

Kazakh Nomads and the New Soviet State,
1919-1934

A thesis submitted in candidacy
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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July 2015

Abstract

Of all the Tsar's former subjects, the Kazakh nomad made perhaps the most unlikely communist. Following the Russian Civil War and the consolidation of Soviet power, a majority of Kazakhs still practised some form of nomadic custom, including seasonal migration and animal husbandry. For the Communist Party, this population posed both conceptual and administrative challenges. Taking guidance from an ideology more commonly associated with the industrial landscapes of Western Europe than the expanse of the Kazakh Steppe, the new Soviet state sought nevertheless to understand and administer its nomadic citizens. How was nomadism conceptualised by the state? What objectives did the state set itself with regards to nomads, and how successfully were these objectives achieved? What confounded the state's efforts?

Using a range of archival documentation produced by Party and state, scholarly publications, newspapers and memoir, this thesis assesses the Soviet state's relationship with Kazakh nomads from the end of the Civil War to the beginning of the collectivisation drive. It argues that any consensus about the proper government of nomadic regions emerged slowly, and analyses the effect on nomads of disparate policies concerning land-ownership, border-control, taxation, and social policies including sanitation and education. The thesis asserts that the political factor which most often complicated the state's treatment of nomads was the various concessions made by the Bolsheviks to non-Russian national identity. Meanwhile the state also made some concerted efforts to adapt itself to the nomadic lifestyle of the Kazakh population.

The thesis concludes with a summary of the sedentarisation campaign 1928-1934, in which nomadic communities were collectivised and brutally forced to settle. But the thesis' central focus is on the years preceding sedentarisation, which have received comparably less attention in the historiography and, the thesis argues, represent a distinctive period for the state's treatment of Kazakh nomads.

Acknowledgements

Without funding from the AHRC and the support of the Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies at Sheffield, this project would not have been possible. I am further grateful to the University of Sheffield for its generosity during my period of paternity leave. Staff at KazNU, based in Almaty, were kind enough to sponsor my Kazakh visa, attend to associated paperwork, and advise on my research in Kazakhstan.

Miriam Dobson and Craig Brandist have been excellent doctoral supervisors. While allowing me the space to take my research in the direction I chose, they provided careful assessments of my work which helped me to avoid myriad errors and to develop ideas I was barely aware that I had. Most important of all they have always maintained enthusiasm (or the convincing impression thereof) for my project from beginning to end, even when my own passion occasionally failed me.

Also at Sheffield, fellow PhD students, researchers and staff have helped to keep the university the vibrant, inspiring institution I first embraced as an undergraduate. I am hugely grateful to Susan E. Reid, Oliver Johnson, Neil Bermel, Amanda Power, Adam Fergus, Hannah Parker and Oleg Korneev for their various contributions. Special thanks are due to Natalia Skradol for her kindness and guidance and most of all to Dagmar Divjak, without whom I would never have embarked on a doctoral project.

My time in Moscow was immeasurably improved by the friendship and advice of Rita Rebetskaya, Isabelle Kaplan, Elena Dosse and family, and by the hospitality and boundless generosity of Delgira and Dolgan Monhaevar. I am thus also especially grateful to Waldemar Petker for introducing me to Delgira and Dolgan and for helping me to arrange my research trips.

In Almaty, Saule Uderbayeva patiently and kindly helped me in countless ways, including showing me the city and its history, jumping various administrative hurdles, explaining some archival procedures, and for introducing me to Talas Omarbekov, to whom I am also grateful for his immensely useful advice. Rustem Kubeyev did a great deal to make me feel welcome in Almaty, and has been a tirelessly accommodating friend and colleague. Marysia Blackwood and Kimberly Ann Powers shared some of their expertise and experience with me and further improved my trip to one of the friendliest cities I've had the pleasure to visit. In this regard, I must also express my gratitude to the anonymous hero who drove me to my second hotel in the centre of Almaty during my first few days of unexpected near-homelessness. In close connection

I would also like to thank Beatrice Penati and Alexander Morrison, who have been extremely helpful in the development of my thesis and who did much to assist me when finding last-minute accommodation in Almaty.

I also owe a debt to numerous experts who have generously provided guidance from afar: Matthew J. Payne, Sarah Cameron, Francine Hirsch, Vera Tolz, Peter Gatrell, Bhavna Davé, Ben Sawyer and Ian Campbell.

Friends and family outside of university have supported me throughout my research and suffered my growing interest in Kazakh history with good humour. My parents especially have been reliable and encouraging with the same quiet bemusement with which they have greeted many of my past endeavours.

Finally, since I began my doctoral project I have become a husband and father, and my greatest debt is to Kathryn and Imogen for reminding me of what is really important in life.

To my parents.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

Within the history of the Soviet Union, the treatment of Kazakh nomads by Party and state covers a substantial portion of the polity's early years, as by the mid-1930s the tale has largely reached its denouement. But situated in the history of Central Asian nomadism, this same story occupies a comparably smaller area at the concluding end of the timeline. Though the events which took place on the Kazakh Steppe in the 1920s are in many ways distinctly Soviet, therefore, we glean some perspective from the broader context of Central Asia's nomadic past and its earlier dominance of Russia.

Nomadism was once the foremost social and economic form on the Kazakh Steppe. The impact of Mongol invasion, perpetrated by great nomadic armies led by the descendants of Ghengis Khan, was so sudden and profound, Svat Soucek argues, that the histories of Russia, China and Central Asia can each be divided into periods before and after Mongol rule.¹ Many of the Mongolian Empire's territories, including large swathes of Eurasia, had already been nomadic in character, but in some places sedentary cultures had existed and were altogether extinguished.² Russia or Rus', then a collection of city states led principally by Kiev, had long been challenged by Eurasian nomads but was in the thirteenth century comprehensively overrun and made subservient to the Golden Horde.³

Emerging out of the Mongolian Empire, the Golden Horde was, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, a vast, powerful and resilient polity.⁴ Its rulers eventually adopted a sedentary way of life but David Morgan argues that the nomadic lifestyle practiced by much of its population enabled it to continue exploiting the sedentary cultures of Russia, leading to the prosperity and longevity of the Horde.⁵ Charles J. Halperin suggests that the Golden Horde represented a 'delicately balanced symbiosis' of sedentary and nomadic elements.⁶ Rule by nomads had a notable impact

¹ Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 103.

² Ibid., pp. 114-115. Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 51-52.

³ Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 10-20. The Golden Horde is sometimes referred to as the Kipchak Khanate.

⁴ Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, p. 162.

⁵ David Morgan, *The Mongols*, Second ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 151.

⁶ Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, p. 26.

on the Russian psyche and, some have argued, on Russia's later governing institutions.⁷ Such was the gravity and humiliation of the defeat, Russia's intellectuals lacked the linguistic and theological tools necessary to properly understand and communicate conquest by a non-Christian force of such might.⁸ Yet Russia inherited some of the old nomadic empire's structures for taxation and administration, and Muscovy emerged as the centre of Russian military and political power by competing with other cities for their nomadic rulers' favour.⁹ Moscow would remain the Russian capital until it was replaced by Saint Petersburg in 1713, and again served as capital after the Russian Revolution, demonstrating Moscow's continuing significance and, by implication, the Mongols' continuing legacy.

The eventual rise of Russian authority based in Muscovy was concurrent with and connected to the disintegration of the Horde. 1502 is typically taken as the final year of the Golden Horde's existence, after which it disintegrated into various khanates and conglomerations of nomadic clans which would eventually be annexed by the expanding Russian Empire.¹⁰ At this time Moscow was the dominant military power in the region, and within a relatively short period the balance of power had been tipped entirely in European Russia's favour, that is, in the favour of a sedentary culture.¹¹

The word 'Kazakh' has been granted various origins. Some make reference to a Central Asian myth about a white goose.¹² Some suggest the word comes from two others: 'true nomad'.¹³ Martha Brill Olcott states that *qaz* is a Turkic word meaning 'to wander', and some have associated this with the Kazakh title and their nomadic heritage.¹⁴ Michael Khodarkovsky offers another translation of Kazakh, as 'fugitive, freebooter', in his description of the origins of the people themselves, who emerged out of one of the khanates which formed the old Mongol Empire and by the late 1500s had come to control 'enormous pasturelands from the Yaik in the west to the Irtysh in the

⁷ Karl A. Wittfogel, 'Russia and the East: A Comparison and Contrast,' *Slavic Review* 22, no. 4 (1963), pp. 627-643.

⁸ Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, pp. 61-64.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-60.

¹⁰ Morgan, *The Mongols*, p. 128.

¹¹ Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 20.

¹² Shirin Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State, Former Soviet South Project* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995), p. 11.

¹³ Didar Kassymova, Zhanat Kundakbaeva, and Ustina Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), p. 142.

¹⁴ Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, First ed., *Studies of Nationalities in the USSR* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), p. 4.

east.¹⁵ There is a consensus among historians that by this time Kazakh society had a tripartite structure, with clans divided into one of three *Juz* (meaning 'hundred'): a younger, middle and elder *Juz*, each occupying different parts of the Kazakh Steppe.¹⁶ The Kazakhs were a nomadic people who spoke a Turkic language.¹⁷

Russian colonial occupation of the Kazakhs, which came before the conquest of the other four Central Asian populations to eventually be granted their own Soviet Republic (Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Uzbeks and Tajiks), was facilitated by technology, particularly gunpowder. The geographical proximity of Russia to the Kazakhs' land, and concerted Tsarist administrative efforts, caused the area now known as northern Kazakhstan to be occupied by sedentary Russian farmers in ever larger numbers.¹⁸ A steady rate of encroachment became in the late nineteenth century a heady race southwards for Russian officers, motivated in Alexander Morrison's formulation by a search for a 'natural frontier'.¹⁹

Russian colonial occupation had the effect of causing some nomads to settle, but the Tsar's administration in Central Asia was sparse and its effect on the everyday life of Kazakhs, in comparison to the tidal wave of interference which was to follow the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, was less immense, hurried, and unilateral.²⁰ Clan loyalties were attacked and Orthodox Christianity was endorsed by wandering missionaries.²¹ Seismic changes did begin to gather pace in the early twentieth century, when an appalling famine in 1916 combined with an attempt to conscript Kazakhs into military service to create widespread unrest and the rise of the Basmachi.²² In 1917, when the Winter Palace was stormed, Russian rule on the steppe was predominant but sedentary culture was not quite the norm. Nomadic features of life, most importantly migration, remained substantially in evidence in the Tsar's governor-generalships.

* * *

¹⁵ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, pp. 12, 13.

¹⁶ Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, pp. 195-196. Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, pp. 12-13. Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire; A Guide*, First ed. (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1985), p. 69.

¹⁷ Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, p. 29.

¹⁸ Bhavna Davé, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 38.

¹⁹ Alexander Morrison, 'Russia, Khoqand, and the Search for a "Natural" Frontier, 1893-1865,' *Ab Imperio* 2 (2014), pp. 1-27.

²⁰ Wayne Dowler, *Classroom and Empire: The Politics of Schooling Russia's Eastern Nationalities, 1860-1917* (London: Ithica, 2001), p. 140. Davé, *Kazakhstan*, p. 36.

²¹ Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, p. 197.

²² The Basmachi engaged in violent resistance and banditry in Central Asia as the Tsarist Empire began to collapse. Martha B. Olcott, 'The Basmachi or Freeman's Revolt in Turkestan 1918-24,' *Soviet Studies* 33, no. 3 (1981), pp. 352-369. Jeff Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865-1923* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 183, 197.

The present thesis is the product of doctoral research which was initially concerned principally with issues of identity and nationality in early Soviet Central Asia. Study was guided by research questions relating to religion, language and tribal loyalties and their relationship with communism and nationalism in the 1920s. Due to the relatively diverse range of political voices to be heard before the rise of Stalin was complete, the 1920s appeared the most fruitful period for the study of the panoply of peoples and communities of Central Asia, how they were categorised in a post-revolutionary context, and how they thought of themselves. In comparison to the more censorial decades which constitute the rest of Soviet history, in the 1920s every people seemed to have their spokesperson.

The chronological focus has remained much the same, but amid the gamut of events and processes under consideration an unexpectedly clear and yet understudied story made itself apparent; one which, counter-intuitively, has proven to be less about identity and categorisation than about the lack of those things. Nomadism, often mentioned in analyses of Soviet Central Asia but seldom discussed in depth, was a significant feature of life on the Kazakh Steppe but any role it may have played as a unifying or mobilizing banner in the 1920s was often omitted from the secondary literature. In other words, nomads were presented as a people without a spokesperson. Why? How did the Communist Party relate to and understand nomads? How did nomads traverse the novel ideological terrain laid out by the revolution? How did they deal with the state, and the state with them? Did anyone speak for them?

The decision to focus specifically on Kazakh nomads began largely as a pragmatic one. In the 1920s, that group which became the titular nationality of the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (KASSR) contained the largest single cohort of nomads within the Soviet Union.²³ They therefore represent the largest single case study in the relationship between nomad and state in the early Soviet period. For the purposes of a doctoral thesis, focusing on the nomads of a single national group lends the project a realisable scale and a degree of clarity and specificity. Accurate generalisations can be made about the Party and state's approach because these generalisations are restricted to a single republic with a single Party branch, a single Central Committee and Council of People's Commissars, and a single territorial ambit. Archival holdings in Moscow and Almaty provide ample foundational material for the

²³ Sarah Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934', PhD thesis (Yale University, 2011), p. 5. See also: Ernest Gellner, 'Foreword,' in *Nomads and the Outside World*, ed. A. M. Khazanov (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. xii.

thesis, while holdings in Bishkek, for example, can be logically omitted on this occasion. In spite of this, additionally, some of these general observations can be sensibly applied to other groups of nomads by way of informed speculation.

These simplifications do come with their own further complications. In various ways the category of Kazakh was contested after the revolution, and the republic which became independent Kazakhstan saw its borders expand and contract very considerably, most notably in 1925. Thus the present thesis uses the Kazakh appellation when discussing any year in the period of study in spite of the fact that Kazakh meant different or many different things at different times, and further notwithstanding the earliest uses not of *Kazakh* or even *Kazak* but *Kirgiz* in the Russian language, a problem discussed later in this chapter. Yet this imprecision is justified by the legibility and feasibility it affords the project in a broader sense.

To the very same research questions outlined above, therefore, should be added the word 'Kazakh'. How did the Communist Party relate to and understand Kazakh nomads? How did Kazakh nomads traverse the novel ideological terrain laid out by the revolution? How did they deal with the state, and the state with them? Who, if anyone, spoke for them?

In an effort to answer these questions, this thesis provides a broad analysis of the relationship between Kazakh nomads and the state from the end of the Civil War to the conclusion of the sedentarisation drive, that is, from 1919 to 1934. Detail is present but each chapter represents a wide-ranging assessment of a particular policy area, allowing the thesis to give a sense of the general situation on the steppe over a period of fifteen years, but particularly from 1920 to 1928, and including a clear explanation of how things changed.

How did things change? The thesis comes to some conclusions which can be summarised as follows. First, the relationship between state and nomad was never likely to be a simple one, but it does seem to have become a little closer and a little more formalised or systematic as time passed. Due to the disorganisation of the early Soviet state, the erratic application of early Soviet power, the transient nature of nomadic life and widespread ignorance about that life and its habits, nomads first experienced Soviet authority only intermittently and with unpredictable results. Yet there is evidence that, as time passed, Soviet authority was experienced more regularly and consistently by nomads. Some nomads came to negotiate with state

representatives, and these representatives had an appreciable effect on everyday life in the nomadic community, or *aul*, before sedentarisation.

Second, as in most other regards, the management of nomads underwent steady bureaucratic centralisation. This is tightly connected with the more methodological approach taken by the state towards nomads. Legislation, dictating terms to regional administrators but also guarding against localised corruption, became more formulaic and prescriptive. Importantly, this centralisation took place within the Kazakh Republic itself, but less than may be expected in the broader context of rule from Moscow. The KASSR has been described as one of the Soviet republics which most jealously defended its competencies in the early years, but more importantly nomadism was not perceived as a Union-wide concern.²⁴ Consequentially Moscow remained a significant but distant and irregular influence for most of the period under investigation. There is evidence of Kazakh regional institutions negotiating with their republic-level counterparts, and increasingly taking direction from the Kazakh capital, and this appears to have been how much policy was generated, rather than from the instructions sent regularly from the Kremlin.

Third, foremost among the factors which intensified as the decade progressed was the new elite's self-confidence in the face of insurmountable environmental obstacles. A potent mix of post-revolutionary ardour and triumphalism combined with an unshakeable faith in technological and social progress to create a political atmosphere in which extravagant agricultural ambitions were pursued in spite of their impracticality. Further, this was not the kind of impracticality obvious only in retrospect to the reproving historian. The forbidding climactic conditions of the steppe and the infertility of much Kazakh soil became tropes for a diminishing number of dogged sceptics within the Kazakh branch of the Communist Party. Their interventions litter the archival materials bequeathed to us from those tumultuous days.

These arguments are made to a varying extent in each chapter, and as indicated these chapters are chiefly built around policy areas. After a review of the relevant secondary literature in Chapter Two, Chapter Three describes the most typical ways in which nomads were understood by Party members and Soviet-era scholars. Chapters Four to Seven constitute the main body of the thesis, expound its central arguments, and make most use of archival materials. In turn, they address the politics of nomadic

²⁴ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 140.

land use; the role of nomadism in the creation of national borders; taxation policies; and social policies towards nomads. Chapter Eight addresses the sedentarisation drive and Chapter Nine concludes the thesis. To give a further foretaste of the issues and arguments at the heart of the thesis, Chapters Three to Eight are summarised below.

Chapter Three describes how Kazakh nomads were perceived by the Communist Party, state administrators and scholars. This is essential context for following chapters, in that it explains the mindset of those who devised and implemented policy. The chapter argues that the overall attitude of the Soviet administration was characterised simultaneously by some consensus and much uncertainty. By 1922 no powerful member of the Kazakh branch of the Communist Party publicly argued that nomadism was a positive feature of steppe life. All agreed that nomadism was squalid, wretched and impoverished. Beyond this relatively simple stance, however, there was no agreement on how nomadism should be managed, and this was a product not of intense disagreement but of disengagement. Policy towards nomads for much of the period was not bolstered with the same acute intellectual struggles which informed policy on class or nationhood, for example. This had profound consequences.

Chapter Four considers the policy area most obviously complicated by the presence of a nomadic population; land ownership and land use. The chapter assesses some of the ways the state sought to regulate land use and resolve the competing interests of nomadic and sedentary peoples, a difficult process made more complex by the presence of inter-ethnic hostilities. The prevailing post-colonial zeitgeist of the early years allowed nomads to benefit modestly from this process, but as the Party's political priorities in the region gave way to macroeconomic aims nomads found their practices more frequently and successfully contested.

Chapter Five analyses four case studies in the delineation and enforcement of the Kazakh Republic's external borders. In three cases, these are borders shared with other Soviet republics. The fourth case concerns the KASSR's only land border with a non-Soviet polity, the Xinjiang province of China. Each example has its own implications for the relationship between nomad and state, but common to all of them are the unsurprising difficulties involved in imposing clear national borders on a highly mobile population. Chapter Five most plainly evidences the problems caused for nomads by the Communist Party's preoccupation with the National Question in non-Russian regions.

Chapter Six considers efforts made to tax nomads. The nature of nomadic life made this process much harder, but beyond this the chapter makes some less predictable arguments. Building on its belief in the inherent poverty of the nomadic lifestyle, the Soviet administration initially made some minor efforts to recognise nomadism in the tax system. Due however to the poverty of the state's understanding of nomads and the problems raised by non-Kazakh nationalities, who made accusations of unfairness, this principle proved unsustainable. The chapter concludes with a discussion of confiscation and the persecution of the *bais*, the wealthier stratum of Kazakh society, in the latter half of the 1920s.

Chapter Seven analyses cultural campaigns conducted among nomads in the 1920s, broadly defined and connected with the concept of *kultur'nost*. Nomads were subject to similar targets on literacy and sanitation, for example, as other members of Soviet society. Indeed, the Party's view that nomads were inherently backward led some to conclude that cultural development might facilitate settlement. It is in the sphere of cultural policy that another trend in the relationship between nomad and state is at its most conspicuous; the Soviet administration's readiness to go mobile, in that it created institutions which physically roamed around the steppe in an effort to engage nomads. The thesis argues that this phenomenon conflicts with our most common notions of the Soviet state.

Chapter Eight draws principally from the relevant historiography to describe and analyse the sedentarisation drive, beginning in 1928 and ending in 1934. The chapter contends that sedentarisation, precisely defined, was the state-sponsored settlement of nomads by violent force, but that the attendant demise of the nomadic lifestyle was also the product of concurrent, mutually-reinforcing processes: famine, repression, collectivisation and population movement.

Importantly, five of the six chapters described above concentrate primarily on the period 1920 to 1928. Primary sources from 1919 are very occasionally cited too. Only Chapter Eight, shortest of the six, engages specifically with the years from 1928 to 1934 and the policies of collectivisation and sedentarisation which define them.²⁵ This was done with intent. As explained in Chapter Two, academic works devoted to the question of nomad and state typically focus almost entirely on the early 1930s,

²⁵ This then explains the period of study suggested by the thesis' title. Though the years 1920-1928 are most comprehensively analysed, some of the earliest references come from 1919, and a brief survey of the years 1928-1934, based primarily but not entirely on historiographical research, comes towards the end of the thesis.

collectivisation, and sedentarisation. Perhaps because talk of sedentarisation was censored in the later Soviet period, because the campaign was uncovered dramatically under Glasnost, and because of the moral outrage the period may provoke, there has been an understandable move towards explaining the shape and origins of sedentarisation in any work concerning Soviet Communism and Kazakh nomadism.²⁶

The response of the present thesis to this trend is twofold. First, it recognises the decade prior to the onset of sedentarisation as a neglected part of the story described in the very beginning of this chapter, and seeks to give the years between the Civil War and the first Five Year Plan its full attention. Second and on a deeper level, it builds on the conviction that sedentarisation, though vitally significant, can have the effect of prejudicing accounts of the Soviet 1920s by appearing to be the natural conclusion of all that took place in those years. The period 1919-1928, by most accounts, thus becomes a preamble to the barbarity of the collectivisation era. This thesis, then, cognisant of the importance of sedentarisation, deliberately prioritises events before 1928. It looks for the origins of sedentarisation in these events, but it also finds in them alternative expository power, as examples of a new Communist state acting in a nomadic region in a post-revolutionary context and confronting problems both ideological and practical. It is this field of analysis in particular which distinguishes the thesis from all related historiographical studies.

Therefore the explanations for how and why things changed through the 1920s, outlined earlier in this chapter, are at most of equal importance to other observations about the general nature of nomadic life after the revolution but before collectivisation. What can be derived from these observations, made in Chapters Three to Seven? To characterise the whole period very briefly; almost no Communist Party members of any consequence hoped or believed that nomadism would endure, and the state wished to incentivise settlement wherever possible. As will be shown, a surprising number of policy positions were conceived as incentives to settlement. Low tax rates for newly-settled nomads are an easily recognisable form of encouragement, but the Party also thought that wealth redistribution (in the form of changing cattle ownership),

²⁶ For a fuller explanation of this trend, see Chapter Two. Some of the pieces most representative of this academic drive are: M. K. Kozybaev, Zh. B. Abylkhodzhin, and K. S. Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane: tragediia krest'ianstva* (Alma-Ata: Ministerstvo narodnogo obrazovaniia Respubliki Kazakhstan, 1992). Talas Omarbekov, *Golomodor v Kazakhstane: prichiny, masshtaby i itogi (1930-1931 g.g.)* (Almaty: Kazakhskii Natsional'nyi Universitet im. Al'-Farabi, 2009). Zere Maindanali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana v gody nasil'stvennoi kollektivizatsii* (Almaty: KazNU im. al'-Farabi, 2003). Zh. B. Abylkhodzhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstana: Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie aspekty funktsionirovaniia i transformatsii (1920-1930-e g.g.)* (Alma-Ata: Gylym, 1991).

education, and fostering heavy industry would diminish nomadic numbers. Such measures were sometimes part of larger political and economic state agendas, and their effect on nomads, notional or otherwise, was often an afterthought. Most initiatives intended to change nomadic life were implemented in an ad hoc or haphazard manner, at least until 1928.

Frustrations emerged among administrators because nomads were hard to find, their herds hard to count, and their practices were more resilient than expected. To overcome these challenges the state sought to earn the loyalty of nomads and to improve the frequency and consistency of its interactions with them, and these dual aims were in fact one and the same. To increase the state's presence in the most remote rural areas of Kazakhstan was to impress the state's worldview upon those occupying these areas, earning new Party representatives among nomads who would then collaborate with the authorities to at least a small degree. Building a state apparatus which could effectively govern nomads meant including nomads in state and Party structures through elections, committee appointments and judicial hearings. Where new Soviet institutions were made in the image of sedentary Russian administrative organs, or where the Soviet system adopted old Tsarist sedentary Russian administrative organs and allowed them to remain as such, their chances of affecting nomadic life in any nuanced way were slimmer than if they adapted to the migratory habits of their charges.

In summary, the present thesis is a broad survey of the relationship between Kazakh nomad and Soviet state from 1919 to 1934. It seeks to explain events beginning in 1928 and associated with the collectivisation drive, but places special emphasis on the years 1919 to 1928 and aims to analyse the treatment of nomads by Party and state in these years without the context of collectivisation. It does so by considering Soviet perceptions of nomads and Soviet policies on land, national borders, taxation and culture. It identifies some of the central difficulties experienced by the state, such as lack of knowledge about nomadic custom and the problems of administering a mobile population. It credits the state with some limited successes, associated mostly with those institutions which adapted to the nomadic lifestyle of the population. It assesses the importance of Communist ideology, but also the significance of the Tsarist Empire's cultural and institutional legacies and a more general faith in progress and technological development after 1917. Before moving on to where all this places the thesis in relation to other historiographical contributions, the topic of Chapter Two,

there are essential questions regarding the thesis' stylistic choices and source base which must be addressed.

* * *

In this thesis, translations, transliterations and the spelling of certain proper nouns are complicated by the use of Russian-language sources and by the frequent appearance in these sources of words of Kazakh origin written in Cyrillic, often in a variety of renderings. For the purposes of clarity and consistency one method of communicating each foreign word or phrase has been chosen and repeatedly used. Where Kazakh words have been encountered in the source material transliterated into Cyrillic, a second transliteration has been made directly from the Cyrillic into the Latin alphabet.

The most complex linguistic decision involved use of the word Kazakh. That historical group now referred to as Kazakhs was generally described in Russian as *Kirgiz* until 1925, with those now called Kyrgyz being distinguished from Kazakhs and most commonly called *Kara-Kirgiz*. In 1925, the year of the national delimitation of Central Asia, those associated with contemporary Kyrgyzstan became *Kirgiz* and Kazakh was written *Kazak*.²⁷ This was later adapted to *Kazakh* to distinguish Kazakhs from Cossacks, whose name was also written *Kazak* in Russian. While some English-language publications now choose to write the nationality as Kazak, the present thesis has opted for the more commonly used and recognisable Kazakh.²⁸ To avoid confusion, Kazakh is also used as the translation of *Kirgiz* when the latter was applied before 1925 to the people and institutions of the republic which would eventually become Kazakhstan. For example the pre-1925 *Kirgizskoi Sovetskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respublik* (KSSR) will be translated as the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic.²⁹

Within the category of Kazakh there is the more important but no less ambiguous category of nomad. As noted by Niccolò Pianciola, Soviet state and Party sources are frustratingly vague about their definition of nomadism. The use of the word *kochevnik* may sometimes be used in archival materials to describe the rural population, sometimes transhumant animal herders, and sometimes nomads defined more strictly

²⁷ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. v.

²⁸ Michael R. Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation', PhD thesis (Georgetown University, 2005). Niccolò Pianciola and Susan Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe. The Collectivization of Agriculture and the Kazak Herdsmen, 1928-1934,' *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 45, no. 1/2 (2004), pp. 137-191.

²⁹ There are a small number of exceptions to this rule where the specific ethnonational categories in use are particularly important.

as pastoralists who migrated all year. The phrase *chisto kochevnik*, implying the latter type, is intermittently encountered, as is *otkochevnik*, which Pianciola translates as 'ex-nomad' or in certain contexts 'refugee' but Matthew J. Payne translates as 'displaced nomad'.³⁰ Transhumance and nomadism differ in vitally important ways, of course, as does the distinction between a merely rural Kazakh and a non-sedentary one. Yet, in common to some extent with Pianciola and the work of other academics such as Payne and Sarah Cameron, the present thesis has opted to use the words 'nomadic' and 'nomad' to describe all the individuals and social phenomena under discussion.³¹ This is for a number of reasons.

As will be argued, the story of Kazakh nomadism in the 1920s is often one about the lack of clear categorisations and identities. Soviet authorities, who provided most accessible sources on the period, appear able only occasionally to have specified accurately what level or kind of nomadism was under question when a particular source was produced. Such was the deficit of reliable, coherent data on nomads that many statistics found in Soviet reports and appraisals are plainly little more than conjecture. Thus it would be an arduous and possibly fruitless task for a historian to make such distinctions, relying on speculative interpretations of speculative assertions. Furthermore, even when Soviet authorities were in a position to distinguish between nomads, transhumant cattle herders and temporary migrants, they may have chosen not to because generally in the state and Party's view what mattered was a Kazakh's behaviour and the effects of that behaviour. Where forthcoming, sources can be misleading. Where informed, sources appear reticent.

More significantly, the distinctions between habitual and temporary migrations of varying distances and frequencies are not vitally important in this thesis' analysis. Whether a Kazakh migrated only under pressure, habitually but only twice a year, or habitually but year round, conflict emerged over their transience in that instance that they interacted with Soviet power. To that effect the thesis would omit relevant historical episodes from its survey if it only studied the state's relationship with *chisto kochevniki*, because the same dynamic was at play in the case of formerly or partially

³⁰ Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' p. 141. Niccolò Pianciola, 'The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931-1933,' *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 25, no. 3/4 (2001), p. 242. Matthew J. Payne, 'Seeing Like a Soviet State: Settlement of Nomadic Kazakhs, 1928-1934,' in *Writing the Stalin Era: Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet Historiography*, ed. Golfo Alexopoulos, Julie Hessler, and Kiril Tomoff (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2011), p. 59.

³¹ Note also that Pianciola in his piece uses the word 'herdsmen', which is appropriate in some circumstances but, for the purposes of this thesis, does not adequately convey the vital concept of migration. Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' p. 141. See also: Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," pp. 59-87. Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis.

nomadic groups. It is this dynamic which is of interest, and it is the product of Kazakh nomadism in any of its manifestations. As the materials show, even 'ex-nomads' still displayed legacies of the lifestyle in their behaviour, which in its effects was also a problem for the regime and therefore of interest. It is perhaps for the same reasons that other historians have made a similar judgement. Though only 'approximately 25% of the Kazak population ... was *fully* nomadic on the eve of the revolution [emphasis added]', it is often claimed simply that 'nomads' constituted the majority of the Kazakh population under early Soviet stewardship.³² Whereas Pianciola prefers to assert that only 23 percent of the Kazakh population was 'entirely sedentary', Jeremy Smith chooses to suggest that '77 percent of Kazakhs were classified as nomadic or semi-nomadic.'³³ The effect for the thesis is the same; over three quarters of Kazakhs are of substantial relevance to the project and others are not necessarily excluded.

In short, this thesis addresses all aspects of the nomadic lifestyle as it interacted with the Soviet administration. These aspects were manifested in the lives of that relatively small number of Kazakhs who still migrated all year in the 1920s, but they were also present in the lives of other Kazakhs who migrated only twice a year, who pursued transhumance, and who at times were in practice sedentary but who returned to migration whether out of choice or under duress. Aspects of the nomadic lifestyle were also visible in the lives of those Kazakhs who were sedentary for much of the 1920s but who exhibited the legacies of their community's nomadic past. The lives of all these Kazakhs shared certain agricultural habits, predilections and unfamiliarities. They were more likely to move, short or far distances, in response to threat. They were also perceived by Soviet authorities in a certain manner in accordance with their nomadic associations, and treated accordingly. In this sense they were all nomads for the purposes of this thesis' research questions.

Given this, the inaccuracy and reticence of Soviet state sources on the *precise* nature of a Kazakh's behaviour is less of an obstacle for the thesis than may otherwise have been assumed. But the source base certainly does have its weaknesses. With the exception of some journalistic and academic texts and one memoir, this thesis relies on archival documentation produced by the Communist Party or the Soviet state. In a few cases this includes petitions and letters submitted by nomads, but due to the

³² Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' p. 141. Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 3.

³³ Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' p. 140. Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 105.

widespread illiteracy of the nomadic population and its lack of fluent Russian speakers, these petitions and letters are likely to have been translated and transcribed by at least one official. The tendency of the Soviet state to operate in the Russian language in the 1920s places a blockade between nomad and historian, as does illiteracy and of course the selective bias of Soviet petition-takers and archivists. Remaining sources discuss nomads from the perspective of the regional committee, People's Commissariat or Politburo, and therefore exude the assumptions, prejudices, misunderstandings and wilful falsehoods of bureaucrats and Party members who were either sedentary Central Asians or from elsewhere, usually European Russia.³⁴

As the central focus of this thesis is the relationship between nomad and state in the 1920s, these features of the source base are not an obstruction. Indeed, to learn about the generation, implementation and results of the state's policies towards nomads, the state's own documentation is the best source of information. But the relative weakness of a nomadic voice amid the cacophony of administrative and Party claims must be acknowledged. How did a nomad interpret the propaganda of the Communist Party or the health inspections of Russian doctors? How were taxes and renewed border controls experienced on a personal level? These questions must remain unanswered. The optimistic projections and euphemistic descriptions of the Soviet materials, which do not properly communicate the brutality of actions sometimes taken against nomads, must also be treated with the usual scepticism. Countervailing narratives from the nomads themselves are scarce.

A final stylistic decision to be addressed relates to the distinction between Party and state. The title of this thesis refers only to the new Soviet state, but the attitudes, policies, members, actions and documentation of the Communist Party are also repeatedly analysed throughout the following chapters. This thesis does not contend that there was no significant difference between Party and state. Rather, it asserts that specifically in their treatment of nomads the Party and state did not differ in a way which is significant for the arguments and conclusions of the thesis. While the Party might be more readily associated with policy formation and the state with policy implementation, for example, the end result is a small group of elites of both Party and state exercising administrative, judicial and ideological power over a larger group defined by their agricultural customs, and it is this dynamic which is here scrutinised.

³⁴ Elsewhere in the thesis some examples of clearly inaccurate claims made by state officials are discussed. For another incidence, Niccolò Pianciola describes Soviet state figures relating to grain quotas in the early 1930s as 'imaginary': Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' p. 181.

In the interests of precision, it might be more accurate to say that this thesis investigates the relationship between Kazakh nomads and Soviet *power*, as manifested in the distinct but (in the context of the case study) similar twin institutions of Party and state. But in the interests of clarity and accessibility, as in its title, this thesis will sometimes refer only to the Soviet state when in fact the Communist Party is also relevant and implied.

* * *

Nomadism was once the foremost social and economic form on the Kazakh Steppe. It is useful to keep this in mind when reviewing the plight of Kazakh nomadism in the 1920s. Though the superiority of nomadic culture over sedentary culture had by then been comprehensively overturned, the same factors which made nomadism so successful may also account for its longevity before Stalinism. To many Communist Party members in the 1920s, nomadism looked like a backward and anachronistic practice which would never withstand the prosperity and progress unleashed in 1917. This is not how nomadism appeared in the early thirteenth century when the concerted conquest of Rus' began. Yet like the Mongol invasion of Rus', the Russian Revolution is an event which can be used to separate two distinct historical periods, so profound were its consequences for all Tsarist subjects, including nomads.

Chapter Two:
Literature Review

In the main body of this thesis, Chapters Three to Seven, much material for discussion has been drawn from archival holdings found in Moscow, Russia and Almaty, Kazakhstan. But analysis of these materials has of course been heavily informed by the works of other historians, who have also provided a good deal of additional detail and insight in their contributions to the secondary literature. The purpose of this relatively brief chapter is to review some of the most pertinent secondary literature for this thesis, evaluating its importance and explaining its various influences. The secondary literature has been grouped into categories for ease of explication. These categories, which will be discussed in order, are: soviet historiography, non-Soviet historiography before 1991, non-Soviet historiography after 1991, Glasnost-era work on sedentarisation (and the period 1928-1934 more broadly), histories of the Kazakh nation, histories of Kazakh nomadism, and histories of Tsarist Central Asia. These categories are not strictly defined, but rather are designed to make clearer their effect on the present thesis. In describing and assessing them, this chapter also reveals the place of the thesis in its broader historiographical context, comparing its approach, aims and conclusions to those of other scholars.

Soviet Historiography

The Soviet Union produced a considerable body of historiographical and anthropological works on the nomads of Central Asia. Given that the political atmosphere and academic output of the USSR varied very considerably over that polity's history, it would be a misleading generalisation to say that these works are all equally astute or deficient in the same ways. Yet, broadly speaking, there are limitations typically associated with Soviet scholarship which can be found among these works as much as among others. Their historical accounts are incomplete due to intense state censorship, meaning the worst abuses of the Communist Party, including sedentarisation, pass without mention. Those events which are discussed are sometimes misrepresented to emphasise the Soviet administration's general benevolence and ideological continuity across time. Anthropological and historical studies are rigidly ideological in their analyses, featuring lengthy passages on the validity and universal applicability of the interpretation of Marxism-Leninism which was *de rigueur* at the time of writing. Certain interpretations of certain factors are

therefore repeatedly used to explain historical and social phenomena, whilst alternative explanations are ignored altogether. The Soviet academic view of the topic under consideration here was therefore partial and subjected to the political motivations of the state.

Nevertheless, Soviet historiography has been considered extensively in preparation for this thesis, and this is for two principal reasons. The first is its influence on other texts. In the Cold War context, access to Soviet archives for foreign scholars was severely curtailed, and academic publications were one of the few available conduits for commentary and data. The bibliographies of English-language studies published before the collapse of the USSR are therefore replete with Soviet scholarship, which must be read and understood in order to understand its influence on non-Soviet historians. The same is true of historians of the post-Soviet space, trained before the collapse but working and writing since. Though now researching in a less censorious political atmosphere, their methodologies bear the hallmarks of the earlier era and studying works from this era makes its legacies clearer. Second, for all its limitations, Soviet historiography contains much original and insightful commentary, as well as a useful corrective against some of the assumptions and axioms of the present age. This case is most clearly made by British historian Ernest Gellner in his foreword to *Nomads and the Outside World*, an anthropological and historical survey by Soviet-trained Anatoly Khazanov. Gellner suggests that a relentless focus on material inequality and social change granted Soviet scholarship a singular insight into nomadic life.¹

A foundational text in the development of Soviet scholarly attitudes towards Kazakh nomads and their history in the 1920s was provided by Boris Ia. Vladimirtsov. His *The Social System of the Mongols: Mongol Nomadic Feudalism*, published posthumously in 1934, was a materialist account of Mongolian society and an explication of nomadic feudalism, a concept Vladimirtsov attributed to the Mongol Empire but which, as will be shown in later chapters, was in use throughout the 1920s among policy-makers.² In explaining the rise of Ghengis Khan, nomadic feudalism allowed Soviet scholars to dismiss alternative factors such as geography or the character of the Mongolian people, the latter of which was deemed part of a racist

¹ Ernest Gellner, 'Foreword,' in *Nomads and the Outside World*, ed. A. M. Khazanov (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. x, xiii.

² B. Ia. Vladimirtsov, *Obshchestvennyi stroi Mongolov: Mongol'skoi kochevoi feodalizm* (Leningrad: 1934). Gellner, 'Foreword,' pp. xiv-xvi.

interpretation.³ But nomadic feudalism was nevertheless a deeply pejorative attribution. Soviet scholarship held that this social form 'had a regressive effect on the socio-economic development of all sedentary peoples incorporated within the Mongol Empire.'⁴ In the Stalinist era the settled view in Soviet historiography was that Mongol rule in Russia had been profoundly injurious, and this perception survived into the late Soviet period.⁵

Later Soviet works engaged to a lesser or greater extent with Vladimirtsov's argument. In his 1957 *The Victory of the Collectivised Farming System in Kazakhstan*, A. Tursunbaev concedes that agrarian development in the 1920s had been far more complicated among Kazakhs because their rural population was more backwards than that of European Russia.⁶ As an example of both the difficulties and the value of Soviet scholarship, Tursunbaev implies that the ultimate settlement of nomads was achieved largely through a system of incentives and land redistribution, but the writer also includes useful statistics on the growth of sedentary agriculture in the Kazakh Republic.⁷

Nomadic feudalism again became the focal point of a debate between Soviet historians in the 1960s and 1970s. S. Tolybekov produced two monographs, the first of which was published in 1959, the latter in 1971.⁸ Both passionately refuted the concept

³ Charles J. Halperin, 'Soviet Historiography on Russia and the Mongols,' *Russian Review* 41, no. 3 (1982), pp. 310-311.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 311. In this Soviet scholarship reversed an earlier rehabilitation of Ghengis Khan and the Mongol Empire overseen by Vasili Bartol'd, a Tsarist Orientalist scholar and colleague of Baron Viktor Rozen, founder of the Saint Petersburg School of Oriental Studies. Bartol'd argued that the Mongol Empire had in fact left a positive legacy of stability and cultural interchange in spite, that is, of the Mongols' 'elemental savagery'. Craig Brandist, *The Dimensions of Hegemony: Language, Culture and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Boston: Brill, 2015), pp. 53-54.

⁵ Halperin, 'Soviet Historiography on Russia and the Mongols,' pp. 308-309. Later in the century geopolitics intervened in this debate. In 1962 academics of the Mongolian People's Republic attempted to rehabilitate Ghengis Khan, complaining that schoolchildren learned about Alexander the Great and Napoleon but not their Mongolian counterpart, a historical figure of at least comparable stature. Reaction in Soviet scholarly circles was highly and immediately critical. The proposed rehabilitation came towards the beginning of the Sino-Soviet dispute, and this heated debate emerged from the fact that China had begun courting Mongolian opinion by citing first the racial solidarity of Mongolian and Chinese peoples and, second, the racial superiority of these peoples over Europeans (Russians), a superiority evidenced by Ghengis Khan's domination of Russians and others. See: Paul Hyer, 'The Re-Evaluation of Chinggis Khan: Its Role in the Sino-Soviet Dispute,' *Asian Survey* 6, no. 12 (1966), pp. 699-700. Robert A. Rupen, 'Mongolia in the Sino-Soviet Dispute,' *The China Quarterly*, no. 16 (1963), pp. 77-79. Hyer, 'The Re-Evaluation of Chinggis Khan,' p. 703.

⁶ A. Tursunbaev, *Pobeda kolkhoznogo stroia v Kazakhstane* (Alma-Ata: Kazakhskoe Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1957), p. 25.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-27, 51.

⁸ S. E. Tolybekov, *Obshchestvenno-ekonomicheskii stroi kazakhov v XVII-XIX vekakh* (Alma-Ata: Kazakhskoe gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1959). S. E. Tolybekov, *Kochevoe obshchestvo*

of nomadic feudalism. In his 1971 *The Nomadic Society of the Kazakhs* Tolybekov criticises earlier scholars for underestimating the immense diversity of Kazakh nomadic life.⁹ The implication of his rebuttal of nomadic feudalism was not that pre-revolutionary nomadic life was harmonious or without need of reform, however. Rather, Kazakh nomadism had both patriarchal-feudal and capitalist features, and had been penetrated by an embryonic market economy which was stratifying economic classes.¹⁰ In terms of Soviet ideology these were significant distinctions, but Tolybekov nevertheless reinforced the same image of a nomadic society in crisis and a benevolent state and Party, whilst simultaneously offering useful information on the nature of Kazakh life and the rate at which it changed. Other Soviet authors did the same; S. B. Baishev's comprehensive *Notes on the Economic History of the Kazakh SSR*, published in 1974, follows a similar pattern.¹¹

G. Dakhshleiger was another prolific historian of the Kazakh Republic, producing monographs, articles and document collections particularly in the 1960s.¹² Again his narrative is of an isolated and fragile nomadic existence, strengthened by the New Economic Policy and liberated willingly, if with difficulty, from exploitative elements by collectivisation.¹³ All these Soviet scholars demonise the *bais*, wealthy members of Kazakh society often treated as analogous with the kulak. They do so as much as any source material produced during the collectivisation period itself.¹⁴ The most critical note struck by Soviet scholars reviewing the collectivisation drive in Kazakhstan is to say that for the nomadic elements of the population the process was slower and more complicated than in sedentary regions.¹⁵

Kazakhov v XVII - nachale XX veka: politiko-ekonomicheskii analiz (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo Nauka Kazakhskoi SSR, 1971). Gellner, 'Foreword,' pp. xv, xviii.

⁹ Tolybekov, *Kochevoe Obshchestvo Kazakhov*, p. 495.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 505-510.

¹¹ S. B. Baishev, *Ocherki ekonomicheskoi istorii Kazakhskoi SSR (1860-1970 gg.)* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo Kazakhstan 1974), pp. 88, 118, 121-123.

¹² Grigorii Fedorovich Dakhshleiger and M. Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane v vosstanovitelnyi period, 1921-1925 gg : sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Alma-Ata: Arkheologiya Zhane Etnografiya Instituty, 1962). G. F. Dakhshleiger, *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie preobrazovaniia v aule i derevne Kazakhstana 1921-1929 gg.* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo 'Nauka' Kazakhskoi SSR, 1965). G. F. Dakhshleiger, 'Kazakhstan nakanune NEPa,' *Voprosy Istorii*, no. 8 (1966), pp. 20-34. G. F. Dakhshleiger, *VI Lenin i problemy Kazakhstanskoi istoriografii* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo 'Nauka' Kazakhskoi SSR, 1973).

¹³ Dakhshleiger, 'Kazakhstan,' p. 26. Dakhshleiger, *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie preobrazovaniia*, p. 311.

¹⁴ Baishev, *Ocherki ekonomicheskoi istorii Kazakhskoi SSR*, pp. 121-122. Dakhshleiger, 'Kazakhstan,' pp. 23-24.

¹⁵ For more of this, see: M. B. Balakaev, *Kolkhoznoe krest'ianstvo Kazakhstana v gody velikoi otechestvennoi voiny 1941-1945* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo 'Nauka' Kazakhskoi SSR, 1971), p. 29.

Ultimately, Soviet historiography of the 1920s should be judged as too restricted in its expression and too dogmatic in its theory to provide any definitive explanation of the relationship between nomad and state in the 1920s and beyond. Yet for its detail about Kazakh nomadic culture, its clear and accurate references to Soviet legislation and its anthropological insights, this body of literature continues to be of use. These latter characteristics are most clearly in evidence in Anatoly Khazanov's *Nomads and the Outside World*, published in English in 1984.¹⁶ Though written in the highly restrictive political atmosphere of the USSR and preoccupied with economic inequalities and development, Khazanov's work includes information on Kazakh nomadic culture in a comparative context with other nomadic groups.

Non-Soviet Historiography before 1991

Long before Khazanov began his research, non-Soviet scholars had taken an interest in Kazakh nomads. Their work was also often produced under the pressurised political circumstances of the Cold War, and initially they glimpsed the Kazakhs through only a very specific prism. Some of the earliest English-language work to engage with Kazakh history, and which suffered most obviously from lack of data, was concerned with the population of Central Asia and its decline during collectivisation. As previously mentioned, non-Soviet studies of the Kazakhs and their early-Soviet history built their analyses on a limited source base prior to 1991, when access to the relevant archives was greatly relaxed.

Frank Lorimer, writing in 1946, noted that the Soviet Kazakh population declined dramatically by 1.5 million individuals between 1926 and 1939. To achieve this figure he interpreted available census materials. He took into consideration both average population increase and the possibility of Kazakh emigration, given the high mobility of the population's nomadic cohort, and qualified his estimate by emphasising the ambiguity of national identity, as it was perceived, in the early USSR.¹⁷ In his *Europe on the Move* published in 1948, Eugene M. Kulischer describes the collectivisation drive as a massive effort to increase cultivated agricultural land and noted that this took place 'at the expense of the natives', and especially nomads, in the Kazakh Republic.¹⁸ Without citing Lorimer directly but by following the same logic, Kulischer too estimates

¹⁶ Anatoly M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

¹⁷ Frank Lorimer, *The Population of the Soviet Union: History and Prospects* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 140.

¹⁸ Eugene M. Kulischer, *Europe on the Move: War and Population Changes, 1917-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 99.

a drop in the Kazakh population of one and a half million people in the early 1930s.¹⁹ Another mention of Kazakh nomads came in *Population Change in Russia and the USSR* in 1966. Here, often quoting Kulischer, the authors again use precisely the same census data from 1926 and 1933, but without further analysis they indicate simply that the settling of nomads caused the Kazakh population to drop by just under a million people.²⁰

Later pieces naturally built their conclusions on previous findings, incorporating together estimates of varying accuracy. Naum Jasny uses the Lorimer quote in his 1949 *The Socialized Agriculture of the USSR*, for example.²¹ As discussed in Chapter Eight, the question of how many nomads perished in the early 1930s remains difficult to assess.²²

Beyond the narrow question of population change, valuable contributions were made to the study of Kazakh history and identity.²³ These still tended towards analyses of quantitative trends, as this was the nature of the information available. Romeo A. Cherot produced an early, useful study of the demographic constitution of Kazakh 'government and Party structure' in 1955, referring to 'nativization' or *korenizatsiia*, discussed in this thesis primarily in Chapter Seven.²⁴ David Lane shared a similar focus in his article on 'ethnic and class stratification' in 1975.²⁵ In arguing that class and the 'urban-rural' dichotomy were more important factors in determining a citizen's status than ethnicity in Soviet Kazakhstan, Lane's analysis concurs surprisingly closely with some claims made later in this thesis.²⁶ An excellent early monograph by George J. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan, 1896-1916*, also offered extensive quantitative analysis, here on the arrival of Europeans to the Kazakh Steppe under the

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 101.

²⁰ J. William Leasure and Robert A. Lewis, *Population Change in Russia and the USSR: a Set of Comparable Territorial Units* (San Diego: San Diego State College Press, 1966), pp. 99-103.

²¹ Naum Jasny, *The Socialized Agriculture of the USSR* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949), p. 323.

²² More recent evidence of the same reliance on census material can be found here: K. S. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, vol. 4 (Almaty: Atamūra, 2010), pp. 284-285.

²³ For a review of what scholarship was available in the mid-1960s, see: Richard Pierce, *Soviet Central Asia: A Bibliography (1558-1966)* (Berkeley: University of California, 1966).

²⁴ Romeo A. Cherot, 'Nativization of Government and Party Structure in Kazakhstan, 1920-1930,' *American Slavic and East European Review* 14, no. 1 (1955), pp. 42-58.

²⁵ David Lane, 'Ethnic and Class Stratification in Soviet Kazakhstan, 1917 - 39,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 2 (1975), pp. 165-189.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 187.

Tsar.²⁷ Though, in contrast to Cherot and Lane, Demko studied pre-Soviet history, he too grants lucid and comprehensive context for the present thesis.

Authoritative qualitative commentary on Kazakh history came later in the period, most notably from Martha Brill Olcott. Her 1981 article 'The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan' exhibited an appreciation for the significance of the collectivization period in the Kazakh Republic.²⁸ As she claims: 'One of the greatest challenges for the sovietologist is to attempt to understand and interpret the events of the 1930s.'²⁹ Olcott accurately contextualises the collectivisation drive in Kazakhstan and identifies some of its main features, such as the chaotic character of the campaign, the difficulty of collectivising nomadic peoples and the establishment of a special Committee on Settlement.³⁰ Yet the Soviet state's actions in Kazakhstan appear less severe and premeditated in this article than in later accounts, evidence of the reliance of English-language scholars on Soviet academic output and its aforementioned reticence on the subject of sedentarisation.³¹ *The Kazakhs*, also by Olcott and published in 1987, suffers too from this reliance on Soviet sources, but remains a seminal English-language text on Kazakh history nonetheless.³² Beginning prior to Tsarist colonisation and ending in the late Soviet era (a second edition covers independence), this account brings together a host of relevant insights into Kazakh cultural, economic, political and social trends, navigating the lacunae in the book's source materials deftly.³³

Further notable English-language works produced before the collapse of the Soviet Union are those which also focused on Soviet Central Asia but through the prism of religion or ethnicity. Perhaps due to a Cold War tendency to overlook the national differences of the region (a tendency which, as will be shown, was very much reversed in later years), Kazakhs were often associated together with other Central Asian groups under the rubric of the USSR's Muslim or Turkic peoples. Prominent examples of this trend include Michael Rywkin, Alexandre Bennigsen, S. Enders Wimbush and H el ene

²⁷ George J. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan 1896-1916* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1969).

²⁸ Martha Brill Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan,' *Russian Review* 40, no. 2 (1981), pp. 122-142.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 129.

³¹ Olcott claims: 'The drive to settle the Kazakh nomads remained in large part restricted to paper as the regime was unable to provide the necessary material or technological assistance to fulfil the task.' *Ibid.*, p. 133.

³² Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, First ed., *Studies of Nationalities in the USSR* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987).

³³ Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, Second ed. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press 1995).

Carrère D'Encausse, among others.³⁴ Such pieces often provide useful introductory information on the Kazakhs and other Central Asian peoples, and give some valuable interpretations of the effect of new Soviet power on Islamic communities after the revolution, but typically omit the question of nomadism.³⁵

Non-Soviet Historiography after 1991

After the collapse of the USSR and the 'archival revolution', historiography on the Soviet period was transformed by the considerable increase in available source material and the new analytical models this material allowed.³⁶ Of all the new categories of historiography to emerge from outside the post-Soviet space in the post-Soviet period, the history of Kazakhs and Kazakhstan has been most often discussed in literature addressing the National Question.

In the introduction to *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, published in 2001, Terry Martin and Ronald Grigor Suny associate themselves with an ongoing effort to repudiate some widespread assumptions about the early history of the USSR, assumptions they respectfully attribute to the work of Richard Pipes. For Suny and Martin, Pipes' account – of the Bolsheviks sweeping away the rights of national groups – pays insufficient attention to the Communist Party's attempts not to obliterate non-Russian nationalism, but to endorse and nurture it.³⁷ Suny and Martin should therefore be associated with a group of other historians, among them Yuri Slezkine and Francine Hirsch, who argue that the Communist Party expended much intellectual and administrative energy in the early Soviet period supporting national identities and creating governing structures to represent them.³⁸

³⁴ Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union* (London: KPI, 1986). Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire; A Guide*, First ed. (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1985). Hélène Carrère D'Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1988). Yaacov Ro'i, ed., *The USSR and the Muslim World: Issues in Domestic and Foreign Policy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1984). Michael Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1982).

³⁵ Zeki Togan was a prominent Turkologist who published on the origins of the Kazakh people: Zeki Velidi Togan, 'The Origins of the Kazaks and the Özbeks,' in *Central Asia Reader: The Rediscovery of Central Asia*, ed. H. B. Paksoy (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1994).

³⁶ Donald J. Raleigh, 'Doing Soviet History: The Impact of the Archival Revolution,' *Russian Review* 61, no. 1 (2002), pp. 16-24.

³⁷ Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, 'Introduction,' in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 4-5. For Pipes, see: Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union, Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*, 6th ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

³⁸ Ronald Grigor Suny, 'Don't Paint Nationalism Red!': National Revolution and Socialist Anti-Imperialism,' in *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then*, ed. Prasenjit Duara (London:

As a prominent non-Russian group which became an official nationality with its own republic, Kazakhs and their treatment by the Soviet administration warrant frequent mention in this body of literature. We learn from Jeremy Smith's 1999 *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, for example, that settling Kazakh nomads were formally granted the best land in the early 1920s to encourage them to relocate and create a majority of Kazakhs within their republic.³⁹ In his later work *Red Nations*, Smith dedicates considerable attention to nomads and the sedentarisation drive.⁴⁰ Michael Rouland has considered the role of Kazakh folk music in the development of a Kazakh national identity, whilst also engaging extensively with the settlement of nomads, arguing that 'Without understanding the economic and social upheaval in Kazakhstan with the onset of Stalin's drive towards collectivisation, it is difficult to comprehend the momentous cultural changes of the 1930s.'⁴¹

The nation-making paradigm and its advocates have influenced the present thesis more than any other discrete group within the historiography. To take an obvious example, Francine Hirsch's work on the Soviet census of 1926 inspired much of Chapter Three.⁴² Chapter Five, on the effect on nomads of the Kazakh Republic's external borders, has been made possible by extensive work on the delimitation of Central Asia into distinct national territories.⁴³ Furthermore, in general terms, the manner in which these authors characterise the motives and priorities of the Communist Party is reflected in the analysis and conclusions of this thesis. The idea that Bolshevik power was not simply relentlessly destructive and homogenising, but

Routledge, 2004). Suny, "The Empire Strikes Out". Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). Yuri Slezkine, 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,' *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994). Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small People of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). See also: William Fierman, 'The Soviet "Transformation" of Central Asia,' in *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, ed. William Fierman (Oxford: Westview Press, 1991). William Fierman, ed., *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1991). Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia, Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

³⁹ Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-23* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. 90.

⁴⁰ Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 105-106.

⁴¹ Michael R. Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation', PhD thesis (Georgetown University, 2005), pp. 272, 272-312.

⁴² Francine Hirsch, 'The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category Nationality in the 1926, 1937 and 1939 Censuses,' *Slavic Review* 56, no. 2 (1997), pp. 251-278.

⁴³ Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, pp. 66-107. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 31-124.

could also be productive and responsive to non-Russian social realities, is a foundation stone upon which this thesis' conclusions lie.

Yet the utility of the nation-making paradigm is, in an instructive way, restricted, and the 1926 census mentioned above is a useful case in point. As argued in Chapter Three, the Soviet census is an example of the Communist Party's preoccupation with national identities and the efforts it made to study and govern those identities. The intellectual and administrative efforts it made when studying and governing nomads, however, were tiny in comparison. In an important way, this thesis will argue, the Communist Party overlooked the significance of the nomadic lifestyle because it had fixed its gaze on national identity in Central Asia. It was, in a sense, distracted by the National Question. For understandable reasons the historiography on the National Question has repeated this mistake. Kazakhs and nomadism, though addressed in much recent historiography of the Soviet era, are often discussed only in the context of Communist efforts to formalise Kazakh national identity. This has affected the presentation of the topic. In spite of being a non-national category (in that little of it was unique to the Kazakh nation and nor was it considered so), nomadism has most often been analysed as an interesting but peripheral variable in the nation-making process. This thesis hopes to place nomadism at the centre of attention, with nation-making, important as it is, made a variable in the governance of nomads.

Beyond the nation-making paradigm, there are scholars based outside of the post-Soviet space whose research is more closely in keeping with work being produced in independent Kazakhstan. As will be discussed, this makes their research part of an effort to create a national history for the country beginning long before 1917. Bhavna Davé and Shirin Akiner may be cited in this context.⁴⁴ Davé for example explicitly questions the view that Kazakh national identity was forged in the 1920s by the policies of the Communist Party, pointing instead to 'culturalist narratives of Central Asian history'.⁴⁵ Alternatively Shoshana Keller, Douglas Northrop and Marianne Kamp are scholars whose work continues in the tradition of research into the religious factor in early Soviet Central Asia, including Kazakhstan or focusing particularly on gender.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Shirin Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State, Former Soviet South Project* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995). Bhavna Davé, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power* (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁴⁵ Davé, *Kazakhstan*, p. 41.

⁴⁶ Shoshana Keller, 'Conversion to the New Faith: Marxism-Leninism and Muslims in the Soviet Empire,' in *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, ed. Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 311-

Glasnost-era work on sedentarisation

As will be argued, post-Soviet historiography produced in Kazakhstan has also developed a preoccupation with the origins and characteristics of the Kazakh nation. But initially the collapse of the USSR had a very different impact in Kazakhstan. It was nomadism which was thrown into stark relief in the Glasnost and immediate post-Soviet periods by a new body of literature. Sedentarisation appears to have become one of the many political secrets which were publicised in revelatory terms under Mikhail Gorbachev, provoking greater interest in the Kazakhs' nomadic heritage. Works which uncovered sedentarisation, written by Soviet-trained scholars experiencing new levels of academic freedom, are sometimes characterised by a jolting mixture of formulaic Marxist-Leninist theory and moral indignation. They are nevertheless among the most informative works referenced in the present thesis.

Most distinctively Soviet in its content is *The Traditional Structure of Kazakhstan* by Zhulduzbek Abylkhozhin, published in 1991.⁴⁷ This monograph begins by reminding its readers that Kazakh society of the 1920s had been studied by Soviet scholars before, but only under strict ideological control.⁴⁸ Yet it then goes on to make the kind of lengthy affirmations of Leninist thought typical of those same earlier scholars.⁴⁹ It then describes in nuanced detail the structures of Kazakh life, including nomadic communities, from 1920 to 1930. It pays particular attention to the familiar notion of class stratification in the *aul* and the influence of Soviet power.⁵⁰ Abylkhozhin makes his separation from pre-Glasnost authors most clearly towards the end of the piece, where he describes collectivisation and sedentarisation as premeditated actions of the state which were responsible for a dramatic decrease in the numbers of livestock and, eventually, a demographic catastrophe in the Kazakh Republic.⁵¹ His conclusions are profoundly critical of the regime.

Yet more coruscating in its criticism is *Collectivisation in Kazakhstan: Tragedy of the Peasantry*, published in 1992 and jointly written by Abylkhozhin and two other

334. Douglas Taylor Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004). Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

⁴⁷ Zh. B. Abylkhozhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstana: Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie aspekty funktsionirovaniia i transformatsii (1920-1930-e g.g.)* (Alma-Ata: Gylym, 1991).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-8.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 75-79, 187.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187, 190, 232.

scholars, M. K. Kozybaev and K. S. Aldazhumanov.⁵² This shorter pamphlet-style text moves from the 1920s to the early 1930s and focuses specifically on the collectivisation drive, emphasising the particularly ruinous effects of the campaign on Kazakhs and Kazakh nomads.⁵³ It also seeks to rehabilitate the nomadic economic system from Soviet-era contempt, arguing for example that in certain circumstances 'nomadic livestock-herding retained its ecological rationale.'⁵⁴

Independent Kazakhstan has produced a series of texts written in a similar style and on similar topics to those which emerged immediately after the Soviet Union's collapse. *Genocide in Kazakhstan* by L. D. Kuderina, for example, considers the maltreatment of Kazakh Communist Party members.⁵⁵ Talas Omarbekov is highly critical of the Soviet regime, also using the concept of genocide in his historical accounts of collectivisation and sedentarisation.⁵⁶ Many of these Kazakh publications are redolent of the body of literature which presents the Ukrainian famine of the early 1930s as an act of genocide perpetrated by the Soviet state; Omarbekov refers directly to the Holodomor in the title of his 2009 document collection.⁵⁷ Zere Maidanali's exceptional monograph *Agricultural Regions of Kazakhstan in the Years of Forced Collectivisation* was published in 2003 and combines statistical analysis of collectivisation with more measured qualitative assessments, often considering the nomadic variable in the outcome of collectivisation policies.⁵⁸ Her conclusions about the scale of suffering experienced in the Kazakh Republic are nonetheless damning.

