

KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN, AND UZBEKISTAN

Life and Politics during the Soviet Era

EDITED BY
TIMUR DADABAEV
HISAO KOMATSU

**POLITICS
AND HISTORY
IN CENTRAL ASIA**



Politics and History in Central Asia

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Timur Dadabaev
University of Tsukuba
Tsukuba, Japan

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Timur Dadabaev • Hisao Komatsu
Editors

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan

Life and Politics during the Soviet Era

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Editors

Timur Dadabaev
Tsukuba University
Tsukuba-Shi, Ibaraki, Japan

Hisao Komatsu
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies
Tsukuba, Japan

Politics and History in Central Asia

ISBN 978-1-137-52235-1

ISBN 978-1-137-52236-8 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-52236-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016959414

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Printed on acid-free paper

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CONTENTS

- 1 **Collective Memory, Oral History and Central Eurasian Studies in Japan** 1
Hisao Komatsu
- 2 **Recollecting the Soviet Past: Challenges of Data Collection on Everyday Life Experiences and Public Memory in Post-Soviet Central Asia** 21
Timur Dadabaev
- 3 **Famine in Kyrgyzstan in the 1930s and 1940s** 39
Guljanat Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun
- 4 **Soviet Agricultural Policy and Cultivating “Virgin Lands” in Kazakhstan** 53
Konuralp Ercilasun
- 5 **Religious Life of Kyrgyz People According to Oral Materials** 67
Ilhan Sahin
- 6 **Stalin’s Passing Recollected** 81
Timur Dadabaev and Guljanat Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun

7	Evaluations of Perestroika in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Public Views in Contemporary Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan	103
	<i>Timur Dadabaev</i>	
	Index	141

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Timur Dadabaev is an Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Tsukuba, and concurrently Adjunct Associate Professor, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, University of Tokyo. He occupies the position of the Director of the Special Program for Central Asian Studies at the Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Tsukuba, Japan. He has been published in *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, *Central Asian Survey*, *Asian Affairs*, *Asian Survey*, *Journal of Contemporary China*, *Pacific Review*, *Nationalities Papers*, *Inner Asia*, *Strategic Analysis* and others. He is currently working on two book projects: *Identity and Memory* (2015, Routledge) and *Japan in Central Asia* (2016, Palgrave). He can be reached at dadabaev@gmail.com.

Konuralp Ercilasun is a Professor in the Department of History, at Gazi University in Ankara, Turkey. He conducts studies and writes research papers on the history of the steppe and mainly on Turkistan and Mongolia. During his research, he highly utilizes the classical Chinese documents such as dynastic histories and dynastic records. Ercilasun has a book on the history of Kashgar; and he wrote several articles on various topics such as Xiongnu, Bishkek, Silk Road and topics related to the modern history of Central Asia.

Konuralp Ercilasun has actively participated in the oral history projects at Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. He was the coordinator and the academic advisor of the Oral History Project on the Formation Process of the Kyrgyz Identity during the Twentieth Century which was mainly

conducted by the Maltepe and Manas Universities during 2007 and 2008. He participated in the Living History of Central Asian People: the Case of Kazakhstan which was conducted by the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and University of Tsukuba (NIHU-IAS Project).

Guljanat Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun is an Associate Professor at the Department of Modern Turkic Studies at Gazi University, Ankara. Her publications are mainly on socio-cultural and intellectual history of the Kazakhs and Kyrgyzs in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Her current research focuses on the Kazakh and Kyrgyz societies during the Soviet period implementing oral history methods. She is a coeditor of *Central Eurasian Studies: Past, Present and Future* (Istanbul: Maltepe University, 2011) and *The Uyghur Community: Diaspora, Identity and Geopolitics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, to be published).

Hisao Komatsu is a Professor of Central Asian studies at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. His research focuses on the modern history of Central Asia and recent works include *New Approaches to Eurasian Studies: Memories and Utopias* (University of Tokyo Press, 2012, coeditor, in Japanese) and *Islam in Great Changes: A Modern History of Central Asia* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2014, in Japanese). He is also found among the coeditors of *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World: Transmission, transformation, communication* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Ilhan Sahin is a Professor at the Istanbul Aydin University, Istanbul. His research focuses mainly on the nomads and nomadism of Central Asia and Ottoman Anatolia. In this context, he uses comparatively written sources and oral history sources regarding the nomads. His recent works include *Nomads and Nomadism: New Approaches in Kyrgyz and Ottoman Nomadic Studies* (published by NIHU Program Islamic Area Studies, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo 2013). He is also coeditor of *Altay Communities: Migrations and Emergence of Nations* (Istanbul 2014), *CIEPO Interim Symposium: The Central Asiatic Roots of Ottoman Culture* (Istanbul 2014) and *Turkic Civilization Studies I: In Commemoration of Professor Karybek Moldobaev* (Istanbul 2016).

Collective Memory, Oral History and Central Eurasian Studies in Japan

Hisao Komatsu

In June 2006, the Department of Islamic Area Studies (IAS) was created at the University of Tokyo. It was established as a joint research centre aimed to further promote comprehensive studies of Islamic areas through associated research between the National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU) and the University of Tokyo. The IAS Centre at the University of Tokyo (TIAS), being a part of a broader network of similar research centres, namely, those at Waseda University, Sophia University, Kyoto University and the Toyo Bunko (The Oriental Library), conducted its first five-year research programme from the fiscal year 2006 to 2010. The common research topic at the TIAS was formulated as ‘Thought and Politics in Islamic Areas: Comparison and Relations’ with the focus on Central Eurasia and the Middle East, and the studies were aimed at examining the dynamic interrelations between thought and politics in modern and contemporary times in the region since the eighteenth century through comparison and correlation. In 2011, the IAS project as a whole launched the second five-year research programme (2011–2015). The author served

H. Komatsu (✉)
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo, Japan

as the representative of the Centre from 2006 to 2011, and was mainly involved in developing Central Eurasian studies. The author referred to the objectives as follows:

Central Eurasia, which consists of Central Asia (including Eastern Turkistan, that is, Xinjiang in China), the Caucasus and the Volga-Ural region—with the exception of some areas—after the collapse of the USSR in 1991 transformed into a ‘newly risen’ Islamic region where scientific research has finally become possible. Though the region currently attracts great attention for its energy resources and geopolitical importance of being located between Russia, China and the Middle East, scientific study of the region itself, even from a global standpoint, has only begun, so, accumulation of basic knowledge on the structures and dynamics in this region should be the most essential task. Paying attention to specific features that the Russian Empire and the USSR, as well as the Qing Dynasty and China attached to local Muslim societies, we will take up such topics as ‘political power and Islam’, ‘Islam and social order’, ‘creation of nations’, and re-Islamisation trends from the final years of the USSR. Investigating these problems through comparison with the Middle East and other areas would likely facilitate clarification of the specificities of Central Eurasia. As a general objective, we are aiming to develop new methods for Central Eurasian area studies.

This chapter aims at reporting on the current results of our research and, at the same time, providing some thoughts on retrospective activities and prospects of Central Eurasian studies in Japan. Furthermore, due to the character of the research activities carried out by the TIAS and research interests of the author, it is historical research work that is mainly dealt with in this chapter.

STUDIES ON CENTRAL ASIAN HISTORY IN JAPAN

When we think of the roots of Central Eurasian studies in Japan, it should be Central Asian history studies, also known as Inner-Asian history or Western Regions studies, that first come to mind. This field is known for its prolific research results, as can be seen from the *Bibliography of Central Asian Studies in Japan, 1879-March 1987* (The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1989). Central Asian historiography, that had already emerged in pre-war Japan, took its roots in Oriental history studies, and therefore, was characterised by heavy usage of Chinese-language historical sources. Hisao Matsuda (1903–1982), who greatly contributed to the

development of historical and geographical studies of ancient Central Asia, was the most representative researcher of this stream. Together with such positivist historiography, attention is drawn to the fact that, beginning from the 1930s, interest in local affairs in Central Asia was rising in context of the political and military developments in Japan. The interest in the vast area stretching from Manchuria and Mongolia to Soviet Central Asia was inseparably linked with the continental policy and Pan-Asianism of the time; specialist magazines of that time even used extracts from the Soviet press to report on the socio-political situation in Central Asia. It is interesting to note that such reliance on Russian-language sources in the field of Central Asian studies made possible the early introduction of the achievements of Soviet Oriental studies into Japan. Thus, among others, there were introduced such works as B. Ia. Vladimirtsov's *History of Social System of the Mongols* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Research Bureau, 1936), V.V. Bartold's *History of Oriental Studies in Europe and Particularly in Russia*, translated by the Research Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Seikatsusha, 1939) and A. Yakubovskiy and B. Grekov's *History of the Golden Horde* translated by Yukichi Harima (Seikatsusha, 1942). However, this obviously politically oriented trend was discontinued after Japan's defeat in WWII, and the next generation of researchers took on conducting positivist academic research independent from the political context.

With the beginning of the 1960s, there appeared a cohort of pioneering researchers who, not limiting themselves to the traditionally used Chinese sources, also began to actively exploit historical sources written in Turkic, Persian, Mongolian, Tibetan and other Central Asian languages. For example, Nobuo Yamada (1920–1987) proved that it was possible to use contractual and other documents in ancient Uighur as sources in Central and Northern Asian history studies; Masao Mori (1921–1996), while successfully contributing to historical studies of the ancient Turkic peoples through research of the Orkhon inscriptions, indicated the important role the Turkic peoples had been playing in global history. Minobu Honda (1923–1998), through scrutiny of sources in Chinese and Persian, managed to eradicate the negative image associated with the Mongol Empire and build the foundations for the study of the Mongol Empire; Toru Saguchi (1916–2006) shed light on the history of Eastern Turkistan (Xinjiang) in the post-Mongol period, a topic that had long been unelucidated by the world's academia. Hidehiro Okada (1931–) has also made

prominent achievements in post-Mongol Inner-Asian history studies by highlighting the importance of the Mongol Empire in world history.

It was these researchers who laid the groundwork for today's Central Asian studies and who instigated scientific research toward the state formation by nomads and, furthermore, to mutual relationships between the nomads and the sedentary population in China and other adjacent areas. They also showed interest in the dynamics of commercial and cultural exchanges, as symbolised in Sogdian merchants who used to link Eastern and Western Eurasia through the Silk Road. On the whole, their research, through capturing Central Asia as a self-reliant historic world, contributed to a rightful evaluation of historical roles played by the northern nomads that had been traditionally looked down upon within the distinct perceptions of the Sino-barbarian dichotomy as barbarian tribes (*yidi*: non-Han tribes in the east and north of ancient China) inferior to 'civilised' China. Such approach even led to the rethinking of the history of China from the broader perspective of Central Asian history. The endeavour was taken over by the next generation of researchers, such as Takao Moriyasu and Masaaki Sugiyama, who vigorously pursued research in the pre-modern history of Central Asia. Hidehiro Okada and Masaaki Sugiyama came to argue that the Mongol Empire was the first entity in history to unite the whole of Eurasia and therefore opened a new epoch in the history of the world. Such paradigm shift paved the way to re-examining the history of China, which previously used to be regarded as a self-sufficient independent world, within the vaster context of all-Eurasian history. Positioning the Qing dynasty's rule over the eastern part of Eurasia as not just another Chinese dynasty, but rather as a Central Eurasian empire appeared quite an effective approach.

On the other hand, from the end of the 1960s, another research trend emerged that focused on studying Islamic Central Asia. Studying the history of Central Asia during the Islamic period that requires usage of historical sources in Arabic, Persian, Chaghatay and other languages had long been left untouched by Japanese researchers. It was Eiji Mano who was a pioneer in this field, producing a series of works on the Timurid Empire and the memoirs of the last ruler, Babur, *Baburnama* (*Book of Babur*). Mano claimed that Timur owed his success to 'the relationship of interdependency between the nomadic and sedentary societies' or, in other words, to his ability to skilfully combine the military strength of the nomads with the economic potential of the sedentary peoples (Mano 1977), thus stressing the importance of the relations between the North

(nomads) and the South (the sedentary) in the historical development of Central Asia. This theory caused disputes with those who, acknowledging the economic and cultural significance of the Silk Road, tend to rather put emphasis on East-West relations in Central Asia and remains a controversial issue that has yet to be solved. In the author's personal opinion, probably both the east-west and south-north axes were functioning in the region, even though with dynamically changing intensities in different periods and different areas; however, it seems that in post-Mongol Central Asia it was the south-north axis that played a predominant role.

Anyway, Mano's pioneering research paved the way for the remarkable development of Islamic Central Asian history studies in the 1980s. This trend was also supported by the tremendous progress in Islamic history studies in Japan that began in the 1970s. At the same time, the next generation of researchers began to produce results on a wide scope of diverse topics, such as post-Timurid political history, structure of the Timurid state, cultural activities protected and patronised by the Timurid court, political and social roles of the *Naqshbandi* order and other Sufi orders, social relations and spirituality in the pre-modern period represented in hagiographies, status of the saint's descendants (*khwaja* families) and pilgrimages to mausoleums of saints (*mazar*), diplomatic relations between the Uzbek khanates and the Ottoman Empire, Russia and the Qing dynasty's rule over Central Asia and their interaction with the Muslim population and national movements of the Turkic Muslims. However, it is also a fact that research activities were subject to certain restrictions of that time. Most of the original historical sources were located in the Soviet Union and were tremendously difficult to access. On the other hand, the available materials had their own limitations, which significantly curbed the scope of research themes.

DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL EURASIAN STUDIES

In such course of events, there appeared a new trend to refer to the discipline previously known by such terms as Inner-Asian history, Central Asian history or Northern Asian history by a new term: Central Eurasian history. Thus, in 1975, young Japanese researchers from the Kansai region established the Young Researchers' Eurasian Studies Society. It was the prominent philologist of Hungarian origin, Denis Sinor, who proposed the neologism 'Central Eurasia'; he wrote the monograph *Introduction à l'étude de l'Eurasie Centrale* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963)

with the aim to lay out the basics for philological and historical studies of Central Eurasia, by which he meant a vast space of the continent populated by the Ural-Altai peoples. In such context, the term ‘*Central Eurasia*’ denoted a cultural concept rather than a distinct geographical definition. Of course, the introduction of the term doesn’t mean that it immediately spread throughout academic circles—even the concise English version of the monograph itself was titled with the conventional ‘*Inner Asia*’, rather than proclaiming ‘*Central Eurasia*’ (Sinor, 1971).

Probably the primary reason why Japanese researchers have readily accepted this new term is that they deemed this concept, that alludes to the immense space spreading from the Great Wall of China to the steppes of southern Russia on the northern shore of the Black Sea, most adequate for describing the dynamism of historical events developed in the regions and their great significance in world history. To name one example, this term proves to be truly valid when dealing with the history of the Mongol Empire. Another factor can be seen in that from the end of the 1980s, researchers of Slavic-Russian history and Central Asian history began to collaborate in studies of Asian regions within the Slavic-Russian world; and various research projects, including Islamic area studies, also boosted the trend. Then, the dramatic collapse of the USSR in 1991 revealed the existence of a vast Islamic region stretching out across Central Eurasia. Such changes have opened up access to previously unavailable historical texts, made it possible to conduct field research and facilitated collaboration with local researchers, and therefore, have tremendously improved the overall research environment.

In recent years, in Japan, the concept of Central Eurasian studies goes far beyond Central Asian history in its narrow meaning and comprises a vast range of research topics, including the history of Crimea, Caucasus, the Volga-Ural region, Western Siberia and other Muslim-populated areas of the Russian Empire, as well as the current state of affairs in the newly created independent countries in the post-Soviet space, construction of new international relations, social transformations during the transitional period and Islamic revivalism. It looks likely that the new forum of Central Eurasian studies will eliminate the boundaries between Russian/Soviet studies and Central Asian studies and provide an integral standpoint in order to capture the whole picture in all its complexity. It is worth mentioning in this connection that the Slavic Research Centre at Hokkaido University, a leading Slavic studies institution in Japan, has recently proclaimed the concept of ‘Slavic-Eurasian Studies’

and has already been successful in its research. In 2014, it was renamed as Slavic-Eurasian Research Center. Meanwhile, more and more works that have Central Eurasia in their titles have been published lately. Here are a few examples.

Mori Masao and Okada Hidehiro, *Central Eurasia* [World History Viewed from Peoples: 4] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1990, in Japanese): A general description of Iranian, Turkic, Mongolian, Uralic and Tibetan peoples.

The Integration of Central Eurasia [The Iwanimi Lecture of World History 11] (Tokyo: Iwanimi Shoten, 1997, in Japanese): Collected papers on major issues of Central Eurasian history from the 9th to the 16th century.

Hisao Komatsu ed., *A History of Central Eurasia* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2000, in Japanese): The first general history of Mongol, Tibet, Eastern Turkistan, and the former Soviet Central Asia. The Korean translation was published in 2005 by Sonamoo Publishing Union.

Stéphane A. Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao eds., *Research Trends in Modern Central Eurasian Studies (18th–20th Centuries): A Selective and Critical Bibliography of Works Published between 1985 and 2000*, vol. 1–2 (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 2003–2006).

Komatsu Hisao, Umemura Hiroshi, Uyama Tomohiko, Obiya Chika and Horikawa Toru eds., *Cyclopedia of Central Eurasia* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2005, in Japanese): The first comprehensive encyclopedia of Islamic Central Eurasia that contains about 1000 items and covers such geographical areas as the former Soviet Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Volga-Urals, Afghanistan, and Xinjiang.

Uyama Tomohiko ed., *Empire, Islam, and Politics in Central Eurasia* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2007): Collected papers presented at the international symposium “Regional and Transregional Dynamism in Central Eurasia: Empires, Islam and Politics” held by Slavic Research Center in July 7–8, 2005.

The term Central Eurasian studies has already taken root abroad as well. For example, the North American-based Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS), created in 2000, has organised annual conferences at various universities throughout North America. And in Europe have already been published two issues of *Central Eurasian Reader*, a research review

journal with an annotated bibliography of research works in the field of Central Eurasian studies around the world (Dudoignon 2008–2010).

Perhaps no clear geographical definition of Central Eurasia that everyone in the world would accept exists, but when the author was asked to provide an explanation of ‘Central Eurasia’ for the above-mentioned *Cyclopaedia of Central Eurasia*, he defined it as a concept ‘used to refer to the area that includes, in terms of modern geographic classification, the Crimean Peninsula, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Xinjiang in China (Eastern Turkistan) and Western Siberia’. The definition was followed by a list of five factors that, in the author’s opinion, make Central Eurasia a distinct area. They are quoted below for reference.

The first factor is the energetic activities of the nomads that started in antiquity. The Scythians, Huns, Alans and other tribes belonging to the culture of horse-riding nomads were the predominant force throughout the region and through exchanges and migration over the vast territory played a proactive role in state formation. It was the Mongols that revealed the specific traits of nomads to the utmost extent in the thirteenth century, at the times of the Mongol Empire, when they did not only unify Central Eurasia for the first time in its history but also expanded its boundaries into adjacent regions. Moreover, the mutual relationship built between the nomadic and the sedentary, as can be seen in the example of the Timurid dynasty, constituted an important element of the historical dynamics of this region.

Second, the Turkisation of the region caused by wave-like migration and settling of nomadic Turks. As the result of a long process that took several centuries, almost the whole population of Central Eurasia, except for some parts of the Caucasus, Afghanistan and Central Asia, came to speak one of the Turkic languages. Heroic epics shared in this vast region and the Chaghatay language, a dominant written language of the pre-modern epoch, were not other than the legacy of Turkisation.

Third, the Islamisation that proceeded almost in parallel with Turkisation. During the period from the seventh century to the nineteenth century, Islam spread over almost all Central Eurasia, except for some parts of the Caucasus, the Volga-Ural region and Western Siberia. As Muslim society in each local area took on original specific lifestyles while inheriting diverse pre-Islamic traditions, they were by no means homogeneous. However, it is important to note that Islamic law instilled some mild order in these societies, and various networks were built through education at madrassas and the activities of Sufi orders.

Fourth, the shared historical experience of being annexed first by the Russian Empire and then by the USSR. Since the conquest of Kazan by Ivan IV in 1552, most parts of Central Eurasia were under the Russian Empire's rule, and after the Russian Revolution of 1917, it was integrated into the Soviet Union. The national and state framework of contemporary Central Eurasia took shape during the period of Russian and Soviet rule with the peoples going through modernisation during the Soviet period. Although Xinjiang in China and Afghanistan did not experience direct rule by the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union, the Soviet presence, as the examples of the East Turkistan Republic or the Afghan war demonstrate, often was a decisive factor, particularly in contemporary history.

And finally, with the deepening crisis at the end of the 1980s and subsequent collapse of the USSR, the geographic concept of Central Eurasia attained its new, contemporary meaning. Central Eurasia came to be understood not only as a region joined by the common historical and cultural factors of the past but also within the new context of the direct or indirect shock felt from the collapse of the immense Soviet Empire, efforts to form a new order and the significant impact of the entire region on the trends in the present-day world. Central Eurasia—although it partially overlaps with adjacent regions such as Slavic territories, the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, North-East Asia—apparently can be regarded as a distinct area, and, what is more, such classification proves to be valid (*ibid.*: 346–347).

In addition, it should be noted that, rather than having clearly defined geographical borders, the territory that should be understood as Central Eurasia has, over its history, repeated expansions and contractions depending on political, economic or cultural conditions of the time. Sometimes, it might be practicable even to include the Mongolian Plateau, Manchuria and Tibet. In any case, this regional concept proves to be an effective tool for examining dynamic interrelations that developed here in the course of history from ancient times to the present day or conducting comparative studies and securing a broader historical perspective without falling into overspecialisation in historical studies.

ISLAMIC AREA STUDIES

Islamic Area Studies, being, to borrow the words of the first director, the late Professor Tsugitaka Sato, 'a new research field aimed at constructing a system of positive knowledge on Islam and Islamic civilisation' while

attaching importance to inter-area comparison and historical approach to all research issues, started in 2006 with the purpose of enhancing understanding of the contemporary Islamic world through interdisciplinary research and analysis of interactions between Islam and various geographical areas. The IAS Centre at the University of Tokyo (TIAS) also formulated a research programme in line with these basic principles. The programme proposed by the Central Eurasian studies group comprised five research themes. They are presented below together with the main research results.

(1) Development of Re-Islamisation Processes in Modern Central Asia

The project is aimed at examining the Islamic revivalist movements in Central Asia from the second half of the eighteenth century to the present from the viewpoint of re-Islamisation of Muslim societies. Particular attention is paid toward the mutual relations between Islam and ruling political powers of the time such as Muslim *khans* and *amirs*, the Russian Empire, the USSR and the newly created independent republics. Implementation of the project requires usage of unpublished historical sources as well as diverse contemporary materials from Central Asia and necessitates close collaboration with local researchers. Furthermore, proper attention must also be paid to dynamic research of Islamic religious practices through anthropological methods. Analysing relations and conducting comparisons with the Middle East presents another important research objective under this theme.

Main results:

Hisao Komatsu, "From Holy War to Autonomy: Dār al-Islām Imagined by Turkestanī Muslim Intellectuals," *Le Turkestan russe: Une colonie comme les autres? Cahiers d'Asie Centrale*, 17/18, 2009, 449–475.

B.M. Babadzhanov, *Kokandskoe khanstvo: vlast', politika, religiiā* [The Kokand Khanate: Authority, Politics, Religion] Tokio-Tashkent: TIAS, 2010.

Hisao Komatsu, *Islam in Violent Changes: A Modern History of Central Asia*, Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 2014 (in Japanese).

(2) Comprehensive Studies on Periodicals in Central Eurasia in the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

During the period between the Russian Revolution of 1905 and the time of the Soviet Revolution of 1917, there were numerous newspapers and magazines published in the territories of Central Eurasia under Russian rule that served as forums for Muslim intellectuals on Islamic reformist thought and emerging nationalism. Although such periodicals became easily accessible after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, their examination has only just commenced. This research project aims to conduct empirical analysis of the discussions developed in the vast intellectual space, including the Middle East and Russia from the perspective of comparison and correlation.

Main results:

B.M. Babadzhonov, *Zhurnal <Haqīqat> kak zerkalo religioznogo aspekta v ideologii dzhadidov* [The Journal Haqīqat Journal as the Mirror of Religious Aspect in the Jadid Ideology], TIAS Central Eurasian Research Series, No. 1, Tokyo: TIAS, 2007.

Zainabidin Abdirashidov, *Annotirovannaiia bibliografiia turkestanikh materialov v gazete <Tarzhumān> (1883–1917)* [Annotated Bibliography of Turkestan Materials in the Tarzhuman Newspaper Terjuman], TIAS Central Eurasian Research Series, No. 5. Tokyo: TIAS, 2011.

Farkhshatov, M.N., Isogai, M. and Bulgakov, R.M. (ed.). 2016. *“My Biography” of Riḍā’ al-Dīn b. Fakhr al-Dīn (Ufa, 1323 A.H.) with an Introductory Essay and Indexes*, TIAS Central Eurasian Research Series, No. 11. Tokyo: TIAS, 2011.

(3) Comprehensive Studies on Thought and Activities of Uighur Nationalists

At the initial stage, the research topic is set as ‘Basic Studies on Historical Descriptions by Uighur Nationalists and Intellectuals in the First Half of the 20th Century’ with the aim of conducting basic analysis of their main historical works related to Eastern Turkistan. This includes defining important parts of text with subsequent translation and annotation, collection and systematisation of data on the authors (including the circumstances of writing the relevant text), analysis of the historical depiction peculiarities and historical perception of the author, evaluation of the significance of the material and other work. At the next stage, ‘A Comprehensive Analysis on Discourse of Uighur Nationalists’ is to be carried out. This stage also includes comparative study with other regions, particularly with Russian and Soviet Central Asia.

Main results:

Yuriko Shimizu, Yasushi Shinmen, Kentaro Suzuki, *A Study of Muḥammad Āmīn Bughra's "Sharqī Turkistān Tārīkhi,"* Tokyo: TIAS, 2007 (in Japanese).

Yuriko Shimizu, *The Autograph Manuscript of Muḥammad Āmīn Bughra's Sharqī Turkistān Tārīkhi*, 2 vols., Tokyo: TIAS, 2014–2015.

(4) Comprehensive Studies on Dynamics in the Modern and Contemporary Ferghana Region

The Ferghana Valley, where presently the state boundaries of three countries, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, meet in a rather complex web, has been a hypocenter of drastic socio-political upheavals in Central Asia throughout modern and contemporary history and is also known for its close relations with Eastern Turkistan stretching beyond the Pamir Mountains. The widespread activities of the *Naqshbandi* sheikhs here in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are a vivid example of this. At present, the region has become a hotbed for the Islamic revivalist movement, and it cannot be ignored when analysing concurrent tendencies in Central Asia. Acknowledging such significance of the Ferghana Valley, this research project set out to comprehensively examine the developments and social transformations in the region in modern and contemporary times, for which purpose, in addition to analysing documents in private possession, hagiographies and other textual historical sources, the results of field work and GIS (Geographic Information Systems)-based research are also to be properly employed.

Main results:

Aftandil S. Erkinov, *The Andijan Uprising of 1898 and its Leader Dukchishan Described by Contemporary Poets*, TIAS Central Eurasian Research Series, No. 3, Tokyo: TIAS, 2009.

Hisao Komatsu and Yutaka Goto, "Reading the Dynamics of Central Asia: An Attempt at Using GIS for Area Studies," in Tsukasa Mizushima and Mamoru Shibayama, eds., *GIS in Area Studies*, Tokyo: Kokinshoin, 2009 (in Japanese).

Yasushi Shinmen and Yayoi Kawahara, *The Uyghurs of the Ferghana Valley and Their Recollections of Crossing the Border*, Tokyo: TIAS, 2010 (in Japanese).

Yayoi Kawahara, *Private Archives on a Makhdūmzāda Family in Marghilan*, Tokyo: TIAS, 2012.

(5) A Research Project on Memories of the Soviet Period

The Soviet period, which lasted for over 70 years, being the time when the fundamental structures of contemporary Central Eurasia were designed, provides important clues to understanding the ongoing transformations in the region. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, this period seems to have been dealt with exclusively in negative tones, and, leaving out the research conducted during the Soviet time that was biased by the communist ideology, the studies of this period lag considerably behind. On the other hand, in Central Eurasia there still live a lot of people who experienced the Soviet period and whose stories and memories present valuable historical material, which can, only now, be recorded and saved for future examination. The purpose of this project is to conduct, in cooperation with local researchers, private interviews with various local people of as diverse backgrounds as possible, and then systematise and analyse the results of these interviews. Such efforts should provide future researchers with the source material base for reconstruction of Central Eurasian history during the Soviet period through comparative analysis with other textual historical documents.

Main results:

Timur Dadabaev, *Soviet Union Remembered: Everyday Life Experiences of Socialist Era in Central Asia*, Tokyo: Maruzen/Tsukuba University Press, 2010 (in Japanese).

Timur Dadabaev, *Identity and Memory in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Uzbekistan's Soviet past*, London and New York: Routledge, 2015.

In particular, it is worth mentioning that such activities, in the first place, greatly boosted research collaboration with local researchers from Central Asia and have yielded remarkable results in the publication of historical sources that had previously been hard to gain access to.¹ Secondly, in addition to the above-mentioned joint research, a series of international symposiums/conferences have been held: in September 2007 in Tsukuba under the co-sponsorship of the Tsukuba University; in September 2008 in Kazan, the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan (Russian Federation), together with the Kazan Federal University; in March 2009 in Istanbul, Turkey, together with Maltepe University; in September 2009 in Tashkent, the capital of the Republic of Uzbekistan, together with the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Science of the Republic of Uzbekistan;

and in December 2010 in Kyoto and in September 2015 in Tokyo both held by IAS project.² Such efforts have expanded and enforced the international research network, which is expected to significantly contribute to further promotion of Central Eurasian studies. Another important achievement is that the projects attracted many young researchers and provided them with the opportunity to publish the results of their research.

QUEST FOR MEMORIES OF THE SOVIET PERIOD

Central Asian area studies began in the West after WWII as a part of research into the USSR, the West's adversary in the Cold War. The research was obviously directed at searching for contradictions, defects and other weak points of the giant Soviet Empire, and therefore, in the case of Central Asia, which was even called 'the soft underbelly of the USSR', tended to emphasise ethnic problems and the potential 'threat' of Islam. During the last years of the Soviet Union, there even appeared a theory that, counterposing the decrease in the Russian and other Slavic populations with the increase in population of Muslim peoples in Central Asia, claimed that such an unbalance in population dynamics would govern the future of the USSR. Now it has become clear that Central Asian area studies during the Cold War contained many misperceptions and misunderstandings. Such misinterpretations were born because of—in addition to political and strategic motives—the overall research situation of that time characterised by the inability to conduct fieldwork in Central Asia and inaccessibility of reliable data and materials.

The situation drastically changed with the independence of the Central Asian states and the collapse of the USSR in 1991. This event finally made possible, although with some exceptions, undertaking field surveys and opened up a way to conducting joint studies in collaboration with Central Asian researchers. In this meaning, Central Asian area studies may be truly called a newly developed research field. The research themes have also quickly diversified. The researchers now show an interest in such topics as formation of authoritarian systems; the Tajikistani Civil War, the two upheavals in Kyrgyzstan and other trends in domestic policies; creation of the framework for regional cooperation after the breakup of the Soviet Union; security problems particularly related to the civil war in south-neighbouring Afghanistan and to the anti-terrorist war in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks; the Shanghai Cooperation Organization formed by Russia, China and four Central Asian states, with the exception

of Turkmenistan; Islamic revivalism and the emergence of extremist movements; global advance of Islamist trends and various Islam-related issues; extinction of the Aral Sea, conflicts between upstream and downstream countries over limited water resources, as well as other environmental and resource problems; and growing disparity between the Central Asian states and the increase of migrant workers to Russia and Kazakhstan. The Central Asian region in fact presents an epitome of the problems that accompany globalisation. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the region provides the most fertile soil for area studies.

Amidst these developments, the author, who is specialised in the modern history of Central Asia, took an interest in how various people of Central Asia (originally being a multiethnic society, the region also became home to Russians, Tatars, Uyghurs and other migrants who settled there in different periods of history) recollect their experiences of the Soviet period that lasted for more than 70 years. The memories attract the author's attention for a reason. As is already mentioned, it is the Soviet era when the state and national frameworks of contemporary Central Asia were designed. Although the Soviet regime has many negative associations, such as the dictatorship by the Communist Party, an ineffective economic system, forced collectivisation of agriculture and nomadic herding, Stalin's mass purges and suppression of Islam and other religions, at the same time it also introduced positive changes in the region, in particular rapid increase in productivity, legal and social systems based on equality, spread of education and progress in science and technology, health care and hygiene improvements and the social advancement of Muslim women. The spread of the Russian language that still functions as a lingua franca today is also the legacy of the Soviet times. Thus, one can say that the fundamentals of the contemporary Central Asian society were laid in the Soviet era.

However, evaluations regarding the Soviet period drastically differ before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The official accounts of modern history in the Soviet Union in general praised the outstanding achievements in socialist construction in Central Asia under the excellent guidance of the Communist Party and never admitted any contradictions in the society that continued to develop, having got over the vestiges of the feudalism and hardships of the Great Patriotic War (WWII). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the evaluation was reversed. For example, in Uzbekistan, the second volume of the *New History of Uzbekistan* series published in 2000 is titled *Uzbekistan in the Era of Soviet Colonialism* and

emphasises the hardships and damage caused by the colonial rule that had continued from the times of the Russian Empire, such as forcibly imposed cotton monoculture and growing regional disparities such policy led to (O'zbekiston 2000). The glory and prosperity of the 'developed socialism' can no longer be seen; instead a new paradigm of national history is proposed, depicting the hardships and sufferings of Uzbekistan 'being annexed into the despotic Soviet Union' that were overcome only after gaining independence.

