# The Soviet State and Lineage Societies: Doctrine, Local Interactions, and Political Hybridization in Kazakhstan and Kirghizia During the 1920s and 1930s

Accepted version of an article published in *Central Asian Affairs*:
Ohayon, Isabelle. " The Soviet State and Lineage Societies: Doctrine, Local Interactions, and Political Hybridization in Kazakhstan and Kirghizia During the 1920s and 1930s", *Central Asian Affairs* 3, 2 (2016): 163-191.

*Isabelle Ohayon*
Research Associate Professor, French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS)
*Isabelle.ohayon@cnrs.fr*

**Abstract**

The Soviet state, in the wake of colonial policy, manipulated the existing hierarchical social order of the Kazakh and Kirghiz SSRs, playing groups against one another to ensure loyalty. Lineages, like nomad pastoralism, were one of the traits of backward- ness that Sovietization sought to eliminate. Newly discovered local party reports reveal how the Soviet authorities perceived the kinship relations, how they suggested and disseminated the lineage categories, and how these categories were actualized in thegovernment on the local scale.

**Keywords**

Kazakhstan – Kyrgyzstan – party cadres – lineage – tribes

• • •

*A society is not a unitary body in which one power and only one power is exercised; it is in reality a juxtaposition, a liaising, a coordination, also a hierarchy, of different powers, that nonetheless retain their specificity.*[1]

⁘

1 Michel Foucault, "The Meshes of Power," in Jeremy Crampton and Stuard Elden (eds), *Space, Knowledge, Power Foucault, and Geography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 156.

doi 10.1163/22142290-00302004

Did the Soviet state have special policy for Central Asian societies, which were organized around lineages? This question did not emerge clearly in the debate on nationalities policy and only came to be established within the broader framework of the Bolshevik efforts targeting the backwardness of these societies, regarded as "feudal and patriarchal." Condemnations of lineage relations occurred relative to the set of retrograde behaviors that Soviet modernization sought to eradicate in order to build a new society freed from old relations of domination based on religion, colonial-type subjection, and gender. In line with Marxist thought, the Bolsheviks regarded lineages as elements of the political organization of pastoral societies, part of the "superstructure" of relations of domination typical of pre-capitalistic societies.2 As social actors, lineages were conceived as clearly engaged in the subjection of indigenous peoples by the imperial colonial power, in the oppression of the poorest and in the organization of a patriarchal social order. To put it differently, owing to the embeddedness of lineage relations in the social and political operation of pastoral populations, these relations were central in the Soviet project and yet did not stand out on their own terms. Unlike other fields of mobilization, such as the emancipation of women, expropriation of the aristocratic classes, and attacks on religious practices, they did not give birth to a policy that was coordinated at the all-union level. Moreover, the reality of lineages was intimately associated with nomadism both in its scientific construction and in the political thinking. Now, nomad pastoralism was also among the traits of backwardness – economic in this case – that Sovietization sought to eliminate.

This notwithstanding, the facts show that the state and its agents had to acknowledge lineage relations when attempting Sovietization. This is especially salient as the nationalities policy, first formulated in 1922, claimed to support the indigenization of the political and technical cadres of the new apparatuses and to give Soviet power indigenous features. At this point, kin- ship groups appear to be part of the political culture and practices of these autochthonous societies, in the sense that while they were obviously not primordial identities, they existed as social constructs rendered operational by the beliefs and relations between the individuals and groups that identified with them. Their fluid actualization is precisely observable in the dynamics of their confrontation with other logics.3 In fact, the technologies of power implemented by the Soviet state at the level of the villages (*auls*) – the building

2 See classical texts cited by Maurice Godelier, *Sur les sociétés pré-capitalistes. Textes choisis de Marx, Engels, Lénine* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1978).

3 Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969).

of institutions, campaigns of repression, and so on – rendered them visible in their interaction with these new political tools and forces of coercion.

It is this bottom-up policy that will form the essential focus for examining how kinship groups intervened when it came to implementing key measures of Sovietization. On the basis of examples drawn from the history of the first two decades of the Sovietization of the Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republics of Kazakhstan and of Kirgizia,4 I will show how Soviet power tried to weaken the lineages, which were viewed as socially relevant communities, and it undermined pre-existing loyalties. I will examine how the actors of the society of *auls* took on a role in this process and appropriated the new political resources supplied by the apparatus of the Bolshevik communist party and the Soviet cadres at the level of villages, districts (*raion*), and regions (*oblast'*). But before doing this, it is necessary to revisit the colonial experience of governing these lineage societies, as well as how Soviet authorities theoretically reconsidered this issue in the framework of the nationalities policy and Central Asian nation-building, which has to do with the nature of the Soviet state.

The Kazakh and Kyrgyz societies that the Russian empire encountered were organized in lineages,5 i.e., in kinship groups whose members, lineal and

4 The examples used to support this argument were previously used in the two following articles: Isabelle Ohayon, "Lignages et pouvoirs locaux, L'indigénisation au Kirghizstan soviétique (années 1920–1930)," *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 49, no. 1 (2008): 145–182, and "Loyalty, Solidarity, and Duplicity: Lineages during the Repression Campaign against the Rural Elite in Kazakhstan, 1928," in Philip Ross Bullock, Claudio Nun−Ingerflom, Isabelle Ohayon, Maria Rubins and Anna Winestein (eds), *Loyalties and Solidarities in Russian Society, History and Culture* (London: UCL-SSEES, 2013), 67–79.

5 In this article, it is not my aim to discuss the segmentarity of Central Asian nomadic societ- ies nor to theorize on their genealogical system. I place myself in the theoretical framework of Svetlana Jacquesson that she drew from Kyrgyz fieldwork. Cf. *Pastoréalismes: anthropolo- gie historique des processus d'intégration chez les Kirghiz du Tian Shan intérieur* (Weisbaden: Reichter, 2010), 23–52, especially 31. In the wake of David Sneath, she considers that the model of the segmentarity society, as it had been elaborated by classical anthropology since Lewis Morgan and Evans Pritchard, does not match the description of lineage societies in Central Asia. Indeed, they differ on the one hand by the absence of egalitarianism and of political acephalism, and, on the other hand by the absence of the process of fusion/fission accounting for the formation of groups when a conflict emerges. Indeed, in this case the genealogical categories are not analogous but ordered alongside a hierarchy. The social order, as represented by the genealogical framework, is modeled on the patriarchal family. Thus, the genealogy appears to be a model of normative bonds that shapes the representation of the past organized according to specific social bonds. This model also regulates behavior and government. In Pierre Bourdieu's words (see *Outline of a Theory of Practice* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977], 33) there is a clear distinction between *official* kinship,

collateral relatives alike, considered themselves to be descended from one common ancestor in direct line. These lineages had various remits depending upon the degree of kinship they retained. This social organization can be described according to the following ideal-type schema. The Russian ethnographic tradition translates them as *plemya*, a word that designates the largest genealogical unit and corresponds to the "line of descent" or "genealogical line," also referred to as "tribe."6 Such tribes are designated by the terms *uruu* in Kyrgyz, and *ru* in Kazakh, and refer to a common and very distant, or some- times fictive, ancestor. They are recognized and established by virtue of genealogies that serve as identity points of reference, given that they do not account for a group precisely situated in space and in time.

The tribes are split among several branches. Following this is a smaller genealogical unit, the group of descent or genealogical group that gathers together groups linked by common ancestors, stretching back five to seven generations for the Kyrgyz and seven generations for the Kazakhs. From these, both vertical descent relations and horizontal kinship relations are defined. Lastly come the subdivisions of groups of descent, i.e., the *bir atanyn baldary* in Kyrgyz or *bir ata balasï* (latter *b-a-b*) in Kazakh, terms that literally mean "children of the same father"; that is, groups of filiation defined in relation to the most recently deceased ancestor, and often comprising between three and five generations.7 In accordance with their size, these lineage groups, which are rendered indifferently by the term *rod* in Russian, gather together communities of people who all know one another and are all linked by a prescription of solidarity imposed by their patrilineal filiation. Based on real and interpersonal interactions, this solidarity does not tolerate breaches of the rules of mutual aid, which are sanctioned by exclusion from the group, and no longer by regulated vengeance. This kinship solidarity is more pervasive than that other, more chance-ridden type of solidarity structuring relations between "lines of descent." In fact, this type of solidarity rests not on real kinship but on the ideology of kinship, and it summons together groups that are not necessarily

---

unique and immutable, which is defined definitively by the formal rules of genealogy, and *practical* kinship, whose boundaries and definitions are as numerous as its users and the opportunities to use it. As a consequence, genealogy and the use of kinship ought to be viewed as a situational discourse.

