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e-mail: bnk1606@mail.ru**FIELDWORK OF ETHNIC IDENTITY:
THEORY, PRACTICE, REFLECTION**

The article deals with the problems of studying ethnic identity in ethnographic fieldwork. The study of this phenomenon is currently one of the most relevant research areas. At the same time, it has a number of certain difficulties, primarily related to research methodology. Methodological difficulties are caused by a variety of theoretical approaches and concepts in study of ethnic identity. Therefore, field research remains for ethnographers the most important means of obtaining information about ethnic properties of studied objects. In addition, choice of field ethnography methods and their application in practice causes certain difficulties when research object is ethnic identity.

Having based on analysis of scientific literature and foreign authors' techniques as well as her own experience, the author accumulates questions ethnographers face when conducting fieldwork of ethnic identity. As the research shows, difficulties of studying ethnic identity are associated with a number of methodological issues. Particularly, key problems are subjectivity of ethnographic research due to several factors, complex nature of researcher–informant relationship, access to research «field» and search for potential informants. In this regard, building communication and developing their own research strategies, taking into account the characteristics of studied society, are necessary conditions for successful fieldwork of ethnic identity.

Key words: fieldwork, ethnic identity, ethnographic research, methods of field ethnography, informants, research strategies.

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e-mail: bnk1606@mail.ru**Этникалық бірегейліктің далалық зерттелуі:
теория, тәжірибе, рефлексия**

Мақала этнографиялық далалық зерттеулердегі этникалық бірегейлікті зерттеу мәселелеріне арналған. Бұл құбылысты зерттеу бүгінгі таңда ғылыми ізденістің өзекті бағыттарының бірі болып табылады және сонымен бірге, ең алдымен, зерттеу әдістемесі мен әдіснамасымен байланысты бірқатар қиындықтарға ие. Әдіснамалық қиындықтар этникалық бірегейлікті зерттеудегі теориялық көзқарастар мен ұғымдардың алуан түрлілігіне байланысты. Сондықтан далалық экспедициялық зерттеулер этнографтар үшін зерттелетін объектілердің этникалық белгілері мен ерекшеліктері туралы ақпарат алудың маңызды құралы болып қала береді. Сонымен бірге, этникалық бірегейлік зерттеу объектісі болған жағдайда, далалық этнография әдістерін таңдау және оларды практикада қолдану белгілі бір қиындықтар туғызады.

Автор ғылыми әдебиеттер мен шетелдік авторлардың әдістерін, сондай-ақ өз тәжірибесін талдау негізінде этнографтың этникалық бірегейлікті далалық зерттеу барысында кездесетін мәселелерін айқындайды. Этникалық бірегейлікті зерттеудегі қиындықтар бірқатар әдіснамалық және әдістемелік мәселелермен байланысты екендігі анықталды, олардың негізгі факторлары: этнографиялық зерттеулердің субъективтілігі, зерттеуші-информатордың қарым-қатынасы табиғатының күрделілігі, зерттеу «өрісіне» қол жеткізу мүмкіндігі және әлеуетті ақпарат берушілерді іздеу. Осыған байланысты зерттелетін қоғамның ерекшеліктерін ескере отырып, коммуникацияларды құру және жеке зерттеу стратегияларын әзірлеу – ол этникалық бірегейлікті зерттеуге арналған далалық ізденіс жұмыстардың табысты жүзеге асырудың қажетті шарты болып табылады.

Түйін сөздер: далалық зерттеулер, этникалық бірегейлік, этнографиялық зерттеулер, далалық этнография әдістері, ақпарат берушілер, зерттеу стратегиялары.