Histories of the Kazakh Nation

A harshly critical assessment of the collectivisation campaign and sedentarisation can now be discovered in some general reference works on Kazakh history published in Kazakhstan since 1991. For example *The History of Kazakhstan: Peoples and Cultures* refers to the 1930s as a war on private property and economic

⁵² M. K. Kozybaev, Zh. B. Abylkhozhin, and K. S. Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane: tragediia krest'ianstva* (Alma-Ata: Ministerstvo narodnogo obrazovaniia Respubliki Kazakhstan, 1992).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁵ L. D. Kuderina, *Genotsid v Kazakhstane* (Moscow: 1994). The work of S. A. Zhakishева is another excellent example: S. A. Zhakishева, 'Primenenie matematicheskikh metodov i komp'yuternykh tekhnologii v issledovanii istorii repressii v Kazakhstane v 20-30e gody XX. v,' in *Kul'tura i istoriia tsentral'noi Azii i Kazakhstana*, ed. Zhulduzbek Bekmukhamedovich Abylkhozhin (Almaty: Fond Soros-Kazakhstan, 1997), pp. 145-159.

⁵⁶ Talas Omarbekov, *Golodomor v Kazakhstane: prichiny, masshtaby i itogi (1930-1931 g.g.)* (Almaty: Kazakhskii Natsional'nyi Universitet im. Al'-Farabi, 2009).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Zere Maidanali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana v gody nasil'stvennoi kollektivizatsii* (Almaty: KazNU im. al'-Farabi, 2003).

endeavour.⁵⁹ The *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan*, published in 2012, has this to say about the subject: 'In the early 1930s, Goloshchekin's collectivization campaign led to the massive loss of cattle that ultimately caused the decimation of the Kazakh population through famine and starvation along with a massive migration out of the country. Some 31 percent of [sic] rural population, or 1.5 million to 2 million Kazakhs, died of hunger and epidemics during the collectivization, and hundreds of thousands fled to China.'⁶⁰ Goloshchekin, first secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan from 1924-1933, has been commonly denigrated in the post-Soviet era, and his actions and views will be addressed again later in the thesis.

The *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan* and *The History of Kazakhstan: Peoples and Cultures* are both features of a relatively new phenomenon: reference works and textbooks on the national history of Kazakhstan produced in Kazakhstan. Other examples include *The History of Kazakhstan: From Ancient Time to Our Days* and *The History of Kazakhstan in Russian Sources*, both multi-volume series, and *The History of the Republic of Kazakhstan*.⁶¹ Further works may place Kazakh history in a Central Asian context but while retaining the emphasis on nationhood and the continuity of a national culture.⁶²

As reflected in its content, this body of literature is part of a growing endeavour to create a national history for the post-Soviet, independent Kazakhstan. This is how many recent Kazakh publications might be characterised, and it has implications for the aims of this thesis. The nomadic aspect of events in the 1920s, before collectivisation, may be noted extensively in books and articles of this sort, but the trend is often to place far heavier emphasis on the lessons of Glasnost-era revelations about sedentarisation in the early 1930s. Both are subsidiary to the pieces' primary purpose of creating a national history but sedentarisation has been granted an iconic role in the Kazakh national story in a similar way that its counterpart, the Holomodor,

⁵⁹ N. E. Masanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: narody i kul'tury* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2001), pp. 374-375, 378.

⁶⁰ Didar Kassymova, Zhanat Kundakbaeva, and Ustina Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), p. 101.

⁶¹ K. S. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei* (Almaty: Atamura, 2010). I. N. Tasmagambetov, M. M. Tazhmin, and S. T. Tauekel, *Istoriia Kazakhstana v russkikh istochnikakh XVI-XX vekov* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2005). Kokish Ryspaev, *Istoriia Respubliki Kazakhstan* (Almaty: TOO Kursiv, 2008).

⁶² N. E. Masanov, 'Osobennosti funktsionirovaniia traditsionnogo kochevogo Khoziaistva,' in *Kul'tura i istoriia tsentral'noi Azii i Kazakhstana*, ed. Zhulduzbek Bekmukhamedovich Abylkhozhin (Almaty: Fond Soros-Kazakhstan, 1997), pp. 5-18. For an English-language counterpart to this tendency, see: Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 216.

takes an iconic role in the Ukrainian national story.⁶³ Certainly the sedentarisation drive was a transformative and defining event in Kazakh history, but this comes at the expense of the years preceding sedentarisation, which are treated as a prelude to the barbarity of the collectivisation period.

In other words, literature on the sedentarisation drive exerts a gravitational pull on all studies of early Soviet Kazakhstan or of nomads in modern Central Asia. Such is the significance understandably accredited to it by historians, other pertinent topics of research are drawn into the story of sedentarisation. They may be used to explain sedentarisation, or sedentarisation might be used to understand and explain them. Assessments of the 1920s, when given, are made in this context.

Histories of Kazakh Nomadism

This partially applies also to the growing body of English-language scholarship which focuses more specifically on Kazakh nomadism. Matthew J. Payne's penetrating work on early-Soviet Kazakhstan and its nomadic citizens looks to the years following the introduction of the first Five Year Plan for material, thereby overlooking the period prior to 1928.⁶⁴ In his piece 'Seeing Like a Soviet State: Settlement of Nomadic Kazakhs, 1928-1934', Payne summarises the treatment of Kazakhs before 1928, but gives his primary aim as stating how and why things changed at the end of the decade.⁶⁵ A comprehensive PhD thesis by Sarah Cameron does engage with the decade 1920-1930, but principally as introductory context for the following four years.⁶⁶

A foremost European scholar specialising in the collectivisation period is Niccolò Pianicola, who brings very welcome quantitative and comparative analyses to the topic.⁶⁷ His two English-language articles 'The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931-1933' and 'Famine in the Steppe: The Collectivization of Agriculture and the

⁶³ Michael Ellman, 'Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Revisited,' *Europe-Asia Studies* 59, no. 4 (2007), p. 664. R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, 'Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33: A Reply to Ellman,' *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 4 (2006), pp. 625-633.

⁶⁴ Matthew J. Payne, 'The Forge of the Kazakh Proletariat? The Turksib, Nativization, and Industrialization during Stalin's first Five-Year Plan,' in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 236-252. Matthew J. Payne, 'Seeing Like a Soviet State: Settlement of Nomadic Kazakhs, 1928-1934,' in *Writing the Stalin Era: Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet Historiography*, ed. Golfo Alexopoulos, Julie Hessler, and Kiril Tomoff (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2011), pp. 59-87.

⁶⁵ Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," p. 61.

⁶⁶ Sarah Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934', PhD thesis (Yale University, 2011).

⁶⁷ Niccolò Pianicola and Susan Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe. The Collectivization of Agriculture and the Kazak Herdsmen, 1928-1934,' *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 45, no. 1/2 (2004), pp. 143-144.

Kazak Herdsmen, 1928-1934' represent some of the most rigorous and informative work done on this most pivotal of subjects, but as is clear from the titles of these two pieces, Pianciola's ambit is largely comparable to other historians mentioned above.⁶⁸ He is however one of a small number of scholars who also assess, with depth and sensitivity, the consequences of the collectivisation drive in the years that followed it.⁶⁹

Remaining English-language publications which do consider the 1920s in detail but without the distraction of the National Question come from Paula A. Michaels and Edward Schatz.⁷⁰ Both authors are interested in the cultural norms of the Kazakhs and their transformation under Soviet influence. Whereas Schatz takes a broad approach to Kazakh culture and its concepts of kinship and lineage (he describes identity as a useful but limited post-modern preoccupation), Michaels' particular focus is in gender and medical norms and the specific case of the Red Yurts, a feature of Soviet rule to be discussed in Chapter Seven.⁷¹ Both works are referenced repeatedly in this thesis.

Lastly, a prominent Soviet-trained historian whose work deserves special recognition is Nurbulat Masanov. Masanov's highly-esteemed work on pre-Soviet Kazakh cultural norms; the origins, specificities and functions of Kazakh nomadism; and the Kazakhs' nomadic economy, has provided a bedrock of knowledge for all those scholars who have followed him, in spite of certain methodological assumptions which evidence his academic training under the Soviet regime.⁷²

History of Tsarist Central Asia

There is a final body of literature which has also been indispensable for the present thesis. This is work on late Tsarist Central Asia and the nature and effects of Russian imperialism there, both conceptual and physical. Demko's pre-1991 contribution has already been noted, but some of the best work in this field has

⁶⁸ Niccolò Pianciola, 'The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931-1933,' *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 25, no. 3/4 (2001), pp. 237-251. Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' pp. 137-191.

⁶⁹ Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' pp. 175-176.

⁷⁰ Paula A. Michaels, *Curative Powers: Medicine and Empire in Stalin's Central Asia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003). Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (London: University of Washington Press, 2004).

⁷¹ Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, pp. 21-27.

⁷² Nurbulat Masanov, *Kochevaia tsivilizatsiia Kazakhov: osnovy zhiznedeiatel'nosti nomadnogo obshchestva* (Almaty: Fond Nurbulat Masanov, 2011). Masanov, "Osobennosti funktsionirovaniia traditsionnogo kochevogo khoziaistva," pp. 5-18. Masanov, "Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie otnosheniia," pp. 35-36. Masanov has also acted as editor for larger works, such as: Masanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: narody i kul'tury*.

emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁷³ As reasserted throughout the chapters which follow, many of the phenomena witnessed on the Kazakh Steppe in the 1920s are less the product of the Russian Revolution and more the results of Tsarist-era events or ideas, making the following works indispensable.

For the socio-economic and political impact of Russian power, the works of Alexander Morrison and Michael Khodarkovsky, though rather different from one another in their style and points of emphasis, have both been helpful.⁷⁴ Both describe the difficulties experienced by the Russian Empire when seeking to extend, define and consolidate its rule over a nomadic region with distinctive topographical features. Like Demko they also describe the effects of Slavic colonisation before the revolution.⁷⁵ These authors provide detailed analysis of Central Asia's governing structures and prevailing socio-economic trends before 1917, but they also offer more generalizable insights into the nature of power, administration and bureaucracy in Central Asia. Some of these insights have proven directly applicable to Soviet Kazakhstan, some act as a useful point of contrast. Further scholars who might be associated with Morrison and Khodarkovsky are Virginia Martin and Adeeb Khalid.⁷⁶ Other works of varying value have considered the religious factor in the colonisation of Kazakh nomads. These include publications by Robert P. Geraci, Robert D. Crews and, for some of the most insightful and comprehensive work on this topic, Allen J. Frank.⁷⁷

In his article 'Russian Rule in Turkestan and the Example of British India, c. 1860-1917', Morrison makes reference to the argument that the ideology of Russian

⁷³ Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan*.

⁷⁴ Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002). Alexander Morrison, 'Russia, Khoqand, and the Search for a "Natural" Frontier, 1893-1865,' *Ab Imperio* 2 (2014), pp. 1-27. Alexander Morrison, "'Sowing the Seed of National Strife in this Alien Region": The Pahlen Report and *Pereselenie* in Turkestan, 1908-1910,' *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 31 (2012), pp. 1-29. Alexander Morrison, 'Russian Rule in Turkestan and the Example of British India, c. 1860-1917,' *The Slavonic and East European Review* 84, no. 4 (2006), pp. 666-707.

⁷⁵ Morrison, "'Sowing the Seed",' p. 9. Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, p. 216.

⁷⁶ Virginia Martin, *Law and Custom on the Steppe: The Kazakhs of the Middle Horde and Russian Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Richmond: Routledge, 2001). Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*.

⁷⁷ Robert P. Geraci, 'Going Abroad or Going to Russia? Orthodox Missionaries in the Kazakh Steppe, 1881-1917,' in *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, ed. Michael Khodarkovsky Robert P. Geraci (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 274-310. Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006). Allen J. Frank, 'Islam and Ethnic Relations in the Kazakh Inner Horde: Muslim Cossacks, Tatar Merchants, and Kazakh Nomads in Turkic Manuscripts, 1870-1910,' in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, ed. Anke von Kügelen, Michael Kemper, and Allen J Frank (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1998), 211-243. Allen J. Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia: The Islamic World of Novouzensk and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1880-1910* (Boston: Brill, 2001).

imperialism differed in a meaningful way from the ideology of Western European, particularly British, imperialism. He cites a common belief that Russian imperialist expansion was not justified by a racist worldview, for example.⁷⁸ Morrison is sceptical of this model, asserting that in its implementation in Central Asia Russian rule did not vary substantively from British rule in India. He does acknowledge, however, that the case for a unique Russian imperialist mentality may withstand closer scrutiny when looking not at the actions of 'military men' but at the published output of journalists and scholars working under the Tsar in European Russia.⁷⁹ A case of this nature has been made Vera Tolz, and with further important implications for this thesis.

Tolz assesses the late Russian Empire's Orientalist scholarship and its effect on early Bolshevik thinking and actions.⁸⁰ She engages with the assumption, commonly associated with Edward Said, that Orientalism as a form of scholarship facilitated imperialist expansion.⁸¹ Tolz argues that certain important members of Russia's Orientalist school differed from their Western European counterparts, and so Said's model is inapplicable in the Russian case. Furthermore, Tolz points to the influence of these scholars in the early Soviet period.⁸² As with the nation-making paradigm, Tolz's conclusions provide useful contextual detail for the thesis, particularly in Chapter Three, but they also inform the analytical approach of the thesis. Like Tolz, this thesis holds that the actions of the Soviet state in Central Asia in the 1920s cannot be easily categorised as imperialistic, at least in the sense used by Said and others. This conviction is most plainly expressed where the thesis diverges from the work of Paula A. Michaels in Chapter Seven. Tolz's work also demonstrates the connections, important for the conclusions of this thesis, between late Tsarist and early Soviet rule and between recent historiography on the National Question and recent historiography on the last years of the Russian Empire. All are relevant to the treatment of nomads after the Russian Civil War.

⁷⁸ Morrison, 'Russian Rule in Turkestan,' p. 672.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 707, 704-706.

⁸⁰ Vera Tolz, 'Orientalism, Nationalism, and Ethnic Diversity in Late Imperial Russia,' *The Historical Journal* 48, no. 1 (2005), pp. 127-150. 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). A similar case is made by Francine Hirsch: Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, pp. 11-13.

⁸¹ Tolz, 'Orientalism, Nationalism, and Ethnic Diversity,' p. 129. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978).

⁸² Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient*, p. 154.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is not to produce a national history of modern Kazakhstan, one which reflects the insights of the nation-making paradigm and perhaps chooses the fate of Kazakh nomadism as a prism through which to witness the creation of a country, in the same spirit as excellent work by Adrienne Lynne Edgar and others.⁸³ Nor does it wish to justify the treatment of Kazakhs by the state as the state's own historians did before 1991, or to chronicle the brutal subjugation of non-Russian cultural and economic practices in the periphery of a Soviet Empire, as in comprehensive pieces by Pipes or Michaels.⁸⁴ The thesis does not attempt another account of the collectivisation period in Kazakhstan, using the 1920s as introductory context for an explanation of sedentarisation. This has been achieved with success by scholars in both Russian and English-language publications. To reiterate the assertions made in Chapter One, this thesis takes as its principal aim an analysis of the treatment of nomadic Kazakhs from 1920 to 1928, based on the perceptions and actions of the Soviet state and Party apparatus in the republic, and to conclude its account with a summary of the period 1929-1934. In various ways, all the different categories of literature described above contribute to this thesis' objective.

Soviet historiography, while obviously limited by the political circumstances in which it was written, provides useful statistical information and must be read if English-language scholarship produced during the Cold War is to be properly assessed. Said scholarship of the Cold War correctly identified some of the most important trends in the state's relationship with its Kazakh nomadic citizens, but was restricted by its source base. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and revelations about sedentarisation and collectivisation were made public, the most relevant academic literature may be said to have bifurcated. On the one hand there is a growing body of national histories of Kazakhstan, connecting the contemporary, independent Kazakh Republic with history which predates both Soviet and Tsarist rule. On the other hand there has been great interest in the more recent origins of Kazakh nationhood, focusing on early Bolshevik actions and, to a lesser extent but just as importantly, on the late Tsarist era. Pre-Tsarist information on Kazakh cultural and economic practices is certainly useful, and the nation-making paradigm has substantially influenced this

⁸³ Northrop, *Veiled Empire*. Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*.

⁸⁴ Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union, Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*, First ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954). Michaels, *Curative Powers*.

thesis' analytical approach. Neither branch of the recent historiography, however, focuses primarily on nomads and nomadism, and those studies which are interested in this subject continue to gravitate towards 1928 and collectivisation. Thus, it is its simultaneous focus on Kazakh nomadism and the NEP period which makes this thesis unique among the literature here described.

*“A Kazakh grew up astride camels,
and astride camels he should stay”¹*

Chapter Three:

Soviet Perceptions of Kazakh Nomadism

At the first sitting of the Congress of Workers for Sedentarisation in 1930, a Comrade Koshkunov was giving a report on the previous year’s campaigning when he was interrupted from the floor:

[Koshkunov] ... And as a result of that year we have it that the *bedniak* and *seredniak* mass have themselves started to declare support for sedentarisation, in spite of agitation from *bais* and nationalistic elements.

They were saying that this sedentarisation turns Kazakhs –

Rejoinder: Into Russians (laughter).

[Koshkunov] These chauvinistic elements interfered with our work.²

This throwaway interruption to Koshkunov’s report was a simple summary of a complex situation in Kazakh life of the time, encapsulating how nomads were understood by state administrators and Party members and helping to explain the relationship between nomad and state by the beginning of the 1930s. The rejoinder mocked a prevalent anxiety, that sedentarisation equated to Russification. It thereby undermined the arguments of those in Soviet Central Asia, characterised by Koshkunov as class enemies and nationalist deviationists, who wanted to protect the nomadic way of life from Party and state. That these ‘*bais* and nationalistic elements’ said they did not want to see nomads become Russians, implying that sedentary Kazakhs is a

¹ The quote comes from the first sitting of the Congress of Workers for Sedentarisation in 1930, and is a mocking caricature of the defenders of nomadism, by then dismissed as agitators for the preservation of ‘feudal relations’: TsGARK *fond* 1179, *opis’* 6, *delo* 3, *list* 14 (henceforth TsGARK 1179/6/3: 14).

² TsGARK 1179/6/3: 48. The speaker was most likely Idris Koshkunov, who was then deputy chairman of the Kazakh Regional Control Committee: K. S. Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana 1920-1946 gg.: Biograficheskii spravochnik* (Almaty: Arys, 2007), p. 202. Broadly, a *bedniak* was a poor peasant or herdsman, a *seredniak* was a peasant or herdsman of moderate wealth, and the *bais* were wealthy or influential Kazakhs or members of the Kazakh bourgeoisie. These terms are included in the glossary, and explained later in this chapter where their meaning is more immediately relevant.

contradiction in terms, reveals something very significant about the nature of political discourse at this stage in Soviet history.

The language of nationality, as will be emphasised in this chapter and throughout remaining chapters, permeated Kazakh political affairs in the 1920s. This is why the image of Kazakhs being transformed into Russians was meaningful whether treated with earnestness or, as at the Congress of Workers for Sedentarisation, with derisive amusement. The concepts of nomadic and sedentary life, on the other hand, were less commonly discussed, and within the Party they were far less intellectually developed. The decision to stress the nomads' national status, rather than an identity based on their lifestyle, emerged from a lack of common understanding of what nomadic and sedentary meant in contrast to far more developed ideas of nations and nationhood. How had political discourse around nomadism come to be so indeterminate? Three factors present themselves for appraisal.

First, Karl Marx and other leading contributors to Bolshevik thought had relatively little to say about nomads.³ Kevin B. Anderson indicates that Marx's theorisation about Asiatic nomadic tribes was not altogether critical, in that he declared them to be devoid of private property and capable of communal forms of production.⁴ But as Anderson himself acknowledges, what little there was of nomadism in Marx's canon was largely located in his journalistic or unpublished works and would have had less impact on the Communist Party of the Soviet Union than his more famous economic tracts.⁵ There, Asiatic nomadism is presented simply as stagnant.⁶ Unlike on matters of statehood or class, therefore, leading Communists came to power in Soviet Kazakhstan without any rich theoretical commentary on nomadism from which to draw inspiration. Nor did they have any aggressive critique of the nomads' circumstances to motivate change.

Second, nomadism was not generally perceived to be a problem which would linger. At the first all-Kazakh conference, a small number of members asserted their view that Kazakhs were nomadic by instinct and would remain so forever.⁷ But this was already a minority attitude in June 1921 and rapidly lost what few advocates it had.

³ Sarah Cameron confirms that this included Lenin: Sarah Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934', PhD thesis (Yale University, 2011), p. 67.

⁴ Kevin B. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity and Non-Western Societies* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 210, 221.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

⁶ Ernest Gellner, 'Foreword,' in *Nomads and the Outside World*, ed. A. M. Khazanov (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. xi.

⁷ APRK 139/1/2: 91.

For various reasons, including the instability of the nomadic economy, the supposed desirability of life in a socialist urban environment, and the new possibilities of technological innovation and financial investment, it was assumed that the remaining nomads of the former Tsarist Empire would settle shortly after the Civil War. Marx may also have played a role in this, as when he did discuss Asiatic nomads, he placed them at the very earliest stages of human progress.⁸ They would therefore have to change very quickly to keep up with the swiftly changing socialist society liberated by the October Revolution. If they were soon to go extinct, then, there would have seemed little reason to agonise about nomads and how best to manage them.

Third, in terms of cultural heritage, members of the Kazakh Communist Party were often European and always sedentary. Leaders in the Party branch such as Aron Vainshtein and Filipp Goloshchekin were drafted in from European Russia. Other prominent figures with a Central Asian background often originated from the 'nomadic heartlands' of central Kazakhstan, but had received an education in urban centres and so had ceased to practice nomadism if indeed they ever had.⁹ At the lower echelons of the Party structure, basic requirements of literacy excluded most still-migrating communities.¹⁰ It is instructive to contrast this state of affairs with the importance of having grown up in a proletarian household when applying to join the Communist Party.¹¹ By systematically promoting members of the proletariat and demoting the bourgeoisie, the Party effected a radical redefinition of class in the former Tsarist Empire and created cadres of individuals fully willing to embrace the new definition, with the proletariat in a foremost position. No such alteration took place regarding nomads; either the Party was run by Europeans with no personal experience of nomadism, or by settled Central Asians. Thus the first-hand nomadic perspective was

⁸ Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*, pp. 156-157.

⁹ The quotation comes from: Bhavna Davé, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 44. For information on the origins and education of Kazakh intellectuals, see: Tomohiko Uyama, 'The Geography of Civilizations: A Spatial Analysis of the Kazakh Intelligentsia's Activities, from the mid-Nineteenth to the Early Twentieth Century,' *Sapporo Summer Symposium* (1998), pp. 83, 87.

¹⁰ This section of the 1926 Soviet census, to be discussed later, reveals the extremely low literacy rates in the republic: *Otdel 1: narodnost', rodnoi iazyk, vozrast, gramotnost'*, vol. 8 - Kazakskaiia ASSR Kirgizskaiia ASSR, *Vsesoyuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1926 goda* (Moscow: TsSU Soyuza SSR, 1928), p. 16. See also: Wayne Dowler, *Classroom and Empire: The Politics of Schooling Russia's Eastern Nationalities, 1860-1917* (London: Ithica, 2001), p. 145. TsGARK 280/3/3: 1-7.

¹¹ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times, Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 16.

as excluded from Communist Party congresses as it had been from the meetings of Tsarist officials.

If 1917 did not make a huge difference to how nomads were widely conceptualised, what were the pre-1917 origins of the Soviet view of nomads, and what form did that view eventually take in the 1920s? It is essential to answer these questions before a full review of the state's treatment of nomads can be made in later chapters of this thesis. The following sections of this chapter, then, will look at the attitudes of Communist Party members and Soviet-era scholars towards Kazakh nomads and nomadism. Both appear to have been influenced by three bodies of thought: Marxism (influential despite lacking a clear position on nomads), the everyday observations of non-nomadic peoples and the studies of Russia's old imperial ethnographers, each of which will be addressed. The third section of this chapter will review the 1926 all-Union census, which reveals the flaws of a combined effort between Party and scholarship to understand nomadism.

Section One: Communist Party Members

By the mid-1920s the power of the Communist Party in Soviet Kazakhstan was preeminent, making the prevailing attitudes of its members vitally important. From these attitudes, after all, emerged all Party policy. The quantity of sources from Party organs, and the variety of opinion and debate which characterized the earlier years of Soviet rule, make it possible to observe changing conceptions of nomads and nomadism from 1920 to 1930 and beyond. Trends can be carefully ascribed to certain individuals within the Party, whose influence waxed and waned depending on broader political circumstances.

Common to all significant Party members was the view that nomadic existence was arduous, even wretched. It is a view best summarised by the comments of Victor Radius-Zenkovich in June 1921 when he sat on the Kazakh Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom KSSR).¹² As an ethnic Russian and native of Arkhangelsk, Radius-Zenkovich confessed that when he familiarised himself with the life and living conditions of the Kazakhs (perhaps in preparation for his appointment to the Sovnarkom), he expected them to be even lower than those normally associated with

¹² Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, p. 282.

'backward peoples.'¹³ In fact, he found life on the steppe to be worse still, darker than could have been anticipated and limited by 'death and degeneracy.'¹⁴

Radius-Zenkovich's words bear some significant resemblance to the general view amongst Russians, Ukrainians and Cossacks in the Kustanai (now Kostanai) Governate. These were peasants with no connections to Party or state, and their opinions were summarised in a report in 1922. They apparently considered Kazakhs to be indolent, abject and uneducated, too preoccupied with self-inflicted hunger to be properly organised.¹⁵ Among labourers in mid-1923 it was broadly believed that young Kazakhs received preferential treatment over Russians, possibly an early example of *korenizatsiia* or the promotion of ethnic minorities in their own territories, which caused generalised hostility towards nomadic and sedentary Kazakhs alike.¹⁶ Other Russians outside the Party system were resentful that nomads had to occupy so much land to yield so little agricultural produce.¹⁷ The invasion of Russian farmland by nomadic communities during and after the Civil War, an important topic discussed in more depth in Chapter Four, cemented the popular view that nomads were a regressive force in post-war reconstruction efforts.¹⁸

This popular view had long roots. The Golden Horde, one of various successor states to the Mongol Empire, ruled Russia from around 1240 to 1480, and is widely held to have had a profound influence on Russian culture, creating a lingering suspicion of the 'nomadic barbarism' of Central Asia.¹⁹ Up until the early eighteenth century Russian peasants were still regularly being taken hostage by raiding bands of Turkic nomads and others.²⁰ As Russian colonization of the steppe accelerated from the 1730s

¹³ APRK 139/1/3: 147.

¹⁴ APRK 139/1/3: 147. For a similar discussion of nomadic *byt* see APRK 139/1/2: 91.

¹⁵ APRK 139/1/350: 30 *ob.*

¹⁶ L. C. Gatagova, L. P. Kosheleva, and L. A. Pogovaia, *TSK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros. Kniga 1, 1918-1933 gg., Dokumenty Sovetskoi Istorii* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2005), pp. 146-147. On *korenizatsiia*, which is discussed again in Chapter Seven, see: Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 132-134, 140-144.

¹⁷ GARF 130/7/257: 2.

¹⁸ GARF 3260/1/25: 33, 34, 41-41 *ob.*

¹⁹ Seymour Becker, 'Russia between East and West: The intelligentsia, Russian national identity and the Asian borderlands,' *Central Asian Survey* 10, no. 4 (1991), pp. 48, 52-53. Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 7, 10-11. Dates for the Golden Horde's existence vary, see for example: Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 148.

²⁰ Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 201.

onwards, certain inter-ethnic hostilities had only intensified.²¹ Russian peasants appropriated more and more steppe land after local Kazakhs had been suppressed by Cossack mercenaries, but the permanent domination of the more mobile nomads proved difficult and reprisals quickly followed.²² This pattern of attack and counter-attack, with neither side able to defend their territorial gains, expedited Russia's imperial expansion southwards.²³ Sergei Solov'ev, one of the late nineteenth century's most influential Russian historians, 'depicted Russia's historic and geographic destiny as the expulsion of Asiatic nomadism from Europe and the conquest of the transitional steppe zone between Europe and Asia for the superior, sedentary civilization of the West.'²⁴

In this context it is unsurprising that the Russian people were not always respectful of its nomadic neighbours, and the re-emergence of violence and banditry in the latest months of the Tsarist era, when Basmachi uprisings and lawlessness broke out on the steppe, sharpened opinions further.²⁵ During the Civil War, Russian command staff in the Red Army were deeply disappointed with Kazakh troops, characterizing them as 'not military stuff ... lazy and physically ill-adapted to military training.'²⁶ No matter how extensive their ideological training, all this was also part of the cultural heritage which Europeans (Ukrainian, Russian, Polish etc) brought with them to the Communist Party.

Party members like Radius-Zenkovich who were born in European Russia were thus most likely to hold similar opinions to those expressed by the peasants of the Kustanai Governate and elsewhere. For these figures, whether at the bottom or top of the hierarchy, nomadism was a backward and highly unstable agricultural practice.²⁷ Some Party members with Central Asian heritage were slightly more likely to talk of nomadism more approvingly. But when they did so, it was often in opposition to the hateful colonising policies of the late Tsarist era. They claimed that the eviction of

²¹ Michael Khodarkovsky cites the foundation of Orenburg in 1734 as the beginning of a 'dramatically new, accelerated, and far more intrusive colonization.' *Ibid.*, p. 158.

²² Michael Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1982), p. 5.

²³ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*.

²⁴ Becker, 'Russia between East and West,' p. 50.

²⁵ Robert P. Geraci, 'Going Abroad or Going to Russia? Orthodox Missionaries in the Kazakh Steppe, 1881-1917,' in *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, ed. Michael Khodarkovsky Robert P. Geraci (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 304. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 61.

²⁶ V. P. Butt et al., eds., *The Russian Civil War: Documents from the Soviet Archives* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 95.

²⁷ RGASPI 17/25/159: 25.

nomads from the best steppe land by Russian peasants led many Kazakhs to settle in an abortive attempt to stay alive. Here, then, declining nomadism is associated with historical injustice.²⁸ This was the closest most Party members came to celebrating the Kazakhs' nomadic heritage, but it was not the same as saying that settlement was a negative development, or that nomadism was a fruitful endeavour. The lack of nomads in the Central Asian contingent precluded empathy. European contempt was merely replaced with pity from Central Asians.²⁹

Prejudices of this kind from Party members were compounded by a less emotive economic critique based on observation. During the 1920s, the Kazakh economy staggered from crisis to crisis as a result of violence, disruption, mismanagement and bad weather, and the Party members who heard about this, or saw it for themselves, drew conclusions about the nomadic lifestyle. The case is made clearest by this article from *Pravda*, published in 1927:

'DZHUT!'

'Dzhut' is the most awful scourge of the cattle-herding nomad. The population of Kazakhstan stands before the threat of great tragedy every year.

When *'dzhut'* seizes the expansive regions of the nomadic population, it carries off a hundred thousand heads of cattle.

What is *'dzhut'*, and what causes it?...

The conditions and living habits of the nomad do not allow the possibility of preserving food in sufficient quantity to properly feed cattle over the course of the long winter. In those years when the winter is typical, that is, with little precipitation, no sharp fluctuations in temperature, small amounts of snow and yielding soil, cattle can cope with the task of acquiring food. But when snow is accompanied by rain, or when there is a thaw and then a freeze on the surface of the soil, an icy crust is created, which represents an awful tragedy for cattle; *'dzhut'* ...

²⁸ RGASPI 17/25/174: 81-82, 114.

²⁹ For another example of a non-Russian Communist Party member expressing sympathy for nomads but not respect for their lifestyle, see: APRK 139/1/2: 89-91. Yuri Slezkine relates attitudes towards nomads among Party members operating in the Russian far north here: Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small People of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 204-205.

Over the decade this tragedy has been visited upon Kazakhstan three times; in 1917 it affected all the regions of Central Asia, in 1921 it gripped the whole expanse of the north-western region of Kazakhstan, in 1927 'dzhut' made its way through the 18 volosts of the Semipalatinsk Governate. The most awful effects of 'dzhut' were in 1921, when 'dzhut' coincided with a year of famine. Not only cattle perished, but people too. The exact figures for the deceased are not known, but around 70% of cattle in the region died. In that year, in the period of the Civil War in Central Asia and famine in the Volga region, the state did not have the possibility to provide the necessary aid to those regions suffering from 'dzhut'...³⁰

For the readers of such material, nomadic herds seemed less stable than their sedentary counterparts and more vulnerable to external shocks.³¹ Nomadic regions, it followed, were the least reliably productive regions of the republic.³² The prevailing feeling was of permanent crisis. Just as Party reports in 1920 described nomadic communities on the brink of famine and collapse, and Party newspapers reported on the continuing series of crises as they occurred, Narkomzem KASSR imputed a 'crisis condition' to the nomadic economy in January 1930.³³ Few outside the nomadic *aul*, a small community of Kazakhs which has been translated as 'mobile village', were in any doubt that the lifestyle exacerbated the problem.³⁴ The ultimate consequence of all this was simple; almost every major Party figure concurred that it would be best if nomads settled and the lifestyle was extinguished.³⁵ Crucially, this consensus was all but complete long before widespread and systematic collectivisation began elsewhere in the USSR, but it is true that disagreement about this basic proposition had been more prevalent in the earliest years of the 1920s.

In contrast, the methods of sedentarisation (allowing the process to occur naturally, offering incentives, and coercion) and the management of pre-sedentarised nomads were more fractious topics at Party conferences and committees. Kazakh historians are right to say that '...the paths of progress for the Kazakh peasantry were associated with the transformation (state-directed) of the animal herding economy

³⁰ "Dzhut!," *Pravda*, Tuesday 19th April 1927, Issue 89.

³¹ RGASPI 17/25/87: 30-31. GARF 1318/11/32: 49-49 *ob.*

³² GARF 1235/140/1029: 5-10.

³³ TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 39.

³⁴ Niccolò Pianciola and Susan Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe. The Collectivization of Agriculture and the Kazak Herdsmen, 1928-1934,' *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 45, no. 1/2 (2004), p. 140.

³⁵ K. S. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, vol. 4 (Almaty: Atamüra, 2010), p. 262.

into an arable or sedentary animal farming economy,' but not all discussants agreed on the nature of state-direction.³⁶ The differing opinions of these early Party leaders may originate from their post-Civil War experiences of the steppe. Many of them were sent on investigative errands in 1921-1922, with Seitkali Mendeshev heading to the north-west, Alibi Dzhangil'din to the north, and a certain Comrade Danilov travelling to the east.³⁷

Other, related points of disagreement surfaced over the the origins or causes of nomadism and the class structures of the nomadic *aul*. Some Party members preferred to describe impoverished nomads or those of low social status as *batraks*, a word meaning a labourer engaged in manual, usually agricultural work³⁸. Others divided up nomadic society into more distinct economic classes including *bedniaks*, the poor, *seredniaks*, those of moderate wealth, and the *bais*. *Bai* was a Kazakh social category, unrelated to Marxist class categories until the arrival of the Bolsheviks, and it included Kazakhs of greater wealth but also those of higher social status and civic authority.³⁹ As will be shown, the Communist Party's opinion of the *bais* was seldom positive, but as time progressed the *bai* came to play a similar role to that of the kulak in the Party's assessment of Kazakh society, leading to increasingly repressive measures. More broadly Party members disagreed about the existence and degree of class stratification in the *aul*, over whether the *bais* represented a powerful capitalist bourgeoisie or something less dangerous and potent.

Here, then, divergence between different members is observable, so different sets of opinion should be introduced. This section will briefly discuss the attitudes of four foremost Party leaders. Mendeshev, Dzhangil'din and Aron Vainshtein are representative of the predominant range of opinion in the Communist Party in the earlier part of the decade. Filipp Goloshchekin's view was always present, but grew increasingly prevalent and then utterly dominant as the decade progressed and dissent within the Party became more dangerous. His assessment of nomadism should be considered definitive for Party policy by the start of the 1930s. Each of these men will feature again throughout the thesis, and through their actions reveal much about their personal conceptions of nomadism.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 262.

³⁷ APRK 139/1/254: 56.

³⁸ Didar Kassymova, Zhanat Kundakbaeva, and Ustina Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), p. 48.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 41. Niccolò Pianciola, 'The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931-1933,' *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 25, no. 3/4 (2001), p. 238.

Seitkali Mendeshev

A vocal figure from the beginning of the decade, Seitkali Mendeshev would become involved in a host of inter-Party disputes about nomads and nomadism.⁴⁰ A former school teacher who tutored future members of the Kazakh administration in their adolescence, in 1919 Mendeshev became a leading member of the Kazakh Revolutionary Committee (*Kirrevkom*) and within two years was serving on the Presidium of the Kazakh Central Executive Committee.⁴¹ He remained there until 1925, then he served in economic organs first for the Kazakh Republic, and then for the RSFSR.⁴²

Of all four figures to be discussed, Mendeshev was least scornful about nomadism. He did not deny that Kazakh nomadic society was poor, and that its impoverishment had been steadily worsening since before 1917. His first point of departure from some of his colleagues was his unrelenting emphasis on Tsarist exploitation as the cardinal explanation for Kazakh poverty. He rebuked senior Party members for lambasting backwardness on the steppe without appending this essential contextual detail.⁴³ This was a habit which would not leave him, and in later years he did not hesitate to draw comparisons between Soviet policy and the actions of the Tsarist administration when things displeased him.⁴⁴ The environment, too, played a crucial role in Mendeshev's thinking. For him, 'the position of the KSSR is such, that there are places where agriculture is completely impossible.'⁴⁵ This attitude would also remain firmly embedded in Mendeshev's analysis. As other Party members contracted Moscow's infectious faith in technology's ability to conquer the natural world, Mendeshev contended that, woeful or not, nomadism was the only viable lifestyle in some areas.⁴⁶

The implication of Mendeshev's emphasis on historical injustice and the difficulties of the steppe environment was that outright condemnation of the nomadic economy was unhelpful, and nuances should be recognised. He counselled that

⁴⁰ His name is sometimes transliterated 'Seitgali'.

⁴¹ I. N. Tasmagambetov, M. M. Tazhmin, and S. T. Tauekel, *Istoriia otechestva v sud'bakh ego grazhdan: Sbornik avtobiografii 1922 - 1960 gody*, vol. 10, *Istoriia Kazakhstana v russkikh istochnikakh XVI-XX vekov* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2005), pp. 127, 144. GARF 1318/11/26: 4 ob..

⁴² Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, p. 236.

⁴³ APRK 139/1/541: 124.

⁴⁴ GARF 1235/123/345: 29-30.

⁴⁵ APRK 139/1/541: 128.

⁴⁶ The nature of this disease is described here: Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 50-54. Its transmission to the Kazakh Communist Party is discussed again in Chapter Four.

sedentarisation was not the only feasible option for nomads, and that alternative improvements to their lifestyle could be found in the short term.⁴⁷ Further, Mendeshév was sceptical about claims of class stratification amongst nomads. At the third Kazakh Communist Party Congress in 1923, delegates heard stories of the wealthy Kazakh *bais* handing out the leftovers of each of their meals to queues of sullen nomadic *bedniaks*, or lending a horse to a disadvantaged pauper only to demand crippling payments of food and other goods in return.⁴⁸ Mendeshév did not repudiate these stories of exploitation, but would not have them attributed to capitalism. For him, capitalist forms of exploitation could not yet be found in 'the purely nomadic Kazakh *aul*.'⁴⁹ To describe exploitation between nomads, he preferred a Russian term with connotations of debt slavery: *kabal'noe otnoshenie*.⁵⁰ Critical as he was, then, of some social relations in nomadic communities, his refutation of capitalistic influence had serious implications for the Party's wider theorisations of nomadism. 'Here, labour and means of labour', argued Mendeshév, 'do not yet play such a role [as they did in the sedentary economy].'⁵¹

Having disregarded excessive theorising about nomadic life as 'logomachy' in June 1921, Mendeshév henceforth emerges from Party documentation as a practical and assertive policy maker, convinced of the nomads' need for material aid from the state.⁵² In the mid-1920s he took the side of agricultural organs lobbying for more loans for settling nomads.⁵³ In the summer of 1924 he would make use of his expertise in the creation of the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border through nomadic territories.⁵⁴ Four years later his repeated objections to the reconfiguration of administrative boundaries in the west of the Kazakh Republic demonstrated the resilience of his convictions. As the sedentarisation campaign reached the peak of its activity in 1932, he submitted a critical report on the plight of Kazakhs in the Aktiubinsk area directly to Filipp

⁴⁷ APRK 139/1/541: 128.

⁴⁸ APRK 139/1/541: 114, 176.

⁴⁹ APRK 139/1/541: 187.

⁵⁰ APRK 139/1/541: 187.

⁵¹ APRK 139/1/541: 187.

⁵² Mendeshév's accusation of logomachy was directed at Zen'kovich, another member of the Kazakh Oblast' Committee in 1921: APRK 139/1/3: 136. The theses from Zen'kovich which had left Mendeshév so unimpressed can be found here: 139/1/2: 72-78. It should be added that Mendeshév was comfortable with abstract ideological theorising on other issues, such as the international system: APRK 139/1/254: 2-3.

⁵³ TsGARK 30/1/362: 169.

⁵⁴ RGASPI 62/2/108: 80-80 *ob.*

Goloshchekin.⁵⁵ Despite his opposition to the decisions of the Central Committee, Mendeshhev would continue to serve in high office, serving as Kazakh People's Commissar for Education 1930-1933 and chairman of the Kazakh Committee for Science 1930-1937. He was arrested as part of the Party purge in 1937 and executed by firing squad in February 1938.⁵⁶ Another Party member with views similar to those of Seitkali Mendeshhev was Smagul Sadvokasov, who helped to coordinate an (ultimately unsuccessful) opposition to Goloshchekin's leadership over a three year period from 1925 to 1928.⁵⁷

Alibi Dzhangil'din

Like Mendeshhev, Alibi Dzhangil'din was made a member of the *Kirrevkom* in 1919, but the intellectual journeys of the two men had been different prior to this moment and would diverge henceforth.⁵⁸ Dzhangil'din had travelled extensively in Europe and Asia prior to the Russian Revolution, and led a Red Army battalion in Central Asia during the Civil War.⁵⁹ Though Dzhangil'din was as keenly aware of Kazakhstan's recent colonial history as any of his colleagues, this left him no less relaxed about the profound backwardness of nomadic life. Among his other endeavours, he served on the People's Commissariat of Social Security from 1921 to May 1925 and again from October 1925 to 1928. He also headed the Koshchi Union for a brief period in the late 1920s and joined the Kazakh Central Executive Committee in 1930.⁶⁰

For much of 1922 Dzhangil'din lived among the Adai nomads to the east of the Caspian Sea, as part of a kind of anthropological survey of the peoples of the new Kazakh Republic. Dzhangil'din called Adai individuals 'nomad-adai', and claimed in a report to the Kazakh Communist Party's central organs that the nomad-adai lived at

⁵⁵ Talas Omarbekov, *Golomodor v Kazakhstane: prichiny, masshtaby i itogi (1930-1931 g.g.)* (Almaty: Kazakhskii Natsional'nyi Universitet im. Al'-Farabi, 2009), pp. 101-102.

⁵⁶ Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, p. 237.

⁵⁷ Sadvokasov has elsewhere been characterised as a nationalist: *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 293. This was an accusation levelled at him after Filipp Goloshchekin began to assert his dominance: Tasmagambetov, Tazhmin, and Tauekel, *Istoriia otechestva v sud'bakh ego grazhdan*, p. 14. See also: APRK 139/1/541: 139.

⁵⁸ Tasmagambetov, Tazhmin, and Tauekel, *Istoriia otechestva v sud'bakh ego grazhdan*, p. 470. Note that Dzhangil'din's name has been transliterated into both the Latin and Cyrillic scripts in a number of ways, such as Zhangil'din and Dzhangil'den.

⁵⁹ Chingiz Dzhangil'din, ed., *Alibi Dzhangil'din: dokumenty i materialy* (Almaty: Ana-tili, 2009), pp. 5-7.

⁶⁰ Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, p. 134. The Koshchi Union was a state-sponsored campaign to alter agricultural habits in the Kazakh Republic. In this thesis, it is discussed in most detail in Chapter Seven.

the complete mercy of nature.⁶¹ His report repeatedly emphasised the fragility of Adai society, and that at any time it could be profoundly destabilized by *dzhut*. More explicitly than Mendeshev, Dzhangil'din believed that nomadism was a natural reaction to a hostile natural environment. It was his clear conviction that the nomad-adai fervently wanted to settle, but the land would not allow it. He depicted constant migration as a vicious circle in which nomads were trapped; utterly dependent on cattle because they had no crops, unable to grow crops because they had to migrate to keep their cattle alive.⁶²

This more extensive emphasis on hardship and shortage would have been compounded by his frenetic reporting on the famine which afflicted north-western Kazakhstan and elsewhere after the Civil War. As a key figure in the Red Caravan investigatory team, he chose to stress the isolation and underdevelopment of the peoples of the steppe.⁶³ Perhaps a more ideological thinker than Mendeshev, Dzhangil'din also prioritised the involvement of nomads in the business of the Party, their education in socialist theory, and their contribution to the Red Army.⁶⁴ Embedded within Dzhangil'din's analysis was a certain respect for the complexities of nomadic practice. He cautioned his Party colleagues that it was impossible to be certain about Kazakh nomads without first having lived amongst them and properly learned their customs.⁶⁵ Yet he was still comfortable with the application of Marxist analysis to Kazakh nomadic society. In March 1923 he was publicly accused of fraternising with reactionary Mullahs and nomadic *bais* during his travels with the Red Caravan.⁶⁶ His muddled response fully accepted the existence of stratified economic classes in the *aul*. To defend himself from bourgeois sympathies, he countered that by enjoying the hospitality of class enemies *he* exploited *them*, thereby giving reactionary elements a taste of their own medicine.⁶⁷ The declarations of Red Caravan committees repeatedly brought attention to the plight specifically of the Kazakh poor, though other

⁶¹ Grigorii Fedorovich Dakhshleiger and M. Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane v vosstanovitelnyi period, 1921-1925 gg : sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Alma-Ata: Arkheologiiia Zhane Etnografiia Instituty, 1962), pp. 89-90.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

⁶³ TsGARK 930/1/3: 7. *Chrezvychainyi Komissar (k 125-letiiu Alibi Dzhangil'dina): Sbornik dokumentov (1916-1923 g.g.)*. (Almaty: Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan, 2009), p. 230.

⁶⁴ TsGARK 930/1/3: 7 *ob.*. Dakhshleiger and Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane*, p. 90. GARF 130/3/597: 4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 90. Dzhangil'din's emphasis on learning local custom can also be seen in reports from the Red Caravan, in which he played a vital role: APRK 139/1/339: 20.

⁶⁶ APRK 139/1/541: 171.

⁶⁷ APRK 139/1/541: 174.

documentation from Caravan participants discussed 'kulak-migrants', appearing to accuse Russian peasants of exacerbating the famine among Kazakhs.⁶⁸

Dzhangil'din would eventually be tasked with negotiating ceasefires with armed Kazakhs rebelling against the collectivisation campaign in 1930, and in the following year he coordinated efforts to return by force emigrant Kazakhs who had fled into China to avoid repression and hunger. He would survive Party purges and remain at the pinnacle of Kazakh politics until his death in 1953.⁶⁹

Aron Vainshtein

Born into Vilnius' substantial Jewish population, Aron Vainshtein joined the Communist Party in 1920 and was sent from his post in Belarus to join the governing institutions of the new Kazakh Republic in March 1922.⁷⁰ One year later, Vainshtein submitted a report to the Kazakh Party Conference which would divide opinion. Mendeshv was one of many attendees who signalled their resistance to the report's key theses.⁷¹ Central to Vainshtein's vision was the unquestionable class stratification of the *aul*. He seems to have considered it his role in Orenburg to educate the more provincial Kazakh Party in proper Marxist doctrine. He admonished listeners for failing to read and understand Marxist texts, and explained to members that stratification was not only a fact in 1923, but had been since at least the mid-1890s. He sought to prove this with meticulous detail, offering percentages of rich and poor Kazakhs by region at a time when reliable information on the steppe population was known to be scarce; many attendees questioned the origins of his data, revealing scepticism which he tersely rebuked.⁷² He also expressed his irreconcilable intolerance for the practice of class exploitation by the *bais* and his intention to eradicate class stratification with haste.⁷³ For him, stratification could be measured in livestock. He conceptualised cattle, horses and sheep as instruments of production, to be redistributed or collectivised much as industrial machinery might be.⁷⁴

Vainshtein was one of the first members to talk openly and coherently about methods of sedentarisation. In doing so he presented himself as a man ready to grasp a

⁶⁸ APRK 139/1/339: 2, 23 *ob.*, 53, 37.

⁶⁹ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 300. Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, pp. 134, 321.

⁷⁰ Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, p. 104.

⁷¹ APRK 139/1/541: 124.

⁷² APRK 139/1/541: 111-114, 188-189.

⁷³ APRK 139/1/541: 115.

⁷⁴ APRK 139/1/541: 191.

nettle which his more timid colleagues would rather leave to seed. An associate had warned him not to advocate a special, punitive tax on the *bais*, he claimed, but Vainshtein outlined it anyway.⁷⁵ A special fund needed to be created, he said, to create exemplary settlements of former nomads for other nomads to imitate.⁷⁶ All this was supported by Vainshtein's firmly-held belief that 'the population wishes to settle.'⁷⁷ Environmental obstacles to the populations' desires received scant attention in Vainshtein's report.

Vainshtein was a pugnacious speaker. He upbraided Smagul Sadvokasov, an outspoken critic of punitive taxation, and summarised Sadvokasov's line with a quote from Tsarist Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin, a figure responsible for wide-ranging agricultural reform in late Imperial Russia: 'You are in need of great upheavals, we are in need of a great Russia.' 'But what you need, Comrade Sadvokasov', Vainshtein concluded, 'I'm very afraid to say and do not want to utter,' to laughter from the assembled members.⁷⁸ Vainshtein would return to Moscow later in 1923 to begin work in an all-Union financial organisation, and was eventually shot at the same time as Mendeshev in February 1938.⁷⁹ In spite of his brief tenure in the Kazakh capital, Vainshtein's intervention is significant as a portent for what was to come in Kazakhstan. He was perhaps one of the vectors which transmitted Moscow's ideological self-confidence first to Orenburg, then to Kyzylorda, and finally to Alma-Ata. As will be argued in later chapters, Vainshtein's view would become a matter of emphatic consensus in the Kazakh Republic in the late 1920s. The arguments he intensified about class stratification in the *aul* even became a matter of international debate, as the anti-Soviet agitator Mustafa Shokay intervened from abroad to state that Kazakhs had no taste for class war.⁸⁰ Other advocates of Vainshtein's perspective included Zakhar Mindlin and the aforementioned Kharchenko.⁸¹

⁷⁵ APRK 139/1/541: 118.

⁷⁶ APRK 139/1/541: 118-119.

⁷⁷ APRK 139/1/541: 119.

⁷⁸ APRK 139/1/541: 191.

⁷⁹ Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, p. 104.

⁸⁰ G. F. Dakhshleiger, *V I Lenin i problemy Kazakhstanskoi istoriografii* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo 'Nauka' Kazakhskoi SSR, 1973), p. 120-121.

⁸¹ Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, pp. 238-239. APRK 139/1/541: 147, 169-170.

Filipp Goloshchekin

'The old, backward, nomadic, semi-nomadic *aul* is dying, and should die.'⁸² So proclaimed Filipp Goloshchekin in September 1931. Descriptions of Goloshchekin in recent historiography can be barbed. His personal involvement in the murder of the Romanov royal family is mentioned pointedly.⁸³ The incongruous fact that he had trained as a dentist before coming to lead the largest of the Soviet Union's Central Asian republics is also used to imply that he was elevated far beyond his field of competence.⁸⁴ The primary accusation, however, relates to the responsibility he bears for the policies of collectivisation and sedentarisation, enforced as they were when he was secretary of the Kazakh Regional Committee (Kazkraikom), a role previously held by Mendeshev.⁸⁵ Goloshchekin instituted what he called the 'Little October', which began in 1926 and continued for many years, characterised by political arrests, confiscation, exile, collectivization and sedentarisation.⁸⁶ The massive loss of life which followed these policies in Kazakhstan has been described by a number of Kazakh historians as 'Goloshchekin's genocide' or 'Kazakh-cide' (*Kazakhtsid*).⁸⁷ The changing political and social circumstances observable towards the end of the 1920s will be addressed in various ways by each of the remaining chapters of this thesis, and the accusations of genocide made by certain historians will be assessed specifically in Chapter Eight. For the purposes of this chapter, it remains to be asked: what was Goloshchekin's conception of nomads and nomadism?

In his frequently-cited address to the sixth Kazakh Party Conference in 1926, Goloshchekin spoke expansively on the economic problems facing Kazakhs and their republic.⁸⁸ On nomadism he was unequivocal. He told his Party members that the

⁸² Omarbekov, *Golomodor v Kazakhstane*, p. 77.

⁸³ Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe: The Memoir of a Nomad under Stalin* (New York: Overlook/Rookery, 2007), p. x. Kassymova, Kundakbaeva, and Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, p. 183.

⁸⁴ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 50.

⁸⁵ Tasmagambetov, Tazhmin, and Tauekel, *Istoriia otechestva v sud'bakh ego grazhdan*, p. 14. Goloshchekin became First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party in September 1925: Michael R. Roulant, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation', PhD thesis (Georgetown University, 2005), p. 281.

⁸⁶ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 223. Kassymova, Kundakbaeva, and Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, p. 183-184. The precise period of the Little October is contested; Michael Roulant states that it began specifically on 3rd May 1928: Roulant, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, p. 288.

⁸⁷ Omarbekov, *Golomodor v Kazakhstane*, p. 6.

⁸⁸ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 223. Tasmagambetov, Tazhmin, and Tauekel, *Istoriia otechestva v sud'bakh ego grazhdan*, p. 14. David Lane, 'Ethnic and Class Stratification in Soviet Kazakhstan, 1917 - 39,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 2 (1975), p. 175.

population they governed was 'sharply divided' into two parts, one sedentary, one nomadic or semi-nomadic.⁸⁹ He explained that approximately fifty percent of the republic's population fell into each part, but that ninety percent of the state and party's attention was devoted to the sedentary half of the republic; that is, until he was interrupted from the floor by a speaker who insisted that in fact no resources or efforts were expended on nomadic herders. This Goloshchekin accepted. He presented the nomads as helpless victims of neglect, and the Party as neglectful for pursuing sedentarisation without consistency or sufficient eagerness.⁹⁰ Unlike Dzhangil'din or Vainshtein, Goloshchekin had little faith in the nomads' inherent desire or capacity to settle.⁹¹ Unlike Mendeshev, however, he also had no respect for the nomadic economy itself, portraying it as unproductive and highly unstable.⁹² He was simultaneously sceptical about nomadism's viability and pessimistic about the nomads' ability to escape their own state of being. Concerted intervention, of a scale previously unseen on the steppe, could be the only answer to the problem Goloshchekin raised.

The *bais* were to be placed directly in the state's line of fire. Goloshchekin explained in his 1926 report that *dzhut* may hurt the *bais*, but that it hurt the nomadic *bedniak* and *seredniak* far more. Hardship alone could not be expected to drive nomads to settlement while the *bais* remained powerful, and Goloshchekin's answer was to improve and increase livestock herding in the republic to break the stranglehold of the *bais*.⁹³ Improvement, of course, could not be achieved within the choking limitations of nomadism. All this depended on a class-based analysis of the nomadic *aul*, which Goloshchekin fully endorsed, encouraging use of a 'semi-feudal' model for understanding Kazakh communities.⁹⁴ Nomadic feudalism was a social model created and endorsed by Boris Vladimirtsov, an expert on Mongolian peoples trained in the Tsarist era whose works on Ghengis Khan and Mongol rule over Russia would be hugely influential on later Soviet scholars.⁹⁵

Goloshchekin's administration persecuted regional and central Party figures who disagreed with its policy direction, eventually forcing oppositionists like Mendeshev to flee the republic. Various factors including repressive actions, a changing

⁸⁹ RGASPI 17/25/1: 56 *ob.*

⁹⁰ RGASPI 17/25/1: 56 *ob.*-57.

⁹¹ RGASPI 17/25/1: 57-57 *ob.*

⁹² RGASPI 17/25/1: 57 *ob.*

⁹³ RGASPI 17/25/1: 57 *ob.*

⁹⁴ RGASPI 17/25/6: 115 *ob.*

⁹⁵ Gellner, 'Foreword,' pp. xiv-xvi.

culture within the Party, and ascendant aspects of Bolshevik ideology all ensured that Goloshchekin's diagnosis and remedy for the nomadic economy became unassailable. The use of quantitative data and the division of nomadic society into economic classes by numbers of livestock, as first advocated by Vainshtein, became standardised.⁹⁶ Regional organs began using the feudal/semi-feudal model for understanding the nomadic economy.⁹⁷ Goloshchekin himself would eventually be arrested and shot after a Party purge in 1941.⁹⁸

Section Two: Soviet Scholarship

Amid the institutional disarray of the Soviet 1920s, any distinction between scholars and Party activists was a fine one. Certainly the likes of Mendeshev and Dzhangil'din presented themselves as intellectuals as much as administrators or politicians.⁹⁹ For the purposes of this chapter, a division is made between those who wielded power, those who directed the apparatus of the state on a regional and republic-wide level, including Goloshchekin and Vainshtein but also Dzhangil'din and Mendeshev, and those who held only influence, intellectuals whom the Party consulted but could choose to disregard. Even if figures shortly to be discussed, like Zarubin and Donich, were never able directly to dictate Party policy, the reports to be analysed in this section were intended to influence the thinking of senior Communists, not to act as a blueprint for state actions. As such they are treated as scholarly interventions.

The scholarship of the 1920s was heavily influenced by Marxism, but also by academic currents originating from before the Russian revolution.¹⁰⁰ In the nascent ethnographic schools of late Imperial Russia, one can find the typical condescension and racial supremacism so vilified by Edward Said and other critics of Orientalism.¹⁰¹ Mongol and Turkish nomads were, in the view of one imperial scholar lecturing in 1851, more destructive for civilisation than plagues, floods or volcanoes. Their

⁹⁶ RGASPI 17/25/201: 30-31, 36.

⁹⁷ RGASPI 17/25/159: 26.

⁹⁸ Kassymova, Kundakbaeva, and Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, p. 101.

⁹⁹ The mission statement of the Red Caravan, for example, places emphasis on investigation and education, not organisation or coordination: TsGARK 930/1/4: 26-26 *ob.*

¹⁰⁰ Zifa-Alua Auezova, 'Conceiving a People's History: The 1920-1936 Discourse on the Kazakh Past,' in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, ed. Michael Kemper and Stephan Conermann (Oxford: Routledge, 2011), pp. 242-243.

¹⁰¹ 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), p. 130. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978).

nomadism made them even more backward than the sedentary peoples of the Orient.¹⁰²

Yet, as the work of Vera Tolz has shown, there were also nuances in the Russian scholarly attitude towards Asiatic nomads which belie easy assumptions about the arrogance of European civilization.¹⁰³ Some argued, for example, that the clan system of the steppe nomads was not necessarily inferior to the settled lives of Russian peasants. This view was augmented by a generalised respect for the culture and history of Central Asia, for which Russian scholars sometimes indulged in self-congratulation.¹⁰⁴ For periods during the Tsarist era, Kazakh nomads were also thought to be less devoutly Islamic than the peoples of Turkestan, and therefore more amenable to assimilation into a pluralistic Russian nationalism.¹⁰⁵ The Tsar's Frontier Commission, based in Orenburg, had scholars migrate with nomadic Kazakhs in order to better understand their customs and dialects, with one linguist developing an abiding love for the Kazakh language.¹⁰⁶ Importantly, however, the imperial administration established agricultural schools in the Zhetysu and Semipalatinsk regions, designed to encourage nomads to settle.¹⁰⁷ This gives some indication of how far Russian scholarly admiration for Kazakh culture would ever extend, and to what extent this admiration was shared by the Tsarist state.

Moving into the Soviet period, the effect of these precedents was a slight corrective against the dismissal of non-Russians as backward. Alongside typical portrayals of the nomadic *aul* as a micro-despotism, an expedition made to Mongolia by the Soviet Academy of Sciences in the mid-1920s drew modestly positive conclusions about the nature of Mongolian nomadic life, for example.¹⁰⁸ Soviet scholars also followed the precedent set by Marr and Ol'denburg by criticising the relationship between European academia and imperialism, and would go on to incorporate non-Russian pre-revolutionary sources into their analyses (including ancient Greek, Roman

¹⁰² Becker, 'Russia between East and West,' pp. 58-59.

¹⁰³ Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 130, 156. Becker, 'Russia between East and West,' p. 61.

¹⁰⁵ Allen J. Frank compellingly argues that this view of Kazakhs was incorrect: Allen J. Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia: The Islamic World of Novouzensk and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1880-1910* (Boston: Brill, 2001), p. 274.

¹⁰⁶ Dowler, *Classroom and Empire*, pp. 38, 39.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹⁰⁸ Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, pp. 274-275. Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient*, pp. 144-145.

and Chinese materials).¹⁰⁹ It is further notable that Party documents, partly following this scholarly line, can rarely if ever be described as racially prejudiced. If the capacity of Kazakhs to rescue themselves from nomadism was questioned it was seldom done so on a racial basis. In other words nomadism was not associated with any racial deficiencies on the part of its practitioners; one Communist Party member came closest to this view when he said in June 1921 'the soul of a nomadic population sits in them [Kazakhs] very strongly'.¹¹⁰ Most of all, however, the scholarship of the 1920s inherited imperial academia's fascination with nationality. Many of the Russian Empire's ethnographers were heavily influenced by Johann Herder's *volksgeist* and expended much energy dividing the Tsar's various subjects into nations.¹¹¹ Given its intense work on the National Question, as described by Francine Hirsch and others, the dominance of the Communist Party would only intensify and accelerate this trend.¹¹²

One of the most informative published accounts of nomadic Kazakhs comes from Ivan I. Zarubin, whose short academic pamphlet 'A List of Peoples of the Turkestan Territory' was published in 1925.¹¹³ Zarubin wrote at a time when the Russian *Kazak* was replacing *Kirgiz* as the foremost appellation for the tribes of Kazakhstan, and the principal aim of his pamphlet was to define and distinguish the nationalities of Soviet Central Asia as his predecessors had done.¹¹⁴ Yet for all its modish focus on national identity, Zarubin did write his piece with a sensitivity to the importance of nomadism as a qualifier to group identities. He was one of a number of Soviet academics who adopted a self-consciously complex system of ethnic categorisation in Central Asia, in response to the complexity they perceived in real life.¹¹⁵

Zarubin depicts Turkestan as a region containing a mix of amorphous national groups, where one's identity might change from day to day or could simply encompass more than one nationality at a time. But points of sharp differentiation did exist around the islands of settled Central Asians which were scattered across nomadic areas in 1925. Here, settled farmers had chosen a nationality and cited it emphatically whenever asked to self-identify. Zarubin had an explanation for this. These farmers

¹⁰⁹ Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient*, p. 65. Auezova, "Conceiving a People's History," pp. 253-254.

¹¹⁰ APRK 139/1/2: 91.

¹¹¹ Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 37.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 5. Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-23* (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 7-28.

¹¹³ I. I. Zarubin, *Spisok narodnostei Turkestanskogo Kraia* (Leningrad: Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1925), p. 1.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹¹⁵ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, p. 163.

were more self-conscious about their national identity because they wanted to displace the other, less favourable identities which would otherwise have been ascribed to them by nomads. One such identity was *sart*.¹¹⁶ There had been some confusion over the provenance of *sart*, which may have originated as a neutral tribal affiliation. Zarubin however failed to locate any ‘*sart* dialect,’ and so declared that it was not a nationality but originally the Kazakh word for Russians. Its definition had subsequently expanded to encompass any untrustworthy sedentary peoples.¹¹⁷ Settled Central Asians did not like this pejorative appellation, nor did they wish to be associated with Russians, so they began more forcefully referring to themselves as Uzbek or Tajik, for example, to counter the use of *sart*. As sedentary communities took greater pride in their nationality, the nomads around them did so too, thereby becoming more likely to define themselves as Kazakhs when asked. Zarubin here credited nomadism with a demonstrable role in the generation of identity.