6 I have taken this use and most of the data included herein on the workings of the Kyrgyz kinship system from the works of Svetlana Jacquesson, especially her *Pastoréalismes: anthro- pologie historique*.

7 Chinara Israilova-Khar'ekhuzen, *Traditsionnoe obshchestvo kyrgyzov v period russkoi kolonizatsii vo pervoi polovine xix–xx v. i sistema ikh rodstva* (Bishkek: Ilim, 1999), 130.

familiar with one another. Being above all symbolic and legitimated by the major recorded genealogies, it is notably performed during funeral rites. The nature, both ideological and ritualistic, of relations between lines of descent means that the real interactions they form can change from one era to another, and can lead to either alliances or rivalries, which explains why they can be politically manipulated.

Lastly, among the Kazakhs, the tribes are gathered into three large tribal federations headed by a khan – the Great, the Middle, and the Lesser hordes (*zhuz*),8 all dating to the sixteenth century and that dominated their respective *ulus* ("houses" or "domains"), and structured political space in the steppes until colonization undermined them. Since the sources regarding these categories lack precision, I will use "lineage" as a generic term to designate the genealogical groups spanning seven generations as well as the *b-a-b* (three to five generations).

The conundrum for historians who address the issue of lineage as an object of Soviet and imperial policies, is to analyze – or rather, to *be able to* analyze – the relation between the categories constructed and used by the political and academic authorities and the actual social groups. Drawn from Soviet archives, the data regarding that period reflect a unilateral vision and cannot be con- fronted with other sources that could refer to identical interactions. It is not possible to understand to which kinship relations the discourses on lineage by the representatives of the Soviet state refer. Taking this fact into account, the Soviet analyses of the lineage relations should be understood as the effect and/ or the actualization of a policy shaping categories. In other words, historians are likely to determine from the sources how the Soviet authorities perceive the kinship relations, how they suggest and disseminate the lineage categories, and how these categories are actualized in the government on the local scale. It should also be possible to gather from the sources how these categories were appropriated and manipulated by the indigenous protagonists themselves.

## Governing Lineage Societies

### *Colonial Practices and Scientific Constructions (1822–1917)*

At the intersection of the Russian empire's ethnographic knowledge and colonial practices of administration, the identification of lineages as social

8 Added to this schema is the *Bukey*, or interior, horde, which is a splinter of the younger *zhuz*, created after Paul I banned Kazakhs from crossing the Ural River, obliging some 5,000 families to confine their nomadic activities to a space between the Volga and the Urals.

actors that were contrary to the ideal of modernity had its origin in the imperial experience of government. The early institutionalization of a two-pronged (imperial and customary) justice system,9 the organization of taxation, and the construction of territorial interconnection, broadly mobilized the indigenous populations during the conquest of the Kazakh steppes and Central Asia in general. Unable to seize or recognize a putative political center in the Kazakh steppes, power was won gradually, element by element, from the tribes and lineages over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,10 without there being a need to account for all the local hierarchies.

In 1822 by Count Mikhail Speransky, governor general of Siberia, promulgated the Charter of Kyrgyz [Kazakhs] of Siberia. With this document, the imperial administration preserved the framework of the horde (*zhuz*). It first legislated on this Kazakh institution in order to use it as a base on which to construct colonial power, even though this destroyed the dignity of the *khan*, formerly the highest political authority. De facto, Speransky continued to recognize the reality of the Middle *zhuz* by appointing its tribal chiefs to various positions in the new administrative hierarchy. He also created *okrug*, *volost'*, and *aul* positions under the responsibility of a *sultan* – a direct reference to the Kazakh institution that singled out persons descended from Genghis Khan as the only ones to be entitled, by virtue of their filiation, to occupy the function of khan, sultan, or *bii* (judge). At the same time, the Charter established the status (*soslovie*) of natives (*inorodets*)[11] that was applied to

9 Virginia Martin, *Law and Custom in the Steppe: The Kazakhs of the Middle Horde and Russian Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2001); Isabelle Ohayon, "Formes et usages du territoire à la période coloniale: la première sédentarisation des Kazakhs," *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, no. 23 (2014): 183–244.

10 Nurbulat Masanov, Zhuldusbek Abylkhozhin, Irina Erofeeva, Aleksandr Alekseenko, and Gul'mira Baratova, *Istoriia Kazakhstana, Narody i kul'tury* (Almaty: Dajk-press, 2000): 158–177. Juridically, the *inorodtsy* were a clearly enumerated and delimited set of peoples, not subject to the general laws of the empire, who preserved their local customs and traditional leadership and enjoyed some other privileges, most notably exemption from military conscription. Informally, the word *inorodtsy* was used, often in a pejorative sense, to refer to all of the empire's non-Russian inhabitants. The term appeared more and more frequently in the nationalist context of controversies directed against Russia's increasingly restive national minorities, and was used to refer to all non-Russians (for Jews or Baltic Germans, for instance), whether legally classified as *inorodtsy* or not. See Andreas Kappeler, *La Russie, empire multiethnique* (Paris: Institut des Études Slaves, 1994), 149 and John W. Slocum "Who, and When, Were the Inorodtsy? The Evolution of the Category of 'Aliens' in Imperial Russia," *Russian Review*, 57, no. 2 (April 1998): 173–190.

11 Natives were a particular category of subjects (*soslovie*) of the Russian Empire with specific rights and different methods of management from the other orders of the Empire.

the non-Russian populations of Siberia and Central Asia. The Charter of the Kirghiz [Kazakhs] of Orenburg, proclaimed in 1824, did the same for natives ruled by the Orenburg Government. In the historicist and evolutionist spirit of German philosophy of law, which inspired Count Speransky directly, these charters aimed at civilizing inasmuch as they codified and incorporated customary laws and indigenous loyalties in order to integrate them gradually into a set of unified imperial laws and to steer the populations toward a higher stage of development.12 This implied notably the progressive abandoning of nomadism in favor of agriculture and sedentary lifestyles.

Thus, even while following its logic of creating differentiated statuses,13 the colonial policy consisted of integrating the elites of the lineages, whether Chinggisid or not,14 into its leadership system by providing them with special privileges. This technique of cooptation went hand-in-hand with a policy of educating native elites in the ad hoc institutions of the Empire, such as the military school established by Nepliuev in Orenburg in 1825, renamed the Cadet Corps in 1844. The knowledge acquired in these institutions, populated exclusively with the children of sultans, *bii*, and other influential figures, especially fluency in Russian, assured the advancement of their service careers as well as their ennoblement as new servants of the Russian state.15 The Empire thus integrated into the order (*soslovie*) of its nobility governor-sultans (*sultan-pravitel'*), individuals who had been ennobled (*lichnoe dvoryanstvo*) and those who were notable by heritage (*potomstvennoe dvoryanstvo*).16 At a lower level, the recruits in the smallest units whether traditional administrators or judges, gained their legitimacy through their place in the local political organization and drew their authority from their status as heads of lineages. Thus, the Empire's colonial policy most certainly had the effect of bureaucratically and administratively institutionalizing the traditional authorities.

The colonial authorities were aware of the risks should they lose the control of the steppes that Speransky had secured in 1822. So, on the occasion of

---

In everyday language, the term was applied to all non-Slavic subjects, but in a juridical sense it referred only to a specific number of ethnic groups, the list of which altered in accordance with the evolution of Russian conquest.

12 Martin, *Law and Custom in the Steppe*, 35–37.

13 See Adeeb Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asiain Comparative Perspective," *Slavic Review*, 65, no. 2 (2006) 231–251.

14 *Cf.* Virginia Martin, "Kazakh Chinggisids, Land and Political Power in the Nineteenth Century: A Case Study of Syrymbet," *Central Asian Survey*, 29, no. 1 (2010): 79–102.

15 Gul'mira Sultangalieva, "Kazakhskoe chinovnichestvo Orenburgskogo vedomstva: formirovanie in napravlenie deiatel'nosti (xix)," *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 27 (2009): 84.

