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Presentation

In and off motion: Lines of culture, labour and moral exchange amongst Afghan migrant taxi drivers in the UK

Speaker

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Abstract

Following 'lines' of Afghan migrant mobility in the UK and Pakistan, this paper reflects ethnographically on questions of coming and going (*rasha ow darsha*) around transnational migration, mobile labour (taxi driving), and death-life rituals (*murrai-zwandai*). First, it analyses forms of movement in ways migrants' lives describe a human condition that ensures continuity in kin relations organised around the material and cultural reproduction of existence. It examines how these movements are inflected with historical events and controversies between imperialism, foreign occupation, tradition and modernity, war, backwardness and national progress in Afghanistan. Second, it ploughs the utility of anthropological writing on lines for analysing ways mobility is enfolded into the morality of migrant labour and exchange, kinship, and progress. Particularly, it problematises Tim Ingold's (2011) distinction between transport and wayfaring: transport as a deadening, preconceived movement from A to B; wayfaring as a vital movement that transcends dead-ends, goals, destinations. This distinction encompasses ways migrants may, or may not, surpass the intensities of the departures, arrivals, destinations, ends, dead-ends, impasses and immobilities they experience and imagine. Third, the paper raises a broader critique of writing that implies an ontological position where 'movement-as-life' is opposed to 'immobility-as-death'. It deems it better to explore ethnographically what immobile 'spaces' offer individuals in terms of synthesising experiences of movement and inaction held in tension. Interruptions, hiatus and aporias *may* produce forms of living death, but these are also forms of being alive.