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History of the Establishment and Development of Ethnic Entrepreneurship in Karakol

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I. INTRODUCTION

As a form of occupation, entrepreneurship is a rational activity based on personal initiative, self-reliance and responsibility, aimed at making profit, and reaching self-realization and increasing self-esteem. This paper studies the history of the establishment and development of ethnic entrepreneurship in Karakol from the early days of Kyrgyzstan's independence (1993–2016). The research undertakes several tasks: to identify the social basis of ethnic entrepreneurship in Karakol; study the motives (reasons) and personal skills behind ethnic entrepreneurship; analyze the special conditions that enable female (ethnic) entrepreneurship, despite various ethnic groups' cultural stereotypes, which do not encourage women to be in leadership positions; provide an empirical compare-and-contrast analysis of male and female leadership by describing specific features of gender-based models of leadership in the establishment of ethnic entrepreneurship; describe the interaction between government and entrepreneurs; and identify obstacles to the establishment of ethnic entrepreneurship and regional solutions to these obstacles.

Research Methods

The research was conducted between 1 June and 10 July 2016. During the course of the research, 17 semi-structured (narrative) interviews and oral histories were conducted, as well as 10 mini-interviews. Ethnic entrepreneurs were surveyed based on their age, sex, education and place of residence.

Karakol City is an administrative, education and cultural centre of Issyk-Kul Oblast. It is also a centre of trade, industry, service, tourism, communication and information. In Karakol, there are many financial and credit companies, international organizations, museums, drama theatres, a zoo and many other education institutions, including universities, colleges, professional lyceums and schools. Karakol City has a multi-ethnic population comprised of over 24 different ethnic groups. According to the statistics department at the Karakol mayor's office, in 2014, the Karakol population was 72,123, among which are 52,133 Kyrgyz, 10,705 Russians, 2,142 Uzbeks, 273 Ukrainians, 2,583 Uighurs, 1,152 Dungans, 1,069 Tatars, 792 Kazakhs, 55 Turks, 53 Germans, 37 Koreans, 30 Azeris, 22 Tajiks, 6 Armenians, 6 Estonians, 4 Moldovans, 3 Turkmen and 1,040 of other ethnicities.

This paper is part of **Global Voices on Pluralism**, a new publication series from the **Global Centre for Pluralism**. These seven papers were produced in 2016 as a part of **History and memory in Kyrgyzstan – toward an inclusive society**, a project developed to support local scholars. Each paper explores an aspect of Kyrgyzstan's history as a diverse society with the aim of generating awareness in Kyrgyzstan about the importance of more inclusive historical narratives as a pathway to pluralism.

II. SOCIAL PORTRAIT OF KARAKOL'S ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURS

The Social Base: Social Origins of Ethnic Entrepreneurs

The establishment of free market relations leads to the increased role of ownership, which serves as a true criterion of social differentiation. New social groups, particularly entrepreneurs in all spheres of economic activity, emerge. A shift to free market relations raises a critical question: which market-oriented social groups will enjoy priority development? According to Russian sociologist L.A. Belyaeva, there are two groups:

The first is owners of sizable properties, former members of political establishment, representatives of large-scale shadow economy, who are able to organize effective production; the second is a mass of people who own properties once privatized from state. The latter includes engineers and technical staff, mid-level managers and administrators, intelligentsia working for salaries, town and village residents that own property, including a large number of farmers, skilled workers, service sector workers and others.²

The social origin of the ethnic entrepreneurs in Karakol has been built primarily from former civil servants and workers of state enterprises, education, culture, medicine, science and other sectors, since during the Soviet era there was no private property. Property in the Soviet Union was represented in two forms: state property (98%) and kolkhoz-cooperative property owned by the collective farms (2%). The respondents' social and demographic characteristics are as follows: gender—females (10), males (7); age—30–39 (3), 40–49 (3), 50–59 (7), 60–69 (4); ethnicity—Kyrgyz (7), Ukrainian (1), Tatar

(2), Uighur (1), Uzbek (2), Korean (1), Dungan (3); education—secondary school (4), college [technical and professional college on basis of secondary school] (2), university (11); social status at the time of their business launch—civil servants [teachers, scientific researchers, workers in the sectors of culture, medicine, and trade and others] (14), military (1), workers at private organizations (1), housewives (1).

Social Origins of the Parents of Entrepreneurs and Their Business Experience

The parents of the surveyed respondents also have backgrounds as workers, farmers and intellectuals. They had never engaged in business, as it was considered alien to Soviet ideology, which was based on conscientious work for the state. Those who worked for themselves and earned money were considered to be speculators and resellers, which were viewed as bourgeois and capitalist; and earning revenue was incompatible with Soviet principles of constructing a socialist lifestyle. However, despite this, Vasiliy Rybko, an ethnic Ukrainian, who briefly experienced the Soviet era in his youth, noted:

Our relatives had experience running a business, but only of the sort of selling apples from our garden, nothing more. The relatives had gardens as they lived in villages. Our roots go back to [a] village, which was formerly called Kara-Oi, and now renamed to Dolinka. Our land plots were large gardens of about 30 acres. And therefore, our business was based on our experience of working at collective farms, i.e., gardening. My relatives had never stopped doing business because farming at work and at home is inseparable.³

Elmira Hudaiberdieva, an ethnic Tatar, told a similar story:

When my husband died in 1984 and I myself had to provide for my three children, I started my business by searching for income on top of my salary. Then

police would not allow it, but when the Soviet Union collapsed, I slowly entered a business of selling food, *ashlanfu* and *manty*, on the street, but police would pose obstacles, calling us speculators. Then an entrepreneurship was non-existent, but, in 1980s and 1990s, when the USSR was crumbling, the situation was difficult. It was confusing. Those who were smarter were able to snatch stuff, you know. But it was alright. We survived, managed to get up.⁴

During the Soviet period, people were encouraged to set up private gardens to grow vegetables and fruits, and hold livestock (chicken, geese and ducks). Households consumed the majority of the produce, while the surplus was taken to markets. The sale of surpluses can be considered the beginning of running business within socialism. In this regard, Vasilii's characterization of selling apples as a business is well justified. Despite the notion of socialism's incompatibility with private ownership and the market (a notion promoted before the Soviet Union's collapse), respondents' parents already had experience selling produce (goods) from farming and saving money, which eventually provided stimulus to launch and promote their business during Kyrgyzstan's transition to a market economy.

III. INDIVIDUALS ENGAGED IN ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES: MOTIVES AND PERSONAL QUALITIES

So what are the motives that stimulate entrepreneurial behaviour? Entrepreneurial motivation types were studied and described by renowned economic theorists, such as Joseph Schumpeter, Werner Sombart, Max Weber and others. Based on research into the literature on entrepreneurship, I highlighted four main motivation types. The first is conventionally called "traditional," and is driven by a desire to

apply professional experience and skills to work in a community with well-established links, or, in other words, the preservation and stabilization of what has already been achieved. The second type is "emotional," which reflects a desire to follow one's emotions and feelings/intuition, or one's psychological character traits. In certain situations, this would "generate confidence in tomorrow," whereas in others, there would be the opposite feeling of readiness to take risks. This could also include some pleasant feelings evoked by the sense of freedom and independence, but what is always the case is an aspiration towards experiencing a certain positive emotional condition. The third type of motivation is based on "values" that drive not toward instrumental benefits, but toward something that is value-based: fulfilling a duty set before oneself, relatives or community. The fourth type is "innovative." It reflects a desire to test one's skills professionally in a certain sphere (professional innovation) and to continuously meet new demands ("innovation" in the sphere of consumption).

These motives reflect various demands, which are briefly described as demands for "survival" (first type), getting emotional satisfaction (second type), raising one's self-esteem (third type) and getting satisfaction from work (fourth type). The reality, however, provides us with a mix of various entrepreneurial motives, thereby creating different entrepreneurial characters.