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**Полевые исследования этнической идентичности:
теория, практика, рефлексия**

Статья посвящена проблемам изучения этнической идентичности в этнографических полевых исследованиях. Исследование данного феномена на сегодняшний день является одним из актуальных направлений научного поиска и в то же время имеет ряд определенных трудностей, связанных, прежде всего, с методологией и методикой исследования. Методологические сложности обусловлены разнообразием теоретических подходов и концептов в изучении этнической идентичности. Поэтому полевые экспедиционные исследования остаются для этнографов важнейшим средством получения информации об этнических свойствах изучаемых объектов. Вместе с тем, выбор методов полевой этнографии и их применение на практике вызывают определенные затруднения, когда объектом изыскания выступает этническая идентичность.

Автор на основе анализа научной литературы и методик зарубежных авторов, а также собственного опыта аккумулирует вопросы, с которыми сталкивается этнограф в процессе проведения полевых исследований этнической идентичности. Выявлено, что трудности изучения этнической идентичности связаны с рядом методологических и методических проблем, узловыми из которых являются: обусловленная рядом факторов субъективность этнографических изысканий, сложность природы отношений исследователь–информатор, возможность доступа к исследовательскому «полю» и поиск потенциальных информаторов. В этой связи выстраивание коммуникаций и выработка собственных исследовательских стратегий с учетом особенностей изучаемого общества является необходимым условием успешного осуществления полевых исследований этнической идентичности.

Ключевые слова: полевые исследования, этническая идентичность, этнографические исследования, методы полевой этнографии, информаторы, исследовательские стратегии.

Introduction

The problem of studying ethnic identity is currently one of the most relevant areas of scientific research and at the same time has a number of certain difficulties, primarily related to research methodology.

First of all, this is due to the fact there is no clear definition of the concepts «ethnicity» and «identity», which is due to their obvious interdisciplinary nature. Today the term «identity» as a category of scientific analysis and social practice is widely used by specialists in various fields of social and humanitarian knowledge – psychologists, sociologists, ethnologists, anthropologists, historians, philosophers, political scientists. Frequently, understanding reasons for current interest in ethnic identity, most researchers still cannot always explain the very essence of this phenomenon. There is a wide range of scientific opinions, explaining this phenomenon. However, its complexity, versatility, variety of forms, as well as radically contradictory trends in ethnic identity development leave a wide scope for further research. In this regard, scientist L.Adams notes that in anthropology and sociology, as in clinical and social psychology, the question of identity is so central that

it would be a huge task to analyze literature or try to generalize how ethnographers «define» identity (Adams, 2009: 316).

In addition to methodological difficulties, associated with variety of theoretical approaches and concepts in research on the definition of identity, there are also difficulties in studying ethnic identity itself. Most researchers argue that ethnic identity is a social construct and is embedded in various contexts: social, historical, and political (Kiang, 2014). Discussions about ethnic identity deal with a standard set of indicators that identities can be multiple, unstable, random, contested, fragmented, constructed, contractual, etc. (Brubaker, Feischmidt et al, 2006: 7). Obviously, the term «ethno-cultural identity» is not so much a logically strict concept as a phenomenon with complex socio-psychological content and deep cultural and historical roots. However, Russian ethnologist, academician V.Tishkov suggests considering ethnicity outside of traditional cultural types, as a phenomenon of cultural hybridity and multiple loyalties, in the key of identity drift and ethnic procedural aspects (Tishkov, 2003: 121-123).

Therefore the researchers must determine what level they will use to study ethnicity: from the point of view of ethnic community – as the ethnic identity of a

certain group, or central object of his interest will be an individual – as a carrier of ethnic characteristics. In the latter case, our focus will be shifted to individual ethnic identity. Accordingly, choice of methods will depend on this, burdened also with the task of correlating methods from various sciences, since ethnic identity is a field of study where, first of all, ethnology, psychology and sociology intersect as we have already pointed out above. So, certain level of methodological reflection is required from a researcher, in particular, knowledge and skills of applying a particular technique, depending on goals and objectives of study.

In this article, we will try to analyze problems researchers face when conducting ethnographic fieldwork, focused on studying ethnicity and ethnic identity.

