

UNESCO PHILOSOPHY DAY Celebration in Central Asia

UNESCO Philosophy Day celebration in Central Asia took place in Dushanbe at the Institute of Philosophy and Law of the Tajik Academy of Sciences. Three representatives Professor Mansur Bekmuradov, Vice-Director of Tashkent Institute of Culture from Uzbekistan, Professor Erkaim Zhorabekova, Chairperson of UNESCO Chair “Intercultural Dialogue and Democracy in Polyethnic Society” of Osh University from Kyrgyzstan and Professor Zhakhan Moldabekov, Chairperson, Doctor of Philosophy, Chair of History of Philosophy and Culturology, Kazakh National University after Al-Farabi from Kazakhstan were invited to participate in the event. The audience included both senior and junior philosophers. The topic of the round table was “Place of Philosophy in the dialogue of civilizations”.



Professor Karamotullo Olimov, Chairman of the National Commission for UNESCO of Tajikistan, Doctor of Philosophy

The round table was opened by Professor Karamotullo Olimov, Chairman of the National Commission for UNESCO of Tajikistan, Doctor of Philosophy. Gulzhan Smagulova, representative of UNESCO Almaty Cluster Office greeted the audience on behalf of the Head of the Office and delivered the message of the Director General dedicated to the International Day of Tolerance. Presentations made at the round table touched upon the issue of tolerance in the Central Asian society which was always known as a multiethnic society with high tolerance for different confessions and ethnicities lived together in peace and harmony for centuries.



Young philosophers were involved in discussions

Reports made at the round table included problems of self- learning in philosophical traditions of West and East, philosophers discussed why the object of research nowadays is man when earlier it was God: mind and logic is man while God is a mystery; in Eastern philosophy there are two views on that issue vahdadi- udjut (discover God through yourself) and vahdadi- mudjut (I am myself the God- that is where the process of learning stops). Concept of tolerance through self- learning and self- understanding was implicit in the discussion of the issue.



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Professor Bekmuradov offered for discussion the issue of a process versus a result based approach in raising children (How was your day today? versus what did you learn today?). During the Soviet time, ideology was oriented to eliminate any fear of God- don't be afraid of God- learn atheism; don't be afraid of yourself- don't be afraid to run away from yourself; be afraid of public opinion, other people and as a result a husband began to hide money from a family, a son did not trust his father and a daughter her mother. Then people began to analyze others. Eventually, a formula began to develop – do anything when nobody sees you. Double standards began to rule in the society – we began to behave differently from how we behave at home. As a result social orientation for the future was lost.

Another issue discussed was the role of philosophy nowadays and about restoration of all the functions of philosophy as a tool for reflection on the events taking place in the society. Is philosophy a scientific discipline? Is it interesting for businessmen, politicians and the general public? Is culture a philosophy? What is happening to religion? They discussed the issue of theology which has been introduced as a new subject in Russia and agreed that it is a necessary subject to be taught. Place and role of logic as a discipline was discussed as well which should be taught in early childhood as a tool for reflection whereas it is now being taught at the University, before the teaching of philosophy.

The round table also discussed the issue of gender and youth in the contemporary world and in the changing societies of Central Asia.



Joint picture of the participants of UNESCO Philosophy Day

All the philosophers agreed that Philosophy Day is tribute to the profession – a day when philosophers should reflect on where philosophers are, what their role is and where they are going. They agreed that together with national actions it was necessary to undertake Central Asian regional actions- to create an Assembly of the Central Asian philosophers in order to elaborate a common basis for teaching philosophy



At the Institute of Manuscripts of the Academy of Sciences

UNESCO Philosophy Day celebration at the Kazakh National University after Al-Farabi

Last year UNESCO Philosophy Day was celebrated at the Department of Philosophy and Political Studies of the Kazakh National University after Al- Farabi and evoked a lot of enthusiasm both among the teachers and the students of the University as well as the philosophic community in Central Asia as a whole who perceived it as a professional holiday for philosophers. This year the University celebrated it on its own initiative and invited UNESCO Almaty Cluster office to join the event. The event was also dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the University. The program of the Day was even more diverse and interesting than last year. A round table on “Dialogue of philosophical cultures in the 21st century” offered the following topics for discussion

- ∉ Programming of new philosophic language
- ∉ Mass media and terrorism
- ∉ Educational aspects of philosophy

- € Philosophy of the dialogue of cultures
- € Nation in the structure of philosophy
- € Non-violence communication in culture

The two hours discussion involved only young philosophers- undergraduate and graduate students and demonstrated outstanding understanding by the younger generation of the modern problems of society through the prism of philosophical reflection.