In keeping with this argument Zarubin further contended that, among the Turkic peoples of Soviet Central Asia, there was a meaningful difference between those who still practised nomadism and those who had adopted a sedentary or semi-sedentary way of life.¹¹⁸ As the adoption of settled agriculture accelerated national differentiation, the settlement of some Kazakhs hastened their ‘Turkification’ and therefore their divergence from Uzbeks, whose heritage was Iranian.¹¹⁹ Nomadism suppressed the Turkic aspects of Kazakh identity, but an essential ethnic distinction such as this remained in waiting until settlement facilitated its more salient expression.

Zarubin informs his readers that he could not have written his text any earlier because he was so reliant on the first four volumes of the 1920 All-Russian Census. He emphasised the indispensability of the census whilst simultaneously acknowledging its various inaccuracies.¹²⁰ This is a reminder of how little material was available to administrators and academics alike in 1925, and three years later, when A. N. Donich produced his slim academic volume, pertinent information remained far from

¹¹⁶ For an example of *sart* used in a non-academic context, see this correspondence from a resident of the Kazakh Republic, received by state authorities in 1923: GARF 130/7/257: 2.

¹¹⁷ Zarubin, *Spisok narodnostei*, p. 15. Edward Schatz’s description of the origins of Kazakh identity has certain parallels with Zarubin’s ideas. Schatz translates *sart* as agriculturalist, and recounts this Kazakh proverb from a Russian source: ‘If a *sart* gets rich, he builds a home; if a Kazakh gets rich he accumulates wives.’ Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (London: University of Washington Press, 2004), pp. 30, 32.

¹¹⁸ Zarubin, *Spisok narodnostei*, p. 9.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

abundant in spite of the huge amounts of data yielded by the 1926 census. The Communist Party's disproportionately greater presence in urban areas was still perpetuating its ignorance of realities in rural areas at the time.¹²¹

Donich's 'Problem of the New Kazakh *Aul*' was published by the Kazakh Gosplan in 1928, the year of the first, localised forced sedentarisation experiments.¹²² He starts his book with a literature review, thereby providing invaluable detail on the condition of Soviet academic opinion at the dawn of a new and disturbing period in the relationship between nomad and state.

The first body of opinion among Soviet academics is represented for Donich by M. G. Sirius and S. P. Shvetsov, who both argued that the nomadic lifestyle was perfectly adapted to the environment of the steppe and if anything should be deliberately revived.¹²³ Donich quotes Shvetsov: Nomadism has been preserved in Kazakhstan not because Kazakhs are backward, but because 'he [the nomadic herdsman] cannot be different in the presence of his given environmental conditions.'¹²⁴ Another of Shvetsov's assertions, made in 1926 and cited by historian Talas Omarbekov, augments this view: 'the annihilation of nomadic life in Kazakhstan would signify not only the death of steppe livestock-herding and the Kazakh economy, but also the transformation of the arid steppe into a deserted wilderness'.¹²⁵ Sirius in turn argued that a fully-developed agricultural economy in Kazakhstan was impossible because profitable agriculture was environmentally unsustainable in all but the most peripheral regions of the republic.¹²⁶ Shvetsov and Sirius' acceptance of environmental limitations echoes the opinions of earlier historians and, in the early 1920s, Kazakh Communist members, opinions which by this time were represented in the Party by Mendeshev and only a few others.¹²⁷

¹²¹ Simon Johnson and Peter Temin, 'The Macroeconomics of NEP,' *The Economic History Review* 46, no. 4 (1993), p. 760.

¹²² A. N. Donich, *Problema novogo Kazakhskogo ayla* (Kzyl-Orda: Gosplan KSSR, 1928).

¹²³ Both authors are also cited alongside Donich as contributors to the discussion here: Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 268.

¹²⁴ Donich, *Problema novogo Kazakhskogo ayla*, p. 1. Donich's citations come from S. P. Shvetsov, 'Priroda i byt Kazakstana,' in *Kazakskoe khoziaistvo v ego estestvenno-istoricheskikh i bytovykh usloviakh*, (Narkomzem KASSR, 1926), pp. 93, 101, 102.

¹²⁵ Omarbekov, *Golomodor v Kazakhstane*, p. 10.

¹²⁶ Zere Maindanali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana v gody nasil'stvennoi kollektivizatsii* (Almaty: KazNU im. al'-Farabi, 2003), p. 6.

¹²⁷ The scholar Nikolai Danilevskii, for example, argued that historically Mongols and Turks had retained a nomadic existence because of the environment in which they lived. See: Becker, 'Russia between East and West,' p. 54.

The second prevailing attitude among Soviet academics was, according to Donich, in opposition to the first but was less intellectually developed. Donich chose M. B. Murzin as its representative, and quotes Murzin as follows: Nomadism impoverishes its practitioners and inevitably leads to intermittent crises; 'The fundamental and unavoidable prerequisite for cultural development ... is the settlement of nomadic communities.'¹²⁸ Whereas Murzin favoured forced settlement, other writers such as A. P. Pototskim agreed with his diagnosis but offered an alternative prescription, namely preferential state investment in sedentary agriculture across the republic to tempt nomads onto the farms.¹²⁹ Vainshtein and Dzhangil'din would each have found much to agree with here, though like Pototskim and Murzin at times they would have disagreed about the appropriate solution.

With thesis and antithesis declared, Donich offers synthesis.¹³⁰ He agrees with Shvetsov and Sirius that nomadism had been the most suitable means of exploiting the hostile terrain of the steppe, but he poses the question: is it worth exploiting the steppe at such a penurious level of development? His answer amounts to one of the most compelling assessments of the problem it is possible to find in any source from any time:

Schooling, libraries, museums, the theatre with its props and scenery, the postal system, the telegraph, telephone, the publication of newspapers, medical aid (particularly in the area of birth control), sanitary conditions, financial matters, the electrification of the *aul*, the development of industry on a contemporary scale, the use of the majority of domestic implements (beginning with the separator), - all this demands settlement and is inconceivable without it.¹³¹

For Donich, the point was not the long heritage of nomadism, nor its economic productivity, but its irreconcilable incompatibility with modern life.¹³² With such a clear conception of the future in mind, the author proceeds to argue that no one had yet

¹²⁸ Donich, *Problema novogo Kazakhskogo aula*, pp. 1-2. The quote originates from this document: M. B. Murzin, 'O meropriiatiakh po osedaniiu i o sposobakh khoziaistvennoi reorganizatsii kazakskogo byta. Tezisy doklada v Komissii Kazgosplana po izmeneniiu metodov khoziaistvovaniia kazakskogo naroda,' ed. Kazgosplan (1928).

¹²⁹ Donich, *Problema novogo Kazakhskogo aula*, p. 2.

¹³⁰ For a concise summary in the historiography of these two competing positions, see: Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p.24.

¹³¹ Donich, *Problema novogo Kazakhskogo aula*, p. 3. The separator referred to by Donich towards the end of the quote is most likely a device for separating cream from milk.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

proved that the Kazakh Steppe could not be adapted for the purposes of sedentary agriculture.¹³³ A self-assured ally of those Party members who had come to see the steppe environment as a surmountable challenge, Donich commits much of the rest of his book to proposals for sedentarisation, to be discussed in Chapter Eight.

Finally, there is an additional interesting feature of the Soviet-era view, shared both by many Party members and scholars; a belief that nomads were unusually receptive or amenable to the lure of socialism, an echo of older Tsarist-era prejudices. In the later Russian imperial period it was sometimes suggested that Kazakhs had only recently and superficially been 'Islamised' by Tatar merchants under the rule of Catherine the Great, a claim Allen J. Frank refutes, suggesting that its appeal came from advocates of Russification who hoped that nomads would be more susceptible to Orthodox Christianity than the sedentary Muslims of Russian Turkestan.¹³⁴ Again in the imperial context, it was further argued that the wretchedness of nomadic existence made nomads more willingly complicit in their own colonisation because of the obvious benefits of Russian sedentary life.¹³⁵ Within the Communist Party, the widely recognised inadequacy of nomadism played a similar role but instead of Orthodoxy the offer was socialism. It was also argued by Soviet scholars that nomadic women were subjected to less restrictive gender norms because nomadism afforded Kazakh family life a certain informality which was closer to the socialist ideal. In theory this meant that the Communist Party's family policies would meet with less reactionary aggression in nomadic regions.¹³⁶ The thesis will address such parallels between the Tsarist and Soviet mentalities regarding nomads particularly in its concluding chapter.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 4.

¹³⁴ Frank, *Muslim Institutions*, p. 276. This story of Tatar merchants proselytizing among Central Asians is touched on by Sultan-Galiev here: Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, eds., *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union* (London: Chicago University Press, 1979), pp. 150-151. Note that other late Imperial Russian scholars, such as Vasilii Bartol'd, did not think Islam an obstacle to progress which had to be overcome: Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient*, p. 155. Russian orientalists of this nature were correspondingly hostile to Russification efforts: Vera Tolz, 'Orientalism, Nationalism, and Ethnic Diversity in Late Imperial Russia,' *The Historical Journal* 48, no. 1 (2005), p. 145.

¹³⁵ Becker, 'Russia between East and West,' p. 59.

¹³⁶ Frank, *Muslim Institutions*, pp. 275-276. For further discussion of nomadic women in the 1920s, see Chapter Seven. Note also the historiography referenced by Yaacov Ro'i: Yaacov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000), p. 542.

Section Three: The 1926 Census

The 1926 census was a product of scholarly and Party cooperation.¹³⁷ The priorities and perceptions of both groups are therefore in evidence in a single source. Zarubin, for example, had strenuously argued against the inclusion of *sart* as a national category for census takers in 1926, because of his belief that *sart* stemmed from economic or agricultural circumstances, not ethnic ones.¹³⁸ This might be read as a small defence of the importance of agricultural categories in opposition to national ones, though it will be shown that nationality became a dominant feature of the census materials nonetheless.

The 1926 census was the first of its kind to be held across the entire Soviet Union, and was a massive undertaking. Of previous attempts, the 1920 census was limited geographically by ongoing military clashes, and left out large swathes of Central Asia.¹³⁹ A second census in 1923 focused only on urban areas, thereby again excluding rural Kazakhs.¹⁴⁰ Both had, in the view of the census-takers of 1926, lacked a properly scientific approach to social categorisation, and this had yielded a dizzyingly long and incoherent list of national identities. It is indicative of the political and intellectual atmosphere of the mid-1920s that a lack of precision about the different nationalities of the Soviet population should have been a cause for concern, and that the Soviet administration expended such considerable efforts to avoid repeating this mistake in 1926. Building on extensive ethnographical work begun in the late Tsarist period, the writers of the 1926 census produced a series of standardised national categories into which identities deemed sub-national or tribal could be assimilated.¹⁴¹ This was intended to prevent the proliferation of non-standard or highly idiosyncratic identities, with some limited success.¹⁴²

Francine Hirsch contends that the national categorisations of the 1926 census were a crucial phase in the creation of the multinational Soviet state. But she is clear

¹³⁷ Francine Hirsch, 'The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category Nationality in the 1926, 1937 and 1939 Censuses,' *Slavic Review* 56, no. 2 (1997), p. 253.

¹³⁸ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, p. 113.

¹³⁹ *Otdel 1: narodnost', rodnoi iazyk, vozrast, gramotnost'*, p. v. Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, p. 105. This does not mean that isolated demographic studies were not under way in the region, however: S. E. Tolybekov, *Kochevoe obshchestvo Kazakhov v XVII - nachale XX veka: politiko-ekonomicheskii analiz* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo Nauka Kazakhskoi SSR, 1971), p. 495.

¹⁴⁰ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, pp. 105-107.

¹⁴¹ Hirsch, 'The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress,' pp. 256, 263.

¹⁴² To work around the restrictions, some respondents merged two or more nationalities, referring to themselves as Kurama-Uzbek or Tajik-Uzbek, for example: Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, p. 129.

that for many peasants and nomads in rural areas the national identity attributed to them seemed arbitrary or meaningless. Indeed, many were unfamiliar with the concept of nationality itself, and so treated their status as a matter of convenience rather than fact.¹⁴³ Even in the 1930s, for example, some Kazakhs were found to refer to themselves as Kirgiz when in the company of Russians, as Kirgiz had been their official Russian-language name until 1925 and the Kazakhs wished to be helpful.¹⁴⁴ Other historians confirm Hirsch's overall view.¹⁴⁵

As will be argued in Chapter Five, the Soviet administration's fascination with nationality led it to delimit Central Asia into national republics with clear borders, borders which were carefully placed to reflect perceived national differences but which poorly accommodated nomadic practice. Just as national distinctions would supplant distinctions of agricultural activity in the delimitation of national borders, nationality appears to have diverted attention from nomadism in the census of 1926.

The evidence for this claim is the absence of any kind of nomadic category in the results of the census, which were released in a series of vast multi-volume publications in the late 1920s. Section one, volume eight of the census lists the people of the Kazakh Republic according to nationality, native tongue, age and literacy, but fails to mention nomadism.¹⁴⁶ Section two, volume fifteen of the census concerns the economy of the Kazakh Republic, and divides the population into ten categories according to their economic role, such as labourer, unemployed or dependent.¹⁴⁷ It also goes on to distinguish between farmers, herders, and agricultural workers on peasant farmsteads.¹⁴⁸ All this only hints at nomadic identity since all farmers were likely to have been sedentary but not all herders were nomadic. Finally, section three volume forty-two contains information on family life, place of birth and period of residence at the site the census was taken.¹⁴⁹ Information here shows a highly mobile population,

¹⁴³ Hirsch, 'The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress,' p. 254.

¹⁴⁴ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, p. 281.

¹⁴⁵ Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), p. 62. Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ This volume reveals the extremely low literacy rates in the republic: *Otdel 1: narodnost', rodnoi iazyk, vozrast, gramotnost'*, p. 16.

¹⁴⁷ *Otdel 2: zaniatiia*, vol. 15 - Kazakskaiia ASSR Kirgizskaiia ASSR, *Vsesoyuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1926 goda* (Moscow: TsSU Soyuz SSR, 1929).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁴⁹ *Otdel 3: semeinoe sostoianie, mesto rozhdeniia i prodolzhitel'nost' prozhivaniia uvechnost'*, vol. 42 - Kazakskaiia ASSR Kirgizskaiia ASSR, *Vsesoyuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1926 goda* (Moscow: TsSU Soyuz SSR, 1930).

but is presented primarily to reveal the number of recently arrived migrants in Kazakhstan, and makes no distinction between habitual and temporary migration.¹⁵⁰

This oversight has been noticed before. Grigorii Fedorovich Dakhshleiger, a Soviet expert on Kazakhstan who published extensively in the 1960s and 1970s, was able to use data from 1926 to discuss Kazakh nomadic practice. His indirect usage of the information, however, reveals the weaknesses of the census materials. To ascertain how many Kazakhs settled in the early 1920s, he first sought to divide the Kazakh population of the time into proportions of sedentary and nomadic. With nomads not having been asked to self-identify as such in 1926, Dakhshleiger cites a statistical report from the same year, which aimed to identify each Kazakh's migratory range based on their period of residence and place of birth, information taken from the census results. Dakhshleiger extrapolated from this report that forty-three percent of Kazakh respondents were nomadic by the time of the census, because they were over ten kilometres from where they were born. The potential for inaccuracy in such an approach is obvious. With even less demographic information available prior to this date, furthermore, he is unable to make a convincing estimate of how many had settled since 1917.¹⁵¹ Dakhshleiger here was building an analysis with limited resources around forty years after the census. For Communist Party officials managing nomadic activities during and immediately following 1926, the inadequacy of the census data for their purposes must have been painfully apparent, only reinforced by the oncoming superabundance of information about national difference on the steppe.

This is not to say that Central Asians identified first and foremost as nomadic or sedentary, and would have regarded a census question on the matter to have been eminently pertinent.¹⁵² Nomadism was an important part of the Kazakhs' shared heritage, as indicated by the complaint from the *bais* mentioned above that sedentarisation turned Kazakhs 'into Russians.'¹⁵³ But in the view of various historians, the predominant means of self-identification amongst the Kazakhs under the Tsar had

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 108-109.

¹⁵¹ G. F. Dakhshleiger, *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie preobrazovaniia v aule i derevne Kazakhstana 1921-1929 gg.* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo 'Nauka' Kazakhskoi SSR, 1965), pp. 308-309.

¹⁵² Nor should the census overall be considered a useless source. On the contrary, just regarding mass repression in Kazakhstan, its data would later become vitally important for scholars making estimates for the population decline suffered by the Kazakhs in the early 1930s: M. Kh. Asylbekov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, vol. 3 - Kazakhstan v novoe vremia (Almaty: Atamüra, 2010), p. 370. Martha Brill Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan,' *Russian Review* 40, no. 2 (1981), p. 124.

¹⁵³ This is a reference to the extract from the first Congress of Workers for Sedentarisation, quoted at the beginning of the chapter.

been one's membership to a clan or tribe, determined by an individual's ancestry.¹⁵⁴ 'Each nomad was expected to know his or her genealogical background (*shezire* or *zheti ata*) at least to the seventh generation.'¹⁵⁵

Rather than suggesting that agricultural or clan-based distinctions in Kazakh communities were more real than national ones, this thesis holds simply that the Communist Party's decision to treat Soviet Central Asia as a collection of nations came at the expense of other ways of seeing the region. While the nomadic-sedentary divide was not forgotten, as made clear in the preceding sections of this chapter, it received nothing like the resources and intellectual attention that nationhood did, in spite of the fact that nationality was an exotic concept for many Central Asians.¹⁵⁶ Crucially, this was during an important period (1924-1928), which for Hirsch is characterised by 'conceptual conquest', as opposed to the 'physical conquest' of 1917-1924.¹⁵⁷ After establishing itself as the foremost military and bureaucratic authority in Central Asia, the Communist Party started in 1924 to monopolise communal and individual identities, establishing its conceptions of nationhood and class (even as these remained contested within the Party) and forcing out or neglecting alternatives based, for example, on faith or agricultural tradition.¹⁵⁸ Thus the Party's conceptual conquest of Central Asia was not fully extended to nomadism, which received relatively little attention from local cadres and was less often the subject of ideological guidance from the centre.

As one example of how this feature of conceptual conquest might have expressed itself, David Lane confirms the deep significance of agricultural practice in his article on ethnic and class stratification in Soviet Kazakhstan, when he says: 'The urban-rural dichotomy was one of the main ways in which differential incorporation of the

¹⁵⁴ Saulesh Yessenova, "'Routes and Roots" of Kazakh Identity: Urban Migration in Postsocialist Kazakhstan,' *Russian Review* 64, no. 4 (2005), p. 663. Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 8. There is some reason to include Schatz here too: Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, p. 30.

¹⁵⁵ Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, p. 28. For a concise definition of the *shezire*, see: Kassymova, Kundakbaeva, and Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, p. 246.

¹⁵⁶ As made clear in Chapter Two, recent scholarship on early-Soviet Kazakhstan is often eager to emphasise the huge efforts made to understand and enumerate the nations of the USSR.

¹⁵⁷ Hirsch, 'The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress,' p. 254.

¹⁵⁸ These chronological divisions of the decade are clearly not intended to be precise, so Michael Rouland's decision to begin his period of Soviet 'consolidation in Kazakhstan' in 1925 therefore coincides with Hirsch's own timeline: Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, p. 272. Interestingly, 1925 is also the year in which Kazakh history increasingly comes to be written from a national perspective, according to Zifa-Alua Auezova: Auezova, "Conceiving a People's History," pp. 241-261.

indigenous population persisted.¹⁵⁹ That is, the incorporation of many Kazakhs into the Party apparatus gave the impression of equality between nations in Soviet Central Asia, but masked another inequality. In terms of access to the Party, and as indicated earlier in this chapter, urban Kazakhs were in a privileged position in comparison to their rural compatriots. As nomadic Kazakhs were by definition rural, the Party's blind spot for nomadism created a vicious circle, in which only urban Kazakhs joined the Party, lacked the insight necessary to attract nomadic Kazakhs, and so welcomed new generations of members also recruited only from the cities.

As a project involving both powerful and influential members of the new ruling elite, the census is broadly representative of a trend across various Communist Party policies in the Kazakh Republic. Eagerness to identify and institutionalise national difference in Central Asia distracted from the management of nomadic peoples, sometimes to their detriment, sometimes to their benefit. The national delimitation of Central Asia itself was obstructive, because the administrative reorganisation it necessitated delayed and complicated the collection of demographic data, forcing at least one scholar to postpone his research into nomadism until the procedure was complete.¹⁶⁰ The intersection between nomadism and nationality was an important feature of Soviet perceptions of nomads, one of many to be discussed repeatedly in the remaining thesis.

Conclusion

The proper conceptualisation of nomadism was debated in the 1920s, but differences of opinion should not be overstated. It would be trite to exaggerate the divergence within the Party or between scholars. The Party's lack of faith in the productivity and stability of the nomadic economy was a constant, and those who resisted it generally offered little more than palliative comfort by emphasising historical or environmental context. This had profound consequences. During the famine in 1921 the Kazakh Central Executive Committee was fully aware of the particular hardships experienced by nomads.¹⁶¹ By 1930 plans for sedentarisation stated that the nomadic economy was impoverished and facilitated the exploitation of paupers.¹⁶² This perception lingered on in the Soviet Union long after the vast majority

¹⁵⁹ Lane, 'Ethnic and Class Stratification,' p. 187.

¹⁶⁰ Zarubin, *Spisok narodnostei*, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ GARF 1318/11/26: 4-4 ob..

¹⁶² TsGARK 1179/6/1: 1.

of Kazakhs had been settled. For A. Tursunbaev looking back on the era from the 1950s, Kazakhstan's rural population had generally been far more backward than in Russia, the latter being notorious for its underdevelopment before 1917.¹⁶³ Tursunbaev also perpetuated the view, by then long-standing, that Kazakh backwardness was exacerbated by the regressive influence of the 'bai-kulak elite', a matter of great importance in the 1920s.¹⁶⁴

Class stratification was one of a number of aspects of the nomadic identity which were rigorously contested at this time. Others included the desires of the nomads themselves and the viability of alternative agricultural practices on certain corners of the Central Asian Steppe. As will be shown in the following chapters, each of which addresses some of the major events of the decade, prevailing attitudes towards these contentious issues shifted over time. Again, however, this seems less a result of meaningful intellectual disagreement and more to do with the lack of a coherent theoretical framework for the problem. The consensus that nomadism was unproductive and unstable seems to have emerged largely from the base prejudices of Communist Party members, which led them to interpret the economic emergencies experienced by Kazakh nomads after the Civil War as the swan song of an outdated lifestyle. Resistance to this conclusion within the administration often relied on vague assertions about the nomadic instincts of the Kazakh people, and given the widespread faith in socialism to bring about prosperity, and the comparable impoverishment on the steppe, dismissing Kazakhs as inherently nomadic may have appeared appallingly callous in that it excluded them on an ethnic basis from the socialist future made possible in 1917.

In her innovative and comprehensive doctoral thesis 'The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934', Sarah Cameron titles her first chapter 'Solving the 'Nomad Question': Kazakhstan and Early Soviet Planning, 1921-1927.'¹⁶⁵ It is telling that her citation for the phrase 'nomad question' comes, indirectly through Ernest Gellner, from a piece published in 1947 by M. P. Viatkin, a Soviet scholar involved in the debate about nomadic feudalism.¹⁶⁶ Finding reference to a 'nomad question' from sources contemporary with the 1920s would be difficult because, in truth, the conceptualisation and management of Kazakh nomads during the decade was

¹⁶³ A. Tursunbaev, *Pobeda kolkhoznogo stroia v Kazakhstane* (Alma-Ata: Kazakhskoe Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1957), p. 25.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁶⁵ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 25.

¹⁶⁶ Gellner, 'Foreword,' p. xvi.

never standardized nor debated with anything like the alacrity afforded the 'National Question'. There was no 'nomad question'; nor was there much 'planning'. Nomadism took its form in the Soviet imagination largely from old, instinctive prejudices dating from the Tsarist era and 'a tradition in the understanding of civilizational markers.'¹⁶⁷ It was thrown into relief as a problem by class-based models derived mostly from Marxism. Scholarship on the matter was limited, less theoretical than practical and intended to solve immediate economic problems. There were no grand congresses convened to reconcile itinerancy with Communism. The Kazakh state for years lacked organs and personnel devoted to managing nomads and overcoming the specificities of nomadic life. The steppe population was corralled into a national republic with the same kind of borders and institutions which elsewhere administered sedentary peoples. Disagreement did not stem from a multiplicity of plans, but because there was no plan.

The existence of a single 'nomad question' might only be suggested by reading later Soviet academic sources, as scholars of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s engaged in a prolonged argument about the validity of Vladimirtsov's model of feudal nomadism.¹⁶⁸ These indeed were theoretical debates, drawing on a canon of Marxist intellectual developments to create social models for nomadic life.¹⁶⁹ Had the likes of Mendeshev and Goloshchekin had these models in the 1920s history may have been different, but Party documentation from their era actually presents us with an organisation resolving the problems posed by a nomadic population ad hoc; implementing and reversing policies, protecting and persecuting families, making predictions and regretting them, estimating quantitative data and then refuting them. These are the processes repeatedly in evidence in the following chapters of the thesis.

¹⁶⁷ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 263.

¹⁶⁸ For more information on this body of the historiography, see Chapter Two.

¹⁶⁹ Gellner, 'Foreword,' pp. xiv-xxiv.

*'What we used to call a "region" is now going to be called a "district".
Someone in the know would start the conversation along these lines,
having just discovered what had been enacted two years previously.*

Mukhamet Shayakhmetov¹

Chapter Four:

The Politics of Land Use in Early Soviet Kazakhstan

Most descriptions of the early Kazakh Republic offer no more than a flat, featureless landscape. Readers are asked to imagine themselves confronted by a 'vast swathe of steppe-land' or 'seemingly unending expanses of steppe', alongside nomads who travelled lightly and unobstructed towards an oblate horizon.² The scale of the Central Asian plains has always been a gift for writers seeking descriptive detail, and the habit of emphasising empty enormity is not new. Tsarist and Soviet-era sources are replete with the same images. The dispersal of a small Kazakh population over a huge geographical area was a frequent theme, as were the hostile natural conditions with which it contended daily.³ Newspapers described the Communist Party's Red Yurts as 'islands in the steppe', beautifully conveying both the perceived ideological aridity of the people and the flat, sea-like continuity of the territory.⁴

Yet as the above quote from Mukhamet Shayakhmetov's memoir suggests, Kazakh nomads were accustomed to the imposition of artificial borders. Before its collapse, the Tsarist administration had begun to distinguish between steppe regions based on the agricultural behaviour of their populations.⁵ After the establishment of

¹ Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe: The Memoir of a Nomad under Stalin* (New York: Overlook/Rookery, 2007), p. 2.

² Ibid., p. vii. Sarah Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934', PhD thesis (Yale University, 2011)p. 31. Shirin Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State, Former Soviet South Project* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995), p. 5.

³ Grigorii Fedorovich Dakhshleiger and M. Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane v vosstanovitelnyi period, 1921-1925 gg : sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Alma-Ata: Arkheologiya Zhane Etnografiya Instituty, 1962), pp. 22-32. APRK 139/1/541: 123.

⁴ The Red Yurts were expeditions of medical staff and Communist Party members who practised on the Kazakh Steppe. See: Paula A. Michaels, *Curative Powers: Medicine and Empire in Stalin's Central Asia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), p. 155.

⁵ Nurbulat Masanov, *Kochevaia tsivilizatsiia Kazakhov: osnovy zhiznedeiatel'nosti nomadnogo obshchestva* (Almaty: Fond Nurbulat Masanov, 2011), pp. 518, 520-521. See also: Lewis Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society: Between Revolutions, 1918 - 1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 137.

Soviet power a matrix of nomadic, semi-nomadic, and settled administrative districts was created, with the first two associated with pastoral stock-rearing and the latter with farming.⁶ In fact, documents from regional committees in the 1920s divide and subdivide the landscape unrelentingly, revealing the alacrity with which the steppe was disaggregated into strips of land with nominally different economic, natural or social profiles. The corollary of a land without natural borders was the proliferation of man-made alternatives.⁷

Like some other Bolshevik policies, these man-made borders suited the steppe and its people like an ill-fitting garment. The early administration had chosen a traditional way of categorizing economic activity by geographical location, which worked well in most areas of the former Tsarist Empire, but nomads could not be attributed to any one locale. To keep a comparable, manageable number of individuals within both sedentary and nomadic districts, or volosts, nomadic volosts were given no delineated geographical location or any clear borders.⁸ In fact these volosts were bands of nomadic yurts dispersed over areas of variable size and containing variable numbers of people. In places, the borders of sedentary volosts were also ill-defined, but they did at least refrain from roaming the steppe at will.⁹

Though distinct from one another, Chapters Four and Five share a theme. Together they describe the manner in which steppe land was distributed in the 1920s, within and around the edges of the Kazakh (Autonomous) Soviet Socialist Republic. They are associated with one another both by the similar processes they describe, and by the highly important political and economic context which contributed to the formation and implementation of land-ownership policies. Both, for example, are partly products of *raionirovanie* or regionalisation, a policy which began as an attempt

⁶ Matthew J. Payne, 'Seeing Like a Soviet State: Settlement of Nomadic Kazakhs, 1928-1934,' in *Writing the Stalin Era: Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet Historiography*, ed. Golfo Alexopoulos, Julie Hessler, and Kiril Tomoff (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2011), p. 64.

⁷ There is a clear parallel here with the Russian Empire's search for a natural frontier in Central Asia during its imperial expansion. See: Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

⁸ In certain areas such as around Orenburg, the Tsarist Empire had also recognised the *kochevaia* volost, or something similar. Orenburg nominated special representatives in each nomadic *aul* for the purposes of communication, and sub-divided its territory into '*administrativnye auly*'. In the Siberian-governed region of the steppe, an administrative *aul* would typically contain 50-70 tents. Such systems allowed the Empire to tax its nomadic subjects. Masanov, *Kochevaia tsivilizatsiia Kazakhov*, pp. 518, 520-521.

⁹ Dakshleiger and Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane*, pp. 26-30.

to divide Soviet land into economically efficient units but became part of the creation of national territories.¹⁰

Chapter Five, entitled 'The Borders of a Nomadic Republic', will demonstrate that the Communist Party created discrete republics in Central Asia to accommodate the various nationalities believed to exist there. Discrete republics needed distinct borders, but new borders often destabilised nomadic communities by severing their traditional migratory routes. The state's fixation on national difference distracted it from differences of agricultural practice, in some ways a more profound determinant of Central Asian identity at the time. This chapter, first, will look inwards, from the external borders of the republic to its internal, administrative borders. This type of border is much broader in definition, encompassing the boundaries between one administrative district and another, but also the space separating agricultural practices, the lands of particular communities, households and individuals, and the de facto barriers which were enforced when access to natural resources was prohibited. Writing about European Russia, James W. Heinzen describes this kind of ground level regulation as where 'the social revolution found its real reflection, as the revolutionary state met rural Russia'.¹¹ This communicates the significance of the process both in Russia and in Central Asia.

It will be argued that internal borders often disrupted nomadic life on the steppe, but that in the early 1920s the same fixation on national autonomy which made external borders more challenging for nomads actually made internal borders less so. A spontaneous post-revolutionary period of decolonisation allowed for a considerable reordering of the administrative map and was understood in national terms. Correspondingly, in this case, as relatively less attention was paid to national matters the position of nomads became more deleterious. The Party's increasing awareness of economic or agricultural identities took priority over matters of national identity, and made the process of internal regionalisation more onerous for nomads in the later 1920s. Overall, regionalisation dictated land use in the republic, and as the distinction between nomads and sedentary farmers was so crucial, and their uses of the same land so incompatible, regionalisation was one of the cardinal policies of the first years of Soviet rule in Kazakhstan.

¹⁰ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 34.

¹¹ James W. Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State: The People's Commissariat of Agriculture under Proletarian Dictatorship, 1918-1929,' *Slavic Review* 56, no. 1 (1997), p. 96.

This chapter will progress chronologically, describing and analysing the various ways the steppe was shared out. It will juxtapose major legislative documents intended to regulate regionalisation – here described as governing frameworks – and petitions from localised disputes, in order to demonstrate how Party rulings influenced everyday decisions. Some petitions were submitted by Kazakh nomads themselves, and as Soviet archival materials offer lamentably few opportunities to hear from nomads, these petitions yield uniquely direct insights into nomadic life in the 1920s. Materials are spread over three sections covering three periods: 1920-1924, years dominated by decolonisation and bureaucratic weakness; 1924-1925, an interim when the Soviet state consolidated its administrative power; and 1925-1928, by which time economic ambition and self-confidence had led to greater centralisation in the Kazakh Republic. The chapter comes to an end in 1928 as this is when the first acts of forced sedentarisation were perpetrated, a campaign of such importance that it defines the years 1928-1934 and is addressed separately in Chapter Eight.

Section One: Settling Grievances, 1920-1924

Just as the 1920s ended with violence, they began with Civil War. Battle between Whites and Reds interrupted agricultural and distributive processes, leading to food shortages, famine, and then outbreaks of disease.¹² This extreme hardship was the first and most pressing reason to regionalise.¹³ In the Kazakh Republic hardship was most pronounced to the north-west, and the party's determination to ease suffering necessitated the accumulation of knowledge on a regional basis. The Red Caravan was intimately involved in this process. To be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Seven, the Red Caravan was a roving band of notable Party members, propagandists and investigators who collected information and disseminated instructions on behalf of the Kazakh capital after the Civil War.¹⁴

The Caravan produced a considerable number of reports on many north-western volosts, principally by talking to local community leaders and party cells.¹⁵ Volost-level information was subdivided into *aul*-level detail, in an effort to create a

¹² K. S. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, vol. 4 (Almaty: Atamūra, 2010), p. 194. Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, pp. 44-46.

¹³ For an excellent general account of this famine, see: Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, pp. 192-199.

¹⁴ TsGARK 930/1/4: 26-26 *ob.*

¹⁵ For further information on The Red Caravan see Chapter Seven. For a broad range of the Caravan's documentation regarding famine relief, see: APRK 139/1/339.

comprehensive topography of need.¹⁶ Caravan leaders repeatedly called for a concerted crop-growing campaign to ease the suffering in destitute nomadic areas during the first famine.¹⁷ Many from the Red Caravan went on to occupy significant posts in the Kazakh Communist Party, taking their experience of urgent economic border-making with them.¹⁸ In fact, many of the Party's most prominent members like Mendeshev, Danilov, Murzagaliev, Dzhangil'din and Zaromskov were sent on investigatory missions between 1920 and 1922. They were all personally practised in solving territorial disputes and assessing local deprivations, and this was a habit the administration would never lose.¹⁹ By the third all-Kazakh Conference in 1923 it was possible for delegates to discuss the average wealth of nomads in different areas, albeit in general terms.²⁰

As well as practised regionalisers, delegates were confirmed decolonisers. The Bolsheviks' fixation on nationhood and national emancipation was an agenda which superseded any proper appreciation for certain non-national differences. Lenin himself was anxious about the post-revolutionary re-emergence of Great Russian chauvinism and the backlash it could provoke from Central Asian communities which had suffered Tsarist oppression, perpetrated by ethnic Russian colonialists.²¹ In spite of this anxiety, the very first Bolshevik administration in Turkestan amplified the resentments of local people by treating Central Asian nationalism with hostility.²² This administration was quickly replaced by new ruling cadres who were more sympathetic to local nationalists. Indeed, many nationalists were accepted into said cadres, and began drawing what they wanted from Leninist rhetoric.²³ Some treated the Bolsheviks' 'instrumental' support for national autonomy as recognition of 'essential' national identities.²⁴ This stronger interpretation of nationalities policy was particularly evident amongst Uzbeks, and Kazakh authorities were able to imitate precedents set in the Uzbekistan area.²⁵

¹⁶ APRK 139/1/339: 45-45 *ob.*

¹⁷ APRK 139/1/339: 2, 20, 23 *ob.*, 53.

¹⁸ APRK 139/1/339: 2. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 177.

¹⁹ APRK 139/1/254: 56, 98.

²⁰ APRK 139/1/541: 111-112.

²¹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 4-20. Hélène Carrère D'Encausse, *The Great Challenge: Nationalities and the Bolshevik State 1917-1930* (London: Holmes & Meier, 1992), p. 39.

²² Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 146.

²³ The obvious example in the Kazakh case is the Alash Party, sometimes referred to erroneously as *Alash Orda*: Didar Kassymova, Zhanat Kundakbaeva, and Ustina Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), p. 24.

²⁴ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 151.

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 151-152.

The creation of external borders would be a union-wide project, but the revision of internal borders between agricultural practices and strips of cultivated land took on Central Asian specificities. Here Communist endorsement of nationalism allowed for a more aggressive post-imperial paradigm which justified decolonisation, defined for the purposes of this chapter as the forceful eviction of Europeans from a new Central Asian nation's land. This was unofficial or unregulated regionalisation, in that the borders between Russian-occupied land and Central Asian land were redrawn without state regulation in the Central Asians' favour. Turkestani authorities claimed that from 1921 to 1922 161 Russian villages were liquidated and 232,891 desiatinas (over 980 square miles) of land were confiscated in the Turkestan Republic, including part of what became southern Kazakhstan.²⁶ Documents declaring these seizures in 1923 admitted that the figures were estimates because the work was carried out hastily and with urgency; in reality much confiscation had been perpetrated by Central Asians spontaneously, without any prompt from the Party at all, and was tolerated with little more than Moscow's tacit approval.²⁷ Tashkent, the capital of the Turkestan Republic at this time, experimented with legislation designed to direct the development of requisitioned land.²⁸

For their part, administrators in the Kazakh Republic began laying the legal foundations over which land requisitions could take place in their own territory.²⁹ As in Turkestan, ire was concentrated on the Resettlement Administration, a Tsarist organ established in 1896 which supervised the arrival of 640,000 European settlers to the best lands of the steppe between the year of its creation and 1909.³⁰ On 2nd February 1921 the Kazakh Central Executive Committee (KTsIK) declared that all land formerly

²⁶ APRK 139/1/109: 1.

²⁷ Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-23* (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 88-89. Inter-ethnic violence in the Turkestan region had been increasingly viscous in the years prior to 1917, as vividly discussed by Jeff Sahadeo here: Jeff Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865-1923* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 127-128, 197.

²⁸ Tashkent also made early efforts to dictate the use of land in nomadic and semi-nomadic regions. See: GARF 1235/123/346:6. For an account of autonomous Central Asia political movements outside Tashkent, see: Sergey Abashin et al., 'Soviet Rule and the Delineation of Borders in the Ferghana Valley, 1917-1930,' in *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (London: M. E Sharpe, 2011), pp. 94-97.

²⁹ Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, First ed., *Studies of Nationalities in the USSR* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), p. 157.

³⁰ APRK 139/1/109: 1. Alexander Morrison, "'Sowing the Seed of National Strife in this Alien Region": The Pahlen Report and *Pereselenie* in Turkestan, 1908-1910,' *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 31 (2012), p. 11. Robert A. Lewis, Richard H. Rowland, and Ralph S. Clem, *Nationality and Population Change in Russia and the USSR: An Evaluation of Census Data, 1897-1970* (New York: Praeger, 1976), p. 232. The Resettlement Administration would continue to be demonised throughout the decade, as in these minutes from a plenum of the Kustanai Okrug Committee: RGASPI 17/25/174: 81-82.

owned by the Resettlement Administration should be returned to the Kazakhs.³¹ The Kazakh People's Commissariat of Agriculture (Narkomzem KSSR) published instructions for the redistribution of this land in December 1921.³² In March the following year, land deemed to have been occupied illegally since the 1917 revolution was also placed into the hands of the working Kazakh population.³³ Regions occupied by Cossacks were targeted specifically in these early years due to widespread hatred of Cossacks as the Tsar's enforcers.³⁴ Kazakh Volost Committees were given clear instructions to distribute all free land quickly, favouring Kazakhs first and other nationalities second.³⁵ It seems true that the eviction of Russians in Central Asia mainly took place in the Zhetysu region, much of which would be added to the Kazakh Republic from Turkestan in 1925. But Jeremy Smith's claim that eviction was restricted to that area alone is not convincing.³⁶ Russians were displaced, and their proportion of the population of the Kazakh Republic diminished substantially between 1920 and 1926.³⁷ The pressure on Europeans to head north would have come in many forms.

In the spring of 1921, for example, one community of Russian settlers near the town of Atbasar became subject to a decree from the Kazakh Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom KSSR) about the return of farmsteads to the working Kazakh people. Petitioning for appeal, the farmers placed heavy emphasis on the effort they had invested in ploughing the soil and planting crops over a great distance, only to have their work destroyed by Kazakhs who, having heard about the new decree, arrived with their livestock and 'boldly' allowed their herds to take pasture over the freshly ploughed fields.³⁸ The Russians' harvest was destroyed and, fearing hunger, they fled to

³¹ APRK 139/1/337: 17.

³² APRK 139/1/337: 19.

³³ The phrase 'working Kazakh' was intended to inject a class element to the decolonisation process, and was ubiquitous at the time.

³⁴ APRK 139/1/337: 17, 19.

³⁵ APRK 139/1/337: 20-20 *ob.*. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 61. Martha Brill Olcott claims that Moscow explicitly banned any policy which expressly favoured Kazakhs over Russians: Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, p. 163. This instruction was evidently ignored, though its existence now seems dubious: Terry Martin, 'An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism,' in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 72-76.

³⁶ Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, pp. 88-89.

³⁷ N. E. Masanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: narody i kul'tury* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2001), p. 368.

³⁸ GARF 3260/1/25: 33.

Kokchetav (now Kokshetau).³⁹ When displaced in this manner it was most common for peasants to petition for new land somewhere in European Russia.⁴⁰

It is tempting here to claim that national and agricultural borders inside the Kazakh Republic had evaporated, as the arbitrary wandering of Kazakh nomadism lost all restraint. No doubt this is how some evicted Russians interpreted events. But the implication that an ordered Russian administrative landscape was being replaced by Kazakh chaos should be avoided. Rather, parts of the landscape were returning to an alternative system less discernible to the state but mutually understood by many Kazakhs. As indicated by Edward Schatz, 'The Kazakh nomadic pastoralists had a loose, but still notable, attachment to territory.'⁴¹ Nurbulat Masanov goes further, describing the Kazakhs' relationship to land as complex and dictated by concrete conditions.⁴² Some nomads may have trampled Russian crops randomly, in a spirit of vengeance, but they could also have understood their actions as the reestablishment of older tribal and agricultural boundaries, not to be found on any Russian map, but deeply meaningful nonetheless.

The rhetoric of Kazakh Soviet organs at the time was characterised by the same interpretation of nationalism as seen in Tashkent, more assertive than Party organs in Moscow would likely have preferred.⁴³ At the first All-Kazakh Party Conference in June 1921, Cossacks were described as the tool with which the Tsar subjugated the Kazakh people, and violence perpetrated on Cossack settlers was largely overlooked. The generosity of the Kazakh spirit was contrasted with the rapacious greed of Russian arrivals; some Kazakhs, it was suggested, tragically believed that there was no free land left in Russia (why else would they arrive in such numbers?), and so Russian settlers should be treated magnanimously on the capacious steppe.⁴⁴ At the same conference, a delegate explained that any Kazakhs who expressed hostility towards European settlers did so because it was those European settlers who had kept the Kazakhs in

³⁹ GARF 3260/1/25: 33.

⁴⁰ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 62.

⁴¹ Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (London: University of Washington Press, 2004), p. 29.

⁴² Masanov, *Kochevaia tsivilizatsiia Kazakhov*, pp. 442-443.

⁴³ Martin also includes Kazakhstan in a list of 'aggressive republics' when it came to the later implementation of *korenizatsiia*, suggesting that central Party organs only expressed their disapproval when conditions for Russians became too onerous: Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 140.

⁴⁴ APRK 139/1/2:91. The opposite was indeed the case. The eradication of aristocratic estates in the Russian countryside strengthened the peasant communes which enlarged as urban-dwellers returned to their old villages: Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society*, p. 41.

economic backwardness.⁴⁵ Thus the Bolsheviks' nationalities policy found expression more in terms of post-imperial reparations than post-imperial freedoms; the assertion of grievance, not independence, in the KSSR. The rhetoric of grievance lingered. In 1926, a resolution from the Semipalatinsk Governate Committee began with a denunciation of the Tsar's colonising policies, and the imperial theft of the best Kazakh land which was said to still affect economic relations.⁴⁶ A year later, at the sixth all-Kazakh Party Conference, the ejection of Kazakhs from the best land was once again cited as a reason for continuing economic underperformance, demonstrating the continued significance of land use.⁴⁷

Sections of the Communist Party clearly acknowledged that decolonisation was unavoidable. Land reform was the question *du jour* across much of the former Russian Empire and the Bolsheviks' canny handling of the matter was critical for the early consolidation of their power.⁴⁸ In Central Asia this meant negotiating disputes which manifested themselves as ethnic antagonism. As one Kazakh state document put it: 'The fundamental question defining the interrelations between the native and immigrant European population is, surely, the land question.'⁴⁹ The initial weakness of Soviet power in Central Asia made it impossible to assuage post-imperial resentment. Instead, the party sought only to mitigate the most destabilising effects of spontaneous internal border-making.

It did this with a series of governing frameworks which first gave some structure to decolonization, though later they took on different priorities and aims. A resolution of the second Federal Committee for Land Affairs (*Federal'nyi komitet po zemel'nyim delam*) was one of the first union-wide frameworks, and one of the most comprehensive. Produced in December 1921, this piece of legislation reveals the attitudes of a central organ, subject to VTsIK, which was seeking generalisable principles for a territory as large and diverse as that which the USSR became.⁵⁰ The resolution called for an end to all Russian colonisation in the newly-established autonomous republics, identifying nomads as one group which particularly struggled

⁴⁵ APRK 139/1/2: 79.

⁴⁶ RGASPI 17/25/208: 33.

⁴⁷ RGASPI 17/25/6: 169 *ob.*. Of course, certain party members tended to make such claims more often than others. For a more detailed discussion of intellectual differentiation among Party personnel, see Chapter Three.

⁴⁸ J. N. Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavour: Russian History 1812-1980*, Second ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 290.

⁴⁹ L. C. Gatagova, L. P. Kosheleva, and L. A. Pogovaia, *TSK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros. Kniga 1, 1918-1933 gg., Dokumenty Sovetskoi Istorii* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2005), p. 288.

⁵⁰ GARF 3260/1/41: 1-7 *ob.*.

with migration before 1917.⁵¹ In part, the confidence with which the committee called a halt to colonisation presumably came from the belief, documented in the resolution, that ten million desiatinas of desert and semi-desert in Soviet Central Asia would never be suitable for sedentary farming anyway, and would be left for nomadic use.⁵² There is a certain fatalism here about the extent to which socialism could overcome climactic realities. Common also in the Kazakh Communist Party just after the Civil War, this fatalism was not shared by many in urban Russia and would be supplanted by a lethal self-confidence in later years, as will be explained in section three.

As well as the environment, the resolution was sceptical about democratic engagement on the steppe. It indicated that annual migration put nomads at a disadvantage when negotiating land use, as they could not be kept in constant contact with administrators. As such, the committee requested that these administrators exercise special thoughtfulness when providing for the land needs of nomads, and pay close attention to local custom.⁵³ Future delineation of land, and the selection of plots for industrial or agricultural development, was to be confirmed at special agricultural congresses with local nomads in attendance. Nomads, the resolution asserted, should be involved in district, governate, oblast and republic-level decision-making whenever internal borders were to change.⁵⁴ With hindsight, the resolution's final demands, such as the provision of water and food supplies to nomads at different points of their seasonal migration, look particularly fanciful, but the democratic element of regionalisation in nomadic areas was one proposal which persisted.⁵⁵

The Kazakh People's Commissariat of Agriculture immediately began receiving documents which proved the impact of the Federal Committee for Land Affairs' resolution. In mid-1921, 330 migrants from near Kaluga in Russia had received a plot of land in the Akmola (now Astana) Governate for the cultivation of crops. The next year, the strict prohibition on colonisation imposed by the Federal Committee for Land Affairs was applied retrospectively, and the land was reclaimed. All 330 settlers were told to return to Kaluga. Though they raised opposition to this decision, claiming that their land was being used and so was not eligible for redistribution, their protests were ignored and Kazakhs moved their animals onto the farmland. Destitute and homeless,

⁵¹ GARF 3260/1/41: 1 *ob.*-2.

⁵² GARF 3260/1/41: 2.

⁵³ GARF 3260/1/41: 2 *ob.*.

⁵⁴ GARF 3260/1/41: 3.

⁵⁵ GARF 3260/1/41: 3 *ob.*.

the settlers made their way to Petropavlovsk, where authorities paid for their train journeys back to central Russia.⁵⁶

Petitions submitted by European communities might create the image of a republic-wide invasion by Kazakhs in 1921, but in the same year settlers also tried to seize new land from Kazakhs.⁵⁷ In many parts of the former-Tsarist Empire legislators capitulated to Russian peasants who took advantage of revolutionary chaos to expand the borders of their land, just as some nomads did.⁵⁸ Not all settlement was understood as illegal colonisation in these years, and all centrally-devised legislation was inconsistently applied.⁵⁹ Some displaced settlers seem to have taken to the road temporarily before returning to their old farmsteads, provoking further rancour.⁶⁰ The Party employed surveyors to negotiate terms between settlers and Kazakhs who were happy to lease their land in return for funds.⁶¹ The impression is given of various Party organs, Kazakh and All-Union, issuing resolutions which sought only to reflect and influence the prevailing zeitgeist.

On 19th April 1921 the Federal People's Commissariat of Agriculture (Narkomzem RSFSR) made an official attempt to dictate the path of nomadic migration along the Ural River. On the west side of the Ural delta, on the opposite side to a collection of Cossack fishing communities, nomads were given permission to pasture their livestock on a seasonal basis.⁶² This was a post hoc authorization of something that was clearly already happening, since regulation for the practice had been devised only lately. The month before the Commissariat's ruling, temporary encampment within one verst of high tide was prohibited along the Ural, to maintain some distance between fishing Cossacks and herding Kazakhs.⁶³ This prohibition would surely have contradicted the promise made later that year, that nomads should be provided access to water resources during their seasonal migrations, but the legislative incoherence of the decade should never be underestimated.

⁵⁶ GARF 3260/1/25: 34.

⁵⁷ APRK 139/1/3: 147.

⁵⁸ Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society*, p. 40. A case of this nature is discussed in depth in Chapter Four.

⁵⁹ Alan M. Ball, as a historian of the NEP era, suggests that economic regulations and laws passed before 1924 often had little or no effect on the individuals implicated in the legislation: Alan M. Ball, *Russia's Last Capitalists: The Nepmen, 1921-1929* (London: University of California Press, 1987), p. 23.

⁶⁰ Gatagova, Kosheleva, and Pogovaia, *TSK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros*, p. 288.

⁶¹ APRK 139/1/350: 30-32.

⁶² GARF 3260/1/25: 115.

⁶³ This decision was made by the uezd's Executive Committee (*Uispolkom*) on 3rd March 1921: GARF 3260/1/25: 110 *ob.*

In any case the prohibition was ignored. In February 1922 Glavryba, the body charged with supervising the Cossack fishermen, contacted Narkomzem RSFSR about the situation on the delta.⁶⁴ Since autumn 1921 the riverbanks had undergone a 'mass occupation' from arriving nomads.⁶⁵ Plant fodder on the delta had been trampled or consumed by Kazakh herds. Some Kazakhs had done some fishing of their own, which Glavryba referred to as 'poaching'.⁶⁶ The effect on the fishing industry was said to be catastrophic. Local fishermen had to travel further in search of fodder for their own livestock, and fish were scared into deeper waters by the presence of animals so close to the banks. Glavryba warned that, if the situation did not improve, the Ural River might share the fate of the Emba further east, which had lost all value to the fishing industry.⁶⁷ Most interestingly, Glavryba blamed the 'connivance of the local economic organs' for the Kazakh influx.⁶⁸ Glavryba asked Moscow to intervene, enforce its earlier ban, and establish clear and recognized borders between two incompatible enterprises: nomadic animal husbandry and sedentary fishing.

As made clear in the first All-Kazakh Conference, there is no doubt that Cossacks were closely associated with Tsarist-era colonization. Perhaps in deference to this association the affair was treated as a matter of national autonomy to be resolved by Kazakh organs of state. Narkomzem RSFSR forwarded the complaint from Glavryba to its Kazakh counterpart in Orenburg, and the Kazakh Central Executive Committee consequentially sent a delegation to the Ural estuary to investigate.⁶⁹ For Moscow's part it seems to have been assumed that the Cossacks would remain in place. Before hearing the results of Orenburg's excursion to the north Caspian, Narkomzem RSFSR asked Orenburg what measures were being taken to prevent further migration to the banks of the Ural, implying that the displacement of the Cossacks was undesirable.⁷⁰ Locally though, given Glavryba's accusations, sympathies seem to have been with the Kazakhs.

⁶⁴ Glavryba was charged with the regulation of these enterprises on 31st May 1921 by a decree from Sovnarkom: GARF 3260/1/25: 110. GARF 3260/1/25: 110-110 *ob.*

⁶⁵ GARF 3260/1/25: 110.

⁶⁶ GARF 3260/1/25: 110.

⁶⁷ GARF 3260/1/25: 110 *ob.*

⁶⁸ GARF 3260/1/25: 110.

⁶⁹ GARF 3260/1/25: 120, 115, 121.

⁷⁰ GARF 3260/1/25: 13.

At this early stage the practice and politics of decolonisation contributed to a governing framework which often worked in the nomads' favour.⁷¹ As made clear by petitions from dispossessed Russians, the boundaries of nomadic pasture expanded after the Civil War. The Party's counter-imperial platform in Central Asia precluded official condemnation of the nomads' actions, and nomads themselves were afforded substantial rhetorical support.⁷² Yet guidelines were nevertheless published. The Party could ill-afford to allow the chaotic and unstructured wanderings of the nomads, as their migrations were often perceived, to disrupt any enterprise at random. The 1921 resolution's answer to this was to permit nomads to choose their own pastureland, but with the condition that their choices not threaten the stability of other communities.⁷³ Clearly this specification was frequently ignored, but not always. When sedentary areas were considered economically indispensable, they were more likely to be protected. As will be seen, the fishermen of the Ural would become associated with a larger developmental plan for their region, far more important than the farmers of Akmola and Atbasar. In the Zhetysu Governate nomadic migration near the Turksib Railway's construction sites was supervised particularly closely.⁷⁴ Nomads were also told to stay away from land designated for urban development.⁷⁵ The Party's policy on national autonomy came into conflict with the imperative of economic development, and certain internal borders had to be recognised by nomadic communities for the new post-imperial system to flourish.⁷⁶ Even as nomadic migrations were extended, the principle that they can and should be contained and controlled stood firm.

Section Two: Asserting Control, 1924-1925

At points throughout the decade, this control of migratory routes lost some of its provincial status and became associated with increasingly ambitious macroeconomic policy. The success of major industrial projects, such as the Turksib, was of far greater concern to the economy of the Soviet Union than the viability of the occasional farmstead. Not only were nomads kept away from construction sites, but sedentary agriculture in neighbouring lands had to be pursued with renewed vigour to feed

⁷¹ Bhavna Davè even claims that the administrative borders established before 1923 were designed to concur with nomadic territorial divisions, though they still obstructed migration: Bhavna Davè, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 36.

⁷² Yuri Slezkine, 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,' *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994), p. 419. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 59-67.

⁷³ GARF 3260/1/41: 1 ob..

⁷⁴ RGASPI 17/25/156: 94, 122.

⁷⁵ APRK 139/1/541: 145.

⁷⁶ GARF 3260/1/41: 3.

industrial workers.⁷⁷ Local committees in western Kazakh regions were under pressure from state-managed oil agencies to accommodate and encourage oil production wherever possible.⁷⁸ The isolation of oil-extraction points near the northeast coast of the Caspian Sea was of particular concern. On 19th June 1922 the managing board of the oil industry in the Ural-Emba region wrote to Moscow, complaining that local systems of communication were inadequate and that oil workers relied wholly on imported foodstuffs because of the salinity of the soil and the lack of inhabitants nearby. The board lobbied for land-reclamation in the area to help solve these problems.⁷⁹ Local Kazakhs would have migrated across these apparently uninhabited regions, and any land reclamation would likely have caused nomads considerable problems.⁸⁰

In the face of overbearing macroeconomic ambitions and localised disagreements, there is evidence that the Federal Committee for Land Affairs made efforts to maintain its ruling in the Kazakh Republic and to support nomadic interests. It demanded the presence of prominent Kazakh Party leaders at commissions on nomadic affairs in the early 1920s.⁸¹ But as other laws proliferated and economic organs squabbled over priorities, the framework became complicated.⁸² A new, similarly ambitious framework was introduced in March 1924, in the declaration on Land Development for the Nomadic, Semi-Nomadic and Settling Population of the Autonomous Kazakh Socialist Soviet Republic.⁸³ This declaration was the product of cooperation between major institutions in Moscow and Orenburg (still at this time the capital of the KSSR), and it contained two significant clauses on the question of land use. First, in areas dominated by animal-husbandry where the question of land use was not contentious, tracts of land were to be found and partitioned for the pursuit of other agricultural activities, the nature of which would depend on local environmental

⁷⁷ RGASPI 17/25/156: 93, 122. For more information on the effect of the Turksib on local Kazakhs, including nomads, see: Matthew J. Payne, 'The Forge of the Kazakh Proletariat? The Turksib, Nativization, and Industrialization during Stalin's first Five-Year Plan,' in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). The inclusion of Kazakhs on industrial sites dominated by Europeans was a frequent source of conflict in the Tsarist Empire, as shown by Jeff Sahadeo: Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society*, p. 128.

⁷⁸ GARF 3260/1/25: 14, 18-18 *ob.*.

⁷⁹ GARF 3260/1/25: 18.

⁸⁰ GARF 1235/123/345: 29. Seitkali Mendeshev was a prominent Kazakh Party member whose work is described later in this chapter. His report on the migratory habits of nomads near the Caspian can be found here: GARF 1235/123/345: 29.

⁸¹ GARF 3260/1/25: 9.

⁸² GARF 1235/102/155: 1.

⁸³ GARF 1235/102/155: 35-40. Chapter Six also deals extensively with the implications of this lengthy piece of legislation, from the perspective of tax collection policies.

conditions. Where arguments erupted during the act of partition, these would be resolved on a case-by-case basis at special land commissions or other agricultural institutions.⁸⁴ Second, particularly intractable arguments over land use were to be passed upwards within the administrative hierarchy, to be solved by uezd, gubernate or republic-wide bodies.⁸⁵

Between 1921 when the first governing framework was established and 1924 when the new declaration was made, the political circumstances on the steppe had changed considerably. Differences of context led to differences of content. First, after three years, the politics of decolonisation was beginning to lose its intensity, and inter-ethnic violence was less acute.⁸⁶ Thus the 1924 framework could make explicit provisions for the occupation of certain areas by sedentary farmers without fear of provocation. Second, the legislative cacophony of the earliest years was being stifled. Administrative structures were gaining coherence. The authors of the new declaration expressed confidence in the growing formalisation of Soviet power in Central Asia by describing an institutional hierarchy of regional and district committees each with their own jurisdiction and powers, and by entrusting this hierarchy with the resolution of controversies regarding the use of land. In doing so, the declaration itself helped to formalise Soviet power structures.⁸⁷

The land commissions mentioned in the declaration were at the front line of regionalisation efforts in the republic. They had been operating since 1922, but their role and formation were standardized in 1924. Three to five local individuals would typically constitute a commission.⁸⁸ Their personal details were recorded when they were vested with judicial competence, and documentation reveals that they were normally men, as young as in their early twenties, who would not have to be Communist Party members, though among Russian peasants youth was the characteristic which most often correlated with Party membership and the same may have been true on the steppe.⁸⁹ Commission members were expected to have some

⁸⁴ GARF 1235/102/155: 38 *ob.*

⁸⁵ GARF 1235/102/155: 39. This chain of command was later confirmed by VTsIK and Sovnarkom RSFSR 1235/123/346: 67.

⁸⁶ For a concise account of ethnic conflict in the Kazakh Republic, see: Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 59-67.

⁸⁷ Michael Rouland suggests that 'Soviet consolidation' began in 1925, but this underestimates the huge legislative achievements of the previous year: Michael R. Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation', PhD thesis (Georgetown University, 2005), pp. 272-313.

⁸⁸ GARF 1235/102/155: 39.

⁸⁹ Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society*, p. 47.

experience in agriculture but would not need higher educational qualifications.⁹⁰ These men sat at the bottom of an intricate institutional system which was further refined later in the decade, but their authority was considerable given their lack of training.⁹¹ Unlike the legal people's courts operating in European Russia after 1920, the land commissions did not require the oversight or presence of a trained professional or judge.⁹² In 1925 alone, Kazakh land commissions resolved over 4,000 disagreements.⁹³ For administrative purposes, these cases were divided into 16 separate types of dispute, including the allotment of farmland, the demarcation of farmland, and the location of nomadic migratory routes.⁹⁴

A glimpse of how these commissions operated further reveals the changing logic of internal borders halfway through the decade. In March 1924, a group of 94 nomadic Kazakhs in the eastern half of the republic sought permission to settle, and utilised the state's petition system to request resources to make their new farming activities a success.⁹⁵ These 94 individuals amounted to 18 tents in a nomadic community of 32, and from the remaining 14 tents dissent was raised about the petition. A volost land commission considered the case on 21st April 1924, and found that the proposed settlement would affect the winter pasture land of the nomads who wished to continue migrating. A month later the uezd land commission concurred with the original verdict, but on 11th August 1924 the Semipalatinsk Governate's land commission, which had also been consulted, decided that it had insufficient evidence to intercede. The nomads hoping to settle recalibrated their plan, distancing their proposed settlement from their fellow nomads' winter pastures and resubmitting their petition.⁹⁶ The remaining nomads then complained that the alternative proposal would destroy their seasonal hayfields, and complicate their access to water.⁹⁷ Not until 12th August 1925 did the uezd land committee finally rule in the settling nomads' favour. The borders of a new sedentary farm were established, and use of land within those borders by nomadic herds, formerly permissible, became illegal.

At this point, protesting nomads sought to employ the decolonising nationality politics which had been applied so effectively years before. They pointed out that, at

⁹⁰ TsGARK 280/3/3: 1-7. According to James W. Heinzen this was also true of most employees of Narkomzem RSFSR: Heinzen, "Alien" Personnel in the Soviet State,' p. 92.

⁹¹ GARF 1235/123/346: 7.

⁹² Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society*, p. 15.

⁹³ The actual number of cases cited is 4,202: TsGARK 280/4/18:1.

⁹⁴ For examples of this categorisation, see: TsGARK 280/3/3:17, 22.

⁹⁵ TsGARK 280/4/30: 4. The nomads sought to settle in the Ulanskaia Volost.

⁹⁶ TsGARK 280/4/30: 4.

