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HISTORIOGRAPHY OF POST-SOVIET KYRGYZSTAN

The first written information about the Kyrgyz is found in ancient Chinese chronicles. However, no Kyrgyz historian who wrote a history of the nation can be identified before the end of the 19th century. Of course, there were many relaters of genealogical legends and stories based mainly on folk heritage. This paucity of indigenous historiography is the reason that Kyrgyz history has been written mainly from external sources in various languages, including Chinese, Arabic, Iranian, Greek, Turkic, Mongolian, and Russian. Kyrgyz historians made their first attempts at publishing histories at the beginning of the 20th century under the influence of the reformist movement known as Jadidism. Some Kyrgyz intellectuals brought out works in Kazan, Ufa, and Orenburg. For example, books by Osmonaaly Sydyk uulu were published in Ufa in 1913 and 1915.

W. W. Barthold was the first European Orientalist to write a brief summary of the history of the Kyrgyz, in 1927, and he opened the way for the beginnings of systematic and fundamental research on their history (see Barthold 1963, 471–543; cf. Schott 1864, 432–61). But this development is connected with the epoch of Soviet historiography. (I must stress that, although he continued to work into the 1920s, Barthold, a brilliant Russian Orientalist, never belonged to the Bolshevik school of historiography).

The Soviet school of historical science demonstrated an unfortunate propensity for the politicization, and sometimes even falsification, of history to please both communist ideologues and the Russians, the main nation in the former USSR. Nevertheless, owing to this school, the first research institutions were founded that focused on Kyrgyz history, archaeology, anthropology, museums, archives, and architectural restoration. During the Soviet period, a wide range of research was organized in Kyrgyzstan, becoming embodied in collective monographs on Kyrgyzstan history from ancient times to the present. At the end of 1991, when the Soviet Union fully collapsed, Kyrgyzstan had its own strong contingent of historians. Nevertheless, this detachment is destroying its old edifice, and the former Soviet school of historians is being crucially transformed. This article investigates the principal contradictions between the old Soviet school of history and the various contemporary schools of Kyrgyz histori-

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ans, who are divided into different methodological and political groups. I will cover how Kyrgyz historians have dealt with issues in the stage approach to explaining history; problems of Kyrgyz ethnogenesis; the history of the states erected by Kyrgyz peoples; Russian colonialism; the problem of the historical personalities who had become non-people under the Soviets; the written culture of the Kyrgyz and surveys of its sources; and, finally, the controversies attending the commemorations of the Manas epic in 1995 and the founding of the city of Osh, planned for the year 2000.

THE STAGE APPROACH IN EXPLAINING HISTORY

The Marxist theory of five main stages governed by certain laws dominated Soviet historiography. This theory suggested well-balanced stages in the development of mankind from savages of ancient times to the modern and future society: (1) the primitive communal system; (2) the slave-holding system; (3) feudalism; (4) capitalism; and (5) communism. Communism in turn consists of two phases: (1) socialism and (2) communism.

The primitive communal system and the second phase of communism were supposedly the "classless" societies. The slave-holding system, feudalism, and capitalism were identified as the societies in which exploiter classes (slaveowners, feudal lords, and the bourgeoisie) dominated. Socialism as a first phase of communism was considered a transition period from class-based societies to the classless society. Proletarian dictatorships (such as the dictatorships of Lenin and Stalin) were thus "warranted" in this stage so the proletariat could fulfill its historical mission of putting an end to class-based societies divided into exploiters and exploited.

During the Soviet period, all history books and textbooks in the Soviet Union, including those for Kyrgyzstan, had to be written within the framework of this theory. Interestingly, there was no evidence of a slaveowning system in the history of the Slavonic, Turkic, and Mongolian peoples; as a result, Soviet Leninists put forward a new theory that some nations could skip a level, passing to the next regular stage (e.g., they could move from the primitive communal system directly to feudalism, bypassing the slaveowning system, and from feudalism directly to socialism, bypassing capitalism). This theory was crucial to and obligatory for Soviet historiography and was developed to encourage Eastern nations while they were being absorbed by the communist political regime.

According to the last official edition of *Istoriia Kirgizskoi SSR* (The History of the Kyrgyz SSR), "only the Marxist-Leninist understanding of history will bring the possibilities to genuine scientific and comprehensive investigation of the historical process in the universal connection of its economic, social, national, and cultural factors" (Ploskih 1984, 7). Nowadays, the Kyrgyz Republic stands out from the other post-Soviet Central Asian countries because of its more democratic transformation and real lack of censorship. It therefore has become a field of action for the different post-Soviet ideological streams. There is the political party of the Kyrgyzstan communists, which continues to consider Marxist-Leninist theory as the only true one and has several supporters among modern Kyrgyz historians. However, other political and non-political, creative organizations are challenging them. One of these is the Kyrgyz-

stan Historians Society (KHS), formerly the Association of the Kyrgyzstan Young Historians, established 3 June 1989 as an anti-communist organization and officially registered only after the collapse of the Soviet Union on 17 July 1992 by the Kyrgyzstan Justice Ministry. The society changed its name on 5 November 1995 and includes prominent representatives of the old generation of historians who consider their main purpose to be the reconsideration of all of the Bolsheviks' ideological clichés in historical science. The revision of Bolshevik historical theory's quintessence is taking place in the research of the other historians and philosophers who are not connected with the KHS.

Thus, the authors of the collective monograph *Istoriia Kyrgyzstana s drevneishih vremen do kontsa XIX veka* (Kyrgyzstan's History from Ancient Times to the End of the 19th Century), which was published within the framework of the Soros Kyrgyzstan Foundation program, wrote: "In due course, the line of arguments of the Marxist historians has been tattered by the pressure of facts and historical occurrences. The three 'whales'—historical necessity as an expression of objective laws of mankind's development; the determining role of existence toward mind; and the role of property as an essential political and economic category of the historical process—on which the Marxist–Leninist understanding of history was based are disappearing into the past" (Chotonov 1995, 4; Koichuev and Brudnyi 1993, 43).