16 Ibid., 90; Masanov et al., *Istoriia Kazahstana*, 182.

the great imperial reform of 1867–1868, they sought to rework the territorial network and to reduce the power of kinship groups over the small administrative units. Reports ordered by the Russian Imperial Society of Geography in the 1860s, studies on customary justice, and works by the Resettlement Agency (*Pereselencheskoe upravlenie*) published in the framework of Stolypin's reforms underscore the presence and power of lineages – translated into Russian with *rod,* whatever the degrees of kinship – at the *volost'* level, and express the authors' anxieties about the durability of these forms of loyalty.17 The *volost'* naturally reflected local relations of force and were often headed by a dominant lineage whose representative had been validated by the colonial administration.18 Giving its approbation to this situation, the administration would name the *volost'* for the dominant lineage, as it was reported in the Kazakh steppes in 1844,19 further to the south among the Kyrgyz in 1889,20 and in Semirech'e in 1912–1913.21 Yet, while this registration of names reified the association of a territory and a lineage and remained stable throughout the history of the administration, it did not reflect the plasticity of games of influences. And the name of a *volost'* revealed nothing about the composition of the lineage or the dominant lineage. Nonetheless, these forms of loyalty remained a major preoccupation for the imperial authorities. They viewed them as obstacles to Speransky's civilizing project, which would remain the marching orders for governors of Central Asia until the end of the Empire.22 Finally, as Svetlana Jacquesson23 highlights, groups of descent became a legal category in Russian colonial law in Kyrgyz land. In virtue of the limited application of customary law, the *bii* or *manap*, who had been granted authorization by the

17 Nikolai Grodekov, *Kirgizy i karakirgizy Syr-darinskoi oblasti*, vol. 1, *Iuridicheskii byt* (Tashkent, 1889); Ivan Kraft, *Sbornik uzakonenii o kirgizakh stepnykh oblastei* (Orenburg, 1898).

18 Ol'ga Brusina, "Obychnoe pravo kochevogo naseleniia Turkestana v sisteme rossiiskogo upravleniia," *Sredneaziatskii etnograficheskii sbornik*, vol. 5 (Moscow, 2006), 227.

19 "Svedeniia o volostiakh Kokpeptinskogo okruga po ischisleniiu, proizvedennomu v 1844 zasedatelem Sukhomlinovym," in A. Konshin, *Zapiski Semipalatinskogo podotdela zapadno-sibirskogo otdela Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo obshchestva*, vol. 2 (Semipalatinsk, 1905), 70–80.

20 Grodekov, *Kirgizy i karakirgizy*, 13–15.

21 P.P. Rumiansev (ed.), *Materialy po obsledovaniiu tuzemnogo i russkogo starozhil'cheskogo khoziaistva i zemlepol'zovaniia v Semirech'enskoi oblasti,* sost. Pereselen. Upravl. Gl. Upravl. Zemleustroistva i Zemledeliia. vol. 4 (St. Petersburg: Vernenskii uezd, 1913).

22 Martin, *Law and Custom in the Steppe,* 34–50; Svetlana Jacquesson, "Reforming Pasto- ral Land Use in Kyrgyzstan: From Clan and Custom to Self-Government and Tradition," *Central Asian Survey*, 29, no. 1 (2010): 106.

23 Jacquesson, *Pastoréalismes*, 47–48.

imperial authorities, dispensed justice along the principle that made it necessary to define the boundaries of an *uruk* since they held an *uruk* accountable for any of its members.

The corpus produced through scientific expeditions and ethnographic and statistical knowledge revealed this tension. When the authorities requested information, state agents, whether military or administrative, produced it; therefore, colonial science was not immune to a certain kind of utilitarian- ism. Indeed, this had been the case since the very creation of the Russian Imperial Society of Geography in 1845. To cite only a few emblematic names: we owe the most refined studies on the nomadic societies of Central Asia to Chokan Valikhanov (1835–1865), a Kazakh, educated in the Russo-indigenous school, and then a member of the Empire's cadet corps; to Nikolai Grodekov (1843–1913), Infantry General, protagonist of the conquest of Central Asia and later governor-general of Turkestan; to Ivan Kraft (1859–1914), governor of the oblast of Turgay, and to Fedor Shcherbina (1849–1936), statistician of the *zemstvo*. Whether these studies were connected to a state directive, such as the Shcherbina expedition to evaluate the lands available for programmed migrations of the Slavic peasants to populate Central Asia, or from initiatives with less backing, such as those of Grodekov or Kraft, they served precise purposes. Their authors held parallel positions as governors and as scholars. This dual authority influenced their analyses on the role of kinship relations in the exercise of customary justice, and they helped train a larger body of indigenous peoples from Central Asia.

The rise of Soviet knowledge, both scientific and artistic, naturalistic and ethnographic, is part of an orientalist axiology specific to *fin de siècle* modernism, a time when the intellectual elites of the Russian, French, and British powers were seeking new interpretations of history, culture, and Eastern religions – an axiology always underpinned by the dichotomy between civilization and savagery,24 progress and backwardness, and even between Christianity and Islam. The role attributed to the lineages contributes to the construction of the notion of backwardness. Without totally adopting David Sneath's argument, according to which both tribe and lineage are pure ideological constructs that were elaborated by Western, Russian, and Soviet colonial and imperialist powers vis-à-vis their peripheries,25 and for which the organization

24 Svetlana Gorshenina, "La construction d'une image 'savante' du Turkestan russe lors des premières expositions 'coloniales' dans l'Empire russe: analyse d'une technologie culturelle du pouvoir," *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, 17/18 (2009): 133–178.

25 David Sneath, *The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society & Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), see chap. 3.

of lineages was only a means by which the dominant could draw up a hierarchical classification of the dominated,26 it is necessary to consider the impact that these scientific formulations had on political thought, and the potential for essentialization that they contained. Nevertheless, neither the production of knowledge nor scholarly engagement can be totally reduced to the Saidian orientalist paradigm.27 Vera Tolz,28 in the wake of Nathaniel Knight,29 convincingly showed this for the Russian Empire. She credits the most prominent St. Petersburg orientalists of the "Rozen school,"30 such as Bartold, with precisely having sought the deconstruction of the very notions of East and West, as well as other prejudices, notably about Islam.31

At any rate, the Bolsheviks had to confront this heritage of practices and forms of knowledge with the social and political realities of nomadic Central Asia, and they drew upon this heritage when they formulated their own specific doctrinal arsenal.

### *Soviet Nationalities Policy (1917–1932)*

Bolshevik thinking produced a radical paradigm shift that promoted an egalitarian model of government whose ambition was to break with the domination of capitalism and imperialism by abolishing both class differences and ethnic hierarchies. Following the declaration on the rights of peoples to self-determination in 1918, the Soviet state formulated policies that were meant to solve the contradiction inherent in the imposition of a revolutionary, progressive, egalitarian model of universal ambition that also respected cultural differences, and in granting rights to a multiplicity of groups.

Using "the nation" as an operational category for structuring the ethnic, confessional, and linguistic diversity inherited from the Empire was a choice that corresponded not only to the political aspirations of the "national" elites of the nascent USSR, but that was also an instrument for re-thinking the principles of cohesion of ethnic groups and for fashioning new entities, attached to new

26 Sneath, *The Headless State*, chap 4.

27 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

28 Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 50, 69.

29 Nathaniel Knight, "Grigor'ev in Orenburg, 1851–1862: Russian Orientalism in the Service of Empire?" *Slavic Review*, 59, no. 1 (2000): 74–100.

30 See also David Schimmelpenninck Van Der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 191–198.

31 Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient,* 91.

principles of identification. Marxist-Leninists, in fact, promoted the modernity of nations as a higher form of social and political organization. Modernity was meant to replace the more "backward" forms, such as the clannish, tribal, or feudal systems identifiable across the former Russian Empire. The "nation" was actually presented as a condition of the Soviet civilizing mission in all its dimensions, since it mediated the belonging to the higher civil community of the USSR. From this fact, lineages as a form of political loyalty of nomadic tradition appeared functionally antinomic to this political project. By nature, they presented obstacles to the more universal modalities of identification that both nation and state embody. This hierarchy became clear notably in the process of statistical construction of the national category as a supra-tribal and/or supra-local principle of identification. At the time of the Soviet census of 1926, constructed by scholars, ethnographers, and orientalists,32 this enterprise was concretized by grouping self-declared identities – Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, etc., – under a singular taxon, often regional and lineage in nature.