Thus, the interpretation of the Soviet period has diametrically changed with the collapse of the USSR. Of course, it is only natural that a country that has newly gained independence draws up a new national history in order to establish its legitimacy and integrity, but it is also true that such history is not free from a political-ideological bias of the time, just like the official historiography of the Soviet times. Then, where does the truth lie? And how can it be approached? Probably the most correct way would be to analyse as historical sources the huge amount of official documents (archives) created and accumulated at various institutions, including the Communist Party and governmental bodies, during the Soviet period. However, as such documents also, in a broad sense, present the 'legacy' of Soviet bureaucracy, they have certain limitations and cannot give a comprehensive picture of reality.

That is why the memories of the people who themselves experienced the Soviet era are worth paying attention to. There have been rather rare cases when former government officials or intellectuals shared their reminiscences of the Soviet times. Yet a more important question is what ordinary citizens thought of politics, society and everyday life in the Soviet Union. Such thoughts, attitudes and feelings apparently were not reflected in official documents, but they may prove to be an indispensable historical source for understanding the Soviet era. Of course, human memory is uncertain, subject to biases and continuous change. More up-to-date knowledge or information can also overlap with previous memories or completely substitute them. However, interviews on the same topic conducted with as many people as possible, who have different backgrounds and viewpoints—if the interviewer manages to determine a certain trend in the collected memories—may well yield valuable historical source material. At least, they will definitely provide a reference system for analysis or insights for defining a problem when dealing with the Soviet period. In other words, people's memories may become a valuable source-based instrument for relativisation of the perception and depiction of modern

history both in the Soviet historiography of the past and national histories written in the new independent states.

On the other hand, memories of the Soviet times seem to be not simply ordinary reminiscences of the past. In many cases, they are recollected and conveyed through the prism of the narrator's current perception influenced by the environment of the present time. In other words, such memories interact with the present and, in this sense, may be able to shed light both on the past and the present. If this statement is true, then memories of the Soviet period can be used not only as a historical source but also as material for area studies. However, as many of the people who lived in the Soviet period are now quite old, if there is nothing done soon, their copious and valuable memories will just vanish without being recorded.

This is why since 2006 our group has been involved in a new research project, within which we visit and interview people at various locations in Central Asia, who belong to the generation that experienced life in the Soviet Union, collect and examine their memories regarding the society and general life of those times as seen through the eyes of ordinary citizens. In addition to the author, the group includes the following four members: Uzbekistan-born Timur Dadabaev (Associate Professor at the University of Tsukuba), Kazakhstan-born Güljanat Kurmangalieva Ercilasun (Associate Professor at Gazi University), Turkish history researcher İlhan Şahin (formerly Professor at the Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Manas University) and Konuralp Ercilasun (Professor at Gazi University). As a rule, a certain set of questions is formulated and interviews are conducted in accordance with these questions with sufficient allowance for time; therefore, a maximum of three interviews a day can be held. This research was originally launched in Uzbekistan, then it included Kyrgyzstan and now it is being continued in Kazakhstan, where, considering the vast territory and the fact that the fieldwork is performed over several weeks each summer, it is expected to take several years to cover only the key areas of the country. Moreover, we keep video recordings of the interviews, which we plan to make public in the future.

The detailed results of the research are presented in the following chapters; for now, it is only worth noting that, in general, nostalgia regarding the Soviet times is still widely spread among people even today. Unexpectedly, the attitude toward Stalin was also predominantly positive. His assessment as a leader who achieved victory over Nazi Germany through his iron-strong will and outstanding leadership and instilled order over the vast domain of the Soviet Union stands in strong contrast with

that of Gorbachev, who led the USSR through the perestroika era toward its collapse. The memories spoken from the perspective of personal experiences of the ordinary people vividly convey the images of people who continue to carry on their everyday lives dexterously compromising with the reality even under the strict rules and limitations of the time. For example, an Uzbek male interviewee in good humour recalled that when he was questioned by a policeman for conducting an Islamic rite, he puzzled the policeman with his answer by explaining that as Islam teaches to pray at the cleanest place in the vicinity, he considered this place (by the statue of Lenin in the centre of Kolkhoz) as the most adequate [Male, 1940, Uzbek, Tashkent, Uzbekistan].

The number of researchers focusing attention on the memories of the Soviet period is gradually increasing, and this research method has begun to contribute to deepening modern history studies and area studies in Central Eurasia. Among others, such publications as Dudoignon and Noack (2014) and Abashin (2015) are remarkable in this direction. Our work, at present, constitutes only a modest effort, but we hope that it will be continued and advanced by young local researchers in Central Asia. In the summer of 2013, the author, for the first time, visited the Kostanay region in Northern Kazakhstan with the purpose of conducting research into memories of the Soviet period. The following two places have left the strongest impression of this region largely populated with ethnic Russians.

The first one is a memorial dedicated to Soviet soldiers killed in combat in Afghanistan. Flowers were still laid at this serious yet moving monument of a tank installed on a stone base. The other one is a time-honoured mosque that had been closed down and once even used as a children's theatre during the Soviet era, but has now reopened and attracts numerous worshippers. The Soviet Union has become the past, yet its memories still carry significant meaning for understanding the present.

NOTES

1. Noda Jin and Onuma Takahiro eds., *A Collection of Documents from the Kazakh Sultans to the Qing Dynasty*, Tokyo: TIAS, 2010; Sadr al-Dīn 'Aynī, *Bukhārā Inqilābīning Ta'rikhī*, Nashrga tayyarlavchilar: Shimada Shizuo and Sharifa Tosheva, Tokyo: TIAS, 2010; Yayoi Kawahara and Umed Mamadsherozdshoev (eds.), *Documents from Private Archives in Right-Bank Badakhshan (Facsimiles)*, Tokyo: TIAS, 2013; Yayoi Kawahara and Umed Mamadsherozdshoev (eds.), *Documents from Private Archives in*

Right-Bank Badakhshan (Introduction), Tokyo: TIAS, 2015; David Brophy and Onuma Takahiro, *The Origins of Qing Xinjiang: A Set of Historical Sources on Turfan*, Tokyo: TIAS, 2016.

2. Following these symposiums, some proceedings and collected papers have been published: *Volgo-Ural'skii region v imperskom prostranstve XVIII-XX vv.*[The Volga-Urals Region in the Imperial Space], Pod redaktsiei Naganava Norikhiro, Usmanovoi D.M., Khamamoto Mami, Moskva: Vostochnaia literatura, 2011; Hisao Komatsu, Şahin Karasar, Timur Dadabaev and Guljanat Kurmangalieva Ercilasun eds., *Central Eurasian Studies: Past, Present and Future*, Istanbul: Maltepe University, 2011; Yoshikazu Morita, Bahrom Abdukhalimov and Hisao Komatsu (supervisor); Bakhtiyar Babadjanov and Yayoi Kawahara (eds.), *History and Culture of Central Asia*, Tokyo: TIAS, 2012.

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Recollecting the Soviet Past: Challenges of Data Collection on Everyday Life Experiences and Public Memory in Post- Soviet Central Asia

Timur Dadabaev

Impartial and informed public evaluation of the past and its understanding has always been a complicated issue in Central Asia over the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Public discussions and forums for self-reflection by society are rarely available. Academic enquiries, as is detailed below, are the subject of scrutiny, political pressure or self-censuring. Such situation sharply contrasts with the historical development of Central Asian states during which they have been exposed to a great number of historical experiences that not only dramatically changed their social structures but also questioned the very basis of their existence. Their historical development moved through the times of nomadic settlements on to the creation of Soviet nations and then to post-Soviet state-building after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These countries and societies experienced transitions

T. Dadabaev (✉)
University of Tsukuba, Tsukuba, Japan

from settled and nomadic lifestyles into the socialist construction of a “Sovietness” followed by the bankruptcy of this notion and reconstruction of ethnic-centered nation building.

Public opinion regarding the processes mentioned above has been shaped by two main factors, namely, “official” historical discourse exemplified by the grand narrative offered by state institutions and the public’s everyday life experiences. “Official” historical discourses can take many forms and are very often exemplified by official historiography, which characterizes what was “politically correct” to consider to be “good” and “bad” among the events of the past. There has been a long tradition of history construction in Central Asia when political pressures and official ideology always had a decisive say in how history is interpreted and eventually constructed. Such approach to constructing history was practiced both in the Soviet period with the aim of beautifying Socialist society (well documented by the Communist-era archives) and in the post-Soviet period, criticizing the Soviet past and praising post-Soviet society building (demonstrated by the current literature on history in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan).

These “official” descriptions of the past sometimes confirmed but more often contradicted interpretations of the past based on analysis made through the lenses of the everyday experiences of ordinary people.

It is this contradiction in depicting the history that lies at the center of this project, which attempts to collect, record, preserve and make public the views of common people regarding their Soviet-days experiences and memory of the Soviet past using the case studies of Kyrgyzstan. In particular, this project aims to contribute to understanding the relationship between the governmentally endorsed history of Central Asian people in the Soviet era and their private lives and beliefs. In order to do so, this study attempts to contribute to academic knowledge on how people remember their Soviet past and what were their memories of their experiences of that time. This also leads to a better understanding of how these memories relate to the Soviet and post-Soviet official descriptions of Soviet life.

The contributions in this volume attempt to achieve their goals through collecting, recording and analyzing the narratives of ordinary people, their views regarding political practices (repression, staff indigenization, administration of things and so forth), economic policies (collective farm formation, industrialization, economic cadre education and so forth), social life (forms and shapes of community and religious life in the Soviet times) and many others.

As is mentioned on a number of occasions in this volume, the methodological tool of data collection used by the authors in this study is interviews and analysis of recollections of the Soviet past within the “Memory of the Past” project (co-organized by the Islamic Area Studies (IAS) Center at the University of Tokyo) over the period of 2005–2015 in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Thematically, the project focused on the recollection of memories on the people’s everyday experiences in the times of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the project aims to use the recordings of the memories of everyday life in Soviet Central Asia and relate those to the official recordings of history.

The project targeted elderly ordinary citizens asking them questions regarding their everyday life experiences in various periods of their lives. By doing so, the project aimed to collect information about how ordinary people regarded and understood the reality of their time and how this understanding related to the official policy of the Soviet government in the Central Asian region. The choice of the everyday life experiences of people as the main focus of this study is considered to be one of those instances that presents a relatively apolitical picture of societal life of that time, which was largely ignored in Soviet and post-Soviet studies. In addition, the information provided by those interviewed in the older age group represents unique data which, if not collected and recorded now, can be lost due to the rapid decrease of those who remember the social environment of the Soviet times. The loss of such data will result in false interpretations, assumptions and speculations without an opportunity to check these against the reality of everyday lives of that time.

Oral interviews were used as the main method of data collection for two main reasons. First, recollections of Soviet past are rapidly vanishing from the historical discourse as people of the generation who experienced Soviet days pass away. Although most Central Asian people are literate, their histories and stories are rarely reflected in the historical construction of their political states. Second, as noted by scholars of oral history, “the business of relating past and present for social ends has for most of the time been done orally; it still is so” (Tonkin 1995: 3).

Methodologically, this study uses critical discourse analysis to answer the questions posited above and to achieve its objectives. The audiovisual recordings of interviews were transcribed and the transcripts and videos were then treated as elements mediating the social events that occurred during that time. In treating these narrations, this study assumes a stance similar to that of other studies that consider representations of pastness as

representations created by persons through interaction, situated in a real time and space and, therefore, as purposeful social actions (for details, see Tonkin 1995). To a large extent, “reading” interviews this way is triadic, consisting of treating representations of the past as historical literature, viewing these representations as part of social interaction and seeing their historical intent (Tonkin 1995: 3).

These recollections regarding various aspects of Soviet life in Central Asia were also analyzed and published elsewhere (Dadabaev 2013a, b). This volume, however, focuses on the most memorable parts of these memories as well as on comparative aspects of recollections where such comparison is appropriate. While the interviewers attempted to reach a balance of gender, region and age in reaching out to the respondents using a network-sampling method, respondents who agreed to participate in the study included mostly residents of larger cities and regions (Tashkent, Ferghana, Andijan, Samarkand, Bukhara, Urgench and Khiva in Uzbekistan; Bishkek and Osh in Kyrgyzstan; and Almaty, Ustkamenogorsk, Uralsk, Astana and Shimkent in Kazakhstan). Of the participants, most were 60 or over. The interviewees of this age group were deliberately selected because they spent their most active years during the Soviet era and their memories are considered to be the most informative about the public’s attitude towards Soviet religious policies. Ethnically, the respondents included Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tatars, Russians, Koreans, Tajiks, Dungans and many others. The respondents were selected from various professional backgrounds and occupations whose work affiliation had not been within the central apparatus of the Communist Party or the Council of Ministers. One of the limitations of the sampling of this project is that the number of participants with higher education involved in nonmanual labor work exceeded those involved in agriculture and the industrial sector.

Only through the experiences of these diverse ethnic groups can one make sense of the complicated and sometimes contradictory patterns of everyday Soviet life in Uzbekistan. In terms of presenting material, we present ethnographic evidence concerning past attitudes in the form of dialogue excerpts: we collected these during tape-recorded or video-recorded face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted using either Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz or Russian languages with interviewees selecting the language in which they preferred the interview to be conducted. All extracts of interviews provided in this volume are translated by the authors of respected chapters. The semi-structured questionnaire

consisted of 11 broadly defined questions covering ethnic, economic and political policies of Soviet times as well as the recollection of everyday experiences. In covering a wide range of social issues wherein religion and other aspects of sociocultural life interpenetrate (such as education, marriage, holidays, gender roles and dress), the respondents indicated common opinions that manifested a variety of attitudes indicating both strong disagreement and attraction to a range of Soviet antireligious policies.

These data provide an empirical basis for understanding the impact of Soviet policies on society and the ways in which they are currently perceived. In addition, because most of these recollections reflect both Soviet-era experiences and post-Soviet policies, the evaluation of the Soviet policies that they reflect also indirectly sheds light on the current religious situation.

SAMPLING METHOD AND RESPONDENTS

The process of sampling for collecting, recording, storing and analyzing the data used in this study has been one of the most difficult tasks as it had the potential for influencing and, in certain cases, shaping the answers to the questions asked. In order to cover the conceptual gap in the literature regarding the views of the ordinary citizens regarding their societies in the Soviet time, the interviewees were collected mostly from the older generations and especially those beyond their retirement age. This is done to cover the memories of the Soviet time by those who spent the most active years of their lives in the Soviet cultural and social environment. These recollections were then either recorded on audio-tapes (in the case of Uzbekistan) or video-records (in the case of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan), put into the script, translated and are being archived.

Out of the four possible alternatives for sampling, namely, deviant case sampling, homogenous sampling, maximum variation sampling and network sampling, authors decided to avoid as much as possible convenience sampling and homogenous sampling in order to avoid the situation when the outcomes of the interviews are similar and predetermined in their content. On the contrary, the project attempted to locate people who led very diverse lifestyles, based on diverse regional, ethnic, educational, social, professional and other affiliations.

In terms of regional representation, in the overall sample size of 75 people, the utmost effort has been made to select more interviewees (5–6 people) from capitals, larger, hence more densely populated regions, while

ensuring that interviewees from the demographically smaller regions are also represented.

The network sampling has been applied to overcome difficulties associated with political restrictions and self-restraints on the side of interviewees through fear of repercussions, while in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, the network sampling has been used to locate people from remote areas that are difficult to gain access to.

As mentioned above, the project included 75 semi-structured interviews (per country) in which respondents were asked 11 general questions regarding their Soviet experiences beginning with recollections and views of various significant events (revolution, collectivization, repressions, World War II, earthquakes, Afghan war, perestroika, etc.) and various Soviet (Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Gorbachev, etc.) and local (Ryskulov, Khodzhaev, etc.) figures of historical significance (Dadabaev 2009, 2010, 2013a, b, 2014, 2015).

The sample group whose responses are used in this volume consists of ordinary people aged 55–80, with a few outliers over the age of 80. Focus on this age group has been determined by the fact that this survey covered questions related to experiences and memories of respondents regarding entire Soviet period. Therefore, it was imperative to have a sample group of individuals in the age groups which personally experienced the most important events in Soviet history. This is done to cover the memories of the Soviet time by those who spent the most active years of their lives in the Soviet cultural and social environment. Although the older generation of respondents was preferred by this study, the logistics of getting access to the desired age group turned out to be one of the most significant challenges. As a result, the lower age of certain respondents was around retirement age (of 55 for women and 60 years old for men) with no limitations put on the upper age. The lowest age was recorded in Uzbekistan where for various reasons, respondents in the older age groups felt reluctant to actively participate in the interviews.

Such wide coverage of the senior citizens provides for a diversity of recollections depending on the experiences of respondents. At the same time, the study recognizes that this age difference probably made the difference in the views and ways how Soviet era was accepted and remembered later, in addition to how (un)successful in future the interviewees have become. Although the sample was intended to include representatives from each region in the three countries studied, equal regional representation was not achieved due to the limited sample size.

In terms of regional representation, in the overall sample size, the utmost effort has been made to select more interviewees (five to six people) from capitals, larger, hence more densely populated regions, while ensuring that interviewees from the demographically smaller regions are also represented. Interviews were conducted from July to October 2006–2009 in Uzbekistan, from March to October of 2008–2011 in Kyrgyzstan and from August to October of 2013–2015 in Kazakhstan. The part of the sample used in the current volume is attached as appendix to this chapter. In addition, there is a second appendix which includes data of respondents used in one of the chapters of this volume but which has not been part of the project.

The network sampling has been applied to overcome difficulties associated with political restrictions and self-restraints on the side of interviewees for a fear of repercussions, while in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, the network sampling has been used to locate people from remote areas which are difficult to gain access to.

INTERVIEWING

In order to facilitate an open and interviewee-friendly environment, the project used the following four techniques in the process of interviews. First, the cultural flexibility and proper wording of the questions was paid special attention. While given the choice of structured (with strictly defined questions), semi-structured and open-ended options for formulating questions, the study opted to use a semi-structured method due to its better applicability to the realities of the region. Using structured interviews in Central Asia often results in short, noninclusive, incomprehensive answers because of the lack of rapport between interviewee and interviewer. On the other hand, using an open-ended interview might have the potential risk of developing into an extensive exchange of opinions and develop into a direction unrelated or distant from the topic of everyday life experiences of Soviet times due to the broad spectrum of issues. Therefore, the semi-structured interview, which includes clearly defined questions and some sub-questions to clarify the meaning of the main questions, was used with interviewees given the opportunity to develop their story as far as it does not move away from the main topic of the interview.

Secondly, interviewers attempted to establish a rapport with the interviewees by discussing some things unrelated to the project topics such as the general well-being of those being interviewed, discussion on the

weather and other topics. In addition to establishing trust between interviewers and interviewee, such long introduction has deep cultural meaning in Central Asia where people are used to having relatively long introductory conversations before proceeding to the heart of the issue that they are interested to talk about. This, within the course of this project and in daily life in general in Central Asia, develops the basis for a smoother conversation and offers a chance for interviewees to get to know the other side and shape their own attitude to them.

After such an introductory entry into conversation, the interview proceeded with the questions asked about the topics related to everyday life experiences in Soviet times. In order to facilitate an open discussion, the project employed an approach when in the course of an interview, interviewees' assumptions were on several occasions critically assessed or even challenged in order to provoke them to offer a deeper insight into how they came to such assumptions and conclusions. However, careful attention has been paid to not radically challenge the flow of the talk and not to discourage the interviewee from laying down his/her assumptions.

And thirdly, project members attempted to make the process of interviewing more "participatory" for both interviewee and interviewer by not only listening to the memories recalled by interviewees but also, on several occasions, having the family members of interviewees and close neighbors listen and then sometimes make their own comments that further encouraged the process of remembering and forced interviewees to use more detailed recollections of the past in order to support their own logic. It was especially so with the older generation of interviewees who seemed at times to have problems with understanding the essence of the question or having problems remembering the periods in which certain events took place.

CHALLENGES, LIMITATIONS AND BIASES

There were few conceptual and logistical problems in the course of the interviews. Firstly, the mentality of the ordinary people has influenced the outcome of the interviews both in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. In both cases, interviewers observed the situation when respondents are often reluctant to speak about the negativities of the Soviet times. This can be explained by several reasons. In addition to potential political and related pressures that will be discussed later in the text, many of the respondents are bearers of the culture when taking one's problems and criticism outside

of society is considered to be shameful and needs to be avoided as much as possible. In both societies, people shared the logic of the local saying that “Garbage should not be taken out of the house”. Therefore, in many cases, interviewees were inclined to speak more about positive sides of the issues than negative ones. In addition, the attitude of interviewees towards the interviewer differed significantly depending on the developed or underdeveloped rapport between interviewee and interviewer. For many of them, interviewees were “strangers” and it is not an accepted norm to speak about negativities to “strangers”.

In order to encourage the interviewees to be more open about various aspects of their Soviet past, the interviewees were often joined by members of their family or grandchildren in front of whom many elders could not misrepresent the realities of their past lives. When there were such few attempts, members of the families listening to the interviews often intervened, correcting and clarifying certain issues both to the interviewer and interviewee.

Another challenge was encountered with the language in which the interviews should be conducted. Due to the multiethnic nature of the societies in Central Asia, Uzbek/Kazakh/Kyrgyz was used for those belonging to the titular ethnic group and preferring to answer in their own language. For the Russian and Russian-speaking groups (like Koreans, etc.), Russian language questioners have been used. In certain instances, questioners in alternative languages (Turkish language ones for Turks, etc.) were drafted and used. But diversity of the languages used for questioners did not present a technical problem, except for the logistical concerns relating to translation.

A much bigger problem was the obvious correlation between the language of the questioner and the pattern of asking questions and answers to these questions. In Uzbek/Kazakh/Kyrgyz, the interviewee had to go through the long procedure of first explaining in length the background of the issue and then asking the question. Otherwise, the answers were either inadequate or too short and mostly shallow. In the Russian language, however, such procedure of going into a long discussion on the background of the issue and its details resulted in the respondents being irritated and the desire for clear and short questions without a long initial interpretation and explanation of the problem. In the same manner, the answers in local languages were softer, longer and extensively descriptive with few short and clear-cut answers. Those responding in these local languages preferred “middle-ground” answers that can largely be attributed

to the mentality of people. Even when respondents answered in a straight and very critical manner, they still preferred to do so after extensive explanation and after “preparing the ground”. On the contrary, Russian language responses were more direct, more critical or clear in their message leaving the background information out or offering very little explanation. In addition, in certain interviews, respondents responded to only one part of the interview regarding their lives and experiences in their local language and then preferred to switch to Russian when they wanted to be more direct or blunt about their attitude to certain events or happenings.

Secondly, in the case of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the majority of those approached have decided to cooperate with the project and to be videotaped. Yet such cooperation with the project also resulted in the situation that sometimes respondents were attempting to provide interviewers with the information that they believed interviewers wanted to hear from them. This, instead, influenced the outcomes of the project because this information did not always reflect real lifetime experiences of people but rather their interpretation of the history they learned from other sources.

APPENDIX I: SELECTED RESPONDENTS TO THE MEMORY
OF THE SOVIET PAST PROJECT IN UZBEKISTAN,
KAZAKHSTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN (2006–2014)

<i>No</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>DOB</i>	<i>Place of birth/ residence</i>	<i>Education/Profession</i>
Samples of respondents from Uzbekistan used in this volume					
1	Male	Uzbek	1940	Tashkent	Secondary/elder
2	Male	Uzbek	1945	Tashkent	Higher/Teacher
3	Female	Uzbek	N/A	Tashkent	Higher/Med. Doctor
4	Male	Uzbek	1941	Tashkent	Higher/Engineer
5	Male	Tatar	1961	Tashkent	Higher/Med. Doctor
6	Female	Tatar	1958	Tashkent	Secondary/Nurse
7	Female	Uzbek	1965	Tashkent	Secondary/Nurse
8	Male	Uzbek	1940	Tashkent	Higher/Teacher
9	Male	Uzbek	1955	Tashkent	Higher/Teacher
10	Male	Tatar	1946	Tashkent	Higher/Administrative Work
11	Female	Uzbek	1941	Tashkent	Higher/Med. Doctor
12	Female	Uzbek	1946	Tashkent	Higher/Engineer
13	Female	Uzbek	1950	Tashkent	Secondary/Nurse
14	Female	Uzbek	1953	Tashkent	Secondary/Nurse

(continued)

Appendix 1 (Continued)

<i>No</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>DOB</i>	<i>Place of birth/ residence</i>	<i>Education/Profession</i>
15	Female	Uzbek	1953	Tashkent	Higher/Med. Doctor
16	Female	Uzbek	1943	Tashkent	Secondary/Nurse
17	Female	Uzbek	1952	Tashkent	Higher/Med. Doctor
18	Female	Tatar	1944	Tashkent	Higher/Med. Doctor
19	Female	Tajik	1966	Samarkand	Higher/Med. Doctor
20	Male	Tajik	1956	Samarkand	Secondary/Unemployed
21	Female	Russian	1943	Samarkand	Higher/Unemployed
22	Male	Uzbek	1960	Namangan	Secondary/Factory Work
23	Female	Tajik	1960	Tashkent	Secondary/Factory Work
24	Male	Uzbek	1940	Andijan	Higher/Teacher
25	Female	Uzbek	1923	Namangan	Higher/Teacher
26	Female	Tatar	1923	Namangan	Higher/Teacher
27	Female	Uzbek	1957	Namangan	Higher/Architect
28	Female	Russian	1959	Namangan	Higher/Teacher
29	Female	Russian	1942	Kokand	Higher/Teacher
30	Male	Russian	1943	Andijan	Higher/Civil Servant
31	Female	Russian	1941	Andijan	Higher/Med. Doctor
32	Male	Uzbek	1951	Andijan	Higher/Med. Doctor
33	Female	Tatar	1913	Andijan	Sec/Civil Servant
35	Male	Uzbek	1946	Tashkent	Higher/Teacher
36	Male	Uzbek	1951	Tashkent	Higher/Teacher
37	Female	Uzbek	1936	Tashkent	Higher/Retiree
38	Male	Uzbek	1936	Ferghana	Higher/Retiree
39	Male	Uzbek	1934	Ferghana Region	Higher/Retiree
40	Male	Uzbek	1942	Ferghana Region	Higher/Retiree
41	Male	Uzbek	1956	Ferghana Region	Sec/Businessman
42	Male	Uzbek	1951	Kokand	Higher/Retiree
43	Male	Uzbek	1961	Kokand	Higher/Accountant
44	Male	Uzbek	1961	Kokand	Higher/Accountant
45	Male	Tajik/Uzbek	1936	Bukhara Region	Sec/Farmer
46	Male	Tajik/Uzbek	1938	Bukhara Region	Sec/Farmer
47	Male	Uzbek	1935	Bukhara Region	Sec/Elder
48	Male	Tajik/Uzbek	1923	Bukhara	Higher/Teacher
49	Female	Tajik	1926	Bukhara	Manual Worker
50	Male	Tajik/Uzbek	1939	Bukhara	Teacher
51	Male	1940	Uzbek	Namangan	Teacher
52	Female	1945	Tatar	Namangan	Teacher
53	Male	1944	Uzbek	Namangan	Architect
54	Male	1943	Russian	Andijan	Teacher
55	Female	1955	Russian	Kokand	Teacher
56	Male	1953	Russian	Andijan	Civil Servant
57	Male	1951	Russian	Andijan	Medical Doctor

(continued)

Appendix 1 (Continued)

<i>No</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>DOB</i>	<i>Place of birth/ residence</i>	<i>Education/Profession</i>
58	Male	1961	Uzbek	Andijan	Medical Doctor
59	Female	1959	Tatar	Andijan	Civil Servant
60	Male	1948	Tatar	Tashkent	Civil Servant
61	Male	1946	Uzbek	Tashkent	Teacher
62	Female	1955	Uzbek	Tashkent	Teacher
63	Female	1952	Uzbek	Tashkent	Retired
64	Male	1940	Uzbek	Ferghana	Retired
65	Female	1938	Uzbek	Ferghana	Retired
66	Male	1944	Uzbek	Ferghana	Retired
67	Male	1949	Uzbek	Ferghana	Director of Market
68	Female	1955	Tatar	Kokand	Retired
69	Female	1945	Uzbek	Kokand	Accountant
70	Female	1943	Uzbek	Kokand	Accountant
71	Female	1961	Karakalpak	Nukus	Accountant
72	Male	1959	Karakalpak	Nukus	Retired
73	Male	1956	Uzbek	Tashkent	Retired
74	Male	1966	Karakalpak	Nukus	Civil Servant
75	Female	1951	Tajik	Bukhara	Farmer
Sample of respondents from Kazakhstan used in this volume					
1	Gender	Ethnicity	DOB	Residence	Occupation
2	Male	Kazakh	1936	Almaty Region	Teacher/School Director
3	Female	Kazakh	N.A	Shymkent	Housewife
4	Male	Kazakh	1941	Shymkent	Professor
5	Male	Kazakh	1947	Shymkent	Businessman
6	Female	Kazakh	N.A	Shymkent	Kolkhoz
7	Male	Kazakh	N.A	Shymkent	Professor
8	Male	Kazakh	N.A	Yuko	Retired
9	Male	Kazakh	N.A	YuKO	Retired
10	Female	Kazakh	N.A	Shymkent	Journalist
11	Male	Kazakh	1938	Almaty Region	Retired
12	Female	Kazakh	1930	Almaty Region	Retired
13	Female	Kazakh	1939	Almaty Region	Retired
14	Female	Kazakh	1943	Almaty Region	Teacher
15	Male	Kazakh	1937	Almaty Region	Retired—Driver
16	Female	Kazakh	1925	Almaty Region	Retired
17	Female	Kazakh	1924	Almaty	Retired
18	Female	Kazakh	1939	Almaty	Retired—Teacher
19	Male	Kazakh	1920	Almaty	Retired, WWII Veteran
20	Male	Kazakh	1937	Almaty	Professor (Economy)
21	Female	Kazakh	N/A	Almaty	Teacher
22	Female	Kazakh	1946	Almaty	Teacher (Mathematics)
23	Female	Kazakh	1936	Almaty	Retired

(continued)

Appendix 1 (Continued)

<i>No</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>DOB</i>	<i>Place of birth/ residence</i>	<i>Education/Profession</i>
24	Male	Kazakh	1934	Almaty	Retired—Party Administrator
25	Female	Kazakh	1940	Almaty	Retired
26	Female	Kazakh	N/A	Almaty	Professor (Philology)
27	Male	Korean	N/A	Almaty	Retired—Professor
28	Male	Tatar	N/A	Almaty	Professor (Pedagogy)
29	Female	Kazakh	N/A	Almaty	Retired Assoc. Prof.
30	Female	Kazakh	1930	Almaty	N/A
31	Male	Uyгур	1939	Almaty	N/A
32	Male	Uyгур	1935	Almaty	Planlash Komiteti-China
33	Female	Dungan	1938	Almaty	N/A
34	Male	Kazakh	1941	Ust-Kamen	Kolhoz Director
35	Male	Kazakh	1932	Ust-Kamen	Teacher and School director
36	Male	Russian	1934	Ust-Kamen	Retired
38	Male	Russian	1939	Ust-Kamen	Retired
39	Male	Kazakh	1928	VKO	Retired
40	Female	Kazakh	1939	VKO	Retired
41	Male	Kazakh	1930	VKO	Retired
42	Male	Kazakh	1944	VKO	Teacher
43	Female	Kurd	1938	Almaty Region	Retired
44	Female	Kurd	1965	Almaty Region	Retired
45	Male	Kazakh	1942	Kustanai	Agricultural Specialist
46	Male	Kazakh	1942	Kustanai	Retired
47	Male	Kazakh	1928	Astana	Retired
48	Female	Kazakh	1938	Almaty	Teacher
49	Female	Kazakh	1937	Almaty Region	Economist Accountant
50	Female	Kazakh	1928	Zhambyl	Farmer
51	Male	Russian	1921	Kustanai	Worker
52	Female	Tatar	1930	Almaty	Retired
53	Female	Kurd	1938	Almaty reg.	Retired
54	Male	Kurd	1934	Almaty reg.	Retired
55	Female	Kurd	1965	Almaty reg.	Retired
56	Female	Kazakh	1950	Qostanay	Retired
57	Male	Kazakh	1942	Qostanay	Agronomist
58	Male	Kazakh	1942	Qostanay	Retired
59	Male	Russian	1933	Rudnyi	Retired
60	Female	Russian	1940	Rudnyi	Trade Union
61	Male	Ukrainian	1943	Rudnyi	Researcher
62	Female	Kazakh	1950	Astana	Retired
63	Male	Kazakh	1928	Astana	Retired
64	Female	Kazakh	1938	Almaty	Teacher
65	Female	Kazakh	1937	Almaty reg.	Accountant

(continued)

Appendix 1 (Continued)