Nevertheless, it is true that Kyrgyzstan's historians (including the KHS "revisionists") who reject the Marxist–Leninist theory of the staged development of mankind toward the teleological future of communist society do not deny the usefulness of periodizing human society's history according to social and economic systems that really exist. They have focused on primitive communal society, the slaveowning system, feudalism, capitalism, and socialism. In contrast to the Soviet clichés, which held that slaveowning states existed in the ancient Central Asian oases, contemporary Kyrgyz historians suggest that the society of the ancient state of Parkana (Dawan in ancient Chinese sources) in the Ferghana Valley was not a slaveowning society but, rather, an early semi-feudal class-based system in which slave work simply supplemented the labor of free community members (Koichuev 1998, 32; Tchorotegin and Ömürbekov 1997, 81). The transitional society of today is conceptualized differently by the Kyrgyz historians as a capitalist, non-socialist one, who describe it as "a third way of development (apart from the capitalist and socialist ones)" (Koichuev 1998, 9).

Some traces of the staged approach to explaining history remain almost in every serious monograph produced by Kyrgyzstan's post-Soviet historians. Still, some academic historians severely criticize the specifics of Marxism's approach to explaining history through social formations. However, they also say that "not all Marxist principles are obsolete; some of them continue to ring true and remain methodologically justified" (Koichuev 1998, 8)—for instance, the so-called principle of historicism, which involves seeking historical facts without any conjecture. Of course, this principle existed long before Marxism ever appeared. The clear majority of these historians, in any case, have stopped copying the old-fashioned, stereotypical pattern of the five regular stages of mankind's development in the way that was compulsory only a decade ago.

THE PROBLEMS OF ETHNIC HISTORY OF THE KYRGYZ

The question of ethnic origins also had political implications in Kyrgyz Soviet historiography, which developed under the influence of Soviet anthropological theory on ethnicity. According to this theory, the family, tribe, and tribal federations arose in the primitive communal system stage; the "people" arose in the slaveowning system and feudalism stages; and the nation arose in two regular stages (i.e., the capitalist nation arose in the capitalism stage, and the socialist nation in the socialism stage). All humankind will resolve all national problems at the ultimate stage of communism, when the nations will amalgamate with one another. The peoples who had orderly kinship structures in the past and retained them until the beginning of the 20th century were named "peoples with tribal and kinship patriarchal remnants." The Kyrgyz—one such people—were considered a "socialist nation" from the end of the 1930s (this definition applied only to the Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan; their kin in China, Afghanistan, Turkey, and elsewhere were considered exceptions to this rule). It was taken into consideration that the Soviet Kyrgyz had bypassed the stage of "capitalist nation."

In Russian, the words *narod* (people) and *natsiia* (nation) are used somewhat synonymously. But according to the last official Soviet anthropology, *natsiia* (which originated from the German pronunciation of the Latin word) was used only for peoples who were living in conditions of capitalism and socialism. *Narod* was lower in its stage than was *natsiia* in its ethnic-development level. The Russian term *narodnost* (it seems to me that it would be correct to translate this as "subnationality") is used to express a lower stage of ethnic development than that for great peoples. For example, Russians in the 18th and 19th centuries were a *narod*, while many small peoples of Siberia were characterized by *narodnost*.

This cliché dominated Kyrgyz Soviet historiography, as well. At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the Association of Kyrgyzstan Young Historians organized several discussions of this issue and suggested rejecting the understanding of ethnic structures typical of the communist approach to social formations. The celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Kyrgyz national-liberation uprising against czarist Russia (mainly in July–August 1916) was one of the factors that prompted these discussions. J. Junushaliev and K. A. Toktomushev, active communist historians at the time, supported the official opinion of the Kyrgyzstan Communist Party leaders, who were in great doubt about the "progressive" character of this anti-Russian uprising (Toktomushev 1992). In 1990–92, these communist historians were continuing to use theoretical postulates suggesting that the Kyrgyz were not a nation (*natsiia*) before 1936 (or before they adopted the Stalinist constitution of "triumphant proletarian dictatorship" in the USSR on 5 December 1936); thus, they found it impossible to consider the uprising one of "national liberation."

These historians' opponents did not accept these postulates. They insisted that the Russian words *narod* and *natsiia* and their Kyrgyz equivalents were synonymous, which is why the Kyrgyz were a *narod* and a *natsiia* at the same time, regardless of their character and the stage of their society at the beginning of the century—that is, before the socialist regime (Ömürbekov and Tchorotegin 1992; Tchorotegin 1991).

Currently there are two opinions in post-Soviet historiography on the ethnic development of the Kyrgyz. The authors who mainly represent the "old school" continue

to believe that "before 1917 the Kyrgyz . . . were not a *natsiia* [nation] and they were only a *narodnost* [sub-nationality], given the feudal-kinship structures of their settlements" (Koichuev 1998, 3). In another book, the sixth chapter is titled, "Formation of the Kyrgyz Sub-nationality" (the author of this chapter is Ö. K. Karaev, and the head of the book's authorial team is Ü. Chotonov, who was a chief editor of *Communist of Kyrgyzstan* magazine). Thus, the diminutive word *narodnost* (sub-nationality) continues to be used, suggesting latent dependence on Soviet-epoch anthropological theory (Chotonov 1995).