Lastly, the lineages appeared to the Bolsheviks to be forms of cohesion that rivaled social classes. Solidarities based on kinship were seen as instruments in the hands of the dominant classes, used to hinder the development of the class awareness that was supposed to emerge from objective social antagonisms; they prevented the emergence of the class struggle as the driving force of his- tory. These two major principles – national construction and promotion of class struggle – in theory grounded the combat undertaken within the Soviet Republics of Central Asia against tribes and lineages during the period of Sovietization and the formation of nations between 1922 and 1936.33

Far from doctrinal declarations, the establishment of the first Soviet political structures in Central Asia thrust an indigenous intelligentsia into the lime- light, one that had been politicized and organized by the 1905 Revolution. To take the sole example of the Kazakh ASSR, these groups had been formed as much on a tribal as on an ideological basis34 – the autonomists of Alash Orda,

32 Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*: *Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, ny: Cornell University Press, 2005); Juliette Cadiot, *Le laboratoire impérial. Russie-urss 1860–1940* (Paris: cnrs Editions, 2007); Sergei Abashin, "Problema Sartov v russkoi istoriografii," *Natsionalizmy v Sredney Azii v poiskakh identichnosti* (St. Petersburg: Aleteyia, 2007), 95–175.

33 Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

34 Xavier Hallez, "Le rôle des relations tribales dans la constitution des mouvements politiques kazakhs entre 1905 et 1918," in Anne Ducloux, et al., *Anthropologie des réseaux en Asie centrale* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2012), 109–112.

the provisional government in Kazakhstan close to the Constitutional Democrats, stemmed from powerful tribes (*argyn*) of the Middle Horde and supporters of Uch-zhuz, which had set down postulates for a political Islam with a socialist flavor, mostly belonged to the Naiman tribe – they rallied to the Bolsheviks in a number of ways. The Bolsheviks, accompanied by some rare char- acters from Alash Orda, such as Ahmet Baytursynov, entered the apparatus alongside Kazakh Communists who were recruited from the individuals who had been removed from the congress of Kazakh great national movements before 1917 and who, like Seitkali Mendeshev, came from the Bukei Horde.35 Their coalition reproduced alliances based on great tribal divisions and regularly succumbed to conflicts and rivalries. The political struggle at play in the Communist Party did not escape the attention of Bolsheviks of European origin and was the motive behind Moscow retaking control in 1925. Moscow achieved this by parachuting in Fillip. I. Goloshchekin, a Bolshevik of the old guard, to replace the Kazakh Mendeshev.36

This inter-Kazakh strife was expressed through a division that ended up in conflicts with the European militants, a fact that Trotsky, even before he was exiled in Alma-Ata in 1928, echoed in 1927. In a letter addressed to Grigorii Sokol'nikov, then vice-president of Gosplan and a Central Committee member of the VKP (b),37 he reported a conversation he had had with two Kazakh protagonists of the local Communist Party – whom he did not name – in which they expressed the discontent of the Kazakh communists regarding Goloshchekin's policies. These Kazakhs blamed Goloshchekin for endorsing measures liable to provoke a civil war in the *auls*, such as mobilizing the so-called *bay* (wealthy herders) against their compatriots, even though he was able to

35 Dina A. Amanzholova, *Kazakhskii avtonomizm i Rossiia. Istoriia dvizheniia Alash* (Moscow: Rossiia Molodaia, 1994).

36 For further details, see Niccolò Pianciola, *Stalinismo di frontiera. Colonizzazione agricola, sterminio dei nomadi e costruzione statale in Asia centrale (1905–1936)* (Rome: Viella, 2099), 269–279. Similar interventions by Moscow could be observed in other Soviet republics at the same time. Their aim was to regain control over communist parties that had started to follow a path that was regarded as "too national." It was, for example, the case in the Ukraine: see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union*, 1923–1939 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 240–269.

37 Letter from Trotsky to Sokol'nikov dated March 2, 1927. Sokol'nikov was then vice president of Gosplan and a member of the Central Committee of the VKP(b), a former president of the *Turkkomissiia*. The letter focused on the national aspects of policy in Kazakhstan and reported on the opposition forces within the Kazakh political machinery, "Natsional'nye momenty politiki v Kazakhstane," *in Noveyshaia istoriia Kazahstana. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov (1917–1939)*, vol. 1 (Almaty: Sanat, 1998), 177–180.

ensure peace in the Russian villages.38 In addition to the accusation of discrimination on the basis of "nationality" contained in this grievance, they criticized the "Sovietization" of the *aul*, which, since it had been undertaken against and without the "wealthiest," was certain to provoke societal division. Kazakh opponents to this policy, who often belonged to the social and economic elite, felt directly targeted by this measure, which they insisted was bound to break the unity of Kazakh society. The hostility of European militants toward the Kazakhs existed prior to Goloshchekin's appointment at the head of Kazkraikom. Indeed, soon after arriving there Goloshchekin reported the existence of these tensions to Viacheslav M. Molotov in 1926.39 The Russians considered themselves "100 percent communists," in contrast with their illiterate, tribal Kazakh comrades, while the Kazakhs accused the Russians of being "colonizers" and "usurpers." The Russian communists maintained that the measures taken against the *bay* in the 1920s had only led to a situation in which each tribe had become a cell of the Party.40

Immediately upon becoming first secretary of Kazkraikom in 1925, Goloshchekin vigorously criticized this state of affairs, which, from his point of view, was linked to the situation in the *auls*. It was a matter of public notoriety that the elected members of the *aulsovet* did not perform their duties according to the formal Soviet canons, instead spending their time conducting their own business on their pastures or elsewhere. This was so true that organizing a simple *aul* council meeting would require many weeks of planning to ensure that all members would attend.41 The social background of the elected members of the *aulsovet,* along with a mediocre level of education and their weak support for the Party – in the image of a Slavic peasant42 – meant that the *aulsovet's* existence ultimately changed little in the herding families' habits or in the decision-making mechanisms within the communities.43 This analysis was the reason behind Goloshchekin's famous expression, "The Kazakhs missed out on October" and remained in the same state of "backwardness" they had been in prior to the Revolution. In May 1926, he wrote in a confidential report

38 Ibid.

39 Niccolò Pianciola, *Nomadi e collettivizzazione delle campagne nel Kazakstan sovietico (1928–1934)*, Tesi di Laurea: University of Turin, 2001, 105.

40 Ibid., 108.

41 Abde Tursunabev, *Pobeda kolkhoznogo stroia v Kazakhstane* (Alma-Ata: KazGosIzdat, 1925), 90.

42 Lynne Viola, "'L'ivresse du succès'. Les cadres russes et le pouvoir soviétique dans les campagnes de collectivisation de l'agriculture," *Revue des études slaves*, 64, no. 1 (1992), 78–79.

43 Abde Tursunabev, *Pobeda*, 90.

addressed to Molotov that the society of Kazakh herdsmen was infinitely backward on the cultural and economic levels, that the population was poor and illiterate, and that the power of the tribal networks could be felt not only at the level of the *auls* but reverberated up to the highest positions of power.44 The inescapable "Sovietization of the *aul*" by the organization of "a small [Kazakh] October" ensued from this analysis. In his speech at the 5th Conference of the Kazkraikom in December 1925,45 Goloshchekin announced his intention to destroy the hegemony of the lineages, notably by creating new administrative divisions, at ever smaller levels, in order to tighten Soviet control over these groups and to be closer to the population

The fierce debate was as relevant within the context of the Russo-Kazakh division as it was among the Kazakh political elites themselves. Baitursynov and some of his allies from the Alash-Orda movement supported the idea that tribal interests resembled a functioning community in which the *bay* helped out their allies and poorest members, and that such traditional modes of solidarity (*sauyn ajtmaj*, *soġym*46) pertained to a certain form of communism.47 Other intellectual figures, such as Gabbas Togzhanov,48 a linguist and journalist in the service of the Soviet project, even promoted the idea that the creation of collective farms (*kolkhozes*), to which he was not opposed, could only be carried out on the basis of the lineage structure of these societies. This was certainly not the case for Turar Ryskulov, a Kazakh figure of Bolshevik power in Turkestan and in the Kazakh steppes. In an open letter to the militant youth of Kazakhstan, published in the newspaper *Sovetskaia Step'* on June 10, 1926,49

44 rgaspi (Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii), *f.17, op. 33, d. 484, ll. 108, 109ob* (June 20, 1926), quoted in Pianciola, *Nomadi e collettivizzazione*, 104–105.

