Newcastle University Nomadic Settlement in Kyrgyzstan, 29 June – 16 August 2009

Expedition Report: June 2010

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‘Nomadic Settlement in Kyrgyzstan’ is an oral history expedition to the Kyrgyz region of Naryn. From 29 June to 16 August 2009, 30 interviews (one unfortunately lost by the translators) were collected from elderly people who remembered well their childhoods in the 1920s and 1930s. These interviews are truly a gold mine for a researcher focusing on Central Asian economic and social history prior to the 1930s, Soviet collectivization and indigenous response, gender issues, the ‘Great Patriotic War’ beyond the front lines, the interaction between Islam and communist state-sponsored atheism, and numerous others issues. The interviews offer a lot for the understanding of this region and hopefully will be of good use for future studies on any of these topics.

For team leader Yuri Boyanin, a historian, the most fascinating glimpse the interviews offer is to the lives of people between 1916 and 1930. Following the Basmachi Rebellion of 1916, the harsh Naryn, previously used for summer pastures, was now permanently inhabited by tribes resettled away of the agricultural Chui and Issyk Kul regions. In the interviews, a historian will find proof that prior to the 1930 collectivization, Naryn was not – and could not possibly be– settled by a nomadic population. A variety of economic and social factors had pushed the tribes to develop a more diverse social structure and adopt a settled or semi-settled lifestyle. Thus when we speak of Soviet collectivization in Kyrgyzstan, a scholar has to be very wary in using the word ‘settlement’ or ‘sedentarization’. The expedition contributed enormously to knowledge of this region and time period, challenging many Soviet and post-Soviet historical myths. Yuri Boyanin will use the interviews and other sources in his doctoral studies on the topic.


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1. Acknowledgements

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Above all, we would like to thank all the Kyrgyz people of Naryn oblast who shared their life stories, joys and hardships with us, making meaningful our task of preserving their memories. These people often times shared not only their personal stories, but even their last piece of bread with us. For this they will not be forgotten.
2. Introduction, based on Interim Report and earlier observations

During this remarkable oral history project we crossed five Central Asian mountain ranges, spent 24 nights in a yurt at a high altitude and interviewed 31 elderly nomads, witnesses of the Soviet collectivization in the 1930s. We crossed the Kyrgyz Alatau, Suusamyr Tau, Terskey Alatau, At-Bashy (“Horse Head”) and Kungey Alatau mountains – some of them spurs of the great Tien Shan. The highest altitude we ventured was 3760m and we experienced significant climatic variations: a 35-degree heat of the plains of Bishkek followed by a snow blizzard on our first day of fieldwork!

Throughout the expedition we enjoyed the great Kyrgyz hospitality, a reminder of a nation’s past. We were presented with an invaluable knowledge of an era slowly forgotten by the country’s post-independence society, now eager to learn the rules of market economy while looking uncertain about its future squeezed between three powers – Russia, the USA and China. While each is seeking to expand (or retain) its influence on Kyrgyzstan, a fourth power – religion – is slowly getting hold of this ex-officially atheist Soviet republic. Islam is spreading fast in the mountainous regions and people, sometimes desperate in their economic situation, are turning to it, as their opportunities are shrinking.

During the Soviet times, not surprisingly, religion in Naryn was hidden and private, not public. How did it survive these 60 years of official promotion of atheism and socialism so it could regenerate so fast when the regime crumbled? In fact people believed in Islam, although few had the opportunity to observe the Muslim fasting and daily prayers, none hajj.

In a similar light, some traditions lost ground, others almost disappeared during the Soviet Union, again to make a return in the 1990s. Here I would place handicrafts - carpets, shyrdaks, national dresses, and folklore singing (which was then replaced at school by songs of bright socialist future), even previously lavish marriage ceremonies would be kept private, with a mullah signing the couple at their home and only the closest relatives present; no loud festivities or feasts for the whole village (as was the tradition a century ago).

As for gender equality, surprisingly a number of women in the Soviet period would still stay at home and take care of household and children; a prominent writer from Naryn did not let his wife work, neither did others. Bride kidnapping and arranged marriage was still widely spread in the region; heavily punished by Soviet laws yet no one would report it to the authorities. A number of women interviewed worked on the kolkhoz and two were members of the Communist Party – Mrs Tokon Ukueva, head of a district and in charge of recruiting new CPSU members, and Mrs Ainakan Adylbekova, vice head of the Kochkor sovhoz.

One of the most interesting interviews was with Mr Barktabas Baetov, a highly decorated veteran of the war with 39 medals and recently invited to meet Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin. Mr Baetov told a grueling story of how he survived every battle of the Soviet campaign – starting at Moscow in 1941, through Stalingrad, Kharkov, Kursk, Leningrad and eventually Berlin in 1945. He lost all his 4 brothers in the war and many other fellow villagers. Other veterans in the region also told interesting frontline stories. From wives of veterans we could understand the difficult life and hardships people in
the villages endured – shortages of food and labour force (all men capable of fighting were sent to the front, few to return).

Another interesting thing is the uniformity of the stories we heard; for a region divided by tall mountain ranges, most could recall a story of a Russian pig breeder, who settled in the 30s and tried unsuccessfully to make profits from pig-breeding. The story is interesting because even though technology such as radio and telephone appeared at the end of the 50s in Naryn, the oblast was quite uniform and people knew through gossip and rumours what is happening in the nearby district.

In the whole region we could admire very unusual architecture. All the houses in Naryn are built in two floors yet not one family uses the second (attic) floor. Some are examples of 'Slav' houses, others 'Finnish', built entirely from wood. There are some fine examples of Russian colonial architecture, mostly in Naryn and Issyk Kul; in Karakol the Dungan (Chinese Muslim) mosque from the beginning of the 20th century is a masterpiece, built to resemble a Buddhist temple with a pagoda-like minaret, and so is the huge Russian Orthodox Church from roughly the same time. Both are made entirely from wood without nails and are well preserved.

What is also very interesting is the level of development of Kyrgyz language; most people in the countryside cannot write in Russian, although they understand it. One lady could only write in Arabic. Until 1930-1 Kyrgyzstan used the Arabic script; with the coming of the Soviets it was replaced by Latin, so most of the interviewees learned to write in Latin script at school. With the outbreak of the war, Latin was replaced by Cyrillic alphabet. Nowadays much work is needed to develop Kyrgyz as a national language; most young people in the towns (where they go to pursue educational opportunities) are using Russian; our team member Ruslan, even though he is from At Bashy, the heart of Kyrgyzstan, has never read a book in Kyrgyz but only in Russian, and this is the situation with other young people as well.

No health problems reported. No significant incidents during the expedition (save for a few ‘financial’ problems – a bank in the countryside retained my credit card for no known reason, so I had to block it). Otherwise we opened an account in a Kyrgyz bank to avoid carrying large quantities of cash and to have access to funds in every major settlement en route.

In this introduction, written only a few days after the expedition, I would like to thank my team members for the excellent preparation, great time together and an expedition well done; also everyone in my department in Newcastle University (especially Prof David Saunders!) for all the support during the field work; all Kyrgyz people we met for their incredible hospitality.

The interviewees we selected were remarkable and shared great stories and memories with us. We will include a full historical background and conclusions from our oral history project in the full report; the interview scripts and movie footage are not yet translated. A few people and their families requested in their interview-release forms that certain very personal details not be shared (or shared with care). However, most – including the ones mentioned by name in this preliminary report - were extremely happy to make their stories known to the public. Unfortunately a few could not speak for long due to their advanced age, but still told a lot.
The expedition was covered in UK’s *The Journal* and Bulgaria’s *Капитал*, *Одисей*, and *Осем* (‘Ossem’ or 8).

3. Discussion of results and methods

The aim of the expedition, as originally proposed, was to study the influence of forced Soviet collectivization programmes on the settlement of Nomadic Kyrgyz people in Naryn.

This would have been achieved by collecting interviews with elderly people from Naryn who had a good memory of their families’ nomadic past and forced settlement in the 1930s. The expedition employed 30 oral history interviews to gain knowledge of the region’s past. In the results analyzed below we get a glimpse of how alternative sources, such as interviews, can offer another perspective on the turbulent 1920s and 1930s of Central Asian history. While offering new points of view to a scholar, oral history can also cause an unwary scientist to fall into one of its many traps, some of which are discussed below. Hopefully we have avoided the pitfalls of oral history when studying such a distant past, yet we still had to be cautious, especially when basing certain facts solely on fading human memory. To draw more firm conclusions, a further study based on more diverse sources is recommended.

