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### **REPORT #3 About Our Activities during January - June 2004**

#### ***1. Students small fieldwork “Problems of ethnic identity in Kyrgyzstan (an example of one of the Bishkek’s neighborhoods Kelechek)”***

Considering the period, it was one semester in our university. We focused mainly on the fieldwork. At first we planned to make a research of gender and ethnic issues in Ozgorush village, Naryn oblast, on March 2004. Students had a spring break at that period. We have changed our topic and place for fieldwork because we received the money at the end of April. The research topic was “Problems of ethnic identity in Kyrgyzstan (the example of one of the Bishkek’s neighborhoods Kelechek)”.

The fieldwork was dedicated to observing ethnic identity in Kelechek<sup>1</sup>, one of new Bishkek’s outskirts. The population of Kelechek is more than 10 thousand people; most of them are migrants, mostly from the South of Kyrgyzstan. The process of migration is typical for the post-soviet countries, especially for Central Asia. Lately, migration takes an inner character. People are moving mostly to Bishkek with hopes to find a job, a better life in general. There are more than 10 neighborhoods in Bishkek, which are predominantly comprised by migrants. Kelechek is one of the poorest. It is situated near the biggest markets/bazaar Dordoy. Practically, the whole Kelechek population makes both ends meet working in Dordoy. Tolkun Jukusheva from AUCA Social laboratory kindly gave us the above information and consultation regarding the Kelechek population specificity. The Social Laboratory carried out the research of children surviving ways in Kelechek 2002-2004.

The research topic was to find out the problems of ethnic self-identification of migrants under new, sometimes extreme, conditions. They are Kyrgyz from South, which borders with Uzbekistan. That means they are assimilated with Uzbek people. Do they have problems with their identity in the new territory, in the new activities, with the new neighbours? What kind of problems do they have? These were the main research questions. We supposed that answers to the questions could help to make a picture of the consequences of migration processes in KR.

The following students of my “Ethnic Identity” course participated in the fieldwork; all of them are students of the Cultural Anthropology and Archaeology program, American University – Central Asia:

- Aizat Aisarahunova, Junior
- Aksana Ismailbekova, Junior
- Aziza Dushenova, Junior
- Eliza Isabaeva, Junior
- Cholpon Egesheva, Junior
- Zemfira Inogamova, Sophomore

Firstly, we gathered for defining the previous questionnaire. We have marked the main points for research regarding the ethnic identity, such as “ground” (place of birth and living from); traditions; way of life and language. Every student chose the points which they would be interested in. Every of them developed their own questionnaires and worked independently. We spent two weeks generally in Kelechek from April 29 till May 15. Students made observations, met and talk to people, discussed with each other.

As a result of our work we realized that the ethnicity is quite sensitive and delicate issue in most of the cases. Our respondents insensibly divided in two parts: “homeowners” and “tenants”. Homeowners are people mostly from Northern regions (Talas, Naryn), which migrated 10-8 years ago, built their homes, have

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<sup>1</sup>“Kelechek” from Kyrgyz means “future”

different kinds of work. Kelechek became a permanent residence for them. Such people are considered as well-being in Kelechek. Tenants are from Southern part of Kyrgyzstan (Batken, Osh). They come to Kelechek temporarily with hope to earn money and get back home. Because of that, they are considered migrants. There are almost whole families who arrive and live in one room, it could be per 5-8 persons. Renting rooms are very small but it does not rise problems for roommates because they believe: "It is not for long time, we will earn money, come back home and will be live in a good way". Almost nobody from Southern people did declare any troubles with their ethnicity. All of them considered themselves as a "real" Kyrgyz because (by their words) they are following Muslim rules; Northerners lost their Kyrgyz roots because they adapted to the Russian people, do not follow all Muslim rules; their women wear short skirts and trousers, cut their hair etc. Northerners, in their part, noted that Southerners relate to Uzbek mostly, then to Kyrgyz, because of their similarity with Uzbek and by the mentioned below reasons, but back to front. Southerner migrant people live in quite bad conditions and they are mostly closed, suspicious, avoidant. We gave women small pads of tea and small notebooks and markers to children. That helped us to flux an ice of their distrust, and it is not such a big present, which could raise a false initiative for giving an interview. On the contrary, Northerners are mainly more open, ready to speak; they did not avoid us.

It is clear that a short-term fieldwork could not give the whole picture and reveal all problems. But it helps to make an important conclusion: the ethnicity is an open and complex issue not only for investigation, but as an existent problem in life: sometimes we are not aware of this. The migration and globalization processes, economical and political changes influence the ethnicity essentially, but differently. That makes me believe in Constructivists theory, which state the situational and changeable character of ethnicity.

I appreciate the RESET/OSI program support, which facilitated carrying out the fieldwork. That became a harmonious finish of my "Ethnic Identity" course. One of the methodological approaches of the course was to give everything I know to students objectively, did not thrust my opinion on students. It was a bit difficult because of huge space of materials on theories, definitions, and authors. I believe students will find their own vision and understanding with reading, work, and research. I hope our fieldwork helped them with that: to comprehend, to delve into the topic. And, the course and fieldwork will initiate students' future thesis work, and then research.