45 *Socialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane v vosstanovitel'nyi period (1921–1925). Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk Kazahskoi ssr, 1962), 170.

46 *Sauyn aitmai*: announcement of a feast or a major funerary meal at which guests, clan allies, or affiliates are obliged to show up with gifts of livestock or milk products (*kumys, kurt*, …). This practice effectuates a certain distribution of wealth. *Soġym*: (lit. slaughter) the slaughter of a horse or a bovine, at the start of winter with the aim of ensuring enough meat reserves for the cold season and which results in a distribution among the members of a lineage. See the description of the rite in Sholpan Ahmetova, "L'islam dans la culture des Qazaqs de Sibérie occidentale," *Cahiers du monde russe*, 41, no. 2/3 (April/September, 2000): 359.

47 Ahmet Baitursynov, *Narodnoe khoziajstvo Kazakhov*, 1926, cited by Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford, ca: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), 218.

48 Gabbas Togzhanov, *Kazakhskii kolonial'nyi aul* (Moscow, 1934).

49 Turar Ryskulov, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* vol. 3 (Almaty: 1997), 266–272.

Ryskulov maintained a dogmatic stance: he claimed that class contradictions now transcended the criteria of belonging to lineages in the *auls*. He desired a greater transformation of Kazakh society through the total destruction of lineage relations and the accentuation of class contradictions. According to him, these contradictions were to result in the class struggle and a commitment to communism. In Kirghizia, this same *topos* peppered discourses about lineages. Statements made at the 4th plenary of the Kyrgyz Regional Committee of the Communist Party in 1932 provided an additional illustration of this point:

> Lineage relations, and the combat between what remains of lineage and group relations, continue to be questions of the utmost importance for us in Kirghizia. The struggle of lineages and groups is today the main weapon of the class enemy, the weapon of the *bay* and the *manap* that makes it possible for them to influence the kolkhozes as well as the local Soviet apparatuses from within, and in this way to elude and to corrupt the class line.50

Thus, those political thoughts and projects have different theoretical foundations in the colonial model and in the Bolshevik doctrine, even though both remain evolutionist (German philosophy of history, Marxism), the lineages embodied backwardness against the civilizing project, against class struggle. Whereas the colonial system had nevertheless granted them a place in local government, all the while giving them a differentiated status to distance them from the higher forms of imperial power, the Soviet project set out to eliminate them. During its establishment in pastoral Central Asia, Soviet power was con- fronted with the challenge of founding its authority on ideological adherence and, *ipso facto*, of breaking with this colonial logic.

## Politics in the Field: Sovietization and the Challenge of the Lineages

How, on the level of political action, did the network of power weave itself within the *auls*, understood here both as the administrative unity corresponding to the village in pastoral regions and as nomadic encampment or residential unity? How was it possible to create interlinking forms of loyalty?

50 tsga pd kr, (Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv politicheskoi dokumentatsii Kyrgyzs- koi Respubliki) *f. 10, op. 1, d. 370, l. 11b*, Stenography of the 4th Plenary of the Regional Committee of the Kyrgyz Communist Party, January 15, 1932, author's translation.

And how were the political tools provided by Soviet administrative and police construction appropriated? Only archival sources generated by the state apparatuses could have possibly documented this history. On account of their very nature, these sources recreate only a partial prism in their reply to the political injunction to eradicate the lineage system. They nonetheless indicate much about what the authorities knew, about what they were able to manipulate, and about what the Soviet indigenization policy meant in the field. Based on examples taken from the Kyrgyz and Kazakh cases, it is possible to build a tableau of the how local rationales were embedded in the Soviet executive apparatuses of the districts (*raions*) and *auls* created in the 1920s and to highlight the various articulations at work between Soviet normative prescriptions and indigenous political practices.

In the autonomous Kazakh and Kirghiz Soviet republics, as elsewhere on its territory, the Soviet authorities devoted a large part of their activity to collecting information about the society, particularly the communitarian organizations referred to as "groupuscules," which preoccupied the repressive organizations during the first phase of Stalinism. Prone to rely on the normative usage of kinship, the organs of surveillance had control, at least locally, over the distribution of the lines of descent in the administrated territories, as several documents from local Kyrgyz archives testify, such as a report on the Naryn district in 1928, which lists all the lineages and localizes them.51 In some cases, representatives of the political police mapped the kinship structures of the population of a *sel'sovet* or of a winter pasture, which would then be associated with a complete lineage, traced in all the complexity of its structure and relations with other lineages.52

These abundant reports by the political police to the Central Committee of the Party of the Kirghiz Autonomous Republic alleged collusion between lineages and the apparatuses. Among the grievances expressed, some pointed at the constitution of *village Soviets* on the basis of lineage, a fact that

51 gano (Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv narynskoi oblasti), *f. 2, op. 1, d. 67, ll. 21–27*, Doklad administrativno-organizatsionnoi deiatelnosti orgotdela Narynskogo kantona za 1927–1928, October 13, 1928.

52 See the reproduction of this schema in Isabelle Ohayon, "Lignages et pouvoirs locaux" 181–2. cga pd kr, *f. 10, op. 1, d. 144, l. 182*, "Podvetv' Dzhakit-S[…] Alagus 70 khoz. Kshtau bulak. Geneticheskaia skhema roda Mongoldor," November 20, 1927 [The Dzhakit-S[…] subbranch Alagus of 70 households, Kshtau bulak. Genetic schema of the Mongoldor tribe] and tsga pd kr, *f. 10, op. 1, d. 144, l.* 193, "Geneticheskaia skhema roda Sarybagish kolena *manap* vetvi esengul" November 20, 1927 [Genetic schema of the Sarybagish tribe, branch *manap*, subbranch esengul].

"complicated the work of the Soviet bodies."53 Comprising other criteria, the homogeneity of lineage of apparatus members at the level of the *volost'* and *sel'sovet* was blamed for poor levels of activity, lack of initiative, failure to meet planning goals, and electoral fraud.54 Again in 1933, while those herders who had refused the collectivization of the lands and the obligatory handover of livestock, were made to emigrate to China, and while the political ranks had been purged several times at the behest of the center, the reports prepared by representatives of Kirghizia for the USSR Department of Nationalities emphasized that political leaders in the Naryn and Atbashi districts remained bound to their lineages55 and lines of descent, and that this belonging influenced their actions.

## Lineages in the Local Machinery of Power

How did the logic of the lineage come to structure the system at the most local level? Recruitment of cadres for the local Soviet administrations in the most ethnically homogeneous regions was subject to changing rules, to the extent that the dearth of literate and politically formed individuals among the indigenous populations strongly curtailed the leeway for action. The criterion used to grant responsibilities to an executive of a *raion* was service in the Red Army, which constituted one of the only guarantees of loyalty to the regime, together with having had training experience in a Party institute in Central Asia, a rare occurrence at the end of the 1920s. Recruitment, usually through cooptation or parachuting someone in, followed another fundamental principle, namely purging persons who had occupied a position under the empire and who belonged to a social class of the so-called enemies. But these elementary criteria were, in reality, impossible to observe: during the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s, it was possible to find a certain number of former *volost'* functionaries who owed their advancement to their being a charismatic leader, a wealthy livestock owner, or quite simply having a certain quality owing to their experience.

53 tsga kr (Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Kyrgyzskoi Repsubliki), f. 21, op. 4, d. 117, ll. 12–45, "Doklad o sostoianii raboty Sovetskogo apparata v Atbashinkoi volosti Narynskogo kantona," October/November 1929.

54 Ibid.

55 tsga kr, *f. 1246, op. 1, d. 631, ll. 1–34*, "Dokladnaia zapiska Mukhadzi i Nazaryvskogo v sviazi s proverkoi raboty po osedaniiu v Kirassr," end of 1933.