<i>No</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>DOB</i>	<i>Place of birth/ residence</i>	<i>Education/Profession</i>
66	Male	Kazakh	1955	ZKO	Policeman
67	Female	Kazakh	1931	ZKO	Teacher
68	Male	Kazakh	1943	ZKO	Retired
69	Female	Kazakh	1955	ZKO	Retired
70	Female	Kazakh	1944	ZKO	Retired
71	Male	Kazakh	1948	ZKO	Retired
72	Female	Kazakh	1955	ZKO	Retired
73	Male	Cossack	1950	Uralsk	Retired
74	Male	Kazakh	1933	Uralsk	Party Bureaucracy
75	Male	Kazakh	1943	Uralsk	Journalist
Sample of Kyrgyzstan used in this volume					
1	Male	Kyrgyz	1913	Issykkol Region	Cattle Breeding
2	Male	Russian	1918	Bishkek	University
3	Male	Kyrgyz	1919	Naryn Region	Worker
4	Male	Kyrgyz	1919	Bishkek	Communist Party
5	Female	Kyrgyz	1920	Chui Region	Kolkhoz Accountant
6	Male	Kyrgyz	1922	Naryn Region	Kolkhoz, Farmer
7	Male	Kyrgyz	1923	Naryn Region	Farmer, Worker
8	Female	Kyrgyz	1924	Naryn Region	Kolkhoz, Worker
9	Male	Kyrgyz	1926	Issykkol Region	Kolkhoz Accountant
10	Male	Turk Mesk.	1926	Bishkek	Shepherd
11	Male	Kyrgyz	1927	Naryn Region	Teacher
12	Female	Kyrgyz	1927	Bishkek	Cinema Hall Director
13	Male	Kyrgyz	1927	Issykkol Region	Accountant
14	Female	Russian	1928	Bishkek	Teacher of Physiology
15	Female	Kyrgyz	1929	Chui Region	Worked in a Kolkhoz
16	Male	Kyrgyz	1929	Naryn Region	Electrician
17	Male	Kyrgyz	1930	Naryn Region	Tractor Driver
18	Female	Kyrgyz	1931	Naryn Region	Farmer, Shepherd
19	Male	Kyrgyz	1932	Chui Region	Teacher in High School
20	Male	Kyrgyz	1932	Chui Region	Motorman
21	Male	Turk Mesk.	1932	Chui Region	Shepherd
22	Female	Kyrgyz	1932	Naryn Region	Mathematics Teacher
23	Male	Kazakh	1932	Chui Region	Shepherd
24	Female	Kyrgyz	1932	Naryn Region	Teacher
25	Male	Kyrgyz	1932	Naryn Region	Driver
26	Male	Kyrgyz	1932	Talas Region	Director of Kolkhoz
27	Female	Kyrgyz	1933	Issykkol Region	Cattle Breeding
28	Female	Kyrgyz	1933	Talas Region	Worked in a Plant
29	Female	Kyrgyz	1934	Naryn region	Geography Teacher
30	Male	Kyrgyz	1934	Chui region	Provincial Cultural Club
31	Male	Kyrgyz	1934	Issykkol Region	Shepherd

(continued)

Appendix 1 (Continued)

<i>No</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>DOB</i>	<i>Place of birth/ residence</i>	<i>Education/Profession</i>
32	Male	Kyrgyz	1934	Bishkek	Professor, Ex-MP
33	Female	Dungan	1935	Bishkek	Russian Literature Teacher
34	Male	Kyrgyz	1935	Bishkek	Professor
35	Female	Turk Mesk.	1935	Bishkek	Kolkhoz Worker
36	Female	Kyrgyz	1936	Naryn Region	Kolkhoz Worker
37	Male	Kyrgyz	1936	Chui Region	Tractor Driver, Driver
38	Male	Kyrgyz	1936	Naryn Region	Agronomist
39	Male	Uighur	1936	Bishkek	University Prof.
40	Male	Kyrgyz	1936	Bishkek	Shepherd
41	Male	Kyrgyz	1936	Naryn Region	Teacher
42	Male	Kyrgyz	1937	Bishkek	Professor
43	Male	Kyrgyz	1937	Bishkek	Ex-Ambassador
44	Male	Kyrgyz	1937	Bishkek	Professor
45	Female	Kyrgyz	1937	Bishkek	Professor
46	Female	Kyrgyz	1938	Issykkol Region	Shepherd
47	Male	Kyrgyz	1938	Bishkek	Professor
48	Female	Kyrgyz	1938	Chui region	Shepherd
49	Female	Kyrgyz	1939	Issykkol Region	Geography Teacher
50	Male	Kyrgyz	1941	Naryn Region	Farmer
51	Male	Kyrgyz	1941	Naryn Region	Shepherd
52	Male	Kyrgyz	1941	Bishkek	Agriculture Specialist
53	Female	Kyrgyz	1945	Talas Region	Cook
54	Female	Kyrgyz	1946	Osh Region	Nurse
55	Male	Dungan	1947	Bishkek	Chief Editor of a Newspaper
56	Male	Kyrgyz	1948	Naryn Region	Accountant
57	Female	Kazakh	1928	Bishkek	N/A
58	Male	Tatar	Before 1944	Bakhchisaray	N/A
59	Female	N/A	1932 (off. 1935)	Bishkek	N/A
60	Male	Kyrgyz	1930	Talas	N/A
61	Female	Kyrgyz	1917	Sokuluk	N/A
62	Male	Karachai	1934	Caucasia	N/A
63	Male	Kyrgyz	1940	Talas	N/A
64	Male	Kyrgyz	1942	Fergana Region	N/A
65	Male	N/A	1938	Talas	N/A
66	Female	Kazak	1939	Talas	N/A
67	Male	Kyrgyz	1942	Narin	Teacher
68	Male	Kyrgyz	1940	Batken	N/A
69	Male	Kyrgyz	1919 (off. 1920)	Talas	N/A
70	Female	Kazakh	1942	Bishkek	N/A

(continued)

Appendix 1 (Continued)

<i>No</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>DOB</i>	<i>Place of birth/ residence</i>	<i>Education/Profession</i>
71	Male	Kyrgyz	1932	Bishkek	N/A
72	Female	Crimea Tatar	1936 (off. 1938)	Bishkek	N/A
73	Female	Chechen	1943	Bishkek	N/A
74	Male	Kyrgyz	1931	Bishkek	Professor
75	Male	Kyrgyz	1944	Bishkek	Professor

**APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEWEES' PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS
(ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, *FORMATION OF THE KYRGYZ
IDENTITY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: 1916–1991*)**

Collaborative project: Maltepe University and Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University
2007

<i>ID#</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Origin and lifetime spent in</i>	<i>Profession/Occupation</i>
1.1	84	Ysyk-kol	Shepherd
1.2	70	Talas	Teacher
1.3	81	Naryn	Teacher
1.4	75	Ysyk-kol	Writer, Journalist
1.5	64	Osh (Alay), Bishkek	Economist
1.6	73	Batken (Leylek), Bishkek	Musician, Artist
1.7	65	Osh (Alay), Bishkek	Journalist, Writer
1.8	83	Chui, Bishkek	Teacher, Economist, Bureaucrat
1.9	70	Ysyk-kol, Bishkek	Economist Diplomat
1.10	70	Ysyk-kol	Sociologist
1.11	80–81	Chui, Kemin, Bishkek	Worker
1.12	70	Ysyk-kol	Historian
1.13	86	Talas	Writer
1.14	76	Jalalabat (Aksy)	Writer
1.15	80	Chui	Worker
1.16	72	Ysyk-kol	Geographer, Academician
1.17	76	Talas	Economist, Kolkhoz Chief
1.18	96	Naryn, Atbashy	Driver
1.19	84	Chui	Composer
1.20	67	Ysyk-kol, Russia, Bishkek	Shepherd, Chief Engineer
1.21	72	Talas	Teacher
1.22	72	Talas, Bishkek	Arts Professor
1.23	87	Chui	Worker
1.24	93	Chui	Bank employee

(continued)

Appendix 2 (Continued)

<i>ID#</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Origin and lifetime spent in</i>	<i>Profession/Occupation</i>
1.25	82	N/A	Linguist
1.26	76	Batken, Leylek	Housewife
1.27	82	Batken, Leylek, Tajikistan	Shepherd
1.28	81	Andalat, Tajikistan	Shepherd
1.29	80	Chui	Farmer
1.30	78	Chui	Farmer
1.31	77	Chui	Housewife
1.32	77	Chong Alay, Osh, Tajikistan	Driver, Shepherd
1.33	67	Talas	Salesclerk
1.34	75	Talas	Chief Miner
1.35	89	Suusamy, Chui	Driver, Kolkhoz Chief
1.36	68	Suusamy, Chui	Teacher
1.37	74	Jalalabat, Toktogul	Housewife
1.38	75	Toktogul	Miner
1.39	72	Karakul, Jalalabat	Farmer
1.40	77	Bazar Kurgan	N/A
1.41	81	Akbash, Jalalabat	Farmer
1.42	80	Naryn	Farmer
1.43	79	Bazar Kurgan	Teacher
1.44	75	Akbash, Jalalabat	Housewife, Shepherd
1.45	78	Ysyk-kol	Historian
1.46	90	Shorobashat, Ozgen	N/A
1.47	80	Shorobashat Ozgen	Housewife
1.48	79	Ana Kyzyl	N/A
1.49	83	Kara Taryk	Tractor Driver
1.50	77	Kara Taryk	Shepherd, Housewife
1.51	73	Jany Chukur	Teacher
1.52	74	Toktogul	Dentist
1.53	85	Arbyn, Osh	N/A
1.54	71	Toloykon, Osh	Teacher, Engineer
1.55	79	Jany Aryk, Osh	Farmer
1.56	70	Aravan, Osh	Kolhoz Worker
1.57	75	Chongaryk, Talas	Teacher
1.58	68	Keng Aral, Talas	Veterinarian
1.59	85	Chongaryk, Talas	Teacher
1.60	Focus Group Discussion in Talas		
1.61	75	Naryn	Worker
1.62	77	Naryn	Farmer, Salesclerk
1.63	77	Naryn	Teacher
1.64	81	Naryn	Worker
1.65	87	Naryn	Salesclerk
1.66	80	Naryn	Teacher
1.67	75	Naryn	Teacher
1.68	85	Naryn	High-ranking Bureaucrat
1.69	66	Bishkek	Diplomat, High-ranking Bureaucrat

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Famine in Kyrgyzstan in the 1930s and 1940s

Guljanat Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun

At the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, Soviet forced collectivization policies, implemented together with the deprivation of livestock and de-*kulak*ization overlapped with harsh weather conditions and poor harvests. The above-mentioned factors had a dramatic impact especially on Kazakhstan and Ukraine as well as on Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.¹ In the case of Kazakhstan, the level of famine and deaths was considerable, because local people operating in a nomadic or semi-nomadic economy were deprived of their livestock. Settlement processes were going on before the population was accustomed to agricultural activities, in conjunction with harsh winters and inhospitable climate conditions. Wide-ranging studies have concluded that these policies resulted in mass famine and population decline in Kazakhstan and Ukraine. In 2008, Moscow officially recognized the artificial character of the *holodomor* (mass famine) in Ukraine.

This chapter focuses on the famine of the 1930s and 1940s in Kyrgyzstan. It is generally accepted that in Kyrgyz history, there are many unwritten and unvoiced aspects. The famine is an important event in Kyrgyz history,

G. Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun (✉)
Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey

and deserves more attention and should be studied on its own. Having analyzed research on oral history sources, this study claims that the famine in reality was more severe than is written in the history books. This work is based on the method of oral history sources, by interviewing elderly people who are 70 years old and above. Interviewing was carried out in all the *oblasts* (administrative territories) of Kyrgyzstan, covering different social backgrounds and professions as well as preserving a gender balance. People, now in their 70s or 80s, still have the memories related to the famine. Furthermore, although the oral history method has some limitations in itself, it does introduce some significant information. The derived data was elaborated in comparison with the newspapers and archival materials of the period.

Famines took place almost once a decade in Kyrgyzstan at the beginning of the twentieth century; there were famines in the 1910s, 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. This study is essentially based on oral history sources; indeed, our respondents who are 70–90 years old do not remember clearly the first two of these. Therefore, the main focus will be on the famines of the 1930s and 1940s. The famine in the 1930s began in the winter of 1931–32 and got worse in the winter of 1932–33. The famine of the 1940s was experienced during the years of the Second World War, or in the words of the interviewees, during the “Great Patriotic War.”²

NARRATIONS OF THE PROBLEM

In this chapter, firstly, the famine of 1931–33 and then the famine of the 1940s will be studied by the information given by the people who lived through this period, mainly using oral history sources. Despite the fact that there was no direct question in the questionnaire regarding the famine, most of the interviewees mentioned it. They have generally described the famine as the most difficult time in their lives, and as the worst aspect of the USSR. After having elaborated on the oral sources, they will be compared with the written and archival sources.

Interviewees, regardless of their social background and regions, describe the period as their most difficult times and explain its reasons:

There was a time of collectivization. Whether you liked it or not, the government deprived people of their livestock. People were left without livestock. Hard times and shortages occurred after this. We still remember those times. Those times were very difficult. We were hungry and exhausted.
[Male, 1912, Kyrgyz, Naryn oblast, Kyrgyzstan]

In the Chuy region, the famine was hard, especially in 1916 and 1932–1933. The reason for the famine of 1932–1933 was that the state took all the produce from the people. That's why they were left without food and suffered as a consequence. [Female, 1925, Kyrgyz, Chuy oblast, Kyrgyzstan]

The respondent from the Jalalabad region told about the scale of the famine in the southern parts of Kyrgyzstan as well as the migration of the wealthy people as a result of the forced collectivization policies.

Thousands and thousands of people died of hunger here in Jalalabad and Kurshab. Wealthy people were either imprisoned or died; or they fled to China, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia or Turkey. [Male, 1929, Kyrgyz, Jalalabad oblast, Kyrgyzstan]

The point that there were mass migrations abroad is expressed in the written sources especially after the glasnost and perestroika period, and later from independence on. In a newspaper from 1990,³ it is indicated that at the beginning of the 1930s, 300 nomadic households fled from Alai valley as well as part of the population from the villages of At-Bashy district, taking with them 30,000 sheep and 15,000 calves (Baktygulov 1990: 88–89).

Furthermore, another interviewee narrates how he faced the slaughter in his village:

In 1930–31 ... in summer, all the men had gone to the mountains for the summer pastures. Only women and children were left, and I was about 12–13 years old then. At that time, we lived in the *yurtas* [that is, tents made of felt], which were pitched close to each other. One day I was outside, and when I came back, I saw blood coming out from the *yurta*. I opened the door and saw a lot of slaughtered sheep and goats. I started to carefully listen to a weak noise coming from outside. I followed the noise and found all the women sitting together in one of the *yurtas*. I asked why they had slaughtered all the sheep and goats. They answered: Why not? These are our goods and we have earned them honestly, why not eat them ourselves rather than the government take them from us. [Male, 1919, Kyrgyz, Chuy oblast, Kyrgyzstan]

This mass slaughter shows how the population protested against the deprivation of their livestock. It seems that such slaughters took place

on a widespread basis, because the Soviet government tried to take measures against the slaughter by law. The Central Executive Committee and the Soviet of People's Commissars of the USSR launched decrees "On measures of the struggle against the ruthless slaughter of livestock" on January 16, 1930 (*Kollektivizatsiya* 1957: 260–261) and several months later another decree "On measures against the ruthless slaughter of livestock" on November 1, 1930 (*Kollektivizatsiya* 1957: 336–337).

According to the responses, it is possible to make some generalizations and analysis. Most of the people cannot forget those days because it was a very difficult time. Depriving people of their livestock was not welcomed. However, it must be indicated that most of our respondents remember better the famine of the 1940s.

Furthermore, regarding the famine of the 1940s, our respondents gave more concrete data. One of the interviewees, as the most remembered event of his life, remembers the starvation, shortage of food and clothes. He cannot also forget how human labor was used [Male, 1921, Kyrgyz, Naryn oblast, Kyrgyzstan]. Another interviewee [Female, 1927, Kyrgyz, Naryn oblast, Kyrgyzstan] gives a vivid picture about life in the 1940s:

Children collected ears of wheat. Every child had a quota to be collected per day. In addition, there were war taxes per household, collected twice a year. The amount of tax was about 300–500 *rubles*. It was very difficult to pay these taxes, but somehow people had to find the money. Also, from 1943, parcels were posted to soldiers. From the *raion* [that is, an administrative district] center, officials came and ordered us to collect from every household 250 grams of dairy butter and 10 eggs.

This respondent worked as a teacher at the village school, and at the same time worked as a political agitator. They collected produce from every household and mixed the dairy butter and eggs with flour, and sent it to the frontline [Female, 1927, Kyrgyz, Naryn oblast, Kyrgyzstan].

Moreover, sources gave further information regarding the scale and gravity of the famine. Indeed, one of the interviewees [Female, 1915, Kyrgyz, Chuy oblast, Kyrgyzstan] narrates:

Following the collectivization, we moved to Jungal [Naryn oblast]. The livestock was taken, and there was a severe famine in Jungal. There were corpses everywhere along the brook. In Bishkek, there was a pickup. Previously it carried livestock. This time, the pickup was carrying corpses.

There was a street named after Kolpakovskii. This street was full of corpses. Only years later did the situation start to get better.

In addition, other interviewee [Female, 1940, Kyrgyz, Chuy oblast, Kyrgyzstan] touches upon another characteristic of the famine:

In reality, the Kyrgyz villages suffered mostly from the famine of 1941–46. The reason is that Russian people are thrifty; they have the peculiarity of keeping reserves. They also had a hard time, but managed to survive thanks to their caches.

Oral history sources have similar distressing memoirs related to their childhood and youth. There were other unpleasant aspects following malnutrition. “People suffered from lice, fleas, scabies, favus, influenza and heavy coughs. Many people died of hunger. Actually, most of the people died, and less survived” [Male, 1933, Kyrgyz, Naryn oblast, Kyrgyzstan].

In addition, famine brought other burdens, too. As was indicated [Male, 1931, Kyrgyz, Naryn oblast, Kyrgyzstan]:

In 1941, after the war started, there was a shortage of food and clothes, as well as epidemics. There were people who perished from hunger. These were not male adults, because the men were at the front. We, the children, tried to bury the dead, or at least to cover their faces.

SURVIVAL

Moreover, it is meaningful to learn about different methods of surviving by oral history sources. This work does not have the intention to generalize these cases as if in a nation-scale; however, there were such cases according to oral history sources. As one of the interviewees [Female, 1924, Kyrgyz, Issyk-kol oblast, Kyrgyzstan] states:

The famine was very harsh. People found new methods for surviving. They realized that meadow mice kept stocks of grain. People had to dig up the burrows of mice, where they could find up to 1–2 sacks of grain granules. We had such a difficult time, which can be seen by us having to eat from mice burrows.

Another method that the people used for survival was a plant named *algy*, korolkowia or *Allium korolkowi* (a member of the Liliaceae, onion family).

The people during the difficult famine years realized that this plant could be boiled and eaten. Respondents stressed that in many places people survived by eating *algy*. One of the respondents [Male, 1940, Kyrgyz, Talas oblast, Kyrgyzstan] said:

During the famine of the 1930s, my father narrated they did not have any food. They only had *atala* [a kind of batter, mixture of water, flour and sour milk], which they drank once a day. Many people left their homes seeking food. They had to venture into the mountains digging up plants, such as *algy* [that is, korolkowia], rhubarb and roots.

It should be noted that oral history sources give more information than written materials. Furthermore, another interviewee [Male, 1931, Kyrgyz, Jalalabad oblast, Kyrgyzstan] indicated that people died from misusing the plants:

In 1941–45 there was a famine. The nutritional items were milk, fried garlic, and a plant called *algy*. People made an *atala* from *algy* and drank it. However, one must know how to boil it properly. Some people got poisoned, because they did not know how to boil it, and died. We had very difficult times. There were famines in the 1930s, after collectivization, and in 1940s during the war. There were big losses. We witnessed all of these events.

Although this study was conducted in Kyrgyzstan and covered only this republic, some of the interviewees, especially those who are from the Talas region, neighboring Kazakhstan, while sharing their own experiences of the famine, also reflected on the mass famines in Kazakhstan, which they witnessed or heard about. The next interviewee [Female, 1938, Kyrgyz, Talas, Kyrgyzstan] states:

Elderly people narrated that in the famine of the 1930s and after WWII a large amount of Kazaks came to Talas. The reason is that the Talas region has land suitable for pastoralism and agricultural activities. Many of these people died after they came, due to the famine. Our people [the Kyrgyz] buried them, because we are both Muslims and brothers.

Moreover, this respondent remembers an incident she witnessed when she was 4–5 years old; they found a young Kazak man, who had died of starvation near their garden. She also remembers how people buried him. By estimating her age, it must have taken place in 1941 or 1942.

There is another meaningful story told by this interviewee [Female, 1938, Kyrgyz, Talas, Kyrgyzstan] regarding the gravity of the situation:

We had a grand grandmother ... She was a Kazak. She passed away just three years ago at the age of 94. [To estimate, she must have lived between the years 1910–2004.] She first married a Kazak man; however, her parents left her because she was married. But later during the famine, her husband sold her to a Kyrgyz man for a *pood* [approximately 16.3 kg] of corn or wheat.

It is generally accepted that the famine of the 1930s was even worse in Kazakhstan and Ukraine. Many studies have been conducted on this topic.

What were the reasons that led to such a harsh situation? They also share their opinions about the reasons. It was claimed [Male, 1933, Kyrgyz, Issyk-kol oblast, Kyrgyzstan] that the Kyrgyz were not accustomed to agricultural work. They were not used to cultivating the land. It was also stated [Male, 1938, Kyrgyz, Issyk-kol oblast, Kyrgyzstan]:

In my opinion, collectivization policies were wrong. In Moscow, some of the party leaders were against these policies. Among such leaders, the most prominent one was Bukharin. In Moscow, there were such opinions voiced to not interfere with the farm workers and middle-level peasants; and above all, not to touch the *kulaks*. These leaders stated that these were the people who were the masters of agricultural work and its secrets. In addition, they believed that as a consequence of destroying them, agriculture would disappear. Despite all of these facts, Moscow issued its orders regarding collectivization.

This view is also supported by written sources. The way that was suggested by N.I. Bukharin, A.I. Rykov and others mainly aimed to alter the exploitative relationships in the villages, turning to cooperation and the socialist way of production, but not destroy certain classes (Baktygulov 1990: 83–84). Moreover, this interviewee expresses an analytic opinion regarding the other reasons behind this process:

While implementing the policies, local executives usually either misunderstood or overestimated them. Thus, there was a mentality to overestimate by 200%; in this way, the orders from Moscow were greatly changed or distorted, until they reach the *raion* level. So these local administrators deprived the Kyrgyz of their livestock, their only property. [Male, 1938, Kyrgyz, Issyk-kol oblast, Kyrgyzstan]

One of the interviewees [Male, 1931, Kyrgyz, Naryn oblast, Kyrgyzstan] thinks there were many errors in politics, and it would be better to leave places as cooperatives. Another respondent [Male, 1933, Kyrgyz, Naryn oblast, Kyrgyzstan] says: “A collective economy just brings harm; there are big differences between cooperative and collective farms. A cooperative economy is a small farm, but everyone will have his/her own portion.” He states that he is for private property, and that such solution would not bring so many losses.

Another interviewee [Male, 1929, Kyrgyz, Jalalabad oblast, Kyrgyzstan] thinks that people could not resist collectivization, because there was a fear factor. “At that time, there was an even worse practice—if someone said something against the system, they could be imprisoned” he says.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the respondents stressed one significant point that was taking place in Kyrgyz society at that time. This issue can be described as kindness, solidarity and support shown in those difficult times. Indeed, one of the respondents [Female, 1925, Kyrgyz, Chuy oblast, Kyrgyzstan] underlined that there was a feeling of solidarity and unity as well as kindness in spite of the shortage of food. Talking about the WWII years, she says that the people even shared milk and milk products, for example, *jarma* [a kind of barley drink].

One of the interviewees [Male, 1938, Kyrgyz, Issyk-kol oblast, Kyrgyzstan] also stated that although the people were hungry and it was a very difficult period, “However, we survived by helping and supporting each other. Friendships, relatives and such good qualities helped to overcome the difficult 1940s and 1950s.”

Another interviewee narrates an episode from his childhood that reflects this character quite explicitly:

The other thing that should be stated here is the fact that the people always supported each other in hard times. For example, my mother used to prepare *bozo* [a kind of home-made fermented grain drink]. She woke up very early to prepare *bozo*; she saw this as if it were her responsibility. The people just came and drank it for free, we never sold it. My mother said that *bozo* was good to protect against anaemia, and she was just making it through kindness. In our society, there were such moral values, despite the difficulties and shortages. [Male, 1938, Kyrgyz, Issyk-kol oblast, Kyrgyzstan]

It is obvious that these people, who are 70–90 years old today, cannot erase these pictures from their memories. In the light of oral history sources, it is possible to paint a broad picture of the famines of the 1930s and 1940s.

OFFICIAL SOURCES

Furthermore, a comparison of the oral sources with the official sources gives us an interesting picture. While studying the newspapers of that period, it is interesting that there is not a single word about the famine and the hard times people were experiencing.

In *Qyzyl Qyrgyzstan* from 1933 and *Leninchil Jash* from 1940 to 1942, the newspapers of the period, which were compared with the oral source data, there are not any mentions of the famines. On the contrary, in *Qyzyl Qyrgyzstan*, issued on January 8, 1933, there is an article, reporting that 27 wagons of well-fed livestock were delivered from Kyrgyzstan to Leningrad, and that the government will still continue providing the Leningrad proletariat with food (*Qyzyl Qyrgyzstan* 8/1/1933, 7, 1). This was the period when the people in Kyrgyzstan were experiencing very hard times.

Nevertheless, this did not mean that local or central executives of the period were not aware of this situation. This can be seen explicitly from the archival documents. Especially, Turar Ryskulov—Vice-chairman of the Soviet of People's Commissars, that is, the council of ministers—on March 9, 1933 wrote a report to Stalin, and copies of this letter were delivered to Kaganovich⁴ and Molotov.⁵ This document was stamped “secret.” The report deals with the situation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in a very detailed way. Ryskulov gave the past and present situation of the famine, its scale, reasons and even suggestions to stop the famine, death and mass migration in a quite informative and detailed manner.⁶ However, “real” history shows that the suggestions in this secret report were not put into practice. Besides, the fact that newspapers of the period did not deal with this problem indicates that authorities preferred to hide the problem from the public and to not deal with it.⁷

While studying written history, it can be seen that the subject of famine is not talked about in the history books in Kyrgyzstan. It is obvious that official history is written from a Marxist–Leninist point of view and interpretation of history. Indeed, collectivization processes in official history are presented in the following way: “The Communist Party and Soviet State, realizing Leninist ideas of the transition of the earlier undeveloped peoples to socialism, while the capitalist stage of development was avoided/not experienced, consequently, with the help of several transitional steps, realized a radical change in terms of social and economic aspects in villages and small settlement units of Kirgiziya. Towards the end of the 1920s,

the main prerequisites of the mass collectivization of the rural economy were created, the social character of *dekhkans* (farmers) and peasants of Kirgiziya was radically changed and kulaks and *bai-manaps* (the exploiting class) were completely liquidated” (*Istoriya Kirgizskoi SSR* 1986: 385).

The negative aspects of collectivization are briefly touched upon in after-independence publications. “Since 1930, the principles of new economic policies started to deteriorate, and the Stalinist command-administrative system gets stronger” (Osmonov 2007: 187). Further, the author states that “in Kyrgyzstan, the process of farm collectivization and settlement of the nomadic and half-nomadic people were held together” (Osmonov 2007: 190).

In addition, there is only one sentence about the famine in one of the books: “An artificially created famine in 1932 in the country resulted in the loss of millions of people, and naturally caused discontent” (*Istoriya Kyrgyzstana XX vek* 1998: 94). The subject of famine is not paid much attention to in the general history books in Kyrgyzstan, even of the post-Soviet period.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, oral history sources indicate that the scale and gravity of the famine were severe, although in the official history of Kyrgyzstan, the famines of the twentieth century have not been recognized as serious events. The famines, which occurred in the 1930s and 1940s, had an enormous impact on Kyrgyz society. Soviet policies including the confiscation of livestock, harsh weather conditions and the Kyrgyz being unaccustomed to agriculture resulted in the people experiencing a very hard time and a decline in the population. Moral values, which contributed to preserving society and public health, despite the famine, deserve special attention.

Moreover, this topic should be further investigated, and here the role of oral history sources is important. Although the method of oral history is sometimes criticized for being subjective, it still introduces the history of everyday life and history itself from the “bottom up.” The regions of Kyrgyzstan should paint similar pictures, but it can still be studied how famine took place in every region of Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, it could be estimated how many people died in the famines. Consequently, the famines of the 1930s and 1940s must have had an impact on the present situation regarding the Kyrgyz population.

In investigating the famines as a subject of historical research, oral history sources are also important to examine daily life, what the people's nutritional sources were, how difficult it was to survive, the consequences of the famines, how many losses there were, what the methods of survival were and what the errors which led to famine were. The results of the famines were losses of life, population decline, migration and social problems. These problems are related to today's population numbers. Oral history plays an important role, because its findings may shed light on this important period of Kyrgyz history.

NOTES

1. On the famine in Kazakhstan, Professor Talas Omarbekov, historian, indicates that the Kazakhs, after the Russian annexation, had two severe famines, one at the beginning of the 1920s and the other at the beginning of the 1930s. These famines caused an enormous loss of life, and those who survived had to flee to other countries. The Kazakhs faced the threat of disappearing as a nation (Talas Omarbekov, *Kazakhstan tarihyнын XX-gасыrdagy ozekti maseleleri* (Significant Problems of the History of Kazakhstan in the twentieth century), Almaty: Oner, 2003, p. 260). Furthermore, the situation in Kazakhstan was known by the local and central authorities, because "the failure of the Kazakh economy was a central theme at the 17th Party Conference held in 1932" (Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 2nd ed., Stanford: The Hoover Institution Press, 1995, p. 182). Regarding the approximate number of losses, it is estimated that "more than 1.5 million Kazakhs died during the 1930s and nearly 80 percent of herds were destroyed between 1928 and 1932" (Naum Jasny, *The Socialized Agriculture of the USSR*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1941: 323 cited in M.B. Olcott, *Ibid.*, pp. 184–185). Olcott further indicates that "the actual losses were probably even greater" (*ibid.*: 185). See also links <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1227767460>, <http://www.azattyq.org/content/article/1156351.html>.

For collectivization in Uzbekistan, see Marianne Kamp—Russel G. Zanca, *Writing the History of Collectivization in Uzbekistan: Oral Narratives*, Seattle, WA: National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, 2008; Nadejda Ozerova, "Collectivization and Socialization of Agricultural Production in Uzbekistan: The Soviet Policy in 1930s," in *The Journal of Central Asian Studies*, The University of Kashmir, Srinagar, Vol. XV, No.1, 2004–2005, pp. 1–14.

For the widespread famine in Ukraine (*holodomor*), see Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, New York, 1986; Philip Boobbyer, *The Stalin Era*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001; Stephen J. Lee, *Stalin and the Soviet Union*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005.

2. In Soviet historiography, the “Great Patriotic War” refers to a period that starts with the German invasion/occupation of the USSR from June 22, 1941 to May 9, 1945 with the victory of the USSR over Nazi Germany.
3. I am grateful to Zuhra Altymyshova for providing me with some written publications on Kyrgyzstan.
4. L.M. Kaganovich held many important positions at that time, and this report was copied to him as head of the Agricultural Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Bolsheviks.
5. V.M. Molotov at that time was Chairman of the Soviet of People’s Commissars, the equivalent of a prime minister.
6. TsGA PD KR (Central State Archive of Political Documentation of the Kyrgyz Republic), f 10, op. 1 d. 505, l. 27, 29–37.
7. It should be remembered that in the Soviet Union, the newspapers, journals and other mass media belonged to state organs.

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Soviet Agricultural Policy and Cultivating “Virgin Lands” in Kazakhstan

Konuralp Ercilasun

Agricultural production was one of the most assertive policies of the Soviet Union. As the state ideology depended on the working and peasant class, the Soviet administrative system had something to say and do in the agricultural sector. Just after its foundation, the state managed to enroll almost all the peasants into communes. Then came the New Economic Policy of the 1920s, a policy in which the articles regarding peasants consisted a great amount among the legal documents. The end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s were the years of collectivization. The Second World War disrupted the plans of the Soviet elite regarding internal affairs. The most extensive and challenging idea came after the recovery from the War and after the change of leadership.

Khrushchev delivered a report titled “On the Further Increase of Grain Production and on the Bringing into Cultivation of Virgin Lands” during the period of internal power politics following the death of Stalin. Within a month, his report became a decree and was published in the state newspaper. The report outlined the depressing situation of agricultural production, the mistakes of the policymakers and practitioners and suggested a

K. Ercilasun (✉)
Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey

new plan for boosting production. The main aim was to increase grain production by 35–40 % in two years. To achieve this aim, Khrushchev proposed that more land, labeled as “virgin” and “idle” land, should be open to cultivation. Cultivating huge amounts of new land required a considerable workforce; so internal migration was inevitable (S. 1954: 101–103).

Following the decree, a mass movement toward cultivating new lands began and lasted for a decade. This was a controversial period in Soviet history, leading to several debates on the achievements and failures of the Virgin Lands Campaign. This chapter aims to paint a picture of common memories about the Campaign. In the first part, I will introduce the general literature on the topic. Then I will deal with the main characteristics of the Campaign. For the third step, I will classify the memories of the Virgin Lands Campaign based on our interviews. And as a conclusion, I will try to combine these memories with existing literature.