One new post-Soviet postulate on the ethnic development of the Kyrgyz is the rejection of artificial terminological divisions such as *narod*, *narodnost*, and *natsiia*. According to this major, new historical understanding among historians, the Kyrgyz are a nation with ancient historical roots. The name of the ancient Kyrgyz was first recorded in 201 B. C. in connection with Inner Asian events. In their 2,000-year history, the Kyrgyz assimilated a lot of components from their historical neighbors (the Hsiung-nu, Wu-sun, Saka, Turgesh, Oghuz, Qarluq, Qypchaq, Uighur, Chigil, Turkified Sogdians, Qara-Qitai, and other Mongolian-speaking peoples). Several Kyrgyz groups were included among the other Euro-Asian peoples and mixed with them. This was expressed during the special scientific conference devoted to research of Kyrgyz national origin and ethnic development (Kyrgyzy 1996).

There were post-Soviet revisions and re-evaluations not only of theoretical aspects but also of the understanding of several historical stages of the history of Kyrgyz ethnic development. According to Kyrgyz Soviet historiography, the postulate suggesting that "the Enissei Kyrgyz were not the sheer and immediate ancestors of the Kyrgyz people" (Ploskih 1984, 50.) officially took root. This postulate was formed under the influence of the "autochthonic theory," which rejected any other historical regions to which the Kyrgyz had migrated and maintained that the Kyrgyz and their ancestors had been living in this country from very ancient times.

Because of this historical approach, not one archaeological expedition by Kyrgyz historians was organized in the Southern Siberia and Altai region during the Soviet period. Historians who studied problems of medieval Enissei Kyrgyz history (e.g., Ö. Karaev, A. Arzymatov, and A. Abdykalykov) became estranged. Asanbek Abdykalykov (d. 1995) was pensioned before he reached the official retirement age. The Sinologist Galina Pavlovna Suprunenko (d. 1997), who published several works on the early medieval history of the Enissei Kyrgyz based on Chinese sources, had to change her department and, of course, her scientific subject in the 1980s.

The Enissei (in the contemporary Kyrgyz language "Ene-Say," or "Valley Mother") stage of Kyrgyz history has in fact been included in all post-Soviet publications in Kyrgyzstan devoted to the medieval history of the Kyrgyz. However, there are two main and opposing opinions on this matter. According to one of them, the Kyrgyz had been living in Enissei (southern Siberia) and the regions bordering it since ancient times—that is to say that southern Siberia and western Mongolia were the Kyrgyz's ancient Motherland (Koichuev 1998, 3). According to the second opinion, which gained wider currency among Kyrgyzstan's post-Soviet historians, the ancient Kyrgyz living in the period of the great Hsiung-nu Empire were settled in the region of the Eastern Teñir-Too (Tian-Shan) Mountains. They migrated from this region into Enissei in the 5th century under pressure from the Juan-juans from the East and the Hephthal-

ites in the West. It was in this period that the Ashina-Turks did the same: they were forced to migrate from eastern Turkistan (to which they had come from the Hessi passage in northwest China) to the Altai Mountains, where they made the first steps toward creating their Great Turk *Qaghanat* (khanate). This concept was especially defended by the Russian archaeologist Yulig Khudiakov, an honorary member of the KHS, and has been included in some recent textbooks on Kyrgyzstan history (Khudiakov 1995, 48–58; Tchorotegin 1996, 204–209; Tchorotegin and Ömürbekov 1997, 110–15). In this view, the history of the Enissei Kyrgyz was not the beginning of the dynamic history of the Kyrgyz nation that migrated within the wide expanses of Central Asia and southern Siberia; it was its continuation.

The problem of defining the period of migration (or re-migration) of the Kyrgyz from Enissei to the Teñri-Too area began enthusiastic debates in post-Soviet Kyrgyz historiography. It is well known that the last official Soviet historiography defended the view that, in the full sense, it was not the Kyrgyz people but simply their ethnic name that had migrated from Enissei. Some of Kyrgyzstan's "official" historians suggested that two Russian versions of the same word be used for two historical stages—that is, "Kyrgyz" for the period before the middle of the 15th century, and "Kirghiz" for the next period up to the present (Ploskih 1984, 423–31). Of course, this was suitable for literature in Russian alone, but it was impossible to implement in Kyrgyz-language literature, which uses only the spelling "Kyrgyz."

Some of the scholars who prepared this very artificial scheme have changed their minds somewhat now and have been using only one word, "Kyrgyz," in their recent publications. However, they continue to regard the modern Kyrgyz as descendants not of the Enissei Kyrgyz but of the Altai Mountain Kyrgyz who migrated to Teñri-Too and formed the Kyrgyz *narodnost* (subnationality) there in the 15th and early 16th centuries (Koichuev 1998, 84–85; Koichuev et al. 1994, 38–41). It is too hard for them to accept that the Altai and Enissei regions are situated within one wide and integrated historical zone to the north of Central and Inner Asia and that it was divided into autonomous regions and republics within Russia during the Soviet period. Their belief that the name of the modern Kyrgyz originated in the migration of ethnic groups of the "Altai Kyrgyz" looks like a remnant of the old schema of Soviet historiography.

Other authors, including Ö. Karaev, Yu. S. Khudiakov, K. Sh. Tabaldiev, O. Karataev, A. Kylychev, M. Kojobekov, T. Ömürbekov, A. Turdueva, T. Beishenaliev, consider that the remigrations of the Kyrgyz from Enissei to Teñri-Too had happened in a few stages between the 9th and 13th centuries (see, e.g., Karaev and Moldobaev 1989; Khudiakov 1986, 1995; and *Kyrgyzy* 1996). This concept has been included in the new textbook on Kyrgyzstan history intended for the seventh form in Kyrgyzstan's secondary schools (Tchorotegin and Ömürbekov 1998, 42–57). In this textbook, the Fu-Yü Kyrgyz (in the northern Chinese province of Heilungzian, Manchuria) and the late medieval Siberian and eastern Turkistan Kyrgyz groups have been included for the first time as a regular part of the entire history of the Kyrgyz that has to be learned by post-Soviet schoolchildren.