⁹⁷ TsGARK 280/4/30: 8.

the hearing of the final uezd land commission in August, not a single Kazakh who spoke Russian competently was in attendance, and the proceedings had nevertheless been held in that language. The translator was weak, and the land commission thus 'did not get to the essence of the case.'⁹⁸ It seems the 1921 resolution's doubts about the difficulty of including nomads in consultative processes were justified. Yet as already suggested the politics of decolonisation and retribution were in decline. The Russians at the land commission may have had a cultural prejudice in favour of settlement, but it was a prejudice increasingly shared by governate-level organs, who upheld the uezd land commission's decision at an open congress on 16th November 1925.⁹⁹ Most interestingly, the nomads who petitioned to settle adopted another feature of the Party's rhetoric at this time, apparently dismissing national differences and instead opting to call their still-migrating fellow Kazakhs 'kulak-*bais*'.¹⁰⁰ The odd combination of Russian and Kazakh words here may have been the translator's invention, but assuming it is a fair rendering, the term implies that stubborn affluent nomads were agitating to keep their community in the past. Class-based insults were becoming the language of choice for astute nomads petitioning a commission of Russians, even as the rhetoric of post-imperial grievance was losing its resonance among administrators. Class and economic development were the new guiding principles of internal border-making.

As the Kazakhs' native bourgeoisie in Communist Party ideology, the *bais* were becoming hate-figures in Communist Party propaganda.¹⁰¹ It was argued that the *bais* thrived in nomadic society, and kept the Kazakhs trapped by a primordial nomadic lifestyle so as to better exploit their labour. One means of doing this was controlling access to water. The state's regulation of water on the steppe thus became a liberating slogan as well as a pillar of Soviet agricultural policy in Central Asia.¹⁰² Initial legislation restricted itself to guaranteeing sufficient water access for nomads and settlers.¹⁰³ The declaration on Land Development from 1924 included an unequivocal clause on this matter. It specified that nomads and semi-nomads could under no

⁹⁸ TsGARK 280/4/30: 4.

⁹⁹ TsGARK 280/4/30: 6.

¹⁰⁰ TsGARK 280/4/30: 2.

¹⁰¹ As in European Russia, the Communist Party struggled to foster class war among the rural population immediately after the Civil War: Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society*, p. 43.

¹⁰² For an example of the inclusion of the *bais* into this argument from 1926, see: RGASPI 17/25/208: 50. Water policy was most significant for the notorious cotton growing efforts of Soviet Uzbekistan: Gert Jan A. Veldwisch and Bettina B. Bock, 'Dehkans, Diversification and Dependencies: Rural Transformation in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan' *Journal of Agrarian Change* 11, no. 4 (2011), pp. 584-585.

¹⁰³ GARF 3260/1/41: 1 *ob.*, 3.

circumstances be prohibited from using water resources, even when those resources were under constant use by sedentary communities, though the declaration also recognised the necessity of protecting wetlands from damage by nomadic herds.¹⁰⁴ Despite the absence of wetlands nearby, the Semipalatinsk Governorate's land commission was not acting inconsistently when it disregarded concerns that a new farm would obstruct nomadic access to water. The *bais* among the remaining nomads may have been strengthened by the commission's decision, but the nomads with permission to settle had theoretically freed themselves from the power of the *bais* forever. Settlement was progressive and emancipatory.

Section Three: Class and Development, 1925-1928

It is of crucial importance that any protection of nomadic subsistence was intended to bring nomadism to an end. Ensuring access to water undermined the retrograde influence of the *bais*. Giving land to settling nomads encouraged others to follow suit. Sensitivity about colonisation by non-Kazakhs did not disappear, but when it was Kazakhs effectively doing the colonising by settling permanently on nomadic pastures, commissions up and down the institutional hierarchy were amenable. The Kazakh administration was steadily including more mechanisms for the development and settlement of land within its jurisdiction. The declaration on Land Development of 1924 was ratified shortly before the production of a register of government funds to be allocated to various regions for the pursuit of sedentary agriculture.¹⁰⁵ With the register, Sovnarkom KASSR planned to settle nomads in specially-designated areas, demonstrating the increasing sophistication of an administrative topography the state first began developing in response to famine after the Civil War. Space was selected for the fertility of its land, the success of its previous harvests, its under-population and access to water. The intention of the register was to deliver resources to nomads as planned by the Federal Committee for Land Affairs in 1921, but also to control and restrict their migrations to a smaller share of the steppe.¹⁰⁶ In later years the Party would use its map of nomadic regions to mitigate upheaval after another winter of *dzhut*.¹⁰⁷

Attempts to induce settlement among nomads were often justified as a way of breaking the power of the *bais* and liberating poor Kazakhs, but the actual rationale

¹⁰⁴ GARF 1235/102/155: 38.

¹⁰⁵ TsGARK 30/1/362: 135-138 *ob.*

¹⁰⁶ TsGARK 30/1/362: 135-138 *ob.*

¹⁰⁷ RGASPI 17/25/87: 32. TsGARK 30/1/1090*b*: 39.

was larger and more profound than that.¹⁰⁸ As explained in Chapter Three, the nomadic economy was always believed to be inefficient. At a time of widespread food shortages in urban areas, the vast tracts of land required to sustain a relatively small nomadic population seemed poorly employed.¹⁰⁹ When the state set about categorising territory by economic strength and agricultural practice, nomadic regions and impoverished regions were found to be the same thing.¹¹⁰ This was true in both the Kazakh and Turkestan Republics from the beginning of the decade.¹¹¹ Much intra-Party debate in the 1920s was characterized by a growing belief that the kind of animal husbandry practised by nomads was productive only to the level of subsistence.¹¹² Economic data, categorised by geographical area, facilitated the Party's increasingly negative understanding of nomadism.¹¹³ As random decolonisation gave way to focused administrative regionalisation, it became possible to highlight the disparities between nomadic and sedentary areas and to encourage nomads to become farmers.

With the Party thereby extending the ambition of its developmental aims, it found its administrative structures wanting. The Collegiate of Higher Control over Land Disputes (*Kollegiia vysshego kontroliia po zemel'nyim sporam*) was the foremost supervisory body for the Kazakh Republic's internal border-making for much of the 1920s.¹¹⁴ It predated Narkomzem KSSR but would become part of that larger body, and collected a good deal of documentation from land commissions and other organs throughout its time in operation.¹¹⁵ But its oversight of local land commissions was severely hampered by its own lack of resources, and doubts about the efficacy of the commissions themselves had become a matter of real concern by 1925.¹¹⁶ Theoretically the Collegiate acted as a Court of Cassation for the commissions, resolving cases mired in disagreement. But with insufficient personnel most of its cases were forwarded to organisations in Moscow, where files were lost or forgotten for years at a time.¹¹⁷ In this context the land commissions looked unaccountable, and the predominance of

¹⁰⁸ RGASPI 17/25/201: 30.

¹⁰⁹ Simon Johnson and Peter Temin, 'The Macroeconomics of NEP,' *The Economic History Review* 46, no. 4 (1993), p. 753.

¹¹⁰ There is further evidence of this in Chapter Six, in the discussion of the early decision to tax areas with a large nomadic contingent less heavily, because these areas were not prosperous enough to pay high levies.

¹¹¹ For Turkestan, see this economic report from 1922: GARF 130/6/998: 4.

¹¹² RGASPI 17/25/159: 190.

¹¹³ Cultural-domestic development in nomadic areas could also be found lacking: RGASPI 17/25/156: 122.

¹¹⁴ TsGARK 280/4/18: 1.

¹¹⁵ TsGARK 280/4/101.

¹¹⁶ TsGARK 280/4/18: 1.

¹¹⁷ TsGARK 280/4/18: 1-1 *ob.*

Europeans in the commissions caused ongoing disquiet. Similar criticisms were made about other agricultural authorities, whose inattention to contentious land-use was said to be exacerbating ethnic tensions.¹¹⁸

For the purposes of further development and the swift resolution of conflicts, the governing framework would again be changed. Later frameworks for land use in the republic made references to the KASSR's Land Code, itself a crucially important piece of legislation. The first Land Code was introduced for the RSFSR in 1922 under Lenin's personal supervision, after which other Soviet republics set about creating their own, though the collectivisation of agriculture in the early 1930s would render them largely obsolete.¹¹⁹ Following lobbying from KTsiK, VTsiK was persuaded to include article 207 of the Kazakh Land Code into the systematic resolution of land disputes. The result of this decision was the centralisation of power in the Kazakh Republic in 1927, constraining the local land commissions after they had been strengthened in 1924, and extending the powers of the Collegiate of Higher Control over Land Disputes to reduce its dependence on Moscow.¹²⁰ As well as using the Land Code to centralise, republic-level authorities made further efforts to extend their power and authority over the conciliation of disagreements in January 1927 and later in 1928, years when union-wide economic policy was also taking a more interventionist direction.¹²¹ All this was justified as a way for Party members to triumph over patriarchal or bourgeois elements in rural areas.¹²²

What were the consequences for nomads? Answers can be found in the creation of the Gur'ev and Ural Okrugs in the west of the republic. In 1928, Gur'ev (today called Atyrau) was the governing centre of the Gur'ev Uezd, an administrative area reaching around the north-eastern coast of the Caspian Sea. This uezd was particularly diverse. It included some of the same Cossack fishing collectives and oil extraction points mentioned earlier in the chapter, and in June 1925 its north-western borders had been extended to include some of the nomadic territories of the former Bukey Governate (to be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five).¹²³

¹¹⁸ RGASPI 17/25/116: 27.

¹¹⁹ Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society*, pp. 91-92. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, pp. 207-208. A full copy of the RSFSR's 1922 Land Code can be found here: <http://lawru.info/legal2/se13/pravo13860>. Last accessed: 19th February 2015.

¹²⁰ GARF 1235/123/346: 6-8.

¹²¹ GARF 1235/123/346: 9-11. GARF 1235/106/152: 7. Ball, *Russia's Last Capitalists*, p. 60.

¹²² TsGARK 280/4/18:1 *ob.*.

¹²³ RGASPI 17/25/285: 104.

For an urban centre managing oil and fishing efforts, the fresh addition of nomadic charges was a new kind of bureaucratic burden. When the public prosecutor's office (*prokuror*) in the town became responsible for administering the north-western nomads of the Gur'ev Uezd it immediately experienced complication and disorder. The nomadic population only remained in the uezd for three to four months annually, spending the rest of the year over borders in other uezds. Investigatory work became immeasurably harder, summoning nomads to court was impossible and court actions reportedly took years.¹²⁴ A protocol from the Gur'ev Uezd committee on 23rd March 1926 confirms also that the counting of nomadic herds, the collection of taxes from nomads, and the support of nomadic agriculture was all far more troublesome than in Gur'ev's settled regions.¹²⁵

Partially in response to the problems experienced by administrators in Gur'ev, in 1928 KTsiK suggested that the Ural Governate, which contained the Gur'ev Uezd, be divided into two new economic zones, the Gur'ev and Ural Okrugs.¹²⁶ This was to be part of the next phase of *rainirovanie*, in which the former system of governates was replaced with a smaller collection of large okrugs based on the prevailing economic characteristics of each area.¹²⁷ Thus the divergent regions of the Gur'ev Uezd would be divided between the two okrugs.¹²⁸ The Gur'ev Okrug, including the southern half of the Gur'ev Uezd, would contain local industrial and advanced agricultural enterprises. These could be more effectively managed from Gur'ev itself, freeing it to become a productive fishing exporter, a major industrial centre, and an important docking station sitting on the Ural delta. Such an economic hub would have no time to manage the backward nomads who used land in the north-west; they would have to join the largely agrarian Ural Okrug. KTsiK presented this change as a reversion to the more

¹²⁴ RGASPI 17/25/285: 104.

¹²⁵ RGASPI 17/25/285: 132.

¹²⁶ A number of documents confirm this proposed delimitation. This declaration from VTsiK on 3rd September 1928 describes the final territorial divisions of the region in most detail: GARF 1235/140/1029: 2-3 *ob.*. However, for evidence of support for the division from KTsiK, see: GARF 1235/140/1029: 5-6. For the VTsiK's direct response to this, see: 1235/140/1029: 9-10 *ob.*.

¹²⁷ Asal Khamraeva-Aubert, "Economic Planning and the Construction of Territorial Limits in Soviet Central Asia: the Case of the Uzbek SSR" paper presented at the BASEES European Congress, (Cambridge, 7th April 2013).

¹²⁸ GARF 1235/140/1029: 5-6. It is worth emphasizing here the rate of flux in the administrative regionalization of the USSR. By 1928, the system of governates had been superseded by ten Kazakh okrugs, and a full description of the republic's structures at this time can be found here: GARF 1235/123/345: 2-5. These okrugs also proved ephemeral, however.

rational, economically-minded administrative structure which existed before the Gur'ev Uezd had taken lands from the Bukey Governate.¹²⁹

As for the new Ural Okrug, this region would consolidate all the challenges involved in governing a more balanced population of sedentary Russians and nomadic Kazakhs.¹³⁰ According to KTsiK, the plans for the Ural Okrug included a 'colonization fund for the Bukey Kazakhs' in the north of the former Gur'ev Uezd, who had in recent years been struggling with Russian farmers over use of land.¹³¹ The fund would have involved the provision of resources to help nomads settle, which many of them were presumed to be doing anyway.¹³²

We see in the report from KTsiK a common tendency to see nomads as an economic burden rather than an economic resource. Instead of fighting over them, okrugs grudgingly shared responsibility for them. The report identified the Kazakh herders of the Dengizskii district, a part of the former Bukey Governate which was to stay under Gur'ev's control, as not at all nomadic.¹³³ In the same clause the report described these herders as having an 'industrial character.'¹³⁴ The implication was that most northern nomadic herders were not 'industrial' enough for an industrial powerhouse.

Resistance to this plan came primarily from Seitkali Mendeshev, then a member of the Economic Congress of the Soviet of People's Commissars (EKOSO), who petitioned VTsiK for several months in an attempt to persuade them to reject the Kazakh government's proposals.¹³⁵ He was initially successful, as demonstrated by a declaration from VTsiK on 20th August 1928 and a corresponding rebuttal from KTsiK.¹³⁶ Nomadism was of crucial importance to Mendeshev's argument. He contended that the proposed division of the Gur'ev Uezd would be disastrous for local

¹²⁹ GARF 1235/140/1029: 5.

¹³⁰ GARF 1235/140/1029: 5 *ob.*.

¹³¹ GARF 1235/140/1029: 5 *ob.*. For details on the colonisation of Bukey territory by Russian farmers, see Chapter Five.

¹³² The report actually states clearly that the nomads of the northern Bukey area were settling, but this may be another example of the complacent attitude the state organs took towards nomads. GARF 1235/140/1029: 6. The belief that all nomads would settle if only they were able to is also present in Mendeshev's counterargument to KTsiK, as discussed in the following paragraphs. GARF 1235/123/345: 29.

¹³³ The Dengizskii district would come to be administered from the village of Ganiushkino.

¹³⁴ GARF 1235/140/1029: 5 *ob.*.

¹³⁵ Mendeshev was a highly influential Party figure whose activities are discussed in depth in Chapter Three.

¹³⁶ GARF 1235/140/1029: 1, 5.

nomads, and substantiated his claim by describing the landscape of the area.¹³⁷ The majority of the uezd was characterised by aridity and the 'bitter salinity' of the soil there.¹³⁸ Such conditions made crop cultivation impossible, and this is why the Kazakh population often travelled from north to south in the Gur'ev Uezd, using fertile pastures where available.¹³⁹ Thus drawing an administrative borderline between the Ural and Gur'ev Okrugs, separating the barren south from the fertile north, would hamper the Kazakhs' migration northwards and seriously destabilise their communities.

Further, the KTsiK was wrong to suggest that the new Gur'ev Okrug would govern a largely sedentary or even industrial population. Because they lived on scrubland which could only support livestock at certain times of year, Mendeshev argued that some of Gur'ev's Kazakhs instead 'had a semi-nomadic character' and travelled north annually.¹⁴⁰ If, in an effort to avert catastrophe, nomads were permitted to migrate into and out of different okrugs, the administrative situation would become only more complicated. Mendeshev made a forceful comparison between the potential folly of the KTsiK and a similar reform made by the Tsarist powers in 1868, which had terrible consequences for the Kazakhs it affected.¹⁴¹ Instead of splitting the Ural Governate into two okrugs, Mendeshev favoured the recreation of a distinct Bukey administrative region, this time a Bukey Okrug.¹⁴²

Responding to Mendeshev, on 30th June 1928 KTsiK simply reasserted its claim that the economic activity of the Gur'ev area could usefully be divided between north and south, and that the southern Kazakhs infrequently interfered in the lives of their northern compatriots. It added that it would be impossible to govern the Pre-Caspian region from the village of Slomikhina, which Mendeshev had chosen as the capital of his alternative Bukey Okrug. The only option was to put Ural'sk, the capital of the Ural

¹³⁷ This information comes from one of Mendeshev's petitions, signed on 7th August 1928: GARF 1235/123/345: 22-30. For some very useful topographical maps of Kazakhstan, including the Gur'ev area, see: George J. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan 1896-1916* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1969), pp. 12-19.

¹³⁸ GARF 1235/123/345: 29. As noted earlier in the chapter, reports from the oil industry earlier in the decade match Mendeshev's description very closely: GARF 3260/1/25: 18.

¹³⁹ It is worth indicating that Mendeshev's arguments mirror the later claims of Goloshchekin about the environmental causes of nomadism.

¹⁴⁰ GARF 1235/123/345: 29.

¹⁴¹ GARF 1235/123/345: 29.

¹⁴² We see the proposals from Mendeshev (and his colleague, Comrade Dosov) most clearly outlined here, in a *vypiska* from a meeting of the Presidium of the Kazakh Central Executive Committee on 30th June 1928: GARF 1235/123/345: 17-18.

Okrug, in charge of north-western territories and to have Gur'ev specialise in the management of its local industries.¹⁴³

Ultimately, on 3rd September 1928, VTsIK resolved the argument and sanctioned the division of the Ural Governate into the Ural and Gur'ev Okrugs, in accordance with KTsIK's wishes.¹⁴⁴ The Gur'ev Uezd was cut in half. The southern Kazakh herders joined an okrug which specialised in oil production and fishing. The northern herders were to be administered from distant Ural'sk. At this late stage in the decade, during the implementation of the first Five Year Plan, KTsIK's desire to create an industrial powerhouse in Gur'ev was taking precedence over nomads' access to natural resources. Industrialisation was vastly more important than post-colonial reparations. A year later in 1929 the Adai Okrug to the south was dissolved, and the Gur'ev Okrug accumulated some of the Adai Okrug's northern lands, where fishing communities were also present.¹⁴⁵ This second readjustment was again made in the name of economic expediency; the Adai Okrug was among the most impoverished and least productive in the republic. Its population was principally nomadic. This was a further denial of Mendeshév's logic, in which nomads should be consolidated within a single administrative area so as to reduce their chances of migrating across borders and ending their relationship with the authorities. Instead, dissolving a principally nomadic okrug would enable it to secure the foundations of a meaningful economic reconstruction.¹⁴⁶ Again Muscovite authorities agreed, and ratified this recommendation by Kazakh Republic-level bodies in spring 1929.¹⁴⁷

Land commissions were not uniformly sympathetic to nomadic needs, but their place at the bottom of the administrative hierarchy at least gave them some understanding of local affairs. Central organs were hardly in a position to appreciate the ambiguities of nomadic land-use, and it was their authority which had been strengthened by the reforms of 1927 and 1928. Their economic priorities were macroeconomic priorities, Union-wide, and after the publication of the first Five Year Plan this meant the structures of the Kazakh Republic should be built around oil extraction, not subsistence animal husbandry. As Kate Brown states in her epigrammatic piece: 'Land that to Kazakh nomads had been a flowing body of winter and summer pastures marked with ancestral burial grounds became to the Europeans

¹⁴³ GARF 1235/123/345: 18.

¹⁴⁴ GARF 1235/140/1029: 9-10 *ob.*.

¹⁴⁵ GARF 1235/123/345: 55.

¹⁴⁶ GARF 1235/123/345: 56 *ob.*.

¹⁴⁷ GARF 1235/123/345: 57.

who conquered it a series of parcels, surveyed and assigned value in square meters and millions of rubles.¹⁴⁸

A cultural change had taken place in these central organs by this time, a change from which Mendeshvili seems to have been excluded. Looking back to the early 1920s, it is hard to overstate how different the Russian Revolution's intellectual impact had been for rural Kazakhstan and urban Russia. The transient lack of authority in Moscow allowed a varied and sometimes bizarre series of political experiments to find expression in modes of dress, art and interpersonal communication.¹⁴⁹ But, to be clear, there were no nudists or atonal orchestras practicing on the Kazakh Steppe.¹⁵⁰ Set between the socialism and anarchism of European Russia, and the liberal Islamism of Turkestan, the nomads of the Kazakh region experienced conflict and decolonisation with comparably little intellectual radicalism.¹⁵¹ As stated above, the nomads invading Russian farmsteads were likely to see their actions as the resumption of an old way of life, not a transgressive political statement. Revolutionary intellectual currents took longer to reach the Kazakh Republic and in many ways would never penetrate nomadic culture. But some did eventually embed themselves among the Kazakh Party elite. One example was faith in man's ability to rule nature.

In the earliest meetings of the Communist Party's Kazakh branch, respect for the steppe's forbidding climate led to an explicit consensus that there were areas of the republic irrevocably unsuited to sedentary farming.¹⁵² Decolonisation was justified for this reason; as Tsarist-era Russian colonists could only farm the best land, nomads had been left with the least fertile pastures and a balance had to be redrawn. Mendeshvili continued to make this argument up until the late 1920s, but the common view had changed. Journalists and Party members became convinced that a properly managed socialist society could overcome any obstacle of the natural environment, and so 'lost interest in nature'.¹⁵³ By 1926 Filipp Goloshchekin was heading the Kazakh Communist

¹⁴⁸ Kate Brown, 'Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana are Nearly the Same Place,' *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 1 (2001), p. 27.

¹⁴⁹ Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 69.

¹⁵⁰ Both could be found in Moscow after the 1917 revolution: Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society*, p. 114.

¹⁵¹ There were notable exceptions to this general picture, of course. For an excellent appraisal of Kazakh intellectuals of the time, see: Tomohiko Uyama, 'The Geography of Civilizations: A Spatial Analysis of the Kazakh Intelligentsia's Activities, from the mid-Nineteenth to the Early Twentieth Century,' *Sapporo Summer Symposium* (1998), pp. 70-99.

¹⁵² APRK139/1/541: 139-145.

¹⁵³ The attitude is perhaps best exemplified by Vladimir Mayakovsky. The full quote is: 'After electricity I lost interest in nature. Too backward.' Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams*, p. 52. For

Party.¹⁵⁴ He contended that substantial investment from the Soviet state would tame the wild steppe, imitating the earlier self-confident boasts of leaders in Moscow.¹⁵⁵

Localised projects such as irrigation and land reclamation became the preferred solution, as did the Koshchi Union (*Soiuz Koshchi*, sometimes *Soiuzkoshchi* or *Soiuz Zharli*), a Party-backed agricultural campaign in the republic.¹⁵⁶ All these projects were evidence that the Party had become convinced of its ability to make more Central Asian districts habitable.¹⁵⁷ As well as taking control of administrative regionalisation, central Party figures were asserting control over the natural environment.¹⁵⁸ This was something nomads had not been able to do when they were forced onto infertile lands by Tsarist colonisers, because of their retrograde practices.¹⁵⁹ Development became inevitable and backwardness inexcusable. Nomads could no longer use their hostile homeland as an excuse not to join the socialist, sedentary future, and any land could serve a purpose more productive than nomadic pasture. Yet still regionalisation went on, this time for the purposes of economic specialisation and the proper delivery of resources.¹⁶⁰ Koshchi cells were told not to expend resources operating in extremely under-populated volosts, containing no more than two or three encampments, and this required regionalisation in demographic terms.¹⁶¹ In 1930 the Alma-Ata Okrug

further discussion of the trend, and its legacies in contemporary historiography, see: Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 64.

¹⁵⁴ I. N. Tasmagambetov, M. M. Tazhmin, and S. T. Tauekel, *Istoriia otechestva v sud'bakh ego grazhdan: Sbornik avtobiografii 1922 - 1960 gody*, vol. 10, *Istoriia Kazakhstana v russkikh istochnikakh XVI-XX vekov* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2005), pp. 13-15.

¹⁵⁵ RGASPI 17/25/1: 57-57 *ob.*. A. N. Donich also includes an excellent summary of the Soviet academic arguments which agree with the position attributed here to Goloshchekin: A. N. Donich, *Problema novogo Kazakhskogo aula* (Kzyl-Orda: Gosplan KSSR, 1928), pp. 1-2.

¹⁵⁶ Note both the name and the objectives of this declaration from VTsIK and Sovnarkom USSR, produced in June 1926: GARF 1235/121/318: 2, 3. See also: GARF 130/6/998:1-4. RGASPI 17/25/208, 25, 76. *Soiuzkoshchi* can be found here: TsGARK 81/1/665: 9. *Zharli* appears to have been a more appropriate alternative to *Koshchi* in areas of the republic with particular dialects: RGASPI 17/25/208: 25.

¹⁵⁷ For a particularly coruscating critique of this conviction, see: Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, pp. 266-267.

¹⁵⁸ Land near Petropavlovsk and Kokchetav was considered particularly ripe for redevelopment: Zere Mainganali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana v gody nasil'stvennoi kollektivizatsii* (Almaty: KazNU im. al'-Farabi, 2003), p. 92.

¹⁵⁹ This point is made in a protocol from the Plenum of the Kustanai Okrug Committee from February 1926: RGASPI 17/25/174: 81. Notably the protocol contains a report which divides the okrug into three regions rated for their fertility, though at this time in the middle of the decade the southern, least fertile region is deemed inappropriate for agricultural development.

¹⁶⁰ See this example of the regionalisation of economic data and need in a 1928 resolution from the Zhetysu Governate Committee: RGASPI 17/25/156: 133.

¹⁶¹ RGASPI 17/25/208, 86.

established a commission to identify nomadic regions where kolkhozes were likely to fail, and to take measures to preclude this failure.¹⁶²

The extension of cultivated land, particularly fields of grain but also cotton and other agricultural produce, was an avowed Party aim as early as 1921.¹⁶³ But the Party's growing self-assurance about man's mastery over nature encouraged policy-makers to expand their ambitions ever deeper into the arid steppe. Meanwhile the common assumption that the nomadic economy was irredeemably inefficient had never left administrators or Party members. If nomadic regions were economically underperforming, it followed that the extension of sedentary regions, in the form of cultivated land, would improve the republic's economy. By 1928 post-imperial sensitivities would no longer act as a brake on agricultural policy, which was always configured throughout the decade in regionalising terms; documentation might discuss the republic's growing 'sown area', the 'extension of cereal farming' or the 'extension of the limits of arable farming.'¹⁶⁴ The number of ploughed *desiatinas* was a foremost measure of economic development for Kazakh Party members, and the crop yield from these *desiatinas* could be cited to signify economic devastation or improvement.¹⁶⁵

Perhaps the most indicative phrase comes from a formal report from VTsIK on a declaration made by its Kazakh counterpart in November 1928. Here, VTsIK emphasises the importance of 'expediting the inclusion of vacant land into the economic revolution.'¹⁶⁶ Here again is implied the old trope of an empty expanse of steppe land and a dynamic, transformative revolution waiting to crowd it with productive activity. Towards the very end of the 1920s, rural areas across the USSR witnessed a new kind of colonisation, led by the Red Army and the '25,000-ers'.¹⁶⁷ As in the Great Plains of North America, it was forgotten that these lands were not necessarily vacant, but populated by a people whose lifestyle was invisible to the forces of, respectively, capitalism and communism.¹⁶⁸

Given this, it is not so remarkable that, in 1930, the First Congress of Workers for Sedentarisation discussed the prior failure to extend cultivated land whilst at the same

¹⁶² RGASPI 17/25/171: 23.

¹⁶³ APRK 139/1/5: 219.

¹⁶⁴ GARF 130/7/257: 5. GARF 1235/73/21: 25 *ob.* RGASPI 17/25/156: 122. RGASPI 17/25/190.

¹⁶⁵ GARF 130/7/257: 5. RGASPI 17/25/187: 138-139. Gatagova, Kosheleva, and Pogovaia, *TSK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros*, p. 407.

¹⁶⁶ GARF 1235/73/21: 25 *ob.*

¹⁶⁷ Heinzen, "'Alien" Personnel in the Soviet State,' p. 100. Lynne Viola, "The "25,000ers": A study in a Soviet Recruitment Campaign during the First Five Year Plan,' *Russian History* 10, no. 1 (1983), pp. 1-30.

¹⁶⁸ Brown, 'Gridded Lives,' pp. 21, 23.

time lamenting the administration's lack of success in settling nomads.¹⁶⁹ By then, the increase of one kind of land (cultivated) at the expense of another (pasture) was a euphemism for the brutal social transformation which sedentarisation became.

Conclusion

By the late 1920s the attitudes and ambitions of the Party were inflated enough to make the oncoming sedentarisation campaign seem a reasonable proposition, but a final blow to the nomadic economy was due. In 1928 the republic prepared reluctantly for the arrival of 500,000 new immigrants, an influx permitted and supervised from Moscow.¹⁷⁰ Migrants were to be directed to land, selected for its fertility, in the north of the republic or along the Turksib railway line, one of the Soviet republic's most important infrastructural developments.¹⁷¹ The Kazakh administration under Goloshchekin defended its right to specify where migrants should be allowed to settle, and chose two vast plots of land in the Ural and Petropavlovsk Okrugs.¹⁷² As in the early years of famine, organs of state were compelled to delimit space on the steppe by circumstances beyond their immediate control, as the decision to encourage half a million Europeans into the KASSR was taken by VTsIK and Sovnarkom USSR in Moscow.¹⁷³ The reappearance on the steppe of *dzhut* at the height of this influx of Europeans intensified concerns about Kazakh citizens, and in January 1930 the Kazakh People's Commissariat of Agriculture offered up a list of areas where state organs, already overstretched by immigration and defined by the poverty of their natural resources, might buckle.¹⁷⁴ Within a decade, the Kazakh Communist Party had gone from supporting the right of Kazakhs to use land as they saw fit to supervising an influx of 500,000 migrants to the best lands of the republic.

The delimitation of the steppe had been a product of the Bolshevik Party's two most salient policy platforms in Central Asia, economic development and national emancipation. The Party's emphasis on national identity was utilised by Kazakhs both in and out of the Communist Party to justify the reclamation of land recently colonized by Europeans, creating a distinction between legally and illegally-owned land. The

¹⁶⁹ TsGARK 1179/6/3: 4-6.

¹⁷⁰ This would happen again at an even larger scale in 1933. Michael Ellman confirms that again the Kazakh leadership, even if sceptical or unhappy with the proposals, accepted them without explicit resistance: Michael Ellman, 'Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Revisited,' *Europe-Asia Studies* 59, no. 4 (2007), p. 666.

¹⁷¹ TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 2.

¹⁷² TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 8-8 ob..

¹⁷³ TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 2.

¹⁷⁴ TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 39.

Party's urge to select and support industrial zones, mitigate the effects of famine, rationally disperse immigrants and pursue agricultural efficiency also necessitated regional distinctions, whether based on lifestyle, economic output or the presence of natural resources. The Tsarist administration had been developing a similar bureaucratic map of the steppe, albeit with less speed or sophistication, and so to some extent the Party was completing a job begun by Russian Imperial officers. Party members carried another long-standing prejudice with them into the 1920s, of a featureless and practically deserted Central Asian landscape which could now be adapted to the needs of the state and filled with productive farmers. Nomads were therefore forced to live 'gridded lives'.¹⁷⁵

Regionalisation facilitated the Party's growing appreciation for the instability and poverty of Kazakh nomadic communities, as a high proportion of nomads in the population often correlated with low levels of productivity, but much like the external border-making discussed in the next chapter, internal borders became the problem even as they seemed to be the solution. Regionalisation separated nomads from the resources they needed, and reminded administrators that the extension of cultivated land could increase a particular region's economic output even as it inconvenienced local people. Systems of reconciliation were widespread, but were difficult to supervise and seemed to carry an inherent European bias. This made land commissions less responsive to a body of republic-wide legislation which was strikingly clear in its defence of nomadic interests. As the decade ended, even central organs seemed blind to the demands of this legislation, focused as they were on macro-economic concerns embedded in the first Five Year Plan.

¹⁷⁵ Brown, 'Gridded Lives,' pp. 17-48.

Chapter Five:
The Borders of a Nomadic Republic

The creation of national borders in Soviet Central Asia has received much scholarly attention. Studies of Soviet Kazakhstan will invariably include a list of works by figures such as Terry Martin, Francine Hirsch, Yuri Slezkine, Jeremy Smith and Adeeb Khalid.¹ Hirsch in particular describes the diligent ethnographic and anthropological processes by which Soviet scholars and administrators distinguished Kazakhs from Uzbeks, Kalmyks, Turkmen and others.² These processes are taken as the intellectual origins for the boundaries of contemporary Kazakhstan, boundaries established in the 1920s but which remain almost unchanged today. The historiography of border-making is extremely comprehensive and has done much to explain the political and economic environment of the USSR's non-European periphery.

In a sense, however, the bulk of this scholarship shares a specific blind spot with the Soviet authorities it analyses. The prevailing fascination with the origins of the Central Asian nations engenders investigation of those phenomena which acted as the building blocks of nationhood in the region; culture, lifestyle, religious faith, language, ethnicity and so on.³ But this thesis argues that nomadism was seldom if ever given the chance to inform, still less define, Kazakh national identity in the Soviet context. So when academics describe the manner in which national boundaries were established, agricultural practice is not often mentioned.

As this chapter will show, this does not mean that Kazakh nomadism had no effect on the process of Soviet border-making. Rather, nomadism and border-making literally and theoretically intersected as frequently as might be expected. It is too

¹ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). Adeeb Khalid, 'Nationalizing the Revolution in Central Asia: The Transformation of Jadidism, 1917-1920,' in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). Yuri Slezkine, 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,' *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994). Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For a particularly good summary of this and other branches of the historiography on Kazakhstan, see: Michael R. Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation', PhD thesis (Georgetown University, 2005), pp. 22-28.

² See, for example Hirsch's account of census-taking in Central Asia: Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, pp. 106-107.

³ For Hirsch this list applies up until 1924: Francine Hirsch, 'The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category Nationality in the 1926, 1937 and 1939 Censuses,' *Slavic Review* 56, no. 2 (1997), p. 259.

simplistic to say that nomadism is incompatible with the division of land, but whereas a settled community might have a new dividing line imposed just metres from its outermost suburbs without trouble, a nomadic or transhumant community is likely to find that such a line deprives its people of essential resources. Similarly, it would be misleading to claim that Kazakh nomads had no traditional understanding of land ownership or land rights, but it is true that their sense of ownership was more flexible and adaptable than the vulgarities of national delimitation might allow.⁴ Overall, Kazakh nomadism made the borders of the Kazakh Republic more difficult to establish and police, because the state struggled to ascertain and prioritise the habits of nomadic land use and lacked the resources to control a highly mobile population. Meanwhile sedentary communities looking to acquire more land found it easier to present nomadic territory as vacant. Subsequent colonisation again confounded and complicated border-making processes.

Whereas Chapter Four conceived of borders in the broad, abstract sense as related to land use and land ownership, this chapter will look at the process of border-making in its more traditional, literal sense. That is, the establishment of the Kazakh Republic's external borders in the 1920s. As such, this chapter is more concerned with negotiation between national republics than between communities or institutions, but the phenomenon of *raionirovanie* also remains relevant. Terry Martin describes early-Soviet *raionirovanie* as a process by which large macro-economic regions were created whilst a patchwork of smaller administrative areas was simplified, and the old Tsarist system of governates was gradually replaced with okrugs. Martin contends that the National Question was of recurrent importance to this process, and the primacy of economics in *raionirovanie* has been recently emphasised as well, but here nomadism will also be added to the list of pertinent factors.⁵

In this chapter, sections are arranged into approximate chronological order; though all of them describe social phenomena originating long before 1920, each of them became most salient at different points in the 1920s. Section one will consider two case studies in western Kazakhstan, the Bukey Governate and the Adai Uezd.

⁴ Edward Schatz, for example, suggests: "The Kazakh nomadic pastoralists had a loose, but still notable, attachment to territory.": Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (London: University of Washington Press, 2004), p. 29.

⁵ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 34. Asal Khamraeva-Aubert, in her own research on the Uzbek Republic, notes that economic priorities were of foremost importance in the creation of new administrative regions: Asal Khamraeva-Aubert, "Economic Planning and the Construction of Territorial Limits in Soviet Central Asia: the Case of the Uzbek SSR" paper presented at the BASEES European Congress, (Cambridge, 7th April 2013).

Section two will look at eastern Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Republic's borders with Siberia and China.

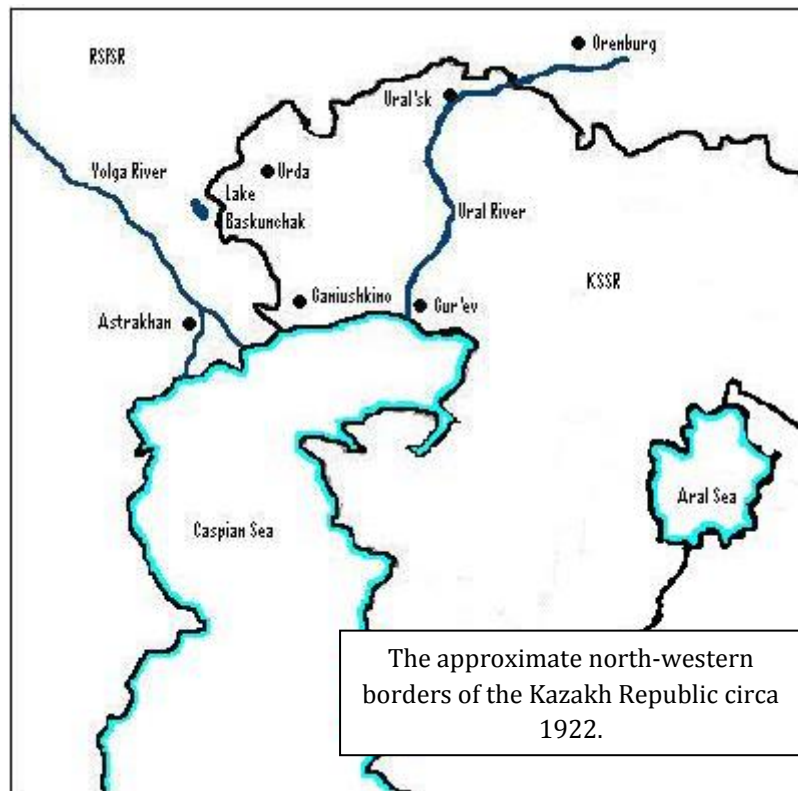
The chapter will place heavy emphasis on the importance of local history in each of the case studies, but argues that there are clear common trends. In all four cases, the location of political and economic borders was of powerful significance to the everyday lives of nearby nomads, and the everyday lives of nearby nomads was a major factor in the success or failure of the border-making process, whether that be defined by the productivity of economic activity, the resolution of inter-ethnic conflict, or the effective supervision of mass migration. Roughly speaking, in the first half of the decade the state's fixation on nationality and national difference interfered with its appreciation of nomadic issues when establishing boundaries.⁶ In the second half of the decade, the state began to show greater concern for economic rather than national factors, and delimited accordingly. Sometimes these economic factors directly related to nomadism. At other times, such as along the border with Siberia, the absence of nomadism seems to have allowed for more straightforward economic judgements. The case studies suggest that *raionirovanie* generally served to disrupt migratory habits and thereby destabilise nomadic society. Even where lines were drawn around migratory paths rather than through them, the resulting economic areas came to be seen as some of the most impoverished even before sedentarisation dominated the agenda.

This chapter will refer repeatedly to national territorial autonomy. It should be emphasised here that national autonomy was always of a limited kind in the Soviet context, and nothing like the full constitutional federalism that the phrase 'autonomy' might now suggest. But the principle existed both in the rhetoric and actions of the Communist Party, and should be presented as such at least to make a distinction with the later era of more profound centralisation.

⁶ For further discussion of nationality policy in the Soviet Union, see Chapters Three and Four.

Section One: Western Kazakhstan

Beyond the Ural River⁷



In 1801, Tsarist authorities gave a collection of Kazakh families permission to cross the Ural River westwards and establish the new Bukey Khanate, sometimes known as the Fourth or Inner *Juz*.⁸ They were led by Sultan Bukey, who sought to escape the intertribal violence which afflicted his relatives in the Younger *Juz* back on the eastern side of the river. Nominally autonomous, Bukey's nomads delivered taxes to the Tsar in exchange for their own land north of the Caspian Sea.⁹ Their lives had been arduous. Previously, imperial policy prohibited their annual migration across the Ural River because it led to conflict with nearby Cossacks.¹⁰ Now given a monopoly on land beyond the Ural River under Bukey's leadership, they had some early success.

⁷ This sub-heading bears comparison with V. Connolly, *Beyond the Urals: Economic Development in Soviet Asia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), though in that instance it was the Ural Mountains being approached from the west, at a very different time in Kazakhstan's development. See also: M. Holdsworth, 'Review,' *Middle Eastern Studies* 7, no. 3 (1971), pp. 378-381.

⁸ Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 182. A *Juz* was one of the Kazakhs' three tribal conglomerations.

⁹ Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, First ed., *Studies of Nationalities in the USSR* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), p. 49.

¹⁰ Didar Kassymova, Zhanat Kundakbaeva, and Ustina Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), pp. 54-55.

From an original population of between five and seven and a half thousand families, the new khanate's population grew to ten thousand families by 1825.¹¹

The fortunes of these Kazakhs fluctuated throughout the nineteenth century. First rumours of forced conversion to Orthodox Christianity, then bad winter weather encouraged some members of the Bukey Khanate to again cross the Ural River, west to east, and return to the Younger *Juz*, only to be repeatedly driven back by Russian forces. The Russian habit of leasing land to nomads around Astrakhan led to mutual accusations of exploitation and ethnic conflict.¹² Imperial soldiers eventually intervened to prevent an uprising within Kazakh territory.¹³ On the death of Bukey's successor, Khan Jangir, in 1845, the khanate was officially abolished, though the Kazakhs remained.¹⁴ Their land came under the jurisdiction of Astrakhan and they became part of the Astrakhan Governate, a governate (*guberniia*) being the largest administrative sub-division of the Russian Empire. New systems of imperial administration were introduced.¹⁵

Despite the transformation of the former khanate's organisational structures, the population's religious and agricultural practices persisted. By 1887, eighty-six years after Bukey first crossed the Ural river, the Kazakh population stood at 207,000 individuals.¹⁶ Though officially subjects of the Tsar, most still identified with the Islamic world.¹⁷ The vast majority were still nomads.¹⁸ In the later years of the Tsarist Empire, these nomads encountered increasingly rapid colonization, first from Cossacks, then Russians. Slavic settlers brought new and expansive forms of sedentary

¹¹ Bukey was officially designated as Khan in 1812. Khodarkovsky estimates the lower original figure here: Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, p. 182. Olcott gives the higher original figure and the increased number here: Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, pp. 49-50.

¹² Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, p. 200. Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, p. 63.

¹³ Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, p. 64.

¹⁴ In Svat Soucek's summary of these events, the 'elimination' of Bukey's polity in 1845 was an act of deliberate suppression by Saint Petersburg: Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 197.

¹⁵ Allen J. Frank, 'Islam and Ethnic Relations in the Kazakh Inner Horde: Muslim Cossacks, Tatar Merchants, and Kazakh Nomads in Turkic Manuscripts, 1870-1910,' in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, ed. Anke von Kügelen, Michael Kemper, and Allen J. Frank (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1998), p. 218. Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, pp. 61-62. The particular transliteration of Kazakh names also comes from Olcott.

¹⁶ Allen J. Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia: The Islamic World of Novouzensk and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1880-1910* (Boston: Brill, 2001), p. 91.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

¹⁸ Frank, "Islam and Ethnic Relations," p. 218.

agriculture with them, and developed mixed relations with the Kazakhs: sometimes hostile, sometimes cooperative.¹⁹

The inclusion of a Bukey Governate into the new Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (KSSR) in 1920 recognised and represented the Kazakh population living in the former territory of the Bukey Khanate. The administrative centre of the governate was moved from the majority-Russian city of Astrakhan to Urda, a small town now in far-western Kazakhstan.²⁰ The second tier of authority for the governate was the capital of the Kazakhs' republic: Orenburg from 1920 to 1925, Kyzyl-Orda from 1925 to 1927, and Alma-Ata from 1927 onwards.²¹ The third and highest tier of power was Moscow. Managing the Bukey nomads thus necessitated dialogue between Urda, the Kazakh capital and the Soviet capital. Astrakhan, as will be seen, also retained a voice of sorts.

Already the story of the Bukey territory, thinly told, reveals one of the most profound differences between Tsarist and Soviet power in Central Asia. As argued by Alexander Morrison, Svetlana Gorshenina and others, the Tsar's colonial officers operated on the assumption that there existed topographical factors which placed geographical limits on the expansion and consolidation of imperial power.²² Michael Khodarkovsky attributes this in large part to the nomadic lifestyle of many in Central Asia. As raiding nomads did not 'define and agree upon common lines of partition' with Russia, the Empire looked for mountain ranges and rivers to signify the beginning of Moscow's jurisdiction, behind which attacks on Russian peasants would be met with forceful retribution.²³ The Ural River was first used to divide Russian farmers from Kazakh nomads. Then after 1801 it was used to divide two groups of nomads, one set

¹⁹ George J. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan 1896-1916* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1969), pp. 110-116, 45-46. It is notable that the first arrivals were Cossacks because, as will be discussed further in section two, the relationship between Cossacks, Russians and Kazakhs in Kazakhstan would cause much disquiet among the Soviet authorities. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 63. For further detail on the fractious relationship between Russians and Central Asian nomads before 1917, see: Daniel Brower, 'Kyrgyz Nomads and Russian Pioneers: Colonization and Ethnic Conflict in the Turkestan Revolt of 1916,' *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 44, no. 1 (1996), pp. 41-53.

²⁰ As is evident from correspondence of the time, including this communiqué sent from the Kazakh central government in 1921, letters addressed to the Bukey Governate's Executive Committee (Bukgubispolkom) were sent to Urda; GARF 1318/11/32: 86.

²¹ Kassymova, Kundakbaeva, and Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, pp. 205-206, 170-171, 26-27.

²² Alexander Morrison, 'Russia, Khoqand, and the Search for a "Natural" Frontier, 1893-1865,' *Ab Imperio* 2 (2014), pp. 1-27. Svetlana Gorshenina, 'A Theory of "Natural Boundaries" and the Conquest of Kuldja (1870-1871): A Self-portrait of Russian Military and Diplomatic Elites in St. Petersburg and Turkestan,' *Ab Imperio* 2 (2014), pp. 102-165.

²³ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, p. 47.

more fully assimilated into the Empire than the other. The river, therefore, was an important administrative symbol, used to define the terms of Saint Petersburg's control. Yet in 1920 the river's political significance ran dry and a dual process began. Ostensible political power was not divided between the governors of geographically distinct areas, but between national territories. The predominance of Kazakhs west of the Ural River was more important than the practicalities of the landscape, and so the predominantly Russian Astrakhan ceded power over the area to Urda. Simultaneously, of course, Moscow would steadily gain more power over the jurisdictions of Orenburg and any other national capital as time progressed. Nevertheless the new national basis for the border beyond the Ural River would never lose its importance. Though the actions of the Russian Empire prior to 1917 had an obvious influence on later events, it is principally the new Soviet approach to territory and borders which so clearly defined events in the Bukey case and in all the other instances discussed in this chapter.

On 3rd October 1921 the People's Commissariat for Agriculture (Narkomzem RSFSR), based in Moscow, turned its attention to two pending territorial disputes between two governates. Though both officially within the boundaries of the RSFSR, the Bukey Governate was also part of the Kazakh national republic. In contrast, territorial membership of the RSFSR alone did not designate a governate as nationally Russian, and so the Astrakhan Governate had no national definition beyond its aforementioned position inside the RSFSR, but with its largely Russian population, Astrakhan might have been described as *de facto* Russian in national terms.²⁴ Thus the disputes submitted to Narkomzem RSFSR were not only administrative but also national in character thanks to each governates' affiliation, one official and one *de facto*, with a different national identity.²⁵ The first dispute concerned 10,677 *desiatinas* of land connected to Lake Baskunchak, a landlocked body of salt water around 160 miles

²⁴ GARF 1318/11/32: 84. The presidium actually considered two further contended territories on that day. It declined to rule on a region occupied by the Kunderovskii Tatars, arguing that this was not relevant to the Kazakh Republic. Questions over the southern part of the Volga delta were deferred to the Administrative Committee of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee.

²⁵ Unlike Kazakhs and many other nations in the USSR, Russians were officially denied their own titular republic with its attendant Russian institutional framework. This is connected again with the National Question and fears of 'Great Russian chauvinism'. See: Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-23* (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 15-16. Terry Martin, 'An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism,' in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 80. Note that from 1926 Russian national soviets were permitted. This created more opportunities for the formal recognition of Russian identity. See: Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 39.

north of the Caspian Sea and not far east of the Volga.²⁶ The second related to the 50,977 *desiatinas* encompassed by the 'Regular Nomadic Encampment' (*Ocherednoe Kochev'e*).²⁷ This 'encampment' was in fact a swathe of land claimed by Kazakhs during the Bukey influx but increasingly leased to Russian farmers since. It sat between Lake Baskunchak and the Volga River.²⁸ The Astrakhan and Bukey Governates each professed an interest in these two regions, which straddled a border between administrative jurisdictions, between national territories, and between agricultural practices.

After a preliminary appraisal the presidium of the Federal Committee of Narkomzem RSFSR actually deferred any decision on the Baskunchak tract and the Regular Nomadic Encampment until the following day, allowing the group's deputy chairman time to consult the Administrative Committee of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK).²⁹ With the Administrative Committee consulted, Narkomzem RSFSR produced a declaration on 4th October 1921.³⁰ Present at the presidium were two representatives of the Kazakh Commissariat for Agriculture (Narkomzem KSSR) and one member of the Astrakhan Governate Committee (Gubkom).³¹ Both disputed regions, the presidium decided, should be considered part of the Kazakh Republic. Further, all those Russians living continuously within either area retained their rights to land use, but now on the basis of Kazakh law. Russians not permanently resident in either area but using land therein were offered a choice by the declaration; take up occupancy within the Kazakh Republic and live by its rules, or move to the Astrakhan Governate and lose all rights to use Kazakh land. Appeals would be heard until 1st March 1922, and all Russian farmsteads newly deemed illegal had to

²⁶ A *desiatina* amounted to around 1.0925 hectares. Its use would be officially prohibited in autumn 1927.

²⁷ GARF 1318/11/32: 84. Original documentation from the dispute uses the rounded figures of 10,000 and 50,000 *desiatinas* to describe the scale of the Baskunchak tract and the *Ocherednoe Kochev'e* respectively. The more specific sizes given above can be found here: GARF 3260/1/30: 1.

²⁸ References in the secondary literature to the *ocherednoe kochev'e* are extremely sparse. Clear information on its geographical location can be found in this report from the Astrakhan Governate's Agricultural Department (Gubzemotdel), dated 20th October 1921; 3260/1/31: 6-6 ob.. As can be seen from this report, there was some small confusion over the ethnic composition of the nomads in the camp. Given the diversity of the region, and its proximity to what is now the Republic of Kalmykia, the population is unlikely to have been ethnically homogenous. Since the Soviet authorities ultimately treated the camp as Kirgiz (Kazakh) this thesis treats the *ocherednoe kochev'e* case as representative of the treatment of Kazakh nomads generally.

²⁹ GARF 1318/11/32: 84.

³⁰ Evidence of a dialogue between the Administrative Committee VTsIK and Narkomzem RSFSR on this issue can be found here: GARF 3260/1/31: 3.

³¹ GARF 3260/1/30: 2. This document, dated 19th October 1921, informed members of Narkomzem RSFSR of the decision made by the presidium fifteen days previously.

be dismantled by 1st March 1923.³² The presidium's ruling reflects the spirit of decolonisation prevalent at the time, as discussed in the preceding chapter.

Narkomzem RSFSR did not have to wait until March 1922 for complaints to arrive. Astrakhan was informed of the commissariat's decision, and ordered to fulfil the requirements of the protocol, on 18th October 1921.³³ The next day the Astrakhan Gubkom questioned the wisdom of those operating in Moscow, and supplemented its case with a report addressed to the Federal Committee of Narkomzem RSFSR.³⁴ The report made the concession, possibly tactical, that the fifty thousand desiatinas of the Regular Nomadic Encampment had been de jure owned by Kazakhs.³⁵ Ever since the Bukey influx in Tsarist times, however, land had been leased back to Russians on a haphazard basis and the Russians had ploughed up more and more of the camp. Crops had been sown and food production among the Russians had increased, as had their herds of cattle.³⁶ Besides, it was argued, the Kazakhs did not even use the land. It had become Russian by custom.³⁷ In the letter accompanying the report, Astrakhan reminded Narkomzem RSFSR that the Russian population of both the Baskunchak tract and the Regular Nomadic Encampment was larger than the local Kazakh population, and that further colonization by the Russians had been permitted and regulated by two Krai Congresses of Soviets since the revolution.³⁸ Astrakhan was using its status as a largely Russian city to argue that it should govern areas where Russians were a majority. Urda, as part of the KSSR, was less appropriate for the task. The nationality of

³² The relevant protocol from the meeting can be found here: GARF 1318/11/32: 85-85 ob.. Decisions of this nature, which favoured Kazakhs when land or water rights were reformed, were fairly common in the early 1920s. It is a tendency in early policy which Matthew Payne describes as 'philo-Kazakh': Matthew J. Payne, 'Seeing Like a Soviet State: Settlement of Nomadic Kazakhs, 1928-1934,' in *Writing the Stalin Era: Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet Historiography*, ed. Golfo Alexopoulos, Julie Hessler, and Kiril Tomoff (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2011), p. 61.

³³ GARF 3260/1/31: 1. The Kazakh People's Commissariat of Agriculture (Kirkomzem) was also informed around this time: GARF 3260/1/31: 2.

³⁴ The first communiqué from the Astrakhan Gubkom can be found here: GARF 3260/1/31: 5-5 ob.. Its report was received the next day, on 20th October 1921: GARF 3260/1/31: 6-6 ob..

³⁵ According to the report, the Regular Nomadic Encampment was originally leased to the Kazakh population of the Bukey *Juz*, but was subsequently given to them freely: GARF 3260/1/31: 6

³⁶ GARF 3260/1/31: 6 ob.. The Astrakhan Gubkom also argued in its letter to Moscow that the Russian population's stocks of cattle and crops exceeded those of the Kazakhs in the Regular Nomadic Encampment: GARF 3260/1/31: 5. For an account of this process in late-Soviet scholarship, see: S. B. Baishev, *Ocherki ekonomicheskoi istorii Kazakhskoi SSR (1860-1970 gg.)* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo Kazakhstan 1974), p. 89.

³⁷ GARF 3260/1/31: 6.

³⁸ GARF 3260/1/31: 5-5 ob.. It should be noted that the Russians encroaching upon Kazakh land would not necessarily have come from Astrakhan or its surrounding area. Pre-revolutionary Russian immigrants came from all across the Russian Empire. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan*, p. 65.

the populations in question was not the only relevant factor, however: Astrakhan further implied that productive Russian farmsteads were being put under threat by governing bodies in Urda, whose sympathies lay more with the rival interests of Kazakh nomads. Astrakhan therefore admitted the presence and importance of nomads in the debate, but only in terms of the threat they posed to productive farmers. Nomadic interests were the misguided priority of the opposition.

Some of Astrakhan's account was questionable. Studies conducted in 1920 found a population of 239,300 in the Bukey Governate and described no less than 99 percent of this number as Kazakh, the remaining 1 percent being Russian. In no other Kazakh-run governate were Russians found to be such a minority.³⁹ These statistics should be treated with a high degree of scepticism given the paucity of available sources at the time and the extremely limited resources enjoyed by administrators and scholars after the Civil War. Besides, as is clear from the dispute between Urda and Astrakhan itself, the official boundaries of what was considered the Bukey Governate would have been ambiguous in 1920 to anyone conducting research. Nevertheless, Narkomzem RSFSR had seen reports on the preponderance of Kazakhs in the Bukey Governate by late 1922, and this can only have damaged the credibility of claims made by Astrakhan about the number of Russians on the borderlands.⁴⁰ Most probably, ambiguity arose from the lack of consensus on what constituted residence and land-ownership. Because much of the Kazakh population was always migrating and its habits were poorly understood by local Russians, Astrakhan was able to underestimate the number of Kazakhs and the extent of their land use, either through mistake or wilful misunderstanding. Other organs were free to exaggerate it.⁴¹

In the absence of consensus, the Kazakh authorities were well prepared for a response from the Astrakhan Gubkom. Around the time that Astrakhan made its disquiet known, the central government of the Kazakh Republic wrote to the Bukey Governate's Executive Committee.⁴² Central authorities proclaimed their explicit intention to protect the interests of the Bukey Governate Committee in Urda, and requested further information from the governate so that its various territorial

³⁹ GARF 3260/1/25: 144.

⁴⁰ GARF 3260/1/25: 143, 144-146.

⁴¹ The claims of the data collected in 1920 look similarly untrustworthy next to George J. Demko's series of maps documenting demographic change in pre-revolutionary Kazakhstan. According to his study from 1969, Kazakhs were barely an absolute majority in north-western Kazakhstan the year before the revolution: Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan*, pp. 133-136.

⁴² To be precise, a communique was dispatched on 13th October 1921, less than a less before Astrakhan's response to the ruling: GARF 1318/11/32: 86.

disputes could be resolved with Moscow. The direct involvement of republic-level officials again implied that the dispute was national rather than administrative in character, since a matter of bureaucratic expediency may have been more astutely resolved by the bureaucrats in Astrakhan and Urda, both more directly involved than anyone in Orenburg.

Faced with the involvement of the central Kazakh authorities, Astrakhan's disputations continued long after Narkomzem RSFSR's original deadline for complaints had passed. Twice in 1923, on 23rd April and 24th August, Narkomzem RSFSR made declarations stating that it saw no credible reason to reverse the original decision it had made in October 1921.⁴³ Repeatedly over this two-year period, the authorities in Moscow endorsed the principle that the Bukey Kazakhs should be managed by Kazakh organs of state. Whilst simultaneously appealing against Moscow's ruling, Astrakhan made efforts to demonstrate compliance. In 1922 the governate's eleventh Congress of Soviets conceded that chaos had been created by the unsystematic settlement of nomadic territory, and that Russians had encroached on swathes of land far larger than had originally been intended.⁴⁴ These claims bare some resemblance to the rhetoric of many in the Kazakh branch of the Communist Party at this time, and may have been a symbolic accommodation of the prevailing anti-colonial paradigm which was so closely associated with the National Question in the early 1920s.⁴⁵

However, Astrakhan's conciliatory sentiments belied the hardship experienced by those actually living on the borderline between governates because the encroachment and unregulated settlement of land by Russians was continuing apace. In April 1923, the year after Astrakhan's rhetorical concessions, Narkomzem RSFSR demanded an explanation from the Astrakhan Gubkom for its continuing 'onslaught' on the Kazakh Republic.⁴⁶ Though Orenburg was granted control over the former Bukey Khanate, Russians from neighbouring Astrakhan were continuing to colonize and settle the land there, perpetuating the serious disruption of nomadic migratory habits in the area. Back in Moscow, notable figures such as Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev acknowledged the plight of the Bukey Kazakhs and held meetings to discuss it with Party members involved in agricultural policy.⁴⁷ Nomadism was complicating the western border of the Kazakh Republic, but not only because nomads came and went. It also affected the

⁴³ GARF 3260/1/30: 19, 21.

⁴⁴ GARF 3260/1/30: 1.

⁴⁵ See, for example: APRK 139/1/2: 79. Chapter Four discusses post-colonial reparations and rhetoric in further detail.

⁴⁶ GARF 3260/1/30: 19.

⁴⁷ GARF 3260/1/30: 15, 16.

behaviour of sedentary communities. Counter-intuitively, sedentary Russians were more likely to ignore the border and colonise the land of a neighbouring republic, acting on the pretence of their administrators in Astrakhan that nomadic land was vacant land. Similar processes appear to have been ongoing at other points around the Kazakh Republic, and not only along its northern border.⁴⁸

How was this being allowed to happen? The implication made by the Astrakhan Gubkom in 1921 was that government from Urda would favour the nomadic minority in the Baskunchak tract and the Regular Nomadic Encampment, placing productive Russian farmsteads under threat at a time of extensive food shortages. Ignoring this warning, Narkomzem RSFSR had granted Urda control over the disputed areas, specifically declaring that Russian farmers would henceforth live by Kazakh laws. The stage did indeed seem set for the invasion of cultivated arable farmland by nomadic herds. Yet a year and a half later the opposite was happening. To an extent this might be explained by the relative weakness and inability of the state, at this early stage after the Civil War, to halt processes which had been underway long before 1917. But a further reason is that, as repeatedly emphasised, both sides so assiduously fought this territorial dispute in national terms. Orenburg stated its commitment to 'the defence of the interests of the Bukey', and therefore to the competencies of Urda as a centre of the Kazakh Republic's power, but not to the nomads nearby.⁴⁹ Narkomzem RSFSR was adjudicating at a time of official sensitivity to the dangers of Great Russian chauvinism, and its rejection of Astrakhan's arguments should be understood in this context. Nomadism may have caused the debate in the first place, as it complicated land-ownership in the Bukey Governate and made it difficult to draw a clearly recognisable border. But the dispute was resolved by bodies speaking for Russians and Kazakhs, not farmers and nomads, and the extension of nomadic practice was subsequently raised mainly by administrators in Astrakhan scare-mongering about the intentions of those in Urda.

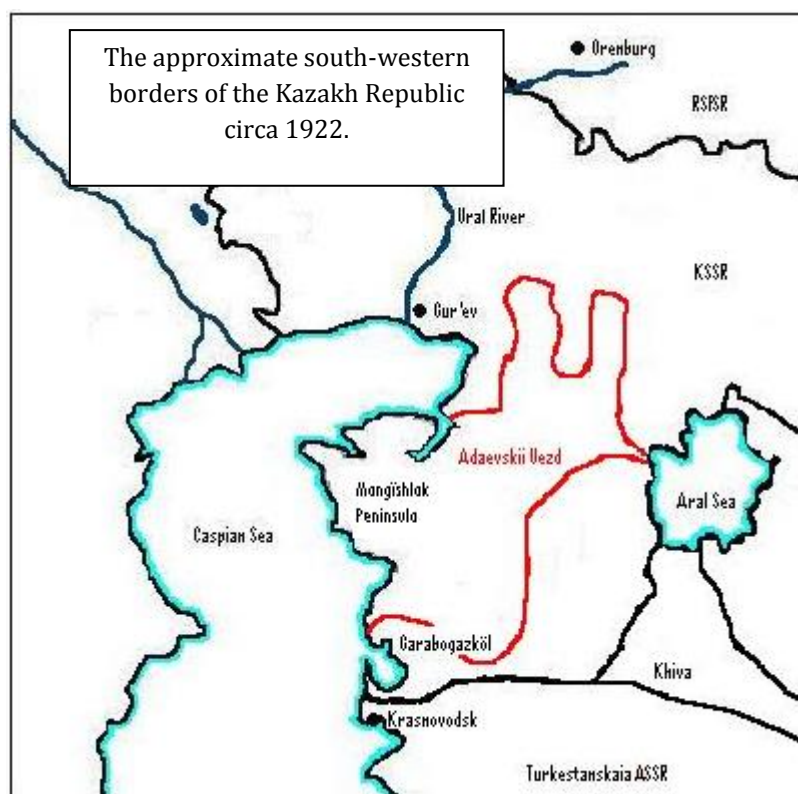
The formal extension of the Kazakh Republic's borders to encompass nomadic lands in the far west might at first seem like an early sign that nomadic life would be respected under Communism. In fact it was a sign that Kazakh national, territorial identity was gaining formal recognition, replacing the old Tsarist principles of topographical and administrative expediency. This meant Kazakh bodies were to

⁴⁸ L. C. Gatagova, L. P. Kosheleva, and L. A. Pogovaia, *TSK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros. Kniga 1, 1918-1933 gg., Dokumenty Sovetskoi Istorii* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2005), p. 406.