Materials and methods

When studying ethnic identity, researchers often look for three types of indicators: 1) «ethnic boundaries» – a symbolic (imaginary) line separating one ethnic group from another; 2) «ethnic markers» – a certain set of cultural, psychological, social, etc. features inherent only in one particular ethnic group; 3) narratives (stories) that express implicit or explicit cognitive content of group ethnic identity.

In this regard, it can be productive to study processes of ethnic identification through the lens of «ethnic boundaries and significant cultural markers» theory by Fr. Barth, concept of «imaginary community» by B. Anderson, «ethno-symbolism» by E. Smith, «self-representation to others» by E. Goffman. Meanwhile, as one of the founders of symbolic and interpretive anthropology Cl. Geertz noted that only real ethnographic data make social and scientific theories and concepts «reasonably reality» (Geertz, 2004).

That is why field ethnographic expeditions remains for researchers the most important means of obtaining information about ethnic properties of studied objects.

The scientific literature, devoted to the problem of collecting ethnographic data and, namely, methodology of field research, is generally reduced to the following stages: preliminary organizational measures, choice of localities, route development, receiving access to research object, introducing yourself and establishing communication with informants, identifying key informants, establishing your own role in the field, moving back and forth between field research and preliminary analysis, clarifying and collecting additional data, getting

out of «field» and compiling a reports and texts further research will be based on (Gromov, 1966; Antologiya issledovaniy kul'tury, 1997; Zhloba, Chernyakevich, 2007)

In the course of field research, well-known and proven methods of field ethnography are usually used, which requires a long stay and familiarization for researchers within studied ethnic environment. In addition, issues of studying ethnic identification and self-identification processes suggest, first of all, using such qualitative methods as «participatory observation», «semi-structured interviews», «situation and case studies» and other methods, requiring constant interaction between ethnologists and informants on the spot.

If these «qualitative research methods» answer questions «How?» and «Why?», then, basically, «quantitative methods» give possible answers to the question «How much? How many?» (Bernard, 2006). Therefore, qualitative methods allow us to consider features of development and functioning of ethno-cultural identity in more detail, as well as to obtain more in-depth and detailed information about the subject studied. Using quantitative methods, such as mass surveys, focus groups, or post-interview questionnaires, will allow us to organize data, identify variations, correlations, group data by age, gender, etc., and data obtained is also supposed to be representative and comparable. These methods combined allow us to solve tasks effectively.

These methods allow us to identify peoples explicit and implicit knowledge about peculiarities of their ethnic culture, collective ideas, values, beliefs, etc., which exist in the minds of individual members of society and determine behavioral models of studied group members. However, experience of fieldwork shows that ideas shared by members of a particular ethnic group do not always coincide with their social practices. Informants, depending on their age, gender, level of education, specific situation, as well as their mood, attitude to a researcher, can say one thing during interview process, and in practice, in real life, demonstrate something completely different.

In this context, methods of cognitive anthropology allow us to go beyond our biased ideas about personality and see how people are aware of their individuality, including ethnic identity. This is an important moment in methodology to study issues of identity, because it gives access to features of self-understanding study groups in various contexts. Thus, this allows researchers to experience repeated group identity and also gives us opportunity to experience and see what ethnic identity means in

social practices. In addition, in the course of field research, we can ask people about what they think and see what they do and why do, and thus compare whether their responses correspond to their actions. This is why ethnographic research can better perceive «cognitive content» of identity than most other methods.

