Introductory remarks

Prior to presenting some of the preliminary findings on the state of socio-cultural anthropology in Central Asia two disclaimers need to be made. First, the countries of the region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) with their respective traditions of anthropology/ethnology are not equally represented in this report, my main “case” is the state of social/cultural anthropology in Kyrgyzstan. I take into consideration some data from Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Uzbekistan. There is much less information on Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in this report. The reasons for this bias are two-fold. On the one hand, the bias stems from the distribution of the discipline in the region: Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia seem to be pioneering the introduction of socio-cultural anthropology of the western type, Kazakhstan and perhaps Uzbekistan occupy an intermediate position as countries that have several ethnological academic institutions but no representation of socio-cultural anthropology, while in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan the discipline (even in the form of ethnology) is hardly present. On the other hand, the focus on Kyrgyzstan stems from my own possibilities of access to the field.

Second, while undertaking preliminary research I mainly relied on the internet and less on published sources; several interviews with the representatives of the discipline via telephone (with Madeleine Reeves) or e-mail (with Emil Nasridtindov) have been conducted; I was also privileged to receive much support and the assistance of Stanislav Khorolets and Galina Melnikova, who conducted several interviews in Kyrgyzstan in June and July 2008. The broader study including interviews with anthropologists, study of the state of library collections, publishing initiatives, museums etc. in (some of) the countries of Central Asian would produce a more nuanced and complete account.

Historical development of Anthropology and/or Ethnology in the region

Ethnology in Central Asia in the soviet period

It may be claimed that the development of ethnology in Kyrgyzstan and arguably other Central Asian countries was not much different from the development of the discipline in other Soviet Union republics during the soviet period. On the one hand, some of the institutional traditions, methods and theoretical ideas of imperial Russian ethnology, ethnography and folklore studies found its continuation during the soviet period (cf. Bertrand 2002).

On the other hand, ethnology was changing, for it was instrumentalized to the end of carrying out nationality politics, which was different from the imperial politics of tsarist
Russia in that it sought rather peculiar political/ideological models for establishing a multiethnic equilibrium in the state (cf. Azrael 1978; Huttenbach 1990). The ambiguity of nationality politics laid in the combination of the two conflicting imperatives: 1) the declared importance of nationality, especially nationalities oppressed by imperial Russia (thus declarative cherishing of national traditions) as well as famous leninist “national self-determination” principle underlining equality and self-dependency of nationalities; and 2) the need to minimize the political meaning and “fission” potential of any particular national/ethnic group within a newly established multiethnic polity. It can be suggested that soviet ethnology was used as one of the instruments of overcoming the contradiction described above. The discipline was reconfigured in such a way that it was facilitating the task of muting the political potential of national divisions. The discipline was used to the end of associating all things national with the past, while the present was supposed to be largely internationalist. In conceptualizing this turn, Fabian’s (1983) ideas about the methods used by anthropology (in the West) in order to associate the Other with the past give some useful insights. Associating of ethnic groups’ differences with historical past was a technique of reification and political domination of these groups. The declarative cherishing of national tradition went side by side with the limitations put to “practicing” ethnic differences in professional and everyday life, e.g. by limiting indigenous language use in workplaces and public places; by limiting school education and university education in native languages, by limiting publishing (press included) and culture events in indigenous languages etc.

Yet another contradiction was inherited in the federal character of the state. The administrative division of the USSR into fifteen republics and a number of autonomous republics and oblasts within these, has triggered a hierarchical division of nationalities into “more” and “less” important, or “big” and “small” ones, with the Russian nation being dominant (cf. Tokarev 1953). Ethnology was used to emphasize the differentiated political status of the ethnic groups with more studies devoted “small” nationalities (rather than the dominant one).

At the same time the often arbitrary drawn administrative borders – arguably – required legitimization not only through coercion but also through consent. Legitimization could be partially provided by the study of the history of an ethnic group (or “titular nationality”) and finding the proofs of its “rootedness” within an assigned territory. Especially in the case of nomadic peoples such as Kazakh and Kyrgyz - but not exclusively them, - this required “inventing traditions” (Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983) and resulted in particular stiffness of nationality (etnos) as a salient classificatory (and ideological) category. Thus the primordialist conception of the nation has started developing and was partly relying on the material of titular nationalities’ (historical) ethnographies (and partly informing the field practices of ethnography/ethnology and ethnographic writing).

Congruent but not identical with the previous three was the enlightenment project of soviet science, ethnology included. The science was juxtaposed to “local knowledge systems” (religion, medicine etc), and in the case of ethnology in particular this meant a “war” on all perezhitki (the outdated, outlived practices): religious beliefs, “backward” customs (such as bride kidnapping, kalym etc.). The materialist and atheist theory required firm identification of these practices with the past (aiming at bringing them to an end). Therefore ethnology was institutionally and theoretically closely linked to archeology in order to create an ideational/practical association.

For the four reasons briefly indicated above (1) diminishing of political potential of ethnic groups, 2) introducing hierarchical vision of ethnic groups; 3) legitimizing arbitrary territories; and 4) modernization and progress project), ethnology in Central Asia has taken a particular shape during the soviet era. National culture (especially that of titular nationalities) was studied, exposed in museums(and confined to them), (re)constructed but also reified and
distanced from the things political. Thus the issues of national customs and traditions, myths and epics, religious belief and rites constituted the core of the ethnology’ research interests. Moreover, these were rather limited in scope and the specialist from the “centre” came to study national “peripheries”. Additionally, ethnology in Central Asia was rarely studying “other” groups or cultures (arguably, for ideological but also for economic reasons).

**Ethnology in Central Asia in the post-soviet period**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the establishing of the independent states in Central Asia post-soviet science in the region has started undergoing rapid changes as far as ideological incentives as well as economic and institutional conditions of functioning were concerned. The change of the scale and intensity of academic research and teaching could not but significantly influence humanities and social sciences in the region, ethnology included. While assessing the influence of systemic change, one has to keep in mind about multi-vector complex character of the processes that took place in the region. I will try to demonstrate the impact of the transformation period on ethnology as a discipline, being aware of the limitations (see the introductory remarks). I will be interested in continuity with the discipline’s traditions developed in soviet period as well as actual and potential tendencies and directions of (paradigmatic) change.

The centrality of nation/nationality as a subject matter for ethnology in Central Asia has remained largely unchanged after 1991, or at least so it seems at the first overview of the discipline in the region. Soviet etnos theory is very strong. When the former soviet republics of Central Asia have gained political independence, national culture and history has acquired a particularly prominent role in nation-building processes (cf. Anderson 1983). The imagining of the state in post-soviet Central Asia was in many respect following into footsteps of nation building processes of the nineteenth century Europe as well as twentieth century post-colonial nation building. It has to be mentioned that prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union the modern (liberal capitalist in particular) forms of statehood/governance – arguably – have not been exercised in the region. In other words, the political projects of modern independent democratic nationhood that are widely spread in political rhetoric of the states of Central Asia, constitute a challenge for political elites not only in terms of “inventing” and installing democratic and market institutions but also political culture responsive to regions’ specificity.

The political incentives for the development of the discipline after 1991 were invariably directing it towards the studies of national culture to the end of reviving it after the decades of soviet domination that has led to the deterioration of

1) language skills (especially among the urban educated population due to education system limitations),

2) national customs and production practices, e.g. nomadic herding (due to the processes of collectivization and industrialization etc.) and

3) religious belief and customs (even in the countries where Islam had had rather weak tradition prior to the establishing of soviet regime, the return to religiosity is conceptualized as a return to Islam rather than e.g. shamanism. This is arguably due to political pressures from Islam countries but perhaps also for internal reasons linked to state-building imperatives).