During the course of the research, every respondent mentioned economic reasons (i.e., the closure of all factories in Karakol after the collapse of the Soviet Union) as the main reason for setting up their own businesses; and that monthly salaries at organizations funded by the state were not enough to provide a minimum level of livelihood. For example:

Kulnara Janserkeeva, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

I guess the main reason was economic, lack of enough money... When I worked at the Academy

of Science, I had a second job at a hospital. I used to receive two salaries. The main reason I think was that my relatives were *kommersanty* [those who were starting a business]. They all would tell me to join them in business, trade, and quit my job that provided 20 soms per month. I went into business under influence of my relatives.⁵

Natasha Li, an ethnic Korean:

Our salaries were always meager. In the 1990s, the Soviet Union collapsed and there were difficulties. I'm a Korean. It is difficult for Koreans to assimilate in Issyk-Kul; therefore, few of us live here. The oriental cuisine is popular. Everyone likes it. Korean salads are almost like a world brand here. And during those difficult 1990s, when salaries were not enough, I tried and made a salad and meals, which I took to a local market on weekends. That's how everything started. In a period between 1993 and 1996, I used to make a living by selling salads until my daughter came.⁶

Yunus Baglaev, an ethnic Dungan:

The main reason was that I used to work at the regional centre for young engineers, but the operations stopped and hours were cut. I saw a collapse in perspective and decided to leave although my salary was good, as fewer and fewer children attended the centre and the provision of supplies to such extracurricular centres fell. The prices rose, but the salaries remained the same. Then I had my third child and I thought better do something new. In the late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, people struggled to survive and feed their families.⁷

Davran Hayrulaev, an ethnic Uzbek:

The reason everyone left for business was due to the economic hardships, the collapse of the [Soviet] Union. Many people were laid off or sent for leave without pay. What is leave without pay? It is when

you sit at home and get paid nothing. It was about survival.⁸

In sum, the sociological research has highlighted the main strategy behind their business launches, i.e., economic reasons. It was due to insufficient or lack of financial means to support the respondents themselves and their families after the Soviet Union's government-funded enterprises and organizations (which had been working successfully) stalled and closed en masse. In such a situation, a large number of people, especially intellectuals—teachers, doctors, engineers, military service people and representatives of other professional groups—had to trade at local markets. Bazaars were the only place where various goods and services were sold for the Karakol residents to meet their consumption needs.

Apart from the economic reasons, two young businessmen, Vasiliy Rybko, an ethnic Ukrainian, age 40, and Nurlan Atagulov, an ethnic Kyrgyz, age 33, pointed out other motives in launching their own businesses: their interest in opening a new business and a desire to benefit Karakol in general.

Vasiliy Rybko: At that moment it was interesting, and it seems this interest manifested. It was my goal and dream to try to work in this new sphere [computers]. You know, it was so popular... so I wanted to try myself. I served in the army and I maintained a strict discipline although I was raised in a different environment. The army was some sort of a lesson for me, where everything was so strict, single leadership and obedience. And here I was in a state of free floating. At that point, we had nothing else to do. Either you work for yourself or you simply roam looking for something to do. In this world, there are only two options: you either work for someone, or you follow your dream and it works for you. And this is how it all started. Actually, I arranged this business while playing. Why? Because in principle I plant trees in the garden because it is interesting for me rather than it being driven by the prospect of benefits.⁹

Nurlan Atagulov: After visiting the United States in 2013 for [an] exchange of experience, I understood that Karakol has a big potential in the business sector, but we lack [the] right people who would promote Karakol as a tourist destination. And I decided to launch my own business as part of [the] ‘Visit Karakol’ project, which helps entrepreneurs develop their business in the tourism sphere. We provide an Internet platform so they can publish information about themselves and their business. When I worked and helped my parents at Green Yard Hotel, I underwent many workshops and trainings provided by various organizations. And these trainings gave me knowledge and opened my potential, which I want to share with people on how to make tourism a business.¹⁰

In addition to the economic reasons for opening their own business, among the ethnic entrepreneurs there were those like Vasilii who sought emotional satisfaction from running a business. For him, running a business meant testing himself with a new venture, boosting his self-esteem and achieving certain results in relevant and interesting work, e.g., the sale and repair of computers.

It is also important to highlight “value-based” motives, as Schumpeter referred to it, in opening a business, which is vividly seen in Nurlan’s experience as a young businessman. He considers it his responsibility to share his knowledge and the skills he acquired abroad with Kyrgyzstani society, particularly in the tourism sector to promote the tourism services offered by local business people. Subsequently, we can identify the motives for opening a business, identified by Schumpeter, in different combinations among Karakol City’s ethnic entrepreneurs.

Joseph Schumpeter’s special analysis of the entrepreneur was connected to his concept of

economic development as a dynamic process: “Carrying out new combinations means reforming and revolutionizing the means of production through the introduction of innovations, and in a general sense through utilizing new technological opportunities for production of new goods or the same goods, but with new methods made possible with the availability of new sources of crude materials or new markets supplying ready production before the reorganization of the previous sector or the creation of a new sector of industry”¹¹. [See translator’s note below]ⁱ

The entrepreneur is a phenomenon of economic development. Schumpeter referred to the entrepreneur as an economic actor whose function is to perform new economic combinations. How do our respondents define business (or entrepreneurship)? Ethnic Dungan Yunus Baglaev’s definition is particularly interesting:

I joined my brothers to start the business. We figured that it would be difficult to work separately, so we put together our efforts and capital, and established a family company. We developed gradually: we set up a grocery store first; then began trading with metals; and then set up a hotel business. Business is about constantly solving new tasks. You constantly face new things. The state changes rules, supplier changes rules. Clients change. One must work differently every time. It is a creative work.¹²

Engaging in entrepreneurial activities requires certain personal qualities. It should be noted that all the respondents mentioned such qualities as ability to communicate and set goals, perseverance, integrity, patience, determination, openness, professionalism and experience. For example:

Vasilii Rybko, an ethnic Ukrainian:

Simple qualities such as openness and humanness,

ⁱTranslator’s note: this text was translated directly into English from Russian, from a direct quotation in Joseph Schumpeter’s book.

that is all, and also goal oriented-ness. One needs to know how to dream and take action. One may want to dream, and one can dream and act. These are different things. I think these are the main qualities.¹³

Munara Asanova, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

First of all, work hard, do not be lazy, do not be late, have everything in order, ranging from coming to work on time to book-keeping. I myself manage bookkeeping.¹⁴

Murat Ashiraliev, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

Running a business requires consistency and patience, as well as a serious approach. If something is not happening, do not backtrack. I want to underscore, one needs patience and do lots of, lots of work day and night. Also, integrity and responsibility are key, every kopek should be accounted for. If, say, you take a certain good from a company, money should be returned within the agreed period, without any delays.¹⁵

Mira Rivazova, an ethnic Dungan:

I think, most of all, one needs experience, patience, perseverance, determination, but once in business, one tends to increasingly approach it as gambling. Also there is a factor of opportunity. If you do not have it, your business will not grow. In general, one needs to have both opportunity and luck.¹⁶

This paper's research results show that the entrepreneurs' personal qualities play a considerable role in running and promoting their business to the level of success. As the respondents themselves have noted, thanks to their personal qualities (patience, perseverance, tenacity), they have been able to achieve their goals, and fulfill their material and moral aspirations. Work experience and an opportunity to carry out plans play a big role as well.

IV. MORAL AND MATERIAL STIMULUS FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY

Material interests are one of the main drivers for running and promoting business for all the respondents because it helps achieve certain wealth, prosperity and wider choices, as well as moral satisfaction from the work they do. For example:

Asylgul Toktoeva, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

Yes, I reap benefits from my business and therefore, I am building a house now and providing for my children. I am free and therefore, I enjoy freedom in terms of choices I have. I do what I need to do and do what brings benefit. On the other hand, possibly, it is better for customers as well because they buy goods that they want. And we feel good when they buy our goods. We build good, friendly relations. Many of my clients are thankful, which gives me moral satisfaction... They thank me for selling them goods which they can afford. Such cases also bring us satisfaction. Of course, I am happy because I earn money here and satisfy my needs.¹⁷

Davran Hayrulaev, an ethnic Uzbek:

Yes, I feel moral satisfaction and can also provide for my family. Here, we work with people, tourists. One tried our food, and he tells others, and the others spread the word to the others and so on. Financial benefits are enough, but it would have been great not to have a loan from bank. You reap what you sow.¹⁸

Mira Rivasova, an ethnic Dungan:

It is difficult to say, it is difficult to get financial satisfaction now because the work is getting more tiresome. Moral [satisfaction] not much. I get some level of financial satisfaction. It was much

better in 1992 until 2005, but now the level of financial satisfaction is falling. Competition is high. Everything is cheap now. Rent is expensive. So I try to put higher prices. Well, it would be a mistake to complain, as I can still provide for my family.¹⁹

As far as the continuity of business and the transfer of business as an inheritance is concerned, the ethnic entrepreneurs expressed different points of view:

Kulnara Janserkeeva, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

No, I would not want my children to be engaged in business. You can earn here a heartache, and nerves are shaken. Business eats the nerves. They need calmer jobs. If I had a higher salary, I would not abandon my profession and go for the business. We faced such difficult times.²⁰

Vasiliy Rybko, an ethnic Ukrainian:

Interviewer: Would you want your children to follow your path?

Vasiliy Rybko: I think the children will choose for themselves. I am not going to impose.

Interviewer: Do you not want to leave them the business?