The problem of the ethnic origin of the Kyrgyz and the question of using the terms "ethnos," "people," and "nation" continue to be debated in a lively manner. These subjects were discussed on 9–10 April 1998 in the Special Council for defending dissertations (the single official council for Kyrgyzstan's historians, which acts under

the Institute of History of the Kyrgyz Republic's National Academy of Sciences). However, no new monograph devoted to these issues has been published. (The work of Oljobai Karataev, who defended his dissertation on Kyrgyz ethnic names, includes not only anthropological and genealogical material but also the onomastic aspects (see Karataev 1994; see also Akunov and Ibraeva 1998, 235–42).

THE HISTORY OF KYRGYZ STATEHOOD

This subject of the history of Kyrgyz statehood is also connected with the devaluation of the roles played by, and the places associated with, the non-Russian nations included in czarist Russia and the Soviet Union in the past. The “common history of the Soviet Union” was always the central issue in Russian history. That is why Soviet Kyrgyzstan schoolchildren were aware of the facts and events of Russian history, but studying Kyrgyzstan's history was an occasional subject in the official program of Kyrgyzstan secondary schools during the Soviet period. Kyrgyz historians complained that their students knew everything about the Russian czars but nothing about their own nation's history. In September 1989, a topic planning for the teaching of Kyrgyz history was published in *Mugalimder gazetasy* (Teachers Newspaper), the official newspaper of the Kyrgyz Soviet Republic's Ministry of Education (see Chukubaev et al. 1989), but its suggestions were optional for secondary schools; their adoption depended on the teachers at the schools (which were only state-run at that time). Only a few schools managed to teach this subject in 1989–91.

According to Soviet historiography's concept of Kyrgyz statehood, “only because of the wise Leninist national policy of the USSR” had Kyrgyz statehood been established in the form of the national autonomy. Thus, historical Kyrgyz states that predated the communist regime were not recognized in Soviet Kyrgyz historiography. What follow are some facts about the Soviet national-autonomy stages for the Kyrgyz: the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast (region) was established on 14 October 1924; after seven months, on 25 May 1925, the region was renamed the Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast. The word “Kara”—black, huge, powerful, numerous—also carried the negative connotation of “rough.” The Kyrgyz never used “Kara” to refer to themselves, but the word was used during the colonial period by Russian administrators to differentiate the Kyrgyz from their northern neighbors, the Kazakhs. Incidentally, from the 17th century until 1925, the Russians used “the Kyrgyz” to refer to the Kazakhs, although the Kazakhs did not use it for themselves. (It is supposed that the Russians had met with the Ural-Volga Kyrgyz groups in the late medieval centuries. Because of the similarities between the Kyrgyz and Kazakh languages, the Russians in the czarist period called both peoples by the same name and did not care about the feelings and ethnic identities of these nations.) The oblast was reorganized as the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within Soviet Russia on 1 February 1926. After several appeals by local authorities to the Kremlin it was reorganized as the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic (that is, it became an equal with Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, etc.) on 5 December 1936. Kyrgyzstan was the first Central Asian republic to remove the words “Soviet” and “Socialist” from its official name, in November 1990, and declared itself an independent state on 31 August 1991, before the formal collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991.

In the 1990s, with independence, the elaboration of problems of historical research relating to Kyrgyzstan became a priority. The subject has both scientific and political importance because it was needed to investigate the pre-Soviet roots of Kyrgyz statehood. It is noteworthy that the same historians write contrary things in recent publications. The collective textbook prepared by the editorial board (which includes chief editor Turar Koichuev, who served as president of the Kyrgyzstan National Academy of Sciences until February 1998; and member editors V. M. Ploskih and S. S. Daniarov) contains an Introduction suggesting that "[t]he Kyrgyz never had their own state before 1917" (Koichuev 1998, 3.) The Introduction of another book declares that "the ancient Kyrgyz established their first state at the same time that the first Turkic-speaking Hsiung-nu empire emerged"; this Introduction was written by Koichuev and Ploskih in collaboration with Turdakun Usubaliev, a member of Parliament and leader of the Kyrgyzstan Communist Party in 1961–84 (*U istokov* 1996, 4). Modern Kyrgyz historiography's concept on the issue of statehood consists of the idea that the ancient roots of the Kyrgyz statehood date from the Hsiung-nu epoch. According to Russian and Kyrgyz historians, the state of the ancient Kyrgyz was situated in the eastern Teñri-Too Mountains, in a zone to the north of Boro-Khoro Mountains and to the west of Dzosotyn-Elissun deserts (Borovkova 1989, 61–62; Khudiakov 1995, 54; Tchorotegin 1995b).

There is also another modern Kyrgyz historiographical concept that supplements the previous one. This concept, rejected by Soviet historiography but adopted by Turkish historians, considers that the Hsiung-nu empire (at the end of the 11th century B.C. and in the first centuries A.D.) was the common origin of the Turkic peoples' statehood (see Tchorotegin and Ömürbekov 1994, 10–20; idem 1995, 251–335; idem 1997, 15–43).

However, there is another concept that suggests that "Kyrgyz statehood emerged in the 6th century A.D." (Malabaev 1997, 3). This concept is connected only with the state history of the Enissei Kyrgyz and does not take into account the statehood experience of the ancient predecessors of the Kyrgyz fixed by the ancient Chinese sources. However some of this author's statements contradict one another. In the same book, Malabaev, who studied only Soviet-period problems of Kyrgyzstan's history in his pre-independence works, wrote that the origin of Kyrgyz statehood belongs to the period of the Wu-sun tribal union and that "the real name of the Wu-suns, according to N. A. Aristov, was always 'Kyrgyz'" (Malabaev 1997, 9–10. Cf. Aristov 1894, 298.) Malabaev has written that the Kyrgyz state collapsed in the 12th century (Malabaev 1997, 29) but does not supply any proof.

