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Supervisor's report on *Nation-Building Policies and Interethnic Relations in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan* by Anastassyia Ushakova

In the present master's thesis, Anastassyia Ushakova has set herself the goal of analysing a phenomenon belonging to the field of nationalism studies. The principal research problem is the impact of national policies on interethnic relationship in the post-Soviet context, and it centres on a well chosen case study, the relationship of Kazakhs to Russians in Kazakhstan since the 1990s. Thus, the time period in question ranges from the breakup of the Soviet Union to the present, but deeper historical layers are proportionately involved too. The central problem of the research is the effect made by post-Soviet Kazakh nation-building on the relationship of the Kazakh majority to the Russian minority. This has been articulated in three topics defining the basic structure of the thesis. The tripartite thesis design corresponds to three analytical levels, a national (state-wide), a regional and a local one. Each chapter required different types of sources and methods.

After an attentive introduction into the pertinent theoretical issues, historiography and sources, the first chapter, corresponding to the state-wide level, offers a textual analysis of the representation of Russians in the historical narratives of state-sponsored textbooks. The second chapter, scrutinizing the regional level on the example of East Kazakhstan, investigates the ethnodemographic processes, especially the outmigration of Russians, with a glimpse at the institutions regulating interethnic relations, as well as the classification of the population along the "titular nation" and "non-titular nations" categories. The local level is at play in the third chapter focusing on the urban landscape of Ust-Kamenogorsk, pointing to both the changes and the permanence of its symbolism as seen in its monuments, museum exhibits and toponyms, on the basis of the author's personal fieldwork carried out in the Winter of 2016/17. The initial conjectures, formulated in the hypothesis of the thesis, have been reconsidered, on all three levels and in their entirety, at the light of the results of the empirical work, which enabled the making of a substantial conclusion. I find the results of this research objective as they are based on correct methodology and thoughtful empirical work. The main text of the 120 page-long thesis is supported by more than 250 footnotes and one table, one map and fifteen photos and it includes a fifteen page long bibliography.

I appreciate the logical progression and the coherence of the whole thesis, successfully achieved in spite of the variety of sources (textbooks, legal texts, statistical data, sociological surveys, buildings and monuments, interviews) and that of the applicable interpretative approaches which could have embarrassed other candidates. The three chapters together constitute a coherent unit in which the social and the cultural realms, the quantitative and the qualitative ones are bound to each other and explain each other very well. As well as this, the efficiency of the author's three-level technique enables readers to see both the macroscopic and the microscopic, and allows them to get a quite elaborate picture, instead of generalizing broad statements, about the transformation of the delicate relationship of Kazakhs and Russians in Kazakhstan. I have been informed by the candidate about the anticipated publication of her first chapter in a scholarly review in Kazakhstan. Actually, I think that the whole thesis is worth publication; in this case, I would recommend her some minor

amendments. Linking her work more visibly to the international academic production on national minorities and cultural heritage should be an advantage for contextualizing her work even better; in the first chapter, more background information on the authors of textbooks may help her explain some aspects of their narratives; and, in the third chapter, the section dedicated to the monuments may contain more detail on the artworks themselves, their making and present-day uses (such as commemorations) which have appeared in the text anyway but should be perfected yet. It was during the final phase of thesis writing that she discovered the importance of the World War II and the Afghanistan war memorial of Ust-Kamenogorsk in connecting Kazakh and Russian historical memory, and they should be analysed accordingly. Anastassyia Ushakova has proved remarkable competence in conducting research within the social sciences area. As for the numerical evaluation of the thesis, I propose grade 5, the best grade available in the Hungarian academic system.



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