their opposition to "the other." However, in Cairo they find themselves in the midst of the new "other" — Arabs. To position themselves vis-à-vis this new "other" they have to renegotiate their relation with the Russian "other." Thus, experiences Kazakhstani students in Cairo reveal the character of the post-colonial situation and discourse in Kazakhstan. In light of Chatterjee's thesis on how the post-colonial world imagines its modernity by reinventing the distinctness of its spiritual culture, while acknowledging the West's superiority in the domain of the material (Chatterjee 1996: 217), we can assume that Kazakh students' coming to al-Azhar to study Islam is an expression of their drive for ultimate "de-colonization of consciousness" from the remnants of Russianness, atheism, communism. However, their experience in al-Azhar slows down these negative sentiments to an extent that students are fair enough to give the communist colonial project certain credit for spirituality.¹² While in Kazakhstan, Kazakh identity is usually constructed vis-à-vis Russian identity; in Cairo, it becomes clear to what extent Russianness has been internalized and, in fact, has become an integral part

of post-Soviet Kazakh and post-Soviet Muslim identity.

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Report on Research Conditions

Surveying Risk in Kazakh Agriculture: Experiences and Observations

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This report provides some observations about conditions for field research that emerged from two intensive periods of fieldwork in Kazakhstan in 2003 and 2004 conducted by the joint German-Kazakh research project, "Crop Insurance in Kazakhstan — Options for Building a Sound Institution Promoting

Agricultural Production." This research is financed by the Volkswagenstiftung (Volkswagen Foundation) and carried out by the Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe (IAMO) and the Agricultural University in Astana. This report is confined to fieldwork conditions. Publications dealing with the substantive outcome of the project are available elsewhere (e.g., Bokusheva and Heidelbach 2004a, 2004b).

¹² This positive assessment of some aspects of the socialist past by the students of Islam might also be a manifestation of certain ideological affinity between Communism and Islam, noted by many scholars (Maxime Rodinson as quoted in Rywkin 1990: 87). Both Islam and Communism have a certain moral vision of society, the achievement of which requires restrictions on individual freedom. In this sense, both of them are anti-liberal.

¹ The survey was conducted in cooperation with the Agricultural University in Astana. The conceptual planning of the survey and implementation of the questionnaire was done by IAMO.

Kazakhstan is a large country comprising 272 million hectares of land, 32 percent of which is used as farmland. The population is approximately 14.9 million people, 43 percent of whom live in rural areas. Agriculture has traditionally been one of the largest sectors in the economy (presently about eight percent of GDP), and currently employs 32 percent of the active population. Rural areas in Kazakhstan do not offer many business opportunities, rendering the agricultural sector the most important employer (National Statistical Agency of Kazakhstan 2003: passim). The rural population in Kazakhstan is not only plagued by a low average income; an additional burden is the high degree of risk and uncertainty to which agricultural population in particular is exposed (Knerr et al. 2001: 10). A harsh continental climate has a strong impact on yield variability, which, together with price and market risk, are the most serious risks for farmers. In addition, natural hazards such as drought and extremely high temperatures typically affect a large number of farms over wide areas in Kazakhstan simultaneously. Thus, production risk possesses a systemic component which results in a high correlation of yield losses across huge areas (systemic risk). This should be an explanation for the high variation in the level of national annual yields (IAMO 2002).

The objective of the project is to assess the effects of exposure to high risks on agricultural sector productivity and to define requirements for the development of economically viable and marketcompatible crop insurance in Kazakhstan. Hypotheses and assumptions gained by analyzing secondary literature served as a basis for drafting and implementing empirical research in the field. The latter involves in-depth interviews with local key informants (staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, the regional administration and private insurance companies), interviews on the farm level and statistical data surveys.

