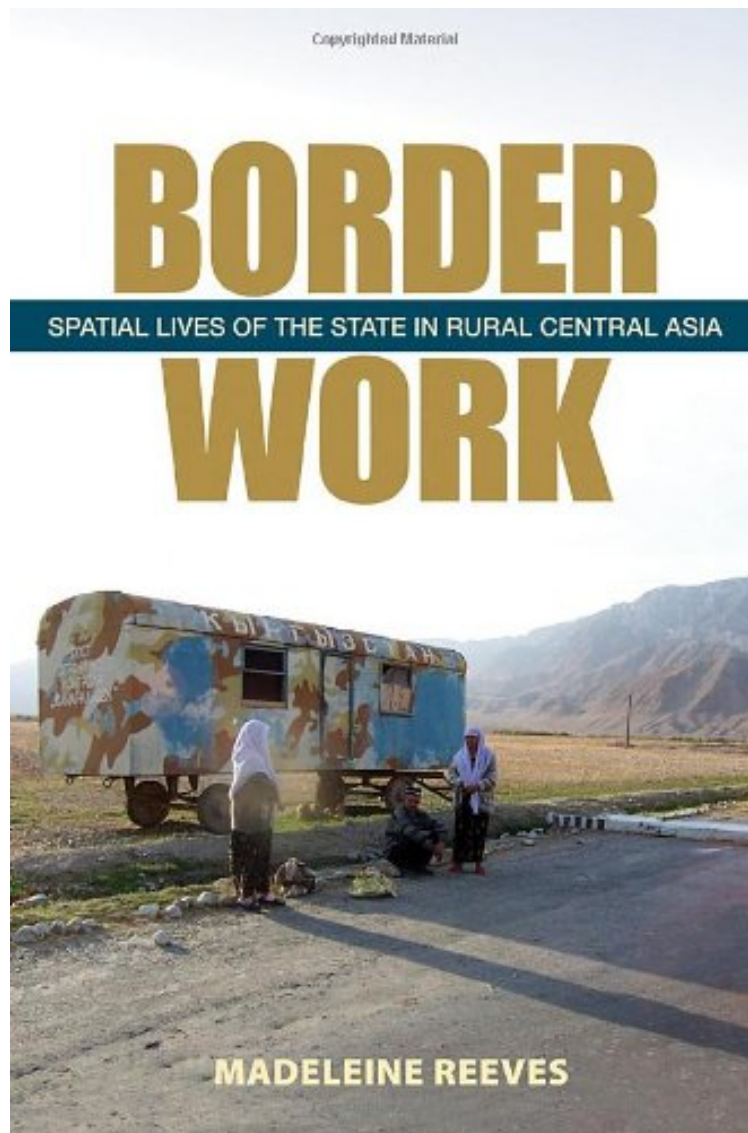


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## **Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia (Culture and Society after Socialism)**

*Madeleine Reeves*

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59.Mb

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## Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia (Culture and Society after Socialism):

In Central Asia's Ferghana Valley, where Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan meet, state territoriality has taken on new significance in these states' second decade of independence, reshaping landscapes and transforming livelihoods in a densely populated, irrigation-dependent region. Through an innovative ethnography of social and spatial practice at the limits of the state, *Border Work* explores the contested work of producing and policing "territorial integrity" when significant stretches of new international borders remain to be conclusively demarcated or effectively policed. Drawing on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, Madeleine Reeves follows traders, farmers, water engineers, conflict analysts, and border guards as they negotiate the practical responsibilities and social consequences of producing, policing, and deriving a livelihood across new international borders that are often encountered locally as "chessboards" rather than lines. She shows how the negotiation of state spatiality is bound up with concerns about legitimate rule and legitimate movement, and explores how new attempts to secure the border, materially and militarily, serve to generate new sources of lived insecurity in a context of enduring social and economic inter-dependence. A significant contribution to Central Asian studies, border studies, and the contemporary anthropology of the state, *Border Work* moves beyond traditional ethnographies of the borderland community to foreground the effortful and intensely political work of producing state space.