The results achieved after a close scrutiny of the oral sources were quite surprising and ran contrary to existing scholarship on the area. A new thesis came along: that perhaps 1930 and collectivization did not force such a radical change on the inhabitants of Naryn who already, on the eve of collectivization, were either semi or fully settled. The other direction in which the interviewees led us, was to conclude that collectivization, after a radical and violent 1930s and World War Two did not lead to the settlement of nomads, the majority of whom continued enjoying their pastoral, semi-settled lifestyle which they practiced between 1916 and 1930. More evidence is needed on this point as all our interviews focus on the pre-war years and interviewees only hint of their families’ life after the war.

The results we received from the expedition challenge all existing western, Soviet or post-Soviet scholarship on the region. An extended study can contribute enormously to our understanding of the years 1916 – late 1930s. This task will be taken by Yuri Boyanin, the expedition's team leader, in his doctorate studies on Naryn in the early Soviet period. Unfortunately, existing scholars doing research on Soviet collectivization in Central Asia, base their studies on the steppe tribes and clans, but fail to consider collectivization and settlement on the mountainous inhabitants as radically different from those in Soviet Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

As for the original aims of the expedition, the results gathered are not at all surprising. Traditional culture, gender roles and Islam were all undermined by the authorities in the 1930s. Some of them disappeared in the Soviet times, others took a more symbolic use in the creation of Soviet-Kyrgyz ‘nationalism’ (such as traditional dress and crafts) and were put in use for purely symbolic Soviet-wide exhibitions. A third group of traditions and rituals continued to be practiced underground. These were passively accepted by the Kyrgyz communist and government officials in the region, some of whom were also
involved in bride selling, religious weddings (sometimes not coupled by a civil marriage), and even polygamy. Once the Soviet Union collapsed, these rituals and practices emerged and became the pillars of the independent Kyrgyz nationalism. I recommend a future study on these topics, especially Islam. While the results will not be novel, they will be instrumental to show Soviet policies against Islam and traditional beliefs, as well as the indigenous response. Scholars have conducted certain studies on religion in Bukhara and Khiva (Uzbekistan) but as of 2010 no such has been done on Naryn, Talas or other Kyrgyz mountainous regions. A close scrutiny of Soviet-Islamic interaction is also essential for anyone doing studies on modern European-Islamic relations, or secular versus religious policies.

Before we reach the results I start with a hope that the area of history discussed in this report will receive more attention by foreign as well as post-Soviet scholars.
4. Background

According to Soviet and post-Soviet historiography, collectivization completely altered the lifestyle of nomads in the Soviet Union. This might not have been the case in Naryn as oral history sources show. Economic, political and social reasons in the 1920s caused a number of people to settle before collectivization. Following a period of chaos, hunger and violence in the first years of collectivization and the Great Patriotic War, post-war recovery meant for the Kyrgyz a return to semi-settled, pastoral economy. Contrary to scholarly and popular belief, collectivization did not alter ‘revolutionary’ the lifestyles of Kyrgyz. What changed was the ownership of livestock, which now belonged to kolkhozy rather than wealthy households.¹

Anatoly Khazanov and Kenneth Shapiro have expressed that traditional pastoralist way of life and culture in the region were destroyed irreversibly.² Hugh Seton-Watson sees collectivization as ‘an arbitrary end of the nomadic form of life, which prevailed in this area from time immemorial’.³ For Robert Service collectivization meant the ‘destruction of an entire way of life’.⁴ Socialist writers claims that the socialist mode of production has created a radically different way of life:⁵ Alampev wrote that nomads have now switched to a revolutionary settled life,⁶ while Leonid Brezhnev argued that the whole structure of life has changed and people have acquired new attitudes to life.⁷

However, no study has helped us understand how collectivization influenced the indigenous populations in the mountainous lands of today’s Kyrgyzstan. Paul Henze has argued that collectivization in cultivated lands has brought radical changes in the way of life and work of people.⁸ It is not clear how has it influenced lands unsuitable for agriculture, such as Naryn. Anatoly Khazanov writes the ‘Kirghiz do not differ in any essential way from their steppe kinsmen’.⁹ While this is certainly true in terms of language, race and history – which all Central Asians shared prior to the Bolshevik takeover – those who on the eve of collectivization found themselves in mountainous regions could not easily take agriculture to radically change their lifestyle. The lands they occupied could only be economically profitable if organized in a pastoral way. After a decade of chaos, confusion and violence brought by collectivization, they indeed switched back to a pastoral lifestyle.

The 30 people of this oral history expedition all remember the years before and during the Soviet collectivization.¹⁰ They come from varied social backgrounds: 14 are from what the Soviet authorities regarded as ‘poor’ households; six from ‘middle’ and 10 from kulak households (two of them ‘self-dekulakized’ prior to collectivization to become ‘middle’ households).

It should not be forgotten that an oral history research trying to understand the beginning of Soviet rule is by default limited by its own subject. A number of people from Naryn fled to China, first in 1916, then again in 1930-32. These Kyrgyz still comprise a sizeable minority in Chinese Xinjiang today. Others fell victims of kulak or ‘counter-revolutionary’ purges in the 1930s, or died in World War Two. On the surface these are facts evident in our oral history sources but inevitably they also influence the availability of interviewees. We base our study on ‘survivors’ who for more than 60 years were exposed to strong anti-religious and anti-tribal propaganda. Most of the 30 interviewees, when asked, do not harbour any negative feelings towards the regime which once exiled their fathers. A historian has to be careful when basing conclusions
on their statements. However, other sources are in Kyrgyz language or currently unavailable to a student, therefore a study of collectivization in Naryn has to inevitably employ oral sources to understand aspects of the period.

Other primary sources used in the expedition include Soviet and Imperial Russian maps, theoretical works of communism (which shaped Soviet policy in Central Asia), translated articles from Pravda, an ethnographical study of Kyrgyzstan conducted in the 1950s by Klavdiya Antipina, as well as a collection of 35 oral history stories from Kyrgyzstan – also recorded in 2009, yet encompassing the whole of Kyrgyzstan and its diverse ethnic groups. Unfortunately many of the interviewees in Sam Tranum’s project were only born in the 1940s thus do not remember first hand the region before and during collectivization.

The main study is chronologically divided into two parts. The first examines the years from the Basmachi Rebellion in 1916 to the start of Soviet collectivization in 1930. The Basmachi Rebellion against Tsarist colonialism marked the beginning of modern Naryn history when the lands of Naryn, previously used for summer pastures, were permanently settled by refugees from Chui, Issyk kul and other parts of the Semirechie region (Семиречье – roughly corresponding to today’s eastern Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan). In this part I will look at interviews to establish whether these people remained nomadic, as believed, or perhaps they were already settled on the eve of 1930 collectivization.

The second part will examine collectivization in the 1930s to the eve of World War Two and touch upon themes of collectivization’s outcome, resistance, dekulakization, and marriage in Naryn.

The research has been conducted on a small, however diverse, group. It only hints, but cannot assume that other people acted, thought or comprehended the period in exactly the same manner. This research is not representative for the whole of Kyrgyzstan, but only Naryn. A study of collectivization in Naryn can focus on one ethnic group and process only, as the region is not influenced by economic forces such as industrialization and sedentary agriculture, nor by inter-ethnic social forces such as the interaction between Kyrgyz, Russians, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Dungans and Uighurs, which is prominent in other regions to the north and south.
5. Results part A: the years 1916 to 1930

Before focusing on Naryn chronologically from the 1916 Basmachi Rebellion in the Семиречье to the beginning of full-scale collectivization in 1930, it is useful to outline the general geographical and historical features of the region.