Vasiliy Rybko: Making dynastic transfer brings only problems. They have their own choice.²¹

Murat Ahiraliev, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

Yes, I would want that my children follow my footsteps. I think our country is lagging behind very much economically; and, to prevent our children from migrating to other countries, I would want them to continue my business, work and serve their country. Taxes and other social deductions that we currently pay would remain in our country for people, which is also our contribution to the

development of our country.²²

Sulayman Asanaliev, an ethnic Dungan:

I receive 100% satisfaction both material and morally from my work. Especially moral one, because I love my profession. Currently, I do not exercise doctoral duties because I work as chairman and manager.²³

The accumulation of capital at a certain stage of the entrepreneurial life encourages business people to expand their businesses through investing their capital in other spheres (e.g., by opening new cafes or restaurants). The case of Sulayman, an ethnic Dungan, is particularly salient. He first opened a dental clinic, which became popular among the population. As he expanded this service, he began to invest his capital in other spheres of business by increasingly assuming the role of owner and manager. He leads in strategic business development by combining these roles. After he becomes a manager, Sulayman takes on almost all risks related to running the business and independently steers his business in a certain direction. He decides on a business's structure based on the available resources and labour force. The manager prepares immediate and future plans on the amount of certain goods to be produced. There is always a risk of making mistakes and facing losses. On the other hand, such complex circumstances help shape an energetic, worker with entrepreneurial spirit as a genuine business manager. In this regard, Sulayman explains how he became successful and what he has done in his work:

We work without advertisement. We follow a developed scheme. We have a competition. When we opened, there were lines of people waiting, but now there are many clinics and no more lines. I have simply my own methods of treatment and organization of labour. When a client comes and expresses distrust, I tell them: 'We will cure you, and if you go and tell in Moscow or Bishkek that you had a medical treatment in Karakol, you will

not be ashamed. No one will say that you had a wrong treatment. I have my own method, and that is why people come. You have probably heard that [Sulayman's clinic] Vivadent is an expensive clinic. The clinic is not expensive. We provide completely different treatment, or if to call it simply we provide treatment à la Bishkek, à la modern. All of our medicine is from Germany. Our suppliers are in Moscow. We use what is used in Moscow. Our equipment is modern Chinese. It is no worse than German. Its turbine rotates and blows air. It all depends on how you provide treatment.²⁴

Sulayman's success story demonstrated the importance of professionalism in his work, which was the application of a leading method of dental treatment with the use of modern technology. In turn, this guaranteed the quality of the service provided and increased his competitiveness in the dental services market. It is worth noting that education, professionalism and work experience play a big role in reaching high results for all ethnic entrepreneurs in their chosen fields, for example, in medical, computer, tourism and other services.

Munara Asanova, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

It was my dream when I was younger to open a wedding boutique. At last I have fulfilled my dream, and I had to invest a lot. I took a loan. I like this business in principle, and I love to run it. I also make national costumes, and cultural centres in Jeti-Oguz, Ak-Say and Tyup rayons are our customers. I have assistants to make costumes in great numbers, and we provide them to performers of all music colleges and schools. Of course, when I applied for loan from the Swiss, they organized seminars, which were very smart. Now these seminars are not free of charge.

This Swiss organization not only helps the entrepreneurs launch their business, but also support those who already have an experience. Their loans had very low interest rates – 4% per

year. It is impossible now. They now have a big business community. I myself am a member of this community. We pay a membership fee and attend different seminars. Unfortunately, we have to pay to attend the seminars. Generally, the trainers are from Switzerland, who provide seminars on business management and marketing. I am applying what they taught me. The acquired knowledge helped me a lot. They provided comprehensive trainings. Marketing. How to communicate with clients, workers and how to treat them. Accounting. I gained a big experience.²⁵

Munara's experience of launching a business demonstrates that, despite the insufficiency of the financial, organizational and educational resources (i.e., a lack of knowledge in accounting and auditing, interaction with clients and staff), new entrepreneurs try to get loans and undergo qualification-raising trainings (business and marketing seminars), which eventually lead to the success and fulfillment of their dreams of launching their own business.

An entrepreneur is a person who works in challenging environments. They work for the sake of self-realization and changing the world around them even on the level of a small company. This is exactly what will let them respect themselves and the people around them. Subsequently, for a majority of entrepreneurs, money, as a measurement of wealth, prosperity and, accordingly, an opportunity to access various material benefits and the means to maintain the current level of their well-being, is the main motive for running a business.

V. INTERACTION OF ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURS WITH THE LOCAL KARAKOL POPULATION

One of the factors that form the basis of successful entrepreneurial activities is the interaction, or relationship, with clients. More and more sellers crop up in the market providing various goods and services, heightening competition among them for clients because the clients decide which business will thrive. The surveyed entrepreneurs think that interaction with clients and the ability to meet their needs and demands is the basis for success in any activity, especially in business.

Karamat Alimova, an ethnic Uighur:

We are running a business for over 12 years already and business is developing. I am actually grateful for our Karakol as its residents have a positive attitude. I am also grateful for my fate for giving me such brothers and relatives. Thanks to people, our business began to develop. All Karakol knows us through me because people have a positive impact on me, and I have a positive personal impact on others. For 12 years, I have cooperated with state institutions, kindergartens, schools and organizations. Everyone come to us, and they all know me. What is our advantage? *A simple humane approach* [author's emphasis]. We always try to come forward by showing flexibility and suggesting a variety of goods with flexible payment arrangements. People would always come and thank us. There were different people, some of whom did not return their debts. We just forget it. Ninety-five percent of them return their debts, and I am thankful.²⁶

Natasha Li, an ethnic Korean:

Being an [ethnic] Korean, I am fluent in Kyrgyz. When clients come, I speak in Russian, but then switch to Kyrgyz. *You know, it is so appealing to them* [author's emphasis]. They like it. They ask if I am Kyrgyz. I say no, but explain I do it because they speak Kyrgyz. People like when you as a representative of another ethnic group speak their language. It wins people. It really does because you see they like it. Also, you live here for so long that you know many people and you try to build good relations with them. For example, if you bought a salad and left, next time I will refer to you by name and ask you to come again. This is a purely humane relations between people regardless if they buy your goods or not. It means a lot. Even when you simply greet and say hello.²⁷

Mira Rivazova, an ethnic Dungan:

A person who is engaged in trade should have good communication skills, must be friendly and smiling. People must be attracted with your conversations and know your goods, so you properly promote them. If you want to sell your goods, sometimes you will have to put a maximum effort to promote it. All in all, a salesman must know the market well and its demands. We also rely on the demand. People come and seek for something without knowing what, and we ask them for what purposes, for whom and try to find or order that good. We often bring goods new to the market and people often get surprised when they know the purpose of new equipment. Sometimes women themselves do not know how to use certain things and we explain. There is such a strong competition that you have to know your market.²⁸

Mirgul Bakasheva, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

People come to me, no one says bad things about me, but thank me, which gives a feeling of moral satisfaction. In order to attract people, I must show

a positive attitude towards everyone and they will come. If I show my anger to people, it will repel people. Some people come to me in a very angry state and I need to find a common language with them. I try to build positive relationship with everyone.²⁹

Vasiliy Rybko, an ethnic Ukrainian:

We build relations based on a simple humane approach.³⁰

Yunus Baglaev, an ethnic Dungan:

Interviewer: What was your relationship with customers, when you were in trade?

Yunus Baglaev: A lot depends on your ability to find a common language with people. When we raised our business to a wholesale trade, importance of building working relations with customers became even more important as customers were primarily from regions. The language you speak did not matter. It was more important for customers to have a quality service, good products and satisfactory prices. We had one competitor who would say to his customers that they should buy from him because they are from the same ethnic group. But you need to give discounts. We tried to improve our service quality, deliver, have a proper package and arrange neatly.³¹

According to our respondents, success in business is based first and foremost on clients. Thus, a business will prosper if a client's basic needs are satisfied in terms of availability of various goods and services, optimal prices (discounts and presents), and friendly and "humane" relationships.

Another factor that helps develop and promote ethnic entrepreneurship in Karakol is communication skills, namely fluency in Kyrgyz, Russian and other languages when one talks to clients. Effective

communication in multiple languages attracts clients and raises the purchasing power of the city residents, leading to an increase in revenues and the moral satisfaction entrepreneurs achieve from the work they do.

VI. THE IMPACT OF ETHNICITY ON LAUNCHING AND RUNNING A BUSINESS

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, every ethnic group in Karakol faced difficulties during the transition period; and therefore, all the respondents agreed that their ethnicity did not influence in any way the process of opening their own business. However, Sulayman, an ethnic Dungan and Davran, an ethnic Uzbek, voiced different perspectives.

Sulayman Asanaliev: I look Kyrgyz and my last name is Asanaliev; I speak Kyrgyz 90% of my time. That is why I did not face any difficulties in my career of a doctor. You know, if I did not speak Kyrgyz, and my last name was distinctively Dungan, there would have been problems.³²

Interviewer: Has your nationality had an impact on when you opened your business?