Along with this, when we try to collect field materials about what «ethnic identity» is, it is necessary to remember that if a person goes out to see ethnicity, he will find it and, thereby, will contribute to its construction. Therefore, in order to study ethnic identity, it is necessary to bring ethnicity into «non-ethnic context» (Eriksen, 1993). Otherwise stated, research strategies should consist largely of observing everyday life or «putting people in the context of their own platitudes». (Geertz, 2004: 22). Indeed, ethnography of everyday life allows us to observe ethnicity and manifestation ethnic identity at the most real and obvious level of daily routines and enables to add this knowledge to analysis of complex abstractions, social systems, structures, and social actions. It claims that such abstractions are embodied and realized in the episodes of everyday life. Therefore, we should consider, observe and record them «here». What makes such a study attractive is that most of life at this level is visible and observable, and it gives us an opportunity to study daily contexts (Goffman, 2000), in which ethnic categories take their meanings and forms, and processes, by which ethnicity actually functions in everyday life.

Results and discussions

In contrast to study of historical documents or census data analysis, ethnographic research is conducted in an environment where scientist's presence can in one way or another affect the data obtained. For instance, ethnographer's observations can be «spoiled» by his/her personal presence – as in the case when a «typical» home meal is affected by arrival of unexpected guest (I think that in everyday life we all, one way or another, encounter such situations). This is especially true when studying the social nature of ethnic identity, when the way informant perceives a researcher has a strong influence on her/his own identity.

After conducting research on the territory of Uzbekistan in the late 90s of the last century, in his discussion of fieldwork dilemmas in post-socialist societies, American anthropologist R. Zanka pointed out how appearance of young, well-dressed, laptop-equipped graduate students from the West in

the offices of Uzbek academics forces them to face a paradox in their professional identity: «between relentless pride invoked by scientists who were inspired by socialism and depressing post-socialist recognition that in many ways their societies have a much lower standard and quality of life, especially scientists, than their Western counterparts» (Zanka, 2000: 155).

However, methods of psychological anthropology remain dominant in study of ethnic identity, when ethnicity is known through social actions of people, certain thinking style, stereotypes, behavioral models, when ethnicity manifests itself in conversation, demonstrated in a certain situation or in effective expression of individual attitude to something or someone. In this regard, in the course of field work, we should pay attention to the so-called «excessive demonstration» (deliberate emphasis) and «reduced demonstration» (deliberate belittling) of their ethnic identity by informants (Eriksen, 1993: 47). According to Fr. Barth, ethnicity is a form of social organization of cultural differences, and the primary significance is those cultural characteristics, which the group marks valuable (Barth, 2006: 16). In this way, from the point of view of «theirs» interacting not only with «others/strangers», but also with «theirs», these signs (ethnic markers) are not just cognitive sources that can be deciphered by observers and scientists, they can also be discursive and interactive sources, which are intentionally used by particular culture representatives, and can consciously or unconsciously be «attributed to» (Geertz, 2004: 234).

For example, when conducting research among the Kazakh diaspora, we often encountered cases of deliberate demonstration of «ethnic authenticity» – «Kazakhness», including good level of Kazakh language skills by our respondents in the presence of researchers: ethnic Kazakhs who arrived from Kazakhstan. At the same time, there is a typical opinion or even firm belief among the studied diaspora that «many Kazakhs of Kazakhstan do not know their native language or do not know it well enough» (Baigabatova, 2019). This opinion was formed by them as a result of information received from relatives and friends who visited Kazakhstan or have already moved to live in their «historical homeland».

Another complex methodological aspect is that ethnographic research involves many levels of subjectivity, and often researchers interpret explanation made by someone else about an event that happened to a third party. Ethnographic analysis is usually interpretive, meaning it tends to explain meanings rather than make reliable predictions, or, as

noted in his classic work, anthropologist Cl. Geertz, «what we call our data is actually our own constructs of other people's perceptions of what they and their fellow citizens think... In other words, we start by interpreting what our informants are involved in or by interpreting their own ideas about what they are involved in and then systematize it» (Geertz, 2004: 22). In such cases, when «information source» is inseparable from «author of information source», and researchers need not so much to «minimize» the impact of «author» on «information source», but, on the contrary, to follow closely, how individual version of an event or explanation of certain relations is shaped» (Issledovatel' i ob'yekt issledovaniya, 2005:17).