⁴⁹ GARF 1318/11/32: 86.

govern lands in which Kazakhs predominated, irrespective of whether those Kazakhs were nomadic or how well those nomads would be treated. Indeed, even as the Kazakh national border was firmly set in place to the west of the Ural River, the agricultural borders of arable farming thundered eastwards. As will be repeatedly shown in later chapters, there was no particularly compelling reason to expect Kazakh authorities to be anything more than ambivalent about the extension of farmland into nomadic pastures, providing national territory was secured. This was a pattern which will recur later in this chapter, and further events in the same area of the Kazakh Republic reinforce the case. Chapter Four describes the eventual assimilation and division of the old Bukey Governate into other administrative territories of the Kazakh Republic, largely at the expense of the nomads who lived there.

Around the Caspian Sea



At the dawn of the Soviet era, Kazakh migrations around the Caspian Sea were bookended by conflict. As they reached their northernmost pastures west of the Ural River, each year the Kazakhs were finding larger European settlements where open grassland had been. When they headed south, onto the Ustyurt Plateau which sits between the Caspian and Aral Seas, they encountered competition of a different kind. The Mangishlak Peninsula had long been a theatre for hostilities between nomadic tribes, who would soon be formally divided into either the Turkmen or Kazakh

nations.⁵⁰ Further still onto the Ustyurt, these communities found that the shallow Garabogazköl lagoon was a useful landmark with which to separate themselves from each other. Maps from after the national delimitation of 1925 show the lagoon under Kazakh control, whereas post-Soviet maps place it under Turkmen jurisdiction. But the border always sits close to the shore.

The Kazakh and Turkmen communities of this region shared a nomadic lifestyle. As noted by a Soviet agent in October 1924, a common preference for nomadism did nothing to ameliorate the often fierce rivalry between groups of Central Asians, but it did mean that such conflict differed in some respects from that witnessed in the north-west of the republic.⁵¹ The two agricultural traditions competing over the outermost reaches of the Bukey Governate could not co-exist in the same space; a field cannot provide both crops and pasturage. The matter was simpler still because agricultural practice appeared to correlate with nationality. Disagreements arose over where to draw the line between nomadism and farming, Kazakhs and Europeans, and in the deliberations on this question we see prevailing attitudes towards nomads emerge. In contrast, Turkmen and Kazakh nomads crossed paths repeatedly around the Garabogazköl and on the Mangışhlak Peninsula. This made the establishment of two national jurisdictions considerably more difficult. But once again the process reveals much about the relationship between state and nomad in early Soviet Kazakhstan.

In post-Soviet historiography the Turkmen tribes are typically distinguished from the other titular nationalities of Soviet Central Asia by their particular interpretation of Islam.⁵² As with Kazakh tribal confederations, however, genealogy and kinship were vitally important to Turkmen allegiances.⁵³ Moreover the 'extraordinary ethnic complexity' of Central Asia applied as much to Turkmen as to Kazakhs, and it would be inappropriate to suggest that the disorder along the shores of the Caspian Sea was the product of clashes between just two distinct groups.⁵⁴ Yet, for the same practical and ideological reasons described in the preceding section, the Communist Party insisted on understanding violence between nomads in national

⁵⁰ Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 60.

⁵¹ The agent's observation was made in regards to Kazakhs and Kyrgyz: Gatagova, Kosheleva, and Pogovaia, *TSK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros*, pp. 243-243.

⁵² Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire; A Guide*, First ed. (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1985), p. 101. Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union* (London: KPI, 1986), pp. 313-327.

⁵³ Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, p. 8.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18. Anatoly M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 121.

terms. That this is so will become immediately clear when this section addresses measures taken by the state to bring order to the Ustyurt Plateau. But first, what chaos was there to remedy? Why disentangle nomads from one another?

These questions are neatly answered by a report produced by the Executive Committee of the Krasnovodsk Uezd, an administrative division encompassing many Turkmen in what was then the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.⁵⁵ Sent in mid-July 1922, the document declared that since the beginning of that year Kazakhs from the bordering Adai Uezd had stolen 350 camels and 1,000 rams from Turkmen communities. Four Turkmen had been killed by Kazakhs. In response, six Kazakh women had been abducted and a number of cattle stolen. Though four of the women were subsequently returned, two remained kidnapped, and the Krasnovodsk Committee described how the Turkmen were preparing for a counter-attack.⁵⁶

New Soviet committees were already familiar with such behaviour. Since spring 1921 local authorities had been encouraging Kazakhs to return livestock to Turkmen tribes in exactly the quantities that were stolen since before 1919. Murder, raids and attacks were all described and condemned.⁵⁷ The Adai region was itself notorious. The Adai were originally a tribal confederation of the Kazakhs' Younger *Juz* which rebelled against Tsarist authorities in 1870. Violent protests split the Kazakh elites in the area, some of whom sided with the Russian administration and were rewarded, whilst others continued to resist tax rises and the confiscation of pasturelands and were brutally repressed.⁵⁸ Briefly part of the Turkestan Republic, the Adai Uezd joined the KSSR in October 1920. Though it remained an uezd, it was given the formal, more substantive powers of an oblast.⁵⁹ It was also enlarged to encompass two nomadic volosts of the Krasnovodsk Uezd to the south.

Alibi Dzhangil'din, an early Soviet visitor to the area and a significant figure in Kazakh politics, reported that the population of the Adai Uezd, whom he called *adaevtsy*, migrated perpetually throughout the year.⁶⁰ This migration took them annually over the borders shared by the Kazakh Republic with Turkestan and the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic (previously the Khanate of Khiva). Though he

⁵⁵ GARF 1235/96/751: 89.

⁵⁶ GARF 1235/96/751: 89.

⁵⁷ GARF 1235/96/751: 20.

⁵⁸ Kassymova, Kundakbaeva, and Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, p. 18.

⁵⁹ K. S. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, vol. 4 (Almaty: Atamüra, 2010), p. 196.

⁶⁰ Dzhangil'din is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three.

considered them loyal to Soviet power, Dzhangil'din placed heavy emphasis on the primitive life of the *adaevtsy*, presenting them as helpless in the face of bad weather and a hostile natural environment.⁶¹ *Adaevtsy* were also used as examples of the most destitute of the republic's population by foremost Party members.⁶²

It is itself notable that reports contain no references to Kirgiz or Kazakhs, preferring instead a derivation of the Adai title.⁶³ It shows that in January 1923, when Dzhangil'din's report was written, an astute observer understood that the loyalties dividing the people of the Ustyurt Plateau were those of kinship, not nationhood. As well as weather and environmental conditions, the *adaevtsy* were also said to be at the mercy of raids from the Iomud. The Iomud were another tribal grouping, soon to be assimilated into the Turkmen nation.⁶⁴ There is clear evidence that, when the Adai Uezd expanded southwards and claimed land formerly governed by Krasnovodsk, resident Iomuds showed little appreciation for this administrative reorganization. New Adai committees in the area had struggled to prevent fellow Adai from attacking the Iomud, but had also called upon the Krasnovodsk authorities to resist any temptation to interfere. It had become Kazakh land. Adai authorities instead recommended the creation of a governing assembly representing both peoples.⁶⁵

This explains the decision of the Krasnovodsk Uezd-City Executive Committee to convene a 'Kirgiz-Iomud' Conference in Krasnovodsk on 6th April 1921.⁶⁶ It was one of the new Soviet state's first major attempts at resolving inter-tribal conflict in nomadic regions, and it accepted the following agenda for the day:

- 1) The establishment of borders between Turkmen and Kirgiz [Kazakh] migrations
- 2) The liquidation of the Kirgiz-Iomud conflict⁶⁷

The conference felt unable to resolve the first matter. Kazakhs of the two volosts which had recently left the jurisdiction of Krasnovodsk and joined the Adai Uezd complained that their water sources and pasturage were over the border to the south, and so they had to enter Turkestan to survive. Attendees decided to allow the Kazakh

⁶¹ Grigorii Fedorovich Dakhshleiger and M. Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane v vosstanovitelnyi period, 1921-1925 gg : sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Alma-Ata: Arkheologiya Zhane Etnografiya Instituty, 1962), pp. 89-91.

⁶² APRK 139/1/541: 118.

⁶³ Dakhshleiger and Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane*, p. 88.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁶⁵ GARF 1235/96/751: 20.

⁶⁶ GARF 1235/96/751: 4-4 *ob.*.

⁶⁷ GARF 1235/96/751: 4.

and Turkestan governments to solve this problem, and as a temporary solution they sought to dissuade Kazakhs from migrating too close to areas where conflict with Iomud was more likely. Around the Garabogazköl, in particular, Kazakh nomads were advised to migrate along a specific route.⁶⁸ Turning to the second item on their agenda, conference members demanded an immediate cessation of all hostilities. A second Kirgiz-Iomud Conference was scheduled for 1st July 1921, which would discuss conflicts in areas which had not dispatched a delegate to Krasnovodsk.⁶⁹

Hostilities, it is evident, did not cease for several years. The thought of convening a conference to conclude long-lived tribal antipathies is itself interesting. It perhaps speaks of the early self-confidence of Soviet administrators who believed that a talking-shop could mitigate a fierce battle for the limited resources east of the Caspian. But the occurrence and subsequent failure of these staged events are easily connected to other, more specific trends in the relationship between Soviet state and Kazakh nomad.

First, easy assumptions about the inherent disorder of nomadic society must be avoided, but abduction and raids were not new phenomena amongst these communities. Kazakh concepts such as *barymta* (cattle-rustling) and *qun* (blood feud) suggest that nomads saw such practices as more a part of everyday life, and less a crisis of lawlessness, than Soviet administrators were prepared to accept.⁷⁰ This might be associated with what Edward Schatz calls 'criminalising clans'; the Soviet intrusion into traditional forms of authority in Kazakh society.⁷¹ In other words, already in 1921 the Soviet state was motivated to sweep away some habits of nomadic life.⁷²

Second, the Krasnovodsk conference spoke of a Kirgiz-Iomud conflict, but also of a Kazakh-Turkmen border. A key source of the former, it was believed, was disrespect for the latter, as it was best to keep warring tribes apart. Immediately this necessitated the intervention of nation-wide authorities, and focus shot from the fundamentals of nomadic existence to the high politics of national jurisdiction. Like the conspicuous nomadic hole in the 1926 census data and the plight of nomads in the Bukey Governate, the nomadic idiosyncrasies of violence on the Ustyurt were again subsumed into a

⁶⁸ GARF 1235/96/751: 4.

⁶⁹ GARF 1235/96/751: 4.

⁷⁰ Khazanov, *Nomads*, p. 150. Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, p.43.

⁷¹ Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, pp. 43-45.

⁷² The intention here is not to contrast the Soviet Union with the Tsarist Empire. In certain regards the two polities had identical effects on nomadic life. See, for example: Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 198.

nation-based understanding of Central Asia.⁷³ Even a peace agreement signed on 8th August 1921 bore the names of representatives from the Kirgiz and the 'Turkmen-Iomud' people, both quasi-national rather than tribal affiliations, in the fashion of a diplomatic accord.⁷⁴ Similar efforts were made to establish peace between Turkmen and Uzbeks around Khiva.⁷⁵

Borders negotiated between nations created new problems for migrating nomads, whether Kirgiz or Turkmen-Iomud. In the 1920s the Mang'ishlak was one of the few places where nomads continued to migrate perpetually throughout the year, and any new boundary separated people from resources which they had long used, but over which no formal ownership was agreed.⁷⁶ The People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (Narkomvnutdel) had to try and supervise the expulsion of communities who found themselves on the wrong side of the divide.⁷⁷ Further east along the border between Turkestan and the KSSR, it was reported in 1922 that nomads were continuing to travel south to trade, as they had done for generations. Typically Kazakhs would exchange their cattle for bread and other farming produce. On their return journeys, militia men at the border would find the nomads' bread supplies and accuse them of speculation. The food would be requisitioned (sometimes for the border guards' own consumption), and occasionally nomads were arrested.⁷⁸

The border negotiations between Turkmen and Kazakh territories bore more than a passing resemblance to those underway further north between Astrakhan and Urda. Like the Astrakhan Governate Committee, the Krasnovodsk Uezd-City Executive Committee was then part of a Soviet polity which did not engender one specific national identity. The Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was similar to the RSFSR in that it was conceived without a dominant titular nationality. Yet negotiators on both sides defended the rights of disparate nomadic tribes using the language of national territorial integrity. If this was done to protect those leading a nomadic lifestyle, the resolution of disagreements and the imposition of borders did not ease the difficulties experienced by nomads and may have exacerbated them. As in the Bukey Governate, nomads on the periphery of Kazakh territory were at the

⁷³ For further detail on the 1926 census and the tension between nationality and nomadism, see Chapter Three.

⁷⁴ GARF 1235/96/751: 108.

⁷⁵ Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), p. 62.

⁷⁶ Sarah Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934', PhD thesis (Yale University, 2011), p. 42. GARF 1235/96/751: 62.

⁷⁷ GARF 1235/96/751: 84.

⁷⁸ APRK 139/1/254: 98.

epicenter of a power struggle over resources and control, but this would earn them no favours from Kazakh authorities with limited understanding of tribal conflicts and limited empathy for nomadic communities. Indeed, the national paradigm was even less suitable for understanding the processes at work in the Adai tribal lands than it was for understanding the colonization of land near Lake Baskunchak. The Russian identity around Astrakhan was at least clear, and in its juxtaposition the Kazakh identity was also thrown into relief. Around the Garabogazköl authorities were still dividing tribes up into Turkmen and Kazakh even as they were drawing a line between peoples who disagreed about much but were equally inconvenienced by territorial boundaries.

A second Kirgiz-Iomud conference took place in Krasnovodsk on 25th July 1922, but it was hardly constructive.⁷⁹ Documentation from the event relates that Turkmen representatives complained about the small number of Kazakhs in attendance. They speculated that perhaps the Kazakhs simply had no desire to establish peaceful relations. There were no Kazakh delegates from any Adai institution present on the day, and it was declared that those Kazakhs who had made the journey were from families already migrating within Krasnovodsk territory. They were unable to negotiate alone without the authority of the Adai Uezd, the government of which had previously given its full support for the meeting of the conference. It was further declared that nothing more could be achieved that day without members of the Adai Uezd itself, and again that higher republic-wide authorities should involve themselves in the dispute.⁸⁰

Higher organs of power were indeed in contention over territory at this time, again reinforcing the perception that this was a matter of republic-wide and therefore national importance. The extension of the Adai Uezd southwards to include the Garabogazköl was strongly resisted by the Central Executive Committee of the Turkestan Republic. One committee member, an N. Iomudskii, claimed to have taken part in an expedition to the coastline and to have been well-informed on local circumstances there. He suggested that the prevalence of wells and pastures around the Garabogazköl would force Turkmen into Kazakh land and that this would exacerbate tensions. Though he supported the principle of a border, his stated aim was a border which reflected the social realities of the area.⁸¹

⁷⁹ GARF 1235/96/751: 79.

⁸⁰ GARF 1235/96/751: 79.

⁸¹ GARF 1235/96/751: 62.

Iomudskii, as a member of the Turkestan Central Executive Committee, is likely to have espoused a particular conception of those social realities. Whereas reports originating from Krasnovodsk tend to present the Kazakhs as perpetrators of violence, Adai committees chose to emphasise the number of armed Iomuds on Kazakh land.⁸² Already the vested interests of different national committees were pitting them against each other, meaning that border disputes were associated with national prestige and status rather than extremely local questions of agricultural practice. Regardless, Iomudskii did not get his way. Comprehensive documentation from the Central Asian Bureau in 1924 describes in detail the formalized national borders of Soviet Central Asia, including the new Turkmen Republic which emerged out of western Turkestan. Certainly, the Bureau and others recognized the extreme ethnic heterogeneity of the border-lands between the Kazakh Republic and its neighbours, remarking for example that many Kazakhs in or around the new Uzbek SSR were arable farmers, making them very difficult to distinguish from Uzbeks.⁸³ The Krasnovodsk area is noted for the predominance of only two major livelihoods: sedentary fishing and nomadic animal husbandry.⁸⁴ But no extension of Turkmen jurisdiction into the Adai Uezd is recorded at this time.⁸⁵

It is difficult to say whether a better placed border, or a border less stringently observed, could have encouraged greater prosperity in the area, but the economy of the Adai Uezd remained one of the weakest in the Kazakh Republic for the rest of the decade. By the 10th April 1929 it had been made into an okrug, and KTsIK and the Kazakh Soviet of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom KASSR) presented VTsIK with a joint declaration 'on the liquidation of the Adai Okrug of Kazakhstan'.⁸⁶ In the two years since the process of *raionirovanie* turned the Adai Uezd into an okrug, the region had consistently underperformed economically. With only 177,000 registered residents, despite its considerable size, the Adai Okrug contained a disproportionately small portion of the republic's population. Sixty-seven percent of its budget came from subsidies, and its entire budget (1,021,000 rubles for 1928-1929) was the equivalent of only 1.4 percent of the republic's overall budget. The principal economic activity of the okrug was still nomadic animal husbandry. Only 2 percent of the population was described as sedentary; 23 percent were semi-nomadic; 28 percent were nomadic with a migratory radius of up to 300 versts and 47 percent were nomadic with a migratory

⁸² GARF 1235/96/751: 20.

⁸³ RGASPI 62/2/108: 92.

⁸⁴ RGASPI 62/2/108: 61.

⁸⁵ RGASPI 62/2/108: 60.

⁸⁶ GARF 1235/123/345: 56.

radius of 1,000 versts or more. These nomadic communities remained impoverished, underdeveloped and highly unstable. The trope of the wandering nomad at the mercy of the elements was as clear in this declaration as it was in Dzhangil'din's 1923 report.⁸⁷ KTsiK and Sovnarkom KASSR further admitted in 1929 that half of the region was always outside of the state's control, wherever its administrative centre was located, because of the infrastructural inadequacies of the okrug.⁸⁸

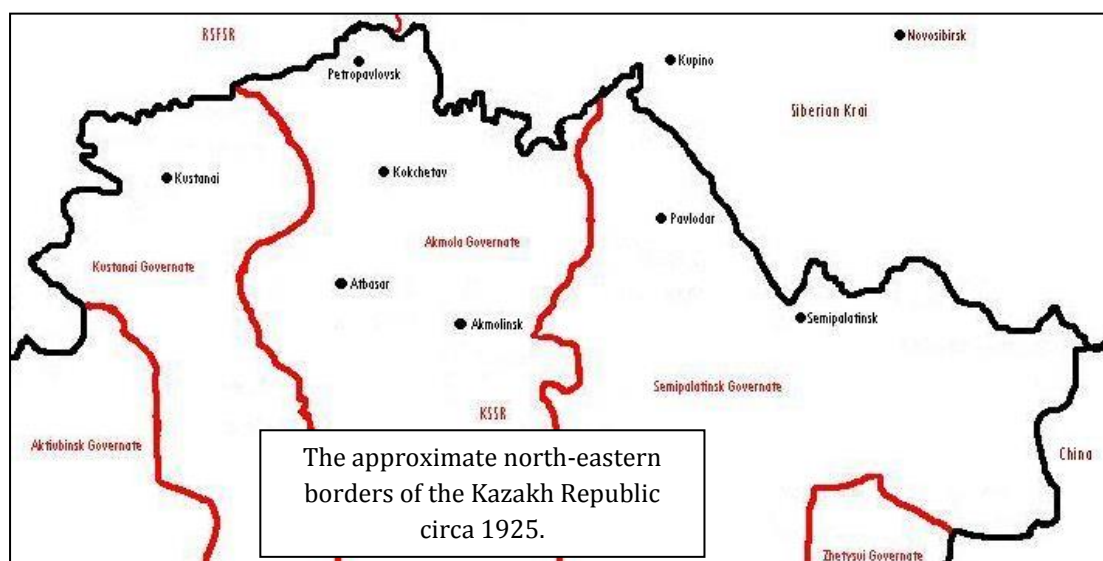
In the first half of the 1920s the Communist Party sought to resolve two border disputes in the western half of the Kazakh Republic. Both disputes had their origins in Tsarist-era history, but Bolshevik agents in Central Asia understood them in a wholly novel way. The principles of national territorial autonomy, coupled with an assumption that the peoples of the former Tsarist Empire could be divided into discrete national groups, replaced administrative expediency and topographical convenience as the authorities' lodestar. This proved a hostage to fortune when Kazakh nomadic practice began complicating the boundaries of jurisdiction. North of the Caspian, Russian farmers colonized temporarily empty migratory zones arguing that they were vacant and could be put to better use. Around the Garabogazköl, the difficult business of distinguishing Kazakh land from Turkmen land was made more arduous by the tendency of the population to share or fight over precious resources. Rather than pursue localized efforts to resolve differences in agricultural culture and habit, the Party's commitment to its national policy dragged these disputes into the heady heights of national, republic-level politics. Using a peace treaty between nations to halt kidnapping between tribes seems a kind of category error but, as evidenced by the ruinous effect of its Kazakh-Turkmen border and its complicity in the extension of arable farming, the Party never prioritized nomadism. Its ambition was here to delineate the internal boundaries of its new polity, and in this context nomadism was an inconvenience to be sidestepped rather than accommodated. As the decade progressed this story became more nuanced.

⁸⁷ GARF 1235/123/345: 56.

⁸⁸ GARF 1235/123/345: 56 *ob.*

Section Two: Eastern Kazakhstan

From Siberia



Before 1917, Cossacks had been placed at the vanguard of the Tsar's colonizing forces in Siberia and on the Kazakh Steppe.⁸⁹ Many of the first arable farmers to settle on the Russian Empire's southern frontier were Cossacks, who withstood initial hostilities with Turkic nomads and stabilized their hold over new land in preparation for the arrival of Russian peasants.⁹⁰ This being achieved, the imperial Steppe Governor-Generalship absorbed 640,000 new settlers between 1896 and 1909.⁹¹ Over a longer period, 1867-1916, the borderlands between Siberia and Akmolinsk witnessed a population increase of 100 percent.⁹² Between 1911 and 1913 alone the population of formerly Kazakh lands rose by over half a million.⁹³ George J. Demko reveals that a large majority of newcomers penetrated the steppe from Siberia's southern fringe, raising tensions in newly contested areas.⁹⁴

War in Europe did not allay colonization. As demonstrated by Peter Gatrell, the invasion of the Russian Empire's western periphery by the Central Powers prompted a mass exodus of refugees, many of whom fled deep into Siberia or as far south as

⁸⁹ Kassymova, Kundakbaeva, and Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, pp. 76, 240, 273-274.

⁹⁰ Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan*, p. 49.

⁹¹ Alexander Morrison, "'Sowing the Seed of National Strife in this Alien Region": The Pahlen Report and *Pereselenie* in Turkestan, 1908-1910,' *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 31 (2012), p. 11.

⁹² Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 38. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan*, p. 114.

⁹³ N. E. Masanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: narody i kul'tury* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2001), p. 367.

⁹⁴ Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan*, pp. 49-141.

Turkestan.⁹⁵ Nor did this process come to an end after the Russian Revolution. On the contrary, its pace quickened. In 1917 branches of the Union of Siberian Farmers had emerged in towns across north-eastern Kazakh territory.⁹⁶ During the Civil War the overall population of the Kazakh Steppe declined by around 13.2 percent, but the proportion of non-Kazakhs increased, reaching 53.4 percent by 1920.⁹⁷ Arriving Europeans claimed ever greater quantities of land, creating shortages of pasturage near new settlements and the kind of inter-ethnic resentment already described in the Bukey Governate.⁹⁸ Given the history of colonization up to this point, animosity between Cossacks and Kazakhs was especially acute.⁹⁹ Fighting between Ural Cossacks and Kazakhs forced 300,000 Kazakhs to flee the westernmost areas of their republic in 1920.¹⁰⁰

For the Soviet administrators of the mid-1920s, this was not mere history. Up to nine years after the fall of the Tsar, in a resolution on local agricultural development, the Semipalatinsk Governate Committee described a region cursed with inter-ethnic tensions and profound inequalities, and a nomadic economy in a 'state of decline,' blaming all this on the colonizing policies of the Tsar and the unregulated influx of new migrants since the revolution.¹⁰¹ Semipalatinsk shared a long northern border with Siberia, and the population of the governate was not only living with the legacies of colonization, but still experiencing it. In the view of the committee a powerful clique of Cossack and Russian land-owners were continuing to surface and exploit the dispossessed poor. Competition for free land was forcing migrating Kazakh communities into rivalry, with weaker groups being ejected.¹⁰² It was the explicit view of the committee that the Tsarist Government had stolen land from working Kazakhs and handed it to Siberian Cossack soldiers, and that land seizure had continued after February 1917.¹⁰³ Here again nationality and nomadism were at work together. North-eastern authorities in the KASSR pitted Russians and Cossacks against Kazakhs, and blamed Russians and Cossacks for the increasing instability of the nomadic economy. Nomadism intensified national tensions, and the extension of the rights of Kazakhs, as a national group, was perceived as a solution to nomadic problems.

⁹⁵ Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 54-55.

⁹⁶ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 114.

⁹⁷ Masanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: narody i kul'tury*, pp. 367-368.

⁹⁸ Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, pp. 168-169.

⁹⁹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 63.

¹⁰⁰ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 44.

¹⁰¹ RGASPI 17/25/208: 33.

¹⁰² RGASPI 17/25/208: 33.

¹⁰³ APRK 139/1/337: 17.

The Semipalatinsk Committee proposed therefore that northern steppe lands owned by Ural and Siberian Cossacks should be returned to Kazakhs, regardless of those Kazakhs' agricultural habits.¹⁰⁴ There were precedents for this decision, including a similar decree made in April 1921 and a declaration made in 1922 by the Akmolinsk Governate, which also bordered Siberia, that land wrongfully taken from the native Kazakh populace should be returned.¹⁰⁵ But it would be no easier extricating European settlers than it was Turkmen nomads around the Garabogazköl. The agricultural economies of northern Kazakhstan and southern Siberia were so interconnected that at one point the Kazakh Soviet of Labour and Defence had even considered the formal unification of the Siberian and Kazakh People's Commissariats for Food Supplies, though the proposal had been deemed unacceptable.¹⁰⁶ Unsurprisingly given earlier events further west, anger in Semipalatinsk over the power of Cossacks and Russians also expressed itself in a border dispute. This is a dispute which can only be fully understood in the context of the anxieties just described, about the legacy of historical colonialism, the impact of colonialism as a current force, and the state of the nomadic economy.

In 1924, the Semipalatinsk Governate Committee sought to push its own jurisdiction northwards, into the Siberian Krai. The Kaukul'skaia Volost was a small administrative division of the Kupino district, then part of the Omsk Governate in the Siberian Krai and, ultimately, the RSFSR. Kupino itself was a town close to the Siberian-Kazakh border, north-east of Pavlodar. Authorities in Semipalatinsk identified the Kaukul'skaia Volost as populated primarily by Kazakhs, and brought this to the attention of KTsiK. It was argued that the whole volost should be made part of the Semipalatinsk Governate. This request was first submitted at least as early as 19th March 1924, and then again on 4th September 1925. The demand was justified on the basis of familiar 'national cultural' factors, essentially, that Kazakhs should govern Kazakhs.¹⁰⁷

As along the border of the Bukey and Astrakhan Governates, territorial disputes between Kazakh and Siberian authorities were understood in national terms and would be decided by republic-level institutions. But once again, a factor of key importance to the proper management of these divided areas was agricultural practice,

¹⁰⁴ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, pp. 45-46. APRK 139/1/337: 17.

¹⁰⁵ APRK 139/1/337: 17-19 *ob.*.

¹⁰⁶ This took place in March 1922: GARF 130/5/504: 60. It should be added that one of the principal justifications for this proposal was also the development of transport infrastructure, particularly the Turkestan-Siberian Railway or *Turksib*.

¹⁰⁷ GARF 1235/122/287.

or lifestyle. When the KTsiK first sided with Semipalatinsk in November 1925, and made a provisional declaration which assimilated the Kaukul'skaia Volost into its neighbouring Kazakh governate, it also stipulated that strip-farming in the volost be immediately and entirely prohibited. Apart from the actual redrawing of borders, this is the only provision the KTsiK recommended before presenting the decision to its presidium.¹⁰⁸ It should be asked what would have been of greater consequence to the everyday lives of the Kaukul'skii Kazakhs: that they be made members of their titular republic, or that agricultural practice be regulated to favour people with less of a background in arable farming? Given the disregard eventually shown to the Bukey nomads by their Kazakh authorities, the answer was most likely the latter. The stipulation from KTsiK might be read as a rare occasion in which the well-being of nomads was weighted equally alongside the principle of national territorial autonomy. Actually, the relative importance of nomadism was also increasing in the judgements of other actors involved in the dispute.

In spite of KTsiK's clear response to the question, disagreements over the Kaukul'skaia Volost were only beginning. Siberian authorities were just as emphatic in their defence of the border as Kazakh authorities were in arguing for a redrawing of the map. In late February 1928 the Presidium VTsiK looked at the matter, though no conclusion was reached until May of the same year.¹⁰⁹ Then, VTsiK noted the demographic features of the area, which after a period of *raionirovanie* had been placed inside the larger Siberian Barabinsk Okrug.¹¹⁰ Outside of Kupino, the contentious volost encompassed 17 *auls*, which together contained 2,008 individuals. Only 59 of these people were Russian, the rest Kazakh. Yet opinion within the volost was apparently divided. The mainly-Russian population of Kupino itself was set against any transfer. Furthermore, if the town was moved then the continuation of strip-farming would be unavoidable, as the Russians there would not countenance a ban any more than the new farmers of Astrakhan had done. It was for these reasons that VTsiK resolved to leave the Siberian-Kazakh boundary where it was, in addition to one more pivotal factor which clearly demonstrates the changing intersection between border-making and nomadism in this case. The report from VTsiK summarized its position with these words:

¹⁰⁸ GARF 1235/122/287.

¹⁰⁹ GARF 1235/122/287.

¹¹⁰ Barabinsk is a town north-east of Kupino, between Omsk and Novosibirsk.

In conclusion, the economic life of the Kazakh population in these village councils in no way differs from the life of the surrounding Russian population: they pursue farming, and partake in a sedentary way of life, know the Russian language and have the most peaceful and benevolent relations with the Russian population. The economic gravitation of the aforementioned population points towards the regional centre of Kupino, and the close proximity to the railroad is certain.¹¹¹

There is a telling distinction here between the reasoning of central officials in Moscow in 1928 and the claims and recommendations made by authorities much earlier in the decade. In the Bukey Governate and Adai Uezd, the sheer number of Kazakhs in particular areas was justification enough for the state to transfer them into the embrace of their own republic where they would ostensibly be safeguarded against the lingering effects of imperialism. Regarding the Kaukul'skaia Volost in 1928, VTsIK acknowledged the predominance of Kazakhs there but went on to demonstrate the state's increasing sensitivity to the nomadic-sedentary divide, a sensitivity which was leading to the very first Soviet attempts at forced sedentarisation in that same year. Nationality and lifestyle are both present in the considerations of VTsIK, but by this point lifestyle took priority. What does it matter if the rural population is predominantly Kazakh when they farm like Russians? Nationality was becoming less important than nomadism in border-making, and it is possible that the Kaukul'skaia Volost would have more likely joined the KSSR if its Kazakhs were predominantly nomadic.

KTsIK itself had implicitly moved in this direction as well. It had emphasized the sheer number of Kazakhs in the Kaukul'skaia Volost, and was siding with a committee which made declarations about the crippling legacy of Tsarism and the requisitioning of land from Russians and Cossacks. Yet the immediate ban on strip-farming it had planned may have been a sign of acceptance that membership of the Kazakh Republic alone was not sufficient to protect a Kazakh from colonization. The Semipalatinsk Committee knew this well enough. By way of reassurance, when rejecting Semipalatinsk's demand for Siberian land, VTsIK suggested that Siberian authorities pay closer regard to the interests of rural Kazakhs.¹¹² In 1928, as confirmed by case studies in other chapters of this thesis, the state was learning the significance and

¹¹¹ GARF 1235/122/287.

¹¹² GARF 1235/122/287.

resilience of nomadism as an administrative problem, and discounting matters of nationality as a result.

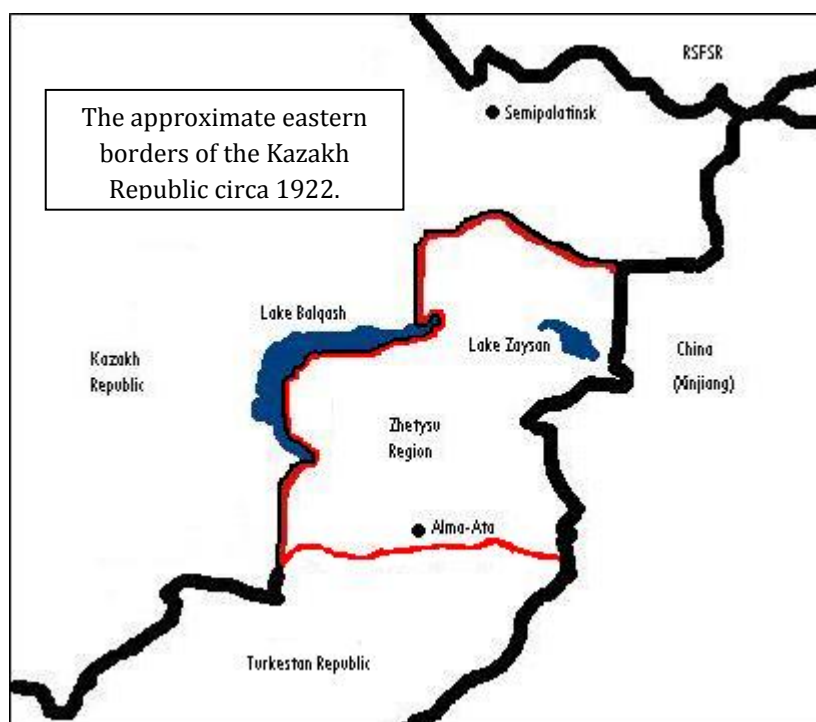
The important similarities between the Russians and Kazakhs of the Kaukul'skaia Volost were not beyond dispute. Back in 1924 when the disagreement began, a local citizen had petitioned in favour of Semipalatinsk. Nashmetdin Aityganovskii was a resident of the volost and claimed that of the four councils then governed by Kupino, all but one were dominated by cattle-herding Kazakhs, not arable farmers.¹¹³ Perhaps VTsIK suddenly realized that Aityganovskii's claim still held true later in 1928, when it altered its position. Having declared the previous May that nothing would change, on 12th November 1928 it moved large sections of the Kupino District into the Pavlodar Okrug, the new Kazakh authority which then bordered much of Siberia.¹¹⁴ Siberian officials protested ineffectually. Another likely catalyst for the extension of Kazakh borders may have been the trialing of a state farm (sovkhoz) in the Kaukul'skaia Volost. The farm was a sizeable sheep-rearing enterprise, and from its provisional basis it quickly grew in size without formal direction from supervisory bodies to do so. It was the land falling under the control of this state operation, spanning across various communities, which was divided between Siberian and Kazakh jurisdictions. One third of the farm remained in place, two thirds came under the management of Pavlodar. Siberian resentment about the decision continued, but in 1935 the Kazakh Republic assimilated the final third of the land involved.¹¹⁵ Though the original ruling on the Kaukul'skaia Volost was therefore reversed, this was justified on the same agricultural and economic bases which had originally superseded national ones.

The Siberian case shows once again that national and agricultural identities competed for the attention of the Communist Party along the borders of the Kazakh Republic. As the Soviet administration lost its earlier enthusiasm for national autonomy, agricultural and economic concerns achieved primary import, but it remained the case that borders generally inconvenienced those who migrated nearby, as events along the Sino-Soviet border make clear.

¹¹³ GARF 1235/122/287.

¹¹⁴ GARF 1235/122/287.

¹¹⁵ GARF 1235/122/287.

Into China

From its earliest manifestation, the Soviet Kazakh Republic only ever shared a land border with one non-Soviet polity, that of China. In spite of the nationalistic rhetoric, the confusion and miscommunication, territorial disputes between Soviet authorities would never have quite the same dynamic as those between the USSR and China. Unlike the previous three case studies, Moscow could not act as a final adjudicator that far east. Unlike the nomads entering Siberian or Turkmen jurisdiction, Kazakhs evaded Soviet power when they entered China. As will be seen, the governors of far-eastern Kazakh lands had to work hard not simply to manage nomads, but to avoid driving them away.

The province of China which bordered the KSSR was Xinjiang, sometimes referred to as Chinese Turkestan, a majority Turkic Muslim region with established cultural connections with the nomads of Russian steppe lands.¹¹⁶ In spite of Chinese assimilationist policies of the late nineteenth century, Xinjiang had always shared its migratory populations with the Russian Empire and contained many Kazakhs.¹¹⁷ The political border between empires may not have signified much more to Kazakh nomads

¹¹⁶ S. Frederick Starr, 'Introduction,' in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (London: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), p. 3.

¹¹⁷ Frank Lorimer, *The Population of the Soviet Union: History and Prospects* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 140. James A. Millward and Nabijan Tursun, 'Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978,' in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Boderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), pp. 63-64.

than that it was a different type of uniformed soldier using intimidation to extract tribute or control the direction of seasonal migrations. Kazakhs had a long history of entering Xinjiang whenever the atmosphere on the steppe became threatening, and returning when rumours suggested that the situation had improved. The last exodus from imperial lands had occurred as late as 1916, with the subsequent influx beginning two years later.¹¹⁸ This was of course a process with nomadic specificities; sedentary communities are also able to flee across borders, but not habitually, and not with the rapidity and relative lack of disruption afforded to nomads.

It should be noted that China was at least as fragmented and unstable as Soviet Central Asia in the early 1920s, and was little more empowered to control its people or borders than KTsIK or Sovnarkom KSSR. From 1912 to 1928 the Xinjiang province, a vast swathe of western China, was under the military rule of Yang Zengxin.¹¹⁹ The Yang administration treated non-Han peoples such as the Kazakhs with imperialistic disdain and maintained power by encouraging nomadic groups to fight each other, tactically arming some and neglecting others.¹²⁰

With martial rule and internecine struggle on both sides of the Sino-Russian border, during the Russian Civil War border markers between the two former empires were changed or destroyed at will. At one point Chinese border outposts deliberately receded, to draw migrating Kazakh nomads closer to the boundary and then demand tribute from them. In 1920 local authorities in Xinjiang bought approximately 60 square kilometres of land near Lake Zaysan from a Soviet uezd commissar, who subsequently followed the tract into China and escaped.¹²¹

After the Civil War and throughout the 1920s, despite Chinese demands, the boundary between Chinese and Soviet territories was never officially altered. Yet any alteration would have been largely a formality, since the boundary was repeatedly ignored or changed without consent. As will be shown, new Soviet authorities were in no position to terminate the well-established tradition of cross-border Kazakh migration. China, furthermore, was not the only space in which emigrating Kazakhs sought refuge. During the years of famine in the early 1930s, it is estimated that

¹¹⁸ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 140. James A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 185.

¹¹⁹ Kassymova, Kundakbaeva, and Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, p. 68.

¹²⁰ Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, p. 184.

¹²¹ Kassymova, Kundakbaeva, and Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, pp. 67-69. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, p. 180.

200,000 Kazakhs fled to Mongolia, Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey, as well as China, and never returned.¹²² Given the official stasis but everyday flexibility of the Sino-Soviet boundary at this time, then, border-making here is a less instructive term than border control.

The first major nomadic migration into China after the Civil War took place in 1921. Perhaps betraying their ignorance about the typical state of affairs on the steppe, central authorities in Moscow were immediately alarmed at the scale and breadth of the wave. Sovnarkom RSFSR's Soviet of Labour and Defence (*Sovet Truda i Oborony*) discovered that Kazakhs from both the Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk Governates had left Soviet land, heading into China and Mongolia. If they had considered this a natural product of transhumance, there would probably have been less cause for concern. Instead, they blamed mistakes made by Siberian bureaucrats in the management of food supplies.¹²³ This first assumption hints at common trends in the thinking of Communist Party leaders: as nomadism was the lifestyle of the desperate, it would only be pursued under duress. When the Soviet of Labour and Defence looked for duress, they found it in the actions of non-Kazakh officials.

The Turkestan Republic's own Sovnarkom was also in no doubt as to why China had gained so many more Kazakhs. The Zhetysu region, which was then part of Turkestan but would join the KASSR in 1925, had also seen huge demographic decline as its population headed east, and the Turkestan Sovnarkom blamed the severe and destructive policies of the Tsar.¹²⁴ On 14th June 1923 it sent a letter to VTsIK which criticized the former imperial government in strident terms and alleged that up to 100,000 Kazakhs had emigrated before the October revolution. The communiqué was intended to acquire sympathy and subsidy for these migrants. As the thousands of Kazakhs had entered Xinjiang, it went on, they were met by several regiments of Chinese soldiers, who unleashed an 'avalanche of fire'. Up to 1,000 Kazakhs were killed. Notably, the letter insists that this experience was not so horrific as the treatment these communities had suffered under the Tsar in 1916, and so they carried on east.¹²⁵

¹²² Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 286. Eugene M. Kulischer, *Europe on the Move: War and Population Changes, 1917-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), pp. 101-102. M. B. Balakaev, *Kolkhoznoe krest'ianstvo Kazakhstana v gody velikoi otechestvennoi voiny 1941-1945* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo 'Nauka' Kazakhskoi SSR, 1971), p. 376.

¹²³ GARF 130/5/504: 60.

¹²⁴ Zhetysu, which translates from Kazakh as 'seven rivers', was more commonly called Semirech'e in Russian during the imperial era.

¹²⁵ GARF 130/28/89: 30.

By 1923, so it was claimed, around 15,000 members of these very same communities had arrived back in the Zhetysu area, and a further 15,000 were on their return journeys. Certainly a census of the rural population in the Zhetysu Oblast in 1920 recorded a slight increase in numbers, made up of returnees from China.¹²⁶ Chinese authorities had again placed a myriad of obstacles in the path of those migrating. What called them home? The Turkestan Sovnarkom listed the October revolution, the land reforms of 1921 and 1922, the reversal of colonial trends and the involvement of the Kazakh masses in socialist construction as reasons for the retreat, which is somewhat credible given the diametric distinction between these policies and those associated with the Tsar, though hardship in Xinjiang and the usual patterns of migratory practice are also tenable explanations. In any case, these 30,000 new Soviet citizens were appearing without shoes, without outer clothing or any of the resources necessary for survival. The Sovnarkom therefore requested six million rubles to provide for fodder and materials so that these Kazakhs could feed their livestock and build new homes, and asked that the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs (Narkominodel) ensure the unimpeded progress of Kazakh returnees into Soviet territory.¹²⁷

The content of the Turkestan Sovnarkom's request is remarkable for a number of reasons, but most important is the sense of inevitability with which it describes the arrival of around 30,000 Kazakhs into Soviet territory. Clearly it was understood that these new citizens would present a huge logistical challenge and would demand a substantial amount of extra resources. Closing the border entirely would likely have alienated Soviet power from much of its internal Kazakh populace, but the option of controlling, directing or slowing the influx is never mentioned. Probably no such option existed, as the state infrastructure along the periphery of Soviet Central Asia was deficient in this as in so many other respects during the decade. There is also a sense of opportunism in the proposals. If 30,000 were coming, they would at least increase a population in the Zhetysu Oblast which had declined dramatically from 1916 to 1920.¹²⁸ The Turkestan Sovnarkom also saw that the wretched state of returning Kazakhs was a chance to provide them with the materials they needed to build permanent residences and settle them for good, making another emigration less likely. The strategy of helping nomads to settle when they were at their most vulnerable would be used repeatedly on Kazakh nomads, with varying levels of success.

¹²⁶ Dakhshleiger and Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane*, p. 23.

¹²⁷ GARF 130/28/89: 30 *ob.*

¹²⁸ Dakhshleiger and Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane*, p. 23.

In accordance with the wishes of the Turkestan authorities, Georgy Chicherin, head of Narkominodel, bid his commissariat facilitate the reintegration of the 30,000.¹²⁹ The Presidium VTsIK also commissioned the People's Commissariat for Nationalities (Narkomnats RSFSR) and Narkomzem RSFSR to produce a plan for aid and economic support for these Kazakhs.¹³⁰ The subsequent plan included the establishment of control points, at which incomers received medical inspection and veterinary care for their livestock; the transference of Kazakhs to particular locations; the provision of food, clothing and rubles at the state's expense, and the distribution of loans, seeds and timber for the construction of new arable farms or mixed arable-livestock farms.¹³¹ The final stipulations of the plan are clear evidence that state organs in Moscow were complicit in the Turkestan Sovnarkom's plan to settle returning Kazakhs as soon as possible after they crossed the border.

The formal intentions of the Soviet state contrast favourably with the actions of Chinese armed forces. But the extent to which Soviet aims were realized is difficult to ascertain. If local bodies could barely identify and maintain a Sino-Soviet border, let alone police it, it is unlikely that they would have been able to establish a comprehensive relief effort for incoming refugees, replete with a transport network, seeds, timber, food and medical aid.¹³² Though ambitious, this would not be the last time the state offered aid to emigrants. On 10th May 1926 VTsIK pledged similar help to 225 families Kazakh families who had arrived in *Kirgiziia*, the name used at the time for Kyrgyz territory.¹³³ In either case, the willingness of the eastern Kazakh population again to emigrate in the latter half of the decade suggests that returnees were not tied to the land in the way Tashkent and Moscow preferred.

At a closed meeting of the Kazakh Communist Party's Krai Committee on 8th August 1928, members considered a report from the Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU) about the 'significant number' of Kazakh households emigrating to China. Committee members were deaf to the echoes of 1916. The meeting concluded that these Kazakhs, which it described as generally of average prosperity, were evacuating the steppe due to widespread misunderstanding about plans for the impending confiscation campaign. As in the negotiations over Siberian land, 1928 was a crucial year for the state's relationship with nomads and nomadism. The committee's raft of

¹²⁹ GARF 130/28/89: 36.

¹³⁰ GARF 130/28/89: 16.

¹³¹ GARF 130/28/89: 16-16 *ob.*.

¹³² Matthew Payne confirms that much of the resources promised to newly-settled nomads did not reach them: Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," p. 71.

¹³³ GARF 1325/121/318: 9.

solutions included a recommendation that Krai-level and local newspapers make fresh efforts to explain what confiscation would entail, and to emphasize plans for the return of all illegally confiscated cattle.¹³⁴

Later that year, in October 1928, violence along the republic's eastern border was related to the Presidium VTsIK in a secret telegram.¹³⁵ Some kind of functional border-guard was by then in place, and meaningful attempts at stopping emigration were resulting in armed conflict. The fatalism of the Turkestan Sovnarkom had gone. But control was hardly in the hands of the state. The border-crossing, described in Russian as either *perekhod* or the more specifically nomadic *perekochevka*, continued in spite of the violence. Sometimes Kazakhs native to Xinjiang joined the fighting to help Soviet Kazakhs escape. On 16th August 1928 150 Chinese Kazakhs attacked the border militia with rifles and forced Soviet soldiers to retreat. The OGPU had reinforced the regiments on the border, and VTsIK dispatched a diplomatic mission to Xinjiang to find out more about the lives of Soviet Kazakhs beyond the border.¹³⁶

Flight to China remained a key means of resistance for Kazakhs during the collectivisation and sedentarisation campaigns which really got underway in the early 1930s.¹³⁷ Kazakhs at war with state organs within the USSR even sought to develop and maintain links with those who had already emigrated, as part of a wider struggle against Soviet power.¹³⁸ This is another example of how the battle to draw and police borders in eastern Kazakhstan exacerbated political tension in the region, as a long-standing nomadic tendency was criminalized. But the porous Sino-Soviet border also informed prevailing economic understandings of Kazakh nomads, as they returned from China destitute and requiring subsidy. As in the poverty-stricken Adai Uezd, the decreasing pasture lands beyond the Ural River and the Cossack-dominated Semipalatinsk Okrug, the nomads appearing on the Soviet side of the border in Zhetysu looked economically useless and burdensome.

¹³⁴ RGASPI 17/25/21: 12. The final reference to illegally confiscated cattle most likely relates to accusations made by Kazakh authorities around this time that Siberian tax collectors had been applying punitive levies on Kazakhs in north-eastern Kazakh land. See Chapter Four for further discussion of this disagreement.

¹³⁵ GARF 1235/140/956: 1.

¹³⁶ GARF 1235/140/956: 1.

¹³⁷ Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, pp. 291-292.

¹³⁸ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 312.

Conclusion

Each of the four case studies described above reveal an early-Soviet state ill-equipped to overcome some of the emerging inconsistencies between orderly bordered Central Asian nations and the non-national tribal affiliations which roamed the steppe. By the beginning of the 1930s eastern Kazakh authorities had to contend with a kind of international Kazakh armed resistance that refused to recognise the Sino-Soviet border which cut it in half. A decade earlier, Iomud and Adai people were having peace agreements signed on their behalf as if they were warring nations, but both peoples still found themselves cut off from the vital resources which they unhappily shared. Post-imperial Kazakh anger had been formally recognised and legitimised by the creation of the KSSR, and the organs of the KSSR set about targeting the famers of Astrakhan and the land-owners of Siberia, but as the decade wore on central organs came to recognise that viable borders reflected not just national discrepancies, but ones associated with agricultural practice.

The creation of the national republics was based on a political judgement: that each nation of the former Tsarist Empire should have its own (limited) territorial autonomy or localised representation.¹³⁹ But, as most recently argued by Asal Khamraeva-Aubert, within these national territories political considerations gave way to economic ones.¹⁴⁰ It seems that the few educated, literate, urban Kazakhs working in Kzyl-Orda and elsewhere could no more empathise with nomads than the Turkmen of Krasnovodsk, or the Russians of Astrakhan and Kupino.¹⁴¹ When okrugs, governates and uezds were built around nomadism, they were either mismanaged or, at the very least, ignored and allowed to stagnate. Like the nomads who arrived without food or outer clothing from China in the very earliest years of the decade, the populations of nomadic administrative regions like the Adai Uezd became the impoverished justification for their own sedentarisation.

Borders were a prescription for a misdiagnosed illness. Where the battle for land and resources was between tribes, the Communist Party treated tribes like nations and accordingly sought to choreograph negotiations between central authorities which did

¹³⁹ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ Asal Khamraeva-Aubert Khamraeva-Aubert, "Economic Planning and the Construction of Territorial Limits in Soviet Central Asia: the Case of the Uzbek SSR".

¹⁴¹ Payne also argues that the Kazakh elite had come to view nomadism as a problem well before the revolution. Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," p. 63. Of course, it was not only Kazakhs working in the management of the Kazakh Republic; in fact the majority were of European origin.

not exist. Where the battle for land and resources was between agricultural practices, the Communist Party saw that these practices coincided with national identities and assumed that national autonomy for each would solve the problem, assuming wrongly that sedentary Kazakh officials would better care for nomadic Kazakhs than Russians would. As the Soviet administration lost interest in national autonomy and turned its attention to economic development, it became more sensitive to agricultural practice and this informed the resolution of border disputes, but as will be seen elsewhere in the thesis, the state's increasing sensitivity for nomadism made it no more benevolent a force.

Chapter Six:
Taxing Nomads

The tax collectors of early Soviet Kazakhstan endured difficulties which were remarkable for their universality. When a concerned citizen of Akmola wrote to the Soviet of People's Commissars in Moscow, expounding the effects of ruinous taxation on a figurative, enterprising baker, it is hard not to see a reference to Adam Smith's famous declaration on the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, and said baker.¹ In 1923, at the Third All-Kazakh Oblast' Conference, Comrade Kharchenko described the frustrations of a redistributionist at work in rural areas: '...if we take a cow from the *bai* and we give it to the pauper [*bedniak*], who was tending the cow for temporary use, then the pauper will eat the cow and again we must take a new cow from the *bai*.'² The insatiate greed of the poor, and the self-perpetuating logic of a tax policy designed to satisfy it, are also enduring themes.

Kharchenko was making reference to the nomadic practice of *saun*, whereby affluent Kazakhs lent livestock to their less fortunate peers for an agreed period, on the understanding that the poor would tend the animal and the two Kazakhs' families would share any resulting foodstuffs.³ Some in the Communist Party viewed *saun* as exploitative, and sought to intervene by formally transferring ownership of the cattle to the poor, though not all nomads accepted their analysis.⁴ Note that wealth in this context is wholly represented by the size of a nomad's herd.⁵ Taxing communities which shared or exchanged herding duties was not simple, and interference was placed in contradiction to the Kazakhs' own tribal laws.⁶ At the time that Kharchenko spoke in March 1923, there was further argument within the Kazakh Communist Party over

¹ GARF 130/7/257: 2-2 *ob.*. Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 119.

² APRK 139/1/541: 169.

³ *Saun* is transliterated here from Cyrillic but comes from the original Kazakh word, as does *amanat*, a similar system which worked slightly differently. Typically *saun* would involve dairy cattle rather than sheep, and it was milk which would be shared out. See: Nurbulat Masanov, *Kochevaia tsivilizatsiia Kazakhov: osnovy zhiznediel'nosti nomadnogo obshchestva* (Almaty: Fond Nurbulat Masanov, 2011), pp. 469-470.

⁴ APRK 139/1/541: 114. Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe: The Memoir of a Nomad under Stalin* (New York: Overlook/Rookery, 2007), p. 214.

⁵ Academics have long debated the significance of livestock to nomadic Kazakhs, and in what sense livestock were conceptualised as wealth. Of principal concern here is that Soviet legislators saw herds as a taxable commodity, but for a review of the literature on the nomadic view of this matter, see: Masanov, *Kochevaia tsivilizatsiia Kazakhov*, pp. 444-450. See also: N. E. Masanov, 'Osobennosti funktsionirovaniia traditsionnogo kochevogo Khoziaistva,' in *Kul'tura i istoriia tsentral'noi Azii i Kazakhstana*, ed. Zhulduzbek Bekmukhamedovich Abylkhozhin (Almaty: Fond Soros-Kazakhstan, 1997), pp. 5-18.

⁶ APRK 139/1/541: 139.

how nomadic livestock should be viewed; as a means of production, or simply as a product for consumption.⁷ Typical administrative problems associated with taxation were deriving new expression from the particularities of Kazakh life.

This chapter will discuss the development, implementation and effect of Soviet tax policy as it related to Kazakh nomads in the first decade of Soviet power. Here tax is defined broadly to include efforts at wealth redistribution, wealth procurement and confiscation, and wealth includes currency but more importantly domestic goods and livestock. As indicated, legislators in the Kazakh Republic confronted problems which would be typical anywhere across the Soviet space, but nomadism was an extra complication. The chapter will first address taxation immediately after the Civil War, when War Communism gave way to the New Economic Policy and post-imperial reparations were a foremost part of the state's agenda. Second, a major disagreement over the correct application of tax exemptions in 1924 will be considered in detail. Third, the onset of the first Five Year Plan and the increasingly onerous taxation of the *bais* will be discussed as a prelude to the commencement of collectivisation in 1928-1929.

The chapter will draw various events together into decade-long trends, whilst also describing some contradictions and anomalies. Chronologically, the decade began with a period in which some attempt was made to tax nomads, as a social category of their own, differently from sedentary groups. This was both attacked and defended not on the basis of their nomadic identity, however, but their Kazakh identity, and this undermined the implementation of the system. In any case throughout this period the Party had hoped to ultimately induce settlement among Kazakhs, and as confidence in the state apparatus grew in 1924 attempts were made to go beyond simple exemptions for nomads and instead offer incentives for the correct behaviour. The Agricultural Tax of 1924 would include specific rates for nomads moving to a sedentary way of life, for example. This was in keeping with the Party's faith in taxation as a means of social transformation, but was ineffective and threw some major disagreements between state organs into relief. Eventually, amid the procurement crisis and with Party members losing interest in incentives and nuanced rate variation, the ongoing penalisation of the *bais* was intensified and broadened out to ever larger numbers of Kazakhs, heralding the beginning of the collectivisation drive in 1928.

⁷ APRK 139/1/541: 191.

Broadly, it will be argued that the development of tax policy was motivated by changing economic and social circumstances as time passed but that a specific, concerted focus on nomads as a category by which tax payers could be defined was often complicated by alternative social typologies; first nation, then class. This is part of a pattern across the decade, wherein the Soviet authorities were so often without a system of social categorization apposite for governing nomads. It was to the detriment of Bolshevik and nomad alike, and may have contributed to the fact that War Communism, as a means of extracting resources from nomadic society, had effectively returned to the republic by 1930. The profound inadequacy of the state's tax-collecting apparatus would also have played a role in this process, as did events in Moscow, though the centre-periphery paradigm appears less helpful here than the other factors cited.

Section One: Tax-in-Kind, 1920-1922

For the Kazakh Republic, the first major reform to Soviet tax practices came on 21st March 1921, when the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) made a declaration 'on the replacement of the requisitioning of food and raw materials with a tax-in-kind.'⁸ As the title suggests, the tax-in-kind (alternatively described as a 'produce tax') was formally disassociated from the haphazard requisitioning of domestic goods which was practised during the Civil War, after an earlier version of the tax had been rejected in January 1919.⁹ The legislation applied across the Soviet polity, but could be and was adapted by regional administrations such as that now established in Orenburg to govern the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (KSSR). The economic conditions of the KSSR, newly subject to the tax-in-kind, could barely have been less auspicious.

When the revolution had come in 1917, Kazakh communities were still suffering from their punitive treatment by imperial authorities after the uprisings of the previous year, provoked by ongoing economic discrimination and the Tsar's notorious attempt to conscript his Islamic subjects for the battle in Europe.¹⁰ The further violence, confiscation and disorder of the Civil War crippled the agricultural productivity of both

⁸ K. S. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, vol. 4 (Almaty: Atamūra, 2010), p. 205.

⁹ The 'produce tax' description comes from: Franklyn D. Holzman, *Soviet Taxation: The Fiscal and Monetary Problems of a Planned Economy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 160. Silvana Malle, *The Economic Organization of War Communism, 1918 - 1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 373.

¹⁰ Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, First ed., *Studies of Nationalities in the USSR* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), p. 149. M. Kh. Asylbekov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, vol. 3 - *Kazakhstan v novoe vremia* (Almaty: Atamūra, 2010), pp. 571-601.

settled and nomadic communities, and families from both began emigrating or succumbing to starvation.¹¹ Estimates for the scale of population decline in each governate (*guberniia*) of Kazakhstan during the Civil War are as follows: Ural'sk 21.5%, Semipalatinsk 20.1%, Turgai 17.6%, Akmolinsk 14.7%, Orenburg 8.5%, Bukey 8.3%, Aktiubinsk 7.7%. The Kustanai Governate saw a modest increase of 0.6%.¹² Post-war hardships were compounded by lamentable weather (*dzhut*), which reduced the yield of the 1920 harvest and perpetuated famine.¹³ Approximately 414,000 Kazakhs died of malnutrition and, by 1923, there were 19.4% fewer families republic-wide than there had been in 1920.¹⁴ The remaining peoples of the former Tsarist Empire had fared little better, and food shortages were legion from European Russia down to Turkestan.¹⁵

Part of the Bolsheviks' response to this crisis was the New Economic Policy (NEP), formally introduced in March 1921 and encompassing the tax-in-kind.¹⁶ Political pressure both from within the Party and outside it had been contending for such an approach which was intended to stabilize prices and hasten economic recovery.¹⁷ To a large extent, the NEP meant an overall reduction of state intervention in the rural economy, and the reconfiguration of what intervention continued.¹⁸ Kazakhstan exemplified this trend. So in the early years of NEP, the influence of state policy on migrations amongst the Kazakhs was brought to a minimum.¹⁹ By 1923, livestock numbers had seen modest increases, and the number of families without the means to feed themselves receded.²⁰ Given the simultaneous decrease in the population of the republic, and the view that the NEP contributed to the creation of a 'budgetary shortfall'

¹¹ Jeff Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865-1923* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 212.

¹² Note that these figures include non-Kazakhs: N. E. Masanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: narody i kul'tury* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2001), p. 367.

¹³ S. B. Baishev, *Ocherki ekonomicheskoi istorii Kazakhskoi SSR (1860-1970 gg.)* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo Kazakhstan 1974), pp. 103, 115. G. F. Dakhshleiger, 'Kazakhstan nakanune NEPa,' *Voprosy Istorii*, no. 8 (1966), p. 26. V. P. Danilov, M. P. Kim, and N. V. Tropkin, eds., *Sovetskoe krest'ianstvo: Kratkii ocherk istorii (1917-1970)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1973), pp. 125-127.

¹⁴ Masanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: narody i kul'tury*, p. 369.

¹⁵ Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923*, vol. One, *A History of the Soviet Union* (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 178-179.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹⁷ Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization* (London: George Allen and Unwin LTD, 1968), p. 133. Michal Reiman, *The Birth of Stalinism: The USSR on the Eve of the "Second Revolution"*, trans. George Saunders (London: I. B. Tauris & Co LTD, 1987), p. 16.

¹⁸ Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, pp. 41-42. James W. Heinzen, "'Alien" Personnel in the Soviet State: The People's Commissariat of Agriculture under Proletarian Dictatorship, 1918-1929,' *Slavic Review* 56, no. 1 (1997), p. 95.

¹⁹ Masanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: narody i kul'tury*, p. 369.

²⁰ Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, pp. 158-159. Kokish Ryspaev, *Istoriia Respubliki Kazakhstan* (Almaty: TOO Kursiv, 2008), p. 250.

there, it is not easy to judge whether the policy was a success or failure, but it was certainly of significance.²¹ As well as prompting a period of diminished economic regulation and the discouragement of arbitrary requisition, the NEP allowed political concerns about class stratification in the countryside to intensify.²² The question of class will be raised again later. The following section will discuss the economic implications of the tax agenda for Kazakh nomads, framed within the early NEP years, and introduce another important political dimension: nationhood.

Nomadism in early Soviet tax policy

The tax-in-kind was first adapted for the peculiarities of the Kazakh Republic on 11th May 1921, less than two months after the initial declaration from VTsIK. The Soviet of People's Commissars in Orenburg (Sovnarkom KSSR) produced a kind of explanatory decree, outlining new levels of taxation on dairy products for the republic.²³ First, the western territories of the KSSR were made subject to a relatively lower rate of taxation on dairy, including the Ural Governate, Orenburg-Turgai Governate (including the former Kustanaiskii Uezd), the Bukey Governate and the Mangishlak Uezd.²⁴ Western Kazakh governates collectively owed 17.4 million *pood* of grain in tax at this time, and were considered some of the most imperilled by famine.²⁵ Any household with one animal in these regions would thus pay 3 pounds of purified butter.²⁶ Households owning two animals would pay four pounds, households with three to five animals paid five pounds, and households owning six animals paid six pounds. In contrast, households in the eastern Semipalatinsk and Akmolinsk Governates paid an additional two pounds of purified butter each, starting with households owning one animal being taxed at a rate of 5 pounds, and so on. Regional variations were not unusual for the time, it should be said. Some of the most impoverished areas of European Russia were also granted tax concessions, for example.²⁷ Yet most instructively, article 5 of the decree from Sovnarkom KSSR further specified that 'Nomadic households in *all governates of the KSSR* [emphasis added],

²¹ Michael R. Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation', PhD thesis (Georgetown University, 2005), p. 165.

²² Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, p. 70.

²³ GARF 1318/11/26: 11-11 *ob.*

²⁴ GARF 1318/11/26: 11.

²⁵ A *pood* was unit of measurement in Imperial Russia, equal to a little over 16 kilograms. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 205-206.

²⁶ GARF 1318/11/26: 11.

²⁷ Danilov, Kim, and Tropkin, eds., *Sovetskoe krest'ianstvo*, pp. 125-127.

owning up to two cows, are exempt from the tax on butter'.²⁸ Nomads of modest means were thus to pay up to four pounds of butter less than their sedentary compatriots in the west, and six pounds less in the east.

All these alterations to Moscow's original decree reveal a Kazakh administration ready to adapt the tax regime of the KSSR to match variations in wealth: variations between regions, between households, but also between agricultural practices or lifestyles. In doing so, the administration continued a process dating from pre-revolutionary times, identified by Yanni Kotsonis. Kotsonis argues that, in common with trends in the USA and Western Europe, late-Tsarist and early-Soviet tax levels were based more on what individuals could pay, and less on what the state needed.²⁹ The state requisitioning of 1919 to 1921 was therefore 'in many ways a regression', whereas the tax-in-kind was a sign of progress, albeit mitigated by the Soviet state's desperate urge to strengthen itself by acquiring greater resources.³⁰ Both Orenburg and Moscow extracted less produce from famine-struck regions, and to some extent moderated their demands on poorer families, to allow the most impoverished parts of the economy to recover. Orenburg took the further step of extending exemptions to nomads, as the vulnerable practitioners of a lifestyle believed to be particularly unproductive.³¹

The unfortunate position of many nomads served as justification for the next significant alteration to the tax-in-kind on 28th June 1921. The second session of the Kazakh Central Executive Committee (KTsIK) placed emphasis on the hunger and hardship faced by nomadic cattle-herders before declaring an overall exemption for nomads and semi-nomads from taxes on meat, leather, dairy produce and wool until the end of that year.³² As was typical of the NEP period, KTsIK further announced that nomads and semi-nomads were free to sell any surplus produce. Comparable official sanctions of localised market trading were being granted across the former Russian Empire at this time.³³ In the Kazakh case, no levy would be imposed on barter at trading fairs, where nomads traditionally sold their goods for other commodities. In fact, KTsIK recommended that the Kazakh People's Commissariat for Food Supplies

²⁸ GARF 1318/11/26: 11.

²⁹ Yanni Kotsonis, "'No Place to Go": Taxation and State Transformation in Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia,' *The Journal of Modern History* 76, no. 3 (2004), pp. 537-539.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 570, 569-574.

³¹ The widespread view of nomadism as arduous and unprofitable is discussed at length in Chapter Three.

³² GARF 1318/11/26: 4-4 *ob.*

³³ Alan M. Ball, *Russia's Last Capitalists: The Nepmen, 1921-1929* (London: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 21-23.

(Narkomprod KSSR) utilise these fairs to distribute products otherwise unavailable to nomads by means of free exchange.³⁴ The declaration made no attempt to distinguish between poor and rich nomads. Within two months of the first intervention by Sovnarkom KSSR, all nomads and semi-nomads had come to be understood as a single entity for the purposes of taxation, at least until January 1922. Alongside regional and wealth-based variations in the new regime's proportionate taxation system, a nomadic-sedentary distinction was assertively recognised, perhaps because the subtler system of the previous year in which nomads were simply taxed less was harder to implement. Now nomads would not be taxed at all for these resources.

Describing the nomads' economy as uniquely fragile was straightforward, and led to an appealingly straightforward solution; do not tax them. But the reforms of the NEP era sought to create a tax policy which was more than just proportionate. Tax-in-kind was a temporary solution, installed only until monetary taxation could feasibly be enforced Union-wide.³⁵ It would undergo a range of changes throughout the decade, particularly as industrialisation, in the KSSR as elsewhere, became a foremost priority.³⁶ The tax-in-kind thus exemplified further trends drawn from the Tsarist period through to the 1920s by Yanni Kotsonis. These include the use of tax as a tool for the state to learn about and transform society.³⁷ Proportionate tax levels could not be established unless legislators understood the economy intimately, and a nuanced application of levies further empowered the state to alter economic and social behaviour.³⁸

The ways KTsiK, Sovnarkom KSSR and others understood and wished to change the population of the Kazakh Republic are neatly exemplified in a report submitted to the first All-Kazakh Oblast' Conference by Mukhtar Samatov in June 1921.³⁹ Samatov, a former member of the Alash Party, was soon to be appointed to Narkomprod KSSR, and his views are revealing.⁴⁰ First, he singled out nomads as a particularly needy group, arguing that they suffered most from pre-Revolutionary urbanization, when the wealth of the rural economy was transferred to and concentrated in the cities.⁴¹ He therefore

³⁴ GARF 1318/11/26: 4. For further discussion of the use of trade fairs, see Chapter Seven.

³⁵ Holzman, *Soviet Taxation*, pp. 106-107.

³⁶ Zh. B. Abylkhodzhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstana: Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie aspekty funktsionirovaniia i transformatsii (1920-1930-e g.g.)* (Alma-Ata: Gylym, 1991), p. 47.

³⁷ Kotsonis, 'No Place to Go,' pp. 531-577

³⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 569-574.

³⁹ APRK 139/1/5: 215-220.

⁴⁰ K. S. Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana 1920-1946 gg.: Biograficheskii spravochnik* (Almaty: Arys, 2007), p. 296.

⁴¹ APRK 139/1/5: 215.

suggested that any taxation of nomads should be accompanied with the state provision of bread to nomads, amounting to another system of exchange.⁴² Second, Samatov referred to the issue of class. His warnings about class stratification under the NEP echoed debates underway in Moscow, where the figure of the kulak was of increasing prominence.⁴³ To address fears of a less equal society, Samatov called for a phalanx of highly-trained tax collectors, recruited from the Party's most conscientious members. These collectors would assertively but tactfully identify *bai* and kulak elements in the Kazakh countryside, and take their resources for the subsidy of heavy industry.⁴⁴ Third, Samatov compared the old system of war-time requisitioning to Tsarist exploitation of the steppe and claimed that Sovnarkom KSSR had lowered tax rates in the previous month to compensate Kazakhs for years of imperial oppression. Exemptions would blunt the differences between Kazakhs and European settlers.⁴⁵

For elements of the Kazakh Communist Party, it was not enough simply to recognise nomadism in the tax system. Rates immediately following the Civil War were necessarily more permissive than many administrators were comfortable with, but the ultimate ambition of the Party was to use every tool at its disposal, including taxation, to transform society and its economic relations. In Samatov's proposals we see the foremost preoccupations of the new administration, and an indication that variable rates would be repeatedly adapted in response to those preoccupations, though not always in the manner Samatov intended, in the coming years.

Nationhood in early Soviet tax policy

As discussed in previous chapters, when the Communist Party looked at the population of Central Asia, it saw a collection of nations. The distinguishing features – even the names – of some of these nations were yet to be formalised, but reparations for past misdemeanours were a major part of the Bolsheviks' agenda during and after the Civil War, and reparations were not possible without some conception of nationhood.⁴⁶ Russians and other European nationalities were presented as the

⁴² APRK 139/1/5: 218.

⁴³ Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, pp. 41-43. The identity and meaning of the kulak will be further discussed in section three.

⁴⁴ APRK 139/1/5: 218-220.

⁴⁵ APRK 139/1/5: 215-216.

⁴⁶ Bolshevik efforts at identifying, constructing and appeasing and the nations of the former Tsarist Empire are addressed particularly in Chapters Four and Five. The arguments being drawn from here are most comprehensively made by Hirsch and Martin: Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

beneficiaries and the perpetrators of imperialism, and were penalized in the KSSR. Kazakhs, Uzbeks and others were seen as victims, and received subsidy.⁴⁷ Land-ownership rights and access to water were reformed in the Kazakhs' favour during the first years of the NEP.⁴⁸ Some land was actually taken from Europeans and given to Kazakhs for their use, and the Politburo VTsIK in Moscow would take another year to revoke its tacit support for the expulsion of European settlers from the Semirech'e region, which joined the Kazakh Republic in 1925.⁴⁹ Kazakh administrators could draw on other precedents set in Turkestan, such as the confiscation of surplus agricultural produce from Russian farmsteads.⁵⁰ Samatov placed the first tax exemptions granted in the KSSR within this broader effort to penalise or reward certain nations, and thereby transform Central Asian society. It is clear that he was not the only one to do so.

On 19th September 1921, the People's Commissariat for Food Supplies in Moscow (Narkomprod RSFSR) submitted a formal request that VTsIK overturn the decision of its Kazakh counterpart and cancel the tax exemptions installed for nomads in June of that year.⁵¹ This cancellation would apply to dairy products and leather, both of which would again be taxed in areas struggling with shortages. The Presidium VTsIK took the request seriously enough to call for further information to justify the repeal.⁵² Narkomprod RSFSR argued that tax exemptions on nomads would curtail the state's resources too greatly, meaning that supplies could not be delivered to other communities in need. More strikingly, the institution called on VTsIK to take measures to preclude 'similar separatist demonstrations.'⁵³ At a time of economic crisis, when suspicion of pan-Turkic separatism in Central Asia was still potent, this association of economic concessions for nomads with a dangerous, bourgeois nationalism would have carried major political significance.⁵⁴ Unlike the decolonisation paradigm, which

⁴⁷ Terry Martin, 'An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism,' in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 67-90.

⁴⁸ Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, pp.157-158. Peter Holquist, 'To Count, to Extract, to Exterminate: Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia,' in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 130. Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-23* (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 88-89.

⁴⁹ Baishev, *Ocherki ekonomicheskoi istorii Kazakhskoi SSR*, p. 88.

⁵⁰ APRK 139/1/109: 1.

⁵¹ GARF 1318/11/26: 6.

⁵² GARF 1318/11/26: 6.

⁵³ GARF 1318/11/26: 8.

⁵⁴ Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, pp. 92-93. Adeeb Khalid, 'Nationalizing the Revolution in Central Asia: The Transformation of Jadidism, 1917-1920,' in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry

engendered concessions to formerly-colonised peoples within the Soviet system, it spoke of a desire to separate from Soviet power and thereby undermine it. It represents an entirely different use of the same nationality-based understanding of the people of the KSSR endorsed by Samatov and others.⁵⁵

Indeed, Narkomprod RSFSR cited a notion of separatist nationalism which would become increasingly prominent later in the Soviet period when regional elites were arrested and shot for nationalist tendencies. Contrasting conceptions of nationalism in competition here are redolent of a more significant disagreement between Stalin and Lenin dating from before the revolution. In broad terms, Lenin was sceptical about the existence of distinct national groups, but acknowledged and made concessions to nationalism in the former Russian Empire in a pragmatic effort to control Russian imperialism and earn the support of non-Russians. Perhaps less than a rigid theoretical correspondence, which may not have been possible given Lenin's preference for functional pragmatism regarding the National Question, what Samatov shared with Lenin was a particular disposition, a tendency or preference for supporting the non-Russian former subjects of the Tsar in a post-colonial context.⁵⁶ Stalin's tendencies were different. He unambiguously accepted that nations existed, but on this basis would become more fearful of their counter-revolutionary potential and eventually sought to strengthen Union-wide institutions at the expense of national organs of power.⁵⁷ The disquiet in Narkomprod RSFSR about the concessionary nature of the Kazakh tax system constitutes precisely the kind of suspicion Stalin also harboured.

Soon after Narkomprod RSFSR made its request, a representative of the Kazakh Republic at the Presidium VTsIK wrote back to KTsIK in Orenburg.⁵⁸ He claimed to have witnessed earlier meetings of Narkomprod RSFSR which concluded that all

Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 156-159. Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 223.

⁵⁵ For a similar example in the recent historiography, see: Benjamin Loring, "'Colonizers with Party Cards': Soviet Internal Colonialism in Central Asia, 1917-39," *Kritika* 15, no. 1 (2014), pp. 77-102.

⁵⁶ Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* (London: Pluto Press, 1975), pp. 60-62. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 4-9.

⁵⁷ Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, pp. 18-28. Hélène Carrère D'Encausse, *The Great Challenge: Nationalities and the Bolshevik State 1917-1930* (London: Holmes & Meier, 1992), pp. 36-39. Stalin laid out his theoretical response to the national question in a notorious article in 1913. See: Michael Löwy, 'Marxists and the National Question,' *New Left Review* 96, no. 1 (1976). Joseph Stalin, 'Marksizm i natsional'nyi vopros,' in *Stalin I. V.: Sochineniia* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1946). Note also that Yuri Slezkine prefers to emphasise some of the continuities in Lenin and Stalin's thought: Yuri Slezkine, 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,' *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994), p. 417.

⁵⁸ GARF 1318/11/32: 49-49 *ob.*

resources must be taken from nomads on the basis of exchange, a position not dissimilar to Samatov's. At the latest negotiations taking place in Moscow, however, Comrade Kotliarenko of Narkomprod RSFSR argued instead that the contentious tax exemptions contravened the constitution of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR, to which the Kazakh Republic then belonged), and would precipitate terrible economic problems. According to his communiqué, the Kazakh representative had countered that Kotliarenko and his peers lacked a full appreciation for the nomadic way of life. Their earlier insistence on requisitioning of pork fat and eggs had driven around a thousand Kazakh families over the border into Mongolia.⁵⁹ Besides, he had said, the declaration which introduced these tax concessions was already translated into Kazakh and was in force; any annulment would cause yet more administrative instability and undermine the authority of the Kazakh government. Then, after the Presidium had deferred judgement and adjourned, a member of VTsIK had apparently told the Kazakh representative that the idea of a cancellation originated not from Narkomprod RSFSR, but from the Orenburg Governate Executive Committee (gubispolkom), officially under the jurisdiction of KTsIK and based in the same city. The gubispolkom governed a region of the KSSR with a high proportion of European settlers and would soon leave the jurisdiction of the Kazakh Republic. It had complained that tax concessions for nomads were exacerbating tensions between Kazakhs and Russians, whereupon Narkomprod RSFSR took up the case.⁶⁰

The Orenburg Governate Executive Committee was not the only regional authority to complain about tax exemptions for nomads. The Governate Executive Committee in Astrakhan also governed a Russian-dominated area on the border of the Kazakh Republic, and had raised similar concerns on 16th July 1921. Though it accepted the tax concessions in full, it warned the Kazakh central authorities against policy which 'relates to one nation alone and clearly shows allocation based on nationality.'⁶¹ To those of Lenin's disposition, this would most likely have looked like an expression of Great Power chauvinism, an objection on the part of the imperial power to its perceived demotion similar to widespread reaction against *korenizatsiia*.⁶²

Perhaps to preclude any such characterisation, Narkomprod RSFSR often reworded these arguments in economic terms. In October 1921 it emphasised to KTsIK

⁵⁹ GARF 1318/11/32: 49.

⁶⁰ GARF 1318/11/32: 49 *ob.*

⁶¹ GARF 1318/11/26: 10.

⁶² Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 151. For further discussion of *korenizatsiia*, largely the promotion of the titular nationality within a given republic, see Chapter Seven.

that nomads, rather than Kazakhs as a whole, already enjoyed exemptions from the taxation of eggs and meat.⁶³ By eschewing a national category in favour of one based on agricultural activity, it perhaps sought to de-politicise the negotiations (having done the opposite in the preceding month). But subsidiary authorities more commonly understood the matter as a national one because Europeans were considered exclusively sedentary, and so the tax exemptions were exclusively for Kazakhs.

Administrators of a particular nationality tended to protect their own, and documentation from central organs gives only a partial picture of the tax system at this time because local bodies retained considerable powers to enforce their own levies.⁶⁴ Thus Party members complained that free trade went on in some regions, whilst requisitioning continued unabated elsewhere.⁶⁵ In summer 1922 a member of the Kazakh Ministry for Internal Affairs registered a series of complaints about the collection of taxes from nomads in the north west of the republic. He claimed that nomads were paying above the legal rate, and connected this with the predominance of Russians in the administrative apparatus.⁶⁶ He accused corrupt officials, likely to be Russian, of enforcing local monetary taxes unfairly.⁶⁷ Similar complaints about the taxation of Kazakhs were made in the Kustanai Governate nearby.⁶⁸ This was localised corruption, but it was not simply inconsistent with government policy; it was an inversion of government policy. Whilst central organs gave tacit or explicit support for post-imperial reparations to certain nations, Russian bureaucrats utilised the same typology of tax payers based on nationality to ignore the nomadic-sedentary divide. Other regional organs appear to have made provisional agreements wherein Russians and Kazakhs were taxed differently, simply for ease of administration.⁶⁹

The point is, first, that tax was seen by the Party as a means of social change. Second, for members like Samatov, the social phenomenon most in need of change was the post-colonial disparities between Kazakhs and Russians, an aspect of the National Question and an agenda which plainly necessitated some distinction between national groups. Third, therefore, governing bodies from the largest and most central to the smallest and most local understood lower tax rates for nomads as a matter of national

⁶³ GARF 1318/11/26: 9.

⁶⁴ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 62. It might be more accurate to add that central organs lacked the authority to impose their will.

⁶⁵ APRK 139/1/2: 24. Ball, *Russia's Last Capitalists*, p. 35.

⁶⁶ APRK 139/1/339: 37.

⁶⁷ APRK 139/1/339: 52 *ob.*

⁶⁸ APRK 139/1/350: 33-33 *ob.*

⁶⁹ APRK 139/1/2: 23 *ob.*

identity. These tax rates were both defended and attacked in national terms, depending on an administrator's attitude towards the agenda of post-colonial reparations. Russians were less likely to be amenable, Kazakhs more so. This was true whether they worked inside or outside the KSSR, as the manoeuvres of the Russian-dominated Orenburg Governate Executive Committee show.⁷⁰

This whole dynamic was further in evidence when tax policy was drawn into ongoing arguments about national jurisdiction. Like Narkomprod RSFSR, local departments run by non-Kazakhs were also held accountable for the mass migration of Kazakhs into Mongolia and China from the Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk Governates. In March 1922, Kazakh authorities suggested that the tax-in-kind had been improperly levied by Siberian tax-collectors upon nomads in the borderland region between the Kazakh Republic and Siberian territories.⁷¹ Kazakhs responded to the economic pressure by moving eastwards and out of Soviet control, and it was claimed that memories of belligerent treatment were keeping them there.⁷² This was a border dispute between regional powers which would erupt again later in the decade.⁷³ In this case, Kazakh authorities connected the onerous taxation of migrating nomads by non-Kazakhs with the encroachment of Russian authority into the Kazakh Republic. The importance of taxing nomads properly was used to defend the republic's territorial integrity, and tax rates based on lifestyle or agricultural preference again became conflated with the National Question.

Nomadism and Nationalism in Competition

The extreme difficulty of developing, and then implementing, a coherent tax policy at this time may explain why initial disagreements over tax exemptions appear to have been left formally unresolved. The nomads' right to keep all their dairy produce and leather was always due for expiry at the end of 1921 anyway, and on 8th January 1922 Sovnarkom KSSR ratified the Work and Cartage Tax. Instructively, a poster-sized publication printed to inform citizens of the KSSR about the implications of this new tax specified that settled Kazakhs would be treated as Russians in terms of tax levies.⁷⁴ The document thereby emphasised that the difference between Kazakhs and Russians was nil unless lifestyle intervened; between the lines the poster was disavowing any 'separatist demonstrations'. But the problems of 1921 looked set to continue. The

⁷⁰ GARF 1318/11/32: 49-49 *ob.*

⁷¹ GARF 130/5/504: 59-60 *ob.*

⁷² GARF 130/5/504: 60.

⁷³ GARF 1235/122/287. This dispute is discussed in further depth in Chapter Five.

⁷⁴ APRK 139/1/463: 133.

document further declared that tax rates for the semi-nomadic and nomadic population would be decided by governate-level organisations, with the single limitation that these rates not exceed those specified in other legislation.⁷⁵

Some efforts were made in 1921 to tax nomads in a manner proportionate to their wealth. As foreseen in May by Sovnarkom KSSR, the variable rates of the tax-in-kind would apply to nomads owning more than two animals. Party members worried about rich nomads, the dangerous *bai* class, from the very beginning of NEP; we see this in Samatov's report. But it was his other principal concerns, nomadism and nationality, which caused the greatest contradiction in the tax-in-kind. Nomads were recognised as an impoverished group, crippled by violence and drought, and the state made some attempt to moderate tax policy for them just as it had done geographically for the western regions of the KSSR. But the state apparatus lacked the sophistication necessary to tax a little less, and within months tax collectors were told not to tax at all. As no Europeans were considered to be nomadic, Russian and Ukrainian settlers around Astrakhan and Orenburg took this to be a sign of national favouritism. This is not surprising given the Party's rhetoric about post-colonial reparations. Tax-collectors, legislators and ordinary citizens conflated nationality and lifestyle, and the former won out in the way the debate unfolded. This seems to have advantaged financial organs concerned about the loss of revenue engendered by such blanket exemptions.

Section Two: The Agricultural Tax, 1924

Taxation in kind formally ceased in 1924. The single Agricultural Tax had been introduced in 1923, and by the end of the following year it was officially collected only in currency.⁷⁶ Taxation in currency allowed for greater precision and control, but the Agricultural Tax itself coincided with a period of 3-4 years during which the state had to procure most of its agricultural produce at market rates, which were often prohibitive.⁷⁷ While the procurement apparatus developed, nomadism would again find expression in the tax disagreements of the time. Though tensions between nationalities on the steppe would not dissipate (they were particularly resurgent after 1929), heightened post-colonial disagreements gave way to more practical debates

⁷⁵ APRK 139/1/463: 133.

⁷⁶ Holzman, *Soviet Taxation*, p. 160. Evidence of widespread preparations for the Agricultural Tax in 1923 throughout the KSSR can be found here: APRK 139/1/116: 29-38 *ob.*

⁷⁷ Holzman, *Soviet Taxation*, p. 161.

over the taxation of nomads as the administration became more bureaucratic and more ambitious.⁷⁸

Forms of farming; forms of settlement

The Agricultural Tax was adapted for the needs and capabilities of the KSSR, much as the tax-in-kind had been, on 7th June 1924. The alterations produced a document, the 'Instructions for the implementation of the single Agricultural Tax', and sections 112-118 of this document outlined new tax exemptions for nomads. This time, however, nomads had to be moving to a sedentary way of life to qualify.⁷⁹ The kind of social transformation the Party felt able to achieve had developed from the relatively simple aim of allowing the nomadic economy to stabilise and the more demanding task of helping the Kazakh economy recover from years of colonial exploitation. Now the state sought to bring an end to seasonal migration, as relieving the tax burden on settling nomads was surely designed to do. This was not a new aspiration but it may be one of the Kazakh Party branch's earliest republic-wide efforts to systematically incentivise settlement through one of the state's foremost policy tools: taxation. The decision to publish instructions also implies an attempt by central authorities to gather tax yields more evenly, with less corruption and fewer anomalies than before.

This all seems less a change of direction than a way of making tax collectors more receptive to the specific demands of the Party after a period defined by wayward regional governors. The Soviet state of the 1920s suffered from a kind of weakness or disorder from which it was constantly seeking to escape, and given complaints in previous years about the lack of direction from central authorities in the implementation of the tax-in-kind, clearer instructions for local committees was one way of doing this.⁸⁰ Difficulties would continue to arise, however, and instructions could be anything but clear. Nomadism, as a practice and a social category, would perpetuate problems for poorly-organised republic-level organs and legislators who had no shared view about how nomads should be treated or what they should become.

The initial source of confusion and obstruction would be sections 112-118 of the 'Instructions...' which were published when the Agricultural Tax was adapted for the Kazakh Republic in June 1924. In the first two months after their publication, they seem to have been ignored entirely. On 5th August 1924, the People's Commissariat of

⁷⁸ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 151.

⁷⁹ TsGARK 30/1/306: 365, 374.

⁸⁰ APRK 139/1/2: 24. Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State,' pp. 75-76.

Finances for the RSFSR (Narkomfin RSFSR) wrote to its Kazakh counterpart (Narkomfin KSSR), instructing it finally to implement sections 112-118, meaning the granting of tax privileges to cattle-herding nomads and semi-nomads who were in the process of settling and taking up arable farming.⁸¹ Thirteen days later, Narkomfin KSSR sent a circular letter out to all governate financial departments. In accordance with a request from Narkomfin RSFSR and sections 112-118 of the 'Instructions...', the letter said, nomads judged legally to be transferring to a life of arable farming should now be granted exemptions from the collection of the Agricultural Tax.⁸²

It is not wholly clear how official this directive was, since it was delivered by circular letter rather than by decree or declaration. This ambiguity may help to explain the contradiction created between the letter and another major piece of legislation which had been introduced on 17th April 1924. The declaration 'On the land-development of the nomadic, semi-nomadic, and settling population of the Kazakh Socialist Soviet Republic' was a long, comprehensive document which principally applied to land-ownership rights, but its 52nd article concerned the provision of tax privileges for the settling nomads.⁸³ As with the 'Instructions...', the wording of this article was pivotal. Aid was promised to the 'working nomadic and semi-nomadic population of the Kazakh Republic, transitioning to a sedentary position'; this aid was 'for the pursuit of arable and arable-livestock-raising activity.'⁸⁴ Aid included loans of farming equipment and livestock, for repayment within 10 years; grain, for repayment within 5 years; timber for the construction of housing and farm buildings; agronomic assistance; and, crucially, exemptions from state-wide and local taxes for up to five years.⁸⁵

Already by 1924 the significance in Soviet tax law of the figure of the settling nomad was evident. But there was no consensus about how he or she should settle. The trouble experienced by the Soviet state in acquiring grain, and the wish of some in the administration to vastly extend the amount of Kazakh land under cultivation, had helped place sedentary farming high on the agenda, but what kind of sedentary farming?⁸⁶ When enforcing the Agricultural Tax's 'Instructions...' in August 1924,

⁸¹ TsGARK 30/1/306: 374.

⁸² TsGARK 30/1/306: 373.

⁸³ GARF 1235/102/155: 35-40.

⁸⁴ GARF 1235/102/155: 39 *ob.* On the use of Kirgiz and Kazakh, see Chapter One.

⁸⁵ GARF 1235/102/155: 39 *ob.* This legislation was eventually ratified in Moscow after some editing. See: GARF 1235/121/318: 1-9.

⁸⁶ Martha Brill Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan,' *Russian Review* 40, no. 2 (1981), pp. 122-126.

Narkomfin KSSR had specified that only nomads transitioning to settled arable farming would benefit from tax exemptions. Article 52 of the declaration 'On the land development...', introduced two months before the Agricultural Tax, more generously granted exemptions to nomads transitioning to arable farming *or* arable-livestock farming. So how many new farmers would be granted exemptions?

The circular letter from Narkomfin KSSR caused consternation in regional offices across the republic, particularly in the east. Complaints began flooding in from September 1924.⁸⁷ The distinction between purely arable and arable-livestock farming, like the taxation of dairy and leather, might seem mundane, but in a place like Soviet Kazakhstan at a time like the 1920s, these were questions of huge significance to the everyday life of the population. Often it could mean the difference between survival and extinction. The Akmolinsk Governate Executive Committee discussed the letter on 11-12th September, and resolved to petition KTsiK immediately for the preservation of tax exemptions as foreseen in article 52.⁸⁸ It went on to argue that any reversal in these exemptions would bring the settlement of nomads to a complete halt. The tenor of its correspondence indicates the alarm caused by the change; the Committee concluded one telegram by saying that it would take any lack of reply as a sign of the centre's acquiescence.⁸⁹ The Semipalatinsk Governate Executive Committee demanded urgent clarification from Narkomfin KSSR on the proper implementation of tax policy.⁹⁰ Describing the pressures placed upon the settling population by the Agricultural Tax, it too complained that the effect of the circular letter would be to suspend further settlement.⁹¹ Antagonism between new Soviet institutions was far from uncommon in the USSR as a whole, and became associated with *vedomstvennost'*, the tendency of those in charge of certain organs to protect the interests of themselves and their staff, much as members of the same nationality also acted favourably towards each other.⁹²

The Kazakh People's Commissariat for Agriculture (Narkomzem KSSR) began its own campaign against the change on 4th September 1924, when it raised the matter at the Federal Committee.⁹³ Eleven days later it wrote to KTsiK, making its case in clear

⁸⁷ A sense of resistance from the regions is communicated in various reports from the time, as well as in the examples cited: TsGARK 30/1/306: 367-367 *ob.*, 390-390 *ob.*, 404-405.

⁸⁸ TsGARK 30/1/306: 416.

⁸⁹ The same telegram begins with the statement: 'It is essential in the most urgent fashion to liquidate misunderstanding' (*neobkhodimo samom srochnym poriadke likvidirovat' nedorazumenie*): TsGARK 30/1/306: 388.

⁹⁰ TsGARK 30/1/306: 397-397 *ob.*

⁹¹ TsGARK 30/1/306: 371.

⁹² Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State,' p. 75.

⁹³ TsGARK 30/1/306: 404 *ob.*

and forceful terms. According to the latest position taken by Narkomfin KSSR, settling nomads were only subject to tax exemptions if they intended to take up purely arable farming. This was in breach of Article 52 from the declaration 'On the land development...' and was, according to Narkomzem KSSR, an absurdity, as purely arable farming was extremely rare within the KSSR. The economy of the republic was dominated by livestock; Article 52 was supposed to reflect this fact. That is why Narkomzem KSSR had received various requests for clarification from regional organs, because nomads would not settle if the promised tax exemptions applied only to unfamiliar agricultural practices. Narkomzem KSSR stated that its complaints at the Federal Committee had been ineffectual, and that KTsiK should take the matter forward and annul the letter sent out in August by Narkomfin KSSR. Without an annulment, hardly any exemptions would be applied.⁹⁴ On 18th October 1924 Narkomzem KSSR contacted Sovnarkom KSSR, asking it to publish the declaration which had introduced the Agricultural Tax to the Kazakh Republic, so that any misunderstandings could be resolved. At this point Narkomzem RSFSR also suggested that tax exemptions should be extended to the working poor (*batraks*) and the homeless.⁹⁵

KTsiK had been in contact with Narkomfin KSSR since 25th September, making enquiries into the contradiction in tax policy which had emerged.⁹⁶ The defence, when it came in early October, served to complicate the disagreement. In implementing the 'Instructions...' to the Agricultural Tax, Narkomfin KSSR had simply been equalising the tax exemptions enjoyed by nomads with those granted to migrants, that is, settlers mainly from Eastern Europe and Russia. Migrants, it was argued, also paid tax when they settled if they did not establish the right kind of farming (that is, solely arable). The institution flatly denied that regional organs were having trouble understanding and imposing these tax policies.⁹⁷ The dispute was shifting. It had begun about the importance of arable farming, but was turning to the significance or otherwise of the nomadic identity. Why should nomads be granted more generous and sympathetic exemptions than other itinerant groups? For a financial body interested in simplifying the tax system this may have seemed a good question, whereas for an agricultural body like Narkomzem KSSR the difference between habitual nomads and migrants of farming heritage would have been pivotal.

⁹⁴ TsGARK 30/1/306: 404-405.

⁹⁵ TsGARK 30/1/306: 390-390 *ob.*. The *batrak* category will be discussed at greater length in section three.

⁹⁶ TsGARK 30/1/306: 389-389 *ob.*, 415.

⁹⁷ TsGARK 30/1/306: 376-376 *ob.*.

In a further letter to Sovnarkom KSSR, this time on 31st October, the financial commissariat became more combative.⁹⁸ It accused its agricultural counterpart of lacking clarity in its definitions of those groups who should be granted tax exemptions. Sometimes, Narkomzem KSSR distinguished between tax payers 'by lifestyle criteria', that is, as nomadic, semi-nomadic and so on.⁹⁹ At other times, it used criteria based on economic behaviour or output, such as cattle-herding and semi-cattle-herding. Narkomfin KSSR described further references to the homeless and to *batraks* as completely incomprehensible; if it was decreed that all *batraks* settling on virgin lands were to be treated as migrants, there would not be a Kazakh in the republic who had to pay the Agricultural Tax.¹⁰⁰ Narkomfin KSSR suggested that it would be enough for tax exemptions to be granted on the basis of a change of agricultural activity, from cattle-herding to arable farming, and a change of living space. Under these principles, the additional social categories of nomadic and semi-nomadic were superfluous; anyone setting up a new farm in a new place is basically a migrant. A new category, encapsulating nomads and semi-nomads as well as homeless migrants who were habitually sedentary, would be sufficient.¹⁰¹ If the nomadic-sedentary divide was replaced with a migrant-settled one, the provisions made in Article 52 of the declaration 'On the land development' specifically for settling nomads would become void. But the administration of tax exemptions would become much simpler if all eligible people were grouped into a single, elementary category.

Again, nomadism was being pushed out of the tax system in favour of alternative methods for distinguishing between tax-payers. As well as administrative expediency, nationalism lay in the background just as it had done in debates over the tax-in-kind. Migrants, rather than nomads, were likely to be European settlers with a well-established culture of arable farming. Both were wandering populations the state sought to pin down, but in applying the same strict incentive for arable farming alone to both groups, Narkomfin KSSR was hugely advantaging Russians and others over Kazakhs, many of whom lacked expertise in extensive crop-farming.

⁹⁸ TsGARK 30/1/306: 389-389 *ob.*

⁹⁹ TsGARK 30/1/306: 389.

¹⁰⁰ Narkomzem KSSR was in this sense acting similarly to its Moscow-based counterpart (Narkomzem RSFSR), which was sceptical of class differentiation in rural Russia and was accused of treating all peasants as one group: Heinzen, "'Alien" Personnel in the Soviet State,' p. 86.

¹⁰¹ TsGARK 30/1/306: 389 *ob.*

Understanding 1924

Before continuing to discuss the disagreements of 1924, it is worth briefly asking what, or who, produced these difficulties in tax policy. At heart, the conflict sat between two contradictory pieces of legislation: the adaptations made to the Agricultural Tax, and a declaration on land-use. Both were ratified within two months of each other. Neither were minor reforms, but major statements of Soviet law. Earlier in the decade contradictions in the tax-in-kind had been between nationality and nomadism and were the product of inadequate implementation. In contrast, contradictions in the Agricultural Tax were written into the legislative texts, implying a certain administrative incoherence or incompetence. But a conflict accidentally created by incautious bureaucrats would surely have been more easily resolved, whereas Narkomfin KSSR soon found itself in a competition, mediated by Sovnarkom KSSR and KTsiK, with regional organs and Narkomzem KSSR.

Institutionally, the Agricultural Tax pitted financial organs against agricultural ones. Narkomfin KSSR was potentially more concerned with the preservation of state revenues, and wanted to reduce the number of citizens eligible for tax exemptions as far as possible, whereas Narkomzem KSSR was most sensitive to the fragilities of the rural economy and wanted to safeguard future harvests. Their respective positions placed them at either ends of the dichotomy described by Kotsonis: Narkomzem KSSR argued for proportionate taxation, measured against the population's ability to pay, whereas Narkomfin KSSR felt the state's need to extract what it required.¹⁰² In Moscow Narkomzem RSFSR, by far the largest of the capital's commissariats, resisted the use of class-based categories for the peasant population because, according to James W. Heinzen, it hoped to avoid alienating the 'most progressive stratum' of the rural population and thereby confounding its own efforts to educate and modernise the countryside.¹⁰³ It was widely accused of being 'pro-peasant'.¹⁰⁴ Possibly Narkomzem KSSR was similarly motivated by its more acute understanding of the agricultural situation in the Kazakh Republic. *Vedomstvennost'*, institutional defensiveness, may also have been at work.

Whether as a product or cause of these countervailing bureaucratic interests, different conceptions of the taxable population also came into competition. Nomads were understood as comparable to migrants by Narkomfin KSSR; both were being

¹⁰² Kotsonis, 'No Place to Go,' pp. 531-577.

¹⁰³ Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State,' pp. 78-79.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

encouraged to settle, so both should be granted tax exemptions on the same terms. Narkomzem KSSR thought tax exemptions for nomads should be equal to that of *batraks*, and thereby put emphasis on their general destitution, and wished to preserve nomads as a special category of tax payer with special privileges. In the latter case, they would be defined by their agricultural capacities, which no longer included only their transhumance, but also their lack of experience in purely arable farming. It is perhaps not surprising that this aspect of their identity should be emphasised by the republic's foremost agricultural body.

One trend discussed often in histories of the USSR is notably absent from the 1924 debates: the centre-periphery dynamic. Though many regional organs complained about the imposition of the 'Instructions...', Narkomzem KSSR did as well. Rather than oppressive zeal, other inhabitants of the Kazakh centre: Narkomiust, Narkomnats KSSR, Gosplan and Sovnarkom KSSR, approached the question with detached ambivalence, as will be described. Narkomfin KSSR was only the centre of the periphery, of course, and may have been under pressure from Narkomfin RSFSR in the supreme centre of Soviet power. Yet, given Moscow's complicity with the contradictory policy embedded in Article 52 of the declaration 'On the land development', such a conflict cannot be taken for granted.¹⁰⁵ As has and will be seen, disagreements in the centre combined with complaint and confusion in the regions. James Hughes notes a similar situation in his analysis of procurement practices in the late 1920s and argues that policy was produced in a 'centre-local dialogue' between Moscow-based and Siberian officials.¹⁰⁶ This seems an appropriate model for many of the contemporaneous trends witnessed on the Kazakh Steppe.

The resolution and its legacy

By late October 1924, Sovnarkom KSSR was already considering a new declaration to resolve the contradiction in tax policy, an idea to which Narkomfin KSSR was openly opposed.¹⁰⁷ Various bodies were consulted on this change. The Inspectorate of Workers and Peasants (Narkomrabkri KSSR) said that it did not object to the reinstatement of tax exemptions for newly-created arable *or* arable-livestock farmsteads, but avoided direct comment on the matter of migrants and nomads.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *VTsIK* had been closely involved with the development of this legislation, as well as making the declaration itself on 14th April 1924: *GARF* 1235/102/155: 35-40, 41.

¹⁰⁶ James Hughes, 'Capturing the Russian Peasantry: Stalinist Grain Procurement Policy and the "Ural-Siberian Method"', *Slavic Review* 53, no. 1 (1999), p. 103.

¹⁰⁷ TsGARK 30/1/306: 389.

¹⁰⁸ TsGARK 30/1/306: 377.

Gosplan KSSR was also measured. It did argue that there was ambiguity over how long the exemptions should be granted, either three or five years, and recommended the latter figure.¹⁰⁹ The People's Commissariat for Justice (Narkomiust KSSR) had more specific advice about the wording of the new declaration. It suggested that exemptions in the Agricultural Tax should be applied to new farmsteads which could be said to have undergone one of the following transformations:

- a) from cattle-herding (nomadic) forms of economic activity to arable.
- b) from semi-cattle-herding (semi-nomadic) to arable.
- c) from cattle-herding (nomadic) to an arable-cattle-herding form of farmstead.¹¹⁰

Interestingly, the decision to include 'nomadic' or 'semi-nomadic' in brackets appears to have come from a joint meeting of the People's Commissariat for the Nationalities (Narkomnats KSSR) and Sovnarkom KSSR on 17th November. Whether or not this had been justified in nationalistic terms is not clear.¹¹¹

Word-for-word, however, Sovnarkom KSSR adopted the formulation quoted from Narkomiust KSSR above. In mid-November 1924 it resolved to extend the exemptions outlined in the 'Instructions...' to nomads transitioning to an arable-livestock-herding farmstead, in accordance with Article 52. Although semi-nomadic Kazakhs officially had to take up purely arable farming to qualify for exemptions, Sovnarkom KSSR included a further clause which dictated that semi-nomads engaged in arable-livestock-herding enterprises would be granted exemptions if they had changed their place of residence. This measure was presumably intended to prevent sedentary communities from claiming to be recently-settled semi-nomads, but in practice it was another concession to Narkomzem KSSR. In a further coup for the agricultural commissariat, exemptions were also offered to *batraks*, as suggested, regardless of their agricultural behaviour.¹¹² The whole struggle had lasted less than four months. Article 52 and its proponents were vindicated.

The eventual cost of this decision became evident the following year, after the national delimitation when the KSSR had become the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (KASSR). The new Kazakh Republic was considerably larger, though old legislative arrangements remained in place. So in October 1925 the Kazakh

¹⁰⁹ TsGARK 30/1/306: 367-367 *ob.*.

¹¹⁰ TsGARK 30/1/306: 378.

¹¹¹ TsGARK 30/1/306: 365 *ob.*, 427-427 *ob.*.

¹¹² TsGARK 30/1/306: 306: 362-362 *ob.*, 428-428 *ob.*.

government generated forecasts for the financial requirements of Article 52, as it was to be implemented, during 1926. The republic would need 1.900.000 roubles of Union funds, non-repayable, to cover the cost of tax exemptions and aid. It also required 4.673.827 roubles of Union funds to be dispensed as loans to help the Kazakh and Kyrgyz rural populations.¹¹³ Precisely these funds were granted to the Kazakh Republic on 8th October 1925 by the Economic Council of the RSFSR, albeit after some delay.¹¹⁴

In the beginning of 1926 the specifications of tax policy generated and endorsed by Union-wide and Kazakh organs were again questioned, this time by a member of Narkomzem KASSR, the organisation which had fought so vehemently for the arrangement. Aliaskar Alibekov, a member of Narkomzem KASSR and formerly of Alash-Orda, expressed his personal view that the 'moment of settlement' (*moment osedaniia*) was extremely difficult to identify.¹¹⁵ Nomads themselves did occasionally sow crops to provide fodder and sustenance at different stages of their migratory journeys.¹¹⁶ Given this, how was it possible to distinguish between a long-established nomadic camp harvesting crops before embarking on its winter migration, and a newly-created sedentary farm, made up of former nomads who were in the first stages of growing crops? Both enterprises could be defined as arable-livestock-herding, both could contain *batraks*.¹¹⁷

The anxiety from Narkomfin KSSR the previous year appears to have had some legitimacy. Purely arable farms would have looked much more distinct from nomadic camps. The migrant category would have placed less emphasis on a specific moment of transformation from habitually nomadic to habitually settled, as migrants could have settled and then re-settled without having to change their status in the eyes of the state. But Alibekov's position does not necessarily represent a volte-face. His complaint ranged further; what the government needed at the time was reliable, stable agricultural production, but it had legislated to induce tumult in the rural economy. Nothing could cause greater disturbance than mass settlement, which would create a multitude of new, fragile farming enterprises needing support and initially producing little.¹¹⁸ Failure to determine the *moment osedaniia* and tax accordingly was not a

¹¹³ TsGARK 3260/5/53: 11-11 *ob.*

¹¹⁴ TsGARK 3260/5/53: 14.

¹¹⁵ Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, p. 49.

¹¹⁶ Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (London: University of Washington Press, 2004), p. 35. Masanov, *Kochevaia tsvilizatsiia Kazakhov*, pp. 310-311.

¹¹⁷ TsGARK 3260/5/53: 36-37.

¹¹⁸ TsGARK 3260/5/53: 36.

reason to extend and rationalise tax rates, but maybe to cancel them altogether. Rather than acknowledge the validity of the approach defended by Narkomfin KSSR, Alibekov may have preferred to return to the exemptions enjoyed by nomads under the tax-in-kind. Possibly this is what Narkomzem KSSR had also wanted in its dispute with Narkomfin KSSR, but it compromised and accepted instead the special treatment of settling nomads and *batraks*, categories which, when taken together, could be applied to most nomads if not most Kazakhs.

The principle of tax exemptions for both newly-settled and still-migrating nomads remained embedded in the tax system. The sixth All-Kazakh Conference in November 1927 heard that around a third of all livestock-herding groups were exempt from the Agricultural Tax.¹¹⁹ But the ambiguities of tax-payer categories continued to obstruct. In the Akmolinsk Governate at the end of 1926, for example, the Agricultural Tax had barely been collected. Governate organs listed how much of tax owed had been amassed in percentage terms, by region and by the agricultural activity of the tax-payers. The highest proportion paid was 39%, in the Atbasar uezd from arable farmers. Most regions did not surpass 20%. Only 21% of arrears for previous years had been secured.¹²⁰ A key reason for the delay was the myriad of petitions submitted over the incorrect calculation of tax rates, with communities refusing to pay anything until their complaints had been addressed.¹²¹ Many such complaints were likely to be over the definition of the community: nomadic or semi-nomadic, habitually settled or newly settled. The Gur'ev Okrug Committee noted some success in the collection of the Agricultural Tax from sedentary groups, but was struggling with levies on nomads.¹²²

1924 was a key moment for the decade, during which the identity of the nomad within the tax system was elaborated, attacked and defended. Whereas the special treatment of nomads under the tax-in-kind was confounded by the politics of nationality, hard-won exemptions for nomads under the Agricultural Tax looked unviable to some because of bureaucratic inadequacies and the pressing needs of state procurement. An agenda for incentivising settlement had entered the tax system from a well-established political consensus, as discussed in previous chapters, but tax collectors were poorly equipped to recognise this social transformation when they saw it. Financial organs sought to promulgate arable farming so that collectors could more easily identify settlement in practice, and gather larger grain yields. Agricultural organs

¹¹⁹ RGASPI 17/25/6: 127 *ob.*.

¹²⁰ RGASPI 17/25/87: 173.

¹²¹ RGASPI 17/25/87: 174.

¹²² RGASPI 17/25/258: 130-133.

sought to utilise the nomadic and *batrak* categories of tax payer to exempt a rural population which could not take advantage of subsidies for purely arable farming. The Kazakh government sided with agricultural organs, but the result was a prohibitively complicated tax policy with extensive exemptions and low yields. Party members, frustrated with this situation, would eventually give up on proper, systematic, graduated tax demands for different nomadic groups, whilst laying the blame squarely on one stratum of Kazakh society.

Section Three: Taxing the *Bais*, 1920-1930

Comrade Iaroslavskii arrived at the third All-Kazakh Oblast' Conference in March 1923 with issue eleven of 'Red-Kazak-Stan', a Soviet periodical published the previous year. To laughter from the floor, he mockingly read aloud the following passage:

That country is considered wealthy, in which a wealthy population predominates. Where the poor are a majority, there all the population is considered poor ... In Russia, 80% of the population is made up of peasants; they are a poor people, therefore the Russian state, taken as a whole, must be considered poor.¹²³

Perhaps sarcastically, Iaroslavskii admonished his audience for sniggering, suggesting instead that such misunderstanding was saddening.¹²⁴ This was absolutely not a Marxist point of view, he said, but the analysis of a person who 'hadn't yet escaped the nomadic domestic economy.'¹²⁵ This final section will consider the implications of class politics for the taxation of nomads. In roughly chronological order, it will first address the treatment of the *bais* in the tax system during the NEP years, before observing a turn towards more repressive measures which led up to and connected with collectivisation and sedentarisation from 1928 onwards.

*Early attempts at taxing the *bais**

The conviction that rich could be distinguished from poor in any community, sedentary or nomadic, was deeply held by many Kazakh Party members from the foremost days of the NEP.¹²⁶ Consequentially, gradation in tax policy depending on wealth quickly climbed the agenda. As mentioned in section one, class was one of the three key issues associated with taxation in Mukhtar Samatov's report to the first All-

¹²³ APRK 139/1/541: 24.

¹²⁴ APRK 139/1/541: 25.

¹²⁵ APRK 139/1/541: 24.

¹²⁶ For further information about class-based analyses of the nomadic *aul*, see Chapter Three.

Kazakh Conference, in which he said that imprecise acts of wealth redistribution would unite poor and rich against the Party.¹²⁷ Accordingly, the very first adaptations to the tax-in-kind entailed lower rates for poorer nomadic families, as well as poorer regions.¹²⁸

Much like the tax-in-kind, however, these early efforts at gradation were shaped by the desperate economic circumstances of the time. Reports from the Red Caravan expedition emphasise this point.¹²⁹ Famine-relief policies in western Kazakhstan in 1922 involved acquiring and distributing cattle so that for every three people in a family, that family owned just one cow. Horses, camels and sheep were ignored to expedite the redistribution of dairy cattle, which would provide the most long-term sustenance.¹³⁰ Whatever the Party's attitude towards the *bais*, the exigencies of starvation allowed for nothing more sophisticated than making sure everyone had enough. The desire for social transformation gave way to the demands of survival.

Soon after the worst of the crisis was over it was argued that tax should be especially punitive for the wealthy, and all the while Party members were aware that nomadic wealth at the time was primarily measured in livestock.¹³¹ At the third All-Kazakh Conference in 1923, Iaroslavskii was joined by Aron Vainshtein, newly arrived from Belorussia to run the Kazakh Party.¹³² Vainshtein would prove to be an astringent critic of the *bais*, whom he accused of deliberately hindering the processes of settlement for which poor nomads yearned. He drew on the well-established view that the *bais* sought to isolate and preserve the nomadic lifestyle because it facilitated their exploitation of the *batraks*.¹³³ Part of his solution to this problem was a direct tax on the *bais*, the results of which would be used to subsidise the settlement of the poor.¹³⁴ His proposal looks much like an incipient form of the Agricultural Tax as it was implemented in the KSSR the following year.

¹²⁷ APRK 139/1/5: 219.

¹²⁸ GARF 1318/11/26: 11.

¹²⁹ The Red Caravan was the name for a team of Party investigators and propagandists which toured central and western Kazakhstan in the very early 1920s before reporting back to governing bodies in Orenburg. Some of its staff would become key figures in the Kazakh administration. For more detail, see Chapter Seven.

¹³⁰ APRK 139/1/339: 56.

¹³¹ The idea that nomadic wealth was *always* measured in livestock is controversial, but it seems more likely to have been the case during periods of extreme hardship like the 1920s. Didar Kassymova, Zhanat Kundakbaeva, and Ustina Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), p. 58.

¹³² Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, p. 104.

¹³³ APRK 139/1/541: 79.

¹³⁴ APRK 139/1/541: 118.

His idea did not pass without criticism at the conference. One attendee cited a region of the Ural Governate where livestock numbers were still so low that to distinguish between levels of wealth would be an absurdity. He went on to reprimand Vainshtein for misunderstanding the Kazakh way of life.¹³⁵ Seitkali Mendeshev was similarly hostile, and his perspective perhaps had something in common with the article ridiculed by Iaroslavskii. Mendeshev argued that the taxation of rich Kazakhs must remain secondary to the subsidy of Kazakhs overall; that Central Asia's colonial past meant that no Kazakh was yet rich enough to endure Vainshtein's treatment.¹³⁶ For a brief moment here national categories of tax payer were being used to squeeze out class-based categories of tax payer, just as they were confounding nomadic-sedentary categories under tax-in-kind.

Nevertheless, the Agricultural tax came to be seen as an instrument for the eradication of the *bais*. The debates of 1924 were principally about who was not taxed, but it is worth emphasising that only settling nomads were granted exemptions under the system, and migrating nomads were being assessed and levied at this time. Though the financial commissariat had been sceptical, the Kazakhs' agricultural commissariat had persuaded Sovnarkom KSSR to include exemptions for *batraks* into the Agricultural Tax. Yet whoever was included in the exemptions, it plainly did not protect the *bais*. In 1926 the Kazakh Party committee explicitly encouraged the use of variable tax levels to weaken *bai* families.¹³⁷

All of this clearly has parallels across the Soviet polity. The decision of Narkomzem KSSR to specify who should not be taxed (the *batraks*), rather than come to an agreement on who should be taxed (certain of members the *bai* class), bears comparison with similar debates in Moscow. Narkomzem RSFSR had also experienced problems identifying members of the rural population who should be taxed or penalised, preferring similarly to focus on those who should not. Its early agricultural strategies relied upon the survival and cooperation of affluent peasants, and so it resisted efforts to target the top strata of peasant farmers and expressed doubts over the kulak threat.¹³⁸ This was difficult to articulate openly in the political atmosphere of the late 1920s, however, as it became less admissible to treat the Russian peasantry as a single group with whom the state must cooperate (the *smychka*).¹³⁹ Other organs

¹³⁵ APRK 139/1/541: 140-141.

¹³⁶ APRK 139/1/541: 124-129.

¹³⁷ RGASPI 17/25/208: 50.

¹³⁸ Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State,' p. 86.

¹³⁹ Hughes, 'Capturing the Russian Peasantry,' p. 100.

would go on to accuse Narkomzem RSFSR of a 'wager on the strong', an echo of Stolypin and Tsarism.¹⁴⁰ Perhaps Narkomzem KSSR had also found itself reliant on wealthier rural communities but, unable or unwilling to defend the *bais*, it instead had opted to advocate tax exemptions for the politically acceptable category of *batrak* and extend this group to include as many families as possible who might otherwise have been deemed *bai*.

This indirect approach could only have had limited success given the overall direction of Party policy. In European Russia, in spite of Narkomzem RSFSR, concerns were growing about the power of the kulak. It was argued that the permissive economic conditions of the NEP had allowed wealthy peasants to exploit their poorer neighbours.¹⁴¹ These same peasants were accused of withholding food reserves to extract the best price from a state equipped with a poorly-conceived system of grain procurement.¹⁴² As Stalin's grip over Party policy strengthened, his language regarding the kulak became more severe, as during his trip to Siberia when he set about criminalising any peasant's resistance to or obstruction of procurement.¹⁴³ In 1927-1928, state reserves of grain and other goods dropped to crisis levels, and the principles of proportionate taxation began giving way to the violent, arbitrary requisitioning reminiscent of War Communism. On 21st April 1928 the Agricultural Tax system for the RSFSR was reformed to increase demands on kulak peasants, just as in the KSSR the *bais* were becoming targets.¹⁴⁴ Emphasis increasingly moved from who should not be taxed to who should be taxed. A second crisis in grain procurement followed another poor harvest in 1928-1929, and the Party's commitment to repressive measures hardened.¹⁴⁵

Nomadism on the steppe gave these procurement crises a specific character.¹⁴⁶ If in Russia the kulak hoarded grain, in Kazakhstan the *bai* stopped any grain from being grown. Party members repeatedly suggested that this contributed to the profound

¹⁴⁰ Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State,' p. 86.

¹⁴¹ Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, pp. 49-80.

¹⁴² Reiman, *The Birth of Stalinism*, pp. 40-41.

¹⁴³ Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, p. 218.

¹⁴⁴ Hughes, 'Capturing the Russian Peasantry,' p. 83.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 81-83, 94.

¹⁴⁶ There are a number of general accounts of the procurement crisis, which focus on the Kazakh Republic as a whole and not just its nomadic population. See, for example: Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, pp. 241-262. M. K. Kozybaev, Zh. B. Abylkhozhin, and K. S. Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane: tragediia krest'ianstva* (Alma-Ata: Ministerstvo narodnogo obrazovaniia Respubliki Kazakhstan, 1992). Zere Mainganali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana v gody nasil'stvennoi kollektivizatsii* (Almaty: KazNU im. al'-Farabi, 2003).

underdevelopment of the republic, and then went on to compare the nomadic economy unfavourably with the republic's economy overall. Fedor Goloshchekin was a key proponent of this view.¹⁴⁷ Nomadic cattle-herding techniques were considered unproductive and backward, associated with 'semi-feudalists' and their exploitative labour relations.¹⁴⁸ But nomads were also more mobile than settled peasants and the *bais* were harder to catch. As rumours of violent confiscation began to spread, hosts of nomadic families passed over the eastern border into China, and Party newspapers tried to alleviate the fears of those who remained.¹⁴⁹ Locating the taxable wealth of the nomads within Soviet territory was problematic too, as a working knowledge of nomadic migratory routes was still in the developmental stages in 1928.¹⁵⁰ In 1927 the Party considered strengthening democracy in the *aul* so that poor nomads could themselves elect the *bais* for oppressive levels of taxation.¹⁵¹ This idea is obviously comparable to the method of 'social influence' practised particularly by Siberian officials a little later.¹⁵² Yet, whereas Russian peasants could and did join the Communist Party, bringing with them a modicum of empathy with rural Russians, cooperation between Party and nomad was tenuous and rare.¹⁵³

Because nomadism was such a problem for state procurement, another perceived, nomad-specific aspect to the crisis of 1927 was the slow rate of settlement. The various subsidies and tax exemptions designed to hurry the pace of settlement were having only modest effects, and in just three years they would be dismissed as having been largely ineffectual by the congress of workers for sedentarisation.¹⁵⁴ In 1924 administrators across the republic had expended considerable time and effort negotiating niche tax exemptions for settling nomads, only to see those exemptions cause further confusion. A new way of discouraging migration and procuring resources was needed, and it is easy to see how heavy taxation of the *bais* became associated with settlement. The *bais* kept nomads migrating, so reducing their economic strength could induce settlement and development. Equally, settlement and development would ease

¹⁴⁷ RGASPI 17/25/1: 56 *ob.*. For examples of regional bodies dictated by the same perspective, see: RGASPI 17/25/87: 29. RGASPI 17/25/208: 51.

¹⁴⁸ RGASPI 17/25/6: 126 *ob.*.

¹⁴⁹ RGASPI 17/25/21: 12.

¹⁵⁰ A. N. Donich, *Problema novogo Kazakhskogo aula* (Kzyl-Orda: Gosplan KSSR, 1928), p. 11.

¹⁵¹ RGASPI 17/25/6: 127 *ob.*-128.

¹⁵² Hughes, 'Capturing the Russian Peasantry,' p. 88.

¹⁵³ Lists of Party members and Party cells never mention nomads, and rarely mention cattle-herders. See for example: APRK 139/1/255: 193-202, APRK 17/25/87: 22-24. Party membership among nomads will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Seven.

¹⁵⁴ GARF 3260/5/53: 41-44. TsGARK 1179/6/3: 2. See also: Donich, *Problema novogo Kazakhskogo aula*, p. 6.

communication between the Party and nomads, improve the productivity of the *batraks*, and thereby further undermine the power of the *bais*.¹⁵⁵ All this was conducive to the Party's aims. Nomadic *bais* were already vulnerable to heavy taxation, and the *bai* category was in effect about to be rolled out to include settling and newly-settled nomads of almost any description.

Echoes of War Communism

The stage was set for the final phase in the taxation of nomadic communities from 1920-1930: confiscation from the *bais*. All Kazakhs, nomadic and settled alike, would suffer the full force of this policy agenda. The logic of the Party justified the heavy-handed treatment of communities which, earlier in the decade, had been identified as vulnerable and in need of special sensitivity. Tax revenues were falling, and this was blamed on the persistence of nomadism. Nomadism, in turn, was blamed on the *bais*, rich Kazakhs located at the heart of nomadic society. The idea of taxing the *bais* into non-existence was well-established intellectually, and had clear parallels in policy elsewhere in the USSR. Tax was intended to transform society, and so it would, though the principle of proportionate taxation would dissolve. Paradoxically, as the state turned its full attention to the problem of nomadism and looked for a solution, the nomadic-sedentary categories of tax payer were again ignored. In their place, where nationality had been the obstructive preoccupation under the tax-in-kind, there came more pronounced class-based categories. In practice however confiscation would look largely arbitrary, just as in Siberia where quotas for the number of repressed kulaks were introduced specifically to increase levies and yields.¹⁵⁶

On 11th September 1928 the Petropavolvsk Okrug Committee (*okruzhkom*) dispatched a secret communiqué to all the regional Party committees under its jurisdiction.¹⁵⁷ Under the popular slogan 'the Sovietisation of the *aul*' the letter declared a new direction for state action. Since the 5th Kazakh Party Conference, policy would now seek to foster the political consciousness of the poor and its emancipation from the *bai* cabal.¹⁵⁸ To achieve these two aims, the *okruzhkom* sanctioned the confiscation of livestock from the *bais*. *Bai* families in nomadic regions with a herd of over 400 were to be evicted and their property seized; *bais* in semi-nomadic regions

¹⁵⁵ This was the essence of Vainshtein's argument in 1923: APRK 139/1/541: 97-123.

¹⁵⁶ Hughes, 'Capturing the Russian Peasantry,' p. 89.

¹⁵⁷ RGASPI 17/25/201: 30-34. The governate system had been replaced by one based on the okrug in the mid-1920s.

¹⁵⁸ RGASPI 17/25/201: 30.

with herds of over 300 livestock would be treated similarly.¹⁵⁹ To intensify this process, the *okruzhkom* also devoted more energy to identifying and distinguishing *bais* from among other nomads.¹⁶⁰ Later in the year, it would gather in further resources from the rural economy by escalating efforts at retrieving debts owed under the Agricultural Tax.¹⁶¹ In November 1928 the Alma-Ata okrug Party conference discussed the escalation of its campaign against what one delegate called the 'semi-feudalists', including the further confiscation of cattle.¹⁶² As late as March 1929, regional committees complained that too few resources were being extracted from the Kazakhs.¹⁶³

In 1928 the NEP was discontinued and the first Five Year Plan came into effect. Between then and March 1930 up to half of all Kazakh families were collectivised, a figure which was by this latter date matched in most regions of the USSR.¹⁶⁴ The scale of the confiscation in these years was greater even than official documents of the time declared, and despite Party rhetoric the nomads who yielded most livestock were of average wealth within their communities.¹⁶⁵ Categories of tax payer based on nomadism and on nationality had been disregarded in favour of a class-based approach, and now this system too was forgotten as all tax obligations became ruinously high.¹⁶⁶ Many more Kazakh nomads would emigrate to China in an effort to retain their herds, similar perhaps to the decision of many Russian peasants to move to urban centres.¹⁶⁷ Other nationalities, such as the Cossacks, would protest against crippling requisitions too.¹⁶⁸ Sarah Cameron argues that the early confiscations of 1928 were characterised by a high level of violence in which regional Kazakh bureaucrats took the opportunity to misapply the law and enrich themselves.¹⁶⁹ The combination of confiscation, sedentarisation and collectivisation would precipitate a collapse in the number of livestock and massive demographic decline on the steppe.¹⁷⁰

¹⁵⁹ RGASPI 17/25/201: 31. For a personal account of one such exiled *bai* family, see: Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe*, pp. 55-60.

¹⁶⁰ RGASPI 17/25/201: 35-37.

¹⁶¹ RGASPI 17/25/201: 179-179 *ob.*

¹⁶² RGASPI 17/25/159: 26.

¹⁶³ RGASPI 17/25/236: 157.

¹⁶⁴ Kozybaev, Abylkhozhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁶⁵ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 224.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 248-249.

¹⁶⁷ GARF 1235/140/956: 1. Sarah Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934', PhD thesis (Yale University, 2011) pp. 111-112. Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'The Question of Social Support for Collectivization,' *Russian History* 37, no. 2 (2010), p. 172.

¹⁶⁸ RGASPI 17/25/41: 6.

¹⁶⁹ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, pp. 122-123.

¹⁷⁰ Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, p. 293.

Around 1928, the Soviet state relinquished all efforts at creating a proportionate tax system designed to accommodate the differences between the sedentary and nomadic peoples of the Kazakh Republic. The lawlessness with which local organs began requisitioning livestock, the scale of the confiscation campaign, and the widespread dismissal of *any* strict categorisation of tax-payer all mark the regression of tax policy to something reminiscent of War Communism.¹⁷¹ If the government had successfully conceived a system in which nomads could be precisely identified and appropriately taxed, it is tempting to speculate that nomadic tax revenues and economic performance would have been less alarming for the administrators in place during the 1927 procurement crisis. But this would be to disregard the fact that a class-based categorisation of nomadic tax payers had been on the agenda from the beginning of the decade, as had coruscating rhetoric about semi-feudalists and the *bai* element.

