, 370.
3. E. Fromm, *Dusha cheloveka* (Moscow, 1992), 378.
4. H. Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism: a Critical Analysis* (New-York: Columbia University Press, 1958); S. Stojanović, "From Marxism to Post-Marxism," in E. Deutsch, ed., *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspectives* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991).

5. Every five years, all teachers in the Soviet Union had to take six-month advanced studies courses in the institutes or departments, where they attended the lectures of their qualifications. This system, with some variations, had been maintained in post-Soviet Central Asia.
6. A. Il'khamov, "Arkheologiya uzbekskoi identichnosti," in *Etnicheskii atlas Uzbekistana* (Istanbul, 2002), republished in *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, no. 1 (2005).
7. D.A. Alimova, Z.Kh. Arifkhanova, A.A. Ashirov, R.R. Nazarov, "Eshche raz o problemakh etnologii v Uzbekistane (v dopolneniye k diskussii)," *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, no. 3 (2006): 117-119.
8. The works of Joseph Stalin are a typical example of simplification, dilution, and vulgarization of Marxism.
9. This was used, for example, in justification of elimination of genetic studies in the Stalin era, when scientific discussion of findings of local experiments was replaced by general speculative discussions citing classics of Marxism and Stalin's works.
10. I. Agzamkhodzhayev, M. Karamyan, "Mezhnatsional'naia tolerantnost' tashkentsev (po rezul'tatam sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniia)," *Obshchestvennoe mnenie. Prava cheloveka* 46, no. 2 (2009).
11. N.E. Masanov, Zh.B. Abylkhochin, I.V. Yerofeyeva, *Nauchnoe znanie i mifotvorchestvo v sovremennoi istoriografii Kazakhstana* (Almaty, 2007).
12. N. Masanov, "Perceptions of Ethnic and All-National Identity in Kazakhstan," *The Nationalities Question in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Middle East Studies Series*, no. 51 (Tokyo: IDE-JETRO, 2002), 25.
13. Oka Natsuko, "Nationalities Policy in Kazakhstan: Interviewing Political and Cultural Elites," *Ibid.*, 111.
14. In a strict sense, distinction between indigenous peoples and migrants is conditional, because the whole history of mankind is a history of migrations. How long should people live in a certain area to be considered as indigenous? The indigenous people who are affirmed today on a certain territory have distant (and not so distant) ancestors who had been migrants at some point. The references made to the fact that a certain ethnicity had originated from a certain territory are not clear either. In Central Asia, there are no "pure" ethnic territories that originally belonged to only one ethnic group. In addition, modern Central Asian nations had been formed involving various ethnicities from the areas outside current borders of the Central Asian states.
15. See for instance <http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/ruhnama/ruhnama-rus.html>.
16. See for instance <http://www.prezident.tj/rus/vistupleniy040906.htm>.
17. E.V. Rtveladze, "Bez retushi! Istoricheskaya nauka i psevdistoriya Srednei Azii," *Centrasia.ru*, September 10, 2006, <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?Month=9&Day=10&Year=2006>.
18. Rtveladze says this concept is based on the principle of ethnic exclusivity, the main features of which are: 1) an ancient state; 2) the antiquity of the nation and its self-proclaimed name; 3) a hypertrophic area or state borders and the territory occupied by the people; 4) excessive exaltation of people and the downplay of the significance of other nations, <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?Month=9&Day=10&Year=2006>
19. A.A. Kusainov, "Istoricheskii protsess skioz' prizmu etnotsentrizma," in *Rossia i Vostok: problemy vzaimodeistviia. Materialy konferentsii* (Volgograd, 2003), 86.
20. From the standpoint of modern paradigms, which are based on a humanistic understanding of the prospects of world civilization, such a question seems rather strange, since every nation and every state has the right for "its rightful place in world civilization", and not just those that had "great past."
21. E. Rakhmonov, *Arii i poznanie ariiskoi tsivilizatsii*, at <http://www.prezident.tj/rus/baromadhoh.htm>.
22. Z.M. Orudzhev, "Formal'no-logicheskoe i dialekticheskoe protivorechie: razlichie struktur," in *Dialekticheskoe protivorechie* (Moscow, 1979), 81.
23. F. Hegel, *Entsiklopediia filosofskikh nauk* (Moscow, 1974, T. 1), 277.
24. *Ibid.*, 167.