Philosophical marathon of musicals “Mosaic of thoughts and feelings” about the mission of philosophy showed creativity of the 3rd year students in finding new ways to reflect on eternal questions of love and wisdom of life through playing Khachaturyan’s music and singing about first love and presenting philosophy as a mother of wisdom. The second musical by the 4th year students presented philosophy as a conscience of generations.



Philosophy through music



Philosophy through song about Mother

The 5th year students were responsible for organizing the philosophic game “Indigenous Philosophy” between teams of the students and the teachers of the department. Two teams – teachers as Witches and students as Aborigines in the arena had to defend different points of view and ideas.



Teachers as Witches



Students as Aboriginals

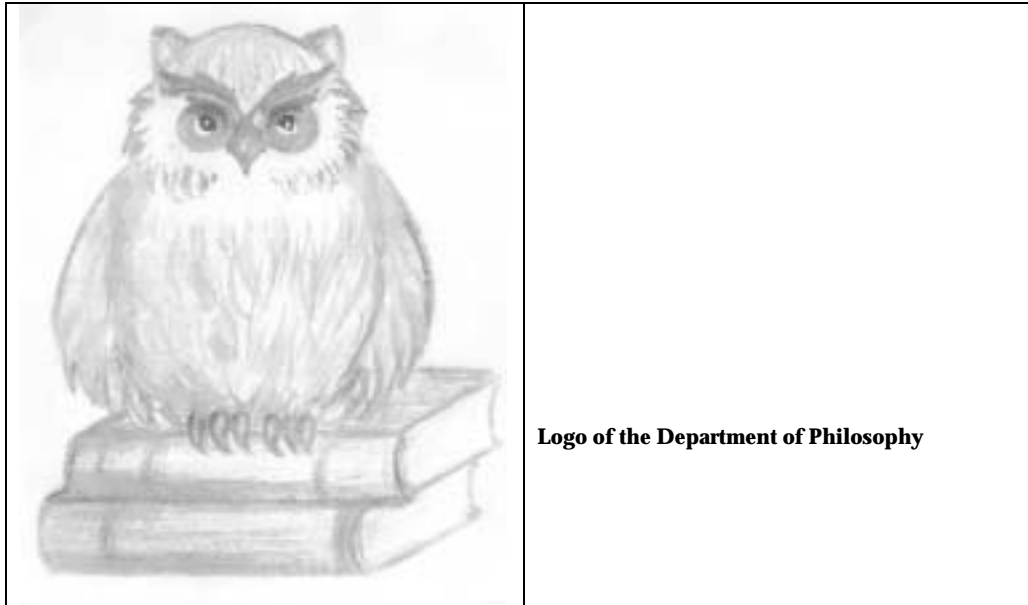
First year students were inaugurated as philosophers through a ceremony “die as a man and reborn as a philosopher”, cited philosophers and had to demonstrate how students perceive teachers and visa versa. Cartoons, music and singing were used as tools to fulfill the assignments.



Calling for spirits of their teachers

The last contest called Philosophic Aitys (Competition of Kazakh musical improvisers) demonstrated the level of interest and love of the university community for philosophy when they had to discuss in a musical manner whether humanity needs philosophy or not.

Modern cinema in the era of globalization and its impacts on peoples feelings and perceptions, xenophobia, racism and religious hatred in shaping societies were the topics of discussions after viewing eleven short movies by different international directors under the theme of “11th of September” in the Cinema Club of Oleg Boretsky, a Professor of the Department and a TV presenter.



Throughout the whole event an exhibition of artworks “EYE of Wisdom” was exposed in the hall of the department with essays, poetry, articles of the students published in national newspapers, etc.

All the participants were awarded with diplomas and one special diploma was given to Vlada Safonova, winner of the Contest “Metaphysical image” for elaboration of the logo of the Department of Philosophy.

Celebration of UNESCO Philosophy Day in the Kazakh National University was a big success both among professionals and amateurs of philosophy. Teachers and students of the University gave interviews for TV and radio.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. Overall, celebration of the Third Philosophy Day in Central Asia demonstrated growing interest of both the scientific society for Philosophy as a discipline and a tool to reflect on the processes taking part in the changing society of Central Asia.
2. Tajikistan as a post- conflict country has limited access to resources and needs a lot of assistance in developing a modern approach to the teaching of Philosophy (development of curricula and programme, library resources, Internet access).
3. Exchange programs between the Universities of Central Asia and internationally could assist in enriching philosophical traditions of Central Asia. There is a big disparity between the level of education of students from e.g., Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. One of the issues noted by social scientists in the region is the loss of the Russian language as a tool of interethnic communication in the region.
4. Development of young philosophers- providing them with the opportunity to do research and participate in the philosophic forums.
5. Share experience on celebration of Philosophy Day at the Kazakh National University with other Universities in Central Asia.