Some of these subjectivity problems can be overcome by triangulation such as making multiple observations or using multiple methods. However, equally important methodological problem emerges: researchers recognize the subjectivity, including their own subjectivity, and try to explain it as part of data collection process. Each researcher should not be responsible for impartiality or reproducibility of their research, but for data they have obtained, collected, having collaborated with their informants. The concept of such «localized knowledge» implies that data does not simply exist «out there», hidden or revealed by informants in response to their self-presentation to a researcher, but rather that data itself is a product of relationships between researchers and their informants. Ethnologists must recognize that the role of informants in such relationships and their response to them fundamentally affects knowledge we can receive.

In this regard, we should always remember that regardless of whether ethnic identity is the subject of research or not, researcher's personality – especially his/her identification by «others» (informants, guides, and entire ethnic environment under study) in the «field» – should be taken into account by a researcher/interpreter as part of data. Polish researcher K. Wojnicka notes from her personal experience of field research that gender, sexuality, nationality and social class can all have implications for the research process [Wojnicka, 2020].

One of the most important components, affecting collection of materials, is assessment of actual understanding the role of field worker, who «sees» and «records» information in a certain way, as well as researcher's position as a carrier of certain cultural stereotypes, scientific concepts and discursive strategies.

Along with this, even personal characteristics, such as age, gender, nationality, level of education,

external data, are very important, sometimes even of primary importance, in the researcher-informant dichotomy and can significantly affect collection of «objective» field material. In this regard, I always remember the cases of our respondents' reaction to Professor S. Azhigali's personality. Expeditions under his leadership, in which I had the honor to participate for many years where I gained invaluable field experience. I often had to watch the first impression from his distinctive appearance – he is tall, has big build and noble grey hair – and later from close acquaintance, namely, level educational, scientific status, had a magical effect on our informers. Furthermore, I often saw them, presenting some information, a little worried, worried about how correct they speak, whether what they say and describe is true, how valuable and interesting this information is to a respected doctor of sciences. There were silent questions on their faces: What do I look like in his eyes? Do I meet his expectations? In this case, identification of researcher by informants and conditional «distance» that existed here between the status of a professor and an ordinary person determined respondents' behavior and features of their narratives.

I often encountered manifestation of «gender» in the «field» during collection of Kazakh genealogies – shezhire. How it was? Ethnic identity categories are a subset of identity categories in which eligibility for membership is defined by attributes based on origin [Chandra, 2006]. One of these categories among Kazakhs is the tribe, clan. As we know, tribe and its divisions among the Kazakhs is the most important social actor, based on feelings of kinship and is a kind of corporation, within which there is close and regular communication on the basis of established rituals. It is clear that tribal identity has its own nature of origin and is essentially not related to general ethnic characteristics in its external manifestation, but field experience shows that quite often informants interpret it as one of the main identifying ethnic characteristics. Therefore, data collection on tribal composition and territory of settlement is very important for understanding the structure of Kazakh society. In addition, a priori, it is believed that knowledge of this kind is mainly possessed by men.

And, when I, a woman (no matter that I am a researcher), began my inquiries about informant's ancestral identity and was ready to hear and record stories about genealogical connections of a particular group, the first reaction to me from male informants – often of older age group – was in most cases, to put it mildly, ambiguous. There was at least

a hint of disbelief and surprise in their eyes. And then, apparently, in order to verify my competence, I was given a «biased interrogation» on the subject of knowing my own «family tree». Only after making sure that I was aware of my own genealogy and the subject of upcoming conversation (kazakh shezhire), my informants «condescended» to me.

Therefore, before starting the «fieldwork», researchers need to find out which methods of building mutual understanding work best, taking into account his own personality and norms of community that she/he is going to study. Adjustments to methodology can be clarified on the spot. For instance, it is recommended to conduct preventive surveillance of population and then specify your survey tools for respondents, so that you can determine in advance which questions will be the most effective and fruitful for collecting empirical material.