5.1. Historical and geographical background: Naryn on the eve of 1916

Imperial Russian maps are very useful to any scholar trying to understand the pre-Soviet human geography of the area. The upper reaches of the Syr Darya River, called with its Mongolian name ‘Naryn’ and constituting today’s Naryn region in Kyrgyzstan, have been annexed by the Russian Empire in 1874. 11 19th century maps show the strategically important military fort, Narin, established on the site of the present day oblast capital and the existence of only one other permanent settlement in Naryn: Kosh-Tube, again located in a big river valley and today roughly corresponding to At-Bashy. 12 Archaeology in the area has proven the existence of older caravanserais and trading posts spread throughout the region. Other permanent settlements might have existed but since native housing comprised almost entirely of zemlyankas and yurts, not Slav-type villages, Russian surveyors were less interested and less likely to map them. 13

1916 was a year of great turmoil for Central Asia. The Basmachi Rebellion which started during that spring in the Ferghana valley quickly spread to the areas of Kyrgyz population. 14 The initial target was the 1916 order of conscription into the Tsarist army, but in the Семиречье it spread as a struggle against colonialists occupying grazing lands. 15 The revolt had two consequences: for the low Issyk Kul and Chui, which spread beyond the limits of our study, nomadism among so many Slav settlers was no longer a viable economic form of subsistence and many Kyrgyz began to settle and engage primarily in agricultural produce. 16 The impact on Naryn was equally profound, as tribes who did not take agriculture were pushed by the Russian authorities headed by General Kuropatkin to the ‘harsh’ Naryn region. 17 Around a third of all Kyrgyz from the Семиречье also fled to China as a consequence, only to return after the Bolshevik Revolution. 18 Previously Naryn and the lands south of Issyk Kul were summer grazing lands, often disputed between ‘Kirghiz’ and ‘Kazakh’ nomads, who regularly laid skirmishes over the use of land. 19

5.2. The 1920s

The 1920s in Naryn were ‘a period of Soviet consolidation during which life remained fairly normal’ and tribes enjoyed modest prosperity. 20 The remoteness of the area and its recent acquisition by Russia had assured that Russian control stays weak in the first years of Bolshevik rule. 21 Martha Brill Olcott argues on the eve of collectivization the Kyrgyz lived like in the Tsarist times, but people could benefit from the establishment of political peace and the opening of markets for their animals and produce. 22 We see proof of this from one of the interviewees, whose father even departed on pilgrimage to Mecca in that period. 23 Hajj was strictly forbidden after collectivization.

However, policies shaped in Moscow soon spread their influence to Naryn. A Kyrgyz ‘national’ territory was created in 1922. Until then no Kyrgyz separate ‘nationality’ existed. In Imperial Russian maps the whole of Turkestan, excluding the Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara showed a ‘Kirghiz’ native population. 24 This Russian confusion over the names and identities of local groups continued until the 1920s when
today’s ethnic and national borders of Central Asia were drawn. An Autonomous Qara-Kirghiz Region was declared April 1922, followed by a Kirghiz Autonomous Oblast and Kirghiz Autonomous Republic, in 1925 and 1926 respectively. In 1936 the status of the territory was elevated to a Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). For E.H. Carr this division was simply a matter of administrative convenience, rather than profound racial, linguistic or historical differences. Outsiders surveyed the population, enforced new rules and tried to reshape the daily life fabric in Central Asia among ‘Soviet’ lines. Launched in 1929, collectivization was also part of the ideological and practical agenda to exert political control over Central Asia and break away with the entire past of these people.

5.3. Defining Kyrgyz ‘nomadism’

Khazanov defines nomadism as ‘mobile pastoralism which has nothing to do with agriculture’. However, such ‘proper’ pastoral nomadism is not common and perhaps not possible. Philip Salzman defines nomadism as a movement of a whole household during an annual round of productive activities. For him sedentarization denotes a restriction of nomadism and increase in sedentism. An assumption that nomadic and settled people are wholly distinct does not bear close scrutiny, as in many cases because of division of labour, tribes have both nomadic and settled members. Semi-nomadic and semi-sedentary pastoralism, although more difficult to define, involve supplementary agriculture and periodic changing of pastures throughout the year. According the Anatoly Khazanov, the Kirghiz at the end of the 19th and beginning of 20th century were semi-sedentary, migrations taking place only over three months every year with not all family members involved in the movement of livestock. Edward Allworth has termed the Kyrgyz ‘transhumant’, yet other scholars are very strictly defending the term to relate only to southern Europe so I will instead use Khazanov’s ‘semi-settled’.

5.4. Were the Kyrgyz nomadic in 1930?

Of the 30 Naryn family case studies, almost half, 13, lived in yurts prior to collectivization. Myrzamat Bogachiev (born 1922) states houses and the village appeared in 1932 when the kolkhoz was established. Prior to settlement no village existed and people lived in the mountains. Shaausup Bugubaev claims the village was settled in 1931, the date the school was also established. In the past a traditional aul (mobile village/unit), again according to Bugubaev, consisted of three to six households moving together along the pastures. When settled, Kalinin village comprised 25-30 households. To compare with collectivization in Kazakhstan, a new settlement in the steppes consisted of around 10-20 auls, each consisting of 10-15 families. In Kyrgyzstan the size of auls and villages was much smaller perhaps due to the lower population. Leslie Dienes argues most of the settlements created in Kyrgyzstan were very small, corresponded to the location of winter auls, and differed markedly in architecture and layout from villages in settled farming valleys, ‘probably lacking the permanence of the latter’.

Four interviewees recall a story of semi-settled lifestyle. Omur Mamaev of Acha-Kayindy (born 1928) was born in a yurt in the mountain pastures, before the village was firmly settled. Yet many people, he continues, lived in more permanent sarays (sheds) during the winter. Chotaly Torshalev of Kok-Jar (born 1922) tells a similar pre-
collectivization settlement pattern, while Asym Bubu Turganbaeva and Juma Kozubek, both from Ak-Jar, tell us of their parents living a semi-settled lifestyle and occupying *zemlyanky* (earth houses) during the winter. Asym Bubu shares the village was settled in 1933, probably on the spot of earlier semi-permanent winter settlement.\textsuperscript{43}

Seven interviewees claim to have lived in houses before Soviet collectivization. The most dubious statement is by Kemel Zhuzu of Pervomayskoe (Birinchi-May): a Soviet commission passing through Naryn just after the Revolution and assigning names to villages, which must have already existed in 1918.\textsuperscript{44} We have three more interviewees from Pervomayskoe so we can draw a useful comparison. Toktobubu Mambetkary cannot provide us enough details; her family fled to China and settled in Pervomayskoe after Stalin's death. Toktokan Zhantekirova (born 1916), also claims the whole village, houses and streets existed prior to Soviet collectivization. Her father had built the house ‘before the Soviet times’ and the structure comprised a typical two-room house: one room for storage and cooking and one for living, with a window. The floor was made of earth. We do not know whether the walls were also made of mud. She did not use the words ‘zemlyanka’ or ‘shed’ to describe her house, thus we might contemplate it was a more solid structure. Suunduk Moloev (born 1918), also of Pervomayskoe, claims that prior to collectivization his family lived in *zemlyankas* with pine-wood roof. During the summer months his father, a shepherd for a wealthy family, lived in yurts higher in the mountains. We do not know if the whole family moved along - which is probable. The father provided enough food by hunting.

Thus we do not know for certainty when was the village of ‘May’ established, only that a Soviet commission might have named it just after the Revolution. The commission, giving it the Kyrgyz-language name ‘oil’ was most probably local rather than Russian.

Suunduk's wife is from the nearby settled village of Taldy Suu. We learn her grandfather was a judge and official for the Russian colonial authorities. The family was wealthy enough to buy their food, rather than produce it themselves. She was born in 1929, at a time when ‘more houses started appearing’ in Taldy Suu. Her family lived in a 3-room house while poorer families inhabited 1-floor mud and wood houses.\textsuperscript{45}

Ermek Shaindy (born 1922) recalls before collectivization her family and many other households living in the valley of Ak-Sai, on the other side of the At-Bashy range. She remembers houses spread all over the Ak-Sai pasturelands. We see the semi-nomads of this region, like Ermek, later settled into At-Bashy to perhaps move them closer to Soviet control:\textsuperscript{46} the At-Bashy mountains acting as a barrier to prevent a possible escape to China. Settlement was thus also a strategic task.