It is known in history that the Kyrgyz restored their state—the Kyrgyz Qaghanat—in the Enissei Valley in the 6th century. They temporarily were dependent on some neighboring countries of the Orkhon Turkic peoples. In 840, the Kyrgyz destroyed the Uighur Qaghanat in Orkhon and conquered wide regions of Inner Asia. Their state included the territories of southern Siberia, Altai, Mongolia, and eastern Turkistan. Barthold named this period of their powerful statehood—from the middle of the 9th century through the first decades of the 10th century—"Kyrgyzkoe veliko-derzjavie" (the Kyrgyz's Great Empire). (Barthold 1963, 471–543). The nomadic empire of the Kyrgyz was split up into several pieces at the end of the first quarter of the 10th century. The small possessions of the Kyrgyz *beks* (princes) existed in the

territories of southern Siberia and northwestern Mongolia before their recognition of Genghis Khan in 1206. The Kyrgyz detached forces served in Genghis's army in Karakorum, northern China, and Manchuria, and in the dynasty's internecine wars (Khudiakov 1995, 6–8, 119).

These well-known events of the Kyrgyz Qaghanat were not included in official Soviet academic publications (Ploskih 1984) because of the ideological and political prejudices noted earlier. Today almost all books and articles about the medieval history of the Kyrgyz mention these events. One of the most recent dissertations on pre-Soviet history, defended by M. Kojobekov, was devoted to Enissei Kyrgyz history (Kojobekov 1997).

There are several new works by contemporary Kyrgyz historians on the medieval Kyrgyz who lived in Tenri-Too. One of them is a monograph by Ö. Karaev that discusses the Jaghataids state and Moghulistan (Karaev 1995). Dissertations on these issues were also defended by A. Kylychev, T. Mashrapov, T. Beishenaliev, and T. Jumanaliev. Unfortunately, these dissertations have not yet been published as books for economic reasons.

Traditional Soviet Kyrgyz historiography regarded the Kokand Khanate's history (the beginning of the 18th century to 1876) as a history of the foreign state that conquered the Kyrgyz land in 1762–1831 (see Ploskih 1984, 490–99). This consideration is retained in the recent works of the academician V. M. Ploskih (Koichuev 1998, 104–15; Koichuev et al. 1994, 43–45). At the same time, works that re-evaluate the Kokand Khanate's history for the Kyrgyz have emerged in contemporary historiography. Historians such as K. Moldokasymov and T. Kenensariiev consider the Kokand Khanate a multi-ethnic state that was a common state for the inhabitants of the Fergana Valley, including the Ferghana Kyrgyz (see Kenensariiev 1997b, 151–59; Moldokasymov 1991, 1994).

Soviet Kyrgyz historians managed somehow to study the Kyrgyz state in the 20th century, though within framework of Soviet censorship. Historians had to kowtow to ideological postulates such as those mentioned earlier, acknowledging that the Kyrgyz people were able to form a state only because of the Leninist national policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This idea was the ideological quintessence of Soviet Kyrgyz historians, and some of post-Soviet historians continue to maintain it. Malabaev repeated these chestnuts in his latest monograph:

The *basmachi* [movement], being one of the forms of military struggle against Soviet authority, was a serious obstacle to the preparation and establishment of the statehood of the Central Asian peoples, including the Kyrgyz. Foreign governments, especially Great Britain, . . . and the neighboring Bukhara Khanate played the essential role in activation of the *Basmachis* [Malabaev 1997, 69].

There are contemporary historians who oppose this view. The issue of the re-evaluation of the role of the *basmachis* was raised at several discussions, debates, and conferences of the Association of Kyrgyzstan Young Historians in 1991–94. Some participants expressed that the *basmachis* and the other nationalist and democratic movements forced the Soviet authorities to give the local national minorities more control over the levers of government power. The issue of national–democratic notions of state building is researched in Kyrgyzstan in connection with the roots of

Turkic peoples' statehood after the collapse of czarist Russia in 1917 (see Çorotegin 1994, 30–32).

The historians Zainidin Kurmanov and Tokonai Ojukeeva have researched the history of the Mountainous Region (oblast) that existed in northern Kyrgyzstan for a few months in 1922. It was the first successful, if ephemeral, attempt by local Kyrgyz political leaders to establish a state within the Soviet system, and it was undertaken on the initiative of Kyrgyz political elites who had been members of non-communist and more democratic parties, such as the Alash Party of united Kazakh, Bashkir, and Kyrgyz intellectuals (the exiled Bashkirian Ahmed Zeki Velidi Togan was among them), the Socialist Revolutionary Party, and so on. These intellectuals (including Eshenaly Arabai uulu and Abdykerim Sydykov) became members of the Bolshevik Party after they were banned from all the non-communist parties in Kyrgyzstan, and they continued their struggle for Kyrgyz autonomous statehood within the Soviet Russia (see Jumanaliev 1994; Kurmanov 1992a, 1992b, 1997; Ojukeeva 1993, 7–16). Ojukeeva's monograph is remarkable for its numerous findings concerning the ethnic and political picture of the regions where the Kyrgyz settled and on the issue of how the modern Kyrgyzstan borders emerged in the 1920s (see Ojukeeva 1993, 32–67, 85–107). It should be noted that the issue of the full restoration of statehood after the collapse of the Soviet Union became a fashionable subject of research not only for historians but for philosophers, political scientists, economists, geographers, and sociologists.