NARRATIVE OF SOVIET TIMES

We can say there is a vast amount of literature in the United States. As early as the middle of 1954, the Khrushchev’s report and the decree of the Central Committee of the Party were briefly summarized in *Soviet Studies* (S. 1954). Then came research in the *Geographical Review* (Jackson 1956). Both the summary and the article aimed to understand the Campaign rather than judge it. Still, Jackson was doubtful about the results of the Campaign. He noted that “there is doubt whether the current Campaign, involving millions of acres of virgin and idle land in a region traditionally noted for its hazards, will greatly improve the situation” (Jackson 1956: 19). After these preliminary reports and research, there was silence in the academic field.

Interest in the Soviet Campaign arose again in 1962. That year witnessed three publications on the theme (Durgin 1962; Jackson 1962; Korol 1962). Jackson carried out a second research project six years after his first article had appeared. It had been already eight years after the beginning of the Campaign, so there was plenty of evidence to evaluate. This time he was more certain regarding the implications and causes of these implications. He indicated that “Rigid planning (indeed, one might question the use of the word ‘planning’), inefficiency, and a lack of incentive for the farm workers, have compounded the problems presented by frost and drought” (Jackson 1962, 79). Another researcher, Durgin, focused on the economic results of the Campaign, which were

summarized as an approximate 50 % increase in grain; a considerable increase in corn; an increase in grain exports; and modest increases in other agricultural products (Durgin 1962: 265–269). He also stated the difficulties encountered during the Campaign. One of such difficulties was addressed by him as soil erosion, but he did not agree on the idea that the Campaign had caused serious erosion (Durgin 1962: 276). The third publication was the paper of Professor Korol, a former Soviet professor who had harshly criticized the Campaign. He suggested intensifying farming in order to achieve an increase in food production. Moreover, he stated that a farmer could display personal initiative only if he owned the land privately (Korol 1962: 18). Both of Korol's suggestions were the initial policies of Malenkov, who had been earlier ousted by Khrushchev.

After the end of the Campaign and the dismissal of Khrushchev, international academic interest in the Campaign was not so popular. It was mostly dealt with by papers and monographs on general Soviet history or the general Khrushchev era. There was one main monograph on the subject during the Soviet period (McCauley 1976). After the opening of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev, the academic interest in all themes related to the Soviet Union increased. Thus, we can find some dissertations related to the Virgin Lands Campaign (Craumer 1991; Pohl 1999). McCauley and Craumer looked at the issue as an economic program. Craumer also addressed the environmental issues. On the other hand, Pohl's point was that the Campaign was not an economic one, but a social one. It was a reform and construction Campaign that did not aim to resolve the fundamental agricultural problems of the Soviet Union (Pohl 1999: 443–444).

The literature of the 1960s suggested that the Campaign was a big failure and harmed the soil; but the research undertaken since the 1970s is more favorable to the Campaign in its calculations. This is because of the fact that the Soviet leadership had begun to study the climate and soil conditions after the disastrous effects of the Campaign. An important environmental study gives us detailed information on the dust bowl effects of the Virgin Lands Campaign (Zonn et al. 1994: 135–150).

THE CAMPAIGN: ITS ORIGINS AND TARGETS

Khrushchev's ambitious Campaign to cultivate virgin and idle lands had originated from his experiences in Ukraine. Unlike Malenkov, he advocated that the Soviet state had a real problem with agricultural production. He devoted his report to the deficiencies in agriculture and then

proposed the Virgin Lands Campaign in order to overcome this problem. Before the decree, he had had some communication with the Kazakh leadership. The answer was that cultivated lands could be increased by 544,000 hectares by 1955 (Mills 1970: 60). However, this was not the figure in Khrushchev's mind. Moreover, Zhumabay Shayakhmetov, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Kazakh SSR, argued rapid cultivation of the steppes would harm the soil and animal husbandry. Thus, Khrushchev accused him of having nationalistic ideas and replaced him with Panteleimon Ponomarenko in February 1954. During this period, Brezhnev was appointed as the Second Secretary of the Communist Party of the Kazakh SSR. The Kazakh SSR was now prepared for the future plans for the steppes. The February–March 1954 Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued the decree to cultivate the country's virgin and idle lands. The decree aimed to cultivate about 32 million acres (approximately 13 million hectares) in 1954–55 (Jackson 1956: 2).

The start of the Virgin Lands Campaign was better than expected. A great deal of land had been enthusiastically cultivated. The Central Committee, taking into consideration this rapid cultivation, rushed to the decision to increase the figures as early as August 1954. The new goal was to cultivate 69 million acres (approximately 28 million hectares) by the end of the 1956 (Jackson 1956: 2). The goal was doubled with the addition of one more year.

The Campaign targeted the vast steppes of the Russian SFSR and the Kazakh SSR, which were suitable for animal husbandry rather than traditional agriculture. It had been the land of pastoral nomads for two millennia. Until the modern era, pastoral nomadism had been the most beneficial way to use the steppes. Only a careful scientific study of the climate and land conditions, and developing new technologies suitable to the region, would make agriculture more attractive than pastoral nomadism on the steppes. However, these were not the issues of the Central Committee. The aim was to immediately increase overall grain production at any cost.

The steppes have a dry continental climate. The average precipitation of the region is below 300 mm. The growing season is 120–125 days. Cold winters last from November till March, with temperatures below -40°C . The summer season is hot, dry and windy with temperatures around 35°C . The summer winds erode the topsoil and create dust storms. Khrushchev had been the First Secretary of the Communist

Party of Ukraine for a long time before he came to Moscow to work for the central government. He paid attention to agriculture in Ukraine, too. Therefore, we can assume that he had his Ukraine experiences in his mind while proposing the Virgin Lands Campaign. Thus, it will be helpful to make a comparison with the climate in Ukraine. Ukraine has annual precipitation of around 500 mm or more. Its growing season is 170–180 days. The temperature difference between July and January is approximately 25 °C, whereas it is more than 70 °C on the Kazakh steppe (Dronin and Kirilenko 2013: 128; Korol 1962: 17). This comparison gives us a clue as to why Khrushchev’s hurry to cultivate the steppe had such negative effects in the region.

Ignorance of the local climatic conditions in the beginning was well summarized in Brezhnev’s words: “We knew, of course, that heat and drought were nothing out of the ordinary in this region. But we did not yet know the implacable perversity of the steppeland calendar, which once in ten years brings particularly cruel and destructive droughts upon the land” (Brezhnev 1978: 133). In fact, Brezhnev’s enthusiastic memoirs on his two years in Kazakhstan can also be regarded as material for “oral” history that contains many local case descriptions and gives us an insight into one of the top practitioners of the Campaign. Brezhnev’s enthusiasm is obvious in his wording and narration. He continues:

We foresaw, even before launching our offensive, that a battle with the elements was inevitable. When the economics of opening up the virgin lands were worked out, the experts estimated that even if there were two years of severe drought in every five we should still receive an average of 500 million *poods* (8 million tons) of grain per year. There was no reason to doubt these estimates. We knew what we were getting into, but it is one thing to know and quite another to see the precious harvest that has taken such effort to grow perish before your eyes. (Brezhnev 1978: 133–134)

There are so many cases narrated in the memoirs how they had encountered difficulties and how they solved them during the implementation of the Campaign. Brezhnev also unveils the distorted bureaucratic system of Soviet administration in his narrative (Brezhnev 1978: 100–102, 109). This is also a narration of the almost “unplanned” planning that Jackson had pointed out earlier (Jackson 1962: 79).

MEMOIRS: TRACES OF ANCIENT BELIEFS AND NOMADIC VIEW FOR CULTIVATING

The soil and climate of the steppe directed ancient people toward animal husbandry in order to make a living. A long history of pastoral nomadic traditions created a unique world different from that of settled peasants. This view also developed some beliefs related to nature. Ancient people believed in the holy sky (heaven), holy earth and holy water. They believed that these sacred beings helped the people. We can observe this belief in Orkhon inscriptions (Ergin 2012: 13). After the conversion to Islam, many ancient practices were Islamized and continued among these people. Thus, the nomadic connection to the earth was different to that of a peasant; generally, pastoral nomads believed that digging the soil was harmful.¹ On the other hand, pastoral nomadism required seasonal migrations whereas peasantry required settling down in a certain place. This difference affected the nomadic perception of peasantry, too (Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun 2015). Although modernization brought some changes to the nomadic view, it was still a social factor living in society. The traces of ancient beliefs and concept of nature sometimes come out in our interviews:

The Virgin Lands Campaign was not a new thing. It was started as early as Alexandre of the Romanovs. All of them, including Nicolas, thought about the same policy ... For me, the most important thing in a man's life is religion, and the first religion was the religion of Tengri. According to this religion, there is a balance between humans and nature, and you were not allowed to break down the soil. Those people tore up every piece of land they saw. They didn't think whether the land was suitable or not. As a result, the fertile strata of the land was gone during the 1970s. In fact, the land should be cultivated, but not on such a scale. A lot of investment was poured in for little gain ... For example, the newcomers in 1954 were all convicts ... The rulers of that time knew nothing, they didn't know about the necessary techniques for the land. However, those who came afterwards were more talented. The newcomers from 1954 and 1955 immediately went back to their hometowns. [Male, 1942, Kazakh, Qostanay]

Traces of these ancient world views are also found in the Kazakh language. The Kazakh term for cultivating the land is “jer jyrtyu” (literally, “to tear the land”), which has the tone of harming the soil. Sometimes the negative tone is emphasized by adding a second verb, that is, “jerdi jyrtyp

tastau” (literally, “to tear up the land”). It is seen from the interviews that people used both expressions while criticizing the Campaign:

From the top administration they ordered us to immediately tear a great deal of land ... The local administrative elite was afraid of the central government, so they **to**re up all the pasture land, they **to**re it up. [Male, 1936, Kazakh, Eastern Kazakhstan]

I look upon the Campaign as being poor ... Kazakhs lost all their pasture lands. The fertile strata of the soil was **to**rn apart and could not be cultivated any more. A lot of erosion took place because of the Campaign. The Kazakh steppe turned into a dust bowl. [Male, NA, Kazakh, Shymkent]

[After Brezhnev came to Kazakhstan,] he forced them to **tear all the land**. Then he brought all kinds of people such as drunks, prisoners, Komsomol members. He brought them from Ukraine and from other places. He let them tear the land again and again. There was no remaining pasture land for the livestock, all of it was **to**rn up. [Female, 1924, Kazakh, Zhambyl]

Khrushchev said that we had to cultivate two million hectares of land, we had to sow corn. Thus, the lands of Saryarka, Tselinograd, Karagandy and Kokshetau were **to**rn. They were places for breeding livestock. That was too much. They **to**re the pastureland and it turned into a dust bowl. You can get a harvest for one or two years, three years maximum from pastureland. On the other hand, if you don't touch it, it will remain as pastureland. Then you can breed hundreds or thousands of livestock on those lands. [Male, 1928, Kazakh, Eastern Kazakhstan]

During the Campaign, I thought it was a good thing. We had lots of food. But now, I think that it was harmful. We didn't have any place to graze the livestock, all **the land was to**rn up. [Female, NA, Kazakh, Almaty]

When we came here, they brought motorized technology and **to**re up **the land**. No one had studied [the characteristics of the land]. [Male, 1942, Kazakh, Qostanay]

The Campaign **to**re our all our pastureland, on which we had grazed our livestock for a lifetime, and turned it into desert. [Male, NA, Kazakh, Zhambyl]

There is only one instance in our interviews in which the expression “tearing the land” is used within a positive sense: “The Virgin Lands Campaign was good. All of the idle land **was to**rn. There was lots of idle land close to Kostanai region. All those lands **were to**rn ... It was very good. They built pretty houses” [Male, 1928, Kazakh, Qostanay]. There is one more usage that can be disputed: “The nature was destroyed. Now we are paying the cost for it. But it had also some advantages. The government

freed many young people from military service and brought them here to **tear the land** ... Russians benefited from it” [Male, 1935, Uygur, China-born]. The interviewee used the term just after saying that the Campaign had some advantages, but he continued stating that it was a benefit to the Russians.

MEMOIRS FROM THE VIRGIN LANDS REGION

Regarding the people’s assessments of the Virgin Lands Campaign, we encounter different opinions. First, we will see the opinions of the interviewees who live in the Virgin Lands region of Kazakhstan:

As a result of this Campaign, Kazakhstan became important and rich in terms of grain. He invested billions. ... However, there were also famines. We couldn’t find bread in 1964 ... It was an unplanned Campaign ... The good thing is that lots of big buildings were built, good state farms were organized. Those were good things. But he made no preparation for that, so in the end he couldn’t continue to push the Campaign ... I think the Campaign was good ... I, myself, participated in it. [Female, NA, Kazakh, Qostanay]

He directed all the power of the Union ... After this Campaign, Kazakhstan became the third largest grain producer in the Soviet Union, after Russia and Ukraine. This was completely due to Khrushchev’s efforts and good policy ... If Khrushchev hadn’t made this effort, millions of hectares of land would still be idle. Then, we wouldn’t have any grain, and also we wouldn’t have any livestock ... When the Virgin Lands campaign was announced, people happily accepted it ... People welcomed the newcomers. Nobody opposed the Campaign. It was impossible to oppose it. [Male, 1942, Kazakh, Qostanay]

It seems that the people in the region are generally in favor of the Campaign. However, there are also some controversial views. It is useful here to remember one of the previous mentioned accounts which was also from an interview taken in the Virgin Lands region:

The Virgin Lands Campaign was not a new thing. It was started as early as Alexandre of the Romanovs. All of them, including Nicolas, thought about the same policy ... For me, the most important thing in a man’s life is religion, and the first religion was the religion of Tengri. According to this religion, there is a balance between humans and nature, and you were not

allowed to break down the soil. Those people tore up every piece of land they saw. They didn't think whether the land was suitable or not. As a result, the fertile strata of the land was gone during the 1970s. In fact, the land should be cultivated, but not on such a scale. A lot of investment was poured in for little gain ... For example, the newcomers in 1954 were all convicts ... The rulers of that time knew nothing, they didn't know about the necessary techniques for the land. However, those who came afterwards were more talented. The newcomers from 1954 and 1955 immediately went back to their hometowns. [Male, 1942, Kazakh, Qostanay]

MEMOIRS FROM THE OTHER PARTS OF KAZAKHSTAN

In the other regions, we encountered both positive and negative evaluations of the Campaign. Here are some examples of positive evaluations:

Some people said that the livestock decreased. However, Kazakhstan is a vast land. It is big enough for both crops and livestock. So, I think the Campaign decision was the correct one ... Now Kazakhstan sells grain to the world. [Male, 1941, Kazakh, Shymkent]

I think it was a big Campaign. Now, thank God, Kazakhstan can harvest huge amounts of grain ... That Campaign was very good for Kazakhstan, for Kazakhs. Because now we are a grain-rich country. [Male, 1947, Kazakh, Shymkent]

People lived in opulence at that time. If you entered some houses, you would see that they fed their geese grain. [Female, 1939, Kazakh, Zhambyl]

Negative evaluations are mostly focused on technical, bureaucratic and social issues. We encountered plenty of negative evaluations about the Campaign. Some of them are as follows:

He removed Shaiakhmetov because of that. Shaiakhmetov had said that those places were pastures and useful for livestock ... I remember 1962–63. We went to queue to buy bread early in the morning. There was famine ... We went early in the morning, made a line. They gave us white bread with a receipt from the doctor. You see ... We travelled to the outer space, but there was drought. So, I am saying that the economic policy of Khrushchev was not good ... It destroyed the horse herds. They said that horses were useless. Now, we are increasing their number again. It killed the camels ... Only cultivate, only cultivate! [Male, NA, Kazakh, Shymkent]

Other countries benefitted from it, but not us. Billions of tons of crops were sent to Russia, and then to Cuba. The ship that carried the harvest

sunk in the Pacific, because it was overloaded. The grain was poured into the Ocean, but we couldn't eat it. [Male, NA, Kazakh, Southern Kazakhstan]

Khrushchev also did wrong things. For example, if you cultivate sandy land, you get nothing. If a plow touches sand, it is wiped out. The original grass just died off. To restore the original vegetation, you have to plant trees for many years in order to feed the earth. The fertile land went down and the sandy land came to the surface. Nothing grew in the sand. After the dissolution of the Soviets, lots of the land was not cultivated but rested ... There was a big harvest. There were lots of combine-harvesters, but no warehouses. Then what happened? All of the harvest rotted. Then the government would charge the officers. Then strange things happened. The officer ordered people to pour the harvest into the river. What a pity! But the officer said "if the harvest rots, then I will be charged, so let the fish eat the harvest!" ... So, there was a harvest but there was also a famine ... Then officers fabricated the statistics. They wrote the amounts as if they matched the government plan. [Female, 1937, Kazakh, Almaty]

Now, Kazakhstan imports meat. This is ridiculous. [Male, 1940, Kazakh, Almaty]

If we don't consider the wars, the Virgin Lands Campaign was the most harmful event along with Collectivization. It disrupted our land. [Male, 1949, Kazakh, Almaty]

Another type of evaluation is to indicate both negative and positive aspects. Below are two examples describing both the advantages and disadvantages of the Campaign:

The Virgin Lands Campaign started in 1954. It had both positive and negative aspects. The positive aspects were that some idle lands were cultivated. Some new technologies were introduced such as tractors, and combine-harvesters. Also, new villages and state farms were organized. In those places there were new schools and culture centers. After the harvest, people were satisfied and could find bread ... On the negative side there were some extremes. Some pastures were also cultivated. After one or two years, those lands turned into dust bowls and erosion happened ... From the top administration, people were ordered to immediately cultivate a great deal of land ... Those lands were different. If there was rain, then there was pasture. No rain, no plants. Those places turned into desert. Plants could not grow again. [Male, 1940, Kazakh, Eastern Kazakhstan]

Agriculture was developed in Kazakhstan during the Khrushchev era. He pushed for the Virgin Lands Campaign. Because of the Campaign and harvest, people arrived. Then some new machines were sent. Agricultural techniques were developed. That is the good of Khrushchev ... In the beginning, there

were also some negative aspects. Because in the beginning they cultivated everywhere. They didn't think whether the crop would grow or not ... One of the retired Kazakh ministers observed those negative aspects. He said: “Many Russians had come, Kazakh schools were closed, Kazakh newspapers were closed.” He wrote a letter to Khrushchev indicating the negative points of the Campaign. Then the government interrogated him. [Male, 1934, Kazakh, Zhambyl]

There are two assessments that should be considered as important case studies in oral history. These assessments show how evaluations are subject to change as the years pass.

The Soviet policy was to steal Kazakh land. I have this opinion today, but I didn't think like that during the Campaign period. Kazakhs are hospitable, they share even if they only have a small piece of bread. So, Kazakhs welcomed the newcomers. During the Khrushchev era corn was sown. Then Kazakhs became managers of pork companies! [Female, NA, Kazakh, Almaty]

During the Campaign, I thought it was a good thing. We had lots of food. But, now, I think that it was harmful. We don't have any place to graze the livestock, all this was torn up. [Female, NA, Kazakh, Almaty]

These two interviewees are aware of their opinions in the past and the change during the course of time. This situation raises the question of how can we depend on memories? Should we consider the contemporary opinions or modern opinions? And how can we unearth the real feelings of the interviewee if he/she himself/herself isn't aware of any change in his/her opinion?

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the extant memories in Kazakhstan regarding the Virgin Lands Campaign display contradictory assessments. It can be said that the people who had actively participated in it have more positive opinions, however indicating the negative implications of the Campaign are greater in quantity. We should take into consideration that cultivation in the Virgin Land regions did not end after the Campaign. It has continued until today. The difference is that the Soviet regime was taught a painful lesson by ignoring the climate and the soil characteristics during the high season of the Campaign. In the 1960s, the regime began to

study the region and developed new techniques that were more suitable to the steppes. After these readjustments, the regime succeeded in attaining sustainable agricultural production. Craumer and Pohl emphasize this later development. This controversy was also noticeable in the oral history sources. Some interviewees considered only the Khrushchev era, whereas some others also considered the period afterwards. Finally, the main positive aspects can be summarized as the increase in grain production and investment in the region. And the main negative aspects are expressed as cultivating pasture land, destroying nature and the migration of a huge number of people.

NOTE

1. In the eastern part of the steppe, Mongols converted to Tibetan Buddhism and integrated ancient nomadic beliefs into this new religion. Thus, until recently, the reluctance to dig the soil was more noticeable among Mongols.

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Religious Life of Kyrgyz People According to Oral Materials

Ihan Sahin

The Kyrgyz community is in the forefront among groups that have preserved to this day the cultural values of nomadism in Central Asia. The most important reason for this is the genetic disposition of the nomadic life and nomadism in the Kyrgyz community and the passing down, both by practice and orally, of many cultural values from generation to generation. In this regard, historical information, legends, heroism and stories related to them over the centuries are discussed as if they are being experienced today among the members of families whose ties go back to seven forefathers, a link that plays a vital role in the *urugs* (sub-clans) and *uruus* (clans) that make up the Kyrgyz community (Abramzon 1960: 3–92; Şahin 2013: 33–48; Vinnikov 1956: 136–181). So the structure of the Kyrgyz community, based on family, *urug* and *uruu* members, can be likened to the circles that result when a pebble is thrown in the water. They learn in a practical way the practices handed down through the generations, oral history information and cultural values and their ever-broadening historical and cultural ties. In this way, they can follow the line to where these links lead back to, in the context of being one community.

I. Sahin (✉)
Istanbul Aydin University, Istanbul, Turkey

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T. Dadabaev, H. Komatsu (eds.), *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,
and Uzbekistan*, Politics and History in Central Asia,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-52236-8_5

Generally among the Kyrgyz there is a world known as *Kökö Teñir*. It is a *shaman* that links this world, *Kökö Tenir*, and the underground world known as *Erlük*. Among the Kyrgyz *shaman* is known by the word “bakshy”. In this regard, *Shamandyk* and *Teñirchilik* can be thought of in the same concept. It is worth noting that even today there are words from the *Teñirchilik* concept, like *Teñir* (God) and sayings like *Teñir Koldosun*, *Kuday Koldosun*, *Teñir Jalgasyn* and *Kuday Jalgasyn*, (may God protect), and *Kökö Teñir* (God), that are widely used by the people. However, the *Teñirchilik* concept has recently begun to be used more widely in the scholarly world. Other cults and beliefs, such as *totemizm*, *shamandyk*, *atalar kültü* and *kök teñir*, that are based on *shaman* or *bakshy*, which link the two worlds, have sprung up in the Kyrgyz community (Abramzon 1958: 143–150; Amanaliev 1967; Bayalieva 1972). In the geography of today’s Kyrgyzstan, Islam began to spread in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. The spread was accelerated with the acceptance of Islam by the Qarakhanid rulers in 960 as the state religion. This spreading continued until the middle of the seventeenth century (Mokeyev 2006: 125–136). It should also be mentioned that within this process, in the Talas region of today’s Kyrgyzstan, Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism took root as the result of the influence of the Sogdian traders, while in the Chüi region the effects of Christianity and Buddhism were reflected in the churches and monasteries built there.

Within the context of our subjects, it should be stated that various religious and belief rituals were formed among the Kyrgyz community and in the geography of Kyrgyzstan. In pre-Islamic times this formation was multisided and multilayered. Mostly, their religious and belief rituals were related to nature and very tightly linked with the natural environment.

RITUALIZED TERMS

In the framework of these matters, there is quite a variety of religious and belief rituals in the Kyrgyz community. The places where these rituals are performed and practiced are known as *yiyk* (sacred) in the Kyrgyz language. The locations are usually referred to with the term *mazar*, which comes from the Arabic word *mazār*. These sacred places include sites like mountains, rocks, caves, hills, springs, trees, tombs and graves upon which they load the meaning of *mazar* (Aitpaeva 2007). In our interviews with Kyrgyz informants, the following statements were made regarding places known as “mazar”: *Mazar degen janagy jalgyz öskön terek da/mazar* is a

tree that grows alone; *Mazar degen el syiyina turgan jalgyz nerse da*/the place called mazar is a place that the people show respect toward [Female, 1939, Kyrgyz, Isyk-Köl oblast, Kyrgyzstan]. For example, they come to the base of this lone tree, read *bata* (fātiha) and make wishes by tying a piece of cloth to a branch. In this regard, they are considered “*yiik*” (sacred) and they won’t even break off any one of its branches. However, it must be emphasized that there is no rule saying that all lone trees are considered sacred and are “mazar”. The most important aspect of this is that the sacred site or “mazar” is known by short, stereotyped, easily remembered and clearly understandable statements. This must be a reflection of the flexibility and practicality of the nomadic lifestyle. The other matter that must be mentioned is that the basic meaning of the word “mazar” used in these statements is *mazar/grave*. As is understood, the Kyrgyz think that the soul is in the grave and is worshipped.

Whole rituals practiced in the mazar places can be called *yrym-jyrym*. On the other hand, the term *yrym-jyrym*, and sometimes just *yrym*, is mostly used in the Kyrgyz community to refer to religious and belief rituals. So essentially *yrym-jyrym* means ritual. In this regard, statements such as *yrym-jyrymın kylyp*/doing *yrym-jyrym* [Female, 1920, Kyrgyz, Chüy oblast, Kyrgyzstan]; *yrym-jyrym degen maselelerge baylanushtuu*/related to matters called *yrym-jyrym* [Female, 1939, Kyrgyz, Isyk-Köl oblast, Kyrgyzstan]; *ilgeri yrym-jyrymdy kyiyin karmashkan*/there were *yrym-jyrym* in older times [Female, 1946, Kyrgyz, Osh oblast, Kyrgyzstan]; *bala kezimde diniy yrym*/religious *yrym* in my childhood [Male, 1934, Kyrgyz, Isyk-Köl oblast, Kyrgyzstan]. Unfortunately we do not have precise information about the origin of the term *yrym-jyrym*. However, originally the term *yrym-jyrym* was *yrym-darym*. It is understood that later on it began to be used as “*yrym-jyrym*”. We can say, though, that the *yrym* of the old *yrym-darym* meant to prevent negativity and the *darym* was an action taken to rid one of a negative health aspect. In this regard, we might also say that the *jyrym* in *yrym-jyrym* could carry no meaning at all, resembling the rhyming but meaningless *mültür* of the Turkish handiadyoin *kültür-mültür*.

RITUAL ACTORS

There are individuals who play important roles in the realization of the religious and belief rituals in the Kyrgyz community. In order to better understand this we should discuss these people and their characteristics.

One of those who played a key role is a person with the title of *moldo*, who has some degree of religious knowledge. This word, which is accepted as having come from the Arabic word *mawlā*, is known as *mollā* in Persian. In pre-Soviet times, the *moldos* generally received training in such cities as Kashgar, Tashkent and Bukhara. A few times each year they would visit the nomads and, in fact, some wealthy families retained them for a price to teach their children for a year. Based on the recollections of the interviewees, there are three kinds of *moldo* among the people, known by the titles *choñ moldo*, *moldo* and *chala moldo*. The *choñ moldo* is someone considered knowledgeable by the people and one who had made the hajj to Mecca, known as *ajy* in Kyrgyz [Male, 1934, Kyrgyz, Isyk-Köl oblast, Kyrgyzstan; Female, 1946, Kyrgyz, Osh oblast, Kyrgyzstan]. These are the major *moldos* whose prayers and rituals were considered effective for solving problems and healing the sick. The *moldo* is at the normal level of his profession, while the *chala moldo* is someone who is not a *moldo* but tried to appear to be one.

For the performance of rituals people with the titles of *moldo* played an important role. The *moldo*'s most important distinction from the others was that he had some degree of knowledge of the Quran and knew *ayahs* (*verse*) and could interpret and read them. Consequently, people with illnesses and those making wishes for their children's future by visiting a *mazar* would want certain rituals performed and they would turn to the "moldo" for this. However, in doing so the *moldo* would keep his actions secret and avoid any outward display. For example, for someone who approached the *moldo* in regard to an illness, the *moldo* would say a prayer and write a *muska*, which would contain an *ayah* from the Quran or Hadith, on a piece of paper. The Kyrgyz know this *muska* as *tumar chiyip berchü* [Female, 1920, Kyrgyz, Chüy oblast, Kyrgyzstan]. Here, *tumar* carries the meaning of *muska*, whereas *chiyip* essentially means to draw a line on paper with a pen. In those times, for those who did not know Arabic writing they perceived whatever the *moldo* had written as a line and so used the word *chiyip* in this regard. *Berchü* means "to give". Of course, the *moldo* performed other rituals besides this. Relatedly, an interviewee, whose father was a *moldo*, stated that her father was quite knowledgeable and that if he pressed his hand and prayed over a point of pain on someone who came to him, the pain would go away immediately. Similarly, if someone had *irin* (pus) in their ear, her father would blow on it saying *süü* and the pus would disappear [Female, 1946, Kyrgyz, Osh oblast, Kyrgyzstan]. The *moldo* would go to places considered sacred by the people at their request and read *ayahs* from the Quran to perform rituals.

Besides the *moldos*, other ritualized actors who played important roles in the performance of rituals among the people are known by the title *bakshy*, also known occasionally as *shaman*. It is understood that the basis of the word is *po-shih* in Chinese and that it is related to the word *bák-shi*, which in ancient Chinese meant a teacher who taught the Buddhist religion (Clauson 1972: 321; Nadelyaev et al. 1969: 82). In this regard, it is noteworthy that the word came into the southeastern languages of the Turkic language group, such as Kyrgyz and Kazakh, and into Mongolian. In fact, in Korean the word *baksu* means male shaman (Choi 2015: 93). Among the Kyrgyz, the word *közü achyk* is used to mean the same as *bakshy*. In the recollections, both *bakshy* and *közü achyk* came up frequently. There are *bakshy* among the women and such a woman is called by the title *bübü* or *bübü bakshy* [Female, 1946, Kyrgyz, Osh oblast, Kyrgyzstan; Female, 1969, Kyrgyz, Isyk-Köl oblast, Kyrgyzstan]. *Bübü* is related to the word “*bībī*”, which was used in Persian to mean “the woman and owner of the house”, and as a title at the beginning of the names of high-ranking women in a portion of the old Turkic states. “*Bībī*” also carries the meaning of “*kadın, zevce, hala, teyze, büyükanne, nine*” (woman, wife, paternal aunt, maternal aunt, grandmother) in Anatolian Turkish (Özcan 1992: 125). Undoubtedly, there were some important differences between the *moldo* and the *bakshy* with regard to the understanding and implementation of the religious and belief rituals. In this context, the *moldo* has focused more on religious knowledge or references, while the *bakshy* is more inclined toward understandings and practices based on magic and witchcraft.

These actors performed rituals at the sacred places called *mazar* by the Kyrgyz people and they were mostly involved with magic, the supernatural and soul summoning. In the rituals of the *bakshy*, who were known as *közü açık* or, more so in the Kyrgyz community, as *Kyrgyzçylyk*, the effect of *shamandyk* was more pronounced. With regard to beliefs and belief rituals related to nature, births, deaths and various other wishes, the *bakshy* was more prevalent. The fact that Kyrgyz poet and Manaschy Togolok Moldo (1860–1942) recorded the séance conducted by a Kyrgyz shaman (*bakshy*) in 1929 for the treatment of a spiritually ill individual, along with the observations and songs sung during the séance (Moldobaev 2014: 114–121), shows that in the 1920s these rituals were held among the people and were part of their lives. In this context, a respondent noted with relation to the force and strength of the *bakshy* [Female, 1946, Kyrgyz, Osh oblast, Kyrgyzstan]:

“*Bakshylar ... bir aiylda biröö, ekinjisi bashka aiylda boloor ele. Eki bakshy bir aiyлга batchu emes, choguu turju emes. Alar aialdar tolgotgondo, kan köp ketip kalsa janyna baryp ‘kara jin öpkösün suurop kachty, tashta ele tashta! dep syrta karai jügürüshöt ele. Törögön aialdan köp kan ketip esin jogotup, anan kyimyldai bash tasa ‘tashtady’ dep aiytyp eger kyimyldabai sulk jatyp kalsa keede ölüp da kalat ele. Körsö kan köp ketip kalganda ölüp kalchy eken da/Bakshys ... one would be in one village and the other in a different village. They would never be in the same village and wouldn’t even enter the same village. When women’s labor pains would come, and especially if there was excessive blood flow, they would come to their sides and say in a loud chanting voice “the black devil has snatched the woman’s lungs! Leave her be!” Then the *bakshy* would run outside. The woman giving birth would faint from losing so much blood and lie still. If the woman came to a bit the *bakshy* would come to her side, saying “the black devil has returned her lung”, and help her to revive.*

In this way the woman giving birth would come back to life thanks to the *bakshy*. This is an indication of the place the *bakshy* holds for some people in the community.

It is noteworthy that in rituals among the Kyrgyz community related to *shamandyk* and *bakshylyk*, the emphasis of the beliefs and the belief rituals is on nature. The most important reason for this is the Kyrgyz community’s oneness with nature because of their genetic nomadic lifestyle. Today among the Kyrgyz populace male or female *bakshy* generally carry the title *kyrgyzchylyk* (Aitpaeva and Molchanova 2007: 395–411).