Bolui Satyeva of Bash Kayindy says that even before she was born in 1923, her father used to live in a house built by Uzbeks from the Ferghana valley who, unlike the Kyrgyz, were skilled in house-building. Bolui remembers many Uzbeks and Dungans living in the region of At-Bashy at the time. Ethnographical maps confirm the existence of an Uzbek population, in fact the only sizeable minority in the whole Naryn.\textsuperscript{47} Possibly these Uzbeks brought and spread their settled, technology. Bolui describes her house to have consisted of the usual two rooms and a window. Walls were made of mud, roof of pine, while a stove which heated both rooms was placed in a corner, heating both rooms. However, her family still practiced a limited form of nomadism, her father bringing their livestock every summer to pastures near Ak-Jar, a few miles along the At-Bashy river.\textsuperscript{48}
Seine Alymkulova (born 1916), also from Bash Kayindy, says houses appeared in 1925, despite her own family still living in yurts. Seine's family was poor; her father provided for them through hunting and working as a shepherd for wealthy families (such as Bolui’s). Social differences like this might explain why some people lived in houses and others in yurts. Anatoly Khazanov argues that the elite nomads were in a position to acquire land and large number of livestock thus becoming partially or fully sedentary.

Turumkan Kasambaeva, born in Dyubeli (later to become ‘Lenin’ Kolkhoz) claims that before collectivization, during summers her family lived in yurts and during colder seasons in a 3-room house. Bakyina Akunova from Ottuk says her family was wealthy and lived in a house before the Soviet collectivization. From Sadybakas Sadyrov we can understand Russians sent architects in 1916-7 to build houses in exchange of local tribes' support against the Basmachi.

Four interviewees do not provide exact information on whether their families were settled or living in mobile yurts prior to collectivization. Naamataly Asanaliev only shares that villages existed before collectivization, but not whether his own family was settled. Abdylda Ali Askar (born 1920) and Niyazbek Kasymaliev (born 1938) tell us an equally incomplete story but that villages were settled after collectivization.

A claim that the region might have been semi-settled gets support from two of the 13 Naryn yurt households: Kurmanbubu Tilematova (born 1925) states that in the years prior to collectivization wealthy people lived in houses while poorer lived 'outside'. Kasymaly Shadokanov, born in 1923, shares that while the rest of the family lived in yurts, before collectivization his grandfather used to live in a two-room house.

Prior to Soviet collectivization, the existence of shops, owned by wealthy households, and Islamic medresse schools for their children, which still functioned in the 1920s further leads to a logical conclusion of the existence of permanent settlements – even if inhabited by the majority only during winters.

5.5. A backward region?

The Kyrgyz remained in the list of 97 ‘backward’ Soviet nationalities until 1932, while Central Asia, according to Alampiev was a ‘backward and impoverished outlying region of Russia, inhabited by nomadic, illiterate cattle breeders’. Karpinsky also stresses on the ‘backwardness’ of the region. Before the Soviets, the Russian Imperial Foreign Minister Gorchakov described the indigenous populations as ‘semi-barbarous people, nomads without affixed social organization’.

However, Kyrgyz society was a complex social organization that bound all social elements together. Its cornerstone was inter-dependence: ‘poor’ families took care of pasturing livestock, food-production and other household duties for the wealthy – who in turn looked to the poor as a labour force for their previously everyday domestic ‘nomadic’ duties, themselves concentrating on tribal leadership, trading or fulfilling Russian colonial government tasks (some inherited Soviet local leadership positions in the 1920s). What the Soviet Union regarded as ‘exploitation’ was a way to prevent society disintegrating, stopping many impoverished households falling away and taking agriculture as subsistence. We can agree with Leslie Dienes that those who did not fit into this system took the economic security of agriculture and sedentarism in Issyk kul and Chui.
6. Results part B: the 1930s decade

6.1. Historical background: Soviet-wide collectivization

Stalin announced the start of a ‘new revolution’ on 27 December 1929 and on 5 January 1930 the Central Committee released a decree on the wholesale collectivization of the Soviet Union. Collectivization was part of the ‘socialist offensive’ first Five-Year Plan, which called Central Asia to be collectivized by 1933. Kulak production was to be replaced with large-scale collective farms.

The first months of collectivization were chaos: there were no blueprints, no discussions and no systematic instructions on how to proceed with collectivization so officials on the okrug and village level had to often improvise. Collectivization was restarted more vigorously in September 1930, causing even wider resistance and losses.

6.2. Collectivization in Naryn

By 1937, 89.1% of all Kyrgyz households were collectivized. Based solely on the interviews, it is difficult to build a clear picture of collectivization. Interviewees are less specific on this period than on the years prior to collectivization. Most put the establishment of kolkhozy as happening in the 1930s, only six give specific dates. Two people date kolkhozy 1930, two 1932, one 1930-1 and then we also have the date of establishment of Kochkor Sovkhoz - 1927.

We know from our primary and secondary sources that the raion committees appointed leaders and officials of kolkhozy. According to Juma Kozubek (who later became head of Ak-Jar kolkhoz), these political commissars who visited each kolkhoz-to-be, were predominantly Kyrgyz and only a few Russian. The officials gathered all people together and asked them to contribute their animals for the creation of collective farms.

The sources show that in the process of creating kolkhozy, traditional Kyrgyz tribal administrative organization was fundamentally transformed: aksakals (elders) were no longer the people with most authority and gave way to those chosen as kolkhoz leaders.

6.3. Resistance

The 1930s peasant struggle against collectivization has been largely forgotten in history, perhaps because of the long decades of Soviet silence and censorship. In Kazakhstan 22% of the population was lost due to deportations, starvation or flight to China. Leslie Dienes argues the Kyrgyz avoided such high cost of human lives and did not suffer as greatly as Kazakhs. But did large-scale resistance exist in Naryn?

Two interviewees from At-Bashy region mention tribes rebelling on the eve of collectivization. As the cause of unrest they put people lacking information of what is happening. According to Shuru Tulokabyldov, fear from authorities motivated people’s resistance. He recalls a rumour that Russians boil children for meat.
Mambetkary’s family had no knowledge of what will happen and thought Russians want to take away their animals by deceiving people they will bring benefits and education to children. Toktobubu and eight more interviewees mention their own families or others fled to China.

There is a discrepancy over who actually fled. According to Omur Mamaev only the wealthy and mullahs fled. Shuru Tulokabyldov, from the same region as Omur, tells a story of everyone but children and elders escaping. He and Juma Kozubek (both from Ak-Jar/At-Bashy) describe a place nearby which holds the bones of many Kyrgyz rebelling or escaping to China; according to Shuru, 40 were shot there. Some families managed to escape to Xinjiang and either returned after spending the winter of 1930-1 or stayed there until Stalin’s death in 1953. Others were stopped from migrating and returned by force, or captured after joining the ‘counter-revolutionaries’, imprisoned or shot.

Two interviewees share that authorities, upon launching collectivization, first took away the horses of people. The reason was that horses were needed for use of soldiers in the army; however this might have been one of the steps taken by the state to limit dissent and resistance. Horses gave nomads mobility to escape authority and mount an effective armed resistance. The horse was also a symbol of their lifestyle which the regime tried to change. Suunduk Moloev's father before joining the Basmachi stole three horses from the kolkhoz. By taking a horse he acquired the means to defy and resist authorities. Horses had to be liquidated, even before kulaks.

Those who did not flee had another ‘traditional weapon of the weak’ to resist collectivization: slaughter their livestock to prevent acquisition by the state. Leslie Dienes and Hugh Seton-Watson have estimated livestock losses during collectivization in Kyrgyzstan to be ¾ of all animals. According to Ian Matley, losses in the height of collectivization 1930-2 were 69% for sheep and goats and 65% for cattle. The losses shown in statistics can be explained not only by resistance, but also by diseases and neglect for the care of animals in the new kolkhozy. Of our interviewees only Omurkul Dapiev recalls his father (a ‘middle peasant’) slaughtering all of his livestock instead of handing them over to the kolkhoz authorities. Many recall an air of collaboration with the regime in establishing its policies out of fear being seen as 'people's enemies' and kulaks.