PROBLEMS IN THE HISTORY OF RUSSIAN COLONIALISM

At the beginning of the 1950s, the idea that Russian colonialism was more progressive than the British and other colonial enterprises finally came to dominate Soviet historiography. This was an officially accepted doctrine of Kyrgyz historiography during the 1950s through the 1980s. That is why it is hardly astonishing that in 1963 Kyrgyzstan celebrated the one-hundredth anniversary of the "voluntary entry of Kyrgyzstan into Russia." In accordance with this concept, the last official academic publication on Kyrgyzstan history maintained that the Russian conquest of Kyrgyz lands fulfilled a "long-standing aspiration" of the Kyrgyz with regard to their northern neighbors: "[a]head of them lay the path leading them toward a bright future in the Union, together with the brotherly Russian people within frameworks of the centralized Russian state" (Ploskih 1984, 584).

Such a whitewashing approach to Russian colonialism can be found in the works of some post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan historians, such as Ploskih and V. P. Mokrynin. In a recent textbook for universities (1998), pro-Russian historians wrote that northern Kyrgyzstan entered into Russia (meaning that several northern Kyrgyz tribes wished to be under the Russian authorities); representatives of the Kyrgyz who opposed the union with Russia were characterized as "enemies." "A little bit longer the enemies of Russia and the Kyrgyz people did everything to destroy their union, which was put on their oath: there was internecine fighting . . . and killings of the supporters of pro-Russian politics" (Koichuev 1998, 136; Koichuev et al. 1994, 46–50). Other works published recently in Kyrgyzstan suggest that there was nothing "voluntary" about the

subjection of the northern Kyrgyz tribes by the Russian empire. They maintain that not only the northern and southern regions of Kyrgyzstan but also the entire Turkistan region were conquered by Russian colonizers (see Kenesariiev 1997b; idem 1998, 15–36; Tchoroiev 1994, 101–14; Ömürbekov and Tchoroiegin 1995, 100–16, 137–56; Tchoroiegin and Ömürbekov 1992).

The question of the roots of Kyrgyz–Russian relations has its own peculiarity. In Soviet historiography answering this question has always involved a whitewashing of czarist Russia's diplomacy. This approach continues in the works of Döölötbek Saparaliev, who researches the problem of diplomatic relations between the Kyrgyz and Russia at the end of the 18th century (Saparaliev 1991a, 1991b, 1995). Nevertheless, he has enriched the historiography by presenting a great deal of new archival material on this issue.

A new approach to these issues has been offered by Arslan Koichiev, a young historian who has researched the original Arabic-script letters addressed by the Kyrgyz biys, or lords, to the Russian administration in Siberia and Saint Petersburg in the 19th century. Before Koichiev, historians had read those letters only in Russian translation (Koichiev 1996.) He was first to maintain that the Kyrgyz biys had been persuaded to write the letters to the Russian administration not only by Russian spies and Russian and Volga Tatar merchants, but also by the northern Kazakh sultans in the 1820s (Koichiev 1994, 133–38; idem 1996, 18–19).

The study of the national-liberation movements at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries is among the main problems of the colonial period. In Soviet historiography some of these movements were termed “reactionary.” The Andijan uprising of 1898 against Russian colonialism in which the Kyrgyz were the main participants, for example, was considered in the Soviet historiography of the 1950s–80s a “reactionary,” “anti-national,” and “feudal–clerical” movement. If one wanted to justify this movement, one would have had to do so under the rubric of class thinking and by proving that its prime movers were the working people, not the exploiters, feudal lords, capitalists, and clergy. Even some contemporary historians try to describe the Andijan uprising in terms of social class: “[i]t was the first uprising of the working people of southern Kyrgyzstan against the Russian colonizers” (Chotonov 1995, 311). This view, however, is no longer hegemonic. In another monograph, the Andijan uprising is described simply as a “national movement” and “the biggest national-liberation movement of the Central Asian peoples at the end of the nineteenth century” (Ömürbekov and Tchoroiegin 1995, 71).

There were tremendous national-liberation movements among Central Asian peoples in 1916, including the Kyrgyz. But research of their history was carried out under closely supervised Soviet political censorship. In Soviet Kyrgyz historiography, it was necessary to brand as “reactionary” the regions where the Kyrgyz were attempting to establish small but independent states similar to principalities under their khans and *manaps*. Kushbek Üsönbaev (d. 1999) found himself under political pressure in the 1980s because of an unpublished monograph manuscript he wrote in which he used a lot of documentary material on the 1916 movement from the Russian colonial archives. But in the contemporary, independent period, he continued to appeal to “class mechanisms” to justify the uprising:

[T]he representatives of the feudal aristocracy decided to use [the working people's] dissatisfaction for their own interests. Many of them joined the insurgents. They used the people's ignorance and backwardness in trying to seize power through rebellion. They declared Mokush, the son of the great *manap* Shabdan, their khan. . . . Soon great *manaps* . . . joined the rebels, declaring themselves the khans of the local districts" [Usenbaev 1997, 85, 100].

In the works of younger historians, such class approaches to describing 1916 have been abandoned (see Ömürbekov and Tchorotegin 1995, 178–83).

But I must stress that Usenbaev's main works cite a large number of archival materials on this uprising, and he is the most prominent researcher of this subject in Kyrgyzstan. Some materials from his last work were contained in an unpublished monograph that was confiscated from the state-run publishing house Kyrgyzstan in 1982, after Turdakun Usubaliev, first secretary of the Kyrgyzstan Communist Party's Central Committee, criticized it. Now his disciples have published some works on this issue (Jakypbekov 1992, 1995; Makhmutbekova 1996).