Whether recruits of local organizations had become right-hand men on account of their careers since the Revolution and their social extraction, or whether there was continuity with pre-revolutionary forms of political authority, they were often regarded by their immediate political entourage according to criteria of lineage; that is, by the very fact of weight of this belonging in the system of identity points of reference. Whomever occupied a position in the rural apparatus in Kirghizia or in the Kazakh steppes was directly associated with the network of relations to which he or she belonged, whether it was referred to in terms of lineage or not. An individual's political choices were understood as those of his group. So much so that, by the mere presence of indigenous individuals in the apparatus, political relations could be read as clan relations in the broad sense of the term.56 The make-up of the apparatus thus resulted from struggles of interest involving groups – lineage groups, in particular – engaged in the local political game. As we have seen, the leaders of Kazakhstan and Kirghizia were aware of this state of affairs, which was thus de facto taken into account when it came to applying strategies formulated at therepublican level for constructing power locally.

As illustrated by a report from the political police of the Ton district (located on the south bank of Lake Issyk-Kul when leaving from the town of Balykchi, situated in the middle of the south coast) dated February 18, 1932,57 a kinship group and a local apparatus could fully coincide. In fact, this report uses the normative wording related to kinship to denounce the various kinship relations that united members of the Party structure and key administrations of the district. It involved the secretary of the Party Community, Kurmanaliev, by distinguishing – as related below – the three types of degree of kinship at stake in his choice of the cadres for the district's leadership: a first degree relating to immediate family, a second degree indicated by the Russian term *rodstvennik*, which probably corresponds to extended family in the sense of the category of *b-a-b,* and lastly to a degree relating to the *uruk* lineage, here *Aryk-tukum*.

As Table 1 shows, the Soviet authorities in Kyrgyzstan relied on their knowledge of kinship relations when selecting local officials. While showing the difficulty, notably, for the informers of the political police to master the categories of Kyrgyz kinship, it displays if not talent, at least some clear pretention for identifying relations and networks, significant issues for surveil- lance in Kirghizia in the 1920s and 1930s. This description is followed by an

56 The concept of clan refers to an interest group rather than to a specifically kinship one.I will use the term in this generic definition.

57 TSGAPD KR, *f. 10, op. 1, d. 437, ll. 7–11*, OGPU report on Balykchi, February 18, 1932.

Table 1 *Kinship Relations among Party Cadres in Ton District, 1932–1933*

| **Family name** | **Place of work or position** | **Degree of kinship with Kurmanaliev, secretary of theParty Committee for the Ton district** |
|---|---|---|
| 1-Sadykov | Department of mass agitation of the Party Committee of the district | Kurmanaliev's son-in-law |
| 2-Sakeeva | "Women" section of the Party Committee of the district | Sadykov's wife, Kurmanaliev's sister |
| 3- Iskhakov | President of the *raikolhozsoiuz*58 | Kurmanaliev's Brother-in-law |
| 4- Bakaev | Vice-director of the office of communications and transports | Relative (*rodstvennik*) |
| 5- Khamekov | Vice-director of the "port" | Relative |
| 6- Khamzamulin | Vice-president of the Executive Committee of the district | Relative |
| 7- Baïgaziev | Vice-president of the Party's District Committee | Relative |
| 8- Adylov | Procuror | Relative |
| 9- Toktobekov | Secretary of the Party's Regional Committee | Relative |
| 10- Kadyrbaev | Sovkhoz organizer | Relative |
| 11-Sariev | *raikolhozsoiuz* economist | Relative |
| 12- Boltchumbaev | President of the Hunter's Union | Relative |
| 13- Betikanov | President of the *raipotrebsoiuz*59 | From the same lineage (*odnogo roda*) "Aryk-tukum" |
| 14- Atankulov | Inspector at the Health Department | From the same lineage "Aryk-tukum" |
| 15- Djamankulov | Director of a Department of the *Kirpotrebsoiuz*60 | From the same lineage "Aryk-tukum" |
| 16- Abdyldaev | District Section Inspector of the Red Army | From the same lineage "Aryk-tukum" |

58 District organization for the implementation of kolkhozes.

59 District organization tasked with consumption and consumer goods (distribution)

60 Likewise, but at the republic level.

Table 1 *Kinship Relations among Party Cadres in Ton District, 1932–1933* (cont.)

| Family name | Place of work or position | Degree of kinship with Kurmanaliev, secretary of theParty Committee for the Ton district |
|---|---|---|
| 17- Dushembiev | District Section Inspector of the Red Army | From the same lineage "Aryk-tukum" |
| 18- […] | Director of the Complaints Office | From the same lineage "Aryk-tukum" |

analysis of the consequences of this configuration of power for the population of the district. According to the report, the secretary of the Party's District Committee of Ton, Kurmanaliev, had sought to concentrate all the political resources in his hands and to use them to the sole advantage of his allies. In response, the *sel'sovet* of the district, employing all means, began organizing according to the same criteria, the idea being to fight Kurmanaliev – who, owing to his position, controlled many political and material resources – using the same weapons. The lineages that had not managed to get control of an apparatus rallied to the district leader of the political police in order to ensure their protection. Thus, three parties emerged: the Kurmanaliev "clan," small groups of *sel'sovet*, and disgruntled individuals around the OGPU. Now, the Kurmanaliev clan clearly enjoyed the greatest amount of authority, in particular against the OGPU clan, because it grounded its arguments in terms of defending the Kyrgyz against expropriation, particularly the *bay* (wealthy herders) and the *manap* (figures of traditional authority) being deported to Ukraine,61 which was indeed taking place in those years. These promises were concretized by maneuvers that consisted of hiding families under threat and assassinating members of the political police. This situation also imperiled the program of collectivization, which lagged behind schedule and which was unequally distributed among the district's *sel'sovet* and families. Thus, the relation ended with an urgent request for the republic's authorities to intervene.

61 TSGAPD KR, *f. 10, op. 1, d. 434, l. 77*. Letter of the GPU delegate of the Balykchi *raion* to thesecretary of the Party's Kyrgyz Regional Committee, Isakeev, February 15, 1932.

**Using Soviet Political Resources to Advance Tribal Struggles?**

This phenomenon appears even more obviously in another series of reports about the Kyrgyz OGPU62 for Balykchi *raion* during 1931–1932. The territory, a large district including the western shore of Lake Issyk-Kul, was traditionally dominated by the great Kyrgyz tribe of the Sayak, powerful due to its notoriety, its number, and the space that it occupied. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, this district was thus directed by Sayak members: the secretary of the Party Committee of the *raion* (*Raikom*), the heads of the legal authorities (*prokuratura*), the president of the Executive Committee of the *raion* (*raiispolkom*), and the majority of the cadres with leadership positions in the party machinery be- longed to this genealogical line.

According to informers working for the political police, the Sayak domination was undermined when the main local organizations targeted a man identified as belonging to the Kydyk lineage. This man, Kodzhemkulov, presided over a *sel'sovet* close to the Chinese border and worked as a Kyrgyz intermediary with the *Komandatura* of the OGPU tasked with guarding the border with China and stopping contraband, with mostly European personnel. Owing to his position and the obstacle he presented to the lucrative trafficking businesses of some wealthy herders, the *raion's* legal authorities sought to prosecute Kodzhemkulov and remove him from his post. He was charged with "being a hireling of the Russians (*priskhvostnik*) and with preventing his Kyrgyz brothers from doing their business." He had apparently denounced the machinations of smugglers at a regional Party conference, incurring the wrath of all the Sayak political representatives. But the Sayak attack provoked a backlash. The Kydyk members of his lineage, even though they also criticized his collaboration with the OGPU, rallied alongside him to defend Kydyk positions in the apparatus. Faced with this threat, the Sayak used all the legal means at their disposal – means acquired thanks to their functions in the organs of power – to neutralize Kodzhemkulov, even asking the republic's Party Committee to dismiss him as president of the *sel'sovet* on the pretext that he was corrupt and leading a factional group.