Toktokan Znahtekirova recalls most did not harbour bad feelings giving their animals to kolkhozy. Akun Ibraev recalls his family handing over 600 sheep, 17 cows and 12 horses in 1930; Chotaly Torshalev's family gave 600 sheep and 200 horses to the kolkhoz, together with all land the family possessed. Bolui Satyeva's father (classified as 'middle peasant') gave all of his animals to the kolkhoz in return for being allowed to keep some. Interviewees agree that kulaks' animals were confiscated first and only afterwards were poor asked to 'donate' their animals to the kolkhoz.

Three Party decrees dating from September 1932 to December 1935, allowed a limited restoration of property for private use. Our sources reveal only ‘middle’ and ‘poor’ households being allowed to keep animals. Naamataly Asanaliev's family could keep 1 cow and 1 horse, Naamat Janaliev 1 sheep and 1 horse, while some were given animals from the kolkhoz (acquired from kulaks) if they did not previously own any. Toktokan Zhantekirova's family was allowed to take 10 sheep and 10 goats. In return
people had to provide wool, butter or other agricultural produce to the *kolkhoz*.\(^9\) Anyone requiring an animal for transport was allowed to take a horse or yak from the *kolkhoz*.\(^{10}\)

**6.4. Collectivization and dekulakization**

Dekulakization went hand in hand with collectivization.\(^{101}\) On 30 January 1930 the Central Committee adopted a formal resolution calling for the liquidation of kulaks as a class.\(^{102}\) Three categories of kulaks were distinguished: the most 'dangerous' would face execution, those in the second category exile, and those in the third, resettlement within their own region and their property expropriated.\(^{103}\) Kulaks were labeled 'counter-revolutionaries' but unlike those who opposed the regime directly by joining the Basmachi or fleeing to China and who could come from various social backgrounds, kulaks formed a specific class: wealthy land and livestock owners. (In our primary sources we see other factors for labeling one kulak: tribal standing, Muslim education, trade with Andijan, China or Tokmok, previous position in the Russian colonial government or membership in the clergy.) Kulaks did not need to oppose collectivization openly (or oppose it at all) to be 'liquidated'. Ironically, following 1916 the kulaks as a class had tremendously increased in Naryn and other areas with few Russian settlers.\(^{104}\) Tribal leaders and wealthy owners had enhanced their economic positions, taking advantage in the increased security and market opportunities provided by a Russian and Soviet indirect rule, thus contributing to an increase in inequalities.\(^{105}\) As an outcome, as many as a third of all inhabitants of Naryn were classified as kulaks.\(^{106}\)

'Dekulakization' stripped the wealthy off material belongings and destroyed their economic power which rivaled state and *kolkhoz* authority and according to Stalin, 'enabled kulaks to subvert masses'.\(^{107}\) The forceful expropriation of kulak property initially fueled collective farms, while traditional social structure was turned upside down. Whereas collectivization was largely pursued by local Kyrgyz cadres (appointed by the *raikom*), interviewees point towards Russians as those who initiated kulak purges.\(^{108}\) According to Kurmanbubu Tilekmatova, at the start of the collectivization drive Communist Party Russians gathered all villagers and enquired of previous social relations. Poor complained against their previous masters,\(^{109}\) whose houses were then searched by Russian Party officials and ordinary Kyrgyz, confiscating most property.\(^{110}\) These accusation sessions might have been limited by traditional society: even the most 'impoverished peasant' would hardly go against his tribal leaders, *aksakals* (elders), mullahs, or *akyns* (bards), although the state tried by all means to portray Soviet purges as guarding the interests of poor and middle class.

Educated and entrepreneurial people were also exiled: some for fear of fleeing over the mountains (Myrzamat's father), but others, although of poor origin, of showing ambition during collectivization (Kurmanbubu Tilekmatova's father in law, who built the village school of Ak-Muz).\(^{111}\) We understand many were accused of being foreign, Chinese spies and tortured or executed.\(^{112}\) In April 1933 Stalin had formally authorized the death penalty to be carried in Central Asia against crimes of 'sabotage, insurrection, banditism and theft'.\(^{113}\) People, according to Myrzamat Bogachiev, were even persecuted for calling the new white sheep 'dogs'.

**6.5. The fate of kulaks**
Our sample is very useful for understanding the fate of kulaks. We have 10 cases of rich families. Myrzamat Bogachiev's father in law was 'taken away' together with 14 more kulaks from Taldy Suu. Myrzamat reports all but one perishing in the hands of authorities. Four other interviewees speak of Stalinist repression in their families, yet all four exiled were later released. Bakyina Akunova's father and uncle, Akun and Alseit, were both arrested in 1931-2 together with the famous poet Kazybek. Ainakan Adylbekova's father (Adylbek) was a mullah and was taken away to Siberia, together with the famous Toktogul and other 'spiritual kulaks'. Exiled kulaks at the time faced a standard eight-year sentence, yet 'shortly' after exile Akun and Alseit were released for hard work and good behaviour. Adylbek was similarly 'justified' by the authorities for being a dedicated worker. Akun Ibraev's father, a producer of bozo, was initially sentenced to '10 years', but the term was lowered to two years for good behaviour and eventually he was released after only one. Sadybakas Sadyrov's father and grandfather were arrested for being leaders of the Bolush tribe but managed to avoid the death penalty and eventually released earlier from their exile. All these people would be placed into the second category of kulaks, only Sadybakas' family fits into the first, 'most dangerous'. The early release of Akun, Alseit, Adylbek and Sadyr was a consequence of a 27 May 1934 Central Committee resolution, legally allowing the restitution of civil rights for 'the most distinguished' kulaks, who had proven their loyalty to the Soviet regime with 'honest, productive work and good behaviour'.

In all these cases, kulaks' cattle and belongings were confiscated. We learn that after being released, they were isolated and 'treated badly', living in woods with no close contact even with their relatives. However, what is remarkable is that none of them was exiled together with their whole family. Only Sadybakas was joined by his father, and the brothers Akun and Alseit were exiled together. Even then, the rest of the family stays: we read of Akun's wife working in the fields to feed the remaining family, with her baby on her back.

Some who had lost their livestock prior to collectivization successfully dekulakized themselves, which is significant in the study of Soviet collectivization, as scholars claim the only way to dekulakize oneself is through flight. Bolui Satyeva's uncle lost all the family's property after his brother died en route to Mecca in the 1920s; the family was now classified as a 'middle' household. Bakash Ashamova's father was a rich and prosperous kulak yet he died in 1933 before being persecuted. The last three cases of kulak households authorities did not take measures against them other than a formal accusation and confiscation of all their livestock to the kolkhoz. Naamataly Asanaliev even claims his father continued to trade shyrdaks and ala kiïz carpets, which his family made, during the 1930s in Andijan, by receiving a spravka document from the authorities.

A January 1930 Central Committee decree had banned kulaks and their families from joining kolkhozy. However, a 1938 law rehabilitated the families of kulaks and allowed them to regain all civil rights and progress on their own merits if they embrace the Soviet communist cause. In three of our cases, children of kulaks were elected CPSU members, some just a few years after their fathers' release from exile. Adylbek's three children all became Party members; Sadybakas similarly became a Party member and avoided conscription in the war because his job at the Frunze Party Print House was considered strategically important. Four other children became workers or officials in their village kolkhozy. Bakyina Akunova's brother became head of militia in Kochkor and in charge of constructing houses in Naryn, his son succeeding him as Kochkor
militia head and one of the first to own a Moskvitch car. All of these people, by becoming members of Party or kolkhoz were formally re-introduced to Soviet society as trustworthy citizens. We can see from our interviewees that kulak’s children all found opportunities working for the state, finding their place in the system which had previously destroyed their families. This is a subject, together with many other aspects of collectivization in Naryn, worth dedicating a further study on.