"*Border Work* is an extraordinary account of the relationship between the state and society. . . . Reeves successfully captures the messy history of territory and border construction during the twentieth-century in Soviet Central Asia. . . . Her deep engagement with the people of these border towns, coupled with her sophisticated theoretical analyses of gendered lives demonstrates the previously unexplored capabilities of the people of this region. This remarkable book enriches the scholarship on the study of borders by engaging everyday practices of rural populations and their interactions with authority figures." Citation by the Association for Women in Slavic Studies's Heldt Prize Committee "Reeves puts this very rich ethnographic material into critical conversation with a broad range of theory, working across numerous boundaries of a different kind: those between academic disciplines. What emerges is an original argument about the productivity of borders: a rethinking, through the prism of these particular 'margins' of the state, of how space is turned into territory, how sovereignty is produced through daily impersonations and improvisations at the border, and how state-formation is forever a work-in-progress. *Border Work* is essential for anyone interested in theorising and critiquing the state and sovereignty, as well as for all students of the politics of space. It offers a set of novel, incisive arguments grounded in first-class ethnography. Finally, thanks to Reeves's light and elegant prose, the book is a page-turner. A must-read." *Allegra: A Virtual Lab of Legal Anthropology* "In *Border Work*, Madeleine Reeves brings a granular ethnographic analysis to the daily practices that surround the border between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan as it snakes its way up and down through the remote Ferghana Valley. . . . She interprets the habitual transgressive acts of border-dwellers who negotiate, appeal to, assert, or bribe their way through the border not as acts of resistance towards a coherent sovereign state, but rather as participating in a particular kind of border work, in which the territorial state is both invoked and undermined. . . . An important contribution to the anthropology of borders." Dominic Martin, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (2015) "Reeves's book will be read with much interest not only by scholars of post-Soviet Central Asia, but also by those interested in borderland and borderscape, critical cartography, postcolonial geographies and anthropologies, gender studies (there is a good, short discussion on women, reproductive rights, and borders), and ethnographic modelling. . . . This book is a clarion call 'border work that stretches our disciplinary, gender, historical, and political worlds and imaginations. These are challenges for those in the social sciences and humanities, but also those who study border healthcare, policy, security, development and environmental awareness." Stanley D. Brunn, *Central Asian Survey* "Reeves's thorough analysis of the processes and practices of the socio-politics that comprise the continual creation and recreation of borders makes a significant contribution to the anthropological investigation of the state. Her close attention to the temporal trajectory leading to the current political complexities in the southern Ferghana Valley . . . make this book specifically valuable to specialists of Central Asia. In general, however, this clearly written book is of great interest to any lecturers and students interested in political anthropology, borderland studies, and globalization." Daniel Mahoney, *Social Anthropology* "Reeves embraces complexity, illustrating widely varied experiences of the border through captivating accounts of Tajiks and Kyrgyz who live in this zone of boundaries. . . . Reeves's engaging storytelling and thoughtful analysis are compelling reasons for a wide audience of those interested in post-Soviet Central Asian states and peoples, as well as ethnographers, human geographers, and scholars of borders and frontiers." Marianne Kamp, *International Journal of Turkish Studies* "Madeleine Reeves does an excellent job of contextualizing the meaning of border and statehood. Perhaps most crucially, her work encourages reflections on how we might push further the collaboration between political anthropology and political science." Sally Nikoline Cummings, *The Russian* (April 2015) "Reeves's fascinating insights on the Ferghana Valley borderlands

