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Abstract

ABSTRACT:

This article explores the links between informal moneylending and aspects of sociality and morality. It documents the moral reasoning and strategizing of two female moneylenders who operate in the radically destabilized context of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. By analyzing these women's lending practices and the way they talk about their experiences, we document the constitutive intertwinement of morality, sociality, and formality in the workings of credit and debt, and demonstrate how questionable behavior is transformed into moral practice. This in turn highlights important features of the post-Soviet capitalist frontier.

Moneylending and Moral Reasoning on the Capitalist Frontier in Kyrgyzstan

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This article explores the links between informal moneylending and aspects of sociality and morality. It documents the moral reasoning and strategizing of two female moneylenders who operate in the radically destabilized context of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. By analyzing these women's lending practices and the way they talk about their experiences, we document the constitutive intertwinement of morality, sociality, and formality in the workings of credit and debt, and demonstrate how questionable behavior is transformed into moral practice. This in turn highlights important features of the post-Soviet capitalist frontier. [Keywords: Moneylending, morality, frontier, Central Asia, post-Soviet societies, economic anthropology]

Introduction

[Lending] is a good thing! Even with interest—it is a very good thing. Most of my borrowers were grateful that I helped them to realize their projects. Those who were not thankful simply lacked intelligence.

— Batma

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