In the recollections, there was basically no mention of individuals with the title of *imam*, with regard to religious and belief rituals in pre-Soviet times. This stems from the fact that imams were generally appointed to masjids in settled areas, whereas the Kyrgyz people of that time were essentially still living a nomadic lifestyle. To put it another way, the idea of building something permanent was foreign to the nomads, so constructing a masjid would have been difficult for them. Nevertheless, during that time the people fasted, prayed, made the hajj to Mecca and the children even sung Ramadan songs (Jaramazan).

THE PRE-SOVIET PERIOD

It is worth noting that in the pre-Soviet period the religious and belief rituals existing and practiced among the Kyrgyz community were under the umbrella of Islam. This situation is clear from the following statements

made during the interviews: *Ilgeri yrym-jyrymdy kyiy karmashkan*/In the past there were yrym-jyrym/rituals [Female, 1946, Kyrgyz, Osh oblast, Kyrgyzstan]; *Bala kezimde diniy yrym, bu orozo karmap, namaz okugan, atam, enem eköö ten okuchu*/In my childhood I did yrym-jyrym/religious rituals, I fasted, I prayed and my parents did these things, too [Male, 1936, Kyrgyz, Naryn oblast, Kyrgyzstan]; *Menin Choñ Enem namaz okup besh maal namazyn jazbai okuchu da*/My grandmother prayed and never failed to pray five times each day [Female, 1939, Kyrgyz, Isyk-Köl oblast, Kyrgyzstan] and *Tayenemder, Choñenemder namaz kylgan kishiler*/my mother's mother and my father's mother said their prayers [Male, 1934, Kyrgyz, Isyk-Köl oblast, Kyrgyzstan].

In addition, the presence in the personal communication of statements to the effect that these religious and belief rituals of the past were performed by people other than the interviewees' parents and grandparents, such as *karyia* or the plural *karyialar*—used to refer to an elderly man in the community; *chal* or the plural *chaldar*—used to refer to a male in poor condition; *abysbka*—used to refer to males over 60 years of age; *kempir*—used to refer to women over 60 years of age, indicates that these things were done traditionally and were passed down from generation to generation. The fact that during the interviews the interviewees, who were all 70 years old or older, noted that the referenced religious and belief rituals were performed by their parents, grandparents and elderly people in the period prior to the Soviet period shows that these rituals were passed down through generations and reflect just about a genetic disposition for this.

THE SOVIET PERIOD AND DILEMMAS

One of the most important aims of the Soviet Union, which harbored various peoples, nations and cultures within a broad geographic area, was to create a Soviet culture and a Soviet man appropriate for the Soviet ideology and structure. In order to bring this goal to fruition—a goal that would affect the social and cultural structures and understanding of the people and communities to their core—the regime, especially after the 1930s, began a systematic struggle against the local cultures and beliefs. The supposition was that religion, including Islam, and its associated elements no longer existed. The Party opposed religious practices in mosques and churches and all related ceremonies, forbidding them. Along with the prohibitions and penalties, the regime subjected the populace to

systematic and continuing training and supervision in order to eliminate the religious practices and the local culture and traditions. In this regard, in the framework of the regime's implementations it is possible to divide the community into two groups with the rough classifications of *school period* and *post-school period*.

During the school period *teachers* were required to make and spread atheist propaganda in all preschools, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and professional schools. The *local officials* had an important function in the post-school period in relation to those who had finished their schooling. In this regard, the *kolkhoz* and *sovkhos* officials, particularly the directors and members of the Communist Party's "partorg", undertook important duties. The *teachers* and *local officials* were entrusted with both accomplishing their duties and with spreading atheism, as the regime's representatives, among the aforementioned two main groups. The real aim of raising an atheistic young generation was not just to cut off the link to religion but it also served as the basic mechanism for *building the Soviet man*. In this context, children beginning their schooling at age seven were consigned to systematic and structured training called *oktyabriat* from first to third grades, *pioner* from third to seventh grade, and *komsomol* from seventh to tenth grade.

Those who successfully completed their training after *komsomol* were inducted into the Communist Party and assigned to duty in the "Party Committee" that was present in each *kolkhoz* (village). As for those who were unsuccessful in their training, those who did not perform their jobs well, those who shunned atheism and remained true to their religion and beliefs, or those who displayed such tendencies, they were punished according to the degree of their faults if they repeated them. In this context, based on the severity of the violation, first an *eskertiü* (warning) was issued. A second offense brought *sögiüsh* (condemnation) and a third resulted in *jumshtan ketiret* (firing or removal from "komsomol" status).

To be able to enter service or get a job after the training period was over, the *komsomol* document was very important. For example, for someone entering military service the first document to be considered was the *komsomol* document. The most severe of the penalties was decided upon and announced at a meeting called *chogulush*. All the members of the concerned institution attended the meeting and the person to be punished was summoned to the stage. Then the charges were read to his face and the resulting punishment was revealed. Of course, such a punishment had a major psychological impact on the person penalized and all those present, as well.

This being the case, most of the source interviewees recalled that “*menin Choñ enem misaly ömür boyu namaz okup jürdii. Atam da oshondoi. Enem myndai al jagyna köbüröök myndai maani berchii emes, birok tarbiyasy oshondoi ele da ... myndai orozo karmashchu bary. Enem namaz okuchu emes*”/my grandmother prayed throughout her life. My father did too. My mother did not pray because she gave no meaning to religion as the result of her training during the Soviet period [Male, 1937, Kyrgyz, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan]; *men tört jashbarymda orozo karmadym ... mektep achylyp, baldar okup kalganda ... karmabai kaldyk, orozonu/I fasted when I was four years-old ... then once school started and we began to study we did not fast anymore*) [Male, 1929, Kyrgyz, Naryn oblast, Kyrgyzstan]; *bul dindi sözsüz dep aitchu emes da eç kim/no one said anything about embracing religion* [Female, 1939, Kyrgyz, Isyk-Köl oblast, Kyrgyzstan]; *atam, enem dinge jakyn, atam moldo bolchu/my father and mother were very religious. My father was a moldo, as well.* [Female, 1946, Kyrgyz, Osh oblast, Kyrgyzstan]. Such statements indicate that the Kyrgyz people were caught in a dilemma between their ties to their traditional culture and religious and belief rituals, on the one hand, and the training system they were subjected to, on the other.

We can better understand this dilemma with the most effective example, taken from the statements of the interviewee, the recently deceased Kyrgyz intellectual, whose father gave him some advice: *Balam azyr emi biz tüshünüp atabyz, zaman bashka, sayasat bashka. Oshondoi bolso dagy bir kolun menen Kudayga taianyyp, Kudaydyn bir buyruktaryn, oshonun aitkanyn myndai karmap, ekinchi cagyman ökmöt menen partiyanykyn karma/my son, now the time and the politics outside the door are different. Nevertheless, hold religion with one hand and bring the orders of Kuday (God) to bear. Take the hand of the government and the party with your other hand and do what they say* [Male, 1937, Kyrgyz, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan]. This shows how the people had to act and think in the face of the policy pursued by the regime.

In this regard, when an interviewee related his recollections he said the following: “*Bul biz kichinekei kezibizden Sovettik tarbiya dep koyup dinge karshy, biz dindi jaktyrchu emespiz. Biz dinge karshy araket kylchubuz. Menin Choñ Enem namaz okup, besh maal namazyn jazbai okuchu da. Men oshonu oshol kishi aityp mintip jürsönüz mugalim bolup ishtei albaim, men katuu uiat bolup kalam dep oshol kishinin namaz okuganyn toktotturgam. Oshonu men tuura emes kylgan ekenmin/Since our childhood we looked askance at religion because of our Soviet training. We would behave in an*

anti-religious way. My grandmother prayed and in fact she never missed praying five times a day. I said to my grandmother ‘if you do this I won’t be able to become a teacher and I’ll be embarrassed.’ So I made her stop praying. This was a mistake on my part [Male, 1936, Kyrgyz, Naryn oblast, Kyrgyzstan]”. This must be a reflection of just how careful not just those actively practicing religion had to be in the face of the policy implemented by the regime against religion, but how careful their relatives had to be, too.

Being constantly careful and alert was not just a concern for normal citizens, it was applicable to Communist Party members, as well. In this regard, an interviewee, who was a member of the Communist Party, remembered the following: *Jash ubagynda myna Partiya adamy boldum dep aitpaimynby, “chlen Kommunist” bolup, oshondo Kudayga ishengenderdin bary ten “Kuday jok” dep chygaryshkan. “Kuday jok, Kudayga ishenbegile” dep. Kudayga ishensen Partiya’dan chygaryp koiot seni. Kudaydy oozuna alsan ele chygaryp koichu anda/*In my youth I was a Party man, I was a Communist. For this reason, all those who believed in God said “there’s no God”, “don’t believe in the existence of God”. If you believed in God and if you mentioned God in your words, they would throw you out of the Party [Male, 1934, Kyrgyz, Isyk-Köl oblast, Kyrgyzstan]. Continuing, he added that *bul ata-enenin tarbiyasynan emes, “Kuday jok” dep, osho Kommunisttik Partiya’nyñ tarbiyasynan bolup kaldy, osbonun taasirinen bolup kaldy. “Kudai jok” dep kakshap ele tiyagynan-biyagynan otursa, Kudayn myna kesep otursa, anan osho kishiler chetinen anan ishene bashtait da alar da/*saying “there’s no God” didn’t come from your parents’ training, it came from the training and the effect of the Communist Party. If one continually says “there’s no God” and repeats this constantly, then people begin to believe these words. This reflects the Party’s policy in its implementations against religion and the role it played.

RELIGIOUS AND BELIEF RITUALS WITHIN A DILEMMA

Despite the fact that during the period of the Soviet Union the words “din-bul apiyim” (religion is a narcotic) became essentially a slogan, it is understood that the Kyrgyz community, especially those in the rural areas, continued to practice their traditional religious and belief rituals one way or another. The most important reason for this was that although people began to be settled in the framework of the *kolkhoz* and *sovkhoz* system,

because of the genetic characteristic of nomadism, along with the mountainous geography, they preserved their ways to a significant degree. For example, the Kyrgyz living today in Naryn province of Kyrgyzstan are referred to as *Nukura Kyrgyz* (pure Kyrgyz). This stems from the fact that, because of the mountainous nature of their region, they preserved their culture both before and during the period of the Soviet Union, never coming under the influence of any other culture.

In this regard, in the period of the Soviet Union, even a Communist Party member would be expelled from membership and punished if it was known and proven that he fasted, prayed or if he said the words “Kuday bar” (there is a God). In addition, as far as is understood from the recollections, even someone who was not a state official or worker would try to avoid attracting attention while engaging in religious practices. But in any case, it is clear that families or family members did not do such things openly and performed their religious and belief rituals privately.

In this regard, an interviewee stated that her mother prayed and fasted as best she could be until her 70s and 80s. She recalled that *apam namaz okuchu, atam da namaz okuchu, kaidan üüröngönün any bilbeim. Al ubakta chynygy bizdi Kuday degen jok, namaz okuu degen jok dep üürötçüü, biz jürgöndö*/My mother and father prayed but I don't know where they learned this from. At that time no one at school taught us that there is a God or to pray [Female, 1920, Kyrgyz, Chüy oblast, Kyrgyzstan]. This shows that families expressed their beliefs in their homes. Nevertheless, she said, as well, that in those days even the *moldo* prayed secretly, indicating that such actions were not done openly. Besides praying, undoubtedly the most important religious duty is the ceremony performed when someone dies.

In this regard, a respondent recalled that even when the father of a *kolkhoz* official died “... *echteke kyla albait, emne kylmak ele? El katary ele el chogulat ... eki üch ele chal turup, janazaga jashtar turbai kalgan. İ ananoshol baiagy biröö okumush bolup, kepinden alyp baryp Kyrgyzcha koiup, kaira kelip öküürüp*/...nothing was done. People were just gathered together, someone would say a prayer, the body would be wrapped and buried. Then there would be the cries of “*öküürüp*” in Kyrgyz [Male, 1932, Kyrgyz, Chüy oblast, Kyrgyzstan]. This indicates that for funerals there was no open ceremony performed.

CONCLUSION

As is clearly understood from our examination, the construction of social and everyday life through the combination of Islamic and non-Islamic rituals was the primary need of the local people. Fresh oral materials which were collected within the *Living History of Central Asian Peoples* project, also illustrate how Kyrgyz people in pre-Soviet, Soviet and in post-Soviet times practiced widely combining their local traditional rituals with the practices of Islam. For instance, the ritual named *mazar taiuu* (praying in sacred places) among Kyrgyz people survived the strictest years of the Soviet regime and has today become a very common ritual practice. Two sacred places (about 10 kilometers away from the capital city Bishkek), where I have conducted field work research, called *Baytik Baatyr Kūmbözüü* (the tomb of Baytik Baatyr) and *Özbek Bay Ata Mürzösü* (the grave of Özbek Bay Ata) are good examples of it. These tombs are currently among the most visited sacred places around Bishkek city, where visitors pray, combining Islamic and non-Islamic rituals. While visiting those sites, the visitors generally circle the tombs *jeti jolu* (seven times) or *üch jolu* (three times) simultaneously reading the Quran *sūras*, so-called *Ikhlās*, three times, and *Fātiha* once. Later, those praying circulate around the tombs, leaning their foreheads to touch the door or the wall of the tombs, mentioning a wish silently. Of course, there are those who say their wish aloud and even scream it out. Some of those who pray bring their children and circle around the tombs with their children. They believe that through the circling of tombs and wishing in silent they will achieve a better future for their children and have a healthy family. It is worth noting that occasionally some people perform different rituals and practices around the tomb. In this regard, among those coming to the tomb are those who, after reading *sūras* from the Quran and praying, light *jeti sham* (seven candles) in front of the tomb among sooty stones that have been previously burned. What is interesting here is that during the lighting of each candle those who pray express in silent seven wishes and believe that it helps to gain their moral expectations [Female, 1970, Kyrgyz, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan].

Interestingly, the abovementioned ritualized practices in the sacred places have their roots in older times. For example, in the burial ceremonies of the Kök Türks, as recorded in the Chinese chronicle, *Chou-shu*

(compiled in 636), when a person died, the deceased was first placed in a tent. Then, the deceased's children, grandchildren and even close or distant relatives sacrificed a sheep or a horse and spread the meat for people in front of the tent during the ceremony. At this time, the relatives of the dead person, especially men, would ride their horses and circle the tent *seven times* where the deceased lay. With each circle, the horse riders would stop in front of the tent's entrance and cut their own faces with their knives, cry and scream loudly. The ritual required that the blood and tears flow together. Next, on an agreed upon date the body of the deceased and his horse, together with his belongings, would be burned. Following this, the ashes would be taken and held for a while and then buried in the ground on a subsequent day. On the day of the burial, a group of relatives would repeat the same circling tradition around the grave, riding their horses and cutting their faces with their knives. At the end of the burial ceremony around the grave, they would set stones as a mark. The number of stones was related to the number of enemies the deceased had killed while he was alive (Saguchi et al. 1972: 34).

Similar records related to the Kök Türks were reflected in another chronicle of the Chinese Sui dynasty (581–618 A.D.). When one of a Kök Türk died, his body was put into a tent and his family and relatives sacrificed a great number of cows and horses and held a ceremony. Again, they circled the tent and screamed and cried cutting their faces. The blood and tears flowed together. Seven revolutions were made around the tent. Then they agree upon a certain date to put the body on the horse and burn them together. The ashes were then collected and buried in the ground (Saguchi et al. 1972: 41–42).

In conclusion, the implemented traditional system of rituals persisted through the ages much more successfully than expected. After conducting and implementing fieldwork-based projects among the Kyrgyz community, I may assert that because of genetically rooted lifestyle and the fact that they live their lives within the close confines of the *Tenir Too* (Tien Shan), no external powers and regimes could deeply affect and change the Kyrgyz people's social structure, religious rituals and ritualized everyday lives. Thus, it is quite clear that in the context of general Turkic history and ritualized past, the landscape of today's Kyrgyzstan is like an *open-air museum* for the whole complement of Turkic-rooted peoples.

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Stalin's Passing Recollected

Timur Dadabaev
and Guljanat Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun

This chapter utilises the data and findings of two different oral history projects. The first one is on the Formation Process of the Kyrgyz National Identity during the twentieth century jointly carried out by Maltepe University and Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University and was sponsored by TIKA (Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency) coordinated by Professor Şahin Karasar, Professor Peyami Çelikcan and Dr. Konuralp Ercilasun. The project was also supported by UTRK (National Television and Radio Corporation of the Kyrgyz Republic), TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation) and Kyrgyz State National University. The second project concerns the Memory of the Soviet Past, sponsored by the Institute for Promotion of Humanities within Islamic Areas of Study of the University of Tokyo and was coordinated by Professor Hisao Komatsu, Professor Timur Dadabaev, Professor Ilhan Sahin, Dr. Guljanat Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun, Dr. Baktybek Isakov and others.

T. Dadabaev (✉)
University of Tsukuba, Tsukuba, Ibaraki, Japan

G. Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun
Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey

One of the most interesting topics in the narration of Soviet memory and the way people understand the Soviet era is related to the image of Stalin. In addition to the mythmaking surrounding him, Stalin-related recollections are also striking in terms of the degree of emotion that ordinary citizens in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan attach to Stalin's passing. For many, Stalin's rule and passing signified much more than a simple change of leadership. It is noteworthy that the majority of respondents, including those who were not explicit about other events, remembered Stalin and his passing. Although the attitudes towards Stalin's figure differed from respondent to respondent depending on background and family history, his death was remembered by the majority of those asked as one of the most unexpected and shocking events of their lives. Additionally, what stands out in respondents' recollections is that the way people remember the days before and immediately after Stalin's passing surprisingly resemble, if not mirror, each other in various republics of Central Asia. This similarity once again emphasises the contradictory nature of the public evaluation and recollection of Stalin's years in office. For many respondents, the name of Stalin is often associated with repression by him or on his behalf. On the other hand, as is obvious from the recollections of Stalin's passing in this chapter, there is a significant number of people who still have positive images associated with Stalin's name.

Among the images associated with Stalin, many respondents attributed to Stalin the role of a "father", "leader" and "human". However, as argued in the sections below, the outcry displayed among many respondents cannot be simply explained by their emotional attachment to Stalin as a human being. Rather, in many instances, hysteria and grief were frequently connected to the conscious or subconscious fear of a "known future" that would follow his death. Such an "unknown future" for respondents was feared to bring potential instability and the collapse of the state. Therefore, the positivity attributed to Stalin was rather closely related to the stability of daily life that Stalin symbolised for many who grieved his passing. The notions that many people associate with Stalin's years also include but are not limited to the "order" he brought, his "victory" in the war, his closeness to the public and his simple way of life. Therefore, the hysteria over his death to a great extent resulted from the fear of losing these characteristics of the state under Stalin as well as the anticipation of the inevitable change that his death would bring to the people, as indicated in the emotional statements presented below.

Such a portrayal of Stalin in the public collective memory starkly differs from the attitude towards Stalin's years displayed in the official historiography, which attempts to portray Stalin's years with the same degree of duality as it does the Soviet period. On the one hand, official historiographical rhetoric condemns the repression and ethnic policies under Stalin, which has been the central theme of a number of books published in the post-Soviet period. On the other hand, many government officials favour the unquestionable discipline, top-to-bottom command style of decision making and the image of a strong leadership style for political leaders. A positive public attitude surrounding Stalin further justifies and legitimises such an image of political leadership for government officials.

STALIN AS A POLITICAL FIGURE AND HUMAN IN RECOLLECTIONS

One of the most frequently mentioned images of Stalin among the respondents of this survey has been the image and perception of Stalin as a "father" of the nation. This was one reason why, despite certain harsh policies exercised during Stalin's tenure, respondents still express their sympathy for Stalin. For many respondents, the image of "father" implies both strictness and generosity. They believe that Stalin possessed both of these qualities. Therefore, for many, repression during his tenure was precisely the type of strictness that one would receive when scolded by one's father when necessary. Many realised how grave the crimes of Stalin's regime were against the many innocent victims of his repression. Nevertheless, these crimes were still considered forgivable in light of the positivity that Stalin is believed to have brought to the common people. A quarter of the respondents to the current survey consider Stalin to be a good leader. For them, the rules and achievements of Stalin's administration predetermined the very existence of the Soviet state. Many expressed disbelief that the Soviet Union would survive challenges it faced at that time without Stalin's style of administration.

The degree of mythmaking with respect to Stalin's figure is very high. These myths are related to Stalin's personality or his deeds, many of which were invented and imagined, as there is no such proof in historical sources. Many of these myths appeared as stories that were passed around or in movies. For instance, one of the respondents narrated that "Stalin wore the same overcoat for 35 years. When he died, it came out that the sole

of his shoes were ragged”. This respondent attempted to demonstrate proof of Stalin’s modesty by claiming to have copies of his letters to his mother, in which Stalin apparently said that he was sending 300 rubles to his mother and would send more money later if he earned it (ID no. 1.34). This respondent was impressed by Stalin’s attitude towards power in that he did not abuse his position despite his supreme authority over the country (ID no. 1.53). Another glorifying myth was that “Stalin did not marry after his wife died, had never eaten his fill, and did not wear new clothes because he grieved for the people” (ID no. 1.53).

Obviously, such views are influenced by respondents’ experiences in the late Soviet years and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. For many respondents, Stalin served as a “hero” because they contrasted him to personalities such as Gorbachev, whom they considered weak, incapable of delivering on promises and not committed to the ideas of serving the state’s interests. Additionally, many respondents contrast Stalin with their current leadership, which they believe to abuse power with regard to their personal interests while also not paying attention to public interests. In certain republics, respondents believe their current leaders commit crimes that are no less criminal than those committed by Stalin. However, the positive input and achievements of the current administration is incomparable, from the perspective of the respondents, to the achievements made during Stalin’s years. This again serves as a myth-generating factor with respect to Stalin’s rule.

To illustrate the point above, we can cite one respondent in Kyrgyzstan who stated the following:

I loved Stalin. I wrote a book about Stalin called ‘After Stalin’ (to illustrate the difference before and after Stalin’s years in office). He is my idol. Many people speak ill of him, but I cannot do that because he liked farmers and workers. (Kyrgyz, a journalist and a university teacher [ID no. 1.7])

A significant amount (approximately a quarter of the interviewees) have stressed Stalin’s role in the victory of World War II (Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun 2011: 450). Some narrated that during WWII, when there was the threat of a siege on Moscow, many institutions moved to other cities; however, Stalin did not leave the capital and bravely stayed to defend the city (ID no. 1.64; ID no. 1.68). Some perceived him as someone who could foresee the future (ID no. 1.65). Some also began the rumour that Stalin did not exchange his son who was imprisoned

in Germany for a German general and see this as proof of his commitment to his country and victory (ID no. 1.66). Respondents were so confident in Stalin that some of them have written poems dedicated to Stalin, such as the one read aloud by a WWII veteran during the interview (ID no. 1.49).

Another point concerning the mythmaking around Stalin was the perceived iron discipline during his years in power. This point was emphasised in a number of interviews with a certain nostalgia among respondents. Again, this illustrates the perception of “proper order”, which respondents expect in their countries and which they contrast to how things are currently run. For many, the perestroika of Gorbachev, explained in later chapters, was the beginning of chaos, which extends to present day. Therefore, many respondents believe that the discipline exercised during Stalin’s reign, although excessive, had an educational effect on the population while strengthening the overall industrial capacity of the state. At the same time, such nostalgia for Stalin-era discipline is also indicative of the lack thereof in the present day, according to many respondents.

Regarding Stalin’s policies, not as many as would be expected (approximately 1/6 of the interviewees) admit that de-kulakisation, repressions and purges were ill-judged policies. Furthermore, the same amount (1/6) do not admit that the repressions and purges were organised by Stalin; instead, they blame Yezhov, Beria, or Trotsky or say that these three either were spies for other states or enemies of Stalin. Some (approximately 1/12) say that local people are responsible for these acts, that is, the Kyrgyzs themselves. For instance, with regard to the kulaks, one of the interviewees claimed: “I think that Stalin did not know what was happening locally. Our local people destroyed those whom they did not like”. The same respondent stated that religion lost its meaning during Stalin’s rule. “Praying and reading the Quran were prohibited. However, it was not Stalin who gave this order but our local authorities” (ID no. 1.65).

It also noteworthy that many respondents were unappreciative of Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin at the 20th Party of Congress in 1956. They were upset with Khrushchev and even claimed that the “cult of personality of Stalin” was a notion invented by Khrushchev for his own political and personal gains.

Moreover, it can be claimed that Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin’s policies and the “cult of personality” did not significantly affect the people of Kyrgyzstan. Instead, they blame Khrushchev for the denunciation.

Professor Salijan Jigitov's work brilliantly explains the public attitude towards Stalin and Khrushchev:

When Khrushchev denounced Stalinism, many people expressed their discontent, rejected the reforms introduced by Khrushchev and praised Stalin's personality, regime and efforts. I was always wondering why our people, even intellectuals, advocated Stalinism when it brought about rather negative results for the society. Once I read a book and discovered the truth about a person who spent most of his life in prison because of professional burglary. A person who spends 15–20 years in prison becomes accustomed to a prepared lifestyle: meal, accommodations and baths are ready, and he cannot adapt to a normal life. It becomes too difficult for such a person to find a job and earn, to find a shelter, to buy food and cook, to bathe by his will, or even to change clothes and bedclothes. To make decisions on his own becomes so unbearable that he commits a petty crime in order to be imprisoned again and to feel comfortable. This truth astonished me and evoked the case of Stalin and Khrushchev. Khrushchev released the people from their moral prison and told intellectuals to think and make decisions individually and to acquire the truth on their own. However, it was a rather arduous job. Therefore, most of the Kyrgyz intellectuals who were educated and were accustomed to working during the totalitarian regime missed the moral prison of Stalinism rather than exploring the world on their own, standing on their feet and thinking individually. (Jigitov 2004: 10–11)

Only a few well-informed respondents, mostly intellectuals, accepted Khrushchev's denunciation and judged his speech to be brave, as narrated below.

The denunciation was almost a shock for us because in school, being part of the komsomol, we were taught every day that Stalin was a great leader and was a genius; therefore, we could not even imagine that such an ideal person could do wrong and contravene the law. [ID no. 1.9]

In summary, it can be observed that this generation's assessment regarding the period is quite positive. There are a few who negatively assess Stalin's personality. These few people are generally those whose families were treated as kulaks and who personally experienced exile. In addition, only those respondents who have a high level of education or are exposed to historical enquiries due to their current occupation were able to assess both the positive and negative aspects of Stalin's rule.

HYSTERIA AND SHOCK UPON THE NEWS OF STALIN'S DEATH

Stalin passed away in March 1953. Because he was the most influential figure both within the USSR and abroad at the time, his death was an unexpected event that shocked members of the Communist Party and Governmental Administrative Departments as well as civilians. To provide a background on Stalin's death, it should be noted that Stalin began to feel ill in February of 1953, and this illness ultimately resulted in his death. According to the announcement from Khrushchev, who was among the party leaders at that time, Stalin continued to work even though his physical condition was poor. He spent time with other leaders of the Communist Party on the night before he passed away, watching movies and dining at his vacation home. Dinner continued late into the night, and he returned to his chambers after seeing off the party leaders, who left Stalin's country house after the dinner. According to Khrushchev, Stalin always invited the Communist Party leaders to his country house on holidays and weekends.

According to multiple accounts, on the day when Stalin became seriously ill, his guards were alarmed by Stalin's absence from his bedroom. Calls were reportedly made that night to party leaders, such as Khrushchev, Beria, Malenkov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov and Bulganin, and they all rushed to the country house to verify that Stalin was ill for verification. According to reports, Stalin was found lying dead in his own bedroom. There are many theories regarding the sequence of events that followed, one of which argues that Stalin was killed by Beria and his subordinates. However, the public was given very little information on the state of Stalin's health, which exacerbated the shock, confusion and panic that people experienced, as indicated in the account below.

The majority of the interviewees in Kyrgyzstan, similar to the respondents in other countries, recollected that they heard the news of Stalin's death on the radio. One respondent narrates, "Stalin's death was a worldwide earthquake, as Pablo Neruda has written in one of his poems" (ID no. 1.4). For some others of a younger age, the news of Stalin's anticipated passing alone brought fear and tears. Such a passing for many implied a perceived end to stability and security and an entry into the unknown.

I was still a little girl, but I remember that the radio reported on the condition of Stalin's illness for 24 hours. I heard 'Stalin's condition is' and 'Stalin is now in' every 2–3 minutes on the radio.

He had not passed away yet, but everyone in Mahalla (a local community) was already crying. The tears were not fake and came from the bottom of people's hearts. Stalin was a person who greatly respected rules and discipline and spent his life setting and abiding them. [Female, 1943, Uzbek, Tashkent, Uzbekistan]

Stalin passed away a few days later. His death greatly shocked everyone and signified inevitable changes to the country. Interestingly, the public perceived Stalin to be invulnerable; no one believed that he could die so soon. Many people were so concerned about Stalin's health that they stopped everything to concentrate on the radio broadcast whenever there was news about him. For some people, their lack of awareness of Stalin's death nearly resulted in the end of their political career, as described in the account below.

At the chemical factory where I worked, the factory manager was enjoying a hunt in the steppe district of Kazakhstan on that day, and the news of the death of Stalin had not yet reached him. The factory had to hold a mourning assembly for Stalin immediately, and we couldn't do it without the factory manager; therefore, military planes were used to locate him. However, they could not find him.

Because of this, the headquarters of the Communist Party ordered the branch office of the Communist Party in Chirchik City to expel the factory manager from the Communist Party and force him to resign. The head of the branch office of the Communist Party in Chirchik was a very wise man, and before he even received the orders from the headquarters, he had already disciplined the factory manager by admonition. Because of this, the factory manager was not expelled or forced to resign due to the regulations of the party, where people who have been disciplined once cannot be disciplined again for the same act.

Subsequently, the factory manager became the Minister of the Chemical Industry in the Soviet Union and Vice Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. His name was Kastanov. If the head of the Communist Party branch in Chirchik at that time hadn't made such a wise decision, Kastanov would have been expelled from the party, and he would never have been successful. [Female, 1923, Tatar, Namangan]

As mentioned above, Stalin's death was a shocking event for many people. The majority of the respondents in this study indicated that they highly respected Stalin because of his perceived decisive role in attaining victory in WWII, his modest lifestyle and his revolutionary background. In

many cases, such respect was indicated by disregard for disagreements that respondents had with Stalin's policies.

According to the respondents' answers, the reactions of people in Central Asia to Stalin's death differed for various reasons. Public reactions included hysteria, shock and an immense sense of insecurity for their future. First, the majority of those who responded noted that they considered Stalin's death to be a personal tragedy, and they grieved from the bottom of their hearts as they would have for a close relative or even their parents. The majority of these people fell into hysteria and cried excessively when they heard the news of Stalin's death.

Many respondents noted that more people grieved and cried over Stalin's death than for any other event in modern Soviet history. Regardless of their professional, social or ethnic background, people from soldiers to farmers and factory workers grieved in their homes, while walking on the streets and in public places dedicated to Stalin's memory. Although the situations in which people learned of Stalin's death differed, their natural reactions were more or less similar, as in the account below.

I was still in the Soviet military in those days, and I heard the news of Stalin's death in Kazakhstan. I cried like a small child with my friends without even trying to hide my tears. I liked Stalin that much. [Male, 1936, Tajik/Uzbek, Bukhara, Uzbekistan]

Interestingly, the public hysteria and huge scale of public grief created social conditions for further emotional reactions, and many people felt depressed and cried over Stalin's death simply because everyone else around them grieved his death. Even children who did not know much about Stalin but heard about him from their parents and saw his pictures on the walls cried over his death.

Some people cried because they grieved over their leader who, in their eyes, contributed to their lives, and others cried because they so highly respected his achievements that led the country to victory in the war. These people believed that Stalin always considered the people's interests in his actions, which made the loss of their leader such a tragic event, as indicated below.

The entire nation cried that day. I had never seen the people of the Soviet Union cry like that before. I think the reason why the death of Stalin was grieved so much was that even though he was a strict person, he always put

the people's interests ahead of his own and always considered their interests first. [Female, 1941, Uzbek, Tashkent, Uzbekistan]

Such grieving took place not only in urban areas where state control was relatively strong but also in rural communities where state control was considered to be much weaker, if not nonexistent. As indicated in the excerpt below, even in rural settings, people grieved over Stalin's death as if he was a member of their family.

I still remember the day I was told about the death of Stalin. It was raining and chilly on that day. Our village is far from the city, and it was 8 km to the centre of the county where there was a telephone. A man riding a horse from the centre of the county came to the village and told us that Stalin had passed away.

We were immediately assembled in the school. A photo of Stalin on a wall was covered with a black cloth without being noticed, and everybody stood crying for more than 2 hours. The residents of the village felt so sad that it was like they had lost a member of their family. [Male, 1942, Uzbek, Fergana region, Uzbekistan]

As described in many recollections of Stalin's death, many people felt a sense of insecurity regarding their future and confusion about how to continue living their lives without Stalin leading the country because for most people—ordinary people in Central Asian republics being no exception—Stalin symbolised their country's victory in the war as well as the increased standard of living and the stable future that resulted.

In this sense, the public's appreciation of Stalin and the hysterical attitude towards his death were, on the one hand, the result of Soviet indoctrination regarding his figure and the repressions under his rule, which suppressed any criticism towards him. On the other hand, many people connected their personal expectations in terms of wellbeing with the figure of Stalin, and for many, he represented the type of a leader who delivered on his promises of improving the lives of the public.