Davran Hayrulaev: No. In principle, it can, but if you are in good terms with everyone and if you do not have issues with other ethnic groups, it is ok. But there are some people who call us *sart* saying that I moved here from elsewhere, even though my great-grandfather was born here in 1880s when there were no Kyrgyz here. I respond saying you moved here recently, while we have been living here for over 150 years. Rarely do these cases occur, but when they do, it's primarily with clients. Officials working for the government know that they can be punished for such behaviour.³³

Among the Kyrgyz, the word *sart* is widely used to refer to ethnic Uzbeks. Looking at history sources, according to anthropologists, *sart* is not an ethnonym or the name of Tajik, Uzbek or other peoples, but a socio-economic status or entrepreneurial strata of people that lived in Central Asia. The term *sart* by modern standards is tantamount to “entrepreneur” or “business people.” In different sources there are references to many interpretations of the term *sart*, the most frequent meaning being the sedentary Muslim population of Turkestan. Among the term’s other attributes is a lack or disappearance of tribal features, the use of a particular language and the generalization of *sarts* as a class.

A sedentary way of living is not the single-valued criteria for being identified as a *sart*. *Sarts* could lead nomadic lives separately in groups or join other nomadic groups. For example, C. Valihanov notes that: “Up to or over a hundred yurt-strong *sarts* roamed here, when I was traveling. As they themselves tell, they have roamed here for over 70 years... they must have their own horses and camels to send off caravans—they had to graze them and rented some land from Kyrgyz... within a short period of time, their numbers rose to up to 150 nomad tents.”³⁴ In the pre-Revolution Russian Empire, *sarts* were singled out as an ethnic group and, during censuses, were registered separately along with other ethnic groups in Central Asia, including Uzbeks. As of now, they have fully assimilated with Uzbeks. Despite that, there are equal opportunities in launching entrepreneurial project for all ethnic groups living in Karakol; and there are certain facts involving locals of Kyrgyz ethnicity who can express their negative emotions towards ethnic minorities engaged in business. For example, Tahmina Kasymova, an ethnic Uzbek, stated:

When I worked for a cake-shop, I did not face such issues. I experienced such talks when I worked at a cafe. The cafe personnel were all Kyrgyz, and when clients saw me, they would ask my husband: ‘Do *sarts* work here?’ It happened frequently. I also had

a mini-market here, and I had a renter called Guljan Ogonbasheva who would often get into arguments with other Kyrgyz and they would regularly ask me to come. One day, I decided to ask the more aggressive renter to vacate the stall. When I asked her to do so, a conflict erupted. She began to shout, ‘Why do *sarts* own all the lands? If necessary I can have you evicted from Karakol in 24 hours.’ By sheer coincidence, a former officer of the security service, named Kubanych, was passing by and I asked her to be a witness so I could file a complaint to the security service that the woman was inciting ethnic hatred. With a court decision I managed to vacate the place. It is a rare case, but it happens. I had two such cases during this whole time.³⁵

Nurlan Atagulov, a businessman, also commented on ethnic entrepreneurship:

I have never been a nationalist and I am not going to become one. I finished a Russian-language school, and I can say I have a Russian upbringing and Russian mentality. I have never divided people based on their ethnic background or other characteristics. If a person is good, it means he is good. If he is stupid, then he is stupid.

In Karakol, there is a perception that it is either Uzbeks or Uighurs who are engaged in catering services, but it was the case in the 1990s, when we did not have anything else. Many Kyrgyz worked primarily in government positions or were engaged in farming, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union, everyone was left on their own and people had to adjust their skills to engage in business. Currently, there are no ethnically divided sectors of employment, when one ethnic group occupies a particular sphere like catering. There are very successful Uighur and Uzbek restaurants, as well as Kyrgyz restaurants. People themselves decide where to go. It is difficult to claim that only Russians work in engineering or IT sector, since now ethnic groups are represented at various businesses. If, to take the

IT sector, only Russians run stores such as Asia Info and Mega Plus, but now we have a new computer salon, Pulsar, where Uzbeks work or which was opened by Uighur young people. Let's imagine a new computer salon was opened, Techno Mir (Tech World), which provide IT maintenance services and sell computers. There would Uighurs, Kyrgyz and others working. Of course, it is partly a result of the departure of Russians from the area; when a master leaves he is replaced by a new person. It requires a deeper analysis, but, in general, business is mixing people...

A level of ethnic intolerance exists everywhere, even in the United States. Their white people in any event view non-whites as different. They do not display it that the state is promoting behavioural changes so people do not divide among themselves. Smart people understand ethnic frictions can lead to conflicts. That is what happened in Osh in 1990 and 2010. People are all the same. There are two types of people: smart and stupid. Smart people do not divide people, but the stupid begin drawing lines along ethnicities and, in this situation, the government should control all these issues and teach people to behave accordingly. I think, only stupid people raise the issue that Kyrgyzstan is only for Kyrgyz. People lived here from historic times. Why didn't such questions emerge during the Soviet Union? Everyone was equal and the state would provide us with jobs regardless of ethnicity. The Soviet Union collapsed and some ethnic groups were better prepared to trade and earn money.³⁶

The collapse of the Soviet Union actualized questions related to access to private property, income, power and social recognition across all ethnic groups in Karakol. In the new market economy environment, the first wave of privatization fell on properties that were markets, shops, canteens, restaurants, buffets and others, where primarily Uzbeks, Tatars, Uighurs and Dungans worked. Consequently, these relatively small facilities were privatized by these ethnic groups,

who began their entrepreneurial activities by using their own resources or taking out loans. Thanks to their tireless efforts, patience and responsibility, they were able to achieve maximum success in business. Thus, the ethnic groups' entrepreneurial productivity is viewed, or imagined, by the local populations as due to stereotypical qualities, such as the ability to trade and earn money, and practicing entrepreneurship not only in Karakol (and Kyrgyzstan), but also in neighboring and other countries. However, it should be noted that the ethnic groups' hard work in business, as an alternative to the state sector, is due to economic reasons, i.e., supporting their and their families' existence or increasing demand for material and emotional satisfaction amid the general increase in quality of life for Karakol's population.

Many respondents have nostalgic feelings toward the Soviet Union, which, in their view, addressed all the questions related to the ethnic differences in one way or another.

Elmira Hudayberdieva, an ethnic Tatar:

During the Soviet Union, people were kinder and led kinder lives than now. They were more educated and had more responsibility, were kinder and more emphatic, but now people became angrier. Then there was order, and children were well behaved... We had a great life back then. Now, we have money, but there is no joy in our spirit because you do not know what will happen tomorrow. Our salaries were small, but we had a great life as we never felt short of anything, and we were less tense and would not lose sleep. We were confident about our tomorrow. We also knew that children would get a proper education and will work.³⁷

Up until now, some Karakol City residents, especially those who lived, studied and worked during the Soviet era, have had nostalgic and warm feelings about the Soviet system. This includes 68-year-old Elmira. This nostalgia is connected above all with the availability of

state-ensured job places, fixed wages, free education, healthcare and social benefits. Therefore, that the respondents (especially, older interviewees) compare the two social systems—recent socialism with its “human face” and capitalism with its harsh rules that do not guarantee jobs or income—lead to such narratives about the Soviet past.

However, Yunus Baglaev, an ethnic Dungan, holds an opposing view on how the ethnic issue was addressed during the Soviet era and how it should be dealt with now:

About 20 to 30 years ago, many Dungans would leave government works to do farming, for example, plant onions. Why? Because I saw Kyrgyz youth kept working for scientific research institutes or other places and receive 120 rubles as salary, while their Dungan peer, who had bad grades at school, by the time of graduation, would own a car because he was growing onions and getting rich. Dungans could not be easily promoted compared to Kyrgyz, who enjoyed more opportunities, and some Dungans kept working for 120 rubles per month and see some salary increase by 30 or 50 rubles. This would make him leave that job. Now it is even more so... Yes, there was no career perspective.

If you remember, we had Issyk-Kul governor D. Saadanbekov, who before used to work at the Diplomatic Academy in Bishkek, where his research revealed that the Kyrgyz represent 73% of the total population, but their representation in the government positions and law enforcement amount to 92% and 95% respectively, which is a big difference. He recommended that this difference is addressed. If you remember, when the revolution took place in 2000 and if the military and police was not mono-ethnic, maybe such tragedies would not have happened. But since the police is mono-ethnic, of course they picked a side. They became not a uniting factor, but a dividing one. This was one of the flaws. There were many discussions about

introducing some quotas. During the Soviet time, the party would regulate quotas. Then the first secretary would be a Kyrgyz, the second secretary would be a Russian and the third would be a woman.