Such disciplines as ethnology and folklore studies of the soviet era were well equipped to provide for the task of restoring fading traditions. Thus these traditions were continued. After 1991 the studies of Manas epic (Kyrgyz national epic) were revived, as well as the collection and description of the customs and material culture of traditional Kyrgyz (as well as other Central Asian “titular” ethnic groups’) communities – thus interest in rural areas. The nation builders were transposing the knowledge/findings of ethnologists to the level of ideology e.g. claiming that in Manas epic one can find “Manas Judgements” – the basic moral code on which the new statehood should be based. The symbolism and ritualism of state
building borrows widely from the material produced within folklore and ethnological studies. The new national narratives shift accents in the assessment of national history (e.g. the change of the assessment and conceptualization of Chinggis Khan figure occurred in Mongolian historic narrative from the interpretation dictated by Marxist disdain for feudal ruler to emphasizing his role in state building and belonging to rich Buddhist tradition presently, cf. Amogolonova, Skrynnikova 2005)). The importance of historic roots has acquired a different meaning – instead of relic or archaic past now an ethnic group is in need of “great” or “heroic” past, thus the national celebrations in the last decade included 1000 years of Manas epic and 3000 years of Osh (in summer 2006 while in Kyrgyzstan I have also seen a billboard announcing “2020 years of statehood”). Thus ethnology concentrates on looking for “deep roots”, “deeply embedded history”, “deep past of Kyrgyz nation”. Thus historical topics and interest in material culture prevails.

This does not mean that the need of introducing changes into ethnology is not being articulated. In Kyrgyzstan, for instance, in the middle of 1990. the project of re-conceptualization of humanities and social sciences was launched, which included several events and publications and involved academic institutions from the countries of the region, Russia and also several Western partners. Among these, an ethnological (i.e. history of an ethnic group) accent could be traced in the publication of Vasili Vladimirovich Bartold’s “Selected works in the History of Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan” (original dates back to the 1920.) It was published in 1997 in Bishkek by Soros Foundation in Russian; Foundation has also sponsored the translation and publishing of a version in Kyrgyz. Leaving aside the fact that the texts constituting the book were written in a relatively distant past, this choice is telling for – in presenting the history of Kyrgyz nation as a continuous process rooted deeply in history - it emphasizes the changed meaning of titular nations in Central Asia in post-soviet era – from “small” nation of the USSR to nation-state status. The text was used in public and political discourse to the end of establishing new national narrative, one of the official publications of 2000-ies is illustrative:

“According to prominent Oriental scholar Vassili Bartold the Kyrgyz great power status is solely related to the Enisey Kyrgyz as one of the direct key components of the ethnogenesis of the Kyrgyz proper. This status survived for 80 years in the 9th century and covered huge areas of Central Asia” (Kerimbekova, Galitskiy 2002).

The potential of change declared by the project was realized mainly in the change of the content of historical narrative as well as the changed evaluation of some events, not in the re-conceptualization of the theoretical concepts forming the basis of the discipline.

Ironically, ethnology of the post-soviet era perpetuates to a large extent the vision of (national) culture that is to a considerable extent substantive, primordialist and ideological. The works of Lev Gumilev have become particularly influential since 1990. Lev Gumilev’s concept of “ethnos” and his bio-ethnic theory that presents “ethnogenesis” as an elemental almost uncontrollable macro-process gained some influence throughout the post-soviet space and was also influencing ethnology. Several observations from Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are telling: Kazakh National University in Astana (capital of Kazakhstan since mid-1990) is named after Lev Gumilev. In book shops Lev Gumilev’s books constitute the majority of what can be found on anthropological topics, his legacy largely influences the Central Asian perceptions of anthropology. This can be seen as a kind of paradox: Gumilev was a political prisoner of the soviet regime for the most of his life, yet he created a theory (or his theory was so interpreted and spinned) that was re-configuring and continuing the “materialist” vision of ethnic history typical of soviet ethnology, rather than undermining it. A more radical questioning or critique is still waiting for an influential articulation.
An example of the debate that took place in Uzbek media and academic circles will be illustrative of the theoretical dilemmas that ethnology in Central Asia faces in the post-soviet era (Laruelle 2004). In 2002 Soros Foundation of Uzbekistan has published “Ethnic Atlas of Uzbekistan”. The publication edited by Alisher Ilkhamov (philosopher1, presently at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the University of London) was arguably “not congruent with an official view of nationality and was introducing western constructivist approach to its conceptualization” (Laruelle 2004). The publication was containing two parts: one devoted to various ethnic groups living on contemporary Uzbekistan territory (this was presented from the traditional “primordialist”) perspective, the other was devoted to the Uzbeks and presented a more constructivist view of the ethnic group. The editor presented the formation of the ethnic group as a process dependant on historical circumstances, economic conditions, political elites’ decisions and so on. The debate quickly acquired political dimension and the publication was used as a pre-text for expelling Soros Foundation from Uzbekistan. Atlas was considered politically intolerable for it relativized (which was interpreted as “de-legitimized”) the official national narrative. The hypothetical and constructivist approach to the nation’s history and culture was considered a violation of the discipline’s boundaries (one of the critics was attacking the editor as a sociologist (sic!) who brings methods and concepts incongruent with ethnology). As Marlene Laruelle argues, ethnology in Uzbekistan has still preserved two distinguishing features of soviet ethnology: 1) the orientation to the study of one’s own culture, and 2) rejection of the studies of contemporary life – the latter is seen as a domain of sociology (Laruelle 2004). The debate was continued in Russian ethnological circles and the opponents were invited to discuss the clash of theoretical paradigms in a special forum at Ethnological Review, a bi-monthly journal of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences (no. 1, 2005). This further developed the discussion (cf. Finke 2006).

The debate surrounding the Atlas indicates that the introduction of new paradigms to the discipline (and these are quite often coming from the West) is received with the mixed feelings of 1) the great interest in the new trends of theoretical thinking and 2) cautiousness with regard to having yet another dominant Others inserting their ideas in the field (especially since rather often these interventions are made with a degree of arrogance and “cultural superiority”). At the same time one has to keep in mind that the connections among post-soviet ethnology schools and institutions are quite strong, and still Russian ethnology is an important reference point both theoretically and institutionally. The latter aspect will be presented in more detail below.

Institutional development of Anthropology and/or Ethnology in the region

The institutionalization of ethnology as a university discipline has occurred relatively late in Soviet Central Asia (if compared to e.g. Soviet Russian ethnology), for instance, the Chair of Archeology and Ethnology of Kazakh State University was founded in 1971 as a part of the Department of History, similar institutional setting was established at Kyrgyz State University in 1978. Its’ “subordinate” position with regard to history as well as usual co-location with archeology was hardly a coincidence. Similarly, in the republics’ academies of sciences ethnography and ethnology were linked to archeology and often placed within historical subdivisions (e.g. institutes).

---

1 Laruelle (2004) refers to him as a sociologist, in Ethnological Review (no.1, 2005) he is presented as a philosopher.
2 There is one notable exception to the latter rule: of studies of makhalla of Tashkent: a traditional settlement and administration structure of the Uzbek that has been re-invented as a traditional form of social organization distinguishing Uzbeks from other ethnic groups but also form of governance and social control offering contemporary political elites some surveillance techniques (Арифханова 2003).
After 1991 academic institutions in former Central Asian republics find themselves in the state of permanent crisis, the number of academic positions available diminished several times (e.g. Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences’ History Institute shrank five-fold and it now counts 26 people). The situation at the universities was slightly more optimistic due to the liberalization of higher education system, yet ethnology chairs and/or departments were occupying rather marginal position and still were being situated within the departments of history. The academic title of “kandidat nauk” (roughly an equivalent of a PhD) and “doktor nauk” (roughly an equivalent of “habilitation”) in ethnology is conferred upon a candidate by the Scientific Board of a respective department of history (or an institute in an academy of science). The numerical identifiers given to particular “specialities” within historical sciences in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan emphasize the closeness of the disciplines: ethnology is 07.00.07 and archeology is 07.00.06. The titles are recognized by Russian Academy of Science and accredited by Высшая Аттестационная Комиссия (ВАК) (Supreme Attestation Committee) on the basis of bi-lateral agreements. This is just one but significant example of the lines of academic co-operation between ethnology in Central Asian states and at Russian Academy. However, due to economic vulnerability of science in the post-soviet period, - especially in Central Asia, - even these links weakened in many dimensions (e.g. funding, research opportunities and facilities, exchange of scholars, interlibrary co-operation etc.) and the “dissertations defended in the last 15 years have not even been up to the standards of Soviet times” (from AD AUCA grant application, courtesy of Emil Nasritdinov).