Special attention requires researcher's ability to communicate with people, build a special communication field, and work on interpersonal informant–researcher relationships. The difficulty of conducting field expedition work is that researchers must be completely immersed in the studied environment, be «there», trying to become «one of their own» and at the same time remain her/himself, without losing her/his authenticity. Therefore, interaction of researchers with their informants and «field circumstances» as well as author's reflection on this issue become a very important source of information, sometimes more important than formally recorded interviews, personal data, etc.

In this regard, L. Adams's experience is quite interesting, who notes: «...I tried to carefully manage presentation of myself, trying to control how I was perceived by my informants. This adaptation involved dressing conservatively and through my behavior, evoking the image of a «good girl», who respected Uzbek culture and generally did not express her sexuality or challenge anyone's beliefs other than asking questions about them. If I had behaved like my friends in the United States, casually swearing, dressing casually, and standing up for my feminist beliefs, I have no doubt that I would have irreparably damaged my relationships with my informants, most of whom were middle-aged men in a modern but sexist society. Nor could I be quite successful by behaving as if I were among my colleagues at home, where I speak well, dress professionally, and establish myself as an expert in my field. I was not an expert, and almost any handbook of anthropology research will tell you that you will learn a lot more from your informants if

you show a “strange attitude”, expressing curiosity about the most ordinary things, as well as playing an «acceptable incompetent» who does not understand how to operate in the field in the first place, but behaves in a way that does not offend or alienate anyone» (Adams, 2009: 328).

The next question is related to data collection methods. Traditionally, in ethnographic research, scientist usually chooses conditions of study, based on both theoretical and practical considerations, then receives access and, at least, tacit permission from those whom he studies to be present as a participant or observer. Then researchers spend a long time in the research environment, observing, listening, and making extensive field notes about what is going on, conducting formal or informal interviews, and possibly working with other types of sources, such as pedigrees, videos, photographs, and personal documents provided by the study group, as well as examining museum collections. These forms of documentation are data ethnographer uses to construct his/her analysis.

The main methods of collecting empirical data are included observation, expert interviews, and informal conversations that represent direct contacts with people. Therefore, important condition for collecting information is compliance with norms of scientific ethics, that is, ethnographer must have a preliminary oral or written agreement with potential respondents about the purpose and topic of conversation or interview. If necessary, informants should be guaranteed anonymity. In addition, extent and breadth of required consent to provide information will depend on nature of research project and may be modified in accordance with local conditions – requirements of ethics codes, laws and customs of the country or community in which the research is carried out. Apart from this, the moral principle for interaction model between a field researcher and representatives of environment s/he studies should be the principle «Primum non nocere» (literally: «first of all, do no harm»). Therefore, in the «field», when collecting empirical material, ethnographers should always remember that they are personally responsible for people and societies that are the research object.

Equally important is search for potential informants. Ethnographic research mainly uses the most common method of «snowball sampling». Although this method undoubtedly has its advantages, our field experience shows that this method is applicable only at the very beginning of study, since «snowballing» from one informant can significantly distort the sample, since it can include/

involve people from only one (related) group, or, for the most part, people who are familiar with each other, or are about the same age, or hold the same views, etc. Therefore, for the study of identity issues, it is necessary to limit the use of «snowball» method from one person. Further we should use methods of «theoretical sampling» (deliberate selection of people representing theoretically important categories) or «target sampling» (deliberate selection of those who are the most interesting for your research).

Similar approaches, applied in the course of field research in Western Mongolia, allowed us to identify features of ideas and social practices of ethnic identification among the Kazakhs of Bayan-Olgi (where they make up 88.7% of the population) and Khovd (11.5%, respectively) aimags (regions). In this case, deliberate selection of a certain number of informants from different aimags with different numbers and densities of Kazakhs in them confirmed our hypothesis that identical symbols can carry different meanings in different contexts (Final report, 2020).