Therefore, it was not surprising that people simultaneously felt grief and fear. Respondents' feelings of fear regarding Stalin's death differ in their nature and degree. As indicated below, for some, the death of Stalin indicated fear for the future and the possible instability that his death might signify. For others, however, the fear was not purely about future but also about how to reconcile and transmit this news to other members of the society.

For instance, a number of respondents in Kyrgyzstan indicated that they were confused about how to behave when hearing about Stalin's death. Most respondents discussed fearing how to share the news of Stalin's death to someone else when they first heard about it. For some, sharing the news made Stalin's death real to them, as in the extract below.

In the morning, it was announced that Stalin had died. However, we were afraid to tell each other that Stalin had died. We went out to the street, but nobody could speak; we feared expressing it. Some people cried; some could not answer. Even if you asked what had happened, no one could say that Stalin was dead. [ID no. 1.6]

Others simply feared that by sharing the news of the death of the country's leader, they might be considered to be happily spreading the news even if that was not their intention. Such fear was certainly rooted in Stalin's policies of repression and the "enemy of the state" hunts that occurred in the 1930s and 1940s. Eventually, this led to a mentality among the population to consciously or subconsciously develop a cautious attitude towards news of any type. Many respondents attempted to figure out how communicating the news to others would influence their wellbeing. As a result, responses were either hysterical crying (that was either natural or a camouflage of fear of speaking out) or simply unemotional detachment from what was happening. Similar narrations indicate that Stalin's policies had established a feeling of fear in the society. Concerning the subject of fear, another person expressed that she was earlier warned by her elder brother not to talk about Stalin's policies outside of the home (ID no. 1.36). Imprisonment and other cruel treatment during Stalin's rule had severely frightened many people.

I was returning from work. I met a woman who told me that the father had died. 'Whose father?' I asked. 'Father Stalin', she said. 'Impossible', I said. 'No, it is true, a meeting is going to be organised', she answered. A pupil from the school was accompanying me. On the road, I bought candies from the shop. Then, we came home. I told my husband that Stalin had died. He started to cry. 'How could it happen?' he was constantly crying. I became frightened. I gave the candies to that pupil and warned him not to tell anyone until the news became well known. My husband told me that I may be imprisoned because I had said that Stalin had died and advised me to confirm the news from the director of the school. Then, I went to the house of the director but was afraid to ask the question openly. At that time, the

director was playing with his newborn and was saying, ‘So, when you grow up, you may say that you were born in the year when father Stalin died’. I could not stop crying. The director confirmed his death”. [ID no. 1.3]

Furthermore, respondents recall that mourning meetings were held everywhere; pupils attended the meetings in school, some remember the meetings being held in Bishkek and a few of the respondents were in Moscow at the time. Mourning ceremonies were held in every village in every corner of the country. In the meetings, participants wore red and black ribbons. Oral sources show that mourning ceremonies were held in China as well. The Uyghurs, who moved to Kyrgyzstan from Chinese Xinjiang, indicated that they were school pupils at that time and were taken to the Soviet consulate. They state that there was a funereal atmosphere and grieving (ID no. 2.18).

Most interviewees (3/4) indicated that they cried. One of the interviewees explained, “If our mothers cry; if our brothers cry; if our fathers, who have been in the war, cry; if people everywhere cry; we would also cry” (ID no. 1.10). Indeed, the majority say that they cried because they worried about the future, then that they “cried because everyone around us was crying”, and a lesser number cried because Stalin was a “father” to them.

CONFUSION

In the days after Stalin’s death, the decision was made by the Communist Party and the government to lay Stalin’s body to rest in the Mausoleum of Lenin at Red Square in Moscow. Stalin’s name was added to the Mausoleum alongside Lenin’s, and his body was placed inside. Everyone was granted access to see the body so that the party and the government could calm public hysteria and make people feel more secure. The party noted that Stalin would remain with the people and that his policies and the stability of the country would not be challenged. However, such behaviour hardly produced the desired outcomes, as described below.

My elder brother was studying in Moscow in those days, and he told me that there was a very long line to the Mausoleum where Stalin’s body was laid. Everyone had such a desire to see Stalin that if they had to, they would push other people out of the way. There were actually occurrences of people being trampled.

He said that people's shoes were everywhere on the street where people were lined up. Everyone was so overwhelmed with sadness that they were just lining up, not worrying about losing their shoes. [Male, 1945, Uzbek, Tashkent, Uzbekistan]

Although people felt sadness, they were also concerned about whether they could maintain their lifestyles. They experienced uncertainty regarding their next leader and the type of life they would have under new leadership. These concerns deepened their grieving over Stalin's death.

As with other republics, people from Uzbekistan who grieved Stalin's death arrived in the capital from all over the country. The government did not require participation in the gatherings in Stalin's memory, and the majority of those attending such gatherings were there on their own initiative to share in the grief with others. Such gatherings occurred in small workshops, factories and schools. Later, they expanded to the squares and streets of cities. The general environment of such gatherings is explained in the recollection below.

I still remember that day in 1953 very well. I woke up in the morning because my mother was crying. I asked her what was wrong, and she told me that Stalin had passed away.

I changed my clothes quickly and ran to the school. People had already gathered, and a large photograph of Stalin from somewhere was put in a lecture hall. Everyone was saying to each other how much they loved Stalin and swore that they would never forget Stalin. [Male, 1940, Uzbek, Andijan, Uzbekistan]

Another account expresses the same feeling of loss but recalls how much insecurity people felt concerning their lives after Stalin's death.

When Stalin died, we were still children. When my elder brother returned from school, he excitedly started telling us about the events that day.

When the radio reported that Stalin had passed away, the vice principal whispered, "What is going to happen to us from now on?" and burst into tears and lost consciousness. Because the vice principal was known as a very strong and strict person, the children realised at this time how serious the death of Stalin was. [Male, 1946, Uzbek, Tashkent, Uzbekistan]

Various gatherings in memory of Stalin took place not only in Tashkent, the capital city, but also in various larger cities, such as Samarkand and

Bukhara, and smaller locations. In Samarkand, many residents voluntarily gathered in Registan Square, located in the centre of the city, because it was a central location where people from various parts of the city and different communities could meet and share their sadness.

When Stalin passed away, many people gathered in Registan Square (in the city of Samarkand) at approximately 5:00 in the evening to hold an assembly. The bells of the factories rang, and many people cried. [Female, 1943, Russian, Samarkand, Uzbekistan]

According to the respondents' accounts, simply attending a gathering made them feel closer to Stalin. At the same time, concerns regarding their futures and the future of the country were on everyone's mind. These gatherings were spontaneous and not well organised.

Since I was little, I did not understand Stalin or what he implemented very well. What I remember is March 3, the day Stalin passed away.

Even though it was a cold day, many people had already gathered in the Red Square of Bukhara City when we arrived. Everyone trusted and loved him. Most of the people were crying, and the way in which they were crying was not normal; I had the impression that those people were prepared to give their lives for Stalin. [Male, 1939, Bukhara, Tajik/Uzbek, Uzbekistan]

For many children who did not understand who Stalin was, this was also a confusing time, as described in the comical anecdote below.

A woman called Lida lived in the house next to us, and when she heard that Stalin had passed away, she screamed horribly. I couldn't tell whether she was crying or screaming.

My mother told me that Stalin had passed away, but I was still a very young child, and Stalin was just a man in photographs decorating walls wherever. And I was left wondering about how a photograph could die. [Female, 1950, Uzbek, Tashkent, Uzbekistan]

On one occasion, there was an episode recalled when a group of students and teacher cried grieving the passing of Stalin. It lasted so long that one little girl got tired of "grieving" and started to check with others in order to confirm if it was then fine to stop crying already.

Such a testimony of the high level of respect towards Stalin in Central Asia is consistent with another account from a Russian, as described in the

excerpt below, emphasising the high level of respect for Stalin across vast areas of the former USSR. These experiences reflect a pattern of experiences in Central Asia when people heard the news of Stalin's death.

The people's love for Stalin was elevated to a level of supremacy by the party's public relation efforts. I was working for the party, and I often wrote (forged) letters (pretending these came from various working class people) addressed to Stalin, which were read in various gatherings (as examples of letters from people to Stalin). However, I wrote (forged) those letters with trust and respect from the bottom of my heart, feeling like a son writing a letter to his father with no feeling of lying (sin). The structure and content of his speeches and books were easy to understand. His role and talents as a leader in the Great Patriotic War; his firm, iron-like intentions; and his measures against the enemies of the nation and those who broke regulations have historical importance and brought order to the country. During the period when Stalin struggled against an illness that resulted in his death, we continuously sat beside the radio so that we didn't miss any news of his condition. We listened to the reports of his death while crying like children. (Kozlova 2005: 162–163)

Interestingly, the level of respect towards Stalin is not dependent on ethnicity or other affiliations of the respondents and has not faded over the years since his rule.

Many connect such an attachment to Stalin to their appreciation of his modest lifestyle. The modest and industrious image that Stalin managed to maintain among the general public was generated from the uniform clothing that he wore for most of his public appearances (always the same military clothing) and his industrious character. Many regarded these characteristics as expressions of his modest personality, his lack of self-interest and his ordinary lifestyle, despite his ability to use his position as leader and possessor of absolute power to obtain personal benefits (Kozlova 2005: 268–269). This perceived dedication to the construction of a new state and the improvement of the standard of living for the people enhanced the respect for him among the public and inspired the devotion of his followers. Respect for Stalin increased even after his death because his lifestyle and dedication to his work contrasted sharply with those of the Communist party leaders who rose to power after him. However, at the time, for many, Stalin's death represented the fall of the ideal and a role model, which contributed to the public panic and hysteria.

RELIEF

As indicated in the excerpt below, not everyone experienced the positive feelings mentioned above. Although limited in their numbers and modest in their reactions to Stalin's death, some people felt relieved by the news of his death. Many of these people were repressed, deported to Siberia, arrested and kept in prisons as a result of oppression or sent to labour camps in Siberia as victims of collectivisation policies.

A good example of the negative attitude towards Stalin during those years is the memoir of Professor Salijan Jigitov as written below.

My grandfather and uncle were killed in prison during the 'Great Terror' years. My father stayed in prison for two years as an 'enemy of the people' and caught a serious disease there, as a result of which he passed away. My father, when he was alive, was constantly murmuring that many people, including himself, his relatives, friends and others, were imprisoned innocently. Moreover, our village was the hometown of a famous Basmachi leader Janybek qadi, and many youth from our village were directly involved in the Basmachi movement. Our village did not obey Soviet rule until 1928. Therefore, the majority of the adults from our village were imprisoned, some were exiled, and others had to flee, leaving their wives and children. The elderly people who survived, when five to six of them came together, started to criticise the new administration. I never heard them approve or praise Soviet leaders, including Stalin, or the Soviet regime. During WWII, I often heard the elderly women, whose children were recruited, speaking out against Stalin. There was even a poem by pupils being recited in the streets:

'Stalin is our great father,
We shout slogans.
Cannot go out from the house,
We stay in bare feet.'

Some respondents suggested that they realised his death was a great loss for the country. Nevertheless, they had already made preparations for other events, even before the news of Stalin's death reached them, and thus held their initially planned events knowing that Stalin was gravely ill or had died, as explained below.

As a significant number of respondents in Kyrgyzstan replied, they did not cry or express their grief in emotional ways when learning about his death. In particular, two respondents in Kyrgyzstan had family members who had been exiled or repressed. However, it is notable that not

all repressed people were happy about Stalin's death. Other respondents indicated that although their families suffered under Stalin's rule, they still grieved and cried when they heard about his death.

One respondent tells a very interesting story. Although this person feared telling others about Stalin's death, they celebrated March 8, International Women's Day, in the evening on the same day. This story suggests the question of whether grief felt for the death of the "father" was sincere or not (Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun, 2011: 452).

"Stalin was going to be buried on 9 March. The 8th was a holiday [International Women's Day]. Even in that situation, we could not give up celebrating the day. We were young teachers at that time. First, we made a wall of newspaper and black fabric [to demonstrate mourning]. Then, we came to the house where we were going to celebrate the 8th of March and closed all the windows of the house so that nobody from the kolkhoz could see or hear us. It was important to take precautions because Stalin was dead. We celebrated the 8th of March until 1 or 2 am and participated in the meeting the next day as if nothing had happened" (ID no. 1.3).

For others, like those respondents in Uzbekistan described below, Stalin's death signified hope for their own release and return to a normal life. Therefore, for them, Stalin's passing was not a cause for grief but rather hope and silent celebration in their hearts in anticipation for better times to come.

Although Stalin had reigned over the country in such a severe and brutal way, he had succeeded in instilling the image of the tenderness of his severity into the minds of people. This is why people ran outside and cried loudly when he passed away.

In memory of Stalin, the bells of the factories continued ringing in the town, and reports of his death were streaming from the radios.

After Stalin passed away, the policies that he had implemented were heavily criticised—criticism led by Khrushchev. Despite such criticism, the thoughts of the people towards Stalin did not change much, and his popularity still remains high today. This proves that the information embedded into the minds of the people during the Stalin period remains. Stalin certainly implemented many unreasonable policies; however, he is also considered to have done a lot for the country.

I mentioned that many people cried loudly; however, this doesn't mean that he was loved by everyone. I think that there were many people who hated him as well. [Female, 1942, Russian, Kokand, Uzbekistan]

Among those who connected Stalin's death to the hope of a freer and better life, there were people who cried because of the expectation of such a reaction or to prove their loyalty to the Soviet government. However, internally, they were relieved and hopeful. Although a few of these people openly showed feelings of hope and relief, some believed that the hysterical reactions were staged or artificially constructed, as described in the excerpt below.

I clearly remember that everyone was crying loudly outside. My mother, who was watching the scene, told me that those people were artificially doing so because they were coerced to go outside and cry. [Female, 1941, Russian, Andijan, Uzbekistan]

Although not questioning the veracity of people's grief, the following account suggests that it was the governmentally constructed image of Stalin as the "father of the nation" that created the sense of loss and that made people feel insecure and confused over Stalin's death.

What I remember is the day that Stalin passed away. I saw so many people walking around and crying while I was on the way home from school. I was thinking 'what happened!' I ran home, and my parents told me that Stalin had passed away.

It was clear that Stalin deceived people and that he planted an image that he was the father of everyone in the minds of the people. [Male, 1940, Uzbek, Tashkent, Uzbekistan]

For people who openly rejected Stalin's policies, the day of Stalin's death became the day when they recalled and reflected on the punishment and oppression to which they had been subjected by Stalin's administration, whereas everyone else was crying and mourning his death. For them, Stalin's death signified the end of various atrocities, and they regarded Stalin's death as heaven's vengeance. The following recollection emphasises the differences of opinion between a father who felt oppressed and victimised by Stalin's policies and a daughter who grieved over Stalin's death.

My father told me 'don't cry' while I was crying and grieving over the death of Stalin. My father was forced to give up all of his assets to the government due to the collectivisation policies. Despite this, the KGB and public prosecutors continued to suspect and pursue my father of still having assets, and they even forced him to admit it.

Although my grandfather donated some of his assets to the country and built an ice cream factory with his remaining assets, the KGB was not pleased, and he was continuously called in for questioning. The stance towards my grandfather by the police was very severe. The purpose of the questioning was for my grandfather to donate all of his assets to the government. My grandfather was called in three times, and he passed away at the desk while he was being interrogated.

A thief who was kept in the same interrogation room as my grandfather told my father how my grandfather died. [Female, 1943, Uzbek, Tashkent, Uzbekistan]

However, some curious reactions were observed from people who were targeted by the same oppressive policies and who were forced to relocate and were deported during Stalin's rule. As with other oppressed individuals, one would expect them to be delighted by Stalin's death; nevertheless, some of these people grieved over the death of the man who was primarily responsible for their oppression, as described below.

I was a 7th grade student in school and was 14 or 15 years old. When I was walking through the city, most of the people were crying. There was a group of people who were deported here as part of Stalin's policy of repression against anti-Soviet groups. Although they were victims of those policies, they still cried and grieved his death. [Male, 1936, Uzbek, Ferghana, Uzbekistan]

It is difficult to explain the reactions of these people. These reactions might be attributed to acting on the part of these individuals or a reflection of a complicated reality in which these people may have attributed the repression not to Stalin but to a mistake of which he may have been unaware. Interestingly, some people considered the Soviet government to be the main cause of their suffering, and they had very strong feelings against the government but no animosity towards Stalin. In addition, they recognised Stalin's contributions in WWII but tend to believe that the Soviet Union could not have won the war without Stalin, thus making their feelings towards Stalin more complex and less clear.

CONCLUSION

From multiple accounts of the public reactions to Stalin's death, it is obvious that his death meant more to people than simply the death of a political leader. For many people, it was the death of a person they respected and who contributed greatly to a sense of security in their everyday lives. Moreover, it was a very emotional event for many as they considered his death to be more than just the death of a leader but the death of a family member or, in their own words, a "father". Therefore, hysterical crying as an expression of grief was considered to be a natural emotional reaction. In addition, participation in gatherings in Stalin's memory was considered to be a showing of loyalty to Stalin, though in modern times, such an action might seem unusual and exaggerated. However, for many ordinary citizens, both in Central Asia and in all territories of the USSR, this was a very natural expression of the deepest appreciation and respect for a person who was associated with a strong will, leadership during the difficult years of World War II, and improved standards of living. These positive images of Stalin, to a great extent, remain unchanged in people's minds despite their recognition of the many atrocities associated with him. Even the de-Stalinisation of society that Khrushchev attempted did not change his image with the public. In a number of interviews, many even blamed Khrushchev for his anti-Stalin campaign, believing that even Stalin's mistakes were part of his effort to help the country develop. In one interview, a respondent recalled that time, saying, "those who blamed Stalin for being a bad leader and Communist were very bad themselves" (interestingly, several respondents used the same phrase in Uzbek and Kyrgyz samples).

At the same time, although recognising Stalin's achievements, many also emphasised the negatives of his policies, including the oppression that occurred during this period and the forced migration of ethnic groups. However, even though human rights violations occurred during Stalin's rule and many people were executed, deported, or imprisoned in labour camps, an overwhelmingly large majority of people expressed their belief that this oppression occurred without Stalin's knowledge or complete understanding of these issues or that such oppression occurred for the sake of the nation. Furthermore, even for people who believed that Stalin ordained such cruelty, some believed that the atrocities that occurred during this period could be forgiven due to Stalin's many other achievements during his rule.

Finally, although many people mourned Stalin's death, people were also relieved by his death, and such feelings indicate that some viewed his rule with a rational state of mind. At the same time, Stalin's death was the beginning of a new period for everyone and brought changes to the political regime, the economy and every aspect of life.

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Evaluations of Perestroika in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Public Views in Contemporary Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

Timur Dadabaev

Perestroika was launched with slogans of economic reform that gradually became calls for political restructuring. In its struggle with the old guard of the party, the political leadership relied largely on public opinion and public support for reform. However, as can be seen in oral history interviews with senior citizens, there was a considerable degree of difference between the public's understanding regarding perestroika and the Soviet leadership's articulated goals. In addition, the opinions of ordinary people were highly optimistic with objectives that often went unrealized. Based on interviews with elderly citizens in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, this chapter inquires about their evaluations of the process of perestroika and their current understanding of it. These evaluations are made from two basic positions. First, they represent the memories of ordinary citizens concerning various events that occurred in their lifetimes

T. Dadabaev (✉)
University of Tsukuba, Tsukuba, Japan

during the perestroika years. Second, they are reconsiderations of the perestroika years from the position of the interviewees' current post-Soviet life, so these reconsiderations also reflect the public's attitude about their present lives.

Although a large body of literature focuses on perestroika and its public perception, the majority of these studies focus on Russia and other non-Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. Thus, the views of the Russian public are frequently generalized as the views of the people of the entire Soviet Union. Additionally, the views of ordinary people at the periphery are often taken for granted and not brought to the forefront. Another aspect underlining the importance of examining CA perestroika narratives is to observe whether the CA countries experiences and understandings of perestroika are similar to those of other states and if the views of the CA public on perestroika have been shaped by their shared Soviet past or by other factors.

This chapter builds on the assumption that people in the CA republics shared the same living conditions, everyday life experiences and working environments in an economic and political system that was similar to the other Soviet republics. In this sense, these experiences and narratives of the Soviet era can be considered comparable. However, this study also speculates that the post-independence experiences and the political, economic and social systems of these states differ significantly from one another. Supposedly, these differences impact not only how people shape their views of post-independence but also, and often primarily, how people recall, reconstruct, narrate and reconcile independence with their pre-independence past.

To compare and interpret the experiences of ordinary people in their everyday lives, this chapter raises the following set of questions. How do people recall their expectations of perestroika in the peripheral republics of the former USSR? How do people reevaluate these expectations today? How are their expectations related to their present lives? What factors serve as measurement tools for the public in their evaluations and interpretations of the past?

The primary objective of this chapter is to examine the recollections and public narratives of elderly citizens in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan regarding their understandings, perceptions and everyday experiences during and related to the perestroika years. In so doing, this chapter aims to address the legacy of Soviet perestroika in the CA republics during the post-independence period. This chapter also seeks to tease

out the nuances in the polarized official memory discourses of the Soviet past, which has been portrayed on a binary scale of either open criticism or patronizing approval of perestroika. In addition, this chapter aims to reveal the interconnectedness of memory, cognition and historical construction in seeking to demonstrate how they shape respondents' individual selves.

Using this approach, this chapter identifies three dominant discourses articulated by ordinary people in the process of enquiry: the narrative of imagined perestroika/disillusionment with perestroika, the narrative of perestroika as a reform that went wrong and a narrative of perestroika as a success and a form of liberation from the past. The first narrative is supported largely by respondents exposed to a conservative environment both in the sense of the current political and economic systems of their country of residence and of their social and other backgrounds. The second narrative appears most often among intellectuals. The third narrative is favored by those who have successfully adapted to the post-independence present and thus regard their past in a rather negative light. Part of the fragmented public understanding and representation of perestroika is the image of Gorbachev and perestroika's "eventual unavailability" as considered from the position of Gorbachev-the-head-of-state, Gorbachev-the-politician and Gorbachev-the-human. In most cases, the content analysis of the interviews shows that the attitude toward perestroika almost automatically translates into the attitude toward Gorbachev, which was the primary motivation for investigating this subject. Therefore, Gorbachev was not a name randomly selected from among many others during the interviews. Rather, Gorbachev was the name most frequently mentioned during the interviews, which explains why it is given such close attention.

While these three narratives can be tracked in the recollections of people in other republics of the former USSR, there are country-specific recollections of certain perestroika-era campaigns in the CA countries, particularly the anti-corruption campaigns, which were well-received by the general public in other Soviet republics. At the same time, as seen in the recollections of CA respondents (Uzbeks in particular), these campaigns, although they were considered important, sent the wrong message to the CA public by conveying the sense of being "scapegoated" or "victimized" for the sake of proving the efficacy of perestroika. In addition, in some other cases (the Kazakh case, for instance), these campaigns sent a poorly received message of ethnic segregation and discrimination, leading to the conclusion that although the aims of perestroika sought to achieve justice for all, it was conducted through the old methods and thus

eventually became the “politics of perestroika” rather than an authentic restructuring.

In particular, respondents used the events of the “Cotton Affair” in Uzbekistan and of Almaty (Jeltoqsan) as illustrations of the “politics of perestroika” narrative.¹ This chapter does not have the ambition to comprehensively analyze these two events. Instead, these two events are used to exemplify the “politics of perestroika” and the way people perceive them from their current position, as they were the events most frequently mentioned by the interviewees. No other events were mentioned with a comparable degree of intensity and emotional attachment.

The main thrust of this chapter is to suggest that these different and sometimes contradictory narratives constitute an essential part of understanding people’s expectations of perestroika and their evaluation of the post-perestroika years. They also underline the notion that post-Soviet governments have been unable to consolidate new constructs of memory with respect to perestroika. Historical construction around the pre-perestroika years of the Soviet administration in most post-Soviet CA countries is conducted along the ideological lines associated with the post-independence years in each of the republics (for Kyrgyzstan, see Osmonov 2005; for Uzbekistan, see Alimova 2001). As has been discussed by some authors, post-Soviet leaders define themselves in opposition to the Soviet past, and their political success has largely depended on their ability to distance themselves from the Soviet past (Ohan 2008: 62). The key feature of this process is the criticism of the past and the glorification of the post-independence present. However, the evaluation of perestroika has been left out of this political coloring because of its contradictory nature and meaning, thus leaving a space for public interpretations. This chapter concludes by suggesting that the present social, cultural and political conditions in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan greatly influence the manner in which respondents describe their past experiences and evaluate perestroika, resulting in the fragmented views of perestroika.

POST-SOVIET CENTRAL ASIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY ON PERESTROIKA

As those studying historical construction emphasize, “the writing of history has often been manipulated for political ends and probably nowhere more so than in the Soviet Union” (Slater 1998: 69). The term “evil empire” became part of American rhetoric to depict the various restrictions inherent

in and the repressive nature of the Soviet state (McMann 2007: 234). In most of the post-Soviet CA countries, historical construction regarding the pre-perestroika years of the Soviet administration is also conducted within this tradition, depicted along the lines of colonial theory and emphasizing points of trauma, repression and ethnic and religious limitations (Ploskikh and Dzhunushaliev 2007: 32–33; Shamsutdinov and Mo'minov 2013: 486–491). As some authors emphasize, the attempts of historiographers to interpret the events of the perestroika era run the risk of being limited by communist ideology or of taking a euphoric and over-exaggerated view of post-independence achievements, referring to this phenomenon as a childhood illness of post-Soviet historiography (Ploskikh and Dzhunushaliev 2007: 34). The CA governments have no clearly defined stance with respect to perestroika, mainly because of its dual meaning for the CA states. Therefore, the post-Soviet CA governments have been unable to consolidate people around new constructs of memory with respect to perestroika. There are several explanations for this. On the one hand, perestroika brought about reforms that eventually resulted in the collapse of the USSR and independence for the republics. In this sense, perestroika was a liberating and decolonizing force, as noted by many observers. In addition, the political leadership of many CA countries still largely consists of individuals who came to power under the influence of perestroika. Therefore, the current governments are reluctant to openly criticize perestroika. On the other hand, perestroika brought significant challenges due to the dramatic change it facilitated, which does not allow governments and historiographers to openly praise and/or support perestroika. The dual nature of perestroika's impact has prevented the emergence of a one-sided, governmentally controlled process of depicting perestroika, which has left a vacuum for public interpretation of the subject.

Evaluating the Uzbek, Kazakh and Kyrgyz historiographies of perestroika highlights divisions in views and understandings of this period even among scholars. Much scholarship on the history of Uzbekistan treats its perestroika period in two ways. Some scholars omit the period of perestroika as such and limit coverage to the late Soviet years (Alimova 2001). Others focus on aspects of scapegoating and ethnic repression that the Soviet government brought to Uzbekistan without singling out perestroika in particular as the cause (Shamsutdinov and Karimov 2004; Shamsutdinov and Mo'minov 2013). However, it should be emphasized that in most Uzbek historiography, the pre- and post-independence

periods are considered to have a binary relationship, a pair of polar opposites in terms of their meaning and significance for the country.

Kazakh historians, influenced by the discourse of the Kazakh leadership, depict perestroika as “the last attempt in the twentieth century to reform the socialist system”, which resulted in polarization of the masses (Abraimov 2008: 123). According to these historians, the Soviet Union had, by this time, become a “unitary state with an all-powerful old administrative-command system” (Abraimov 2008: 123). Concurrently, economic conditions in Kazakhstan were depicted as catastrophic and in need of urgent restructuring, not only in the literature compiled by authors in Moscow but also in studies published locally in Almaty (Aktual’ye voprosy 1988).

The content analysis of newspapers and media sources of the perestroika period in Kazakhstan conducted by Morozova and her colleagues reveals that from 1985 to 1989, the theme of the need for economic reconstruction was of primary interest to newspapers. However, coverage of the issues related to the need for economic reforms was, in later years, gradually overshadowed by the rhetoric of the importance of national reconstruction and of support for the revival of national and national-linguistic traditions after 1987 (Morozova 2011). Therefore, in Kazakhstan and in other national republics, the discourses prevalent in the national media during the years of perestroika increasingly focused on the issues of new (ethnocentric) nation-building and cultural and language support (Morozova 2012).

The situation in Kyrgyzstan is different in that many scholars have emphasized the continuity of the historical discourse from the Soviet to the post-Soviet period. Therefore, the perestroika years are elaborated upon and fleshed out to a certain extent; however, the narration of the perestroika years is generally limited. The perestroika years as such are also treated differently from one work to another. Some writings divide the period of perestroika into several smaller periods of time to clearly delineate the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union and the moment of the launch of Kyrgyz nationhood (Chotonov 1998; Ploskikh and Dzhunushaliev 2007). Other studies treat perestroika as one short period without further ado, dividing it into smaller periods and even without describing those elements that signify perestroika (Voropaeva et al. 2008). Notably, many of these studies emphasize the importance of the Soviet period for the so-called “modernization” of Kyrgyzstan but fall short of evaluating the perestroika period or limit their evaluations to criticism of

Gorbachev's indecisiveness (Osmonov 2005; Ploskikh and Dzhunushaliev 2007: 271–277). Moreover, some authors claim that the supporters of perestroika were predominantly ethnic Russians, particularly among the top-management of various regions in Kyrgyzstan (Osmonov 2005: 440). Such depictions aim to portray the beginning of “perestroika” as a process that was imposed from above that was neither initiated nor supported by the general public. These accounts claim that perestroika was only later (after 1988) used chaotically by the masses to achieve various goals such as unlawful land grabs (Ashar) and the creation of politically (Zamandash, Koz Karash, Ayikat) and ethnically centered (Osh aimagi, Adolat) organizations to make further claims against the government at various locations within Kyrgyzstan² (Osmonov 2005: 441–442). However, despite the appearance of such movements, they did not serve as generators of debate about perestroika but rather served the immediate economic and social interests of their organizers. In the post-perestroika years, they lost their appeal with a public that had become overwhelmed by other social and economic problems.

This lack of attention to a seminal period in the Soviet state and the launch of nationhood in the former Soviet territories have two major connotations. First, the analysis of these events is complicated because of the natural duality surrounding them, symbolized by both the tragedy of the collapse of an old state (the USSR) and the decolonization effects of the birth of new states (the individual republics). In addition, clear-cut evaluations are rendered more difficult because the political elite, including historians, have deep connections both in terms of their disciplinary traditions and educational backgrounds, complicating their ability to evaluate the perestroika years. That being said, the lack of official references to and evaluations of the perestroika years has left an open space for the public evaluation of this period, that is, an evaluation based on people's personal experiences during these years. Their current lives can be seen as barometers for measuring the selectivity of their memories.

SLOGANS OF PERESTROIKA

It is safe to say that perestroika as a reform process was a reactive phenomenon in that its objectives and purposes were constructed over several years as part of a reactionary process to the changing foreign and domestic environment in and around the USSR. Even Gorbachev did not have a clear plan of action to implement reform, nor did he have any clearly

defined objective. His instinct for reform, by his own recognition, came from his initial desire, first, to stand out among those who were considered incapable of efficiently mobilizing the people for various tasks and, second, to efficiently address the increasing number of problems arising in the USSR at the time (Gorbachev 1987: 21–23). However, as those studying Gorbachev note, “His ideas in those years did not represent such a radical departure from the past as they were subsequently to become” (Brown 2013: 200). To a great extent, the departure point for perestroika was more a negation and critique of past and present problems than a clear understanding of how things ought to be improved. Gorbachev’s drive can be best explained by his depiction of the Soviet paradoxes in the early 1980s, which contrasted “scientific and technological triumphs” and the “obvious lack of efficiency in using scientific achievements for economic needs” (Gorbachev 1987: 21).

Perestroika began with the rather modest and vague slogan of “acceleration (*uskorenie*)” and was announced during the 1985 April plenum of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Very few people, including Gorbachev, understood its proper meaning. The catchy word acceleration was interpreted in two ways. Those identifying with the “reformists”, among the core group of communists supporting Gorbachev, explained it as improving labor efficiency, adhering to new technological imperatives and increasing the levels of production. The conservative interpretation of the term emphasized strengthening discipline in line with policies established by Gorbachev’s predecessor, General Secretary Andropov, and fighting corruption. Gorbachev’s explanation of the term was a combination of “unflagging forward motion, the identification and resolution of problems” and “perfecting a society of developed socialism”, which was meant to result in “the elimination of everything that interferes with development” (Gorbachev 1995: 173). Such vague phrases left enormous space for interpretation in both the reformist and conservative camps, symbolizing both his weakness and lack of new ideas. Following on the heels of acceleration came the slogan *khozraschyot*.³

However, this did not produce much in terms of increasing the efficiency of the administration of economic activity. Gorbachev recognized this fact by admitting that “at that stage, neither I nor anyone else was ready to formulate a truly realistic evaluation of our situation, or to advance major new ideas” (Gorbachev 1995: 172).

At the 1987 January plenum of the CPSU, another slogan was created to replace acceleration, “glasnost (openness)”, which was meant to

facilitate the transition from a command economy to performance- and market-based tools through openness and democratization in all spheres of life. Glasnost also implied the appointments of heads of various organizations based on internal elections and the introduction of “democratic” principles.