Apart from traditional academic institutions, i.e. research institutes of academy of sciences and universities, there are more flexible institutional arrangements that create opportunities for the development of ethnology in the region. These include internationally coordinated projects which incorporate an ethnological component. It has to be emphasized, however, that in most of these projects the discipline is not treated self-dependently and is linked to archeology, history and literary monuments studies as well as to tourism rationales and practices.

To give an example, a large scale UNESCO project “Integral Studies of Silk Roads – the Roads of Dialogue” that was functioning in the region since 1987. The project resulted in a number of initiatives ranging from research projects on the situation of women in the region to organization of ethnic handicrafts and art festival (UNESCO CLT/CPD/DIA/2008/P1/68). In 1995 the International Institute for Central Asian Studies was established by UNESCO in Samarkand, Uzbekistan (cf. Вестник МИСАИ, нр 1, 2005). The following countries are members of the Institute: Azerbaijan, China, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, South Korea, Tajikistan, Turkey, USA and Uzbekistan, while Mongolian Academy of Sciences, French Archeological Mission in Central Asia and Zvodullo Shahidi International Foundation for Culture (Tajikistan) have the status of associate members. The Institute is coordinated by Shirin Akiner (School of Oriental and Asian Studies, University of London).

Another institution harboring ethnological/anthropological research worth mentioning is Institute Francais sur l’Etudes d’Asie Central opened in 1992 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and being a part of the Main Office of University Research Cooperation, department of archeology and social sciences, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France (http://www.ifeac.org/fr/). The permanent staff of the Institute is not numerous (there are 5 permanent positions: the head, two “habilitated” PhDs (“doktor nauk”) and two PhD (“kandidat nauk”)), but this number is increased by several PhD and MA candidates obtaining scholarships as well as fellows from the Western and Central Asian research institutions. The research activities of the Institute are not limited to anthropology, yet ethnological/anthropological topics are appearing in their publications. Since 1996 the Institute publishes an annual Les Cahiers d’Asie Centrale, an interdisciplinary journal in French (since 2003 the journal has been funded by the committee of readings [(sont dotés d’un
I am not sure about the translation – A.H.] and since 2005 it has been published by *Maisonneuve & Larose*). Presently the *Institute* has its branches in the capitals of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

**Institutionalization of anthropology in Kyrgyzstan**

I will try to present the case of Kyrgyzstan in more detail in order to consider what are the potential sites/practices of institutionalization of ethnology within the academic field in Central Asian countries.

**Academy of Sciences**

It has to be emphasized that anthropology is not strongly institutionally marked at Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences (KAS). At the Institute of History of KAS there is a Division of Archeology and Ethnology (since 1992 the Division exists alongside two others: 1) Kyrgyz History from Ancient to Modern Times and 2) Contemporary Kyrgyz History; there was a short period between 1990 and 1992 when 7 subdivisions functioned in the Institute, including two separate ethnology and ethnography divisions). Very few PhD (3 to 5) theses were defended in the speciality “ethnology” (no. 07.00.07) (personal communication and library search). These are mostly past-oriented/historical (e.g. "Вклад С.М. Абрамзона в изучение этнографии кыргызского народа" (2005, Bishkek) by Pirimbaeva Jarkyn Jusupjanovna).

There is also a separate Unit of Dungan studies at KAS, where ethnological research on Dungan minority is contained in several areas of research activities and applied practices:

1) material culture, everyday routines, agrarian cycles, crafts of Dungans;
2) Dungan language and linguistic change (the vice-head of the Unit is a philologist and folklorist, Mukhamed Huseynovich Imazov);
3) didactic and popularizing activities – editing and publishing of textbooks, organizing language courses, exhibitions, events as well as media presence (newspaper and radio station).

The vitality of a substantivist culture concept in this particular context is connected very importantly with the aim of preserving national minority culture by an ethnic group with no statehood (or even no administrative territory for that matter). Interestingly, there are no Uyghur studies unit at KAS, Uyghur studies are carried out in Kazakhstan (at the Institute of Oriental Studies).

**Universities**

At the universities in Kyrgyzstan ethnology is taught in a way that concentrates rather on material culture and customs as well as the past rather than contemporary life. Its position – usually at history departments - does not allow ethnology to become a fully-fledged university discipline (with a notable exception of American University of Central Asia, which will be described below). At Kyrgyz State National University the Chair of Archeology and Ethnology has a considerable archeological bias in terms of its staff, research and curriculum offered to history students. This largely perpetuates soviet times pattern, when most specialist who did ethnographic fieldwork in the region were not “local” but based in academic institutions in Moscow and Leningrad. The students who presently attend some of ethnography/ethnology courses most often become teachers of history and do not pursue ethnological careers.

In a similar fashion, some ethnological courses are taught at other universities, e.g. Kyrgyz State Pedagogical University and Slavic University. In the former there is a Chair of Social Anthropology and ?? (compare “Narratives and Nationhood...” project description below). The latter has established the Chair of History and Cultural Studies within an interdisciplinary Humanities Department in 1995 (presently the V.M. Ploskikh, - historian and archeologist - is the Chair). Some archeological projects are carried out there, but others – e.g.
aiming at contemporary culture e.g. ethnic conflict resolution – are conceptualized as “cultural studies” (культурология). The general impression is that the departments either continue soviet type ethnology or – when innovative actions is undertaken – a tendency is get involved in an interdisciplinary research where ethnology has minor chance of development as a distinct research methodology and a way of theorizing.

American University of Central Asia (AUCA, former American University of Kyrgyzstan) in Bishkek as well as National University of Mongolia constitute a notable exception to this rule. The Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the latter employs faculty who have been educated in Western Europe and Japan, they maintain strong academic links with the academic institutions where they obtained the education; this has an impact on the presence of western type studies organization (see Annex 1 for more details of the faculty). They also do translation work which institutionalizes anthropology in Mongolia, and overall they are trying to set a western type social anthropology department.

The Anthropology Department of AUCA in Bishkek is another example of introducing western type anthropology to Central Asian academy. According to Madeleine Reeves, “relative openness in Kyrgyzstan of 1990-2000 gave space for people to be creative. Individuals had a chance to mark their stamp on the discipline. If one had charisma, time and ambition to do something for the establishing of a discipline s/he certainly had her/his influence. The structure [of science] was open or chaotic, which gave opportunity for American University formula. Its neo-colonial name is misleading – it was started by a group of Kyrgyz scholars [i.e. Kyrgyz citizens – A.H.], who thought strategically and saw strategic opportunities of being independently funded [the University is funded by Eurasian Foundation of the U.S. State Department and the George Soros’es Open Society Foundation – A.H.]. This was not the case of outsiders coming – but the institution was formed from inside. The University bear a stamp of people who were making it.” (Madeleine Reeves, personal communication).

“Our Anthropology Department is recognized as one of the strongest in the University, and we have been able to take advantage of a variety of programs for faculty and course development (e.g., grants from the Soros Foundation and Mellon Foundation). Our department is the only one in post-Soviet Central Asia which offers anthropology as a discipline, as in other parts of the world. It was established in 2003 on the basis of the Kyrgyz Ethnology Department, which had 3 full-time and 4 part-time instructors... In 2003 it was transformed to become the Department of Cultural Anthropology and Archaeology. In 2007, we began a new re-orientation along the lines of the "four-field approach," under the name of Department of Anthropology, with the ability to teach also Linguistic Anthropology and Physical Anthropology. The department has 10 full-time instructors.” (CAD AUCA grant application, 2008, courtesy of Emil Nasritdinov).