6.6. Outcome of collectivization in Naryn

The Kyrgyz as a whole were not prepared to oppose the regime. While some tribes and individuals resisted the regime, as the interviews show, many submitted to Soviet rule. By 1934 the last major resistance in the region was silenced. All the people were settled ‘firmly’ into houses, becoming sovkhozniks and kolkhozniks in what some scholars call a ‘new system of state feudalism’ and ‘second serfdom’. The interviews point at barley as the only crop produced in the mountainous Naryn lands during the 1930s, while potatoes and wheat only started to be cultivated after the war. Trade with Andijan might have continued to some extent in the 1930s but it certainly declined in importance as those who were involved in it – wealthy Kyrgyz – were ‘dekulakized’. Traditional links over the At-Bashy mountains with China must have declined in the period, as Republican China became an ideological enemy of the Soviet Union and many were purged as ‘Chinese spies’. Hunting, a traditional form of subsistence was banned by the authorities, while eagle hunting, a symbol of nomadic identity also disappeared. The regime tried to make people as dependent as possible on kolkhozy. According to Richard Pipes, being economically dependent on the regime means surrendering your freedom. The right to property, which creates an autonomous sphere, is even more important than the right to vote. Property was thus one of the first to be taken away during collectivization.

Religion also lost ground under the Soviets. The interviewees share that along with collectivization, mosques were razed while anti-religious propaganda penetrated the youth at school.

In neighbouring Kazakhstan, Soviets perceived industry as the chief lever that ‘did away with backwardness and facilitated political and cultural growth’, while transport infrastructure facilitated the ‘development of formerly remote areas’. In Kazakhstan, settlements with schools, houses, hospitals, power stations and roads were built to accommodate industry. In Naryn no such forces of ‘transformation’ existed and the area remained only economically exploitable for pastures.

In turn, the lack of large settlements, industry and transport infrastructure attracted few Russians to settle to Naryn. The Slav settlers were the ones who brought new economic patterns and ideologies to Central Asia and transformed economy and society. Most Naryn inhabitants until the 1930s had escaped these forces of change, as the region attracted few sedentaries, but even after collectivization very few Russians, as we learn, migrated to the area. Naryn throughout the Soviet period remained predominantly Kyrgyz.

Five interviewees point at Russians holding high Party, administration or Sovkhoz positions, and eight mention Russians appointed as teachers. The oblast administration at village and kolkhoz level comprised local cadres. From our primary sources we learn those in charge of collectivization in every village were barely
According to Marxist-Leninist ideology, someone in charge of bringing down ‘proletariat Revolution’ (there was no proletariat in Central Asia) had to be able to read, comprehend and propagate the socialist teachings. Myrzamat Bogachiev recalls most of the 20 kolkhoz officials appointed in Taldy Suu were illiterate and could not even sign their names. Many were not aware of the philosophy of collectivization. Another problem in Naryn, evident in our interviews, remained the shortage of atheist cadres for teachers.

Soviets no doubt wanted to modernize and indoctrinate the region but simply did not have the means. Examining our sources we find an instance of this in the Soviet desire to bring modern medicine to Naryn during the 1930s. The regime surely had the means to deal with traditional healers, yet could not replace them with a suitable alternative. By 1939, there were only 169 Kyrgyz ‘modern’ doctors in the whole Republic! Most other were Russians, but they and modern medical facilities could not penetrate every village in Naryn. Kurmanbubu Tilematova recalls a local healer being assigned as the head village doctor in Ak-Muz, continuing to use herbs and traditional medicine. Seine Alymkulova shares her mother, who was a folk doctor, was contacted by Russian medical personnel in At-Bashy to share her knowledge of traditional herbal treatment, while continuing to act as the village nurse.

Paula Michaels is wrong in her assumption that traditional healers continued to serve the population despite the existence of modern biomedical facilities. To the contrary – the state had to continue to rely on existing medical structures because no alternative existed. This was in no way untypical for the Soviet Union, which in difficult times employed the support of even its ideological enemies. One interviewee recalls mullahs being selected as school teachers during the early 1930s when only a handful of people were literate and could become school teachers. (Although other interviewees, such as Toktokan Zhantekirova recall seeing no mullahs at all during that decade.) In this case a historian might argue that the campaigns of dekulakization and korenizatsiya, both openly supported by Stalin, clashed on this occasion in Naryn. It was probably left to oblast secretaries to decide on policy priorities.

### 6.7. Marriages

Scholars believe the Soviet Union lost the battle over traditional marriages. Our interviews initially confirm this: at least six were involved in arranged marriages; at least four falsified their age to the legally allowed 17; four women were kidnapped; at least four acknowledged to have given/received kalym (bride price); one was involved in polygamy; a man married for the widow of his brother; two did not register in front of the authorities. (It is possible there was simply no Zapis aktov grazhdanskogo sostoyaniia office in many rural parts to register marriages.)

Only two divorced after an arranged marriage or kidnapping. We can see the full spectrum of byt (custom) crimes in a sample of only 30 interviews! Soviet laws of 1926-8, more strictly implemented after an 8 July 1944 decree, had banned all these crimes of byt. Yet byt, it seems, defeated Soviet socialist ideals. Traditions such as kalym, kidnapping and polygamy persisted, despite efforts of authorities (sometimes also involved in the same ‘crimes’). Virtually all our interviewees married in the traditional Muslim way, or it would be considered immoral by Islamic society.

The Soviet Union had the means to oppose all these habits, yet by not interfering much in marriage it ensured something strategically important: widespread
intermarriage between tribes and clans. The gentleman who had married thrice had wives from three different tribes, something other interviewees acknowledge being very rare in the past. People so carefully guarded their customs – which they still keep – that they let go of their tribal loyalties and affiliations, their only historical markers of indigenous identity. All divisions and separation had to disappear before national and Soviet identities were created.
7. Conclusion

The close scrutiny of our oral sources shows that already prior to Soviet collectivization a number of Kyrgyz in Naryn lived in permanent settlements. An extensive study is recommended to clearly put all of them on a map. Even with existing sources, a scholar can conclude the phenomenon of pure nomadism was not economically and socially possible in the years 1916 to 1930. The household’s economic situation rather than tribal or clan differences determined whether a family is fully or semi-settled.

It is logical to assume the existence of permanent housing in Naryn before collectivization contributed to the formation of settled villages. However, not everyone in these settlements lived in a house. We see a number of poorer households still residing in tents and yurts and their duties still revolving on being on the move with animals during the warmer months. Living in zemlyankas and building sheds for animals must have been an appreciated convenience and becoming more common, while richer could afford three-room houses. Perhaps some households still roamed the remaining few free pasturelands in auls. However, the tendency was to group households and labour force together. Thus when the Soviets came it was only an administrative task to give names to villages – the boundaries of some of which were already been shaped by economic forces.

The violent collectivization campaign did not extinguish Kyrgyz pastoral way of life. According to Anatoly Khazanov, in an ecological zone occupied by nomads, sedentarization can only take place where agriculture is a possible alternative and has economic advantages over pastoral nomadism. The state was reluctant to keep the region semi-nomadic and people independent which would impede their political education. However, despite the ideological bias against a wandering way of life, after the disastrous 1930s decade, the Soviet government recognized its economic benefits (producing meat and wool) and incorporated the annual migratory cycle into collective stock raising. Perhaps collectivization and firm settlement were experiments which in the long term proved unfeasible and unsuccessful.

As we also see in the interviews, the importance of husbandry declined only in prestige, but not in the number of people dependent. Khazanov is wrong to say the biggest change was herds no longer belonged to shepherds, who had now become labourers on state-owned and collective farms. From our primary sources we saw that prior to collectivization many Kyrgyz again pastured animals other than their own.

Like in the old days, many shepherds continued to move between pastures with their whole families. Four interviewees recall a return to a pastoral lifestyle: Naamat Janaliev shares that initially during collectivization all animals were fed on grasslands around the kolkhoz but afterwards they were allowed to pasture higher in the mountains, ‘as people had used to’. Asym Bubu Turganbaeva recalls people were allowed to head to the mountains again as shepherds, returning to yurts. Myrзамат Bogachiev says people looked after Soviet cattle, assigned specially designated areas at the pastures, closer to rivers. Bubu Aytambetova shares that during summers only a few people stayed down in the village while most went the pastures together with their families and kolkhoz animals. Such partially nomadic lifestyle kept the majority of people and working
conditions poor and created few opportunities for professional advancement. On the other hand, improvements were made in the veterinary medicine, zootchnical and economic education of people.\textsuperscript{181}

We can call this ‘pastoral communism’ being built in Kyrgyzstan.