Following the mentioned above approach, I did not make strong changes/corrections in students' research papers. I think there are no wrong ideas, visions. Wrong answers could be only in exact science. I was trying to study student to reflect, to think, to analyze. I cannot say that some of thoughts' way is not correct. Every one of the works is interesting for me, and I hope will be interesting for others. I can just add, do not forget that authors are students; they are studying. Every one of them has good potential and big interest in research.

## **2. Workshops**

### *1) Meeting with the Cultural Anthropology and Archaeology (CAA) program students*

I am an adviser of CAA Freshmen and all the students of my course were from the CAA program and once I have got an idea to ask students what do they think regarding the specificity of anthropological courses. We met in our lounge-room on May 14. My questions were as it follows: What differentiates anthropological courses from the others? What kind of activities do they like as effective? How does a lecturer/instructor have to be?

All students agreed in that anthropological courses are more complex, but more interesting. Then our discussion spilled over into the channel of general methodical requirement students to teacher. They mentioned that a lecturer should be able to explain difficult matters on simple examples with simple language. Using the interactive and various methods is preferable, said the students; to work in groups is more effective by their opinion, and they like assignments with a comparison. They noted the importance of lecturer's inflexion; teacher has to speak clearly and un-droningly. That's interesting: students requested for the teacher to be strict and punctual; to encourage every activity of the student even by good words, but to criticize the wrong things. Juniors suggested from their three years study experience to divide course on three parts with three exams at the end of each of the parts; to make a topics review before exams; to try to repeat course themes periodically. And the last significant issue, which students emphasized, was a research

paper. They suggested keeping strong deadlines for the paper, together with all of other tasks. Juniors – Eliza, Aksana, Aziza etc. – had the “Qualitative Research methods” class of Chad Thompson, CEP Fellow, in Spring 2001. They liked his tactics: to put deadlines for drafts, which are at the end of every month. Chad graded every draft and at the end of the course students had their papers almost done and Chad had no problems with evaluations. I liked their ideas, and think they gave an image of the ideal lecturer, which could be a model for us.

*2) Meeting/lecture: Dr. John Schoeberlein, Central Asia and Caucus Program Director, Harvard University, USA*

John Schoeberlein, PhD in Social Anthropology, is the mentor of my “Changes in Kyrgyz World-View (1917-1940, North Kyrgyzstan)” project from Central Asian Research Initiative (CARI) HESP/OSI. He visited AUCA April 2004 and gave lectures for the CAA faculty and students. There were three main topics: Anthropology in Kyrgyzstan; Anthropology of Islam; and Anthropology of self-consciousness. He touched the issue that interested us: Teaching Anthropology. Dr. Schoeberlein marked four points, which are the core for the lecturer in Anthropology. The first one is the idea of culture studies, which are interesting by themselves. The lecturer’s goal is to show this interest to students; to involve students in the topic. The application of general Anthropology concepts to their own experience is an important method for teaching anthropologists. The next point is to use the origin of texts and to study students on that. The third distinctive point of anthropological courses is the penetration into one’s own or other culture. And the last one is learning on practice. Teachers of Anthropology should let students make their anthropological researches through giving them concrete tasks, for example, to define terms by themselves.

*3) Meeting with my colleagues from the Cultural Anthropology and Archaeology (CAA) program*

There was a meeting of the CAA program faculty members on March 15, 2004. Those were Mukaram Toktogulova, Aida Egemberdieva, Talantaaly Bakchiev, Tynara Ryskulova, and I. All of us have a basic education in Language and Literature Studies. All of us have worked with our dissertations/researches using/studying anthropological issues. All of us are developing and teaching anthropological courses. So, we are teachers, who work on “transition”. Because of that, the main issue for discussion was what differences could be noted in teaching courses in Language/Literature and in Anthropology. The following are the main conclusions of the discussion. As an instrument, a language requests a lot of practice, without that it is impossible to study any language. It is not necessary to study a theory. But a theory in anthropological courses takes a big part, it builds a base for being an anthropologists. But a practice, applying a theory on practice became bricks for building of specialists. So, the main method for teaching anthropologists should be using the theory on practice, to make more tasks have research character, to write research papers, which could help students reflect on new material. Tynara supposed that we should be very objectively in giving material. Another point for discussion was the evaluation of students’ work. Everybody agreed that we should use both kinds of work – writing and oral - for better evaluation.

**3. Visiting Lectures.** Unfortunately, I could not to get any news from Anna Harutyunyan, which is my “pair”. I was going to give lectures in “Anthropology in Kyrgyzstan” and “Ethnic Identity problems in Kyrgyzstan” topics. It is a pity, that I had no chance to meet Anna, firstly, and to visit her university, to meet her colleagues, to change our thoughts on Anthropology issues, at least. I think it is the same with Anna.

Finally, I would like to express again my gratitude to the RESET/OSI program, which has gave me, and the CAA/AUCA program too, the opportunities to make the students fieldwork; to initiate our meetings, which, I believe, were useful for us. Certainly, the main thing is meeting colleagues – young Anthropologists.

Best regards,

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