The classical four-field formula of American anthropology\(^3\) gives a disciplinary framework that rather well suits the aspirations as well as possibilities of the faculty, since it gives the opportunity to make use of the faculty’s education background and research interests (e.g. in archeology, physical anthropology or folklore – and more broadly literary and linguistic studies; all of these would be obsolete is social anthropology of a British type would have been taken as a model). There is also a number of Visiting Fellows and Guest Lecturers from western Universities and students have opportunities of spending a year or semester abroad. There is also a novelty at the AD: in 2008 the Social Foundation “Anthropological Research Centre” has been established within the Department’s frameworks. In the beginning

---

\(^3\) It has to be emphasized that currently in the USA this formula is considered rather problematic by the representatives of the discipline, since it „cracks” not only theoretically or methodologically but also institutionally, cf. Sylverman 2005.
much teaching was in Russian, presently, more teaching is carried out in English, but also these are several courses taught in Kyrgyz.

If one sees AD AUCA as a laboratory, where Central Asia social/cultural anthropology is “in the making”, the outlook of the discipline can be defined by two fold shift that is occurring at this institution:

1) they expand and try to engage in comparative research (contrary to previous tendency to concentrate exclusively on Kyrgyz culture, e.g. kinship systems, Manas epic);
2) there is also a shift in theoretic paradigm:
   - before the ways of teaching on ethnicity had strong primordialist component, essentialising ways of presenting *etnos*; strong emphasis on history (knowing YOUR history).
   - now: different theories are taken on broad and there is a tension within faculty between essentialised approach to ethnicity (cf. the Silk Road Seattle project) and a more constructivist, and even postmodernist approach.

Summer schools, which offer some possibilities of field-work to the students from the Western universities, can be considered a path to the institutionalization of anthropology in Kyrgyzstan, for they allow both the faculty and the students of local universities to get involved in field-work more actively (while assisting guest students), are economically viable and raise the prestige of the discipline. However, the summer schools which I managed to spot are rather archeological than anthropological/ethnological, which yet again pushes cultural/social anthropology as a discipline to the background. For instance, in summer 2005 AUCA organized a summer school for American students in cooperation with Indiana University at Bloomington (Anne Pyburn was an organizer on the American side):

„Students from the US and Kyrgyzstan will live and work together on an archaeological project designed to develop scientific research skills and cross-cultural communication and understanding. In addition to actual mapping and excavation, students will get language exposure, a chance to meet Kyrgyz people from many walks of life, and tours of various cultural sites as well as hiking and outdoor recreation.” (summer school internet site).

Museums

Academics (mainly historians) retain the links with museums, but these are rather history or archeology museums. Museums play a significant role in nation building project too. National History Museum of Kyrgyzstan presents mostly archeological exhibits, concentrating on craft and art pieces (formerly it was Lenin museum: after 1991 the statue of Lenin has been placed at the back of the museum, the statue of Freedom took its place in front of the museum in late 1990.; the reluctance to remove the figure of Lenin completely is rather illustrative of the dialectic/ambiguous attitude with the soviet past in the country; similarly there are tensions on whether to totally remove or preserve Soviet exhibits inside the museum (Madeleine Reeves, personal communication)).

Other permanent or temporary exhibitions presenting mostly “national culture” function at universities and embassies. Ethnographic exhibits are often placed together with art pieces, the distinction between these is however not obvious (see the last section for reflections).

Visual anthropology

There are films on Central Asia made by Western anthropologists or journalists. For instance, there was a film that has been noticed in the West entitled “Bride kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan” by Petr Lom from 2004 (released 2005), the film lasts 51 minutes, First Car / Icarus Films, New York, and according to Hulya Dermiderik (2006: 74):
I have not been able to establish if there are locally made ethnographic films. Paradoxically there is quite a strong tradition of documentary (or para-documentary) film-making in Kyrgyzstan, but people who make these films are rather artists than anthropologists. There also some (potentially) anthropological perspectives appearing in journalistic reportages.

**Publishing**

Publishing is largely in Russian. Anthropological publications in Kyrgyz have strong pedagogic function (e.g. “you should know your history”). Thus historical topics and interest in material culture prevail. Contemporary issues are discussed rather in sociological publications. There are no serious periodicals devoted solely to anthropology/ethnology issues, thus the authors who publish (e.g. from AUCA) do it either abroad or in multidisciplinary collections of articles.

**Ethnic groups’ organizations**

“The House of Friendship of Kyrgyzstan’s Nations” functions in Bishkek, it has – paradoxically - revived after 1991. It includes several “sections” of national minorities living in Kyrgyzstan, these organize various events; attempts are made to (re)present national culture (dance, art etc.). Ukrainian, Greek, Korean sections are among the most vibrant. Importantly, connections with respective diasporas outside Kyrgyzstan are maintained, the meetings at the “House” serve as an information exchange venues, a site for building social networks or a facade institution used by authorities to demonstrate their success in multiculturalism. Mentioning of this institution within the framework of the discussion of the institutionalization of anthropology in Kyrgyzstan should be understood in the context of the discussion of the meaning of ethnicity and substantives conceptions of national culture and identity that are dominant in the discipline’s discourse. Such institutions – functioning parallel and aside of academic anthropology – solidify the category of nationality/ethnic group as a salient unit of thinking about social practice. It imposes its limitations to the efforts on those few anthropologists who attempt to go “beyond” nation and try either a more constructionist approach to national identity or simply different problematic.

**International Projects**

International projects are volatile enterprises that trigger some activity but for a short term. Yet, in an unstable and weak economic and political conditions of contemporary Kyrgyzstan international projects create a viable alternative to state institutions despite their short term character and very limited number of positions they offer. There are several types of projects that could be placed in the category of the projects with anthropological component. I have mentioned some initiatives by UNESCO earlier on. There are research projects initiated by Western Universities and also quite specific and valuable projects caring for didactic needs. There are two Regional Seminar for Excellence in Training (ReSet) projects funded by Open Society Higher Education Support Program (HESP) relevant to the development of the discipline in Kyrgyzstan: “Nationhood and Narratives...” and “Building Anthropology in Eurasia”.

1) “Nationhood and Narratives...”

The project “Nationhood and Narratives in Central Asia: History, Context, Critique” (2006-2009) within the Open Society HESP ReSet framework is directed by Madeleine Reeves (Cambridge University), Cholpon Turdalieva and Nina Bagdasarova. It brings together 27 young academians from the region who are regular participants, two others participated occasionally. It is hosted by Kyrgyz State Pedagogical University and The Invisible College, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.
According to one of the coordinators,

“the idea was born from the following constellation of circumstances: the colleague Nina Bagdasarova from Slavic University [in the official project information Ms. Bagdasarova figures as a representative of The Invisible College, but it is usual for the scholars to work in several institutions, mainly for the economic reasons – A.H.] and myself were invited as guest lecturers, for instance at summer schools that were devoted to theory and practice of inter-ethnic relations, or conflict resolution (applied courses). We both felt that what was lacking was during the discussion was a shared understanding of the key categories. For example, the category of ethnicity, the way how it is theorized, conceptualized, understood and institutionalize (similarly, the category of gender); there was a clash or rather lack of meeting points between Soviet (and post-Soviet) social science thought and western social science thought on these categories.” (Madeleine Reeves, personal communication)

What is at stake in “Nationhood and Narratives” project is a wish to engage with diversity of approaches [that the participants are representing], e.g. to make Benedict Anderson’s and Lev Gumilev perspectives on the nation both be discussed. According to the project description:

„This program is committed to the theoretical and historical exploration of nationhood and narrative in Central Asia, and dedicated to the enhancement of undergraduate teaching pertaining to these themes. Aimed primarily at young University teachers from Central Asia, the program will examine the ways in which “nationhood” has been theorized in different academic and institutional traditions, and the way that such conceptions articulate with, and are appropriated by, nation-building projects of different kinds.”

The project directors do not take [social science] thought as if it were “the truth” but rather aim at taking into consideration the context in which they arose/were formulated. Madeleine Reeves expressed anxiety that such an “orthodox” treatment of social sciences threatens the unique opportunity of building partner relations between western and Central Asian counterparts of ethnology/anthropology building project.