It is now required to have quotas in the party lists, but these requirements are easily bypassed through negotiations. If a woman MP gives up her mandate, a woman candidate should replace her, although between women MPs there are two male MPs in the party list order. It should be reinforced legally. If a candidate became an MP through a minority quota in the party list, a minority candidate should replace that MP. Also, the system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs should have more representatives of minority groups. However, it must be admitted that the system is built in a way that an outsider would not be able to integrate.³⁸

Yunus’ experience as a representative of a small Dungan ethnic group demonstrates that the decisions addressing ethnicity during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods were of a formal and declarative nature. Despite the multicultural composition of Kyrgyzstan’s population, the government has not paid the necessary attention to matters of diversity. The situation around inter-ethnic relations appeared to be calm. Excessive attention to the ethnic issue was thought to have a potential to exacerbate controversies and lead to conflicts. The official Soviet position had been an “ethnic blindness”—a reluctance to recognize ethno-cultural diversity and issues that built up over years. It led to the deficit of democracy, inequality among different groups, loss of the government’s legitimacy, inadequate decisions and triggered tensions, which appeared in different forms, including open confrontations. All the above-described processes took place in Kyrgyzstan, which led to today’s recognition of the importance of ethnic diversity and the necessity of its inclusion in the state governance system.

The state plays a leading role in managing diversity. It is not only a guarantor of social, political and

economic stability, but also sets standards as an exemplary employer. After the collapse of the Soviet system, minorities did not have any difficulties in opening and running a business. However, it must be admitted that ethnic affiliation was an obstacle to career growth, including access to power, ownership, prestige, and certain social status in government organizations and agencies. After Kyrgyzstan gained independence, the titular ethnic group, Kyrgyz, had disproportionate representation in government institutions, and only in rare cases did ethnic minorities have representation. Fluency in the Kyrgyz language, similarities in names and last names with that of the titular nation, coupled with a higher education status, helped many minorities overcome barriers, and have better access to professional and non-governmental organizational (NGO) careers. Such a situation forced minorities to seek employment in business in order to re-establish the social and economic status lost during the government re-structuring in the post-Soviet period.

In Kyrgyzstan, as in most other post-Soviet states, the government still remains the biggest employer. It sets the rules and standards of behaviour in the sphere of inter-ethnic relations. Government policies and norms related to diversity have a serious impact on society. Thus, for the state, the question of competency is a key factor in the sphere of diversity. This competency should be practiced by every agency and every official, no matter the level. Effective and conscientious governance, and transparent democracy on the basis of participation and social partnership, constitute the basis of diversity management. At its centre, diversity management policy requires legal guarantees for integration, non-discrimination, and the social and political inclusion of all ethnic groups.

VII. PROVISION OF GOODS AND SERVICES BY ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURS

In Karakol, there are no ethnic groups that provide goods and services only to representatives of the same ethnic groups. Every respondent said they provide goods and services to the city's entire population and to tourists of all types. They never pay attention to ethnic backgrounds. Their primary goal is to sell quality goods or services that meet the population's demands.

Munara Asanova, an ethnic Kyrgyz, stated:

I do not have such an attitude. I view everyone as equals. I do not have privileged clients, and I view all as equals. Of course, some clients might have such biases. For example, Russians visit Russians' saloons, and Kalmyks go to Kalmyks'. It might be their feeling of patriotism. For example, if I am in the market, I try to buy from Kyrgyz. I do it, but I do not know why. Maybe I want to support them. But it is not because I do not like Uighurs or Dungans. It is just I want to support one of ours, and I think it is normal that I prefer to buy from them. It is not that I do not like Dungans or anything.³⁹

In market economies, one of the main motives of entrepreneurship is to earn money. Consequently, the entrepreneur's main task is to attract a maximum number of clients who, regardless of their sex, race, ethnicity, residence, faith or other affiliations, vote for this or that good by buying that good. This is based on purely practical interest. However, ethnic minorities wanting to support entrepreneurs of their own ethnicity by buying their goods or produce are driven by ethnic solidarity and social networks within that particular ethnic community.

VIII. INTERACTION BETWEEN BUSINESS AND STATE

State regulation of entrepreneurship, and the support and perspectives for development, is important not only for business people, but also for society in general. The respondents expressed their views on the government's role in regulating business.

Alisher Shamsiev, an ethnic Tatar, said:

In my view, there must be a comprehensive country development program, which takes into account our unique nature, the presence of such resources such as the lake and mountains. Different from what they are trying to do randomly by confining some issues, re-building roads and infrastructure. There is also a poor information campaign. The government is not working with traders and entrepreneurs engaged in the tourism sector. There are few seminars, conferences held discussing best practices and requirements in the world in the service sector. People are left on their own. Such a situation will not boost growth. If our tourism sector including hotels and catering is poor, we will not compete in a larger market.

Interviewer: What would you do for the city and Kyrgyzstan in general, if you were in the government?

Alisher Shamsiev: It is a very interesting question. There must be a specialized agency that would work with priority sectors in the economy, say tourism. These sectors should get a serious attention with serious objectives set to be accomplished within short period of time. We understand that our nature is beautiful, but our infrastructure is not developed, which require big programs. We need to get rid of agencies that have a complex of issues, and create agencies that would deal with roads first, then launch information campaign on tourism, and then work to

address the lack of knowledge on how to run tourism and other businesses.

Clearly, there must be more flights to Issyk-Kul. We wish that our Karakol airport is reconstructed and be operational again to allow airliners to come and bring tourists. We need a group of young people with modern education and full energy and will and new perspectives, unlike those managers who are tired now and have conservative thinking.⁴⁰

In my view, Alisher's suggestions on tourism development in Karakol are very valuable and justified. These measures could be added to the city development strategy, which would cover such sectors as education, culture, economy, including industrial and social infrastructure, communication (transport and air) not only among the provinces, but also with local and international destinations. This requires regular involvement of highly qualified and creative young people in running the city who would work for the benefit of people.

It must be noted that all the entrepreneurs expressed distrust of the state, which is not providing any real support for small and medium businesses in Karakol. The state, particularly the tax service, fire security, architecture and other agencies pose obstacles to the work of business people by conducting numerous checks, unjustified claims and interference in their activities. This is what the business- owner interviewees shared in this regard.

Alisher Shamsiev, an ethnic Tatar:

I do not feel and am not aware of any support from the state. I cannot even imagine how their support would look like. Instead, they create obstacles. A serious problem emerges when a businessman with his or her development plan goes to, for example, city architecture service, which is slow and has little interest in the visitors' issues. The municipality property management department is also ineffective.

Bureaucratic difficulties might force people ask themselves whether it is worth living in such a country. Or is it better to move somewhere else? I think the state does not value its people and human potential. It is sad to see how qualified teachers, educators, engineers are left jobless in the country. Time will pass, and who is going to stay here? Only those who cannot leave or those who have narrow worldview. There is a difficult situation in the agriculture sector. People use any fertilizers without proper checks to grow vegetables and fruits. This is how we get produce with pesticides and herbicides which impacts our health. And when our health deteriorates, we go to a local hospital, where we understand the scale of issues present in our healthcare system. There are issues with inaccurate diagnosis and we understand there are even more problems. We get treatment for diseases we do not have. And these all scare me a lot.⁴¹

Tahmina Kasymova, an ethnic Uzbek:

If we take sanitary-epidemiological, tax, fire security inspections as the state, then they did not help, but posed difficulties. They come and search for a pretext to fine us, both officially and unofficially. We had to bribe them. But now entrepreneurs became knowledgeable of their rights and have higher legal literacy. I also have proper experience now and do not pay official fines at all as my documents are all in order. I maintain this principle even when the financial police comes.

I took loans with a minimal interest rate—7%—from a private company. The state does not have such loans. In the West, prior to issuing a loan, loan takers are taught proper ways of developing a business project, assess all possible pros and cons, then draft an activity budget on paper. All the foreign companies look at written business project to see how the business idea will be materialized. From my experience, I can tell that local companies would write up 3–5 page contract with small fonts

and spend too long a time to consider it. For them, the most important task is to have a person sign documents and issue the loan, while giving no consideration as to whether the loan taker would be able to pay back the money.

I started my business by taking a bank loan. Previously our banks would ask us to fill out a form to get our estimations. Now, bank staff themselves fill out the form using figures that we provide to calculate estimations. European banks assess all the risks associated with the implementation of the project idea. A program must be introduced to allow a more thorough assessment of project ideas before issuing business loans. Of course, there are experienced businessmen who know how to properly build a business project, but there are also those who are new and how have developed their ideas in their heads. It is not the way forward. That is why people fail to return the loan. If there were a program that would educate people and oversee the business, it would have led to prosperity in the country.

Interviewer: And what measures would you suggest that the government take to support business?