The decade of 1930s to World War Two demands a further, careful study of how collectivization influenced the Kyrgyz in the short and long term, until the Soviet collapse. The 1930s might be even more remarkable in Naryn history as the only time when nomads were fully settled. After the 1930s, livestock breeding continued to be practiced in a manner unchanged from centuries.\textsuperscript{182} Anatoly Khazanov argues the sedentary world always wins out over the nomadic; however the only benefit a sedentary civilization can have from these marginal, unviable for agriculture lands, is to leave their economy nomadic.\textsuperscript{183}
8. Some further comments – Education

Education was considered the third front of communist Revolution. The goal of korenizatsziia, which spread in Naryn together with collectivization, was to create an indigenous teaching corps to indoctrinate people in the values of communism and atheism.\textsuperscript{184} Statistics show that by 1939 only 4756 people in rural parts of Kyrgyzstan had advanced beyond 7th grade; the majority had finished either 1-4 grades (200 941) or 5-7 grades (55 883).\textsuperscript{185}

Our oral sample holds information for 21 people’s education, who are in fact disproportionally well educated: 15 completed at least 7 years of school – which was the education minimum established by Moscow only in 1949.\textsuperscript{186} Of them three completed 8th grade,\textsuperscript{187} three 9th grade\textsuperscript{188} (Kurmanbubu Tilekmataova not progressing to 10th grade only because her parents died), and two completed all 10 years of school.\textsuperscript{189} From the other six, Chotaly Torshalev started school at the age of 15-16 and was conscripted into the war after finishing 3rd grade; Naamataly Asanaliev completed 4 years of elementary school and then advanced to veterinarian school but did not share how many years he studied there.\textsuperscript{190} Three people did not attend school: Zhyrgalbubu Torshaleva’s parents were afraid to let her walk every morning to the distant school; Suunduk Moloev was an orphan and his brothers did not perform their duty to encourage his education; Sadybakas Sadyrov did not complete Soviet school despite his family encouraging him, but tried to graduate from the Pedagogical Institute in Naryn. He was already literate, possibly in a medresse.\textsuperscript{191} From the cases of Suunduk and Sadybakas we can contemplate the authorities during collectivization did not pursue so actively to educate those who were already aged 12-16.

By the time our interviewees graduated, they were possibly more educated than their teachers, some of whom were barely literate.\textsuperscript{192} In 1939 there were only 9577 Kyrgyz teachers for the whole SSR.\textsuperscript{193} This shortage of teachers had forced the Central Committee to order that in national regions priority be given to the establishment of pedagogical schools. We can see in our sample many were funneled to these institutes, rather than technical and central VUZy.\textsuperscript{194} Twelve of our interviewees (and/or their husbands and wives) were enrolled into the Pedagogical Institute in Naryn, taking a two to six month teaching course.\textsuperscript{195} Only two completed VUZy: Barktabas Baetov, who graduated from the Kyrgyz National University, and Ali Askar in Leningrad. A shortage of teachers, Party and government cadres ensured even the most educated and ambitious pursued their careers either in Naryn or in Frunze.\textsuperscript{196}
9. Some further comments – War and identity

The effects of the war on Naryn are another matter worth scholarly attention. Naamataly Asanaliev recalls people becoming increasingly closer together during and after the war, fought by the entire society. This period of immense tragedy to Central Asians played a great role fusing national and Soviet identities into the lives of these people. In Naryn many men lost their lives, while women had to take care of their traditional household and family duties, and also take men’s responsibilities in the kolkhoz. Some, like Seine Alymkulova, were employed building roads and canals in the region. Men fought side by side with other nationalities, strengthening their sense of national affiliation, women worked side by side for many years, feeding their families and supplying the front lines. This is significant for people who had lived far apart for long periods and possessed no other identity than clan affiliation.

In 1916, an order calling for Central Asian conscription ignited the region into a revolt, while a similar law for conscription in September 1939 (when the Soviet Union invaded Poland) saw people remaining loyal to the state. By the end of Great Patriotic War, national and Soviet identities crystallized. The spirit of Soviet friendship, cornerstone of Leninist-Stalinist ideology, was engrained into these people. The ideological goals of collectivization and settlement were achieved, even if permanent settlement of mountainous nomads remained an unresolved issue.
10. Translation and the ‘Kyrgyz’

The biggest weakness of the project is its translation of primary sources. The dates, facts and thoughts of people are all evident in the translation, but their words are not as vivid, descriptive and emotional as originally exclaimed. The interviews are fit a historical and geographical use, but ethnographers or other scholars will benefit more from a better translation which will hopefully be soon developed.

The author has used the spelling ‘Kyrgyzstan’ and ‘Kyrgyz’ to name the Republic and its inhabitants.

As the author has established in the historical background of the dissertation, prior to the Bolshevik takeover, the inhabitants of most of Turkestan were referred to as ‘Kyrgyz’. From 1920 to 1926 Kazakhstan officially held the name ‘Kyrgyz Autonomous SSR’, before being renamed to its present day name. The name ‘Kazakhstan’ comes from the Cossacks (Казаки) who inhabited the northern steppe region of today’s republic. After 1926 ‘Kyrgyz’ remained in use only for the mountainous region between Lake Issyk Kul, Tien Shan, Naryn and the Ferghana Valley. Prior to the national delimitation they spoke one language, which is only preserved in today’s Kazakhstan. In Kyrgyzstan the language was arbitrary developed away.
11. Finances

Final Budget – calculated in August - September 2009.

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¹Seminars, books, maps and travel costs for Ruslan to tour Naryn region and pick interviewees.

²International bank transfer and local cash withdrawal fees (2.5% of the sum).

³Visas include Yuri’s travel to/from Istanbul for their issuing.

⁴Internet, post/courier and local phone simcard/calls.

⁵Camcorder and recorder tapes, extra camcorder batteries and external microphones – bought from London, sent to Kyrgyzstan via a courier.

⁶Translation of 100 hours of interview footage from Russian/Kyrgyz into English and placing subtitles on the movie; this we decided to do in a professional studio. Also includes costs to send the translated video and audio material, plus written interview transcripts to Britain.

⁷Ruslan received $1000 for his efforts and work in the planning and execution of the expedition; this we agreed during the last days in Bishkek. In our opinion a fair amount considering the contributions he made as a local team member.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Sources of money</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Cross Award, Royal Geographical Society, awarded 22 Apr 2009</td>
<td>£2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle University Expeditions Committee, 9 June 2009</td>
<td>£1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle University Vacation Scholarship, 30 Apr 2009</td>
<td>£1260</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newcastle Spirit of Entrepreneurship Award 2009, 7 May 2009</td>
<td>£600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Contributions from Ms Yana Tzaneva</td>
<td>£1060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Contributions from Mr Yuri Boyanin</td>
<td>£713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Scholarships and Grants</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Personal Contributions</strong></td>
<td><strong>£1773</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>£7133</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The final budget is $11,608, calculated at a 28.08.2009 rate of UK pound to US dollar 1.62737. In June 2009 the rate was around 1.40 and that is when some payments (airplane tickets, etc) were made. The currencies used during the expedition were Euro, Sterling, US Dollar, Kyrgyz Som and Norwegian Crown (used to buy the cheapest available airplane tickets – from the Norwegian website wideroe.no). All daily expenses, regardless of currency were immediately recorded and converted in US dollars – the most widely used currency in Kyrgyzstan.
12. The Kyrgyz Presidential Elections of 23 July 2009

In light of the April – June 2010 unrest, first in northern Kyrgyzstan, then in the southern regions of Osh and Jalal-abad, the elections of July 2009 should be mentioned here as the primary cause of the bloody violence months later. Our team was in the town of Naryn at the time of the July elections. Heavy police and armed forces presence could be felt in the town about a week before the elections, something quite unusual for the otherwise calm and quiet province. Posters of Atambaev and Bakiev, the two primary contenders were placed everywhere in the town and all other settlements. The police station in Naryn had raised the flag of Bakiev. In fact most police stations in the region had raised Bakiev’s flag, only in the major town of Kochkor could Atambaev’s flag and portrait be seen on the façade of the police station. This signified that perhaps power is still very much personal in Kyrgyzstan, the institutions being weaker than the personalities in charge of them.