2) “Building Anthropology in Eurasia”

The project „Building anthropology in Eurasia” (2007-2010) is the newest Open Society Institute HESP ReSet project that is aimed at undergraduate university teachers. The project is hosted by Aigine Cultural Research Center, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (in cooperation with the Dept. of Cultural Anthropology and Archaeology at American University-Central Asia, Bishkek, and the Program on Central Asia and the Caucasus at Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. USA). The program’s directors are Aida A. Alymbaeva (AUCA), John Schoeberlein (Harvard Univ.) and Mukaram Toktogulova (AUCA). It’s website gives a full view of the project’s structure and invited faculty: [link]

According to Madeleine Reeves, it has a strong ideological component in a sense that it introduces new approaches instead of old ones (that are – the premise goes – wrong), thus there is a devaluation of the soviet tradition. On the project website one can read:

„Anthropology, as known elsewhere in the world, did not exist in the Soviet Union [my emphasis – A.H.], and has been very slow to develop in the post-Soviet space. The Regional Seminar on ‘Building Anthropology in Eurasia’ will undertake to provide a substantial beginning for anthropology to scholars in this new space.” (project’s website)

The project, which is linked to AD at AUCA, is likely to further strengthen the position of this department and be instrumental in developing curricula more in-line with the state of art in anthropology “internationally”. In July 2008 the project participants took part in a seminar at
Issyk-Kul lake in Kyrgyzstan. Since this is an initiative in the making, it would be fascinating to learn more about the project, especially about the participants’ backgrounds and the project’s preliminary results.

3) Silk Road Seattle project affiliated with Walter Chapman Center for Humanities at Washington University (http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/index.html) involves one of Kyrgyzstan scholars, an AUCA faculty member Elmira Kuchumkulova. Together with the project coordinator Daniel C. Waugh she authored the sub-site “Traditional Culture” (http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/culture/culture.html), where she describes Kyrgyz material culture and rituals – including a very personal and engaged description of her own “traditional wedding”.

“The wedding reflects my true personal feelings towards the nomadic life and culture in which I grew up. I still have a deep spiritual connection with my past childhood experience in the mountains. I am very grateful to my grandparents for taking me in, teaching me the wisdom of nomadic philosophy, and instilling in me all the traditional nomadic customs, values and beliefs while living in the mountain pastures of our ancestors. All of these penetrated deeply into my blood and played a key role in shaping my personal identity as a Kyrgyz woman.” (http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/culture/wedding/wedding.html)

This project is perhaps not investing much institutional strength to anthropology in Kyrgyzstan. Yet it gives a peculiar example of the possibilities and frameworks of cooperation between Western and Central Asian anthropologists, it also demonstrates that political sensitivities constitute part and parcel of anthropological theorizing and writing, both in the western and post-soviet countries.

4) The Mountain Institute (TMI) at Berkeley has a “Sacred Mountain Program” which initiated a project on “Mountain Cultural Landscapes in Central Asia” with TMI’s Himalayan Program (http://www.mountain.org/work/himalayas/index.cfm).

“This new initiative seeks to work with local organizations and communities to understand and use cultural values placed on features of the environment as a basis for community-based conservation activities and sustainable livelihoods focused around sacred sites in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan”. (source: http://www.mountain.org/work/sacredmtns/index.cfm#intl)


I have not been able to find more information on the project, especially on whether it actually worked in Kyrgyzstan, but it is potentially interesting for there is a public debate around Suleiman-Too in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, which is claimed to be a sacred mountain. There were efforts of placing the mountain on UNESCO world cultural and natural heritage list (cf. UNESCO, WHC-03/27.COM/20B). However, the economic incentives were pressing local government to open the mountain to business investments and various sorts of business excavation works. The whole debate in media made archeologists/ethnographers noticeable figures. The issues of material vs. non-material culture were also raised as well as the debate on the law on preservation of both.

The list of four different initiatives presented above does not exhaust the whole variety of anthropology-related projects held in Kyrgyzstan, I am aware it can be incomplete. Still it shows that the efforts to promote discipline are either cameral and elitist (as in both reSet projects) or turn into popular culture “consumable” imaginary of ethnic groups as objects of “tourist gaze”. The last project is interesting not as such but as an indication that the debates
surrounding “national heritage” are invariably invoking the figure of ethnologist, especially in the situations when apart from material culture (the domain of archeologists) the status/fate of non-material culture is being debated.

**Existing teaching/training programs**

The existing training programs have been mentioned in the section on Universities in Kyrgyzstan above, also ReSet “Building anthropology in Eurasia” has been briefly presented above. The change introduced by AD AUCA leads away from placing anthropology’s research object in the past, to the engagement with field methods and developing curricula compatible with anthropology taught at western universities. The internal incentives at AUCA lie in the need to acquire full formal recognition as a university department and as a discipline (the faculty attempts to search for recognition both in Russian academic circles and Western – European and American – institutions). This would allow it to confer fully-recognized titles not only of BA (which it can do now), but also of an MA and PhD in social/cultural anthropology. AD AUCA faculty have set years 2010 and 2012 as the terms, when they plan to acquire full legalization of their MA and PhD programs respectively, and they are likely to succeed in achieving this goal. An additional external institutional incentive for AD AUCA (but also at Slavic University) is the aspiration to enhance cooperation and exchange programs with western universities (which is very attractive for the students and faculty), and thus they try to comply e.g. with some of the Bologna process imperatives (AD AUCA grant application, 2008, courtesy of Emil Nasridinov). The curriculum of AUCA Anthropology Department is (see Annex 2 for details) is exemplary of the radical switch to western type anthropology in the following issues:

1) not only “own nation” but other countries and regions of the world are being the subject matter of courses;
2) there are courses that do not automatically exclude the studies contemporary world, including “applied anthropology”, “medical anthropology”, “environmental anthropology” and “political anthropology”;
3) there is a strong emphasis on field work;
4) contemporary western theories are taught.

The two introductory paragraphs at the web-site of the department declares:

“Anthropology concerns the study of human thinking, activity and communication in its social, ecological, biological, political, economic and psychological contexts. It is one of the most wide-ranging of the academic disciplines. Anthropology is a highly international field that promotes intercultural cooperation and human development. AUCA is aiming towards a four-field department, where four subfields of anthropology are represented: cultural anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology and physical anthropology.

In anthropology courses, the students learn about religion, economics, society, politics, art, family structures, social relations, food and more as they pertain to many cultures in the world. Anthropology courses examine the similarities and differences among all cultures. But aside from learning interesting things about Central Asia and the world, anthropology students also learn how to talk to people and get reliable information, how to ask questions about culture and behavior, and how to understand why people think, believe and act in the ways that they do.” (AUCA, internet site: [http://www.auca.kg/en/academics/Degree_Programs/anthropology](http://www.auca.kg/en/academics/Degree_Programs/anthropology), accessed 28.07.2008)

However, the moderate optimism should be applied in the case of DA of AUCA. The project is very ambitions but in a way it functions in academic vacuum for in other universities anthropology is taught quite differently (with accent put on 1) history; 2) ethnogenesis; 3)
material culture; 4) folklore and sometimes 5) languages). The students of AUCA tend to either
1) continue their academic career abroad (for instance, there is an AUCA alumni Aksana Ismailbekova (BA from AUCA, MA from Edinburgh University), doing her PhD research on Kyrgyz patron-client relationships at Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology, which has a tradition of Central Asian studies), or
2) incorporate other theoretical perspectives in their work in Kyrgyzstan by getting involved in institutional settings other than anthropological or anthropology-oriented. [This is an intuition with no proof – A.H.]