Tahmina Kasymova: Why is China developing in such a pace? Because manufacturers are exempt from taxes and have chances to develop. Here, new entrepreneurs who do not know their rights are stifled. Rather than supporting them, everyone run after them to reap them off.⁴²

Nurlan Atagulov, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

The support for business is not in a scale it could have been. There is virtually no support. On the other hand, the state should not interfere in business, but should set up conditions for the development of our business. First, it is security; secondly, proper infrastructure, including electricity, roads and clean water. Thirdly, Kyrgyzstan should be presented internationally as a single tourist platform. Business

will naturally develop itself and sideline those who are unable to survive. Those who are stronger survive in business. This would boost the tourist sector and there would be more positive feedback from tourists. It is especially important when information is searched online by potential tourists.

Ten-to-fifteen years ago, tourists would complain that Kyrgyzstan is a beautiful country, but does not have proper conditions such as places to stay and eat, something that tourists found inconvenient. The state should take care of the cleanness of the Issyk-Kul shores, where it is dirty and which leave unpleasant impressions. The state should work with people to raise their awareness of things that should not be done. For example, people have picnics on mountains, where they cook meat and leave after themselves, resulting in piles of waste, which no one wants to remove. They must be gathered and disposed in a garbage containers. It is a sign of lack of culture to clean after themselves. This is something that must be taught. Ninety-five percent of foreigners do not litter, except for very rare cases.

Interviewer: What are the perspectives of business development in Karakol and the Kyrgyz Republic?

Nurlan Atagulov: There are huge perspectives for business development in Karakol and Kyrgyzstan. We have an enormous potential in terms of natural resources, tourism and other sectors of business. Extraction of natural resources must be developed slowly.⁴³

Sulayman Asanaliev, an ethnic Dungan:

I love Karakol... Karakol is a hospitable city, a rich city, where one can earn money. I see how construction works are ongoing and people are further building upon their achievements. Many specialists stay in capital Bishkek after graduation from universities. I recommend doctors to work in the regions, even in Karakol, where they can get

more experience. The city is rich, compact, small, where everyone knows one another, respect. It provides an opportunity to develop.⁴⁴

Karakol city is a unique place to develop entrepreneurial ideas and other civic activities due to its social and cultural, climatic and geographic conditions. Of course, its residents, with their diverse ethnic background, unique traditions, customs and culture, give the city a certain identity. Indeed, everyone knows each other in the city, and the social fabric has been soaked with diverse networks of neighbours, professionals, relatives and friends, etc. Therefore, in fact, Karakol city represents a comfortable and friendly community. And the development of business brings benefits not only to its owners, but also to all residents as it satisfies their needs in various goods and services.

Thus, not only should the central government accept the responsibility to support entrepreneurship, but regional and local governments as well. Issues impeding entrepreneurial development across ethnic groups and comprehensive support must be among the priority concerns in the state policy, as well as at the regional level. The state should carry out economic regulation of the business sector through privatization policies, and the creation of a favourable investment and entrepreneurial climate that ensures state support for entrepreneurship.

The creation of a favourable business climate (covering credit and monetary, budget and tax, customs policies, as well as scale, forms, and methods of state's economic regulation) is defined primarily by moral and ethical values, norms and traditions in this sphere. These fundamental values and traditions must have a considerable impact on the philosophy and principles of the state regulation of the business sector and the shaping of the state's applicable economic policies.

IX. OVERCOMING STEREOTYPES AND PROMOTING TOLERANCE OF ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The perception of ethnic entrepreneurship across Karakol's population is very different, ranging from friendly (in the form of jokes), positively predisposed (enriching one another with our differences or unity in diversity) to conservative and sceptical views, especially among youth born in the post-Soviet environment where diversity management has been neglected. Yunus Baglaev, an ethnic Dungan, shared his observations:

Interviewer: Have you heard any stereotypes in relation to your ethnic group?

Yunus Baglaev: Often in joke forms saying why Dungans sell sugar when all Dungans sell culinary plants. And we would respond that there are enough Dungans selling vegetables. There is a deeply rooted stereotype that Dungans must sell culinary plants. Even in Dungan communities, Dungans themselves say that they got lazy that their cucumbers are much worse than that grown by Kyrgyz. Economic stimulus is much stronger than any persuasion... I, like other Dungans of Karakol, was a farmer, used to grow garlic, potato, culinary plants. But now, agriculture does not bring benefits nor breeding livestock.⁴⁵

The respondents suggested a variety of factors that promote tolerance for ethnic entrepreneurship. Tahmina Kasymova, an ethnic Uzbek:

I like Tatars' *Sabantuy* [an ancient summer festival celebrated by Tatars as a national holiday], where

everyone is invited, not only Tatars. Why not have Kyrgyz, Uighurs, Russians and others who live here organize such events? This is a uniting factor. During the Soviet time, there was a holiday where we would represent 15 member states, wearing national costumes, preparing national meals, displayed customs and traditions. Every ethnic group makes their own contribution. For example, Dungans are good at agriculture. Thanks to them we have vegetables.⁴⁶

In this way, the joint organization of holidays, festivals, competitions, and other public events that strengthen consolidation of unity among the city residents leads to increased mutual understanding and respect in the multicultural society.

Vasiliy Rybko, an ethnic Ukrainian:

We are so different from one another and we all can complement each other. And we do not have to go anywhere. This is our homeland. We are all Kyrgyz, every one of us, there is no difference. We are all teachers for one another, all of my neighbours are different: Dungans, Uzbeks. For example, we eat with chopsticks when we go to a Dungan wedding, we eat *boorsok* [an ancient Kyrgyz dish, consisting of pieces of rolled dough deep fried in oil] when we go to that of a Kyrgyz. Everyone is different. For example, they bring something when Kurban Ait comes, and we bring them something for Easter. This is what unites us. We are all different. I am trying to spread this message across that this is great. We all can share a lot with each other, and there is no difference whether you graze your sheep up on mountains or here... The understanding that we are so rich in terms of diversity would unite us and we would periodically remind one another about this. One must live by heart. This is the main aspect...

We will be united not by physical food, but spiritual. During the Soviet times, there was a saying that a healthy body has a healthy spirit, whereas now

people say that a healthy body lives in a healthy spirit. The Internet has opened the borders. Now guys from the United States call just to chat and get to know us. This allows us to practice languages and learn new things without going abroad. If our worldviews expand, there will be fewer things to argue about. A lonely person is weaker and poorer. We have nothing to divide; we have enough land. It does not matter how much land you have, but what you do with that land. Money should not be kept idly, it should be put into action. I grow richer, when you do something...

All had to go into business because they had to... You cannot do much alone. You can do something if you hire staff or the like-minded. You will keep a certain part of the revenue, but if your staff is hungry, the work will see no progress. They must be paid well. We try to make sure people are well fed. This makes us disciplined. We must take care of them and they will take care of you. The same applies to the state structure. We are the state. Therefore, all the responsibility lies on our shoulders. The small state develops into bigger one.⁴⁷

Nurlan Atagulov, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

One must always invest into education and education of their children with the aim to get a result. Well-educated people have a potential to expand their business as they learn from experience of other countries how to simplify and increase revenues... People from their early years should learn to live with each other by participating at various events, including public events, sports and planting trees. It would be more effective if it had an element of competition, with teams consisting of mixed ethnic groups and working towards a common goal. In such competitions no one would care about ethnic background. The new generation, which grew up after the collapse of the Soviet Union, are more nationalist because the state neglected this question. During the Soviet Union, the Russian language

served to unite all the ethnic groups that lived in Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁸

The sociological research confirmed that certain stereotypes exist among the ethnic groups living in Karakol, expressed not openly, but in forms of jokes and friendly comments. The research revealed that the respondents' opinion on this matter differs. One group of respondents thought that there were no other forms of interaction, except for the competition-based. The other group of respondents noted that there was an element of jealousy toward economically active minorities who benefited from privatization in the 1990s, when smaller businesses had quickly gained business value helping the minorities reach sustainability and economic independence.

The ethnic minorities, as well as Kyrgyz themselves as the titular nation, react to stereotypes differently. The receptivity to such stereotypes depends on the level of education, culture, ethics and socialization of the ethnic groups. Therefore, actual access of ethnic minorities (along with Kyrgyz people) to owning resources, power, revenues, social status and prestige would lead to inter-ethnic accord and tolerance among the groups. For example, when hiring for a job or suggesting potential candidates for managerial positions, education and professional qualities, rather than the ethnic background, of the candidates should be highlighted.

X. GENDER AND ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As much research shows, in the genesis of entrepreneurship, the following series of social factors play a considerable role: sex, age, education, pre-entrepreneurial career, family and the social network system. Several approaches—demographic, sociological, historical—can be highlighted in the

scientific literature to define the notion of “women-entrepreneurs.” In its demographic aspect, women-entrepreneurs are the special social group, aged between 25 and 50, which has a social status of entrepreneurs, a set of values, worldviews, interests, demands, and social and psychological characteristics influenced by the new transition or the ongoing transitions in the society.