bespeak of the systematic, long-term, on-site fieldwork that she has carried out, but also of her genuine personal interest and commitment to listen to and to understand the lives of her interlocutors. In the course of the book, we meet border guards, traders, farmers, taxi drivers, teachers, NGO workers, demobilized soldiers . . . Her theoretically informed analysis draws on case studies from very different geographical and historical settings. This approach encourages comparison and makes the book relevant far beyond the field of Central Asian Studies. . . . Border Work is a brilliant ethnography which has much to offer to those interested in the state and its borders."Christine Bichsel, *Society and Space* (July 2015)"Madeline Reeves' *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia* is an important contribution to the literature on borders and borderland cultures. It also makes an important methodological contribution and presents to the reader what Clifford Geertz refers to as 'thick description of what goes into the making of a border. The most striking aspect of the book is the vivid descriptions of the complex geography in Central Asia, which is brought forth through a careful choice of words and articulated with the help of lucid semantics."Rimple Mehta, *Border Criminologies: Centre for Criminology, University of Oxford*"Madeline Reeves's *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia* details the intersections of interests, state authority, and boundaries between Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan in the southern Ferghana region. Highlighting the "urge to have determinant borders" while remaining conflicted over anxieties about what a demarcated and barbed wirebounded state might mean in practice (249), this work provides compelling insights into how residents of a border region reconstruct spatial realities while negotiating shifting economic, social, and political terrains. Through a wide variety of ethnographic portraits, detailed observations of changing market patterns, and the careful examination of residents constructing and adjusting perceptions of legality and illegality, Reeves account of this highly contentious region is able to delve deeply into a specific border region while maintaining theoretical linkages to the studies of boundaries, the limitations of state administrative control, identity, and mobility across the globe."Cynthia Buckley, *Slavic* (vol. 74, no. 4)"In *Border Work*, Madeleine Reeves has crafted an intelligent, challenging, award-winning volume. . . . *Border Work* is an impressive piece of scholarship for those interested in the anthropology and ethnography of contentious border regions."Kristopher White, *Asian Affairs* (November 2015) "*Border Work* is a fascinating and original fieldwork-based account of the making and remaking of borders in the Ferghana Valley. In this empirically rich and theoretically sophisticated book, borders are not taken as given, but are themselves objects of ethnographic inquiry. Such an approach permits Madeleine Reeves to construct a sustained critique of the ways in which politicians, scholars, and others conceptualize statehood, the making and performance of state power, and nationality."Jessica Pisano, *The New School for Social Research*, author of *The Post-Soviet Potemkin Village: Politics and Property Rights in the Black Earth* "In this brilliant ethnography of the state, Madeleine Reeves shows us how a border can be materialized in particular moments and settings, ruptured and remade by everyday acts, and stabilized and destabilized by movements elsewhere. The border is a work in progress that can easily be undone. *Border Work* is wonderfully observed and beautifully written. It is a major contribution to our understanding of politics as event."Andrew Barry, author of *Material Politics* "While many scholars study Central Asia through the political dynamics of cities and capitals, Madeleine Reeves ventures into the remotest corners of Batken and the Ferghana to craft a textured account of life in rural borderlands. Her book shows rural populations to be far more globalized and politically savvy than is often expected. Central Asian officials and development officials should take note."George Gavrillis, author of *The Dynamics of Interstate Boundaries* "*Border Work* is a theoretically sophisticated ethnography of the state. Beautifully written and grounded in rich fieldwork, it shows how states are works in progress, their authority ceaselessly performed and contested. While situated in the early twenty-first century, the book also provides fascinating insights into the twentieth-century history of the Ferghana Valley and the consequences of Soviet rule there. Madeleine Reeves has brought the rich materials of Central Asia fully into conversation with cutting-edge anthropology."Adeeb Khalid, author of *Islam after Communism* Drawing on extensive and carefully designed ethnographic fieldwork in the Ferghana Valley region, where the state borders of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan intersect, Madeleine Reeves develops new ways of conceiving the state as a complex of relationships, and of state borders as socially constructed and in a constant state of flux. She explores the processes and relationships through which state borders are made, remade, interpreted and contested by a range of actors including politicians, state officials, border guards, farmers and people whose lives involve the crossing of the borders. In territory where international borders are not always clearly demarcated or consistently enforced, Reeves traces the ways in which states' attempts to establish their rule create new sources of conflict or insecurity for people pursuing their livelihoods in the area on the basis of older and less formal understandings of norms of access. As a result the book makes a major new and original contribution to scholarly work on Central Asia and more generally on the anthropology of border regions and the state as a social process. Moreover, the work as a whole is presented in a lively and accessible style. The individual lives whose tribulations and small triumphs Reeves so vividly documents, and the relationships she establishes with her subjects, are as revealing as they are engaging. *Border Work* is a well-deserved winner of this years Alexander Nove Prize. About the Author Madeleine Reeves is Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester. She is the coauthor of *Surviving the Transition? Case Studies of Schools and Schooling in the Kyrgyz Republic Since Independence*, editor of *Movement, Power and Place in Central Asia and Beyond: Contested Trajectories*, and coeditor

of Ethnographies of the State in Central Asia: Performing Politics.