Language is yet another issue that should be considered when assessing the state of anthropology in Central Asia. There is a lack – if not complete absence - of textbooks and monographs in Russian or Kyrgyz that would represent social/cultural anthropology perspective. Thus translation work is needed (such work is carried out actively in National University of Mongolia, in Kyrgyzstan however this is slightly more complex: economic reasons are coupled with political ones). Furthermore, students (from urban areas) lack good working knowledge of indigenous language (e.g. Kyrgyz, Kazakh). On the other hand some of the universities try to develop teaching in English (e.g. AD AUCA claims 95% of their teaching is in English), which makes the studies even more elitist (the good working knowledge of English is the region is not so wide-spread as one would wish).

In Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan the situation is even more difficult. The knowledge of Russian is poor among young people (children learn in national languages) thus when they enter the university education this [the lack of literature in national languages] puts a severe constraint on teaching. Lecturers find themselves in a very challenging situation, they have to provide spontaneous translations. The complex situation of linguistic diversity overlaps with political sensitivities and economic constraints.

**Lines of research**

The lines of research of ethnologists in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan in particular, primarily include the study of ethnic groups residing in respective countries with regard to their customs, oral and literary tradition, material culture including culture sites. When analyzing research interests of the faculty at Social and Cultural Anthropology Department at the National University of Mongolia and Anthropology Department at AUCA – i.e. the “pioneers” social/cultural anthropology in Central Asia, - one can see that

1) anthropology of religion (e.g. beliefs, rituals; shamanism, Islam) is one of the most prominently represented research areas alongside ethnicity/national identity studies and history. The faculty is also developing a variety of interest that are rather new to the discipline in the region:

2) political and economic anthropology, the latter including interest in rural area and rural development;

3) urban anthropology;

4) the studies of nomadism,

5) anthropology of trade;

6) influence of ecological and geographic aspects of the environment on cultural practices and vice versa;

7) recently migration\(^4\) has become one of the lines of research;

\(^4\) The migration flows to and from the country are studied since the migration situation is quite complex: migrants are not only refugees from Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, but also Germans, Jews, Russians who left the country but sometimes remain in contact with those who stayed; there are also labour migration flows that go from the country (e.g. to Russia where approximately 400 thousand people find employment according to some estimations); and Chinese labour migrants that work in Kyrgyz rural areas.
8) there is also an interest in theory and methodology of anthropology;
9) the topic traditional to western anthropological studies such as kinship are studied;
10) folklore studies and linguistic anthropology fall within the group of research interests that have been a continuation of soviet ethnological and folklore studies;
11) narrative and travel writing analysis;
12) apart from “own country” such regions/countries/polities as Middle East, Japan, Eurasia, Osman Empire. (for more details see Annex 1 and 3).

Personal reflections

The report presented above is preliminary, thus the reflections below are loose impressions rather than any sort of binding conclusions.

Why in the soviet times (late 1980.) a yurt in The Fine Arts Museum in the capital of Kyrgyz Republic was not causing any surprise among the visitors? It was not made by an artist, an author/craftsman was not even mentioned on the legend. It represented an impersonalised and asocial version of the Kyrgyz national handicraft and traditional culture, with the accent put on the latter word. What would be considered a piece of “material culture” and an ethnographic artifact in an ethnology museum, was in this particular museum exposition equalized with a piece of fine art. The object was presented outside of the broader context of the social practices (of life and work, e.g. nomadic herding culture), that it was part of. The viewer was supposed to admire the patchwork of the cushions and carpets inside etc. The yurt – and Kyrgyz culture that it epitomised – was made less important for the present, less real and in a way less “authentic”. Especially the latter transformation is rather tricky. The association with high culture might have played a role of evaluative distancing:

1) only aesthetic objects deserved exposition, while non-aesthetic ones have to be excluded, put out of sight;
2) no one cares if a piece of art is a product of some social practice or an invention of museum curators, as long as the piece is aesthetically attractive and is fulfilling its function.

This practice can be in fact called postmodern in a sense that it smuggled an immense relativity through the backdoor of materialism and positivism: traditions and customs could be invented and written anew as long as they received some legitimation, be it political, historical or – for that matter – aesthetic. This particular case of transposing the piece of material culture and social practice to the level of artistic experience is a hologram of the functioning of ethnology in soviet Central Asia (although perhaps no ethnologist was involved in putting that exhibit in The Fine Art Museum in Frunze).

Presently in Central Asia political and economic conditions of ethnology’s functioning as a discipline have radically changed. However, the paradigmatic shift within the discipline as such is not as dramatic as one would have expected. The content of the disciplinary knowledge has changed (e.g. new historical narrative, positive assessment of tradition etc.), but the conceptual basis of doing ethnology has remained largely intact. National traditions, national culture and identity (the key topic of ethnological studies) are approached in primordialist and essentialising terms. At the same time the practices of “constructivism” or “postmodernism” of the kind, which I have presented in the previous paragraphs, have resulted in inertial association of culture with material – and beautiful – objects. The materialization and aesthetization of the concept of culture is boosted by e.g. nation building purposes, tourism development incentives as well as generally positivist view of science, that is ideally expected to bring some “hard data” and not speculations and hypothesizing.

There are several initiatives, especially, in Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia, of introducing social/cultural anthropology of western type to Central Asian academic field. Roughly a half of the faculty in both institutions is educated in broadly understood western academic institutions (Japan, Turkey, UK, France, USA, Australia). Over one fifth got their degrees or
titles from Russian (or Soviet Russian) academic institutions (Academy of Sciences, in particular). One third of the faculty are educated in their own countries, in soviet and post-soviet times (faculty members are relatively young so it is rather post-soviet than soviet education or career path at least at the last stages of career). The economic conditions, in which anthropology departments function, are not favorable: there are not enough research funds, especially in Kyrgyzstan. The western grant-giving institutions have their role to play, but this kind of support (may) give rise to various sorts of conspiracy theories and thus politicize anthropology even more than it is presently. The projects intended to “bring” social/cultural anthropology to Central Asia are generally valuable enterprises, but they also capable of producing tensions among or even rejection on the part of Central Asian anthropologists, if introduced with arrogance and from the position of cultural, civilizational or academic superiority.

These institutional, economic and political constraints put limitations to the development of the field. One could only wish a lot of good luck and strength to those few anthropologists in Central Asia who are capable of departing from “Fine Art Museum” version of national culture and culture in general, and getting involved in a multifaceted projects that would allow studying contemporary processes and practices of Central Asia from a bottom-up, engaged and reflexive perspective.

References


Brown Carl L. (ed.). 1996. Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans. New York:


Токарев С.А. 1953. Этнография народов СССР. Москва: Издательство МГУ.
Annex 1

**Departments of Social/Cultural Anthropology in Central Asia: Research interests, courses taught and academic backgrounds of the faculty**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>RESEARCH INTERESTS</th>
<th>COURSES TAUGHT</th>
<th>SOURCE OF EDUCATION/TITLE (COUNTRY)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Chotaeva Cholpon</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Habilitation (&quot;doktor nauk&quot;)</td>
<td>Acting Associate Professor</td>
<td>Ethnic and National Studies, Cultural and Religious Studies, Language, the Middle East, Japan, History of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia</td>
<td>Ethnicity and Identity, People and Cultures of the Middle East, Religion and Culture in Japan, the Politics of Nationalism</td>
<td>KG Habilitation in Historical Sciences, History of Kyrgyzstan, National Academy of Sciences, the Kyrgyz Republic, 2005; she had fellowships in Japan and Arab Emirates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Abdykano-va Aida</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>Paleolithic Arid Zone of Central Asia, Prehistoric Art, Physical Anthropology.</td>
<td>Archaeology of Central Asia, Rock Art of Eurasia, Intro to Physical Anthropology, Intro to Archaeology</td>
<td>RU PhD Archeology; Institute of Archaeology &amp; Ethnography, Siberian Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences, Novosibirsk, Russia, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Dyikanbaeva Algerim</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Religious rituals, indigenous religions, folklore and folk life of Central Asia, anthropological theory.</td>
<td>Intro to Cultural Anthropology, Anthropology of Religion, History of Central Asia, Anthropology of Conflict, Folklore of Central Asia</td>
<td>TU Aegean University, Izmir, Turkey, 2004, Cultural Anthropology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Research Interests</td>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kuchumkulova Elmira</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Nomadic peoples and cultures of Eurasia: oral tradition, historical nomadic and</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sedentary interaction, relationship between Islam and native religious system of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>beliefs, and issues of ethnic/national identities in contemporary Central Asia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Turdalieva Cholpon</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Acting Associate</td>
<td>History of Central Asia, anthropology of kinship, nomadism</td>
<td>KG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>History of Kyrgyzstan, Anthropology of Kinship, History of Central Asia, Great</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>game: International competition for Central Asia, Peoples and Culture of Central</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Toktogulova Mucaram</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Islam, Traditional Cultures of Kyrgyzstan, Field Research Methods, Linguistic</td>
<td>KG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>World Civilizations, Intro to Research Methods, History of Anthropological Thought,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anthropology of Islam, Fieldwork Research Methods, Senior Seminar, Language and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nasritdinov Emil</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Acting Associate</td>
<td>Bottom-up development, Markets and trading networks in Central Asia, Culture and</td>
<td>AU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>development, Sustainable development, Societies and nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peoples and Cultures of the Oceania, Intro to Research Methods, Environmental</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Alymkulov Narynbek</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Theoretical problems of history as a science, weaponry of the nomads: from Huns</td>
<td>RU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to the Osman Empire, history of Japan, weaponry of World War II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Military-Historical Anthropology, History of Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Position, Academic Experience</td>
<td>Research Interests</td>
<td>Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rakhimov Ruslan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Peoples and Cultures of the West Africa, Contemporary Anthropological Thought</td>
<td>PhD candidate, School of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences Paris, France, 2006-2009, Social Anthropology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Hardenberg Rolland</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Acting Associate Professor (visiting 2006-07)</td>
<td>Kinship Theory, Political Organisation, Social Theory, History and Theory of Anthropology, Anthropology of Religion</td>
<td>Ph.D., Ethnology, University of Tuebingen, Germany, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Symbols and Rituals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mongolia, National University of Mongolia, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dolgorsuren, D.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer, Doctoral Candidate, National University of Mongolia</td>
<td>Museum Studies, Anthropology of Art, Nomadic Culture: Inner Asia, and Mongolian Ethnography</td>
<td>Doctoral Candidate, National University of Mongolia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tserenkhand, G.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Professor (&quot;kandidat nauk&quot;)</td>
<td>Ethno-history of the Mongols, Mongolian Culture and its tradition and innovation</td>
<td>Professor, Kandidat Nauk, Academy of Sciences, USSR, Moscow-Leningrad, 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Byambadorj, S.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer, Shamanistic and Folk belief, Traditional and Buddhist Ritual of the Mongols</td>
<td>Religious Anthropology, Language, Symbols and Communication, Tourism and Anthropology and Mongolian Ethnography</td>
<td>Doctoral candidate, National University of Mongolia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Munkh-Erdene, L.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Professor and Chair, Ethnology, Nationhood, Nationalism and Mongolian and Inner Asian history and culture, and Mongolia’s Post-Socialist political and societal transformation</td>
<td>Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, History of Anthropological Theory, Nationalism: Ethnicity, Nation and State and Research Methodology</td>
<td>PhD, Hokkaido University, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Research Focus</td>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Saruul, I.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Ph.D., Mongolian Academy of Sciences, 1998</td>
<td>Mongolian history and culture, Political and Ethnic geography of the Mongols, and Customs of the Mongols</td>
<td>MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Bilegt, L.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Ethnology and Culture of the Mongols</td>
<td>RU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Bum-Ochir, D.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Power, Politics, Shamanism, and Ritual in Inner Asian Cultures</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Takiguchi Rio</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Visiting Fellow</td>
<td>Mongolia’s land privatization and land ownership in Mongolia</td>
<td>JA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author’s compilation on the basis of the internet sites of the respective departments: American University of Central Asia, Department of Anthropology: [http://www.auca.kg/en/academics/Degree_Programs/anthropology/faculty_anthropology](http://www.auca.kg/en/academics/Degree_Programs/anthropology/faculty_anthropology); National University of Mongolia, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the School of Social Studies: [http://sss.num.edu.mn/Departmental%20Webpage/Homepage.htm](http://sss.num.edu.mn/Departmental%20Webpage/Homepage.htm), both sites accessed on 28.07.2008)
Annex 2

Curriculum of AUCA Anthropology Department

Required Courses

ANTH 101 Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
3 credits
This course introduces the students to various contemporary cultures and provides the content for further study in cultural anthropology. It examines human diversity across cultures, respecting the differences and searching for similarities.

ANTH 110 Introduction to Archaeology
3 credits
The goal of this course is to familiarize students with stages of development of humankind, and the creation of material and spiritual cultures; types archaeological monuments; methods of archeological research. Students also learn the place of archaeology within the context of the social sciences and how to use archaeological sources.

ANTH 131 Language and Culture
3 credits
An introduction to the study of language viewed through the prism of culture. Issues examined include languages of the world, variation in language, problems in linguistic structure, and culture and communication.

ANTH 132 Introduction to Physical Anthropology
3 credits
This course is devoted to the study of human evolution and the body structure of humans. The class also considers different theories about human origin. Students learn about skeletal analysis, historical and modern views of race, and biological processes.

ANTH 201 Field Research Methods
3 credits
This course introduces students to qualitative research methods, concentrating on the tools of ethnography: interview techniques, survey methods and data analysis. Students will gain practical experience in preparation of a research proposal, interviewing, and the use of life histories and case studies.

ANTH 200 Fieldwork (Ethnography)
3 credits
This course introduces students to practical, hands-on fieldwork that will be done in a particular off-campus setting. The students will have an opportunity to implement their learning using theory-informed techniques at the research site(s), as well as compiling and analyzing data post-fieldwork.
ANTH 203 Fieldwork (Archaeology)
3 credits
Students will use various kinds of archaeological methods, such as the investigation of archaeological monuments, dating, synchronization, and excavation. Students have the opportunity to participate in archaeological object fact-finding trips within the region, such as in Bishkek, Balykchy, Bel-Saz, Chap, Kochkor, Bashy-Sook, Son-Kol, Tash-Rabat, and Ak-Olon. At the end of the practicum, the student presents his or her diary and a complete report of the fieldwork for certification by the instructors.

ANTH 300 History of Anthropological Theory
3 credits
Prerequisite: ANTH 101
This course is designed to introduce students to the history of anthropological theory. Attention is paid to the national traditions of anthropology in England, America and France, focusing on the major personalities and theoretical orientations of the field since the 19th century.

ANTH 410 Senior Seminar
3 credits
This course is designed especially for students in the first semester of their senior year to help them prepare to write the senior thesis in the spring semester. Students learn how to formulate a thesis, articulate claims based on reasons and present reasons based on evidence. The techniques and craft of writing a draft and making systematic revisions are honed so that students can meet the high standard of writing demanded by the senior thesis.

Topical Core and Regional Courses

ANTH 220 Archaeology and Material Culture of Central Asia
3 credits
Prerequisite: ANTH 110
This course is devoted to the archaeological study of the cultures of Mongolia, Southern Siberia, Altai, Central Asia and Eastern Turkestan/Xinjiang. Students will become familiar with archaeological monuments from the Paleolithic to the Middle Ages and with new interpretations of archaeological data. This course is taught at the most modern level of scientific knowledge in the archaeology of Central Asia.

ANTH 224 Folklore of Central Asia
3 credits
This course is devoted to an overview of works from various cultures considered to be in the oral tradition, with a special focus on Central Asian oral tradition. Students will seek out themes and symbols recurring throughout the network and explore various interpretations. Commonality and divergence of theme, symbol and motifs will be discussed.

