

Opponent's assessment of the diploma thesis „Mortality trends and patterns in the Caspian region of the Republic of Kazakhstan“ by Ulpan Alimova

The thesis of Ulpan Alimova with the title „Mortality trends and patterns in the Caspian region of the Republic of Kazakhstan“ consists of 100 pages incl. 13 pages of appendixes. Its text is organized into five core, further divided chapters plus introduction, conclusion, lists of abbreviations, tables and figures, biography and the above mentioned appendixes.

This work is thematically focused on attractive theme of mortality in the part of Kazakhstan situated to the North and East from Caspian Sea. The selected region represents dynamically developing territory which economic growth is mainly related to oil mining. Prior data analysis, the author is setting frameworks of the study, its objectives, hypotheses and relevant theories. The literature overview is followed by discussion of data and methods used for the purpose of this study – analysis of mortality levels and structures and their developments in recent years, since the previous census (1999). The finding related to the author's analyses creates the content three chapters in the second part of the thesis. General and age-specific mortality characteristics should be presented on the background of their development in Kazakhstan as a whole. The text of the work is finishing by conclusion attempting to summarize principal findings and accumulated knowledge.

On the first view, the diploma thesis of Ms. Alimova seems to have logical and internally consistent content considering all very basic aspects of mortality in the region. Also its methodological part has required professional level and corresponds at least with basic requirements for a master thesis in Demography. Nevertheless, the text presented has several imperfections. Already in the very beginning part, (English) abstract, one can find some contradictions. It seems that the main problem is related to improper use of grammatical tenses in English language. Is mortality increasing or decreasing in the region today?! In the thesis content one can find that the titles of the Chapter 4 and 5 are not consistent. Once there is mentioned comparison with Kazakhstsan, it should be repeating or maybe better not mentioned in both cases.

In the own text of the submitted thesis, there are for instance following discrepancies or misleading information. In the subchapter 1.2 is the author operating with avoidable mortality which is not the subject of her analysis. In the subchapter 1.3, there is appearing the text which does not look authentically (p. 14, par. 3 and 4). The work quoted in this part (Sobotík) is not appearing in the list of used literature (p. 15). It is always advantageous to spell properly names of authors, especially they are your teacher and you meet them for two years almost daily (Richtarikova, twice on the page 15). Similar comments can be addressed to the 2nd chapter. There, however, is more questionable fact that overview of the literature is mostly replaced by description of morality situation. Definitely strange looks specification of the region under the question in the part devoted to the literature review. Moreover, there is unclear from the map presented as the figure 1 (p. 18) what is the Caspian region within the territory of Kazakhstan (this is done only in the map on the page 44). In the table 1 (p. 22) is an error in the headline: There are not data describing levels of child mortality but only infant mortality ones.

In the chapter 3 there should be explained at least two formulations. The first starts on the first row of the page 38 (Fractions ...), the second on the page 40 below the table (Yet the main ...). The text is also not always clear (e.g. p. 36, par. 3). Neither from the map, neither from the text on the page 44 is fully clear if Caspian region is the part or not of the Western Kazakhstan in its delimitation for the purpose of this work.

Logical inconsistencies and mistakes are appearing also in the “content” chapters 5 and 6. For all maybe only the table 7 inserted between logically connected tables 6 and 8 (pp. 56-58), mentioning infectious and parasitic diseases among (three) most frequent cases of death when numbers presented speaks about something different (pp. 58-59), and surprisingly appearing international

comparison on p. 61 when in the other cases she do not use this method. The author also uses abbreviation of CVD (cardio-vascular diseases) in the comments are concerning entire group of circulatory diseases (p. 70). On the page 78 (the 3rd paragraph) is also written that: "...in the Caspian region, CVD mortality will probably not fall down to the Kazakhstan average level." However, the recent values of mortality indicators as presented in the figures 15 and 16 are already bellow the corresponding values for Kazakhstan.

Regarding established and partially presented facts of both positive and negative nature it is not easy to decide about overall assessment of Ulpan Alimova's diploma thesis. Taking into account the innovative character of the thesis in the context of contemporary Kazakhstani demography and good methodological performance of the author, I recommend the diploma thesis „Mortality trends and patterns in the Caspian region of the Republic of Kazakhstan“ for attention of the Commission for State Examinations and propose to decide about its assessment also with regards to the result of the defence process.

Prague, October 9, 2009

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tomáš Kučera".

RNDr. Tomáš Kučera, CSc.
opponent