The whole affair polarized the Balykchi *raion* to the point that most of the lineages and lines of descent (the report confuses the distinctions and qualifies them both using the Russian term *rod*) sided with one faction or the other. Minor kinship groups took advantage of the situation to denounce the Sayak's project of appointing people exclusively from their line of descent in *raion* positions, at a time when the next *raiispolkom* elections had caused a stir

62 TSGAPD KR, *f. 10, op. 1, d. 434, ll. 96–97*. Note of the OGPU, March 26, 1932.

among the population. Confronted with this situation, the republican OGPU and Party Committee decided to intervene. With the approach of the sowing season, the authorities feared fomenting a "clan" war that could undermine collectivization efforts. The authorities thus decided to dismiss both lineage leaders of the Kydyk and the Sayak and appointed a representative of a lineage uninvolved with this quarrel as president of the *raiispolkom*. However, neither leader was actually punished, only momentarily neutralized. This can be interpreted as a policy of equilibrium in relation to genealogical lines, and it recalls the logic employed at the same time in the Soviet Republic of Turkmenistan, although the scale of the intervention differed radically.63

Whether Kydyk or Sayak, these representatives from rival lineages were well-integrated in the apparatus and manipulated the definitions of kinship used by Soviet bureaucrats. Though the Kydyk and the Sayak stemmed from different categories of kinship groups – the first harking back to the *uruk* or *b-a-b*, the second to a major genealogical line involving a more numerous population– lineage-based mobilization nevertheless played a dominant role in the political struggle, in which identification with a group continued despite the imbalance. The question is to determine what part was played by solidarity to a lineage and what part by its instrumentalization. In fact, while the Sayak used the discourse of "nationality" to denounce their enemies, the Kydyk confronted their foes with a legalistic discourse designed to incriminate them. Thus, the rivalry did not play out by invoking lineage. However, the result of the dispute shows that the mechanisms of lineage solidarity were what turned this interpersonal political conflict into a clan conflict. This is also how the OGPU described the conflict, which tends to prove that lineage solidarity trumped other particular interests: the Kydyk came together even though they did not approve of their man's collaboration with the OGPU. This pattern of rivalry between apparatuses, each associated with a certain lineage, was able to function because the authority of the apparatus was in part based on the cohesion of a lineage. Republican power was perfectly aware of this arrangement, intervening as judge and arbitrator only when the inter-clan struggles threatened its political priorities.

## Loyalty in the Context of Repression: Manipulation of the Lineages

In these conditions, how could forms of loyalty to the Soviet regime exist? How could this social organization of powers fulfill the aims of Soviet policy? Several

63 Adrienne Edgar, "Genealogy, Class, and 'Tribal Policy' in Soviet Turkmenistan, 1924–1934," *Slavic Review*, 60, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 266–288.

situations seem to suggest that the lineage affinities were exploited or manipulated to apply legislation drafted from above. Therefore, one can assume that the intersection between a lineage and a Party cell or administrative unit could be put at the service of the state. This occurred to such an extent that lineages, institutionalized in an apparatus, utilized their traditional prerogatives to implement policies. It could even be concluded that it is only thanks to the lineages' investment in the apparatuses that Soviet policy was indeed applied, at least in ethnically homogenous milieus.

Nonetheless, in the case of Kirghizia we lack precise examples of repression, properly speaking, but they are abundant for Kazakhstan. On several occasions, notably during the repressive episodes at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, relations between lineages were exploited for repressive purposes in Kazakhstan. For example, during the 1928 campaign to "confiscate the goods of wealthy livestock owners and semi-feudal individuals, and to deport them," local Party cells (at the level of the *sel'sovet*) instrumentalized their private relations in the lineages.64 The point was to coax the Kazakh population into denouncing wealthy herders and traditional elites and, on the basis of these denunciations, to establish lists of persons subject to confiscation. In theory, the class criterion ought to have been the basis of this under- taking, with the dominated denouncing the dominant. Instead, the local Party cells, which were perfectly aware of the power of lineage solidarities in the face of "class antagonisms," adopted a peculiar strategy. They mobilized the population's knowledge of rival lineages and their political and economic elites to compile lists of persons whose properties were to be confiscated. To put it differently, the representatives of Soviet power at the level of the *raion* and *sel'sovet* – which were overwhelmingly and often integrally indigenous – relied on kinship groups to implement the policies introduced by the republic, taking advantage of their knowledge of Kazakh society. This method, which consisted of instrumentalizing the pertinent lines of fracture in the local societies, was indeed blatant in the official directives addressed to local cells that came fromthe republican delegation of the Party of Kazakhstan:

> Discussions on the lists of *bai* have to take into account all the ways that the masses in the *aul* could express an opinion, whether by breaking the kinship barriers, by verifying the lists during meetings with the inhabitants of the smallest *auls*, … or by going, if necessary, with each person to their workplace. … The confiscated livestock and other means

64 See chap. 2 *in* Isabelle Ohayon, *La sédentarisation des Kazakhs dans l'urss de Staline. Collectivisation et changement social (1928–1945*) (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2006), 71–105.

> of production [have] obligatorily to be distributed among the poor; these goods are not to be permitted to the lineage to which the suppressed *bai* belong.65

Lineages thus concretely marked the limits of any kind of policy based solely on class categories. But the actors of this policy themselves belonged to a specific filiation, to the extent that confiscation could have been used to settle personal or collective scores, motivated by considerations of genealogical be- longing. Among the documents present in the collection of the confiscation commission,66 there are several testimonies about the instrumentalization of kinship relations for suppressing and neutralizing an enemy with a view to keeping or gaining power. These testimonies, which stem exclusively from grievance letters, eloquently attest to the combination of lineage authority and nascent Soviet power, as well as the reciprocal use of the respective prerogatives of each of them. One letter of grievance dated January 4, 1929, addressed to the Sovnarkom of the Kazakh ASSR, was written by Boshai Moinakov, a native of the Syr-Daria Okrug who had been deported to the Ural'sk Okrug.67 He reported machinations against him that had been motivated by criteria of lineage. He denounced his conviction for being a *bai,* and the seizure of his property and deportation despite his not owning enough livestock to be in- criminated. He accused one of his enemies of taking advantage of his status as a delegate to the Confiscation Commission to get rid of him. Moinakov claimed that his lineage, the Zhaqsybai, was being persecuted for refusing to submit to the Bagul lineage, to which a certain Manabai Mankiev, the son of the lineage head, belonged. He was also one of 15 commission delegates, all of whom, as it so happened, belonged to the Bagul. He added that he had

65 TSGA RK (Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Respubliki Kazahstan), *f. 135, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 92–103*. "Open letter to all the cells of the vkp(b) and all the communists in the *auls*," 1928.

66 TSGA RK, Collection 135 of the "Confiscation Commission of *bai* property," a temporary body created on August 27, 1928, and dissolved in spring 1929, containing the official statements of meetings of the Commission and its regional (*okrug*) and local (*raion*) representations, the work plans of this body, its correspondence with local delegations, the individual files of persons subject to confiscation, possible letters of grievance and victims' appeals, reports on appealing convictions, and notably on deportation. In it one finds handwritten letters expressing grievances and favorable testimonies concerning convicted persons, most often written up in Russian by official state translators and signed by the clumsy hands of often uneducated or illiterate plaintiffs in Kazakh and in Arabic characters.

67 TSGA RK, *f. 135, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 68–70.*

endured a similar machination in Tsarist times, when this same Mankiev was a local elected member, and it led to his deportation for "political incivility."

In this *aul* Number 9 of Ichki-Talas *volost'* in the Taraz region, the population was comprised of 27 households from the Zhaqsybai lineage and of 460 house- holds belonging to the Bagul branch, a report that the bureau of statistics of the *volost'* confirmed. This numerical dominance of one group over another was replicated in the apparatuses that had always been dominated by the Bagul, both in imperial and in Soviet times. Eager to compensate for this imbalance, Moinakov tried to impose his authority and joined the Confiscation Commission. His enemy thus hastened to have him put on the list of *bai* and demanded his arrest by army detachments from the administrative center of the *raion*. His request was turned down, which led him to buy favors from the head of the local militia. The latter then proceeded, accompanied by the representative of the *aul*'s Confiscation Commission, to requisition Moinakov's property, to arrest him, and to drag him into town, from where he was then deported.