ANTH 210 Anthropology of Kinship
3 credits
Within contemporary kinship discipline, it has become important to inquire about practices and the meanings of relationships and the language used about relationships as a starting point for analysis of kinship in different societies. Many kinship systems existed in the past and many still exist today. Students examine kinship systems and analyze theoretical debates concerning concepts: kinship and marriage, kinship and gender, and Kinship and household.
ANTH 322 Environmental Anthropology
3 credits
Environmental anthropology investigates the relationship between people and their ecosystems. This course focuses on how this relationship evolves in various cultures around the world. We explore the diversity of concepts and notions of environment across geographic regions, climate zones, landscapes and lifestyles: from Bedouins in Arabian deserts to natives of Alaska and Siberia. We then bring this traditional knowledge of sustainable environment into the contemporary context to see to how it has been corrupted by the developments in technology, by global and local politics and by human’s greed for affluence. The final goal is to seek the ways of restoring the balance in our ecosystems and saving our planet from destruction.

ANTH 330 Anthropology of Religion
3 credits
Religion has always been one of the most important topics in anthropology. Since the earliest expeditions, anthropologists have sought to understand the often-unusual religious practices they encountered. People’s views of their origins, the supernatural, and a moral life are based on a set of shared ideas they learn as they grow up in a given society. In this course the students look at themes that have guided the anthropology of religion throughout the centuries. It also aims to present, analyze and discuss various religious phenomena, such as rituals and sacred sites, witchcraft and sorcery, death and spirit possession. The course concentrates on traditional religions and the non-formal practices of major religions.

ANTH 351 Medical Anthropology
3 credits
This course examines how cultures shape ideas about health and disease all around the world. The course highlights such topics as ethno medicine, ritual healing, gender and health, international development and global health.

ANTH 421 Applied Anthropology
3 credits
Applied Anthropology is a specialized approach to doing anthropology, which attempts to apply anthropological methods and data to help solve the world’s problems. Students discuss issues and problems relevant to economics, human health, social institutions, politics, education and many other areas where human problems exist.

ANTH 476 Political Anthropology
3 credits
Humans living in groups make collective decisions about organizing social activities, allocating and using resources, and maintaining security and stability within society. In negotiating decisions people rely upon ideologies, concepts and practices learned in the culture of daily life as well as in the more formalized practices of performances and rituals. Political anthropologists study the ways that social status, authority and power are created and used to shape collective and individual action, and the ways that authority is legitimated through cultural performances.

ANTH 235 Peoples and Cultures of Central Asia
3 credits
This interdisciplinary course is an introduction to the ethnoLOGY, history and culture of Central Asia from ancient times to the present day. Ethno-historical and cultural survey will take in
those regions, which today comprise former Soviet republics (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan) and Mongolia, Northern Afghanistan and Northern India. Students examine ways in which Central Asia and its sedentary and pastoral cultures have been central to the world history and civilizations. Through primary and secondary readings, class discussion and audio-visual materials, students also become familiar with theories and methodologies used to study ethnic and cultural identity.

ANTH 225 Peoples and Cultures of Oceania
3 credits
In this course students will take a journey into the incredibly beautiful islands lost in the waters of the Pacific Ocean and into Australia, land of kangaroos, koalas and boomerangs. This course is designed so that students learn about the myths and legends of the ancient islanders, brave warriors and first conquerors of the Great Pacific, and about traditions and unique knowledge of the aboriginal people of Australia, to understand what constitutes the simplicity and beauty of their culture, lifestyle and social customs.

ANTH 239 Peoples and Cultures of North America
3 credits
This course is designed to provide students with a thorough introduction to the many varied peoples and cultures found in contemporary North America. While the primary focus of the course will be upon the societies of the United States and Canada, some consideration is also given to Mexico and neighboring Central American nations as Latin American peoples and cultures are of increasing importance throughout the North American continent. Via examination of the peopling of North America, the influences of geography, migration patterns and key historical events, students will leave the course with a good basic understanding of both the dominant national cultures and those of the many varied ethnic groups that constitute the multicultural mosaic of modern life in North America.

ANTH 259 Peoples and Cultures of Middle East
3 credits
This course presents a short introduction to the Middle Eastern region. Since the Middle East is a vast region occupying the modern territories of North Africa, the Near East, the Arab Peninsula as well as Israel, Turkey and Iran, the course will deal only with the region’s key issues: traditional structure of the society and its traditional and moral values, the Islamic religion and its involvement into the politics, folk culture and printed media, theatre, cinema and visual art. Special lectures will be devoted to the position of women in the region and the implications brought to the region by globalization.

ANTH 275 Peoples and Cultures of East Asia
3 credits
The course seeks to examine various aspects of culture of East Asia. A focus on culture serves as one of the most useful means of looking at East Asia as an entity. A comparative perspective will be employed to examine the cultural links and the cultural differences among China, Japan and Korea (as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan). The course also introduces students to a variety of methodologies for the study of culture (e. g. anthropology, cultural studies, and history) alongside the use of material and visual culture such as art objects, artifacts, novels, memoirs, films, among others, about/from the countries of East Asia.

GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES
ANTH 102 Introduction to Research Methods
3 credits
In this course students will learn how to conduct a research project in anthropology and reveal patterns in the everyday activities of people. They will dive deep into the complexity of their time to find precious insights and will fly above it to generalize and form bigger pictures. This course will familiarize young anthropologists with the methods of conceptualizing, systematizing, categorizing, collecting, extrapolating, analyzing, writing and presenting. These skills are essential operational tools of all researchers who study the behavior of people and want to make sense of the often confusing and complicated reality.

HIST 108 History of Kyrgyzstan
3 credits
This course is a survey from earliest times to the present. The course familiarizes students with Kyrgyz history, ethnic groups and religious institutions, as well as with social, political and economic developments that have combined to form the Kyrgyz nation. Emphasis is on the development and major characteristics of Kyrgyz history, and on the roles and contributions of historical leaders and individuals. The key periods are Ancient, Turkic, Kyrgyz, Mongol, Imperial, Soviet and post-Soviet. Class presentations focus on selected and significant events that shaped the development of the political, cultural, scientific and economic institutions of the Kyrgyz people and Kyrgyzstan.

HIST 222 History of Central Asia
3 credits
The course will present an interpretive history of Central Asia, focusing on the dynamics of interaction and development that have brought a great diversity of peoples together to shape the region over thousands of years. Our approach to such a deep and rich history, with so many significant figures, important chapters and wonderful legacies, is to emphasize the relations and commonalities among peoples, and the great continuity in the historical processes that have shaped the region and given rise to the cultural forms that we observe.
Annex 3

Selected publications by Cultural Anthropology department, AUCA, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan


Alymkulov Narynbek Negative Tendencies Inherited by States of Central Asia in independence conditions // Scientific theoretical conference “Tolerance and Intolerance”, Saint-Petersburg, 2006, (Otricatel’nye tendencii, unasledovannye stranami Central’noi Asiiv usloviah nezavisimosti)

Chotaeva Cholpon, Etnokul’turnye factory v istorii gosudarstvennogo stroitel’stv Va Kyrgyzstana (Bishkek, 2005).
Chotaeva Cholpon, Ethnicity, Language and Religion in Kyrgyzstan (Tohoku University, 2004).
Chotaeva Cholpon, Etnichnost’ i etnicheskiy natsionalism. Nauchno-teoreticheskie materialy k avtorskomu spetskursu “Etnichnost’ v sovremennom mire” (Bishkek, 2005).
Chotaeva Cholpon, Yazyk, etnichnost’ i religiya v Kyrgyzstane: po materialam sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniya 2003 goda (Bishkek, 2005).
Chotaeva Cholpon, Tsivlizatsiya i kul’tura. Nauchno-teoreticheskie materialy k uchebnomu kursu "Istoriya mirovoi kul’tury" (Bishkek, 2004).
Chotaeva Cholpon, “Problemy aktualizatsii etnicheskoi identichnosti v sovremennom Kyrgyzstane (po materialam sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniya)”, Sayasat, 2005, 8.


Toktogulova Mucaram. Кыргыздырдын ишениминдеги синкретуулук маселеси книга: Кыргызстандагы мазар басуу. Бишкек, 2007, p.419-433