HISTORICAL NON-PERSONS

Re-evaluation of the role of historical personalities continues to be one of the most burning questions in Kyrgyz historiography. Some of the personalities were familiar to the ordinary people, but they needed to be "rehabilitated" because they had been considered "reactionary" during the Soviet period. Some of them were executed by the Stalinist regime or by the later, more moderate Soviet system, and publishing objective accounts of them was prohibited. Some information about these Kyrgyz figures was preserved in folklore and genealogical legends. Other historical figures, such as Bars-Beg, were unknown to the entire nation. Some great leaders lived in this territory but were not considered Kyrgyz. It is now impossible to imagine the whole history of the Kyrgyz and the people who lived in the lands of contemporary Kyrgyzstan without these individuals. Today, Kyrgyz historians are studying not only Kyrgyz leaders who lived in the ancient, medieval, and modern periods, but also representatives of other nations who made a valuable contribution to Kyrgyz history or historiography: Li Ling, an ancient Chinese general military leader; Nikolas Bichurin, a Chuvash Sinologist; Chokan Valikhanov, a Kazakh scholar; Biy Yan Hu, a Dunghan rebel leader; W. W. Radloff, W. W. Barthold, S. E. Malov, and E. Polivanov, the Russian Orientalists; S. M. Abramzon and E. A. Davidovich, the Jewish historians; V. Ya. Butanaev, a Hakas anthropologist; the Czech and Slovak workers of the 1920s; and the peoples deported to Kyrgyzstan (Germans, Koreans, Caucasians, etc.).

The problem of reconsidering historical individuals was raised during the last years of *perestroika* in Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyzstan public (most notably, writers and other representatives of the cultural elite) put the question squarely in 1987–88. Soon some communists executed in the 1930s were considered rehabilitated. Their membership in the Communist Party was slowly restored, which meant that their names could be included in books and textbooks and in the mass media. This happened at the end of 1988, and it was a sudden development for Kyrgyzstan, because only three years earlier (in 1985–86) witnessing campaigns of repression, such as one against mountaineers who sang the songs of Kazybek Mamatemin uulu, a poet executed in 1930s,

was a usual occurrence. The uprising in December 1986 against the Kremlin in Almaty, the capital of neighboring Kazakhstan, was used as an additional pretext to put official pressure on potential and real Kyrgyz nationalists beginning in December 1986 and into 1987.

One intellectual who suffered from repression was Sabyr Attokurov, who had been the head of the Department of Archeology and Ethnography at Kyrgyz State University. He was branded a nationalist because he had given lectures about Kyrgyz genealogical traditions and legends. Attokurov was forced to leave the university, students who supported him were nearly expelled from the history faculty. By 1989, the local mass media had begun publishing profiles of historical individuals of Kyrgyzstan. Some of them were included in the new "Topic planning in Kyrgyzstan History" prepared by activists with the Association of Kyrgyzstan Young Historians in collaboration with A. Chukubaev. His role was to assure the republic's Ministry of Education that the program was prepared under the leadership of an experienced scholar, but the main ideas belonged to the association members' circle (see Chukubaev et al. 1989).

Political censorship, though weakened during these years, continued to exist. As I remember, the authors of "Kyrgyz History: A Brief Encyclopaedic Dictionary," submitted to the state-run publishing house in 1989, had to prove that every bit of new material in the book was compatible with communist ideology. This book was the first specialized, concise compendium of historical individuals and events connected with Kyrgyz history and that of Kyrgyzstan. Its main aims were to recall forbidden historical names to the Kyrgyzstanis and to show that public mention of them was no longer prohibited (Chukubaev et al. 1989; Urstanbekov and Tchoroiev 1990).

The first years of Kyrgyzstan independence witnessed a real absence of pro-communist censorship and a prohibition of the Communist Party's activities. (Kyrgyzstan was the only Central Asian country to prohibit temporarily the activity of the former ruling party after 19–23 August 1991, when all of the republic's communist organizations supported the conservative communists' challenge to democratization in the USSR. The Kyrgyzstan Communist Party that has existed since 1992 is tiny and no longer plays an important role in producing Kyrgyz historiography.) Since October 1990, when the communist leader was defeated by Kyrgyz democrats in the presidential election, publications about past political figures have become open, widespread, and fashionable. Censorship has been retained only in the hearts of some historians, who incorporated it into their habits of thought as a component of their self-control.

One of the first publications on the victims of the purges of the 1930s was prepared by communist historians who had permanent access to the party's archives. (It was hard for non-communist researchers to gain access to the archives during the Soviet period: Semenov 1991). That book of essays was one of the last products of the weakened self-censorship of the Communist Party's research body. "There were not so many 'enemies,' and those killed were not only simply good men but also steadfast champions of the ideas of the October Revolution," wrote I. E. Semenov, deputy director of the Institute of the History of the Kyrgyzstan Communist Party and the book's compiler (Semenov 1991, 4, 170). The implication is that the whitewashing of the killings of opponents of the October Revolution's ideas and ideology was perpetuated to spare the feelings of the communists. However, simply drawing attention to

the secret archives of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan was an important step, and the material in the book were useful for those historians who did not have an opportunity to work in the archive. The archive is now open to all political organizations and institutions in Kyrgyzstan, although it is possible that the communists removed some "unsuitable" materials before abandoning it.

Some of the historians who were the main censors and heaviest-handed editors of official history publications in the 1980s managed to gain opportunities to work in the semi-open archives of the former KGB (now known as the Service for National Security) of Kyrgyzstan in 1990–91. Their purpose was to consider secret documents in preparation for the rehabilitation of victims of the Stalinist regime. It is hard to imagine that this job would be given to historians who were among the ardent supporters of censorship under the communist ideology just before the collapse of the Soviet Union. The discovery of a mass grave containing the victims who had been shot on Choñ-Tash hill in the Alarnedin district (20 kilometers southeast of Bishkek) in November 1938 and their official reburial in the summer of 1992 became one of the new stimuli for researching the lives and activities of the victims of repression and other formerly prohibited individuals (see Khelimskaia 1994).