We did not conduct any interviews on the day of elections, as well as immediately before and after it. Our Kyrgyz team members and staff declined Yuri’s offer to travel to their homes to vote, saying the results are already wide known: Bakiev will win. And he won, with a confident 76% of the popular vote. Almaz Atambaev of the opposition won only 8% and when the results were announced, requested to withdraw his candidacy claiming fraud on the side of Bakiev. There were some minor protests in Bishkek and Balykchy but blood was not shed and people, it seemed, were accepting Bakiev’s new 5 year term. Here it should be noted his first term was only four years, from 10 July 2005, when President Askar Akaev was ousted from the presidency, to 2009. According to the Kyrgyz constitution, no candidate can run for office if he or she is 60 years of age. Bakiev would have turned 60 on 1 August 2009, so he scheduled the elections a week before his anniversary and a whole year before his first term ends. The ironic in this case is that he did rule for 5 years, just as his first legal term was about to end, he was forced to a self-exile in April 2010, however at a huge cost in human life.

Kyrgyz media, for a whole week following the elections, portrayed voters as entirely satisfied with the political situation. People were shown voting for Bakiev holding flowers which they smilingly presented at the polling stations. The elections could only be described as surreal and eerily quiet. We expected the bloody events of 2010 to happen after the results were announced and large-scale discontent to fill the town squares. We were even prepared to leave the country in need, but the situation remained calm. Perhaps Bakiev had taken good measures to secure the country, by placing armed forces in all strategic towns, ready to crack down on opposition. The posters of Bakiev, showing happy and smiley people, stayed on the streets until the CIS informal summit in Cholpon Ata (Issyk Kul oblast) in early August 2009, in which the heads of state of the Central Asian stans and Russia met. President Bakiev wanted a show of power to his colleagues. He could not allow a rival to step to the presidency, nor any protests to erupt before or during the CIS meeting, which could discredit him and his presidency, bound solely by personal loyalty and financial benefits for his followers. His cautiousness played a crucial role in those months and no major protests or challenges to his power erupted until April 2010.

At the time of writing, the future of Kyrgyzstan looks less certain, less democratic, less tolerant, less open. This expedition could not have been implemented if such widespread unrest had erupted during our time. Perhaps we used one of the last windows of
opportunity to research and collect precious memories of the Kyrgyz past, before they are lost or unavailable to us.

In Bishkek we had a chance to meet with many Kyrgyz professors, students from the entire CIS (most former Soviet republics), as well as few western scholars such as Prof Jeff Sahadeo of Carleton University, one of the world’s premier historians of Central Asia. Prof Sahadeo was in fact our neighbour in Bishkek during our later stay in the capital.

We all hope the future of Kyrgyzstan will be brighter and more prosperous for its people, who already have lived through enormous hardships in their lives. Perhaps today’s events in 60 years will be the subjects of another oral history project in Kyrgyzstan. For the time being, I am leaving this study of the 1930s here, but promise to take off from where I left. I hope future researchers of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia will find it useful in their studies of how Kyrgyzstan reached where it is now.
13. Endnotes

5 Dienes, Pasturalism, 361.
6 P. Alampiev, Soviet Kazakhstan (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958), 47.
10 On translation see the end comments on Translation.
11 Sketch of the Acquisitions of Russia in Europe and Central Asia Since the Accession of Peter I to the Throne, Edward Stanford, London, 1876.
13 J.C. Walker, Turkestan and the Countries Between the British and the Russian Dominions in Asia: Mapped on the basis of the Surveys made by British and Russian Officers up to 1878, Survey of India, 1879, 2 sheet.
14 Robert Service, Society and Politics in the Russian Revolution (New York: St Martin, 1992), 54
18 Dienes, Pastoralism, 350.
19 D’Encausse, ‘Organizing and Colonizing the Conquered Territories’, 212.
20 D’Encausse, ‘Organizing and Colonizing the Conquered Territories’, 211.
24 Dienes, Pastoralism, 350.
25 Ibid., 350.
29 Dienes, Pastoralism, 350.
30 Ibid., 350.
31 Soch. v 5 tomos. Tom. 1. 1912, 265.
33 Carr, History of Soviet Russia, 335.
34 Allworth, Soviet Nationality Problems, 176.
37 Kolstoe, Russians in the Former Soviet Republics, 23.


31 Ibid., 19


35 Allworth, *Central Asia*, 125.


37 Interviews 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 27, 28, 29.

38 Interview 17.

39 Interview 22.

40 Olcott, *Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan*, 130.


42 Interview 14, 15, 16.

43 Interview 10.


45 Interview 11.

46 Interview 12.

47 Khazanov, *Outside World*, 221.

48 Interviews 23, 24, 26.

49 Interviews 7, 8, 19.

50 Interviews 18, 20.

51 Interview 22.

52 Interviews 7, 11, 26.


54 Ibid., 56.


59 Interview 18.


65 Olcott, *Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan*, 126.


67 Viola, *War Against the Peasantry*, 175.


71 Interviews 1, 29.

72 Interviews 3, 17.

73 Interview 6.

74 Interview 28.

75 Interview 17.

76 Interview 1, 4.

77 Interview 7.

Dienes, *Pasturalism*, 357.
Hoskins, *History of the Soviet Union*, 244.
Dienes, *Pasturalism*, 357.
Interviews 1 and 4.
Interview 4.
Interview 15.
Interviews 1, 4.
Interview 15.
Interviews 3, 16.
Interviews 4, 27.
Interview 4.
Interview 16.
Dienes, *Pasturalism*, 357.
Interview 27.
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Interview 7.
Interview 9.
Interviews 14, 18.
Interview 20.
Interview 7.
Interviews 26, 29.
Interview 4.
Figes, *Whisperers*, 86.
Dienes, *Pasturalism*, 357.
Interviews 6, 17, 18, 24, 26.
Interview 18.
Interview 24, 26.
Interviews 6, 17, 18.
Interview 20.
Interviews 6, 7, 11, 16, 17, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30.
Interview 17.
Interview 24.
Interview 28.
Interview 29.
Interview 30.
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Lewin, ‘Who was the Soviet Kulak’, 212.
Interview 11.
Interview 16.
Interviews 6, 7, 30.
Interview 7.
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Figes, Whisperers, 353, 436.

Interviews 6, 7, 24, 11.

Interview 1.

Martin, Affirmative Action Empire, 313.

Khazanov, ‘Contemporary Pastoralism in Central Asia’, 505.

Fitzpatrick, Stalin’s Peasants, 4.

Interviews 14, 16, 18, 21, 22, 23, 26, 28.

Interview 20.

Interviews 9, 16.

Heller, Utopia in Power, 244.


Interviews 7, 30.

Interviews 9, 10, 12, 13, 20, 22, 30.


Alampiev, Soviet Kazakhstan, 52, 94.

Ibid., 46.


Allworth, Central Asia, 125.

Interviews 1, 7, 18, 28, 29.

Interviews 9, 12, 14, 18, 22, 24, 27, 28.


Interview 17.


Interview 20.


Interview 18.

Martin, Affirmative Action Empire, 384, 386.

Interviews 12, 18.


Kulaks headed most Central Asian village Soviets during the 1920s, before being labeled ‘enemies’.

(Pethybridge, One Step Backwards, Two Steps Forward, 405-7.)

Interview 27.

Increasing by all means possible the literacy of non-Russian nationalities to ensure their participation and support for Soviet government. (Martin, Affirmative Action Empire, 12.)

Interviews 3, 11, 12, 14, 17, 24.

Interviews 3, 14, 21, 23.

Interviews 21, 23, 25, 28.

Interviews 3, 12, 21, 22.

Interview 4.

Interview 5.

Interview 16, 26.

Interview 14, 25.


Interview 4.

Interview 1, 2, 3, 7.


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176 Dienes, *Pastoralism*, 357.
177 Khazanov and Shapiro, ‘Contemporary Pastoralism in Central Asia’, 505-7.
179 Interviews 3, 9, 17, 21.
180 Interviews 7, 16, 20.
181 Olcott, *Collect Drive in Kazakhstan*, 142.
186 Total Kyrgyz SSR titular nation population in 1939 was 1,460,000, of which 1,189,000 rural. (M. Holdsworth, ‘Soviet Central Asia’, *Soviet Studies*, 3, (1952), 275.)
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