Women-entrepreneurs are an objectively developing socio-professional group united by common circumstances that push for the formation and development of certain socio-psychological and spiritual values and pattern of life. The special character of this socio-professional group is the equal status of the entrepreneur, i.e., the presence of certain organizational and legal forms of activity (individual entrepreneur, a company with limited liability, closed joint-stock company and others).

From a historical perspective, in the post-Soviet space, including Kyrgyzstan, female entrepreneurs have become active since 1993 and 1994 as a separate social group with its own motives, needs and behavioural strategy for running businesses in a new environment set by the market economy. Female entrepreneurs with diverse ethnic backgrounds have the following features:

- 1) aged between 30 and 70;
- 2) Individual work experience;
- 3) Presence of a clear professional character and responsibility for promoting her own business;
- 4) Sector-related clear specificity: women-entrepreneurs primarily focus on sectors traditionally occupied by women, i.e., trade, service sector, education, tourism, etc.

Thus, we can conclude that the establishment and development of market relations changed

their priorities in life. The women view their entrepreneurship as a new way of adjusting to new circumstances, which allowed them to launch their own business and thereby solve, by themselves, many issues related to employment. Despite the difficulties, they were able to acquire confidence in themselves and their ability to master a new role—entrepreneur.

Currently, the stereotypical roles of men and women in the Kyrgyz society remain unchanged: men are the breadwinners, and women are the guardians of the hearth. However, it must be noted that these notions are changing, but are yet to be fully realized by our society.

Between 2003 and 2014, I conducted sociological researches among female entrepreneurs in Issyk-Kul Oblast. This research confirmed the thesis about the stereotypical roles between males and females. The following are some of the interviewees’ perspectives on the issue.

Ilamshaeva Zulfiya, ethnic Uzbek:

Interviewer: As you know, in Asian countries women have secondary roles. If she moves to the first role, it is not always welcomed. Have you felt pressure from males working for the government or other institutions, who stressed your secondary role and that you are a woman, even though you are a business person?

Ilamshaeva Zulfiya: Yes, of course. It happens not only in our society, but also in our family. My husband tells me: “At work you are a manager, but at home you are a wife.” This explains everything. At home my husband is higher in status. It does not matter if you are an entrepreneur or somebody else. In our society you have to reckon with it, and men will never yield to the idea that women are first. Even if I earn more, it will not play a role. We will not have equal status.⁴⁹

Gulipa Zhuzumalieva, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

Interviewer: Has your family supported you in your entrepreneurial endeavour? You clearly work a lot and spend less time with your family and children.

Gulipa Zhuzumalieva: Yes, of course. Without my family's support, I would have never become an entrepreneur. My family supports in all respects, especially morally. I support my family financially, whereas the rest I get from my husband, children and grandchildren. I have four children: one son and three daughters.

Interviewer: You said you dedicate yourself to business fully. Do you do house chores at home?

Gulipa Zhuzumalieva: Of course. I also do house chores. At home, I am a mother for children and an obedient wife for my husband. If I have time, I cook and do chores. In general, my family helps me.⁵⁰

The influence of traditional society on families and children's upbringing is noticeable. In the public's perception of the majority of Central Asian people, women are different from men by nature, duty, in opportunities and ability. In general, a woman's abilities are valued much lower than a man's. One way to possibly overcome this is to increase the social and political, economic and spiritual awareness of various social groups in the society, who will then have a wider worldview and greater consciousness in new circumstances.

Vasiliy Rybko, an ethnic Ukrainian:

Interviewer: You are a male entrepreneur. Do you think it is easier for men to run a business than for women?

Vasiliy Rybko: I think there is no substantial difference. Now at this particular time I am responsible for general management. But it is my

wife who carries out the actual management. I did not want to spend time on that, but my wife said she likes it. I am now more involved in gardening. You will not find me here in summer. There is not much harvest this year. I come here only in winter. I had free time and shifted to another activity. Here, I am more involved in representational and legal issues. I also have legal education, therefore I lead on this. She runs the business. The gender does not play a role in management; the sex does have any significance. The only issue might be women are treated differently by males, for example, in the fiscal services. But this from the realm of gender interactions. There is no difference for entrepreneurs; the question is how women will present themselves. I respectfully view women who are busy. She could be a good mother as well as a good entrepreneur. The main thing is to find that balance because nature expects them to give birth and raise children.

If there is no such a balance, there will not be order at home, with husband left somewhere and children left with no care. It might be more challenging for women, and equally interesting. Man is the head of the family and breadwinner, and if woman takes up that role, man turns into a doormat. It causes uncomfortable feelings and he begins to abuse alcoholic drinks, etc. But when there is a balance, everything is alright. The main thing is to maintain the sense of measure.⁵¹

A majority of the surveyed women are managers of private companies or firms. And it begs the question: how are women managing that role?

Imankojoeva Shaiy, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

Interviewer: How can you characterize your work at your private company?

Imankojoeva Shaiy: Our work is interesting and difficult. It is difficult when you cannot find resources, but you eventually find them and carry on.

Our work progresses thanks to our staff's strength or joint efforts through *ashar* [a form of voluntary community labour]. We try to get out of this situation by our own means.”

Interviewer: Did you have a talent in running business?

Imankojoeva Shaiy: I did not have talent for entrepreneurship. While I had a great experience of working with people, i.e., organization talent, this ability was with me since my school years. I do not want to boast, but thanks to my organizational skills, I had been nominated to senior party positions and managed people. If I had not shown my skills, no one would have noticed me. I learnt a lot about working with people when I was with Komsomol [a Soviet youth organization].

Here, the specifics of the work are linked to working with customers and is completely different. We say, ‘the clients are very capricious people,’ but nevertheless we try to find a common language with them and work. Sometimes some clients come agitated, argue and talk aggressively. And despite this, we must greet them as guests.

Interviewer: Which personal qualities are needed to engage in entrepreneurial activity?

Imankojoeva Shaiy: Honesty, resourcefulness, punctuality. Personal responsibility, ability to persuade, build contacts and personal links. We demand and ask that our staff view the clients at our hotel as our guests. And guests must be greeted as if to your house. Not as unwanted. Every guest must feel welcome. That is why we must try to provide good service to keep him from leaving for another hotel. We try to do the best of our abilities and in our hands.⁵²

Gulipa Zhuzumalieva, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

Interviewer: Can you call yourself a person with entrepreneurial spirit?

Gulipa Zhuzumalieva: As you know, in order to become an entrepreneur, it is important to have a special talent, like an artist, actor, teacher, doctor, etc. Not everyone can become an entrepreneur. Your heart must be set on doing business. I am not good at describing my personal qualities, but my perseverance, persistence made me an entrepreneur.

Interviewer: Do you need any other personal qualities to become an entrepreneur?

Gulipa Zhuzumalieva: In order to become one, one must be up-to-date with changes. New and good word innovation has emerged. Innovation is a search for new methods, technologies, developments and introductions. For our industry it means getting new technologies from more developed countries. One must be up-to-date with all developments in the sphere of production of similar products in developed countries. Keep up with requirements in the world, search for new and constantly think about developing yourself and be demanding toward yourself. If one sleeps calmly, he or she will never become an entrepreneur.

Interviewer: Have you been able to realize your potential in entrepreneurship? Or you have achieved your goals during the Soviet Union similarly?

Gulipa Zhuzumalieva: No, during the Soviet Union we were part of a planned economy and I could not realize my potential, as there were completely different requirements. We lived under a full control of the higher Soviet dictatorial organs. We were told the plan, i.e., how much to process and within what period, and then our products were distributed according to the plan. We had never bothered about the sale of our products. Our factory was busy

during the Soviet Union only with processing our own produce. Entrepreneurs work in a completely different way. One must organize everything from scratch, including organizational, production, sale and financial aspects. Entrepreneur counts everything, foresee their next steps and sometimes go for a risk.

Interviewer: Has your life style changed, when you have become an entrepreneur?

Gulipa Zhuzumalieva: Yes. I have become more content in moral and material respects. We count every kopek, expenses, revenues and income. There are three criteria for a successful work, particularly in our sphere of diary produce: raw products, processing and sale.

Interviewer: How many hours a day do you work?

Gulipa Zhuzumalieva: As you know, business requires that you constantly move forward, search for something new, aspire to achieve your goals and tasks. I currently work 15 hours a day or more. If I have not completed some tasks and ideas at work, I continue them at home. I work all the time, reflect, think about all aspects of our business, put tasks before myself, my team, specialists, who work at our factory.⁵³

It can be said with certainty that a majority of the female respondents are satisfied with their position and status, and confidently run their business, despite challenges and risks stemming from the crisis in Kyrgyzstan caused by internal and external factors. Russian sociologist A.E. Chirikova writes: “When it comes to the question of peculiarities of male and female leadership, I tend to share the position that there are not principal differences in a male and a female management, although there are some peculiarities due to the differences in the psychological structures of males and females.”⁵⁴

Jekshebaeva Biubiugul, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

Interviewer: How would you characterize your work in private business?

