

Aspirations of young men in rural Kyrgyzstan

MA Research Project

Philipp Erath

General Information

For the period of almost three months I stayed in the village 'Bokonbaevo', which is located on the southern shore of lake Issyk-Kul in northeastern Kyrgyzstan. Since I already stayed in this village in the course of my BA Research project, my access to the field proved to be rather unproblematic and welcoming.

Besides the Research Project I also volunteered for a local touristic agency called CBT (Community Based Tourism), because my host family and many of my friends are in one way or another involved in this organisation.

Research & Perspectives

Since I have already known the young men for four years, I was especially interested in what has changed in their lives and views concerning morals, aspirations and work.

Whereas many of my friends dreamt about migrating abroad to work in the past, most of them these days desire to marry, stay in the village and have children. Furthermore, a rather islamic-orientated rhetoric and many ideas about family, work and morals, which had a clear connotation, surprised me. Being a young man myself in a similar stage of life with a different cultural background, we were able to share our ideas and beliefs with each other. The methods I used were mainly informal conversations, participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

My MA Thesis will be based on this data in order to look deeper into ideas of social adulthood, masculinity and morals. I want to explore the question of what it means to be a young man in contemporary rural Kyrgyzstan. My focus is to investigate these young men's aspirations, the ways of accomplishing them and the broader (and sometimes conflicting) moral frameworks these aspirations are based on.



Football tournament of all male age groups.



Playful fighting while doing collective cleaning.



Feeding and taking care of the animals.



'Ghusl' - ritual purification before the friday prayer.



Respect towards older men and women is central.