As for how to access various research «fields», most scholars agree that there are usually two preferred strategies for conducting ethnographic research.

The first strategy is to go through official channels, requesting permission from local administration or public organization to study a particular region or group. This method has the advantage of giving your actions legitimacy and giving you some immunity from control or resistance from authorities. The disadvantage is that in some situations, official sanctions can jeopardize research or restrict the ability to visit certain people, groups, places. So, for instance, anthropologist D. Gladney, based on his 20-year experience studying the ethnic identities of national minorities living in China, notes that «conducting field research in China without a special permit is illegal, and for the most part only a few researchers can obtain it. Those who were allowed to conduct fieldwork were so restricted and have sympathy to public policy that their work generally lacked dispassionate stance necessary for ethnographic credibility» (Gladney, 2003: 6).

Our field experience of studying the Kazakh diaspora in China showed that even when we received official permission, we were always limited in conducting proper ethnographic research, in particular, in visiting certain areas, access to certain groups of population, for example, on a religious basis, developing certain topics and areas of survey and field research. The «limiters» were representatives of local administration «assigned»

to our research group, who accompanied us during our trips and «passed us from hand to hand» in each local area we visited. This experience has confirmed the conclusion made by D. Gladney: «The idea that civil servants look over their shoulders ... is unpleasant, if not completely unacceptable, for most anthropologists. As a result, modern ethnographers tend to avoid places where such restrictions apply, preferring to work in the field, where they could, for the most part, pitch their tent with impunity» (Gladney, 2003: 5).

The second way to receive access to research «field» is to find a key informant whose knowledge of studied environment is particularly relevant to your research, who can introduce you to people, provide you with necessary information and, moreover, who can tell you a little about what is happening «behind the scenes». For example, what diaspora representatives can and cannot express in relation to their ethnicity and ethnic identity, being in a non-ethnic environment, what restrictions the state imposes on their expression and their own interpretations of identity. However, disadvantage of working too closely with a single key informant is that a researcher eventually accepts their biases as their own, so after gaining wider «access», it is advisable to expand network of informants, involving more people with different worldviews and opinions.

As soon as «access» is obtained, next task every ethnographer faces is to establish connections with the people she/he is studying, so that they can answer questions quite freely and feel quite comfortable around a researcher, behave naturally. This habituation to researcher's presence, which can only be achieved through sustained interaction, is one way in which researcher can try to assess his own influence on what his/her informants say or do. Then he or she can evaluate and compare data collected when informants respond directly to him/her, and data he/she collects when they seem unaware of his/her presence, or get so used to it so that they do not pay attention to their presence. In addition, among ethnographer's personal observations and random conversations occupy a special place. Often, not only the subject, but also the very interlocutor's intonation carries so much information that its analysis can give the most unexpected results.

Conclusion

To summarize, we can conclude that technology of collecting empirical material is a question of researcher's competence, his

qualifications, professional experience and personal characteristics, in particular, ability to build communication. There is no single universal ethnographic tool for working with informants. Depending on the goals and objectives of research, taking into account the characteristics of surveyed society, historical, cultural, political, socio-economic factors affecting it, each ethnographer should build his own tactics and strategy for collecting field material. An experience show that over the years, each researcher, choosing classical methodology as a primary technique, still expands his/her own reserve of techniques and methods for obtaining this or that information.

Thus, fieldwork experience and analysis of relevant literature has shown that there are no universal methodological guidelines in the fieldwork of studying ethnicity and ethnic identity. Therefore, when embarking on such an extremely complex «object» in measurement, ethnographers, guided by the above-mentioned problems, armed with experience of their predecessors, must develop their own strategy and tactics for research. Furthermore, they must take into account complex nature of researcher-informant relationship and remember that field ethnographic research involves many levels of subjectivity. As a result, by the highest standards, every ethnologist has to «rediscover» and «reopen up» research «field» of ethnic identity.

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