The Association of Young Kyrgyzstan Historians called on the authorities to open the formerly secret archives to all historians. I believe this is now possible in Kyrgyzstan. For example, I had discussions with two former ministers of national security—the late Anarbek Bakaiev and Feliks Kulov, who became the mayor of Bishkek—on this issue, and they said that the material on the 1920s–40s could be investigated by researchers. In March 1994, I had an opportunity to work in the former KGB archives researching politicians of the 1920s, and I can say that the archive staff at that time resorted to internal self-censorship before passing material to ordinary historians and other patrons. Because of the semi-openness of the former KGB archive, which is unusual in the other post-Soviet Central Asian republics, the Kyrgyzstanis have had new access to several historical documents. One interesting publication in the new environment is a book about the Osh events of 1990 by Talant Razzakov, the ministry's spokesman, who used material from his institution (Razzakov 1993).

Several individuals who lived in the medieval and pre-Soviet periods were being researched for the first time in Kyrgyzstan post-Soviet historiography. One popularizer of this work was Kenesh Jusupov, a prominent Kyrgyz writer and editor of the *Ala-Too* journal, who published a series of readers on Kyrgyz history, genealogy, tradition, and culture (Jusupov 1991–95). These draw from material about Belek Soltonoiev, a Kyrgyz historian who wrote a manuscript on Kyrgyz history that was repressed in 1938 and manuscripts on other historical individuals and Kyrgyz specialists (among these works were translations of major portions of the books and articles by Yusuf al-Balasaghuni; Mahmud al-Kashghari al-Barsqani; Moldo Kylych; Moldo Niiiaz; European Orientalists such as Barthold and Remy Dor; the Chinese Kyrgyz historian Anvar Baitur; and the Chinese Dungan expert on Kyrgyz folklore, Hu Zhenhua).

A. Koichiev published a book on the life and activities of Osmonaaly Sydyk uulu (Sydykov). This was one of the first specialized pieces of research on this pre-Soviet historian, who published two books in Ufa in 1913 and 1915. These books were banned by the Soviet censor because their author had been branded an "enemy of the people" and escaped to pre-communist China. Further, the books were written in Kyrgyz in

Arabic script, which most Kyrgyz Soviet historians of the second half of the century could not read (see Koichiev 1992; Osmonaaly Sydyk uulu 1913, 1915, 1990).

In the 1990s, several books, essays, and articles were published in Kyrgyzstan about historical individuals, among them Taghai-biy, Tailak baatyr, Ormon-khan, Polot-Khan (Mulla Ishaq Hasan uulu), Kurmanjan datka, Shabdan, Abdykerim Sydykov, Jusup Abdyrakmanov, and Ishak Razzakov (Asanov 1991, 14–17; Attokurov 1994a, 1994b; Beishenaliev 1994; Joldoshev 1992; Jusupov 1992; Kenchiev 1992; Kenensariiev 1997a; *Kurmanjan-dalka* 1991; Mitalip uulu Jañybai 1993; Moldokasymov 1991, 1991). Of course, some publications offered unprofessional coverage of the material, and there was some forging of documents and genealogical legends resulting from the author's desire to exalt the person or events about which they were writing. Such errors occurred in works by Aman Gaziev, Kylych Esen uulu and Tursunai Ornurzakova, among others (Kylych Esen uulu 1994; Gaziev 1991, 1995; see also Tchorotegin 1997a). During the post-Soviet years, several works by medieval and pre-Soviet and non-Soviet authors were published in Kyrgyz. Some of them had been preserved as manuscripts; some of them had not been known at all (Ahsikenti 1996; Aldash 1992; Baitur 1992; Balasagun 1993; Kashgari 1991, 2:441–59; Sooronov and Zulpukarov 1993). This process of popularizing the written heritage of the Kyrgyz, whether medieval or modern, is now widespread.

THE WRITTEN CULTURE OF KYRGYZ AND SOURCES

One of the positions officially adopted by Soviet Kyrgyz historiography was that “[t]he Kyrgyz people, as well known, did not have their own written culture and written literature” before the Soviet epoch (see Ploskih 1984, 645). Thus, the medieval and pre-Soviet written monuments of the Kyrgyz nation were not taken into account. Among them were the Enissei Kyrgyz's written heritage of the 8th to the 12th centuries, including the Sujiin–Davan inscription of the Kyrgyz lord in northern Mongolia (mid-9th century). An Arab geographer, Abu Dulaf (10th century), wrote that the Kyrgyz were using their own script (presumably the Enissei's rune-like inscriptions). Buddhist manuscript copies were ordered by the Kyrgyz lords in the 9th and 10th centuries. The Syrian–Nestorian, so-called Uighur, Soghdian, and Arabic written monuments and epigraphic inscriptions of the Central Asian peoples who were regular historical parts of the modern Kyrgyz nation were saved in Kyrgyzstan (Edilbaev and Kylychev 1995, 246–49; Jumagulov 1963–87).

The Kyrgyz used Arabic script from approximately the 10th century (Islam became a state religion after 960 by decree of the Karakhanids) until 1928. (The Kyrgyz living in China and Afghanistan continue to use this script even now). Latin script was adopted in Kyrgyzstan in 1928 and was used until 1940, when the Stalinist regime ordered all the Turkic nations of the Soviet Union to change to Cyrillic. (The Armenians and Georgians continue to use their pre-Soviet national scripts). Thus, the Kyrgyz had to change their script twice within twelve years—a hardship on adults, who found learning the new scripts difficult and wanted to use their already acquired reading and writing skills. Within a few days, they became illiterate. A lot of the old books were destroyed during the repression and persecutions of pre-Soviet intellectuals. These actions were part of the so-called socialist cultural revolution in the 1920s–30s.

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