Fieldwork was carried out in summer and autumn 2003 and in spring and summer 2004 in six selected provinces [oblys, oblast']: Aqmola, North Kazakhstan and Qostanay in the north, Aqtöbe in the west, South Kazakhstan and East Kazakhstan. For our study purposes, i.e., a study of a large, geographically dispersed population (farms), it was convenient to use a multistage sample design. This is a type of design where in the first stage a sample of larger units is selected (the provinces in our case); then in a second stage, from each of the selected first stage units a sample of smaller units (districts

[audan, raion] in our case) is chosen. The last step includes the selection of farm enterprises and individual farms in the district. A multistage design is particularly appropriate where a large-scale survey is to be conducted, and where for logistical and organizational reasons it is convenient for the sample to be grouped together in a more limited number of geographical areas, rather than being spread thinly and dispersed across the country (Poate and Daplyn 1993: 58-59). The selection representative provinces was carried out in September 2003 in Astana by taking into account the criteria "importance of crop production in the regional economy," "percentage of active population working in agriculture," and "the relative importance of strategically important crops" (i.e., wheat, cotton, and oil-yielding crops like sunflowers and rapeseed). The provinces were selected to depict as exactly as possible the different geomorphological and agroclimatic conditions, and thereby also different agricultural specializations. The same holds for the selection of districts within the provinces. Between two and four districts per province were selected according to the criteria "natural yield potential" and "relative importance of crop production." Farms were selected by Simple Random Sample (SRS) (Poate and Daplyn 1993: 61-65).

Four points are worth making about the conditions for conducting field research of this kind. First, experience from 2003 showed that carrying out a random selection procedure for districts and farms does not produce satisfying results. Districts that were administratively reorganized and farms that changed legal form, ownership status, and crop area several times during the past years might be selected. Structural interruptions such as these could lead to spurious findings. As a result, more importance should have been attached to additional recommendations of the often very helpful provincial and district administrative staff. As the 2004 experience showed, fieldwork tasks in the district can be organized more efficiently when the input of the administration is taken seriously.

Second, staff and data resources in the departments of statistics and agriculture vary significantly across districts, and thereby the degree of necessary support for researchers also fluctuates. For our purposes, we need long time series (1960-2003) of yields and sown areas for the most important agricultural crops on a farm-level basis. But as a result of different organizational and structural reforms and changes, this data is scattered among different institutions, i.e., provincial and

district-level statistical and agricultural departments and archives. We are able to safely say that each district has its own rules. Thus, data collection resembles detailed detective work. Equally, access of foreigners to non-secret agricultural data is regulated and managed in different manners across provinces and districts. In the northern Kazakh city of Qostanay, it was more difficult to collect data than in other regions. This was, according to the head of the Province Department of Statistics, the result of "bad experiences with foreigners," i.e., misuse of confidential data.

A further lesson learned is that the quality of accounting data varies greatly across farms. While smaller private farms might not have any records at all for the past years, larger, well-performing farms sometimes have an army of accountants. However, only the main accountant has an overview of the data, and he usually is not obliged to pass on information to a third party without the agreement of the head of the respective enterprise. That makes it necessary to obtain an appointment with both persons. The last point shows the importance of hierarchy in Kazakh institutions. The dominant role of the head is inherent to the system and is an obstacle to both the functioning of the institutions themselves and the efficiency of interactions with their clients.

Finally, the efficiency of fieldwork is likewise availability of regional by limited telecommunications and by rural infrastructure. The exchange of data via electronic systems is often possible between state institutions, but limited between institutions and other entities — in our case, The state of the Kazakh researchers. telecommunication network is illustrated by UN statistics. Kazakhstan placed 134th out of 187 countries for internet users per inhabitant, 106th out of 204 countries for the number of main phone lines per inhabitant and 126th out of 191 countries for phone subscriptions per mobile (UNCTAD 2003a). In a UN paper assessing the overall diffusion of information and communication technology Kazakhstan is ranked 166th out of 180 countries (UNCTAD 2003b: 45). Taking into account the bad state of many roads and the vast territory of districts, both a clear-cut plan and thorough organization of fieldwork by experienced researchers are essential to the successful and efficient collection of data.

Field research is always a complex process involving many contextual factors, discontinuities,

negotiations, and compromises. Comprehending cultural and historical peculiarities of the research area, learning how local institutions function, and being willing to adapt personally to new circumstances that affect planning and negotiation strategies are key qualifications for conducting successful data surveys, especially in transition and developing countries.

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