Jekshebaeva Biubiugul: The work is interesting and heavy. It depends. We try to meet all the needs of our clients, supply necessary medicine that our clients ask [for]. We sign agreements with firms on supply of medicine, and I myself often travel to Bishkek to take the goods. I have built sustainable, working relations with the supply firms... There are firms that immediately come to my pharmacy when they are in the city. Prices of our medicine are much lower than in other pharmacies because I buy the medicine with cash and the revenue margin is small. That is why I have regular clients, which thank us for the affordable prices and good service. I try to get whatever drug our client asks, explain [it to them] and help. I gain both moral and material satisfaction from my work.⁵⁵

Gulipa Zhuzumalieva, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

Interviewer: Do you like the market system, the system of capitalism?

Gulipa Zhuzumalieva: I really like this system. I am a manager for myself. I am independent and try to work for myself and my children. I would like to secure a decent future for my children. And let other people know that you opened your own business and are working well. It means respect, admiration and recognition of the society. I do not wish a return to the Soviet system because there was no such freedom, independence and satisfaction with your material standing. In the planned economy, it was all pre-planned and planned on the top, and we worked to fulfill the orders. But now I do not want it to return because this system is much better for one who works.⁵⁶

Derevyanko Galina, an ethnic Russian:

Interviewer: What is it like to be a businesswoman?

Derevyanko Galina: She wants to run business like she runs her household. It means a better management of household to make it cozier with all parts of the house in place so that there is money and prosperity. And let your guests see it. In business, genuine women instincts prevail. If guests see that there is no male support and that she has to survive, her instincts are triggered.⁵⁷

Female entrepreneurship is generally like effective management of the household. Women show their genuine female characters – tactfulness, intellectuality, and flexibility when solving business issues. As a matter of fact, women involved in business are more responsible and reliable as partners, and try to adjust to a changing environment and rules of competitive market. The sociological research, conducted on the basis of oral histories of the female entrepreneurs in Karakol city and Issyk-Kul Oblast confirms Russian sociological data and shows that female management is based on a combined strategy and includes a big set of “techniques” and “methods” used in running a venture. There is, to a large extent, a leadership style intrinsic to women, which is based on such personal qualities as the ability to work in a conflict situation with risks, permanent readiness to face changes, the ability to champion innovation, and to counter pressure and defend her position.

Jamankulova Shaigul, an ethnic Kyrgyz:

Interviewer: When a business person opens his/her venture, they simultaneously become manager, economist, accountant, and other roles and responsibilities. Did you have a similar practice?

Jamankulova Shaigul: Yes, I experienced the same practice. We ourselves researched the market demand for the good we produced. As a technologist,

I myself subject our good to certain scrutiny. If it turns out to be good, we produce it in greater numbers for consumers. For example, every product has its own calculation that takes into account the list of products used for making the pie, so the products are delicious and have a market demand.

Interviewer: So you test yourself, and as a technologist bake it, and then take up roles of salesperson, economist, accountant, thereby combining various types of activities?

Jamankulova Shaigul: There is a demand for our products. We check the level of demand, and sell what people need. We take into account the location, standards of living and people’s needs. And depending on these, we supply our products to kiosks and sell. If customers are better off in a district where my kiosk is located, their needs are different in terms of goods. In places where people are worse off, their demand for cheaper products is higher. And we take it into account.⁵⁸

Shirobkova Vera Grigorievna, an ethnic Ukrainian:

Interviewer: After the collapse of the Soviet Union, all factories, industrial plants, and collective farms experienced difficulties. Many did not even understand which system we were heading to. Which qualities of yours did you have to rely on to preserve your factory, resume its activities in a new environment? I guess everyone had difficulties.”

Shirobkova Vera: Speaking of the difficulties, first of all, we should have started this when we were younger. Second of all, I am actually very happy that I had a good teacher, Z.A. Kulumbayeva, who guided me not only in my professional career, but also in life. She was a director for 20 years. She grew up in a very highly cultured family. She handed over a lot to me. The most important is patience, respect and perseverance. All in all, our team has long been established.

Interviewer: Have you as a woman experienced pressure from officials? As a woman exclusively?

Shirobkova Vera: You know I'm a woman. You have been probably told that I have a strong personality (laughs). I have not allowed anyone. Once one described me as making requests even in a demanding tone (laughs). In fact, I have not experienced such a pressure.

There was one instance. I will not reveal names. They were high-level officials, who, in an offending manner, told me I was not in a position to do this and that, and that other plants had done this and that. It was suggested that I could go to Kazakhstan to bring milk here. I was told in this manner. I will say names. They were high-level officials. This must be changed. The working capital should be increased, without taking loans. Children and relatives of those high-level officials did so and went bankrupt, with assets being dismantled. Of course, valuable items were taken away. We could not afford it. Of course, if we had a bigger capital, we could have risked. But we could not. We kept going, like we had done before.⁵⁹

That is how "...successful models of leadership are applied by those managers who, regardless of their gender, possess psychological repertory of both male and female managers."⁶⁰

Thus, the research has showed that male and female leadership qualities have a common nature and are not based on gender differences. A good manager has a double repertory of management technologies: both male and female. Also, women's success in their businesses is not a product of luck or opportunity. In many cases, it is a result of socio-psychological characteristics and women's readiness for difficulties associated with conflicts.

XI. CONCLUSION

The ethnic characteristic of entrepreneurship in Kyrgyzstan traces back to the first wave of privatization in the second half of the 1990s. In the late 1990s, Uighurs, Tatars and Russians privatized small infrastructure units used for trade, catering and other businesses. The big facilities with large territories (steel and bitumen factories, milk factories, meat factories, garment factories) became properties of the Kyrgyz. The second wave of privatization in the 2000s also favoured representatives of the titular ethnic group, primarily of male gender. Historically, in the pre-Soviet, Soviet and early post-Soviet periods, ethnic minorities were primarily engaged in the trading sector. Such experience resulted in their quick adjustment to the market economy. When shifting to the market economy, ethnic minorities were able to overcome barriers with a minimal loss and vulnerability, and improved their economic standing, despite having, to some extent, a poor base for starting up a business.

According to the respondents, today, these positions have been equalized. The Kyrgyz have opened cafes and restaurants. Consequently, there is now an equal ethnic representation in trade and service sectors. As for transport, construction, heavy industry and manufacturing, the Kyrgyz are represented to a larger extent. Karakol has about 200 operational guest houses, which are run predominantly by women, thereby giving a female face to the hotel business. In tourism, young males generally occupy services such as providing transportation, guides, drivers, bicycle and horse rentals. Except for ethno-tourism involving horses and yurts, tourism in general has multi-ethnic representation. Nevertheless, recently there have been many cases where services for the provision of yurts were provided by non-Kyrgyz. Kyrgyz women predominantly administer micro-credit services; and Kyrgyz men are represented heavily in local private security agencies.

An entrepreneur is a person who works in difficult conditions. They work for the sake of self-realization, changing the world even on the level of their small company. This is what allows them to respect themselves and the people around them. Accordingly, for many entrepreneurs, the main motive that stimulated them to run a business was money as a measure of wealth, prosperity and therefore, access to various material benefits and maintain their existing way of living.

Entrepreneurship for women is one of the ways of adapting to new circumstances, allowing women to open their own business and consequently solve their many issues related to finding employment. Despite difficulties, they managed to gain confidence in themselves and their abilities to master the new role of entrepreneur.

The research showed that male and female leadership has a common nature and does not directly depend on gender differences. A good manager has a double repertory of managerial technologies: both male and female. A woman's success in her business is actually not a result of their luck and opportunity.

Running entrepreneurial activity requires certain personal qualities. It must be noted that a majority of the respondents highlighted such personal qualities as communication skills, determination, perseverance, integrity, patience, insistence, openness, professionalism and experience. Thus, the establishment and development of ethnic entrepreneurship in Karakol (after the collapse of the USSR) took place in a difficult and controversial period, with representatives of different ethnic groups finding themselves unprepared and unskilled. These people were in a shocked state and forced to work in a new market system. As they raised their potential for adjusting to the social and work sphere by engaging in private business, a parallel adjustment to changing social and economic circumstances also occurred. Currently, the development of the ethnic

entrepreneurship in Karakol manifests itself in the quick restructuring of the economy with an abundance of market choices, leading to a rich supply of goods and services, weakened monopolies and increased competition.

NOTES

- ¹ This project aims to support local researchers exploring historic narratives of Kyrgyzstan's past. The author wishes to thank John McNee, secretary general of the Global Centre for Pluralism, and Morgan Liu, research consultant and associate professor, Department of Anthology, Ohio State University, for their generous support.
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- ⁶⁰ Chirikova (1998), 56.

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