Conclusion

As is the case for many other aspects of early-Soviet Kazakh history, the brutality of the 1928 confiscation campaign might be used to characterise the tax policies of the whole decade. There is justification for this approach. Hostility towards the *bais* was a feature of Party rhetoric at least from the end of the Civil War. Differentiation between rich and poor nomads was written into the earliest tax reforms. Despite the difficulties of assessing nomadic wealth in practice, the Party was determined to settle nomads and convinced that this could only be done if the *bais* were undermined. Although they came together with lethal effect at the end of the NEP period, none of these trends were new. The Soviet state of the 1920s was arbitrary, punitive and disproportionate in its taxation of Kazakh nomads.

If this was the whole story, however, the variations in tax policy during the NEP era would have been dominated by a class-based system for categorising nomadic tax-payers. Instead, the most important bases of categorisation in 1921-1922 were the nomadic-sedentary divide and nationality. These two priorities for Soviet legislators came into conflict both in the development and implementation of tax policy, as when Russian tax collectors and bureaucrats ignored the special exemptions laid out for nomads by the Kazakh administration.

The nomadic-sedentary divide again came under attack in 1924, and again the figure of the *bai* was not the matter of central dispute. This time, financial and

¹⁷¹ The connection between War Communism and the procurement methods of the late 1920s is made by James Hughes here: Hughes, 'Capturing the Russian Peasantry,' pp. 78, 93.

agricultural commissariats clashed over contradictory pieces of legislation because they had different priorities and different levels of belief in the ability of the state apparatus to deliver. In its battle for a more complicated but more nuanced approach to taxing nomads, Narkomzem KSSR was victorious, but at least one of its members came to appreciate the difficulty of implementing what had by then been decreed.

At that point the state was already trying to make nomads settle through taxation. After the hiatus of War Communism, the government was continuing to create a more modern, more sophisticated tax system with some elements of proportionality, which could be used to create a settled, egalitarian society out of a nomadic one. Failures of practical administration, and the difficulty of manifesting the nomadic identity in graduated tax rates, hindered tax reform, and by 1927 had helped to create the view that nomads would never produce sufficient tax yields and could not be settled through incentives alone. The Party had made limited attempts to bring nomads into a modern tax system but also faced major economic crises and was deeply suspicious of the *bais*. Policy here was straddling two of the Party's larger, 'often conflicting, goals: modernization and class politics', goals shared by both central and peripheral state organs¹⁷² By 1928, systematic and proportionate taxation had been abandoned.

The 1920s might therefore usefully be divided up into three stages. The first lasts from 1920 to 1923 and is dominated by imperial reparation and nationhood. The second starts in 1923 and ends in 1927, during which time the state had not come to terms with the inadequacy of its administrative apparatus. From 1927, appreciation for the weaknesses of prior tax reforms led the Party to utilise cruder, more disruptive methods of extraction. The common thread through all three periods is the persistence or otherwise of the nomadic-sedentary divide in tax policies. If this crucially important distinction had survived national distinctions, administrative blindness and a class-based approach, in that chronological order, nomadic communities may have looked considerably more robust by the end of the decade. As it was, their fragility was used as cornerstone justification for the sedentarisation campaign.

¹⁷² Heinzen, "'Alien" Personnel in the Soviet State,' p. 99.

Chapter Seven:

Soviet Cultural Policies in the Aul

Members of the Kazakh Communist Party often ascribed specific meanings to seemingly general terms. Their references to culture could be especially perplexing. The oil industry of the Emba region was said to be playing a big 'cultural role' for the Kazakh Republic because it had ordered a shipment of American grain to be sown in fields near its oil wells.¹ Semi-nomadic and sedentary communities were credited with a more 'cultured' economy than their nomadic counterparts, and culture at times was used as the opposite of 'primitive.'² Declarations might speak of 'cultural construction' and 'cultural forms' of economy, whilst another document refers to the cultural work of the Kazakh Komsomol.³ So what did members of the Zhetysu Governate Executive Committee mean when, on 11th April 1928, they wrote of the lack of 'cultural-economic points' in the region?⁴

'Culturedness' (*kul'turnost'*) was a prominent aspect of political discourse and social policy from early in the Soviet period. As the quotations above confirm, the concepts of *kul'tura* and *kul'turnost'* were already a conspicuous feature of the Party's agenda in the 1920s.⁵ *Kul'turnost'* in fact emerged as a common objective in European Russia in the late nineteenth century, and represented 'the aspirations of workers who wished to rise above their poverty and degradation ... By the Soviet period, the discourse on culturedness emphasized proper conduct in everyday life, including bodily hygiene, domestic order and labor efficiency, as well as a demonstrative appreciation of high culture.'⁶ But these things would not be achieved through personal commitment and an anaemic public-information campaign. The politicisation of domestic life under Bolshevik rule drew politeness and sanitation into a schema along with macroeconomics, (counter-)revolutionary politics and, in the Kazakh case, agricultural practice. Each interacted with and affected the other.⁷ With some

¹ APRK 139/1/541: 200.

² RGASPI 17/25/1: 179. APRK 139/1/350: 33.

³ GARF 1235/73/21: 61. TsGARK 81/1/665: 24.

⁴ RGASPI 17/25/156: 122.

⁵ Vadim Volkov, 'The Concept of Kul'turnost': Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process,' in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 211-213.

⁶ David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 16.

⁷ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 115. For a particularly good case study on the politicization of everyday life in the USSR, see: Jochen Hellbeck, 'Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: the Diary of

reservations, Vadim Volkov argues that all this might be thought of as a 'civilising process', and connected with ideas of civilisation.⁸

Comparable to but distinct from *kul'turnost'* was the concept of *byt*, typically translated into English as 'everyday life'.⁹ During the NEP period the Communist Party choreographed campaigns for a *novyi byt* or 'new way of life'. As broad as *kul'turnost'*, *byt* had a more domestic, menial series of associations such as with health and consumption, sanitation and again hygiene.¹⁰ In other words, from early in the 1920s the Soviet state involved itself with the minutiae of its citizens' activities, norms and customs of personal behaviour which in an earlier era might have been thought of as private, intimate and a matter of individual discretion. This chapter will address the nomadic iteration of this trend.

In European Russia questions of *kul'turnost'* and *byt* were made contentious by the additional factor of class. Debate centred, at the time and long since, on whether the official endorsement of certain cultural values or domestic practices was the imposition of middle class predilections on working class peoples.¹¹ In Soviet Central Asia, as was so often the case, nationality took the place of class, at least in later historiographical debate. For some historians the Communist Party's policies relating to *kul'turnost'* and *byt* were examples of cultural imperialism, in which a set of Russian or European domestic norms was forced upon non-European, non-Christian, non-urban peoples.¹² But, in comparison with arguments over class taking place in Moscow, this anti-imperial critique of social policy was less fiercely debated within the Kazakh Party branch at the time. As a result of processes described in Chapter Three regarding the profound disconnection between nomads and Party members, there was a consensus in the Party, close to absolute, about the correct role of *kul'turnost'* and *byt* in nomadic communities throughout the 1920s.

Stepan Podlubnyi, 1931-9,' in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 77-116.

⁸ Volkov, "The Concept of Kul'turnost'," pp. 210-211.

⁹ Matthias Neumann, 'Revolutionizing mind and soul? Soviet youth and cultural campaigns during the New Economic Policy (1921-8),' *Social History* 33, no. 3 (2008), p. 253. Volkov, "The Concept of Kul'turnost'," p. 218.

¹⁰ Neumann, 'Revolutionizing mind and soul?,' p. 248.

¹¹ Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, pp. 8, 22. Volkov, "The Concept of Kul'turnost'," p. 216.

¹² See, for example: Paula A. Michaels, *Curative Powers: Medicine and Empire in Stalin's Central Asia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003). Douglas Taylor Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

The consensus was as follows: nomads were some of the least cultured people in existence and their lifestyle was to blame.¹³ This explains the diverse uses of the concept of culture cited above. Terry Martin's list of means for achieving culturedness encompasses 'industrialization, urbanization, secularization, education, universal literacy, and territorial nationhood', but may well have also included settlement, the process by which all relevant features of the nomadic lifestyle were extinguished.¹⁴ The grain sowing near the Emba oil fields encouraged settlement, and therefore greater culturedness. The Kazakh Komsomol taught its members literacy, and therefore culturedness. 'Cultural-economic points' indicate the close alignment in Bolshevik thinking between economics and culture.

In the Kazakh Republic 'high culture', which David L. Hoffmann associates with *kul'turnost'*, would have to wait.¹⁵ The Bolsheviks, finding formerly Tsarist Central Asia in a parlous, poorly developed state, had more pressing cultural concerns.¹⁶ In the 1880s the governing institutions of rural Russia had undergone significant reform and the empire's economy began to modernise.¹⁷ Tsarist Central Asia did witness some experiments in state-led social policy at around this time too, including the creation of a limited educational infrastructure, and education was a critical element of changing culture. Nascent as it was, though, this infrastructure's purposes and aims differed depending on the personnel in charge. Some enterprises taught the Russian language, but also aimed to 'preserve in students their love of the steppe and the nomadic way of life', contrary to official policy which was to encourage settlement.¹⁸ The provision of education varied enormously by region of the steppe, and many *aul* schools were only open in spring and early summer, when the exigencies of nomadic life could accommodate them.¹⁹ Generally speaking, 'In pre-revolutionary Kazakhstan the network of [imperial] cultural-educational institutions was extremely weak.'²⁰

¹³ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 127.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹⁵ Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, p. 16.

¹⁶ Bhavna Davé, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 36.

¹⁷ John A. Armstrong, 'Old-Regime Governors: Bureaucratic and Patrimonial Attributes,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14, no. 1 (1972), p. 8.

¹⁸ Wayne Dowler, *Classroom and Empire: The Politics of Schooling Russia's Eastern Nationalities, 1860-1917* (London: Ithaca, 2001), pp. 140, 259.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 146.

²⁰ K. S. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, vol. 4 (Almaty: Atamüra, 2010), p. 406.

Rectifying this weakness was one of the Soviet administration's first priorities for the republic.²¹ The Kazakhs were targeted by various 'cultural outreach policies' emerging from various political agendas and cultural misunderstanding ensued.²² As self-declared anti-imperialists, Bolsheviks in Moscow sought to demonstrate that they would not treat Central Asian territories like colonies. But cultural policies in Central Asia and among nomads did take on their own dynamic which are connected by some with the Party's sense of a civilising mission. In her lucid discussion of the USSR as an empire, Paula A. Michaels compares Soviet actions in Kazakhstan to imperial policies imposed on the Belgian Congo. She argues that the education, health and artistic funding which flowed from the centre to the Kazakh periphery mitigated Soviet crimes but it did not negate them.²³ Cultural work was intended to overcome the primordial conditions of the nomads, whose 'very existence attested to everything the Bolshevik activists despised as primitive, antimodern, and backward.'²⁴ There is barely any evidence in Party documentation of emotional antipathy, but certainly nomadic culture, while it existed, was not respected. Its backwardness was seen as the antithesis of Soviet *kul'turnost'*.²⁵

This chapter will chart various attempts at changing the Kazakh nomads' culture but also add commentary on further social policies and general attempts at managing the life of the nomad. This includes some issues discussed in earlier chapters, but the distinctive theme here is the focus on effecting personal behavioural change in nomads and in altering their *byt*. Some of the policies or objectives under discussion might at first appear disparate, but together they made an orchestral composition which Party figures heard as a discordant but complete whole, unable or unwilling to disassemble. Why the administration associated so many of these different policies together is partially explained by culturedness' great breadth of definition, but there are other credible reasons. For example, the immaturity of Kazakhstan's governing institutions

²¹ *Ibid.*, 406.

²² Matthew J. Payne, 'Seeing Like a Soviet State: Settlement of Nomadic Kazakhs, 1928-1934,' in *Writing the Stalin Era: Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet Historiography*, ed. Golfo Alexopoulos, Julie Hessler, and Kiril Tomoff (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2011), p. 61.

²³ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 7. This argument bears some similarities to that of David Lane: David Lane, 'Ethnic and Class Stratification in Soviet Kazakhstan, 1917 - 39,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 2 (1975), pp. 172-173.

²⁴ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 153. Another historian with a similar position to Michaels is Matthew J. Payne. See: Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," p. 63. Matthew J. Payne, *Stalin's Railroad: Turksib and the Building of Socialism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001).

²⁵ For further discussion of Soviet cultural policies in the Central Asian context, see: Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

meant that each body's administrative jurisdiction was poorly defined, causing social objectives to bleed into one another. Alternatively, the sheer novelty of such a comprehensive, amorphous and ambitious set of social agendas may have caused those charged with implementation to conflate and confuse. The variety of policies under discussion involved a large band of different institutions, the structures of which often played a significant role. All this will be discussed in the present chapter.

It is not easy, nor necessarily desirable, to disentangle Soviet Kazakhstan's earliest social policies into neatly delineated agendas. Their messy interconnectedness was one of their most important characteristics. Agricultural practice will again be discussed here, for example, but is relevant only in relation to the everyday life and cultural level of practitioners. As a result this chapter is best structured not by chronology, institution or policy, but by clusters of all three combined. To summarise: the chapter will first address the structures of the state, its engagement with nomads, and efforts at creating the kind of effective, representative administration necessary to command an unprecedented level of interference in nomadic lives. Second, it will consider agriculture and economics, then education. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of nomadic women and the Red Yurts campaign. Whereas earlier sections concentrate on the state and Party's gradual encroachment into nomadic life, later sections focus more on the aims and effects of this encroachment.

The chapter will argue that effecting behavioural change among nomads proved particularly difficult without a strong and well-organised administration, but that a strong and well-organised administration was hard to achieve without certain behavioural changes. In a sense, raising one's cultural level was the same as cooperating with the Soviet state and reinforcing the Soviet economy. The Party had some successes in some areas, such as literacy, when it itself became migratory, allowing its institutions to become mobile and pursue the nomads around the steppe. Nomadic statehood was not conducive to fast, standardised and comprehensive policy outcomes, however, and those in the Kazakh Party leadership who lacked patience – a clear majority – were likely left unsatisfied by the results. If they were hoping to culturally colonise the steppe, they were frustrated.

Section One: Building an Effective and Representative Administration

The deficiencies of the early Soviet administration in Kazakhstan deserve repeated emphasis. They contextualise much of the Bolsheviks' efforts in the realm of social and domestic policy. To achieve something as nuanced as change in *kul'turnost'*

or *byt*, the Party hoped to build an administration which was effective and representative. An effective and representative administration would not only be a conduit for social transformation, but an incident of social transformation in itself. Yet building such an administration would prove to be a profoundly ambitious objective. This objective will be here addressed in regard to the two halves of the Soviet administration; first the state, then the Party.

Tsarist Russia bequeathed a meagre state institutional inheritance to the Bolsheviks, who had to reconcile the ambitiousness of their aims with the poverty of their governing structures. This matter arose at the first All-Kazakh Party Conference in Orenburg in June 1921 amid complaints about the lack of central direction, the amateurishness of leading institutions and the disarray of their regional counterparts.²⁶ For months after the Civil War the governors of some administrative zones were unaware of which national republic they had joined, making it impossible to build a chain of command.²⁷ As acknowledged by the Central Asian Bureau in 1926, the extreme heterogeneity of agricultural activity in the Kazakh Republic, in comparison to neighbouring Uzbekistan, made reform in rural areas very difficult.²⁸ Managing nomads wherever they were to be found was a challenge for the Bureau. Their erratic distribution within nomadic territory, the unfamiliarity of state employees with the nomadic way of life, and the deficiency of Party activity in the nomadic *aul* all slowed the pace of 'cultural-pedagogical work.'²⁹ Even by November 1928, one Party comrade felt able to use the evocative phrase 'organisational helplessness' to summarise the Kazakh state's capabilities.³⁰

Petty corruption, bribery and incompetence hindered state action and alienated nomadic communities, and in the early years Party members worried that poor communication links meant nomads were unaware of the help which was offered to them.³¹ Later on in the decade, weak lines of communication were held to blame for widespread fears about new confiscation practices.³² *Aul* soviets were more erratic affairs than their village equivalents, and this complicated taxation, education and

²⁶ APRK 139/1/2: 24.

²⁷ APRK 139/1/2: 34. It was also briefly argued that Moscow should govern the Ural Governate: APRK 139/1/254: 54.

²⁸ RGASPI 62/2/562: 162.

²⁹ RGASPI 62/2/911: 165.

³⁰ RGASPI 17/25/159: 25. This Comrade Povolotskii may have been Aleksandr Moiseevich Povolotskii, then chairman of the state planning commission and member of the Kazakh Sovnarkom: K. S. Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana 1920-1946 gg.: Biograficheskii spravochnik* (Almaty: Arys, 2007), pp. 274-275.

³¹ APRK 139/1/254: 99-102. RGASPI 17/25/208: 48 *ob.*

³² RGASPI 17/25/21: 12.

recruitment.³³ Concerns about banditry led the Party to postpone some of its early propagandising efforts and investigatory expeditions, perpetuating ignorance about the condition of the republic.³⁴ Lawlessness itself was not easily overcome in this context; congresses held to resolve tribal disputes were hard to publicise, and so were hardly attended.³⁵ Census materials from before and after the Civil War were incomplete and misleading, and at least some in the administration knew this.³⁶

Infrastructural problems were considered less acute in the Russian-dominated northern provinces of the early republic, as attested by a report on the Orsk *uezd* of the Orenburg Governate in 1922.³⁷ This signifies the association between Kazakhs and backwardness, but also the genuine disparity between different regions in terms of communication and travel networks. In 1930, by which time Orsk and Orenburg had left the KASSR, statisticians counted just 600 cars in the entirety of the remaining republic.³⁸ Party officials believed that the absence of other kinds of transport, such as canals and railroads, had inhibited the productive capacity of arable farming in Central Asia and would continue to do so under Communist rule without major construction works.³⁹

State employees were as green as the organisations they populated. Rosters of committee members from 1925 list men as young as 22, with no higher education or Party membership, making rulings on issues of real consequence for the daily life of nomads and others.⁴⁰ Decisions about the legal boundaries of nomadic migration routes, for example, could be a matter of starvation or success for both nomads and the farmers they bypassed.⁴¹ Important regional organs were critically underfunded.⁴² On 10th November 1928, VTsIK noted the weakness of the Kazakh Republic's judicial structures. As courts functioned very slowly, local governing organs were forced to

³³ Sarah Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934', PhD thesis (Yale University, 2011), p. 59.

³⁴ APRK 1/139/254: 38, 56, 71.

³⁵ GARF 1235/96/751: 79. For further discussion of this case, see Chapter Five. The involvement of nomads in democratic procedures was an explicit aim for the administration despite the difficulties in achieving it. Consider, for example, plans for the first constitution of the Kazakh Republic, produced in early 1924: Grigorii Fedorovich Dakhshleiger and M. Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane v vosstanovitelnyi period, 1921-1925 gg : sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Alma-Ata: Arkheologiya Zhane Etnografiya Instituty, 1962), p. 100.

³⁶ RGASPI 62/2/108: 90.

³⁷ APRK 139/1/293: 18-19.

³⁸ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 25.

³⁹ RGASPI 17/25/87: 30. RGASPI 17/25/159: 27.

⁴⁰ TsGARK 280/3/3: 5, 7.

⁴¹ Charts listing the 'nature of contentious cases' often included a space for disputes 'about nomadic routes': TsGARK 280/3/3: 17, 22.

⁴² TsGARK 280/4/18: 1.

leave even the most violent crimes unpunished, and the perpetuation of blood feuds was a particular concern.⁴³ A common complaint submitted to regional committees concerned the widespread theft of livestock. This problem had still not abated in early 1933, and was still being blamed on administrative incompetence.⁴⁴

In this context, how could the Bolsheviks hope to effect behavioural change in some of the most intimate areas of nomadic life? Democratic engagement and representation was conceived as one partial solution to all these problems, as well as a check on various kinds of malpractice, but was realised in only the most limited forms. Women, peasants and livestock-herders were apparently hardest to involve in the elections of 1926, which troubled Party leaders who believed that participation would empower these groups at the expense of the reactionary *bais*.⁴⁵ At least one body hoped that democratic engagement could peacefully resolve conflicts over land use, but the Communist Party lacked the manpower to have messengers migrate across the steppe and properly inform nomads about Party nominations.⁴⁶ Working with figures available to him in the mid-1950s, Romeo A. Cherot claims that Kazakhs dominated non-urban Soviets after the republic-wide elections of 1927.⁴⁷ Late the following year, KTsiK was instructed to improve communication with the rural economy by VTsiK, yet Kazakh democratic participation appears to have again receded by 1929.⁴⁸

This decline would have worried Party leaders because they believed in the power of democracy to overcome the *bais*, but also because it was a failure of *korenizatsiia*. *Korenizatsiia*, translated by Terry Martin as 'indigenization', was the process of adapting the administration of a republic to have it reflect that republic's titular nationality.⁴⁹ In Central Asia this policy began to have meaningful impact

⁴³ GARF 1235/73/21: 25-25 *ob.*. Edward Schatz cites 'blood revenge' as one of the Kazakhs' traditional forms of authority and control, which the Soviet regime took against. See: Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (London: University of Washington Press, 2004), p. 43.

⁴⁴ RGASPI 17/25/208: 15, 48 *ob.*. In 1933 the Kazakh Regional Committee located the incompetence in the collective farming system: RGASPI 17/25/78: 10.

⁴⁵ RGASPI 17/25/208: 15, 19. TsGARK 81/1/665: 9.

⁴⁶ The body in question is the Federal Committee for Land Affairs, operating in 1921: GARF 3260/1/41: 2 *ob.*. On manpower, see: RGASPI 17/25/285: 29-30.

⁴⁷ Documents produced by the Syr-Darya Gubkom in 1927 do suggest that elections were moderately successful in that year: RGASPI 17/25/256: 116. For Cherot's figures, see: Romeo A. Cherot, 'Nativization of Government and Party Structure in Kazakhstan, 1920-1930,' *American Slavic and East European Review* 14, no. 1 (1955), pp. 46-48.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-48. GARK 1235/73/21: 25 *ob.*

⁴⁹ Terry Martin, 'An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism,' in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 67-90.

between April and July 1923 when 'mechanical *korenizatsiia*' was instituted, mainly involving the dismissal of Russians from senior office and their replacement with members of titular national groups. Kazakhstan is characterised by Martin as an 'aggressive republic' in this regard, promoting Kazakhs with alacrity.⁵⁰ Sarah Cameron suggests that the Bolsheviks' approach to *korenizatsiia* was 'profoundly divisive', in that it alienated those ethnic groups who were necessarily overlooked.⁵¹ It was not until the arrival of Filipp Goloshchekin in 1925 that this 'mechanical' *korenizatsiia* was replaced by 'functional' *korenizatsiia*, when emphasis was shifted to the use of the Kazakh language in deliberations and publications and away from hiring and firing.⁵² As such, in May 1927 the Syr-Darya Gubkom indicated that more of its administrative functions should take place in Kazakh, not Russian, and that more Kazakhs should be trained and employed in financial and accounting roles.⁵³ This was very much representative of regional organs across the republic.⁵⁴ Later that year Goloshchekin submitted a report to the eighth Aktyubinsk Governate Conference in which he accused both Kazakh and Russian Party members of 'deviations' in their implementation of *korenizatsiia* until that point, confirming the shift in policy described by Martin.⁵⁵

A major topic in its own right, what is significant about *korenizatsiia* for the purposes of this thesis is the definition of nationhood on which it was based. In an effort to make Soviet power native, to remedy the Tsarist Empire's colonial legacy and combat cultural backwardness, the Bolsheviks strove to bring Kazakhs and their language into the committee room.⁵⁶ The republic would then better represent the Kazakh nation. But as explained in Chapter Three, Soviet definitions of Kazakh nationhood seldom included nomadism or its cultural legacies. Thus efforts to include rural Kazakhs and nomads in matters of Party and state were not written into *korenizatsiia* and benefitted little from that agenda. Though the Party also worried about democracy's failure to overcome the *bais*, this seems a complication of a more fundamental problem, that nomads were alienated from the state and would not engage, but the state could not systematically involve itself with nomads without first engaging and employing them.

Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 102-106.

⁵⁰ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 140.

⁵¹ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 81.

⁵² Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 143-144.

⁵³ RGASPI 17/25/256: 142.

⁵⁴ RGASPI 17/25/6: 148 *ob.*-149, 190 *ob.*-191.

⁵⁵ RGASPI 17/25/116: 21.

⁵⁶ Martin, "An Affirmative Action Empire," p. 74. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 126.

Like the state, the Party was a device for the transformation of wider society. Communists were made well-aware of the social structures of nomadic society which had to be expunged, variously described as 'patriarchal', 'tribal' 'capitalist', or simply as *bai*.⁵⁷ The power of Mullahs and other religious authorities in Kazakh society was a target for the atheist Communists as well, and the perceived dominance of men in Central Asian communities was criticised.⁵⁸ At times tribal, religious and patriarchal divisions were equated with class divisions, at other times they were presented as irrelevant anachronisms which distracted poor Kazakhs from the most fundamental form of stratification in the *aul*, that of economic class.⁵⁹ Ultimately, however, all these features of nomadic life were held to have a regressive effect on Kazakh culture.⁶⁰ Prominent Party figures such as Sultan-Galiev repeatedly made the case for the eradication of exploitative elements in the *aul*, accusing them of lending animals, leasing land and allowing water-access to poor Kazakhs and demanding ruinous levels of repayment.⁶¹ Sultan-Galiev himself was an atypical Party member, a Tatar nationalist who had argued that class categories should not be applied to formerly colonial peoples. He wrote extensively on anti-religious propaganda, another question of culture and *byt* to be discussed again shortly.⁶²

Sometimes described as the 'Sovietisation of the *aul*', the spread of the Party and its campaigns was explicitly intended to undermine traditional structures of power in Kazakh society.⁶³ As explained in Chapter Six, the expropriation of goods and livestock from the richest Kazakhs was perhaps the Party's primary method before sedentarisation, but more subtle policies were also advocated, such as 'rallying the *bedniak* and *seredniak* mass against the *bai* in the *aul*'.⁶⁴ This might involve the replacement of patrilineal principles of inheritance and land ownership with collective

⁵⁷ RGASPI 17/25/174: 102. RGASPI 17/25/116: 62. Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 77.

⁵⁸ For a list of the Mullah's duties in the Inner Horde, see: Allen J. Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia: The Islamic World of Novouzensk and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1880-1910* (Boston: Brill, 2001), p. 286-288. For an example of Party members' attitudes in 1923, see: TsGARK 81/1/665: 12-13, 33-38. See also: Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*.

⁵⁹ RGASPI 17/25/208: 15.

⁶⁰ RGASPI 17/25/208: 48-52.

⁶¹ RGASPI 17/25/116: 62-63. RGASPI 17/25/6: 127 *ob.*.

⁶² Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, eds., *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union* (London: Chicago University Press, 1979), pp. 144-151.

⁶³ RGASPI 17/25/208: 48 *ob.*.

⁶⁴ RGASPI 17/25/6: 127 *ob.*. Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 71.

ones devised by the administration, but the regular propagandising of *aul* Party cells was surely the Communist Party's primary strategy.⁶⁵

Leaving aside the antagonism and disruption engendered by such an approach, this assault on traditional social structures could have a retroactive impact on the Party's other agendas.⁶⁶ The risk of forbidding the children of *bai* families from attending schools, for example, was that moderately-affluent and impoverished Kazakhs would also accidentally be denied an education.⁶⁷ The Bolsheviks' earliest assault on faith and religious authority in the Kazakh Republic was largely unsuccessful and deeply alienating.⁶⁸ The state's interference was also highly provocative in less intimate but no less important areas like agricultural activity.⁶⁹

As with the state, it was believed that the Communist Party should be made more representative of Kazakh society, principally through the recruitment of more Kazakh members.⁷⁰ This would mitigate the provocative impact of Communist propaganda by undermining the sense that the Party was a Russian institution acting in a colonial manner towards Kazakhs. The more Kazakhs in the Party, the more the Party looked like a collaborative multinational effort.⁷¹

Rural Kazakhstan's earliest Communist Party cells were small in number, and the quality of their membership was a source of serious anxiety for those in Orenburg. Qualified Kazakhs were hard to find, and suitable Russians rarely possessed the necessary familiarity with Kazakh life and culture.⁷² One delegate sent to the Kazakh capital from the Adai region related local concerns thus: 'The organisation of the Communist Party in the Kazakh Republic has 25 thousand members and the oblast bureau could not find from that number an appropriate secretary!'⁷³ There followed a rush to recruit new Kazakhs, generally from among young adults, through the

⁶⁵ RGASPI 17/25/187: 138. TsGARK 81/1/665: 12-13.

⁶⁶ Mukhamet Shayakhmetov describes the shock felt among nomads in response to the state's anti-kulak measures here: Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe: The Memoir of a Nomad under Stalin* (New York: Overlook/Rookery, 2007), pp. 11-15.

⁶⁷ GARF 1235/73/21: 25.

⁶⁸ Michael R. Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation', PhD thesis (Georgetown University, 2005), pp. 286-287.

⁶⁹ Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, First ed., *Studies of Nationalities in the USSR* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), p. 158.

⁷⁰ Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-23* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. 136.

⁷¹ Martin, "An Affirmative Action Empire," p. 75.

⁷² APRK 139/1/2: 24.

⁷³ APRK 139/1/2: 25.

organisation of associations or unions.⁷⁴ This was most commonly done at particular points in the nomads' seasonal migrations, when their location was more certain and their lifestyle made fewer demands on their time.⁷⁵ Joining the Party thus necessitated at least a brief behavioural shift from ordinary nomadic duties. But nationality was not the only criterion by which potential members were assessed, and unease quickly followed regarding the class character of new Kazakh members. For some Party leaders, the recruitment of Kazakhs at the expense of Russians became conflated with a kind of bourgeois nationalist entryism.⁷⁶ Early, small-scale Party purges were enacted in response, particularly between 1922 and 1924, alongside further engagement with the poorest of the steppe population.⁷⁷

Ideally, new Party members had not just to be Kazakhs, but poor Kazakhs, and as well as nationality and class, the Communist Party kept registers of its members' professions, whether farmers, livestock-herders (presumably this category included nomads), craftsmen and so on.⁷⁸ A high proportion of recruits from affluent professions was inevitable because of literacy requirements, which the wealthy were more likely to meet.⁷⁹ This would continue to cause alarm late into the decade.⁸⁰ Leaders claimed that bourgeois elements in the membership stopped the Party building a relationship with the *aul* and holding influence there, though it is unclear when the Party would ever realistically have been satisfied with its power among nomads; by 1929 it was indisputably but still jealously the supreme institution on the steppe.⁸¹ The Party also continued to use methods of social categorisation without readily-apparent resonance in nomadic regions. The Semipalatinsk Governate does not explain, in a register of new recruits printed in September 1929, how pastoral nomads were inserted into a typology including *batrak*, 'peasant', and 'worker' but not *kochevnik*.⁸² For a Party anxious about its sway in nomadic regions, it remained stubbornly attached to national and class differences, but not agricultural ones.

⁷⁴ APRK 139/1/2: 34.

⁷⁵ RGASPI 62/2/911: 168.

⁷⁶ L. C. Gatagova, L. P. Kosheleva, and L. A. Pogovaia, *TSK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros. Kniga 1, 1918-1933 gg., Dokumenty Sovetskoï Istorii* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2005), pp. 131-133.

⁷⁷ Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, p. 181. APRK 139/1/2: 34.

⁷⁸ APRK 139/1/254: 74. RGASPI 17/25/87: 22-28.

⁷⁹ Lenore A. Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union* (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), p. 44.

⁸⁰ Lane, 'Ethnic and Class Stratification,' p. 174.

⁸¹ A Bogdanov, 'The Koshchi union in Kazakhstan,' in *The Nationalities Problem and Soviet Administration*, ed. Rudolf Schlesinger (Oxford: Routledge, 1956), p. 94.

⁸² RGASPI 17/25/236: 251.

As Party organisations spread across the countryside, from 1925 Kazakh membership began a steady five-year rise.⁸³ Already in 1926, regional committees felt able to express growing confidence in their network of rural cells, which were apparently increasing Party engagement and becoming more involved in the management of economic and societal life in the *aul*.⁸⁴ Yet leaders remained mindful of nomadism's unique challenges:

The remoteness of the *aul* from the governing centres; the disconnectedness of the *aul*; the low cultural level of its clannic existence; the nomadic economy [all] hold back the growth of the technical and political literacy of the *aul* communist and lead to the subordination of the interests of the Party to the interests of the clan, of the group and of the *bai* elements.⁸⁵

Cherot confirms that, in comparison with settled Uzbeks or Tajiks, 'the unsettled character of the Kazakh population made it difficult to establish political contact with them, to make them Party, and politically, conscious.'⁸⁶ Propagandising against nomadism would be difficult while nomads could not hear the propaganda.⁸⁷ Cherot, however, also notes the relatively high proportion of Russians in the Kazakh Republic, and the Kazakhs' comparably low level of education and urbanization, as reasons for the continuing dominance of Europeans in the Kazakh Party branch for the entirety of the decade 1920-1930.⁸⁸

As the scales nevertheless tipped haltingly towards a Kazakh majority, new Party members of all nationalities were being hurriedly educated in the ideology of the organisation. Lectures, discussion groups and publications of varying length and sophistication were the Party's primary means.⁸⁹ For those who attained it, membership of the Kazakh Communist Party was thus intended as a transformational process. The more nomads who joined, the less backward the population would become. Perhaps, if younger people were perceived as less obstinate and more compliant, this explains the Party's eagerness to engage with the native youth. By 1929,

⁸³ Cherot, 'Nativization,' p. 52.

⁸⁴ RGASPI 17/25/208: 48.

⁸⁵ RGASPI 17/25/208: 48.

⁸⁶ Cherot, 'Nativization,' p. 53.

⁸⁷ Paula A. Michaels states that propagandising against nomadism was the preferred method of settling Kazakhs until the Party opted for violent intervention at the end of the 1920s: Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 154.

⁸⁸ Cherot, 'Nativization,' pp. 49-50, 53.

⁸⁹ APRK 139/1/190: 2-2 *ob.*, 12, 15.

Kazakhs outnumbered non-Kazakhs by two to one in the Kazakh Komsomol.⁹⁰ Still the processes of recruitment and education took time, creating what Martin describes as a 'hole in the middle'; a lack of Kazakhs employed in middle-ranking professions requiring literacy and numeracy.⁹¹

The Soviet state and Communist Party were both parts of the larger Kazakh administration which would be used in the 1920s to change nomadic society and nomadic social norms. Both began the decade as deeply inadequate institutional conglomerations, and the policy of making them more representative and thus more effective was imperfectly realised. For nomads, this was largely because representation was conceived in terms of class and nationality, social categories which correlated to some extent with nomadism (nomads were usually poor and never Russian) but which did not perfectly reflect the nomadic-sedentary divide in the Kazakh Republic. The difficulty of communicating with nomads, and the low rates of literacy and numeracy among them, also hindered their recruitment, and because participation in the administration was at least as transformational as being governed by said administration, nomads often missed a further opportunity to experience the processes of social change favoured by the Party. Yet all this did nothing to dissuade the administration from seeking social change. Though the early Party and state lacked effectiveness and representativeness, they both set about accumulating information on nomadic life and devising ways to transform it.

Section Two: Information, Agricultural Reform and Economic Policy

In February 1922, a delegate to the second All-Kazakh Conference complained: 'On the steppe now, as earlier, any information is completely lacking.'⁹² A scarcity of knowledge, or a rich abundance of ignorance, was both a symptom and cause of the minimal infrastructure inherited by Bolshevik revolutionaries. The Red Caravan was one of the Party's first means of redress, and provided the administration with some of its earliest and most immediate insights into nomadic life and culture.

Not to be conflated with the Red Yurts, the Red Caravan was a quite distinct enterprise albeit with notable similarities. Like the yurts, to be discussed later, the Red Caravan was a roving institution, which approached nomads instead of waiting for nomads to approach it. It is one of the first instances of the Soviet administration going

⁹⁰ Cherot, 'Nativization,' p. 56.

⁹¹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, p. 179.

⁹² APRK 139/1/254: 101.

mobile in Central Asia; meeting its nomadic citizens in situ on the road. Its objectives were also similarly manifold. Soon after complaints were aired at the second All-Kazakh Conference, a kind of manifesto of aims for the Caravan was published by the Kazakh Oblast and Central Executive Committees (the Kazakh Obkom and KT'sIK).⁹³ Its three stated aims were:

- 1) The investigation, inspection and instruction of local Party Soviets and professional organs and the study of local working conditions.
- 2) Political-educational work and economic 'agro-propaganda.'
- 3) Practical medical and veterinary aid to the population.⁹⁴

The Caravan was to be led by three representatives of KT'sIK and the Kazakh Obkom. A complaints bureau would be managed by a member of the Kazakh Committee of Justice, a political department would liaise with regional bodies, and veterinary information points would be held alongside medical clinics.⁹⁵ The Red Caravan thus acted as an inspecting, instructing and galvanising arm of the central Kazakh Party executive. In the full variety of its functions, it may be presented as an early microcosm for all the social policies the Party pursued on the steppe, but as a means of gathering information it excelled because so many of its services doubled as methods for learning about the nomadic population. They were also provided to nomads on the move, in their typical state of seasonal mobility, rather than in the artificial conditions of a conference or court hearing. This is presumably why a photographer and a scholar also joined the troupe.⁹⁶

The Red Caravan travelled extensively within the Kazakh Republic, setting off from Orenburg on 20th May 1922 and alighting at the towns of Orsk, Turgai, Atbasar, Akmolinsk, Petropavlovsk, Pavlodar and Semipalatinsk, visiting various villages and *aul* communities en route.⁹⁷ On arrival at the Orsk region of what was then a north-western area of the Kazakh Republic, the Red Caravan gave orders to local bureaucrats for the alleviation of famine and the improvement of sanitary conditions, among other objectives.⁹⁸ It also began the flurry of reports which Party leaders in Orenburg used

⁹³ TsGARK 930/1/4: 26-26 *ob.*.

⁹⁴ TsGARK 930/1/4: 26.

⁹⁵ TsGARK 930/1/4: 26-26 *ob.*.

⁹⁶ TsGARK 930/1/4: 89.

⁹⁷ *Chrezvychainyi Komissar (k 125-letiiu Alibi Dzhangil'dina): Sbornik dokumentov (1916-1923 g.g.)*. (Almaty: Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan, 2009), p. 230. TsGARK 930/1/4: 87-89. See also: TsGARK 930/1/1.

⁹⁸ TsGARK 930/1/2: 2-3.

when devising legislation in keeping with the New Economic Policy.⁹⁹ Unsurprisingly given the time of its activity, the Caravan's favoured themes in its reporting of nomadic life were shortage, destitution and need.

The Red Caravan worked on similar issues both independently and together with the Red Army. A representative of the Red Army's Kazakh recruitment office travelled with and answered to the leader of the Red Caravan. During expeditions, this figure was expected to arrange meetings with civilians to explain the nature and aims of the Red Army and to discuss local military affairs. When the Red Caravan came across military companies, the Red Army's representative was obligated to inspect and correct political-educational activities within the group, thereby fulfilling an extra supervisory function on behalf of central authorities.¹⁰⁰ It seems that the Red Army was sometimes conceived of as an institutional conduit for the establishment of a network of Party cells, which would eventually supersede the army across the republic, moderate the activities of serving soldiers, and augment the state's governing apparatus.¹⁰¹ In preparation for this handover the army published internal propaganda.¹⁰²

Long after the Red Caravan had finished its expedition, the Soviet administration was still investing considerable effort and resources in studying the Kazakh population. Most obvious is the All-Union census of 1926, but regional bodies also sponsored their own research.¹⁰³ On 15th February 1927, for example, the Syr-Darya Governate Committee launched an inquiry into 'one of the volosts typical for Kazakhstan.'¹⁰⁴ The Gubkom seems to have preferred a representative volost because its data might have provided generalizable lessons for the management of the whole governate. It described the population of its typical volost as semi-nomadic, located in one area during the winter and migrating in the summer months.¹⁰⁵ Under a heading helpfully

⁹⁹ TsGARK 930/1/4: 89.

¹⁰⁰ TsGARK 930/1/4: 36.

¹⁰¹ See, for example, concerns about the lack of Party cells within the army in the west of the republic: APRK 139/1/2: 34. The Red Army would also come to be used during the collectivisation drive as the infrastructure of Narkomzem RSFSR was considered untrustworthy: James W. Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State: The People's Commissariat of Agriculture under Proletarian Dictatorship, 1918-1929,' *Slavic Review* 56, no. 1 (1997), p. 100. It is also noteworthy in the context of a Soviet administration struggling to recruit and represent Kazakh nomads that the Red Army only had one regiment of Kazakhs during most of the 1920s: Niccolò Pianciola and Susan Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe. The Collectivization of Agriculture and the Kazak Herdsmen, 1928-1934,' *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 45, no. 1/2 (2004), p. 152.

¹⁰² APRK 139/1/350: 11.

¹⁰³ For commentary on the census, see Chapter Three.

¹⁰⁴ RGASPI 17/25/256: 33.

¹⁰⁵ RGASPI 17/25/256: 33.

entitled 'Questions that need answering,' the Gubkom revealed the extent of its ignorance seven years after the close of the Civil War.¹⁰⁶ Questions were a mixture of economic, political, and social or cultural issues: the whereabouts of *aul* Soviets; the number of communities in an 'administrative *aul*' (*adm-aul*); the size of the population in an *adm-aul*; the number of clans in an *adm-aul*; the main leaders of these clans; the time of the summer migration; migratory routes; the distances between summer and winter campsites; the size of *aul* Party cells; the age, education, social origins and occupation of cell members; how cells operated during migrations and how frequently they convened.¹⁰⁷ Assuming that the Syr-Darya Gubkom asked questions for which it had no ready answer, it appears no better informed about its network of Party cells than it was about the population they supervised. Comparably on 7th April 1930, prior to a reorganisation of collective farms in the area, the Alma-Ata Okrug Committee felt it necessary to create a commission for the identification of nomadic and semi-nomadic regions.¹⁰⁸

As it gradually increased its understanding of the Kazakh nomadic population, the Soviet administration took steps to change the cultural norms or *byt* of the nomads. The most obvious manner in which it could do this was by changing prevailing agricultural practices, migration and pastoral animal husbandry, since these practices defined the distinctive, unique everyday behaviour of nomadic communities in the area. Agricultural reform has of course been discussed in every chapter of this thesis, but here it will be considered specifically with regard to its cultural or domestic implications.

First, the poor state of Kazakh livestock was deemed a key cause of the nomad's cultural deficiencies, and it was repeatedly argued that lack of technology, outdated habits and poor veterinary standards all undermined what little profitability could be found in nomadic animal husbandry.¹⁰⁹ Fundamentally, nomadism was 'backward' and

¹⁰⁶ RGASPI 17/25/256: 33.

¹⁰⁷ RGASPI 17/25/256: 33, 33-37. For a good discussion of the peculiarities of the USSR's early regional administrative systems, see: Yuri Slezkine, 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,' *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994), p. 430. The phenomenon of the administrative *aul* is further discussed in this thesis in Chapter Four.

¹⁰⁸ RGASPI 17/25/171: 23. Nomadic regions were some of the last to see the imposition of collective farming: Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 165.

¹⁰⁹ RGASPI 17/25/208: 51. RGASPI 17/25/87: 31. TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 39.

unproductive, and poverty suffocated social progress.¹¹⁰ A resolution of the sixth All-Kazakh Regional Party Conference in 1928 summarised the problem as follows:

The characteristic trait of cattle-breeding in Kazakhstan is its extreme backwardness (archaic, uncultured forms of activity in the community, a haphazard approach to developing the herd, nomadic routes across a vast distance, inferior types of livestock, pasturage all year, periodic decline as a result of *dzhut* and epidemics and so on)...¹¹¹

Nomadic techniques for keeping animals were thus a prime target for the Party's intervention, initially to protect herds from epizootic episodes, raiding packs of wolves and *dzhut*. According to estimates made at the time, the population of the Akmola Governate lost considerable numbers of livestock as a result of epidemic in 1926, and a good portion was taken by wolves in the same year.¹¹² The Party believed it could rectify these problems with new scientific methods of farming and animal husbandry.¹¹³ Veterinary assistance would take the form of trained specialists offering advice to nomadic communities, and governate bodies also planned to breed Kazakh sheep with varieties which produced more wool. More cattle hide would go to the tanning industries, communities would be encouraged to create and trade more dairy products, and prices would be fixed to strengthen animal husbandry.¹¹⁴ Livestock herding among both sedentary and nomadic communities would undergo 'rationalisation.'¹¹⁵

The improvement of livestock breeds was an agenda for the whole Kazakh Republic as well, as revealed in a declaration from Sovnarkom RSFSR, dated 2nd August 1928.¹¹⁶ Party members also spoke about improving access to fodder for livestock, to bring more stability to the republic's nomadic herds.¹¹⁷ Rather than increasing the land available to nomads, the Party encouraged the use of feed in place of fresh fodder.¹¹⁸ This effort intensified in 1930 as another bout of instability and hardship struck the

¹¹⁰ RGASPI 17/25/159: 25. As explained at the third plenum of the Kazakh Regional Committee in 1926, semi-nomadic and settled communities produced more goods: RGASPI 17/25/1: 179. For another reference to productivity, see: GARF 1235/73/21: 61.

¹¹¹ RGASPI 17/25/6: 203.

¹¹² RGASPI 17/25/87: 31.

¹¹³ Martha Brill Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan,' *Russian Review* 40, no. 2 (1981), p. 125.

¹¹⁴ RGASPI 17/25/87: 31-34, 37.

¹¹⁵ RGASPI 17/25/87: 36.

¹¹⁶ GARF 1235/73/21: 61.

¹¹⁷ RGASPI 17/25/159: 25.

¹¹⁸ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 164.

republic.¹¹⁹ Rationalisation on a republic-wide level involved the formalisation of nomadic migratory routes and the locations of summer and winter pasturages.¹²⁰

As and when nomads did settle, and possibly at the points in the nomads' migrations when they stopped to sow or reap grains and fodder, attempts were also made to improve agronomic technique. Kazakh agronomic practice was typically compared unfavourably with that of Russian peasants; whereas some Russians had long ago begun adopting the medieval three-field system of crop rotation in the republic, Kazakhs were barely familiar with it.¹²¹ The disparity between the two was seen not only as a logistical problem but a source of profound inequality and instability.¹²² This was particularly the case in the context of widespread food shortages after the first famine.¹²³

Party-led efforts to change this state of affairs began in the earliest days of the republic, as on 22nd February 1921 when the first session of KTsiK proposed increasing and improving land cultivation, explicitly with the cooperation of the republic's livestock-herding communities¹²⁴ Such a behavioural shift necessitated education and guidance from localised state actors, at that point conceived as 'agricultural soviets', who would actively include nomadic and semi-nomadic society into the improvement of agriculture through instruction and propaganda whilst also offering veterinary aid and protection from wolves, perhaps as incentives for the nomads' complicity.¹²⁵ An army of agronomists was required for such a task, but the administration struggled to find sufficient numbers, and all the Party's extravagant pledges must be read alongside the aforementioned complaint from 1928 about 'administrative helplessness'.¹²⁶ Anxieties about the bourgeois background of some specialists seems to have been less

¹¹⁹ TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 39.

¹²⁰ TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 39.

¹²¹ APRK 139/1/350: 33. RGASPI 17/25/6: 169. J. N. Westwood concisely summarises the three-field system as: 'fallow; winter grain; spring grain': J. N. Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavour: Russian History 1812-1980*, Second ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 78. The replacement of the three-field system with 'multifield crop rotation' in European Russia was however far from complete at this time: Heinzen, "'Alien" Personnel in the Soviet State,' p. 78.

¹²² APRK 139/1/350: 33. RGASPI 17/25/6: 169.

¹²³ TsGARK 30/1/362: 141-141 ob..

¹²⁴ Dakhshleiger and Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane*, p. 176.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

¹²⁶ GARF 1235/73/21: 19. The archival reference to 'administrative helplessness' is: RGASPI 17/25/159: 25.

pronounced in the Kazakh Republic than in Moscow, possibly because numbers were even lower and Kazakh officials felt less able to be particular.¹²⁷

The Soviet state also convened 'sowing campaigns' to furrow and sow lands and overcome food shortages at harvest time.¹²⁸ Given the presumed cultural backwardness of nomadism and the transformational effects of settlement, these endorsements of sedentary arable farming were conceived as acts of social as well as economic intervention.¹²⁹ Some of the Red Caravan's most important decrees related to agronomic efforts, such as the coordination of community-wide efforts to plough the land and sow seeds.¹³⁰ The distribution of grains for sowing remained an important aim for the administration.¹³¹

The regulation of trading relations between livestock-herders and farmers was also a recurrent policy.¹³² Commodity exchange was seen as a way of making animal husbandry more profitable at the height of NEP and undermining the strangle-hold of the *bais*, as well as efficiently distributing produce.¹³³ The mobility of nomadic communities and their traditional use of trade fairs seemed a simple way of overcoming the lack of roads and rail.¹³⁴ The largest annual Kazakh trade fairs could last for weeks and attract tens of thousands of nomads, creating fields of yurts across many kilometres of land.¹³⁵ The Party involved itself in the organisation of such commodity markets on the steppe late into the NEP era, thereby again co-opting the mobility of nomadic institutions and practices for its own ends just as the Red Caravan had done.¹³⁶ As concerns about exploitation and private capital gained currency, the administration organised 'mobile state exchange' and began closing down some non-state markets.¹³⁷ Of course, the exchange of private goods was justified as a way of

¹²⁷ James W. Heinzen notes a comparable dearth of specialists in his study of Narkomzem RSFSR: Heinzen, "Alien" Personnel in the Soviet State, p. 80.

¹²⁸ RGASPI 17/25/187: 40-43, 49-51. RGASPI 17/25/78: 78-86.

¹²⁹ TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 39 *ob.*.

¹³⁰ TsGARK 930/1/2: 2.

¹³¹ TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 41 *ob.*.

¹³² APRK 139/1/2: 85. TsGARK 30/1/306: 513-518.

¹³³ TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 39.

¹³⁴ RGASPI 17/25/87: 35. RGASPI 17/25/6: 169.

¹³⁵ Zh. B. Abylkhozhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstana: Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie aspekty funktsionirovaniia i transformatsii (1920-1930-e g.g.)* (Alma-Ata: Gylym, 1991), pp. 44-45. The *Koiandinskaia Iarkmarka* in the Semipalatinsk region was a particularly large event held between June and July. It apparently became a vast *jailau*, or summer pasture, a time of celebration as the hardships of winter receded: Didar Kassymova, Zhanat Kundakbaeva, and Ustina Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), pp. 119-120.

¹³⁶ RGASPI 17/25/87: 36. RGASPI 17/25/256: 118. RGASPI 17/25/6: 204 *ob.*.

¹³⁷ RGASPI 17/25/256: 118.

allowing nomads to accumulate the resources needed to successfully settle, and therefore successfully advance, so the state's adoption of nomadic practices was conceived as another temporary solution to the governance of a highly mobile population.¹³⁸ All this coincided with the perceived economic interests of the Union and the state more generally.

For the construction of a stable economy, nomadic agricultural behaviour had also to be standardised and harmonised with the expansive range of agricultural practices to be found elsewhere on the steppe.¹³⁹ The lack of established, republic-wide norms for governing land-use and agricultural activities was held responsible for increasing ethnic tension in late 1928, as was the unregulated use of water and the long-neglected irrigation system which exacerbated shortages.¹⁴⁰ Moscow encouraged the Kazakh Party branch to popularise crop growing, improve livestock herding and develop cottage industries and handicraft techniques in rural Kazakhstan.¹⁴¹ Even the further development of timber and carpentry was connected to the nomads. Amze Nakhimzhan, a delegate to the second All-Kazakh Conference in 1922 and then only 23 years of age, pointed out: 'The significance [the timber industry] has for the settled population is clear to everyone, but regarding nomads, the wooden parts of yurts are essential for them.'¹⁴²

In comparison to later years, the NEP era was characterised by less intervention than the ambitious publications of Party organs might suggest. Irrigation projects and land reclamation was however a site of considerable activity from the beginning of the 1920s.¹⁴³ Irrigation created the possibility of cotton-growing in the south, a means of stabilising and improving the Kazakh Republic's economic productivity as a whole.¹⁴⁴ This was considered so important that the KASSR's borders were drawn carefully around irrigation systems, so that canals which serviced Kazakh land would not have their water sources managed by Uzbeks.¹⁴⁵ General attempts were made to regulate water-use across the republic.¹⁴⁶ The state aimed to create or reconstruct a more

¹³⁸ RGASPI 17/25/159: 26.

¹³⁹ GARF 1235/73/21: 18 *ob.*.

¹⁴⁰ GARF 1235/73/21: 25.

¹⁴¹ GARF 1235/73/21: 25 *ob.*.

¹⁴² APRK 13/1/254: 168-169. I. N. Tasmagambetov, M. M. Tazhmin, and S. T. Tauekel, *Istoriia otechestva v sud'bakh ego grazhdan: Sbornik avtobiografii 1922 - 1960 gody*, vol. 10, *Istoriia Kazakhstana v russkikh istochnikakh XVI-XX vekov* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2005), pp. 190-192.

¹⁴³ Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, p. 158.

¹⁴⁴ RGASPI 17/25/116: 22. TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 39.

¹⁴⁵ RGASPI 62/2/108: 89, 94-95.

¹⁴⁶ RGASPI 17/25/208: 50.

comprehensive network of wells, for the use of passing nomads and others.¹⁴⁷ Aside from cotton, the administration entertained proposals for melon fields and goat farms.¹⁴⁸

Larger infrastructural projects such as oil extraction and the Turksib (Turkestan-Siberian) and Semirech'e railways acted as loci for economic development and nomadic engagement.¹⁴⁹ The Party prioritised the security and control of areas of major economic significance, creating spaces in which Soviet power functioned fully and properly within the larger malaise. A resolution from the Central Asian Bureau on the treatment of nomads suggested that it was here, at these points of state orderliness and control, that medical and educational institutions should be established for the cultural improvement of nomads who passed by.¹⁵⁰ These areas were also conceived as most appropriate for large-scale sedentary agricultural efforts.¹⁵¹ The image created by the documentation is of a general lawless nomadism tempered only where communities brush against areas of concentrated state interests, where facilities functioned as they should. Beyond these areas 'the tribal principle and patriarchal relations' reign.¹⁵²

The Koshchi Union was established in Central Asia in 1920, and may initially have been a response to the instability and banditry which predominated there at the time. Like other forms of collective endeavour, it did not begin meaningful operations in the Kazakh Republic until later in the decade, but by the late 1920s its Kazakh branch had become a major lever of power, dominated by ethnic Kazakhs.¹⁵³ In May 1928 it had 231,650 registered members.¹⁵⁴ Koshchi Union cells primarily operated in settled and semi-nomadic regions, but also engaged with and recruited nomads, building bases within particular *auls* and then connecting with other local cells to create unified regional branches.¹⁵⁵ Though it was intended as another means of undermining tribal loyalties in favour of class ones, its membership towards the end of

¹⁴⁷ GARF 1235/73/21: 61. RGASPI 17/25/159: 25.

¹⁴⁸ TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 39 *ob.*.

¹⁴⁹ RGASPI 17/25/116: 22.

¹⁵⁰ RGASPI 62/2/911: 168.

¹⁵¹ RGASPI 17/25/159: 26-27.

¹⁵² RGASPI 17/25/208: 48 *ob.*.

¹⁵³ APRK 139/1/541: 212-213. Bogdanov, "The Koshchi union," p. 90. Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, pp. 176, 277. A certain Comrade Glukhov spoke of banditry and unrest in February 1922 at the All-Kazakh Party Conference, and said that the Party's biggest mistake on this question was its reliance on an insufficient organizational-instructional apparatus: 139/1/254: 71. See also: RGASPI 17/25/1: 180-181.

¹⁵⁴ Bogdanov, "The Koshchi union," p. 90.

¹⁵⁵ RGASPI 17/25/208: 76, 85-86.

the decade was still drawn disproportionately from affluent families, prompting intermittent purges.¹⁵⁶ As in the Party, purges were considered an effective means of shaping the lives of nomads and others who wanted to retain their institutional foothold. Like the other economic and agricultural policies of the early Soviet state, the Koshchi Union was intended to promulgate new, superior forms of behaviour and then enforce those behaviours through cooperation, support, but also patronage and financial coercion.¹⁵⁷

Like the establishment of an effective and representative administration, in the ideological atmosphere of early Soviet Central Asia, agronomic and economic reforms were believed to have important cultural consequences which are vitally important for understanding the Soviet state's relationship with Kazakh nomads. These reforms were pursued alongside ongoing efforts to learn more about nomads, in lieu of a successful attempt to bring nomads into the republic's administrative structures. At times, such was the distance between nomad and state, institutions took to migrating themselves, whether in the form of trade fairs or roving investigatory teams. This trend is also observable in the sphere of educational policy, an area with a more readily apparent cultural dimension which again had to adapt to the nomadic context.

Section Three: Education

Agronomic training, ideological instruction, general education and literacy formed a tight association of mutually relevant agendas in many Kazakh Party documents. A report from the 'agitprop department' (*agit prop otdel*) of the Kustanai Governate, dated March 1922, exemplifies the trend.¹⁵⁸ According to the piece, the agitprop department was then recruiting the best agronomists of the region to work with the local newspaper 'Steppe', to help the publication answer the questions of its readers relating to the proper cultivation and division of land and adaptation to drought conditions. The department also produced a series of pamphlets on related matters, including 'Questions of a drought-struck economy', and ran monthly agricultural courses. At the same time, the department was cooperating with the Red Army on matters of internal Party propaganda, and advising educational organs on the liquidation of illiteracy.¹⁵⁹ The agitprop department apparently combined all this with

¹⁵⁶ Bogdanov, "The Koshchi union," p. 91.

¹⁵⁷ TsGARK 81/1/665: 9-10.

¹⁵⁸ APRK 139/1/350: 11-11 *ob.*

¹⁵⁹ APRK 139/1/350: 11.

work more befitting of its title, such as the coordination of Party activities among the scattered communities of the governate.¹⁶⁰

Education was something any Kazakh Party or state organ could do. Even the Red Army's recruitment official who travelled with the Red Caravan, mentioned earlier in the chapter, had a distinctively educational function. In between explaining the Red Army's policies and activities to civilians, this figure was tasked with the establishment of schools and libraries in any military units he or she came across during his journey. Once organised, the official would leave the unit with instructions for the further development of these educational endeavours.¹⁶¹ The Red Caravan itself, in its capacity as a fact-finding expedition, confirmed the pressing need to improve literacy among Kazakhs, and insisted that Russian Party members educate themselves about local Kazakh custom and practice.¹⁶² If the Party was to function as an educational institution, it had best be educated. A Party census from January 1927 revealed that only 35% of Kazakh Party members had received a formal education, and 25% of all members were wholly illiterate. Other ethnic Party branches in Central Asia admitted worse results, but the need for basic education was clearly not imaginary.¹⁶³ In 1923 Kazakh Party cells received a 90-hour course in political economy produced in Moscow.¹⁶⁴

Such was the conflation of educational and agricultural policies, that the Kazakh People's Commissariats of Education (*Narodnyi komissariat prosveshcheniia Kirgizskoi ASSR*, or Narkompros) and Agriculture (*Narodnyi komissariat zemledeliia*, or Narkomzem) spent the summer of 1924 arguing over which organisation was best placed to manage education in rural areas.¹⁶⁵ Originally controlled largely by Narkomzem, *sovkhos* and *aul* schools were transferred to the jurisdiction of Narkompros by central organs, something Narkomzem briefly protested. After all, some of the Party's greatest agricultural challenges, including the prevention of livestock epidemics and anticipation of climactic disasters, were contingent on state-directed education.¹⁶⁶ Narkompros defended the decision on two levels; first, that Narkomzem's conception of education was too narrow, and second, that Narkompros

¹⁶⁰ APRK 139/1/350: 11 *ob.*

¹⁶¹ TsGARK 930/1/4: 36-36 *ob.*

¹⁶² APRK 139/1/339: 20, 37.

¹⁶³ Cherot, 'Nativization,' p. 54.

¹⁶⁴ TsGARK 81/1/665: 1-4.

¹⁶⁵ TsGARK 30/1/362: 195-195 *ob.*

¹⁶⁶ GARF 1235/73/21: 61.

would better manage all aspects of rural education, including its agricultural aspects.¹⁶⁷ Certainly this was a major matter, since *aul* schools were said to play the most 'decisive role' in the countryside.¹⁶⁸ The building of a network of educational institutions, offering their services to nomads, was one of the administration's foremost aims.¹⁶⁹ Education was seen as the state's way of accessing the minds of nomads, precipitating voluntary behavioural changes in agriculture, health and social order, while also effecting a larger political transformation. But all could potentially prove beneficial for the *aul*, the governate, the republic and the Union.

Even later in the decade, as fewer and fewer Party members anticipated a long-term accommodation of nomadism, Governate committees were planning to create cadres of nomadic tutors and mobile schools alongside the more conventional textbooks and educational grants.¹⁷⁰ Sovnarkom RSFSR insisted on the further construction of stationary schools in regions dominated by Kazakh nomads in August 1928, but the principle of nomadic educational institutions which moved to meet their pupils seasonally had by then been long-standing.¹⁷¹

To elaborate a little more on this trend for fact-finding expeditions, trade fairs and, here, educational projects to migrate around the steppe, what is so striking about these policies is that they differ so dramatically from more widespread representations of the Soviet state. Historians might more commonly present the Soviet state as an immovable, unyielding framework of institutions or an unresponsive, stagnant bureaucracy, highly formalised and very much of physical bricks and mortar, which is what has made the high walls of the Kremlin or the reticent facade of the Lubyanka such apposite visual metaphors for Soviet power. Could there be any greater contrast between these Muscovite landmarks and the carts of the Red Caravan or, to be discussed in section four, the Red Yurts? In place of the Byzantine paperwork for which Soviet Commissariats became notorious, small-scale Party cells travelling the steppe were necessarily cut adrift from centralized authority, albeit with clear instructions in hand. In the Kazakh Republic, at least, Soviet power for a period roved the landscape in search of a hearing, rather than hiding its inner machinery away behind solid, imposing and impregnable architecture.

¹⁶⁷ TsGARK 30/1/362: 195-195 *ob.*.

¹⁶⁸ RGASPI 17/25/208: 52.

¹⁶⁹ RGASPI 62/2/911: 165.

¹⁷⁰ RGASPI 17/25/208: 52. RGASPI 17/25/87: 217.

¹⁷¹ GARF 1235/73/21: 65 *ob.*.

The physical mobility of educational institutions was intended not only for the benefit of isolated or disinterested rural Kazakhs, but also for rural Kazakhs with an interest in joining the Party. In an assault on the 'political illiteracy' of Party members and membership candidates, authorities in the Akmola region arranged educational expeditions, assemblies of peasant delegates and ideological courses which would deliver Communism to the countryside.¹⁷² In instructions published in November 1926, course convenors were advised to begin their tutelage based on an assessment of their pupils' knowledge. It was deemed essential to hold an introductory group discussion, in which the 'leader should speak as little as possible' in order to discover the issues which most interested his or her pupils.¹⁷³ Literacy for membership hopefuls was a priority, as some arrived at the assembly point completely illiterate, but on matters of political theory the pedagogue's role was to encourage Kazakhs to discover Communism for themselves: 'The old question 'lecture or discussion' should be decisively resolved in favour of the latter.'¹⁷⁴ Perhaps it was thought that the open steppe made escape from a soporific lecture too easy.