## Everyday Uses of Kinship: A Challenge for the Soviet Social Order

The logic of lineage could also be mobilized to subvert the injunctions of Soviet policy and serve the specific interests of the lineages. The coinciding of a Party cell and a lineage thus became the framework for misapplying political priori- ties and misappropriating resources. Not unsurprisingly, cases of subversion were common. In any case, they were the topic of a great number of reports by the political police and of permanent complaints during Party meetings in Kirghizia and the Kazakh Republic. By virtue of the kinship relations that bound local leaders to those they governed, measures of imposition or confiscation, for example, were not applied in line with the rules that he been set.68 The goods granted to the *raion,* or even to the kolkhozes, were redistributed according to relational affinities. In Kirghizia, the president of the kolkhoz Kzyl-Emchek, in Naryn district, distributed fabric rolls sent by the center for the kolkhozians to members of his lineage only.69 These instances confirm the preeminence of lineage solidarities over those of class, confirming that class divisions, had their practices been actually updated, almost never matched lineage divisions. This primacy given to the wording of lineage in the perception the society had

68 TSGAPD KR, *f. 10, op. 1, d. 363, l. 155*, letter to the Party Committee of the *raion* of Alamedin, December 1931.

69 TSGA KR, *f. 23, op. 1, d. 845, ll. 78–93*, "Doklad o bor'be s khisheniem i unichtozheniemskota," 1934.

of itself, in fact, constituted a powerful obstacle to a politics grounded in social differentiation. In these regions, during de-kulakization (1929–1932), only the interventions of troikas from the outside were able to ensure that the policy of repressing the wealthiest herders would be applied. Attesting to this is the example of the head of a Kyrgyz lineage who had escaped several times from expropriation thanks to the complicity of the members and president of his *sel'sovet*, who had provided false testimonies. He was registered as a *bedniak*, a poor herder, though he came from the class of *bai-manap*. This man had secured his "impunity" by promising his daughter to the person in charge of the *sel'sovet* collections. His arrest report, written by the OGPU in 1931, states that, at the end of the nocturnal operation of dekulakization, members of the *sel'sovet,* including the president, came to pay homage to the wealthy Kyrgyz herder, embraced him, and bade him farewell in the presence of the troika.70

The gift of a young woman was common in the societies of Central Asia, especially in times of crisis. In Kazakhstan, for example, in *aul* Number 2 of the Malasar *raion* in the Alma-Ata Okrug, the plenipotentiary responsible for the collections, eager to marry off his son, asked a poor man to offer him his daughter; in exchange, he would record that the man had fulfilled his part of the plan, in lieu of a *kalym*. The *kalym*, the goods that the family of the future spouse had to give to the fiancée's family, was a *sine qua non* condition for marriage, but it had been forbidden by Soviet law. The *kalym* nevertheless remained a fundamental concern for families. For a Kazakh household to consent to give a daughter "free of charge" in exchange for a simple exemption from the plan shows how much pressure the collection quotas exerted on families. It simultaneously reveals the power of the plenipotentiary, so overbearing that he was able to obtain daughters-in-law without supplying a *kalym*. This case of manipulation, which the OGPU attributed to the infiltration of the *bay* into the apparatuses, was simply a manifestation of the new relations of power within the *auls*.71

In addition to breaches in doctrine, many subversive acts were recorded concerning the customs of the leaders of *raions*, *sel'sovet*, and sometimes *oblasts*, that were classified as indictable offenses under Article 58 of the USSR criminal code. The criminalization of these acts supplied the language with which the republican authorities of the Party and the OGPU described them.

70 TSGAPD KR, *f. 10, op. 1, d. 363, ll. 87–89*, "Doklad OGPU o predvaritel'nykh itogakh po iz"iatiiukulachko-baimanapkikh khoziaistv," July 1931.

71 A. Berelowitch and V. Danilov, S*ovetskaia derevnia glazami VChK, OGPU, nkvd, dokumentyi materialy,* vol. 3, (1930–1934), Book 1, 1930–1931 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2003), 518.

According to them, these acts implicated the reputation of the Party and the regime and justified exclusion from the Party. The list of indictable offenses includes retrograde attitudes toward women and the tendency to drink, but also a certain number of the social acts and rituals on which the local political elites precisely relied to assert their authority. Apparatus members organized and went to honorific feasts that their supporters planned for them;72 they attended the death anniversaries of lineage members, rituals that not only had strong social significance, insofar as they evoked the great lines of descent, but also contained a religious dimension; and they participated in the equestrian games held in the summer on the high pastures and which were a notable occasion for settling various matters (disputes, alliances, etc.). Apparatus members knew that they were going against the behavioral norms decreed by law, but they nevertheless took part in these rites, which directly contributed to the cohesion of lineage groups. Their presence at these rites was the condition of their support from, and integration into, the society, and guaranteed their legitimacy, of which they made the most in the apparatus.73

## Conclusion

The games of lineages in the Soviet apparatuses were not necessarily acts of resistance or protest. They resulted far more from the secular practices and the social and political organization specific to these societies. In addition, forms of loyalty and transgression were often practiced in combination rather than exclusively within a given apparatus. Indeed, they co-existed in most cases, the strategy endorsed depending on the circumstances and the persons involved. The operationalization of the local indigenized apparatuses in the Kazakh and Kirghiz Soviet Republics can thus be read as the fruit of a reciprocal instrumentalization by central Soviet powers (notably republican ones), on the one hand, and by lineages, on the other. Each side used the means of legitimization that the other side granted. From their position in the apparatuses local leaders obtained a power that conferred on them the status of representatives of the state, whose capacity for violence had already been experienced by

72 Traditional feasts and games were, in the postwar period, not only tolerated by the regime but instrumentalized as places of intervention and of political communication.

73 TSGA PD KR, f. 10, op. 1, d. 155, ll. 127–134, official report of vyezdnaia sessiia partkollegi, village of Karabalta, containing decisions taken against eight party members (*kandidat*) or lower-level state agents (militiaman) for participating in or organizing "traditional" demonstrations, "ash" (obsequies) or "toi" (a feast notably in honor of circumcision).

the population, notably from the beginning of its integration into the Tsarist empire. The republican authorities, by using the wording of Kirghiz and Kazakh kinships, implicitly recognized in those who claimed the authority of a lineage an indisputable efficiency in implementing directives and representing the herder societies. They participated in the building and the updating of the categories they had invested with power. This balance was nevertheless precarious and liable to be undone through purges and other measures de- signed to neutralize the power of the lineages.

Sovietization policies collided with the pastoral societies of Central Asia. But in their implementation, they were constantly redefined by local actors, who adapted or re-routed their use, giving birth to forms of political hybridization. This process was also doubled by an opposite dynamic, one comprising multiple forms of resistance to the penetration of a centralized and foreign power, thus revealing the difficulties Central Asian societies faced in endorsing exogenous initiatives. Moreover, the forms of indigenous political autonomy and inertia entailed by the presence of kinship groups in the apparatuses were certainly elements that reinforced the feelings, on the Soviet side at the central and republican levels, that control was being lost over the society. These elements then became integrated into the argumentation, characteristic of the great Stalinist turning-point, according to which peasant societies were regarded as uncontrollable communities.74 In this, the violence used to carry out the program of the first Five-Year Plan – measures of collectivization and sedentarization, purges, deportations – can thus be read, locally, as the central government's confessing its failure to "indigenize" local party organs.

Despite organizing party organs in accordance with kinship relations in regions with pastoral herding and strong Kazakh or Kyrgyz majorities, as this article has shown, and despite the hostility of the regime to this functioning and its concomitant frailty, the question arises of the mutual adaptation of the Soviet logics and the logics specific to indigenous political cultures, as well as of the combining of forms of legitimacy and loyalty. Despite purges and other phenomena that weakened the political resources of the lineages, it appears

74 Benjamin Loring reports that the very same suspicion toward lineage groups was expressed in the list of grievances against the Kirghiz of the South of the country. See Benjamin Loring, "Rural Dynamics and Peasant Resistance in Southern Kyrgyzstan, 1929–1930," *Cahiers du monde russe*, 49, no. 1 (2008): 199–200. There have been many studies regarding how rural societies in the USSR might have been obstacles to the revolutionary project, whether socially or economically speaking. See Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 234–240.

that the political duplicity that emerged through the meeting between two forms of power and loyalty lastingly structured local power in the Kazakh and Kirghiz Soviet republics, sometimes working to thwart the Soviet state's ideal and project, and sometimes ensuring its implementation. These practices may have helped embed the Soviet system in lineage societies and constituted forms of appropriation of the new regime, at least in the first stage of the construction of power in the interwar period. During the Soviet history of Kazakh and Kyrgyz societies, the social content of the lineages evidently evolved, as did the society's commitment to them.75 Its resurgence today, in completely reconfigured discourses and realities,76 ought to give us reasons to revisit the Soviet itinerary of these forms of the social and the political after Stalinism.

---

75 Bertrand Bouchet, "Tribus d'autrefois, kolkhozes d'aujourd'hui," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 59, no. 1 (1991): 55–69.

76 Svetlana Jacquesson, "From Clan Narratives to Clan Politics," *Central Asian Survey*, 31, no. 3 (2012): 277–292; Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).