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Title: Corruption in a “culture of money”: understanding social norms in post-Soviet Uzbekistan

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to explore the social meaning and ordinary activities surrounding informal transactions in order to better understand the social context forming the premises and informing the meaning of corruption in Uzbekistan. A theoretically founded hypothesis is that informal transactions in Uzbek society reflect different cultural meanings than in the Western world. If this is true, there may be reasons to re-evaluate the concept of corruption in order to reflect the morality of exchange in Uzbekistan. This article is based on two periods of field research between 2009-2010 in *Oltiariq* district of Fergana region, Uzbekistan. We used ethnographic methods and the case of wedding ceremonies in order to illustrate local perceptions of informal exchange. Our results can be summarised in three main points: (a) informal transactions are deeply embedded in cultural practices; (b) not all informal transactions are corrupt; (c) when talking about (or measuring) corruption, local perceptions should be taken into account.

Keywords: *Uzbekistan; corruption; law and society; social norms; Central Asia; ethnography*