When these reforms were initiated, the Soviet system was characterized by the monopolization of political power by the Communist party, the notion of “democratic centralism”, a command economy, state ownership of the means of production, leadership in the international communist movement and an ambition to construct a global communist society. During the perestroika years, for various reasons (be it genuine interest in dismantlement of one party-rule or for merely symbolic pretense of reforms), the notions of the Communist party’s leading role and the principle of “democratic centralism” were abolished and elections were introduced instead.⁴ Additionally, economic reforms liberating entrepreneurial activities were introduced, offering opportunities for small enterprises to participate in the economy. Public ownership of the means of production was challenged. Ideological shifts also challenged communist ideals, which led not only to the dissolution of the USSR but also to discrediting the communist ideology and rupturing the communist bloc (Lane 1992).

These changes were applauded by outside watchers as the triumph of liberal values and the market economy. It has now been documented that these changes reverberated all the way down to the lives of individual people in the republics constituting the USSR. These changes and the new environment, to a great extent, defined the representation of perestroika in the public memory.

PUBLIC EVALUATION OF PERESTROIKA

It must also be emphasized that public evaluations of perestroika are undergoing a process of transition. In light of the economic difficulties and political confusion that characterized the immediate post-Soviet years, the dominant discourses of perestroika-bashing versus perestroika-praising became fragmented, leading to a public construction of discourses that were positioned between the two extreme interpretations. In this chapter, interviews with respondents indicate that evaluations of perestroika fall into three main narratives, although fragmentation is likely to continue.

Disillusionment with Perestroika

The first narrative regarding perestroika—and the most popular among senior citizens in Central Asia—refers to the “good old days” and recalls the perestroika years as a time of confusion and uncertainty. Some respondents place these two notions in binary opposition (“good old days” vs. perestroika confusion), whereas a fewer number of cases indicate that these notions are connected to one another (i.e., the “good old days” resulted in perestroika). A few issues stand out in respondents’ narratives. In the narratives that place these two notions in binary opposition, the evaluation given to perestroika can be characterized by the key words “empty talk” and “confusion”.

For these respondents, the present is the appropriate time to reflect on disillusionment with the ideals of perestroika and the very core of its motivations. Perestroika slogans were often misunderstood, and its publicity campaigns were ridiculed and became fodder for jokes. All of these events left an impression of a time of confusion rather than smoothly executed reform:

There was no perestroika, it was only empty talk. Even his (Gorbachev’s) phrase, “You press from the bottom, we will press from the top” shows this. What pressure? Again, as with his public programs against alcoholism, it was necessary to sit down and calculate first. Those regions raising fruits, what happened to them? He says, I did not think that it would turn out like that. The economy was interrupted, and alcoholism was not solved. In my opinion, Gorbachev was an immature and untalented leader. [Russian, Male, 1939, Ustkamenogorsk, Kazakhstan]

Naturally, the point of departure for respondents espousing these opinions was the “good old days”, and the measuring stick for their judgment was not a new spirit of change or enthusiasm for reform but rather functionality. Respondents emphasized that prior to perestroika, the economy seemed to be functioning, food-stock production (which collapsed in the Gorbachev years and resulted in a deficit of essential products) was proceeding well, and many goals set by the government appeared to be achieved, unlike the anti-alcohol campaigns of the perestroika period.

Others often question the results of such massive economic reforms, which ultimately implied a criticism of the standards of living of ordinary people. Among them are those who spent most of their active years in service to the state and who felt that their previous sacrifices were wasted

for what turned out to be nothing more than “empty talk”. Notably, these opinions were heard equally from Russian and non-Russian ethnic groups. This type of discourse is also present in all of the CA republics, and its essence is very close to that of perestroika critiques from other former Soviet republics. This type of logic is best exemplified by the extract below:

Because of my World War II wounds, I was often in the hospital. And during one of my stays in a hospital, Gorbachev came to power. Every day, we received newspapers full of Gorbachev’s speeches. After a while, I named him “talker”. And I think this is his one feature that will remain in history. So what if he was the first president of the Soviet Union? The question is what did he do for people? ... So many millions of people died in poverty, so many people suffered with no salaries and so on and so forth. So much money has been stolen and so much has been privately appropriated. It was in fact robbing the public ... I was given vouchers (government-issued bonds in place of compensation for state property). I sold them for 200 rubles. That’s all I got out of it.

What did they build for people? Perestroika means reconstruction. So what did they construct? If they began reconstruction, they meant there was something wrong. So at the end, what did they build instead of that? Did it get better? It became better only after the arrival of Putin.... Couldn’t we preserve the Soviet Union? We could have preserved it in a different form. We could have avoided all of these “diseases”, horrors, the robbing of the public. [Male, 1921, Russian, Kustanai, Kazakhstan]

One senses that many of these recollections reflect not only what people experienced at the time and their evaluation of those events but also the public’s post-Soviet experiences. As indicated above, people not only question the results of the perestroika movement but also reflect positively on current political processes in Russia under Putin’s leadership. In so doing, they subconsciously attach a degree of support to the type of reforms they see as more positive or desirable than those undertaken during perestroika. For them, the changes that Russia underwent under Putin’s leadership are not dissimilar to the changes of perestroika: in the Putin years, Russia had to overcome civil unrest, separatist wars, economic collapse and a decline in its influence. However, as is symbolized by the reference above, people understand that Putin’s administration handled these problems better than Gorbachev in the Soviet era and—even hypothetically—than the Kazakh authorities (in the case of the respondent above). In this sense, such selective memories also emphasizes the point

that many respondents felt the need for change during perestroika but did not know how such change would proceed. Therefore, their support for Gorbachev and his perestroika might have been stronger at the time than they indicate now. Today, people can compare the results of Gorbachev's reforms with Putin's solutions, having experienced the difficulties of the post-independence years in CA. In light of these comparisons, support for perestroika in the public's recollection is fairly weak, while critical sentiment is much stronger.

In a similar fashion, some respondents recalled other General Secretaries as foils to Gorbachev. Andropov especially was often mentioned as a man who could have delivered more because of his commitment to discipline and the "rule of law" and his dedication to the country. By indicating their preferences for Andropov and other alternatives, these citizens articulate the character traits they felt Gorbachev lacked in his drive to succeed with perestroika, as exemplified in the extract below:

I personally liked only Andropov ... He did not let people just wander around the streets. This is how a real ruler needs to be. He did not steal and damage anything. He referred everything to the law. All the confusion would then be settled in the ministries of justice and internal affairs ... Gorbachev pretended to conduct perestroika and destroyed everything with the prior consent of other countries. [Male, 1919, Kyrgyz, Naryn region, Kyrgyzstan]

Such views also reflect respondents' post-Soviet environments. Although the discourse that "no perestroika happened" was present among respondents from all the CA countries, it was more common in respondents from countries that experienced greater economic and social turbulence, such as Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The tone of references in these countries also differed depending on how respondents saw their post-independence present. In Uzbekistan, the post-independence present was often counterposed with the chaos of the perestroika years because the Uzbek government, under the firm leadership of President Karimov, was able to establish a stable and long-term administration with an established power elite. In many cases, respondents would credit their government for its ability to take control of the situation in the initial years following perestroika. In the case of Kyrgyz respondents, the perestroika period has often been described as the beginning of a series of chaotic and unstable years characterized by frequent changes of government and indecisive governmental actions. Particularly vocal in this regard were those coming from

an intellectual background. In Kazakhstan, the majority of those who felt that perestroika had little or no positive impact on their lives evaluated it as a sort of suffering that had to be overcome to achieve the development they feel they enjoy in present-day Kazakhstan. They feel that the mere fact of perestroika's non-success offered them more opportunities for independent post-Soviet development, including a flourishing energy sector, rising living standards and overall economic and political stability. These observations show that respondents' processes of memory construction are greatly influenced by several factors. These factors include, first, respondents' notions of possible alternatives to Gorbachev, such as Andropov or Putin. Second, many respondents choose to emphasize the memories that support their vision of their present; in so doing, they criticize the past and praise the present, or they criticize their past as a reason for the troubles in their present lives. The few people who were able to avoid the negative impacts of perestroika ended up in a type of isolation, which appeared to be their way of coping with time. Again, the sphere of their private lives, everyday needs and private economy dominated their agendas, while perestroika was understood as something remote and unrelated to their lives. This was especially true for people residing in rural areas, many of whom spent much of their time either in agriculture or in animal husbandry and had little time, attention for or understanding of the larger events taking place around them. The following narrative is representative of this mindset: "Frankly speaking, when they speak of Gorbachev, people rarely say nice things. He dissolved the country. He did not do much really. However, when it comes to me, I did not notice his time much. I was too concerned with taking care of our livestock to notice how his rule had passed" [Female, 1931, Female, Naryn region, Kyrgyzstan].

Criticism of perestroika policies and their impact was felt early in the perestroika years, and, as has been discussed above, public criticism was not taken as an indication of trouble. In one of his speeches at the 1988 party conference, Gorbachev rebuffed similar criticisms that symbolized the divide between what people thought of him and his own views on perestroika (Gorbachev 1987: 264).

This type of divide between those who believe there were no any results of perestroika and those who support it did produce certain outcomes. Those in the former group believe that perestroika was an imagined reform process in which people were handed another ideological platform to believe in that closely resembled communist ideology than real reform.

Those who are not as radical in their conclusions believe that although perestroika did not achieve its outcomes, it was a necessary process that just eventually went wrong.

Perestroika as a Needed Reform that Went Wrong

The second discourse that can be traced through respondents' evaluations of perestroika takes the middle ground, acknowledging the need for reform but also emphasizing the wrong direction it eventually took. This group of respondents is the same size as the former group. Respondents supporting this understanding of perestroika emphasize that Soviet economic development and their own living standards were at a point where some type of action was required. In this sense, their evaluation of Gorbachev's initiative and his attempt to change the status quo was quite positive. In addition, many senior citizens believe that the decision to change the country's economic model was correct, as described below:

I like the coming of the market economy. I am dissatisfied with the past. Why did our leadership not agree to conduct the transition to market relations earlier? We needed to do it earlier.... I do not argue that Marx was a genius and so were Lenin and Engels. However, there were many other alternatives, like Adam Smith, Ricardo, Marshall.... I saw Gorbachev for the first time in Moscow. I was there on business and saw him on TV ... I personally respect him because he spoke the truth. [Female, Kyrgyz, Issyk-kul, 1939, Kyrgyzstan]

The same respondent also suggests that although the policy to move away from a centrally planned economy to instead learn from the best examples offered by alternative models was correct, its implementation was a separate issue. Generally, people in this group (with higher level of education and those with better abilities to analyze data) tend to separate the initial intent of perestroika and its implementation. In many cases, respondents connect the failure of perestroika to either Gorbachev's personal weakness or a Western conspiracy to create trouble in the USSR. For them, after the policies of perestroika focused on economic development turned into a political sop to keep Gorbachev relevant and in power, perestroika became a lie that had to be sustained to pacify the masses.

You know, it is not a secret that many people blame Gorbachev for the dissolution of the USSR. Indeed our generation remembers Soviet times with

good memories, irrespective of our ethnicity. His slogans of perestroika and glasnost resulted in the loss of the strongest, biggest state. We now live in an independent state, and there are good sides to it as well. However, in economic terms, we are still experiencing many difficulties ... The politics of Gorbachev were very difficult to comprehend. When he first started his reforms, all seemed to be right and good. People felt freedom. They went outside and spoke whatever they wanted to. His meetings among huge crowds of people and his greeting everyone with a handshake was a positive thing. It gave you a good impression. Maybe his politics of glasnost—in their initial meaning—were a good thing. But my feeling is that he did not calculate it properly and it all resulted in such a sad outcome. As a result, people of all territories of the Soviet Union suffered from his decisions. [Male, 1947, Dungan, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan]

While respondents favoring this narrative credit Gorbachev's leadership in initiating reforms, they also accept the fact that the reforms were a reactionary process rather than deeply thought through. Among the factors leading to the collapse of the system, many respondents note the external pressures and foreign expectations to which Gorbachev and his leadership attempted to appeal.

He (Gorbachev) also recognized that he was no longer able to change anything. But the remote control for Gorbachev was in the hands of the Pope and Bush's father and people like them. Gorbachev admitted that everything has been decided for him ... His main mistake was the dissolution of the USSR. As for perestroika, I evaluate it as a temporary lie in order to control the public. It is like opening the window (to let the stress out of the population—TD). [Female, 1939, Kyrgyz, Issyk-kul region, Kyrgyzstan]

Similarly, one respondent from Kazakhstan who held this view suggested that the main weakness of perestroika was not its conceptual part, as the right ideas were articulated and the problems were emphasized. According to such recollections, these types of problems were inherent in the USSR, and they needed to be exposed so that they could be managed. What was more important, according to respondents, was the ability and commitment to act upon these statements and to take bold action to resolve these issues, which was not what survey participants saw in reality. They explain this by saying that there was no clear understanding of how to address these problems and that the majority of these problems were defined only at the level of rhetoric. One example of this was the campaign against

alcoholism, which was launched in the USSR in 1985 to eradicate the chronic problem of alcohol dependency.

Perestroika brought some news, some changes. But as a whole, it was not a well-thought-out policy. Social conditions and people's real conditions were not carefully considered. For example, in the public programs against alcoholism, all the vineyards were destroyed, which in turn led to the destruction of many villages' economic subsistence, and many people were thus left jobless. [Male, 1936, Kazakh, Almaty region, Kazakhstan]

Another line of criticism stems from the damage done to the dignity of many respondents by policies that seemed to bend to the demands of foreign countries. This is partly because most respondents in this group were brought up under Soviet ideology, which nurtured the idea of the Soviet Union's superiority over other countries. This nationalist pride was a motivation in their careers and, to some extent, a way in which people found meaning in their lives. Despite the fact that respondents in this survey were from CA countries, they strongly associate with the Soviet Union as a whole; in this attitude, they are similar to Soviet citizens who identified with the Union over their republic of residence. These respondents still feel that the ideals of making the country a better place did not produce the desired outcomes and eventually resulted in the collapse for which perestroika is responsible.

I want to say the following. There were two sides to perestroika. First, the slogan of perestroika led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. This was a joy to those who wanted it to collapse. But all of our parents (elders) were prepared to sacrifice their lives for the Soviet Union. To this day, they condemn Gorbachev. Because they look at China. Life is good in China. We would have the same if ... (we had followed the same path).... And also, perestroika left many people hungry, which leads to anger ... If we preserved certain aspects and mixed them, we would be good. If we learned from China, we would follow a good path. That means that socialism was not such a terrible thing. They not only have a large population, their economy has moved far ahead. This is one view of the general public. However (the second view is that) I think Gorbachev had it all right if he decided to have perestroika. I served as a rector of the university at that time. One time, the rectors of 600 universities (including me) were called to the Kremlin, and I had a good opportunity to learn about everything firsthand. When I returned, the first experiment with elections was held in Kyrgyzstan. National University

was the biggest institution, with 13,000 students and 800 communists. I headed one of the communist branches in the University. I was busy with my research and at the factory, so I refused to be nominated as a candidate in the elections. But one friend of the head of the party organization in the university told me that because I was a communist they wanted to put my name on the ballot. There were 12 of us at first on the ballot, which shortened to 3 and then I was finally elected. I was at first frustrated to be elected (because it meant being away from research and being involved in more work). But later in life, I realized this had been one of the most significant days in my life. These elections played a crucial role in my life. I was then elected to the Supreme Soviet and the Highest Attestation Commission, which issued 3000 diplomas/degrees, and in all of them, I have my signature of approval. Therefore, I personally cannot say anything negative about these days of perestroika. However, I know very few people who were glad to have Gorbachev's perestroika in their lives. [Male, 1934, Kyrgyz, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan]

Notably, the discourse that calls for a consideration of the outcomes of perestroika not only in terms of what was achieved but also in the international context by comparing Soviet perestroika reforms to other countries comes from senior citizens in all the surveyed CA countries, that they come from different national, ethnic or social backgrounds, as in the case below. "If you think of the Soviet system, one can say that the main assumption of building communism based on Marxist ideology was perhaps wrong. Look at China, where there are some smart people who try to build socialism but with modifications. Look at Cuba and other places" (Uzbek, male, Tashkent region).

The stream of arguments above indicates that although hypothetical, many believe that the Soviet system as such could have been sustained, thus questioning the unavoidability of Soviet collapse. As indicated above, people supporting this argument look at possible alternative paths of development and often refer to China and other foreign examples as possible "others". This view is typical for those respondents who were actively involved in the process of reform and who were driven by belief in perestroika's slogans. While many seem to have been disappointed by this era, they do not feel comfortable characterizing it in black and white, which is also related to the fact that in evaluating perestroika, many of these respondents are evaluating their personal lives. Therefore, their outright rejection of perestroika would imply self-rejection, as they felt they were in positions that allowed them a certain amount of influence over

the pace of reform. In addition, many of these respondents made considerable progress in their career paths as a result of perestroika's reforms. Thus, their emotional attachment to the perestroika years is different from those who were only at the receiving end of the policies.⁵ This argument resembles the arguments of academic observers concerning the potential of the Soviet system in the early days of perestroika (Gill 2013).

Perestroika as a Success Story

Along with openly critical and moderate views of perestroika, a certain number of respondents strongly believe that the perestroika movement was positive. For them, the aspects of reform that aimed to restore the Soviet style of governance and economic production are not the aspects for which they value perestroika. By contrast, they believe that the liberating aspects of perestroika must be emphasized as the most important reforms for people in this region. Therefore, respondents who supported this stance noted that the mere fact that perestroika resulted in the dissolution of the Soviet Union is praiseworthy in and of itself. For them, perestroika was not a movement to reconstruct the state but rather the beginning of the process of deconstructing the state.

Gorbachev dissolved a state. At first, people (the nation) became frightened. But it turned out that Gorbachev was very clever. He is even today invited to lecture in Europe. Everything became better. For example, during the Soviet Union, you had to save money for years and years just to buy a carpet. To buy a car (which was once in a lifetime event and not for everyone, because it was outrageously expensive—TD) was like buying a Toyota (considered luxury and very expensive—TD) today. Now there are 2–3 cars in every house. Gorbachev's perestroika seemed harmful at first, but later it was good. People returned to their traditions and religion. Gorbachev was right and he behaved correctly. [Male, Uyghur, 1935, Almaty, Kazakhstan]

As indicated in the recollection above, those respondents who support this narrative of perestroika collapse of the Soviet Union per se was a way of restructuring. Therefore, from the perspective of current lives of respondents, success of perestroika needs to be formulated in different terms. For them, the weakening and eventual collapse of the Soviet state led to betterment of the population's well-being. From the position of their current lives, many consider the era of perestroika as a time of suffering that was

required to move toward a merit-based society. Notably, however, these respondents do not refer to issues of ethnic liberation and religious freedom as primary factors in the USSR's collapse, factors that are often mentioned as important in the secondary literature. For these respondents, the important measure of perestroika was more closely related to living standards and improvements in welfare and, subsequently, religious and ethnic revival. The emphasis of economic factors over issues of ethnic and religious self-identification can be explained by several factors. First, while religious freedom and ethnic identities were constrained by the boundaries of Soviet identity formation in the Soviet era, people in CA were still able to follow their ethnic and religious beliefs on a day-to-day basis. In addition, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the increase in religious extremism, the public's evaluation of religion and the importance of returning to religious public life has also undergone a shift toward support for moderate Islam, which does not interfere with public life. The negative effects of increasing ethnocentric nationalism have also been seen in a number of inter-ethnic clashes in the post-Soviet years, the most recent of which occurred in Kyrgyzstan in 2010.⁶ Therefore, for many respondents, the emphasis on perestroika as a process of ethnic and religious liberation would not justify supporting its outcomes. Concurrently, the new opportunities created by the collapse of the command economy touch upon the very important sphere of people's private lives and demonstrate how the population's lives improved. In this setting, perestroika is the process that resulted in economic liberation.

On par with economic criteria, freedom of speech is another aspect of perestroika that is highly valued among respondents. The appreciation of newly acquired freedoms of speech and self-expression was one of the points mentioned by respondents, even when acknowledging the failures of perestroika in other areas. Nevertheless, those supporting this narrative of perestroika continue to believe that perestroika's successes can be measured by acquired freedoms (including those in economic and political fields), despite its weaknesses and multiple faults: "We journalists and writers welcomed perestroika positively. We thought that perestroika would bring some changes; actually, it seemed that it brought some. Later, it became over-wrought and over-done. But it was perestroika that hastened the process of achieving independence. I cannot talk negatively; it was good" [Female, 1936, Kazakh, Almaty, Kazakhstan].

This type of evaluation can be explained through two realities of respondents' lives. On the one hand, for these people, the importance

attached to free speech from perestroika is rooted in their Soviet experiences and limitations, which did not offer them opportunities to fully develop their skills and capacities. Therefore, for them, perestroika was an opportunity to abandon past limitations and to open new frontiers. On the other hand, they recall and evaluate perestroika from the position of their post-independence present, and their views are strongly influenced by their current position and opportunities.

REPRESENTATIONS OF GORBACHEV IN POST-SOVIET CA

Previous studies in Russian media demonstrate that there are six representations of Gorbachev: as a political actor of the past and present, as a leader in different public and private organizations, as an award grantee, as a front man, as a guest of honor and as a family man (Vanhala-Aniszewski and Siilin 2013: 225).

Although Gorbachev was active in Russia after his perestroika years, many respondents in CA spoke of Gorbachev in the past tense, indicating his importance as being confined to the Soviet years. Some authors conclude that in Russia, Gorbachev remains a polarizing figure whose policies have not been forgotten (Vanhala-Aniszewski and Siilin 2013). In the CA case, however, his historical figure is part of selective forgetting in the public memory. Respondents recall him as little more than a part of the Soviet past, as distant from the lives of the people as the USSR itself. Therefore, despite the fact that he was the head of the Soviet Union, he is typically represented as largely symbolic of the chaos rather than of the might of the Soviet state. Four narratives can be identified in this type of representation. The first represents Gorbachev as an untalented head of the Soviet state. The second narrative depicts him as an intelligent but weak statesman. The third represents Gorbachev as a contradictory individual driven by personal interest and ambition. The fourth image, which stood out in the interviews, is the omission of Gorbachev-the-man in public narratives, which also represents the public's stance toward him.

Gorbachev as the Soviet Leader

It has been reported that 37 % of Russians believe that the breakup of the Soviet Union would have been unavoidable with or without Gorbachev, with a separate poll suggesting that 40 % of respondents blame the August

1991 (GKCHP) plotters for the dissolution of the USSR (Holmes 2013: 186). In addition, some authors grant Gorbachev a “rightful role as the most enlightened and democratic leader” (Holmes 2013: 188). In contrast, interviews conducted in this chapter show that, although public representations of Gorbachev are shifting away from blaming him, the vast majority of chapter respondents see his attempts to reform the USSR not as an indication of his strength but of his weakness. Respondents often counterposed and compared Gorbachev with and assessed him against figures such as his predecessor Andropov and current president Putin. In addition, national pre- and post-Gorbachev leaders such as Rashidov and Karimov in Uzbekistan, Usualiev and Akaev in Kyrgyzstan and Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan have become individuals who are frequently compared to Gorbachev as possible “others”.⁷

The result of Gorbachev’s perestroika was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the creation of the CIS ... As a result, the USSR followed the wrong path of disintegration. No leader wanted to follow what others say. However, the firmest among them turned out to be President Karimov. I believe he was the first among CIS countries to have found the right way. There was no war like in Dushanbe, like in Chechnya and so on. He retained most ethnicities in the country, preventing interethnic conflict. He has written numerous books on how to transfer to the market economy and started implementing his ideas. I believe these are his main achievements. I do not think Gorbachev or even Yeltsin could do this. Although he (Karimov) gets criticized often for this and that, I believe that just for doing what I have mentioned, he deserves a monument. [Male, 1940, Uzbek, Tashkent region, Uzbekistan]

This again supports the argument that the public’s memories are shaped by two main factors: their everyday experiences and living standards and their views of the present, through which they evaluate their past experiences. In addition, although calls for “strong” leadership in the Russian context are associated with a sense of “national pride” and the revival of “great Russia”, in Central Asia, strong leadership is associated with aspects of functionality (“proper” “order”) and the image of a “ruler”. In the post-Soviet context, the leadership style and the changes that were meant to modernize and democratize CA societies are often associated with the images of leadership that people experienced in the years of perestroika, thus leading to a fear of the “known”. In a related matter, it was Gorbachev who initially rehabilitated the word “reform”, which was

feared as a challenge to the Soviet system of governance. From his time to the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, this notion of “reform” temporarily became a positive reference that implied forward movement. However, with time, Gorbachev’s failure brought negative connotations to the word “reform”, which to this day implies change that is conducted at the public expense but for which the general public is held accountable. In this sense, Gorbachev both “rehabilitated” and later “hijacked” the word reform, which symbolizes the duality in the evaluations of his legacy in CA.

In addition, most interviews demonstrated deeply rooted suspicion of Gorbachev’s motivations, which is often linked to his having “sold out” to the West and to doubts about his resolve to defend the achievements of previous generations. His attempt to reform Soviet society is regarded as a failure of loyalty to Soviet achievements and values.

Gorbachev is a betrayer of the homeland. People just say ‘bastard’ about him. Recently, during his 80th birthday, it came out, they showed it on TV: Walesa, the former Polish president, said, ‘Mikhail, when you told us that you would destroy SU, we did not believe. But you did it, you are a good guy’. SU was destroyed according to a plan. [Male, 1934, Russian, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan]

Soviet upbringing and ideology, which had always counterposed foreign values and interests with those of the Soviet Union, is partly responsible for this attitude. In making this comparison, people regarded the deterioration of the USSR as a result of improving relations with countries whose ideologies were considered irreconcilable with the Soviet way of life until perestroika. Such drastic changes, coupled with decreasing living standards and disintegrating public order, were the source of many people’s belief in conspiracy theories and views of Gorbachev as a Western agent.

Additionally, because the majority of respondents’ most active years came at the peak of the Soviet era, they defined their lives in terms of the successes and failures of the Soviet system that they had helped construct. On the other hand, perestroika seemed to reject everything they stood for, and Gorbachev was the person who launched that process under the pretext of improving the system, when in reality, it resulted in its destruction:

I remember Gorbachev. He came with the slogan of “perestroika”. What used to be a slogan turned into reality. I used to work for the factory. I have forgotten other slogans. They resembled something like “brake (slom)” or

“mechanism (mekhanizm)”. I understood it as crashing, breaking and then rebuilding. For example, we had a fruit and vegetable processing plant in Tokmok. It used to work day and night. We used to send its products to Russia. There used to be a factory to process wool. There was a sugar production facility. Only one pipe is left of it. Everything else was either sold or stolen. All its metal structures have been sold to China. [Male, 1932, Kyrgyz, Chui region, Kyrgyzstan]

As stated above, for many people, the notion of being “sold out” is not merely metaphorical; it also refers to bankruptcy and the literal selling off of factories and infrastructure that many generations of Soviets worked to construct. For many of these respondents, it was Gorbachev’s weak leadership and not the system that was responsible.

Gorbachev as an Intelligent But Weak Leader

One group of respondents believes that Gorbachev was progressive in his attempt to reform the system but weak and perhaps the wrong leader to be placed in charge of actually delivering reform. The main logic behind this view is respondents’ understanding that the Soviet command economy did not motivate people to work hard, and because people were not motivated to produce, there was an overall decline in production efficiency, resulting in economic stagnation. Another point uniting the perspectives of respondents in this group is that they see the decline of the Soviet Union as beginning in the late years of Brezhnev’s rule, which ended in stagnation. This stagnation had its roots not only in technological declines in production but also in the view of respondents, primarily in the fact that the interests of the political elites and the informal economy coincided, resulting in widespread corruption, as described below.

The fact that the Soviet Union collapsed was the “achievement” of Brezhnev rather than of Gorbachev. It started to fall away during the times of stagnation under Brezhnev. This is the time when the leadership of the mafia began to integrate with the leadership of the communist party. I remember that in those times people had to wait in line for years before they could be accepted into the communist party because becoming a member of the communist party was like begin given access to the “eatery”. If one were a member of the communist party, you would receive an additional 200 rubles to the 200 rubles of initial salary. You would be placed in a management position and such motivation was the beginning of the collapse of the USSR under Brezhnev ... Communists approached the issue with the same

approach as the mafia did but from the perspective of their (governmental) positions. This was the time when the interests of the mafia and communists coincided, and this was the time when Gorbachev's perestroika started. They divided everything shoulder to shoulder with mafia bosses across the whole of the Soviet Union. [Male, 1943, Russian, Andijan, Uzbekistan]

In a similar manner, another respondent expressed the view that the need for perestroika was deeply rooted in the Brezhnev period, when a shift occurred in people's attitudes toward the government and membership in the Communist party, both of which came to be seen as tools to achieve private goals. Thus, these respondents saw Gorbachev's perestroika as desperately needed. In this sense, Gorbachev is not understood as having a vital role in dismantling the Soviet Union; what respondents do hold him accountable for is his inability to reverse the process of decay:

I think that Brezhnev was an aggressive reformer in the beginning, the same as other politicians. However, he lost his willingness as his term in office lengthened, and he neglected everything. That was the beginning of the breakup of the Soviet Union. You could say that the dismantling of the Soviet Union began during the Brezhnev period, not during Gorbachev's perestroika.

We dreamed about becoming members of the Communist Party in the period before Brezhnev, and we had a feeling of wanting to die for the country and the Communist Party. However, when it came to the Brezhnev period, becoming a member of the Communist Party meant "having power and securing the future of your own children and grandchildren". Subsequently, as the end of the Brezhnev period approached, the power and national property were concentrated in the hands of executives of the Communist Party and the Mafia, and the country declined rapidly. [Male, 1951, Uzbek, Kokand, Uzbekistan]

As seen in the narrative below, another similarity in these respondents' views is that many were involved in knowledge-intensive labor. These occupations helped them better understand the weaknesses of the Soviet system and the importance of Gorbachev's reforms. Therefore, many of these respondents appreciate perestroika and Gorbachev's efforts but believe that the time for reform had come and gone with Brezhnev:

I used to work at the aviation plant. I could work endless hours at the factory, but there was a limit to what I could earn. So I did not really have any financial motivation to work more. The only motivation for me was technological, as I

could learn so much. And it is in this sense that the system of extensive development and centralized planned economy came to the limits of its functioning by the 1970s–1980s. Especially in defense-oriented and high-tech industries, the limits of such a system are obvious, and stagnation in such development comes very fast if the system does not respond properly. We missed this time, at the time of Brezhnev, and this was the time. [Male, 1943, Russian, Andijan, Uzbekistan]

As a result, although these respondents held positive views of Gorbachev personally, they viewed the systemic changes that occurred during the perestroika era negatively: “Gorbachev was also good in his own way. Well, about perestroika, I have heard only after the collapse of the Soviet Union. They said they will rebuild something and offer jobs. But for people, it meant only suffering with many people being laid off (IN, village of Tarsuu, Kyrgyzstan).

Gorbachev as a Contradictory Egoist

The economic and political reforms championed by Gorbachev that occurred in the Soviet Union were conducted under various slogans. Many of these slogans were ambiguously explained to the public, leaving fertile ground for interpretation. The slogans’ ambiguity and lack of explanation combined with their increasing use in everyday life created more confusion, which was later associated with Gorbachev’s style of governance. To start with, the very term “perestroika” meant little to the public, and in many narratives, people still find it difficult to define. It could mean both partial refurbishment and complete reconstruction. Neither meaning was properly conveyed to the public, thus strengthening the image of “empty talk” in a new linguistic coverage. Other terms associated with Gorbachev, such as “acceleration (*uskorenie*)”, “pluralism (*plyuralizm*)”, “consensus (*konsensus*)” and “new type of thinking (*novoe myshlenie*)”, seem to be taken from his slogans. These words became the subject of a great number of jokes and comedic performances on television talk shows; in most cases, they were not meant to symbolize the entire Soviet or Communist nomenclature but Gorbachev in particular. Confusion was further exacerbated by official campaigns, such as the campaign against alcoholism that implied a ban on trading alcohol. These situations conveyed to the public that the perestroika reforms were not meant to improve the lives of people. They were also vaguely linked to the party line. The only person who stood by

these slogans and campaigns was Gorbachev himself because they supported his image as an energetic and innovative leader:

I have to say that my impression is that Gorbachev did not think too much about things he spoke about. He thought that if he said four words (referring to four slogans of perestroika), people would follow him. So he kept repeating these four words. What are these words? The first one was “perestroika”, then “pluralism”, then “openness (glasnost)” and there was a fourth word (I do not remember now). He kept repeating these four words but he could hardly explain them. To start with, he could not explain what the perestroika was about. But somehow, his authority grew significantly because of these four words. At the same time, he was also forced to leave because of these four words ... He was not a very clever man in my mind ... There was so much suffering that people had to undergo because of these four words and because of him. And look at him nowadays. He received the Nobel Prize and he is travelling around with such an important face. [Male, 1945, Uzbek Tashkent, Uzbekistan]

As discussed above, the public’s main criteria for judging the efficiency of perestroika were their daily lives and living standards. The public representation is also effected by media depictions. Some of these stay close to the depiction above, representing Gorbachev as self-centered, particularly in Russia (Vanhala-Aniszewski and Siilin 2013: 226). However, for many people, the main criteria of judgment remained living experiences and living standards. By contrast, as Gorbachev himself and many observers concluded, for Gorbachev, “throughout most of his period as Soviet leader, economic reform took at best third place in his priorities after the task of ending the Cold War and his major domestic concern of fundamental political reform” (Brown 2013: 213). Notably, Gorbachev acknowledged this fact by saying that “in the heat of political battles, we lost sight of the economy and people never forgave us for shortages of everyday items and the lines for essential goods” (Brown 2013: 212).

I was working as a director of our village school during the Gorbachev era. Frankly, I did not understand the policy (and motivations) of Gorbachev. He either sold his soul or I do not know ... He made all of the chaos and destroyed Lenin’s, Stalin’s and Marx’s teachings. As it turns out, his perestroika meant mostly destruction and disappearance of people. We guessed it might be the case back then, and we always expected that he would do something (bad), and he did. I do not know, maybe wasting resources (*tudasyuda razbrasyval*) is something to be referred to as perestroika. These days,

Bakiev now makes some suggestions and I frankly do not listen properly. I do not read papers anymore except the crossword puzzles section. I cannot stand reading papers anymore. I watch TV sometimes but I do not know what is true and lies among what is being told to the public. I listen to both I guess. During Soviet times, I thought that at the time when I retire, I will be visiting resorts and having a good life. Look at us now. We are thinking of how to heat our house. [Male, 1932, Chui, Kyrgyzstan]

This recollection shows that, on par with expectations of change from Gorbachev, respondents were also suspicious regarding the feasibility and practicality of the reforms offered. This suspicion, in turn, shifted to doubts about Gorbachev as a person. Notably, in his memoirs, Gorbachev attempts to describe himself as someone who was close to the concerns of the public. His attempt to display his personal life to the public by taking his wife on trips abroad and his justification of his mistakes as the result of human weakness were not accepted by the public in a particularly positive manner. Instead, in most narratives, there is discourse understanding Gorbachev as a “fellow person” or as a “family man”, and few respondents displayed the type of understanding that Gorbachev expected from the public. Instead, what is consistently emphasized in the majority of recollections focusing on Gorbachev’s personal qualities is his image as a self-centered political apparatchik and egoist who cared little for people’s concerns and problems.

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC REPRESENTATIONS OF THE PERESTROIKA YEARS

The representations of perestroika and Gorbachev among the CA public as described above have many similarities with the evaluation of the reform years in other former Soviet republics (Ohan 2008). Recollections of this type are not necessarily limited to the CA general public. There are, however, some trends and features particular to CA representations of events and happenings that people associate with the perestroika years and their meaning for their lives. In this chapter, two episodes specifically emphasized in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were the fight against corruption and the old way of governance. These campaigns received significant coverage and public support in these republics at their outset, but with time and the changing post-Soviet political and social situation, each campaign came to be evaluated negatively. The change in values in the post-independence

years is partly responsible for this reevaluation. The pattern of behavior of current leaders and politicians has also affected the way people evaluate past politicians and their actions, thus impacting their evaluation of perestroika anti-corruption campaigns.

Perestroika and the Cotton Affair/Uzbek Affair in Uzbekistan

In recalling the late Soviet years and the legacy of perestroika, many recall the so-called “Cotton Affair”. The name “Cotton Affair” first came into circulation before perestroika in the period after the death of Brezhnev, during the rule of Secretary General Andropov. The incident became known as the Uzbek affair in the perestroika era, when an investigation was launched to root out the wrongdoings that perestroika was supposed to correct. Prosecutors Telman Gdlyan and Nikolai Ivanov were sent to Uzbekistan to investigate official corruption, and their investigation lasted throughout the perestroika years. However, among respondents, this particular aspect of perestroika left them feeling that the Uzbek nation was sacrificed for problems that were pervasive across the Soviet system and for which Uzbekistan could hardly be held solely accountable.

The Uzbek affair, which first surfaced in 1982–1983, was one of the greatest corruption scandals in the history of the Soviet Union. To ensure self-sufficiency in cotton for the needs of the textile industry during the Brezhnev period, Moscow insisted on an increase in production in cotton-cultivating republics. The rhetoric of cotton as “white gold” was introduced, and its value for Uzbekistan was emphasized, in particular. Uzbekistan produced as much as 60 % of the cotton cultivated in the Soviet Union. Major canals, water-related infrastructure, water resources and agricultural knowledge were essential to increase productivity in this dry region. However, the level of support provided by the central government in Moscow was insufficient, while heavy administrative pressure was leveled at the republic’s leadership to deliver on unrealistic plans for increases in cotton production. The pressure on Rashidov, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan at the time, and his subordinates became excessive, and the cotton issue became a matter upon which their political careers depended.

Although Rashidov realized that the central government’s requests exceeded the republic’s capacity for cultivation, expressing such concerns to the leadership in Moscow would have been interpreted as weakness. Nonetheless, Rashidov raised his concerns about underfinanced

agriculture and the overall level of development at the Political Bureau (the supreme decision-making body in the CPSU). As Gorbachev later recalled in his memoirs, “Rashidov’s themes never varied: the one sided development of Central Asian region, employment problems and the need to create jobs, and last but not least, irrigation problems” (Gorbachev 1995: 135). His concerns were largely neglected, however. The only way Rashidov and his subordinates could conceive of to satisfy the requests of Moscow was to manipulate the statistics to make it appear as though the requested production volumes had been reached. Naturally, to support the story, they also fabricated the documents for expenses and received financial resources from Moscow for cotton that was never supplied. The collective farms connected to cotton growing and high-ranking officials of the local-, republican- and union-level organizations of the Communist Party were also rumored to have been connected to the data manipulation and eventual funds mismanagement.

Andropov, former Chair of the KGB and eventual successor to Brezhnev, directed the probe into this major scandal, which extended far beyond his term in office and into the perestroika years. In the years of perestroika, after First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan Rashidov passed away (rumored to have either committed suicide or have had a heart attack), the name “Cotton Scandal” changed to the “Uzbek Scandal”/“Uzbek Affair” or the “Uzbek Cotton scandal” and grew into a larger anti-corruption campaign symbolizing Moscow’s resolve to do away with old practices of patronage and bribery. However, to those in Uzbekistan, the campaign looked like an attempt to single out and scapegoat Uzbekistan for Moscow’s mistakes in its economic policies and planning, which was especially so because the investigation seemed to overlook the responsibility borne by officials in the Communist Party’s Central Apparatus in Moscow, instead blaming local party leadership for all the problems.

The criminal investigation was entrusted to two teams of public prosecutors (spearheaded by Gdlyan and Ivanov), and many officials were arrested and even sentenced to prison terms in connection with the affair. Because Brezhnev and Rashidov had already passed away by the peak of the investigation, it was difficult to prove their involvement.

Due to favorable media treatment, public support for the investigation was very high across the Soviet Union. Simultaneously, it depicted Uzbeks as corrupt and predisposed to illegal activities. Branding this affair in ethnic terms also contributed to the image of Uzbeks in the USSR, who were

reported to be “oppressive”, “double-faced”, “irresponsible” and “jealous” by the end of Perestroika in 1992 (Levada 1992: 142). The political implications of the cotton scandal were immense, possibly leading all the way up to the Central Apparatus of the Communist Party. For this reason, all aspects of the criminal investigation were directed from Moscow, which aimed to apply pressure on Rashidov and his apparatus to crush both.

However, for people in Uzbekistan, the investigation appeared in a different light. Although Uzbek leadership padded the numbers in reports, respondents in this survey believed that Rashidov spent the funds he was supposed to have embezzled for Uzbekistan and not for his own benefit. The subway and many of the buildings in the capital of Tashkent could not have been built without large amounts of funding, and there are many people who believe that even though Rashidov committed acts of document falsification, forgery and even bribery, he did so for the Uzbek people and that his actions were unavoidable if he sought to improve the people’s lifestyle. Respondents’ views are also colored by contemporary corruption scandals motivated by personal greed when the number of big corruption schemes had been exposed and the bribes recovered were found to be spent not for public projects but for the personal interests of those involved in post-independence time. People highly praised the improvements in the living environment of the city, and they believed that Uzbek leadership, particularly Rashidov, during the Brezhnev period was responsible for giving Tashkent its present appearance by his making full use of any source available in the difficult political environment, although not all funds were obtained through cotton-related manipulation.

Because Brezhnev strongly pressured Rashidov to ensure the increase in the production of cotton, many college and high school students had to help with the harvest. These were sacrifices that brought cotton production levels in Uzbekistan to the top among the republics that provided cotton. Despite such negativities (such as student harvest mobilization), I still support the policies and behavior of Rashidov even today because Rashidov forged the numbers in order to gain financial support from Moscow to be later used for the people. [Male, 1955, Uzbek, Tashkent, Uzbekistan]

Another narrative expresses appreciation, respect and support for Rashidov, stating that people generally believe Rashidov not only attempted to secure financial resources for the republic but also used his friendly relations with

Brezhnev to ensure Brezhnev's support for socially oriented construction and infrastructure projects, as described below:

Rashidov was a real hero. The metro and buildings were not built for the Communist Party or the elite, and this could only be done by a leader (Rashidov) who truly loved his people. Even nowadays with all the technology and resources available, it would be difficult to build an infrastructure like the metro, and it was a tremendous effort that Rashidov put into this and was able to bring the financial resources to Uzbekistan under the strict management of the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, while in the period where the First Secretaries of other republics were afraid of the KGB or Communist Party's apparatus in Moscow, in Uzbekistan these institutions feared Rashidov because there was a special (patronage) relationship between Rashidov and Brezhnev, and in case anything came up, Rashidov always went directly to Brezhnev to discuss the matter. In this sense, Rashidov was an excellent politician. He listened to what Moscow said in order to enhance his relationship with Moscow, and by doing so, he was trying to improve our lives little by little. [Male, 1960, Uzbek, Namangan, Uzbekistan]

There are several other factors that positively influence the public's evaluation of Rashidov and his deeds. First, prior to the Rashidov era, most Uzbek cities, including Tashkent (the capital), were built in a traditional architectural style, while during Rashidov's tenure, cities were rebuilt based on new architectural traditions. Rashidov's rebuilding of Tashkent after the earthquake as one of the largest and most modern cities of Central Asia further contributed to his positive image in the eyes of Uzbekistan's population.

In addition, a significant number of people consider Rashidov a hero who defended the interests of Uzbekistan against the government and Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Although Rashidov's mishandling of cotton cultivation and eventual embezzlement of funds was regarded by many in Moscow as a failure, for many in Uzbekistan, this represented Rashidov's attempt both to avoid conflict with Moscow over the cultivation of cotton by pretending that plans were being achieved and to alleviate the suffering of Uzbek farmers by not asking them to commit to unrealistic cultivation goals. These respondents also believed that the money generated by the forgery was not used for his personal gain but was invested in Uzbekistan's economy.

A third reason for the Uzbeks' appreciation of Rashidov is a perceived attempt by Soviet authorities, particularly in the post-Brezhnev period, to make a scapegoat out of Rashidov while overlooking the involvement of higher authorities in Moscow in the cotton fund embezzlement and ignoring the problems of unrealistic cotton cultivation planning. Many took this as an insult to Uzbekistan and the Uzbek nation. They regarded Rashidov as someone who stood with the people. For them, Rashidov was not a criminal but a hero defending the people and who was victimized by the Communist Party. In this sense, when recalling the perestroika years, people in Uzbekistan tend to make a distinction between the general mood of democratization, restructuring and openness and the "harassment" of Uzbek leadership, which they see as "harassment" of the entire republic.

Perestroika and the Almaty (Jeltoqsan) Events in Kazakhstan

As stated above, one of the first tasks for Gorbachev was to change the leadership of the republics to ensure that his reformist policies were supported by the republican leadership. In Uzbekistan, this took shape as the desire to defeat the corruption of republican leadership under former first secretary Rashidov, which eventually resulted in convictions and prison terms. As described above, the anti-corruption campaign was not viewed positively by the people and was instead considered scapegoating the Uzbek ethnic majority. For respondents in Kazakhstan, the events in Almaty in 1986 became representative of their desire to change the flow of affairs. These events began with the dismissal of the first secretary of Kazakhstan's communist party, Dinmukhamed Kunaev, who had served from 1964 to 1986 and was considered an old cadre of Brezhnev. As with Rashidov in Uzbekistan, Kunaev was accused of clan politics, favoritism and of promoting patron-client relations (Gorbachev 1995: 330). In his memoirs, Kunaev quoted Moscow-appointed prosecutor Kalinichenko and argued that the purges against him were Moscow's attempt to create a "Kazakh affair", which they could not otherwise fabricate (Kunaev 1994: 302). Gorbachev appointed Gennady Kolbin in Kunaev's stead, an ethnic Russian considered an outsider in Kazakhstan in terms of both his ethnic origin and experience in Kazakhstan (Kunaev 1992: 269). In his memoirs, Gorbachev recalls that this appointment was made in consultation with Kunaev and on his recommendation (Gorbachev 1995: 330). However, Kunaev's recollection emphasized that, in response to his question about the future first Secretary of Kazakhstan, Gorbachev responded by saying,

“Let us decide this on our own” (Kunaev 1992: 265). Whichever version reflects the real flow of events, Gorbachev later regretted this appointment, saying that, “We should have realized that it would be difficult for the Kazakhs to accept a Russian in this position” (Gorbachev 1995: 330). He also recognized that his actions represented the old way of solving problems, which he justified by saying that “We were at the beginning of perestroika, but to some degree we were still following the old ways” (Gorbachev 1995: 330). Public displeasure with the appointment led to demonstrations that initially consisted of several hundred students but later growing to a crowd of several thousand.

Although the protesters were indicating their disapproval of the removal of Kunaev and his replacement by Kolbin, the students’ demonstration was construed as ethnically motivated, and the protests were later interpreted by the Politburo and the press as primarily nationalist (Gorbachev 1995: 330). There were also attempts to frame the protests as pure hooliganism devoid of any political justification. Thus, troops from the Ministry of Internal Affairs were called out to break up the protests, resulting in a number of casualties. Some people were expelled from university and were persecuted. In the post-Soviet environment, these events are considered the beginning of the public’s demand for independence and their desire to do away with old patterns of political appointments and governance.

Although the events of 1986 were suppressed, spontaneous protests against Moscow’s refusal to consider Kazakhstan’s needs spread across the country. Eventually, this resulted in calls to strengthen Kazakh language education and culture. Kolbin even suggested making Kazakh the official language. However, these suggestions stemmed more from the politics of perestroika than from any real desire for restructuring society. By 1989, the calls against Moscow-directed policies had grown so vocal that Gorbachev called for open elections into the Supreme Soviet of each republic. This resulted in increased Kazakh nationalism paired with economic stagnation.

CONCLUSION

Certain conditional conclusions can be drawn from the recollections of the respondents featured in this chapter. First, the public perception of perestroika is neither a pure account of people’s experiences nor an objective judgment of their situations. Instead, these recollections must be analyzed as a negotiation between respondents’ pasts and their present. They

also demonstrate the public's methods of adjusting their judgment of the past by reflecting on past experiences and relating those experiences to their current lives.

Therefore, the evaluation of perestroika involves a negotiation between respondents' pre-independence past and post-independence present. Although respondents with mixed views of perestroika believe that the stability of the Soviet years was sacrificed to the perestroika reforms, those supporting the positive impact of perestroika believe that in the negotiation between past and present, they acquired more than they lost. This trade-off between past and present is a matter of values, and notions of acquisition and loss are not necessarily material concepts, although people refer to these lost or newly acquired notions in material terms. In addition to this evaluation of perestroika, expressions of support for (or criticisms of) perestroika are often articulated through the criticism, support or otherwise differently expressed evaluation of Gorbachev's capacity as a Soviet leader, as a politician and as a man.

Second, respondents' understandings of perestroika can be seen as fragmented, moving away from the older interpretations that were divided between perestroika-bashing and Soviet nostalgia. The primary reason for such fragmentation is the diversity of contemporary public experience, changing living standards and individuals' hypothetical constructions regarding how the situation during perestroika might have developed differently. In these counterfactual experiments, possible "others", such as present leaders (Putin, Karimov, Rashidov, etc.), or different national experiences with reform, such as that of China, are compared against the Soviet experience of perestroika.

Third, the uniting factor behind the majority of respondents' narratives is the fact that perestroika offered people hope for new development, which was primarily measured by an improvement in the standard of living. Another idea mentioned repeatedly was that perestroika involved an imagined general restructuring, as opposed to any particular restructuring of any particular sector or field of economy or politics. However, people's understanding of perestroika's results fragmented at that point, with many believing that the reform process lacked clearly defined goals and, at times, seemed to be conducted as reform for reform's sake. Those who supported perestroika appreciated its decolonizing nature with respect to the CA republics. The third group consisted of those who believed that no real reform had occurred to begin with.

Fourth, the public perception of perestroika is that of a vision of reform focused primarily on changing the structure of governance, as opposed to restructuring the economy and improving living standards for ordinary people. In this sense, many respondents accept that perestroika was a top-to-bottom process, leaving the concerns and opinions of the public at large outside its scope.

Fifth, public representations of perestroika are related to the view that much of perestroika was based on criticizing past leaders and campaigns and replacing them with new leaders and new reform slogans. The structure of the reforms is seen by many as typical of the “old ways” of doing things in the Soviet Union, and perestroika is held responsible for its failure to root out those ways. In addition, denigrating the past and glorifying the present was seen in many of the CA republics as an attempt to scapegoat their majority populations, connecting misappropriations and corruption to particular ethnic groups and thus igniting the nationalism that eventually led to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

NOTES

1. “Cotton Affair” is the term used to describe the scheme used by leaders of Soviet Uzbekistan to exaggerated figures for cotton production and to transfer substantial amounts of funds from central Soviet funds into Uzbekistan. Almaty (Jeltoqsan) events stands for describing of 1986 riots that took place in Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, in response to General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev’s dismissal of Dinmukhamed Konayev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan and an ethnic Kazakh, and his appointment of Gennady Kolbin.
2. “Ashar” stands for association for collective resolution of problems created by those individuals who unlawfully grabbed lands in Kyrgyzstan. “Zamandash” was a discussion club organized in Kyrgyz State University. “Koz Karash” was a discussion club organized within Institute of Economics under the State Committee of Planning. “Ayikat” stands for the name of organization of politically active Kyrgyz youth in Moscow. “Osh aimagi” stands for organization of ethnically Kyrgyz youth in Osh city of Kyrgyzstan while “Adolat” stands for similar organization of ethnically Uzbek youth in Osh city of Kyrgyzstan.
3. *Khozraschyot* or *khozyaistvenyi raschyot* (economic accounting) introduced in the USSR in the years of New Economic Policy of the late 1920s and early 1930s was later reintroduced in the perestroika years. It is broadly defined as “A method of planned operation of socialist enterprises ... which requires the

- carrying out of state-determined tasks with the maximum economy of resources, the covering of money expenditures of enterprises by their own money revenues, the ensuring of profitability of enterprises” (Nove 2011, 32).
4. “Democratic centralism” is the principle of Communist party organization which allows for a freedom of policy discussions by its members at all levels but imposes superiority of decisions made at higher levels.
 5. For an interesting account of the public’s adoptive strategies in the perestroika years in Russia, see Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
 6. In June of 2010, inter-ethnic Kyrgyz-Uzbek violence erupted in and around city of Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan. Inter-ethnic violence and ethnic cleansing resulted in a big number of human casualties and raise in Kyrgyz ethnic nationalism.
 7. Gorbachev has been compared to many other figures. For a comparative perspective of Gorbachev with Kerensky in Russia, see Nadezhda V. Lipatova, “On the Verge of the Collapse of Empire: Images of Alexander Kerensky and Mikhail Gorbachev”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65:2 (2013): 264–289.

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INDEX¹

A

abolishment of mahallas, 88
Afghanistan, 8, 9, 14, 18, 41
antireligious campaigns, Soviet, 25
antireligious policies, 25
 accounts of struggle and rejection, 19, 42, 73, 95, 103
 depictions of repressed religious populations, 14, 96, 97
 hybrid configuration of Soviet Islam, 14, 122
 re-imagined religious identity, 10, 83, 105, 115, 136
 and system of secular education, 15, 22, 24, 25, 30, 85, 86, 109, 116, 135
anti-Soviet movement, 99
Arab Islam, 4, 68
atheism, 74

B

Basmachi movement, 96
Bolshevik, 50n4
books
 on Central Asia, 95, 123
 on Kazakhstan, 47, 103–38
 on Kyrgyzstan, 40, 47, 48, 84, 87, 96, 123
 on Soviet past in CA, 21–30, 81
 on Uzbekistan, 123
Brezhnev, L. I, 56, 57, 59, 125–7, 130–4
buildings and monuments, in Soviet-era, 18, 60, 123, 132, 133
Bukhara Emirate, 18n1, 24, 31, 32, 70, 89, 94

C

Central Asian states
 decision-making and public participation in Soviet era, 131

¹Note: Page numbers with “n” denote notes.

- Central Asian states (*cont.*)
 ethnic identity, 121
 Islam in, 10
 leadership, in context of Soviet era,
 55, 103
 political repression and its impact,
 22, 26, 83, 85, 107
 post-Soviet, 13, 21–30, 103–38
 pre-Soviet practices and attitudes of
 people, 24, 78, 82, 126
 reactions of people to Stalins death,
 87–93, 95–101
 self-identification, 121
 sense of statehood, 14, 15, 21
 Soviet way of life, 124
 status of women, 15, 26, 41, 71–3,
 96, 97
 transformation of present-day, 9,
 115
 World War II, 26, 84, 100, 113
 civil war and Soviet repression, 14, 22,
 26, 82, 83, 90, 99, 107
 collectivization, features of
 advancing and accepting, 15, 18,
 26, 45
 agricultural reform and, 39, 44, 45,
 53, 55, 62, 130
 and enforcement of cotton
 production, 130, 132, 137n1
 and escaping Soviet administration,
 57, 106, 107
 implementation of, 39, 45
 imposing of, 16, 109
 individuals' evaluations of, 107,
 123, 136, 137n2
 negative feelings toward, 48, 57, 62,
 64
 negative outcomes, 115, 121
 process of advancing, 48
 traumatic impact of, 48
 collectivization, features of ;, 26,
 39–42, 44–8, 49n1, 53, 62
 common identity ; creation of, 81,
 121
 Communist Muslims, 15, 47
 “Communists *versus* Muslims”
 relationship, 125, 126
 community life
 after collapse of the Soviet Union,
 13, 15, 21, 84, 127
 competent organs/bodies, notion of,
 111, 124, 125
 curriculum, school, 42, 62, 63, 74, 75,
 77, 86, 90–3, 98, 99, 128, 132
- D**
 decision-making
 in Central Asian nations, 83, 131
 government-public relations on,
 95
 public participation in, 93, 100
 in Soviet era, 82, 104, 113, 121,
 124
 de-*kulakization* policy
 (raskulachivanie), 39, 85
 democracy, notion of, 111, 124,
 138n4
 deportation, of ethnic groups, 100
- E**
 education
 in Central Asia, 8, 15, 22, 24, 89,
 109, 116, 135
 ethnic schools, 15, 22, 24, 25,
 30–6, 109, 117, 135
 Russian-language, 15, 24, 30–5,
 109, 135
 during Soviet-era, 25
 elderly citizens, narratives of
 ethnic identification, 113, 121
mahalla, 88
 “enemies of the state”, 95

- ethnic and religious groups, 24, 29, 67, 74, 100, 113, 137
 forced deportation and displacement of, 99, 100, 128
- ethnic identities
 attitudes toward Russianization policy, 121
 ethnic and linguistic policies, 108, 127
 image of societies' victimization, 83, 105, 134
 mixed marriages, 25
 national and ethnic membership, 126
 recollections of general public, 23, 24, 82, 83–6, 90, 104, 105, 113, 117, 129, 135
 Russian-speaking Sovietophiles, 29
- ethnicity, issues of, 30–6, 95, 117
- everyday life
 anti-Soviet attitude, 99
 during perestroika period, 21–37, 104, 127
- F**
 free society, Soviet model of, 116
- G**
 Gorbachev, M., 18, 26, 55, 84, 85, 105, 109, 110, 112–20, 122–9, 131, 134–6, 137n1, 138n7
perestroika, 18, 26, 85, 103–38
 grass-roots organizations, 62
- H**
 historical heroes, as symbols, 8, 67, 84
 history
 interpretation of, 47
 “licensing” historical heroes as symbols, 8, 67
- I**
 inter-ethnic accords, 121, 138n6
 inter-ethnic relations, patterns of, 121, 138n6
 Islamic practice, in Central Asia, 10, 67, 71–4, 76–8
- J**
 Jadids, 11
- K**
 Khrushchev, N., 26, 53–7, 59–64, 85–7, 97, 100
kolkhoz (agricultural collective farm), 18, 32, 34–6, 37, 74, 76, 77, 97
 in Soviet times, 18, 74, 76, 77
Komsomol (communist youth organization), 59, 74, 86
kulaks, 45, 48, 85, 86
 Kyrgyzstan, 12, 14, 17, 22–8, 30–6, 39–50, 68–71, 73, 75–9, 82, 84, 85, 87, 91, 92, 96, 103–38
- L**
 labor camps, in Siberia, 24, 42, 72, 110, 126
 land ownership
 rights for, 109
 leadership, perceptions related to
 Brezhnev, 56, 125, 130–2, 134
 Gorbachev, 55, 84, 113, 114, 116, 117, 123, 125–9
 Khrushchev, 53, 55, 56, 100
 Stalin, 17, 53, 82, 83–6, 93, 100
- M**
 mahalla in Uzbekistan
 associations based on, 15

- mahalla in Uzbekistan (*cont.*)
 authorities and, 49n1, 134
 characteristics of, 82
 citizens' recollections of, 16, 17, 23, 25, 26, 76, 82, 100, 103, 104, 112, 114, 116, 118, 119
 degree of freedom for performing social roles, 117, 121, 138n4
 distinguishing trait of, 14
 duties of, 74
 educational and cultural facets, 25–8, 85, 106
 evaluations of, 15, 61, 103–38
 inter-ethnic, 121, 138n6
 as venues for traditional education, 8, 15, 22, 24, 25, 30–6, 85, 86, 109, 116, 135
 “women’s group” in marriage, 26
- Marx, Karl, 47, 116, 119, 128
- modernization
 cultures and lifestyles, 8, 15, 16, 56, 135
 economic and social system, 4, 5, 9, 15, 56, 108, 135
 “freedom” of mobility and inter-ethnic interactions, 121, 138n6
 improvements in policy and daily life, 16, 28, 49, 53–64, 82
 Soviet model of, 116
- N**
- New Economic Policy (NEP), 53, 137n3
- nostalgic narration
 cotton harvest mobilization, 132
 degree of political freedom, 117, 121, 138n4
 emotional reflections, 82, 89, 91, 96, 100, 106, 120
 freedom of mobility and inter-ethnic interactions, 121, 138n4, 138n6
kolkhoz member, 18, 32, 34–7, 74, 76, 77, 97
Komsomol aspirants, 59, 74, 86
 life of Communist Party members, 76, 77
 model of a “free” society, 16, 46, 121
 sense of “certainty in the future” and “confidence in tomorrow”, 17, 26, 70, 78, 82, 84, 134
 social structure and career trajectory of Soviet society, 21, 79, 88, 118, 120, 130
 on stable lifestyles and socialist “democracy”, 8, 13, 15, 22, 25, 45, 93, 108, 137n3
- O**
- official historical discourse, 22
- oktyabriat* (elementary school communist organization), 74
- Oral History Project
 challenges, limitations and biases, 24, 26, 28–30, 36–8, 83, 107
 narration of memory, 40–3, 82
 sampling method and respondents, 25–7
- ordinary citizens
 Communist Part’s atheistic ideology, 74
 ethnic identity of, 13, 36, 81, 121, 138n6
 flee civil war and Soviet repression, public political participation, 16, 23, 25, 82, 100, 103
 and Soviet antireligious campaigns², 25
 Stalinist policies towards, 48
 traumas of collectivization, 107

P

People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) of Turkistan, 42, 47, 50n5

perestroika, 18, 26, 41, 85, 103–38

political repressions, during Stalinist period, 26, 85, 90

political structure, during Stalin-era, 107

public-government relationship and, 47, 83, 92, 93, 98, 99

quite resistance, 4, 17, 46, 86, 116

re-interpretation of history and, 16, 47, 127, 136

trauma and, 107

post-Soviet society, 6, 13, 21–37, 48, 78, 83, 103–38

postwar reconstruction

- economic reconstruction, challenges 77–8, 22, 108, 113, 114, 127
- jobs or educational opportunities, 109, 135

private lives and beliefs

- meaning and function of religion, 121
- and public functions, 22, 115, 121
- responses to state's enforcement and violence, 14, 138n6
- women spaces, 15, 26, 41, 71–3, 96, 97

“progressive” Soviet, 125

public attitude to ideology, pattern of, 83, 86

public political participation, 100

R

religion in society

- attitudes towards, 82
- dichotomy of, 4
- freedom of choice of, 23, 27
- generational and ethnic differences
 - in 168–72, 15, 25, 68, 73, 74, 85, 124

- religious rituals, 73
- Soviet education and propaganda campaigns, 8, 15, 22, 24, 25, 30–6, 74, 109, 116, 135
- Soviet-era education and, 25
- Soviet policies towards, 25, 48
- third perspective of, 10, 11, 18, 84, 120, 125, 126, 138n7
- women and, 25, 73

religious identity, of Muslim ethnic groups, 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13–15, 44

repressions, during Stalinist era

- anti-Soviets tried by troikas, 87, 97
- forced deportation and displacement of ethnic groups, 99, 100
- forceful resettlement, 15, 47, 48, 114
- labor camps, 26, 42, 72, 110, 126
- repressed as enemies of state, 96, 97
- targets for arrests, 99

Russian Empire, 2, 6, 9, 10, 16

“Russianized” people, 18, 109. *See also* ethnic identities

Russian Revolution (1917); and public in Central Asia, 9

S

schools

- ethnic, 95
- Russian-language, 3

self-governance organizations, 122

self-identification, 121

social actors (Soviet-era), 69, 71

socialism, benefits of, 16, 47, 110, 118, 119

social life, in Soviet times, 22

social networking

- role of, 1, 8, 14, 24–7

social welfare, 121

Soviet administration, in Central Asia, 57, 106, 107

- Soviet-Afghan border, 9, 26
- Soviet antireligious campaigns, 25. *See also* Soviet religious policies
- Soviet atheism. *See* atheism
- Soviet citizenship, 16, 17, 23, 25, 26, 76, 82, 103–38
- Soviet education and propaganda campaigns, 8, 15, 22, 24, 25, 30–6, 74, 109, 116, 135
- Soviet ethnic policies, 83
values of ethnicity or religion, 67, 68
- Soviet identity, 121
formation process, 121
- “Soviet” identity
formation of, 14–18, 36–7
- Soviet Islam, concept of, 6, 9, 25, 28, 59, 68, 117, 136
- Soviet man, creation of, 73, 74
- Soviet-ness, notion of, 22
- Soviet past
construction of a massive buildings and monuments, 6, 13, 15, 22, 23, 55, 78, 96, 105–8, 111, 113, 115, 127, 133, 136
interpretation of history, 14–18, 22, 23, 29, 30–6, 47, 104, 106, 107, 110, 111, 127, 136
leadership, 17, 53, 55, 56, 82–4, 93, 100, 103, 107, 108, 111, 113, 114, 116, 117, 123, 125, 130–2, 134
nostalgia about, 17, 85, 136
patterns of public participation, 93, 100
public-government relationship, 22, 47, 109, 133
traumatic experiences associated with, 107, 109
- Soviet religious policies. *See also* antireligious policies
Bolshevik decrees, 50n4
introduction of atheism, 74
- Islam, 5–15, 18, 23, 68, 72, 73, 78, 81, 121
participation in religious practices, 24, 67–9, 71–7, 121
and pattern of public attitude to communist ideology, 13, 107, 111, 115
towards religious clerks, 24
- Soviet Union
collapse of, 13, 15, 21, 84, 118, 120, 121, 123, 124, 127, 137
ethnic policy, 16, 23, 53, 55, 60, 76, 99, 118
performance in WWII, 14, 15, 84, 88
religious policies on society, 24, 25
sovkhoz agricultural enterprises, 74, 76
- Stalinist era
advancing and accepting of collectivization, 48
economic policy and economic reform during, 53
forced deportation and displacement of ethnic groups, 99, 100
grieving and participation in gatherings in Stalin's memory, 93, 100
hysterical attitude towards, 90
life of displaced people, 17
news about death and reactions, 89, 96
pattern of communications between the public and the political elite, 109
perceptions regarding political leadership, 83, 103, 107
policy perspectives, 84
political repression and the general public, 105, 109, 129
propaganda campaigns, 74
re-interpretation of history, 47
as a relief, 96–9

resisting collectivization, 46 (*see also*
 (repressions, during Stalinist
 era))
 Stalin's death, public sentiments of,
 87–93, 95–101
 state institutions, 22
 “state *versus* people” relationship, 8,
 22, 108

U

USSR. *See* Soviet Union

V

village council 185, 47

W

World War II, impact in Uzbekistan
 everyday life during, 21–37, 48, 78,
 104, 127
 food distribution during, 44, 46
 Great Patriotic War, 15, 40, 50,
 95
 hospitals and medical facilities, 113
 in Kazakhstan, 15, 17, 18, 23–7,
 30–6, 39, 44, 45, 47, 49n1,
 53–64, 82, 88, 89, 103–38
 in Kyrgyzstan, 26, 84, 114
 methods of public mobilization to
 the front line, 136
 postwar reconstruction, 113
 Turkistan unit, 2, 3, 7–9, 11, 12