Beyond political literacy, tutors were faced with a more profound problem. As noted by VTsIK in November 1928, the Kazakh Steppe greeted the October revolution in a state of almost total illiteracy.¹⁷⁵ According to one estimate, over 90% of the *aul* population was illiterate in 1920.¹⁷⁶ Kazakh nomadic culture was traditionally oral, including in its transmission of Islam.¹⁷⁷ Literacy became a prevailing Party ambition and also a cornerstone of social mobility; attendees of literacy classes could be made Party members and encouraged to act as role models for their fellow nomads.¹⁷⁸ As argued in section one, illiteracy was a major obstacle in the recruitment of and communication with nomads. The early literacy campaigns were less effective in rural areas and riven with contradictions but it is notable that, leading into the 1930s, these campaigns have been presented as one of the Soviet administration's most unambiguous successes.¹⁷⁹ Here the Party's youth movement, the Komsomol, played a particular role, as did the republic's larger infrastructural projects, which educated

¹⁷² RGASPI 17/25/285: 217.

¹⁷³ RGASPI 17/25/285: 219.

¹⁷⁴ RGASPI 17/25/285: 219.

¹⁷⁵ GARF 1235/73/21: 24 *ob.*

¹⁷⁶ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 60.

¹⁷⁷ Frank, *Muslim Institutions*, p. 317.

¹⁷⁸ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 162.

¹⁷⁹ Grenoble, *Language Policy*, p. 47. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 397.

their Kazakh employees. By 1939 the literacy rate in the republic for those over 50 years of age was recorded at a striking 83.6 percent.¹⁸⁰

The decade closed with some of the Party's educational ambitions unfulfilled. On 17th October 1929 a representative of the KASSR informed VTsIK that there was no principle of compulsory education in the republic, nor could or would there be without further funding from Moscow.¹⁸¹ Education remained a priority for some time, therefore, and Party members continued to conflate it with all other kinds of development into the 1930s. Sedentarisation was, for some in the administration, a quintessentially progressive policy, and so it should come as no surprise that the Committee for Sedentarisation counted children's nurseries and literacy among some of its most important measures.¹⁸² The committee also discussed the building of roads and hospitals and the management of Party cadres.¹⁸³ The connection between the Committee for Sedentarisation, the First Five Year Plan, and the changing direction of cultural policy in the USSR and in the KASSR may indicate how activities were going to change in the early 1930s.¹⁸⁴ Most state organs, though not all, would stop migrating just as nomads were forced to.

In broader terms of cultural development, the living and working practices among urbanized nomads also came under the Party's gaze. As Matthew J. Payne suggests, many Kazakhs (and all nomads) were 'production outsiders', unaccustomed to the conventions of the industrial workplace.¹⁸⁵ They would need protection as well as additional guidance. Reports of Kazakhs, potentially recently-settled, damaging buildings and allowing their livestock to do the same would also have prompted the Party to adapt a rural lifestyle to an urban environment.¹⁸⁶ In May 1930 the Aktiubinsk Okrug Committee recommended that the administration of newly-settled *aul* communities should be organised with reference to the 'cultural-domestic specificities' of the population in question.¹⁸⁷ This might have involved emphasising the importance

¹⁸⁰ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, pp. 400-401.

¹⁸¹ GARF 1235/73/21: 21 *ob.*

¹⁸² These were listed alongside the building of telephone lines and the provision of medical aid. See: TsGARK 1179/6/5: 2.

¹⁸³ TsGARK 1179/6/1: 3, 8, 10.

¹⁸⁴ For an example of the Committee's comprehensive engagement with the five year plan, see: TsGARK 1179/6/5: 15-16 *ob.*. See also: Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 165.

¹⁸⁵ Payne, *Stalin's Railroad*, p. 95.

¹⁸⁶ RGASPI 17/25/285: 83.

¹⁸⁷ RGASPI 17/25/140: 215.

of hygienic domestic conditions, for example, something which would also be of repeated significance in the Party's dealings with nomadic women.¹⁸⁸

Section Four: Nomadic Women, Health and the Red Yurts

Inheriting certain elements of their approach from late Tsarist intellectual currents, the Bolsheviks brought to post-revolutionary Russia a commitment to transforming women's role in both domestic and professional contexts.¹⁸⁹ In Central Asia this same agenda interacted with local cultural and religious practices, but was no less radical, indeed it may have seemed more so.¹⁹⁰ The proper position of women, hotly contested within the Party in the 1920s, was deeply intermeshed with questions of culture and everyday life.¹⁹¹

Like other policies, campaigning for the inclusion and betterment of women was an interdepartmental effort, and was understood as such by the Kazakh Party branch.¹⁹² At times this appears to have undermined the case for a strong central *zhenotdel* (Women's Department), which was denied an official role, centrally and regionally, in famine relief efforts in 1922 because its brief was considered insufficiently relevant.¹⁹³ Sarah Cameron rightly asserts that female emancipation among Kazakhs (who were less likely to wear a veil, for example) did not become the heightened political controversy it did among Uzbeks.¹⁹⁴ Shortage of manpower also affected the women's agenda: Goloshchekin, by then first secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party, admitted in 1927 that the republic suffered from a critical lack of relevant trained professionals, including doctors and midwives.¹⁹⁵

On the other hand, gender politics were not relegated to the prerogative of a lonely sub-committee in Alma-Ata, formed to fulfil the demands of one of Moscow's

¹⁸⁸ This secret letter from the secretary of the Kazakh Obkom, sent early in the decade, indicates that Kazakhs generally made less hygienic tenants: Gatagova, Kosheleva, and Pogovaia, *TSK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros*, pp. 131-133.

¹⁸⁹ Elizabeth Waters, 'The Modernisation of Russian Motherhood, 1917-1937,' *Soviet Studies* 44, no. 1 (1992), pp. 123-124. Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, p. 68.

¹⁹⁰ Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*, p. 53.

¹⁹¹ Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, pp. 68, 232. For a discussion of the relationship between women and culture in the 1930s, see: Julie Hessler, 'Cultured Trade: The Stalinist Turn towards Consumerism,' in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 201.

¹⁹² APRK 139/1/463: 54.

¹⁹³ APRK 139/1/463: 54. Heinzen discusses comparable interdepartmental disputes here: Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State,' p. 75.

¹⁹⁴ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, pp. 81-82. See also: Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*.

¹⁹⁵ RGASPI 17/25/116: 21.

ideological preoccupations. The Koshchi Union was expected to be sensitive to issues of gender.¹⁹⁶ Regional committees regularly discussed 'work among women' alongside finances, communications and governance, and published local newspapers for working female Kazakhs.¹⁹⁷ Though the Union-wide *zhenotdel* was formally dissolved in 1930, it continued to function in Kazakhstan and in similar republics into the 1930s.¹⁹⁸ Prior to this moment, it too reflected the tight interconnection between health, education and gender in the Bolsheviks' approach. Each governate's *zhenotdel* was expected to enlist women specifically in the battle with typhoid in 1922, for example.¹⁹⁹ Women were seen as the primary conduit for the improvement of domestic hygiene and public health in the *aul*, and were targeted with leaflets advising on these matters.²⁰⁰

By various Soviet criteria of development women lagged behind men, and as nomads similarly lagged behind sedentary communities, so nomadic women formed one of the neediest groups in the Union. From the beginning, the administration of the Kazakh Republic had been keen to recognise gender difference in the nomadic *aul*. All nomadic women were exempt from the Work and Cartage tax in early 1922, for example.²⁰¹ If literacy was rare among Kazakhs in the early 1920s, it was almost unheard of among Kazakh women, and as such they were particularly targeted by literacy campaigns, with a phalanx of female Kazakh literacy instructors envisioned by the Party in November 1922.²⁰² The recruitment of poor Kazakh women into the Communist Party was also a daunting aim.²⁰³ In some ways nomadic culture may have mitigated the challenge, however. Yaacov Ro'i asserts that to some degree Kazakh women were less secluded than in other Central Asian communities, and that this was due to the informality of nomadic custom, which made gender segregation impractical.²⁰⁴ Yet it is notable that Ro'i cites Soviet-era scholarship in defence of this description, which may originate from later Soviet attempts to present nomads as culturally amenable to Communism. In this respect, the argument bears indicative

¹⁹⁶ TsGARK 81/1/665: 9.

¹⁹⁷ RGASPI 17/25/285: 70. RGASPI 17/25/236: 141. Gender equality was also explicitly written into drafts of the Kazakh Republic's first constitution in January 1924: Dakhshleiger and Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane*, p. 102. TsGARK 81/1/665: 12.

¹⁹⁸ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 156.

¹⁹⁹ APRK 139/1/243.

²⁰⁰ TsGARK 81/1/665: 12.

²⁰¹ APRK 139/1/463: 133. For further discussion of this tax, see Chapter Six.

²⁰² APRK 139/1/463: 59. Female illiteracy was a serious challenge across the Union in the 1920s and 1930s: Waters, 'The Modernisation of Russian Motherhood,' p. 124.

²⁰³ 17/25/236: 141.

²⁰⁴ Yaacov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000), pp. 451, 542.

similarities with Tsarist efforts to present Kazakh nomads as lacking in Islamic fervour and therefore responsive to Orthodox Christianity and Russification.²⁰⁵

As indicated by Narkompros KASSR, until 1923 most propagandizing among female Kazakhs was restricted to urban and settled regions. It was at this point that the administration turned its attention on the nomadic *aul* and its attendant challenges; the scattered distribution of the population, changing seasonal circumstances and the 'hostile attitude from the male part of the population to the involvement of women in the work of the Soviets.'²⁰⁶

The Soviet conception of female empowerment encompassed many changes in behaviour and belief, including their participation in collective labour, Party membership, voting, improved literacy and economic independence. The Communist Party also sought to undermine and ultimately eradicate certain customs, such as polygamy and *kalym*.²⁰⁷ *Kalym* was the Kazakh dowry or bride price, which predated Islam but was later adapted to that religion.²⁰⁸ A 'day for the cancellation of *kalym*' was celebrated by Party cells in 1923, and the following year in October it and similar practices were formally banned through Soviet reforms to the criminal code.²⁰⁹ Here the Soviet Union was continuing a subjugation of Kazakh legal and social practices which had begun long before 1917, but such measures were also part of the Communist Party's increasingly antagonistic relationship with religious norms and activities.²¹⁰ Sultan-Galiev drew these issues together most concisely in 1921: 'cultural backwardness and religious fanaticism go hand in hand, completing and mutually reinforcing each other.'²¹¹

²⁰⁵ Allen J. Frank argues that non-Soviet historians like Martha Brill Olcott and Alexandre Bennigsen have perpetuated this misrepresentation of the Kazakhs by uncritically referencing Tsarist-era sources: Frank, *Muslim Institutions*, pp. 275-276. See also: Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 198-199.

²⁰⁶ TsGARK 81/1/665: 5, 9.

²⁰⁷ TsGARK 81/1/665: 5-13.

²⁰⁸ Kassymova, Kundakbaeva, and Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, pp. 135-136.

²⁰⁹ TsGARK 81/1/665: 6. H  l  ne Carr  re D'Encausse, *The Great Challenge: Nationalities and the Bolshevik State 1917-1930* (London: Holmes & Meier, 1992), p. 165. For further discussion of the Soviet state's reform of religious practice, see: Shoshana Keller, 'Conversion to the New Faith: Marxism-Leninism and Muslims in the Soviet Empire,' in *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, ed. Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 311-334.

²¹⁰ For further discussion on the Soviet Union's treatment of women and religious custom in Central Asia, see: Northrop, *Veiled Empire*. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar*, pp. 204-240. Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 214.

²¹¹ Bennigsen and Wimbush, eds., *Muslim National Communism*, p. 148.

By the mid-1920s, overall, the ‘involvement of women in Soviet-construction’ was a revealing motif.²¹² As with the Party’s efforts in recruitment and democratic engagement, to which women were said to have a ‘passive attitude,’ work among women did change women’s lives but it also served to enlarge the state and reinforce its power.²¹³ Economic independence, for example, meant putting women to work in the rural economy, which had the useful additional benefit of increasing productivity.²¹⁴

The Party’s engagement with women in the *aul* was closely associated with its work ‘among the *aul* youth.’²¹⁵ As with women, young people were seen as instrumental for the ‘sovietisation of the *aul*’ and as vitally important for the future industrialisation of Central Asia.²¹⁶ The Party prioritised the improvement of literacy among children and encouraged them to read Communist newspapers as well as focusing on their participation in agricultural work and so on. The Kazakh Komsomol was expected to cooperate when possible with the Red Yurts, shortly to be discussed.²¹⁷ Within the sub-group of youth, the Party again distinguished by gender. Young girls were to be taught to read, but the Party also revealed the limits of its radicalism by encouraging them to study the domestic arts of embroidery and handicrafts.²¹⁸

As in agriculture, class-consciousness and democracy, the emancipation of women required educational programmes and Party-led instruction at conferences, though these were more common in settled regions.²¹⁹ Specifying a schedule for each seminar and conference was a preoccupation of Narkompros, which was perhaps concerned that such novel forms of political engagement could easily be derailed by unpractised participants.²²⁰ At conferences, a high premium was placed on the discussion of practical, everyday issues which would appeal to a Kazakh ‘as a mother, as a builder of the economic life of the *aul*.’²²¹ At the third Kazakh regional congress of Governate Women’s Departments, held on 4th June 1922, delegates enjoyed lectures on the economy of the Kazakh Republic and society under NEP. An excursion into the

²¹² TsGARK 81/1/665: 9.

²¹³ TsGARK 81/1/665: 9.

²¹⁴ TsGARK 81/1/665: 6.

²¹⁵ TsGARK 81/1/665: 24.

²¹⁶ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 402.

²¹⁷ TsGARK 81/1/665: 24, 25, 27, 30.

²¹⁸ TsGARK 81/1/665: 29.

²¹⁹ TsGARK 81/1/665: 8.

²²⁰ TsGARK 81/1/665: 5, 6.

²²¹ TsGARK 81/1/665: 6.

countryside was also organised, where attendees could familiarize themselves with new methods of collective childcare and upbringing under Communism.²²²

State or Party-led education clearly took many forms, including mobile or seasonally-run schools, conferences, excursions and more conventional stationary institutions, but also the Red Yurts. These were bands of medical and legal experts, veterinary specialists, tutors and Party propagandists, offering the benefits of their expertise and distributing educational publications.²²³ Normally Russian by ethnicity, with men predominating further up the chain of command, some of these professionals came from as far away as Moscow. They were often accompanied by one or more Kazakh guides who also functioned as translators.²²⁴ The groups would roam the steppe in yurts decorated with a red flag to signal their purpose and their affiliation with the state. Expeditions could last months, but groups would seldom offer their services to a particular nomadic *aul* for more than 5-10 days before moving on. One group saw 3,000 individuals during a three-month summer period in 1927.²²⁵ Like almost any of the republic's endeavours, the Red Yurts were understaffed and underfunded, but they clearly had their admirers in the administration.²²⁶

The Syr-Darya Governate committee stated in March 1927 that 'The Red Yurt is the proven form of work among women of the nomadic population.'²²⁷ Of all the institutions or policies which worked to bring women into the political space of the Kazakh Republic, the Red Yurt was the most intimate. Michael Rouland associates the campaign almost entirely with women and gender, though in reality the Red Yurt's objectives varied just as many other institutions' did.²²⁸ Its mobility and flexibility made it seem an indispensable method for engaging with nomads on various domestic, social and everyday matters, with the Semipalatinsk, Syr-Darya and Zhetysay Governates all recognising the utility of the Red Yurts and committing more resources to their expansion in the later 1920s.²²⁹ All this may explain the campaign's surprising longevity. In 1928, as the imposition of the first Five Year Plan coincided with the Kazakh Republic's first incidents of forced sedentarisation, VTsIK noted the success of

²²² APRK 139/1/463: 276.

²²³ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 155. TsGARK 81/1/665: 11-12.

²²⁴ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 60. Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 219.

²²⁵ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 158.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

²²⁷ RGASPI 17/25/256: 79.

²²⁸ Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, p. 176.

²²⁹ RGASPI 17/25/236: 166. RGASPI 17/25/256: 86-86 *ob.*. RGASPI 17/25/156: 46.

the Red Yurts campaign and recommended its continued use.²³⁰ The following year approximately 134 yurts were active on the steppe, of which around 100 focused specifically on women. By 1939 this number had declined to less than 12.²³¹ Yet there seems to have been some recognition in the USSR after World War II that the persistently transhumant behaviour of some Kazakhs still required a state willing to come to them. By 1952, in the era of late Stalinism, 273 Red Yurts were back in operation.²³²

The seminal piece on the Red Yurts campaign, cited indispensably elsewhere in the secondary literature, is Paula A. Michaels' *Curative Powers: Medicine and Empire in Stalin's Central Asia*.²³³ Michaels is articulate and admirably clear about her own analytical perspective, placing the Yurts alongside sedentarisation and collectivisation as a series of imperial policies used to colonise and control the steppe.²³⁴ She makes a distinction between two types of medicine in her discussion, 'biomedicine', which was advocated by the Yurts and the Soviet state more generally, and 'ethnomedicine', native to Kazakh nomadic culture.²³⁵ This choice of words reveals a position close to that of Virginia Martin, who seeks to avoid a crude dichotomy between 'traditional' (Kazakh) and 'modern' (Russian) culture in her own work.²³⁶ Medicine is a final, vital aspect of the state's social policy in the 1920s, associated with culteredness but also with productivity and the control of typhoid and other dangerous diseases. As with other educational endeavours, sanitation in the *aul* made nomads more useful (or less of a nuisance) to the state.

It is true that the 'curative practices' advocated by state-employed doctors would have been quite alien to many nomads, and the opportunity for cultural misunderstanding was clearly considerable. In the early twentieth century, Kazakhs were still paying for the ministrations of religious healers.²³⁷ The new doctors on the steppe, including those employed by the Communist Party to work on the Red Yurts,

²³⁰ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 156.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 156.

²³³ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, pp. 61, 206. Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, p. 176.

²³⁴ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, pp. 1-8.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

²³⁶ Michael Khodarkovsky, 'Review,' *Russian Review* 61, no. 2 (2002), p. 306.

²³⁷ Allen J. Frank, 'Islam and Ethnic Relations in the Kazakh Inner Horde: Muslim Cossacks, Tatar Merchants, and Kazakh Nomads in Turkic Manuscripts, 1870-1910,' in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, ed. Anke von Kügelen, Michael Kemper, and Allen J. Frank (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1998), p. 235.

were generally secular, educated in European Russia, and politically conscious.²³⁸ They sought to create patient histories for the nomads they saw by asking women about their first menstruation, the age at which they lost their virginity (Kazakhs were apparently asked simply when they got married) and how many children they had.²³⁹ These were intrusive questions for a member of the old imperial nationality to ask, and rumours subsequently spread that the Red Yurts kidnapped Kazakh girls to put them to work in the city.²⁴⁰ Doctors of the Red Yurt also administered smallpox vaccinations and offered advice on food hygiene.²⁴¹ Whether or not all these policies constitute an imperial project must be placed within this thesis' wider discussion of Soviet power in Central Asia, to be addressed in Chapter Nine. There is at least space here to point out that the bulk of Bolshevik ideology's intellectual origins, which justified the actions of the Red Yurts, was avowedly anti-imperialist. Although the kind of cultural work practised by the Red Yurts was associated with settlement, settlement was not only pursued for the economic benefit of the metropole. Nomadism was considered profoundly disempowering as well as culturally and economically inferior.

As with the Party's agenda for women more generally, the Red Yurts were not controlled directly from one central authority. Regional bodies employed Yurts with enthusiasm. In 1927, the Syr-Darya Governate resolved to deploy its Red Yurts for three to four months at a time, to increase their number and provide them with more trained staff. In conjunction with other bodies, it insisted that its Yurts receive more funds for 'circles' (*kruzhki*) of nomads working on hygiene, sanitation, home economics, needle-work, singing and drama.²⁴² The Red Yurts in the region were also expected to arrange more consultations with pregnant women, debtors and other potentially vulnerable people in need of legal aid.²⁴³ In the Zhetysu area in November 1928, local organs noted approvingly the success of the Yurts, which had only been operating nearby for a short time. Since they were deployed, significant progress had been made in the Party's campaigns against *kalym* and for the payment of alimony, *kruzhki* for young girls were being organised around the Red Yurts' encampments and female literacy had increased. There was however room for improvement, and the Governate

²³⁸ Waters, 'The Modernisation of Russian Motherhood,' p. 126.

²³⁹ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 158.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

²⁴¹ RGASPI 17/25/156: 46-46 *ob.*

²⁴² RGASPI 17/25/256: 79. On use of theatrical *kruzhki*, see also: Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 399. The specific ideological purposes of some *kruzhki* remain unclear, but it is tempting to speculate that one reason for their existence may have been to create what may now be called women-only spaces, in which a freer form of female self-expression was encouraged.

²⁴³ RGASPI 17/25/256: 79.

authorities planned to expand almost every aspect of the Yurts' work, most particularly hygienic instruction, which was said to play a hugely important role in the betterment of nomadic life. Again with specific regard to women, the Red Yurts in the Zhetysu area apparently lacked a permanent legal advisor, weakening the quality of advice offered to nomadic women.²⁴⁴

The Red Yurts were not the Party's only conduit for disseminating medical expertise. Stationary 'Medical points' or centres employed doctors and other specialists to offer services to visiting nomads.²⁴⁵ Medical staff of this kind in the Gur'ev Okrug in 1926 apparently became despondent about the isolation of the nomadic population and the impossibility of properly engaging with it, submitting complaints which local Party leaders were keen to rebuff.²⁴⁶ Scattered over a wide area, nomads made difficult patients, which worried one attendee of the Alma-Ata Okrug conference who spoke of the common illnesses which afflicted nomadic communities.²⁴⁷ In August 1928 Sovnarkom RSFSR instructed its Kazakh equivalent and Gosplan RSFSR to work together on a five-year plan for the growth of a public health system 'in rural and particularly in nomadic regions.'²⁴⁸ For veterinary assistance beyond the Red Yurts, the Kazakh Sovnarkom in 1928 was also in talks with Muscovite authorities about 'the strengthening of the zootechnical veterinary network.'²⁴⁹

Perhaps more vividly than in any other policy area, the state's treatment of Kazakh women demonstrates the depth and intimacy of the social and cultural changes for which the Party hoped. Health, sanitation, marital relations, handicrafts and leisure time all came under the jurisdiction of authorities outside of the traditional structures of nomadic society. It is unsurprising that, in these most personal and private aspects of life, the state was at its most proactive and dynamic, using the conventional transportation means of the nomads themselves to proselytise and transform. Unlike illiteracy, for example, which correlated quite clearly with nomadism, it is also notable that undesirable gender politics were not assumed to be contingent upon agricultural practice. Perhaps looking south to the deeply conservative religious communities of Uzbekistan, the Party does not seem to have assumed that settling Central Asian women were emancipated Central Asian women. Gender was one major policy area

²⁴⁴ RGASPI 17/25/156: 46-46 *ob.*

²⁴⁵ RGASPI 17/25/208: 45, 47.

²⁴⁶ RGASPI 17/25/208: 47.

²⁴⁷ RGASPI 17/25/159: 189.

²⁴⁸ GARF 1235/73/21: 65. Sovnarkom RSFSR also instructed Kazakh authorities to provide a five-year plan to include more children in public schooling.

²⁴⁹ GARF 1235/73/21: 61.

which was not conflated reductively with settlement. This is one further explanation for the enthusiasm with which the Red Yurts migrated about the steppe; they could not complacently assume that the settlement of nomads would render work among women temporary and ultimately obsolete.

Conclusion

When in April 1928 members of the Zhetysu Governate Executive Committee complained about the lack of 'cultural-economic points' in their region, they could have envisioned a diverse assortment of institutions and services.²⁵⁰ The Communist Party found distinctions between culture, economics and politics distasteful; rising prosperity meant improving cultural standards, and improving cultural standards meant rising prosperity. Both meant settlement, but in these early years they also entailed less existential transformations in nomadic life. Thus projects ranging from agronomic training sessions, vaccinations, conferences on childcare, dramatic troupes, Party recruitment and digging wells were all held to have a cultural influence on Kazakh nomads.

Just as culture and economics were effectively the same, state-building and Party recruitment were not just mutually contingent objectives; they were the same objective.²⁵¹ Comparable arguments have been made before. Regarding Turkmenistan, Adrienne Lynn Edgar argues: 'The crucial contribution of local elites in shaping Soviet nations has not received enough attention.'²⁵² This acknowledges the importance for the Bolsheviks of bringing Turkmen into the state. Similarly on Uzbekistan, Marianne Kamp elegantly states: '... if Uzbeks needed a state, then the state also needed Uzbeks.'²⁵³ What of nomads? The severe difficulty experienced in recruiting Kazakh nomads for the Communist Party and employing them for the state hints at a degree of incompatibility between nomadism and effective statecraft as it was conceived by the administration. Where successes were made – and some were, in education for example – these were often attained by state institutions which were in practice nomadic. The most obvious example was the Red Yurts and Caravan, but newspapers and *aul* schools and Party cells are also relevant here. Further development of these policies was curtailed by sedentarisation, though it is tempting to speculate on whether

²⁵⁰ As cited in the introduction: RGASPI 17/25/156: 122.

²⁵¹ Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State,' p. 98.

²⁵² Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, p. 5.

²⁵³ Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*, p. 63.

state-nomadic cooperation could have expanded in a USSR where sedentarisation was not perpetrated.

Some historians have noted the Communist Party's belief in the economic benefits of *kul'turnost'* and concluded that Soviet social policies, from stationary schools to mobile Red Yurts, were colonial policies designed to exploit the economic potential of the Kazakhs for the enrichment of the state Union-wide. This makes the USSR an Empire whose metropole, Moscow, aggrandised itself to the detriment of its realms.²⁵⁴ Party cells unleashed a cultural war against nomadic custom to 'shatter Kazakh traditional identity by destroying their nomadic lifestyle.'²⁵⁵ Nomads could then be put to work in the fields. There were certainly aspects of Kazakh nomadic custom which the Soviet state sought to alter or destroy altogether. Paula A. Michaels is right in this context to draw parallels between Soviet actions and those of Western European Empires, whose sense of cultural superiority encouraged them to suppress the alien customs of colonised peoples.²⁵⁶ The Red Yurts' campaign against *kalyms*, for example, was an uncompromising external assault on a deeply-ingrained native practice.

Most contemporary Kazakh historians, no matter how harsh their criticism of the Soviet state, are reserved about this kind of colonial paradigm.²⁵⁷ Perhaps this is because the insights of scholars such as James C. Scott or Edward Said take no major place in their common intellectual heritage, which ultimately is Soviet, in spite of the fact that Said drew some of his own intellectual inspiration from Imperial Russian scholarship.²⁵⁸ Those educated in the late Soviet era are unlikely to have been told that

²⁵⁴ Ronald Grigor Suny, 'The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, "National" Identity, and Theories of Empire,' in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 25.

²⁵⁵ Matthew J. Payne, 'The Forge of the Kazakh Proletariat? The Turksib, Nativization, and Industrialization during Stalin's first Five-Year Plan,' in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 224. Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," p. 60.

²⁵⁶ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, pp. 9-10.

²⁵⁷ Most offer highly critical assessments of early Soviet policy without accusing the USSR of being an empire: N. E. Masanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: narody i kul'tury* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2001). Zere Maindanali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana v gody nasil'stvennoi kollektivizatsii* (Almaty: KazNU im. al'-Farabi, 2003). Kokish Ryspaev, *Istoriia Respubliki Kazakhstan* (Almaty: TOO Kursiv, 2008). M. K. Kozybaev, Zh. B. Abylkhozhin, and K. S. Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane: tragediia krest'ianstva* (Alma-Ata: Ministerstvo narodnogo obrazovaniia Respubliki Kazakhstan, 1992).

²⁵⁸ Matthew J. Payne references James C. Scott in his title here: Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," pp. 59-87. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (London: Yale University Press, 1998). Paula A. Michaels draws inspiration for her argument from Edward Said's Orientalism here: Michaels, *Curative Powers*, pp. 9-10. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978).

the early Soviet state was colonial in nature. Talas Omarbekov prefers to relate Soviet actions in Kazakhstan to Bolshevik debates about the scope and role of the state.²⁵⁹

This is a more instructive approach to understanding the state's social policy among nomads in the 1920s. Notwithstanding the Bolsheviks' intellectual heritage, which was not altogether hostile to the cultures of colonial peoples, the Party would have been quite ahead of itself if it were to have educated, cultured, trained and tutored Kazakh nomads in order to exploit their labour, since these things were all required for a far more primary goal; the establishment of a functioning state apparatus which could affect nomadic life in anything other than the most crude and rudimentary fashion.²⁶⁰ For the Communist Party of 1920s Central Asia, establishing consistent, pervasive, reliable state power, structured, of course, around a collection of non-Russian national cultures, was an overwhelming priority. For the Kazakhs' relationship with the state, nomadism had a distancing effect, both literal and figurative. Campaigns on literacy, gender and hygiene worked to reduce this distance and create common reference points for administrators and nomads in the decade before sedentarisation. At this time the Party was so eager to create points of commonality and make its power and influence meaningful, it compromised with the population and migrated too. Historian Adeeb Khalid has considered the Soviet Union's imperial status extensively. His attitude is nuanced, but in rejecting characterisations of the USSR as an empire, Khalid proffers the alternative term 'mobilizational state'.²⁶¹ The early Soviet administration on the Kazakh Steppe was not only mobilizational, but mobile.

²⁵⁹ Talas Omarbekov, *Golomodor v Kazakhstane: prichiny, masshtaby i itogi (1930-1931 g.g.)* (Almaty: Kazakhskii Natsional'nyi Universitet im. Al'-Farabi, 2009), pp. 1-10.

²⁶⁰ Chapter Three discusses relevant aspects of the Bolsheviks' intellectual heritage in more depth. See also: Vera Tolz, 'Orientalism, Nationalism, and Ethnic Diversity in Late Imperial Russia,' *The Historical Journal* 48, no. 1 (2005), pp. 148-149. Niccolò Pianciola addresses similar ideas relating to state-building using the phrase 'the process of etatization of Kazak society...' Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' p. 191.

²⁶¹ Adeeb Khalid, 'Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,' *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (2006), p. 232.

Sedentarisation – it is collectivisation.

Sedentarisation – it is the liquidation of the bai-semi-feudalist.

Sedentarisation – it is the annihilation of tribal relations.

Sedentarisation – it is the meaningful ascent of the economic and cultural prosperity of the aul working masses and it is thereby their liberation from the bai cabal.¹

Chapter Eight:

Sedentarisation

Sedentarisation (*osedanie*) has haunted each chapter of this thesis.² Just as the Committee for Sedentarisation claimed limited responsibility over schooling, so confiscatory authorities were credited with a role in inducing settlement. The Communist Party used the language of internal border-making as a euphemism for the forcible settlement of nomads in the early 1930s. Sedentarisation provoked a mass exodus to China, leading to panicked debate about the USSR's border-security, and its transformational character placed it at the heart of many of the Party's disagreements over the nomads under its jurisdiction. Unquestionably, sedentarisation matters. Yet as explained in Chapter One, it is the primary objective of this thesis to describe and analyse the position of Kazakh nomads in the earlier years of Soviet power, 1919-1928, before the sedentarisation campaign reached its fiercest intensity. This campaign has, after all, already received considerable scholarly attention, while the nine or ten years which preceded it often suffer generalization or neglect. Nevertheless, before the thesis is concluded, this penultimate chapter must offer some assessment of the sedentarisation campaign and extend the scope of the project to 1934.

An analysis of sedentarisation is indispensable for a number of reasons. First, it would be difficult to draw compelling conclusions about the preceding years without some reference to it. In its assessment of the 1920s, this thesis has argued that the period was not characterized by steadily increasing levels of repression reaching an inevitable climax in the following decade. It has also emphasized that the ideological continuities in the Communist Party's treatment of nomads were hugely important but

¹ The quote is from Filipp Goloshchekin: TsGARK 1179/6/4: 7.

² As well as *osedanie*, the concept can be found in Russian-language sources described as *osedovanie*: RGASPI 17/25/339: 92. It may also be rendered as *sedentarizatsiia*: M. K. Kozybaev, Zh. B. Abylkhozhin, and K. S. Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane: tragediia krest'ianstva* (Alma-Ata: Ministerstvo narodnogo obrazovaniia Respubliki Kazakhstan, 1992), p. 15.

relatively minimal and intellectually scant, restricted largely to a sense of what progress looked like and that nomadism wasn't it. A description of sedentarisation completes these arguments by offering a point of contrast or comparison with prior events. Second, sedentarisation was a provocative assertion of state power which has garnered much comment from historians. It thus provides an opportunity to return to the historiography and to the conclusions of other studies before this thesis draws its own. Third, the sedentarisation campaign was a period in which the duplicity of state and Party documentation deepened; when the difference between what the Party said it wanted and what happened looks, in hindsight, very considerable.³ The subsequent assessment is thus a timely reminder of the imperfections of the present source material.

Discussion of sedentarisation, based largely on a historiographical survey but also employing primary references, will seek to establish what exactly sedentarisation was, when it happened, its scale and the factors which account for its existence. Some comments on how these matters relate to the thesis as a whole will then follow. Overall the chapter will assert that sedentarisation might be defined broadly, as one part of a much larger process, or very narrowly as a particular act of state agents. This act, violent forced settlement, separates the specifically nomadic experience of the post-NEP period from the Kazakh Republic's more general experience of that same time. Violent forced settlement was systematically implemented from 1929 and began to abate in 1932, coming to a halt in 1934. Due to this and other coterminous processes, the Kazakh population declined by 1.5 million individuals in these years, though the chapter rejects claims that this should be thought of as an example of genocide. It will be further argued that sedentarisation was the result of larger, Union-wide processes, but that this is not quite the same as it being a direct order from Moscow.

Sedentarisation's Auxiliaries

Though it is often referred to as a discrete phenomenon, sedentarisation was intermeshed with a host of other state initiatives. These were interdependent and helped to constitute each other, and together they amounted to a vast and radical policy programme. Other contributing factors to sedentarisation were beyond the Party's control or were the unintended consequences of state actions, but similarly had

³ Matthew J. Payne neatly encapsulates this tendency in describing the Party's disposition as 'schizophrenic': Matthew J. Payne, 'Seeing Like a Soviet State: Settlement of Nomadic Kazakhs, 1928-1934,' in *Writing the Stalin Era: Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet Historiography*, ed. Golfo Alexopoulos, Julie Hessler, and Kiril Tomoff (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2011), p. 67.

the effect of perpetuating settlement. In this sense sedentarisation had many different auxiliaries, policies or trends which existed independently of sedentarisation but also formed it, and it them. It is wise to identify and isolate these auxiliary factors before defining sedentarisation itself; four will be discussed below.

The first of these auxiliaries was collectivisation, itself a much larger project and a broader term.⁴ As explained in 'Collectivisation in Kazakhstan: Tragedy of the Peasantry', 'Strictly speaking, the mass sedentarisation of the nomadic and semi-nomadic economies was something thought up in close coordination with collectivisation.'⁵ Certainly they coincided. As the procurement of grain reached crisis levels in European Russia in late 1927, confiscation of domestic goods in the KASSR was already well under way and was applied particularly harshly on nomads.⁶ The first incidents of sedentarisation swiftly followed, first in the predominantly sedentary arable regions of Kazakhstan where grain-requisitioning was most widespread.⁷ Collectivisation, if defined as a violent attempt to improve grain yields and subdue the peasantry, had major implications for Kazakh nomads. As elsewhere, increasing grain yields in Central Asia meant increasing the amount of land sown for harvest, a project nomads had consistently confounded. Thus the logic connecting collectivisation with sedentarisation was: the fewer nomadic migrations, the more land available for newly-collectivised farming communities.⁸ Kazakh historians argue further that sedentarisation was itself a means of liquidating private property and socializing the means of production, goals closely associated with collectivisation, suggesting perhaps that Kazakhs could not be collectivised while they remained nomadic.⁹ Sedentarisation therefore facilitated collectivisation, and collectivisation justified and accelerated

⁴ A more thorough analysis of collectivisation policies can be found in Chapter Six.

⁵ Kozybaev, Abylkhozhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 17. A similar claim is made here: Zh. B. Abylkhozhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstana: Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie aspekty funktsionirovaniia i transformatsii (1920-1930-e g.g.)* (Alma-Ata: Gylym, 1991), pp. 186-187.

⁶ Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization* (London: George Allen and Unwin LTD, 1968), pp. 214-249. Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 105.

⁷ Zere Maindanali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana v gody nasil'stvennoi kollektivizatsii* (Almaty: KazNU im. al'-Farabi, 2003), pp. 4-5.

⁸ Martha Brill Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan,' *Russian Review* 40, no. 2 (1981), pp. 123-125. Michael R. Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation', PhD thesis (Georgetown University, 2005), p. 300.

⁹ K. S. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, vol. 4 (Almaty: Atamüra, 2010), pp. 271-272. See also: RGASPI 17/25/201: 179. It is argued that collectivisation was simply more difficult to achieve in nomadic regions: Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive,' p. 129.

sedentarisation.¹⁰ A declaration of the Kazakh Regional Committee in December 1929 stated that sedentarisation should be accompanied by '100 percent' collectivisation of the population, an echo of the first Five Year Plan.¹¹

The second auxiliary was an escalation in generalized political repression, another phenomenon witnessed across the USSR at the same time. Political arrests and executions were practiced both in Kazakh society at large and at the top of the Kazakh Communist Party.¹² Kazakhs and others who refused to join collective, sedentary agricultural endeavours were threatened with exile or arrest.¹³ Legislation passed on 7th August 1932 sharpened punitive measures against dissidents, which then included death by firing squad or ten years in prison and the confiscation of property.¹⁴ Sedentarisation was presented as a matter of class politics, and those who resisted as class enemies, to be treated accordingly.¹⁵ Between 1930 and 1931 the OGPU condemned 6,765 citizens of the Kazakh Republic to 'kulak exile'.¹⁶ Meanwhile Party members who publicly disagreed with sedentarisation and other policies were condemned, often as nationalists, and ostracized or deported.¹⁷

Even as the OGPU was exiling Kazakhs from their republic, many more citizens were arriving into the KASSR under the supervision of that same organ of state, and placed in one of the republic's notorious Gulag camps.¹⁸ The Karlag camp was established in 1931 and covered 281,000 acres of land alone.¹⁹ This was one form of another auxiliary to sedentarisation: mass population movement and migration.²⁰ Though the Gulag system was clearly designed to keep people in one place, it was also

¹⁰ Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," p. 65.

¹¹ Abylkhozhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstana*, p. 187. Paula A. Michaels, *Curative Powers: Medicine and Empire in Stalin's Central Asia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), p. 165.

¹² M. K. Koigeldiev, *Stalinizm i repressii v Kazakhstane 1920 - 1940-kh godov* (Almaty: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2009). N. K. Myrgaliev et al., eds., *Krasnyi terror: Sbornik dokumental'nykh materialov politicheskikh repressii 20-50-kh godov xx veka* (Almaty: Altynbek särsenbaiüly khory, 2008).

¹³ Kozybaev, Abylkhozhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁵ TsGARK 1179/6/3: 16.

¹⁶ Kozybaev, Abylkhozhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁷ I. N. Tasmagambetov, M. M. Tazhmin, and S. T. Taukel, *Istoriia otechestva v sud'bakh ego grazhdan: Sbornik avtobiografii 1922 - 1960 gody*, vol. 10, *Istoriia Kazakhstana v russkikh istochnikakh XVI-XX vekov* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2005), p. 14. K. S. Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana 1920-1946 gg.: Biograficheskii spravochnik* (Almaty: Arys, 2007), p. 9.

¹⁸ Kozybaev, Abylkhozhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 11.

¹⁹ Kate Brown, 'Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana are Nearly the Same Place,' *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 1 (2001), p. 26.

²⁰ Another example of this from 1933, which directly implicates Moscow, is discussed here: Michael Ellman, 'Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Revisited,' *Europe-Asia Studies* 59, no. 4 (2007), p. 666.

one of various ways in which sparsely populated land came to host high concentrations of people. Sedentarisation took place at a time when a large number of citizens, culturally sedentary, were arriving onto the steppe.²¹ Aside from the Gulag, some of these citizens were Russian kulaks sent to join collective farms (kolkhoz), around 51,000 of whom arrived in 1930 alone.²² Others, the so-called twenty-five-thousanders (*dvadtsatipiatitysiachniki*), were often former urban-dwellers, mostly Party members, who arrived to expedite work on the kolkhozes.²³

In the late 1920s the Kazakh administration was making hurried preparations for the arrival of these new settlers. This involved the delimitation of new arable farmland, putting renewed pressure on migrating nomads who were expelled from the best land and perpetuating a process which began with the first major influx of Russian settlers in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁴ This influx of migrants and prisoners was an additional part of the Party's programme for transforming the Kazakh Republic into a productive arable economy. Representing another form of mass itinerancy, it accelerated the state's attempts to regionalize and control movement, aims shared by the Committee for Sedentarisation which argued that nomads looked increasingly incongruous in a land of Russian-led collective farms.²⁵ As Russians and others came from the north, many Kazakhs hoping to evade the state travelled east, escaping over the border into China and thereby increasing the sedentary proportion of those Kazakhs who remained.²⁶

Sedentarisation's final auxiliary phenomenon was famine, a feature of Kazakh nomadic life for much of the early Soviet period. If, as is commonly claimed, the state turned to collectivisation and sedentarisation because it lacked the goods needed to feed the cities, it was not nomads who were hoarding grain, though they were of course unlikely to grow a surplus.²⁷ While by 1927 there was some evidence that the Kazakh economy was stabilizing and the far greatest proportion of that economy was still in private ownership, food reserves among Kazakhs had only recovered from the meagre levels which followed the Civil War, and nomadic communities were not equipped to

²¹ Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," p. 79.

²² Smith, *Red Nations*, p. 105.

²³ Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive,' p. 127. Lynne Viola, 'The "25,000ers": A study in a Soviet Recruitment Campaign during the First Five Year Plan,' *Russian History* 10, no. 1 (1983), pp. 1-30.

²⁴ TsGARK 30/1/1090b: 8-8 *ob.*, 39-42. Eugene M. Kulischer, *Europe on the Move: War and Population Changes, 1917-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 101. Bhavna Davé, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 30.

²⁵ TsGARK 1179/6/1: 1-2. TsGARK 1179/6/3: 8.

²⁶ For further details on this, see Chapter Five.

²⁷ Kokish Ryspaev, *Istoriia Respubliki Kazakhstan* (Almaty: TOO Kursiv, 2008), p. 252.

resist the state's new directives.²⁸ As will be discussed, famine went on to be a defining feature of the sedentarisation campaign, additionally provoking epidemics which were exacerbated by malnutrition.²⁹ Kazakh pastoralists were perhaps the people most vulnerable to famine across the whole USSR.³⁰ Various historians report a staggering decline in numbers of livestock, who struggled to find sufficient sustenance on the single plots of steppe land herds were apportioned.³¹ State agents then exacerbated the shortage through further confiscation.³² Famine also heralded the end of the campaign, as authorities acknowledged the crisis in 1934.³³ Sedentarisation unquestionably intensified the famine, but it was also perpetuated by administrators who spoke of it as a solution to shortages, and by starving nomads who were forced to discontinue their seasonal migrations and approach towns and farmsteads to beg for food.³⁴ Starvation may have been a more effective inducement to settlement than the violence which helped to cause it.

As stated above, each of these auxiliaries to sedentarisation (collectivisation, political repression, migration and famine) existed independently but facilitated each other. Soviet organs often discussed them interchangeably, perhaps in recognition of their interdependence, but also in keeping with the Party's predilection for viewing all policies whether political, economic or social as part of one holistic transformation of society. Goloshchekin and his allies subsumed a large variety of initiatives under the 'Little October' agenda, to be addressed shortly.³⁵ In so doing, the Bolsheviks laid the foundations for contemporary historical narratives which generally also associate all these phenomena together into a single period of unprecedented state interference and repression. Whether Russian or English-language scholarly analyses propose primarily to describe collectivisation, political repression, migration, famine or the treatment of nomads, all studies inevitably include commentary on all five issues.³⁶ This is an astute

²⁸ Abylkhodzhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstana*, p. 41. Smith, *Red Nations*, p. 105. Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, p. 294.

²⁹ Niccolò Pianciola and Susan Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe. The Collectivization of Agriculture and the Kazak Herdsmen, 1928-1934,' *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 45, no. 1/2 (2004), p. 167.

³⁰ Michael Ellman suggests that if the harvests of 1931 and 1932 had been better there may not have been a Soviet famine 'except possibly a localised one among the pastoral population of Kazakhstan': Ellman, 'Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Revisited,' p. 677.

³¹ Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive,' p. 122. Smith, *Red Nations*, p. 106. Kozybaev, Abylkhodzhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 20. N. E. Masanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: narody i kul'tury* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2001), p. 375.

³² Kozybaev, Abylkhodzhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 14.

³³ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 166.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

³⁵ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 223.

³⁶ See, for example: Kozybaev, Abylkhodzhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*. Maindanali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana*.

approach given the impossibility of understanding any one without the others, and has enabled Kazakh historians to develop a new, broad appraisal of state actions in the KASSR.³⁷ Rather than being divided into discrete processes which are observable across the Soviet Union, they are brought together into the singular national history of Kazakhstan, a project which has grown in importance since 1991.³⁸

The treatment of all aforementioned phenomena as one episode in Kazakhstan's national history, though instructive, does however have a flaw. It reveals how the period was different for Kazakhs, how the state acted in the Kazakh Republic and how this might compare with other titular republics of the USSR. But it partly neglects the issue which this thesis has repeatedly attempted to answer in various contexts: how the period was different not for Kazakhs or citizens of the Kazakh Republic, but for nomads. Here again a focus on nationhood and national history serves to distract from queries related particularly to nomadism.³⁹ Famine, migration, collectivisation and repression may have been experienced by nomadic and sedentary communities in different ways, but these differences are seldom emphasised in the historiography. The phenomena are essentially presented as republic-wide. More specifically in this case, then, what made sedentarisation, the only action experienced by nomads alone, a policy in its own right, distinct from the other phenomena with which it interacted?

It is possible to cut away the significant but ancillary features of the era following NEP in the KASSR, through to the definitive essence of sedentarisation.⁴⁰ This is sedentarisation which was not an incidental result of collectivisation, migration, authoritarianism, or famine, but a deliberate attempt to permanently settle nomads by force.⁴¹ Some of the methods used in this period were more intense, more coercive variations on the kind of techniques discussed in preceding chapters; some Red Yurts,

³⁷ In a piece published in 2010, Kazakh historians explain their desire to counter old Soviet misrepresentations of the nomadic lifestyle in the 1920s: Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, pp. 274-275.

³⁸ Maindanali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana*, pp. 3, 7. Zifa-Alua Auezova, 'Conceiving a People's History: The 1920-1936 Discourse on the Kazakh Past,' in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, ed. Michael Kemper and Stephan Conermann (Oxford: Routledge, 2011), p. 241. Talas Omarbekov, *Golomodor v Kazakhstane: prichiny, masshtaby i itogi (1930-1931 g.g.)* (Almaty: Kazakhskii Natsional'nyi Universitet im. Al'-Farabi, 2009), pp. 1-12. For further discussion of contemporary post-Soviet, Russian-language scholarship, see Chapter Two.

³⁹ One of the most notable exceptions from this trend is the work of Niccolò Pianciola: Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' pp. 137-191.

⁴⁰ Matthew J. Payne has explicitly made a similar distinction, but puts greater emphasis on the Kazakh ethnocentricity of the repression in the republic, rather than on the lifestyle of some of those Kazakhs who suffered: Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," p. 60.

⁴¹ Pianciola uses a broader definition here, though in a more specific chronological context: Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' p. 188.

for example, began withholding their services from nomads who refused to settle.⁴² Tax, more specifically arbitrary confiscation, was used to penalise nomads and exhaust their reserves. But the sedentarisation campaign was novel and distinct in its systematic and widespread use of violence to force nomads to settle. It is further distinguished by the profundity of its intended consequences. Though many other communities were forced to settle new land at this time, uniquely Sedentarisation systematically and widely used violence to settle nomads *and* terminate their habitual migratory customs, an enormous cultural as well as spatial change.

During the sedentarisation campaign, the Soviet state employed large numbers of armed militia to approach each migrating Kazakh *aul* and force the nomads present to a prearranged 'point of settlement' (*punkt osedaniia*).⁴³ Some points of settlement would boast crude purpose-built domestic constructions but in many cases nomadic yurts would simply be arranged into rows, like an orderly new village. New villages could be given names as incongruous as 'Rosa Luxemburg', a trend which began in Russian regions.⁴⁴ Though cases continued to emerge of nomads pledging to remain in place and then moving on, often the community's livestock were rounded up, some confiscated, and the rest moved into new pens. Their owners were told that releasing the animals was a criminal offence, earning immediate and severe punishment.⁴⁵ In a sense then the state did not so much settle nomads but settle nomadic livestock, leaving Kazakhs no other option but to pitch their tents within walking distance of their most important resource. This whole process was more uncompromising and coercive even than that described by Sheila Fitzpatrick with regard to collectivisation in European Russia.⁴⁶ Most former nomads lacked the technology and expertise to pursue sedentary agriculture, but more crucially, they would likely have known that their *punkt osedaniia*, hurriedly and carelessly chosen as they often had been by state employees, was usually insufficiently fertile to support animals all year every year.⁴⁷ Animals starved as their fodder depleted, and nomads starved as their herds depleted.

Accounts differ over the precise timing of the campaign, and this is where the tendency to conflate sedentarisation with other phenomena again becomes

⁴² Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 166.

⁴³ RGASPI 17/25/339: 92. Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," pp. 65-66. Kozybaev, Abylkhozhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 16. Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' p. 179.

⁴⁴ Kozybaev, Abylkhozhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 17.

⁴⁵ Davé, *Kazakhstan*, p. 59. Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive,' pp. 133-134.

⁴⁶ Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'The Question of Social Support for Collectivization,' *Russian History* 37, no. 2 (2010), pp. 156-158.

⁴⁷ Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," p. 70.

problematic. Documentation and analysis reveal that large-scale collectivisation and confiscation began in the Kazakh Republic considerably earlier than in the bulk of the USSR, with early efforts occurring in 1927-1928 before beginning again in 1929, prompting a large increase in collective farm workers in the KASSR between October 1928 and October 1929.⁴⁸ Early experiments in sedentarisation may have been held in 1928, but systematic attempts were certainly being made by late 1929, albeit in a limited and regional form. At the first regional congress of workers for sedentarisation in 1930, attendees complained about the disorganization of sedentarisation projects implemented in the previous year, and in so doing they confirm that the campaign had started by then.⁴⁹ It appears to have begun principally in the okrug administered by Alma-Ata (now Almaty), then also the capital of the KASSR.⁵⁰ This was followed in December 1929 by a decree from the Kazakh Central Executive Committee (KTsIK) which called for the sedentarisation of all nomads in the republic.⁵¹

From late 1929 onwards sedentarisation intensified in explicit response to the first Five Year Plan, which had been published in 1928.⁵² In this the campaign again bares comparison with the other phenomena described above, which were all exacerbated around the time in the late 1920s typically associated with the Stalin administration's 'Great Turn' or break from the NEP and other Party positions.⁵³ The Plan demanded that the Kazakh Party branch increase the pace of collectivisation, thereby necessitating an accelerated rate of sedentarisation given the link between the two agendas.⁵⁴ The Committee for Sedentarisation, which was formally recognized by Presidium KTsIK in April 1930, worked with the various charts and tables of economic aims produced by Moscow in conjunction with the Plan.⁵⁵ The Plan also had the characteristic effect of bureaucratizing and systematizing the process of forced settlement, meaning that all nomads across the republic would suffer comparable

⁴⁸ TsGARK 1179/6/3: 2-3. RGASPI 17/25/159: 26. RGASPI 17/25/201: 31. Kozybaev, Abylkhozhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 18. Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive,' p. 124. Smith, *Red Nations*, p. 105. Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 154. Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, pp. 288-289.

⁴⁹ TsGARK 1179/6/3: 1-2.

⁵⁰ TsGARK 1179/6/1.

⁵¹ Smith, *Red Nations*, p. 105.

⁵² Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 165. Maindanali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana*, p. 95. Sarah Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934', PhD thesis (Yale University, 2011), p. 124.

⁵³ Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," p. 60. KTsIK and the Kazakh Sovnarkom also legislated for greater political repression, for example, in February 1930: Kozybaev, Abylkhozhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 21.

⁵⁴ TsGARK 1179/6/3: 17.

⁵⁵ See, for example, TsGARK 1179/6/5: 15-16 *ob.*. On the governmental recognition of the Committee, see: TsGARK 1179/6/2: 12.

treatment and that again progress would be measured in terms of data categorised by region.⁵⁶

Beginning in limited, experimental form in 1927-1928, then, the process of violent, forced sedentarisation became a systematic republic-wide campaign in 1930. According to Niccolò Pianciola, however, it remained 'a low priority' in 1930 and 1931.⁵⁷ After an increase in activity, instructions to slow the pace of change in the KASSR came from central organs in autumn of 1932, but the campaign appears to have continued into 1934.⁵⁸ Thus the bulk of the process occurred between the years 1929 and 1933 within a timeframe not dissimilar to the period of collectivisation and anti-kulak campaigning elsewhere in the USSR.⁵⁹ In 1934 concerns over the size of the ensuing famine forced the Party to discontinue the campaign, though by then nomadism had largely ceased to be a current, notable social reality on the steppe, and by the end of the 1930s nomadism had been almost entirely eradicated; a small number of communities retained some transhumant practices far beyond this point.⁶⁰

The Scale of Sedentarisation

With a rudimentary timeframe established, it is possible to assess the scale of settlement, of sedentarisation, and of its effects. It is important to emphasise here that these are different measurements. To serve the intent of this thesis in maintaining a focus on nomads and nomadism, it is sensible to distinguish violent sedentarisation from collectivisation and other agendas. But it would be extremely difficult to divide former nomads into those who settled in direct response to sedentarisation, and those who settled in response to the changing political environment of the KASSR, generalized hardship, confiscation and so on. Indeed, as this section has argued thus far, these factors worked in chorus and numbers of any kind are difficult to trust. Soviet scholarship, upon which English-language scholars were highly reliant until the 1990s, was of course under pressure to justify the earliest actions of the state and thus includes questionable data.⁶¹ Previous chapters described the problems encountered by an underdeveloped state apparatus wanting to differentiate permanent settlement

⁵⁶ Maindanali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana*, p. 95. Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 165.

⁵⁷ Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' p. 188.

⁵⁸ Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," pp. 75-76.

⁵⁹ Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (London: University of Washington Press, 2004), p. 43.

⁶⁰ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, pp. 154, 165. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 272.

⁶¹ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 218. As an example, consider this account of the years leading to the campaign from S. B. Baishev: S. B. Baishev, *Ocherki ekonomicheskoi istorii Kazakhskoi SSR (1860-1970 gg.)* (Alma-Ata: Izdatel'stvo Kazakhstan 1974), pp. 121-124.

from temporary settlement and habitual migration from reactionary migration. These problems did not disappear in 1929, in fact they were compounded by the Party's common conflation of collectivisation and sedentarisation. Thus what should we make of Martha Brill Olcott's assertion that by the 10th March 1930 56.6 percent of the republic's population had been collectivised?⁶² Was this proportion also henceforth sedentary?

It is perhaps unsurprising in this context that many historians prefer to cite the drop in livestock during the period, which certainly communicates the depth of the famine.⁶³ The statistics are unsettling in their scale. In 1928, according to one group of Kazakh scholars, there were 6,509,000 cattle in the republic. By 1932, as sedentarisation began to ease, the republic contained only 965,000 cattle. The same source tells us that numbers of camels also dropped from 1,024,000 in 1928 to 63,000 in 1935.⁶⁴ These figures can be found repeated in a number of texts, however, and as with the statistics utilized by Olcott they may have their roots in Soviet scholarship and reflect its agenda.⁶⁵

In terms purely of sedentarisation, estimates are few and they can be obscured by the Party's tendency to talk of the *khoziaistvo*, here comparable to a community or group of nomads, instead of individuals. Zere Maidanali cites the Committee for Sedentarisation's claim that 443,700 *khoziaistva* were settled by the end of 1932, but the number of nomads within each community would likely have varied considerably.⁶⁶ Other historians give a sense of fluctuation in the campaign, wherein 87,136 nomadic and semi-nomadic *khoziaistva* were forcibly settled in 1930; 77,508 in 1931; 77,674 in 1932; and 242,208 in 1933.⁶⁷ Though these numbers do not correlate with Maidanali's, they bear some resemblance to further figures from the Committee for Sedentarisation, which for example repeatedly claimed that 84,340 nomadic and semi-nomadic *khoziaistva* were forced to settle between January and November 1930.⁶⁸

⁶² Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive,' p. 129. A similar claim can be found here: Maidanali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana*. Kozybaev, Abylkhozhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 4. These or similar statistics may have originated from The General Aims of the Kolkhoz Movement in Kazakhstan, published in 1931, and cited here: Abylkhozhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstana*, p. 177.

⁶³ Smith, *Red Nations*, p. 106. Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive,' p. 122.

⁶⁴ Kozybaev, Abylkhozhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 20.

⁶⁵ Here they are cited without a reference to primary sources: *Ibid.*, p. 20. See also: Abylkhozhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstana*, p. 190. Masanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: narody i kul'tury*, p. 375. For further discussion of Soviet scholarship, see Chapter Two.

⁶⁶ Maidanali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana*, pp. 111-112.

⁶⁷ Kozybaev, Abylkhozhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 16.

⁶⁸ TsGARK 1179/6/4: 7. The same figure can be found here: TsGARK 1179/6/3: 4.

Matthew J. Payne gives a similar figure, preferring to translate *khoziaistvo* as 'household'.⁶⁹ Interestingly in its own documentation the Committee for Sedentarisation goes on to report that, of the 84,340 *khoziaistva* settled, 45,500 had also been 'covered by collectivisation' (*kollektivizatsiei okhvacheny*), so a settled nomad was not always a collectivised nomad.⁷⁰ Aside from the problems of the *khoziaistvo* as a unit of measurement, the Committee for Sedentarisation would have been under political pressure to present solid statistical data despite the likelihood that it, like much of the Kazakh administration, was under-staffed and under-resourced. The most obvious retort to this complaint, however, is that if any organ of the Soviet state was going to yield instructive information on the sedentarisation campaign, it was probably going to be the Committee for Sedentarisation. For the later years of the process, avoiding the restrictions of the *khoziaistvo* measurement, Paula A. Michaels claims that 159,000 nomads and semi-nomads were settled from 1932 to 1933.⁷¹ Maindanali offers data on sedentarisation divided by region of the republic.⁷²

Measuring overall fatality rates for the period is also complicated.⁷³ More than one historian points out that the massive drop in the number of Kazakhs registered in the KASSR after the first Five Year Plan is partially explained by a mass exodus to China and elsewhere during 1930s, so paying sensible attention to likely demographic trends whilst comparing the 1926 and 1939 All-Union censuses does not guarantee an accurate estimate (the Kazakh Republic of 1926 also included regions which it had lost by 1939).⁷⁴ Furthermore it is not easy to separate Kazakhs from non-Kazakhs among the deceased.⁷⁵ A kind of consensus has emerged, however, that around one and a half million Kazakhs died in the early 1930s as a result of famine, violence and epidemics, all created or exacerbated by the actions of the Soviet state. Estimates closer to one million are generally found in older works written during the Cold War such as Robert Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow*, though Olcott's quote of one and a half million also

⁶⁹ Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," p. 71.

⁷⁰ TsGARK 1179/6/4: 7.

⁷¹ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 165.

⁷² Maindanali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana*, pp. 111-112.

⁷³ This applies across the USSR, of course. See: R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, 'Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33: A Reply to Ellman,' *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 4 (2006), pp. 625-633.

⁷⁴ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 286. Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe: The Memoir of a Nomad under Stalin* (New York: Overlook/Rookery, 2007), p. vii. Omarbekov, *Golomodor v Kazakhstane*, p. 9. Kulischer, *Europe on the Move*, p. 101. Didar Kassymova, Zhanat Kundakbaeva, and Ustina Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), pp. 101, 144. Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, pp. 291-292. These calculations and debates have previously been mentioned in Chapter Two.

⁷⁵ Kozybaev, Abylkhodzhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 375.

comes from a 1941 piece by Naum Jasny, and Eugene M. Kulischer suggested the same number in 1948.⁷⁶ More recent analyses from Kazakh historiography can draw nearer to two million, though the timescales over which fatality is measured can vary.⁷⁷ Estimates have increased over time but there is little evidence that contemporary differences run between English and Russian-language scholarship. For Niccolò Pianciola the 'most ... convincing contribution to the problem' is S. Maksudov's assertion that 1,450,000 Kazakh individuals died as a direct result of starvation between 1931 and 1933.⁷⁸ In summary, the range of policies imposed on the Kazakh Republic in the early 1930s by the Soviet state, including sedentarisation, precipitated a mass famine and a demographic catastrophe.⁷⁹ With all factors considered, the gap between the 1926 and 1939 censuses reveals a drop in the Kazakh population of over one third.⁸⁰

Sedentarisation was a campaign whose principal aim was the settlement of all nomads in the KASSR. In the pursuit of this aim it was aided by a number of other concurrent phenomena; collectivisation, political repression, migration and famine, all of which began to escalate in the late 1920s and reached their peak in the early 1930s. Sedentarisation distinguishes itself from the other factors which contributed to greater levels of settlement, and from the state's previous efforts to encourage settlement, by its systematic and widespread utilization of violent force. This force, in combination with other phenomena, largely eliminated nomadism in the Kazakh Republic and caused well over one million Kazakhs to starve to death.

'In today's terms, it would unquestionably justify the accusation of genocide.'⁸¹ So says journalist Tom Stacey of the events described above in his introduction to Mukhamet Shayakhmetov's poignant memoir of the Kazakh famine. Kazakh historians have used the terms 'Goloshchekin's Genocide' 'ethnocide' or 'Kazakhcide' (*Kazakhtsid*) in making such an accusation as, though other nationalities suffered from the state's

⁷⁶ Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, pp. 29-292. Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 190. Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive,' p. 122. For more from Jasny, see: Naum Jasny, *The Socialized Agriculture of the USSR* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949). Kulischer, *Europe on the Move*, p. 101. Further discussion of estimates made before 1991 can be found here: Kozybaev, Abylkhodzhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 27.

⁷⁷ Kassymova, Kundakbaeva, and Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, p. 101. Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe*, p. vii. Omarbekov, *Golomodor v Kazakhstane*, pp. 7-9. Kozybaev, Abylkhodzhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 376.

⁷⁸ Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' p. 137.

⁷⁹ Abylkhodzhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstana*, p. 232.

⁸⁰ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 284.

⁸¹ Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe*, p. vii.

policies, Kazakhs suffered disproportionately within their own republic.⁸² Payne indicates that deaths were 'highly ethnicized' there.⁸³ However, he also acknowledges that 'the state expended enormous resources to avoid "mass extermination", unfortunately it was rather indifferent in monitoring the use of these resources.'⁸⁴ Few analysts describe sedentarisation as a deliberate attempt to exterminate Kazakhs.⁸⁵ If it had been intentional, attempts at mitigation would never have been made, and this logic applies even if attempts were unsuccessful or lacklustre. What the post-NEP state wanted to exterminate was nomadism, not Kazakhs.

Furthermore Kazakhstan's experience of the collectivisation era must be properly contextualized alongside other parts of the USSR at this time, as Sarah Cameron does most eloquently: 'Other parts of the Soviet Union, most notably Ukraine and parts of Russia (the Volga, Don and Kuban regions), would also experience terrifying collectivisation famines, peaking in the period from 1932-1933. But hunger in the Kazakh Steppe assumed a different pattern, arriving earlier, enduring longer and becoming proportionately more deadly than elsewhere in the Soviet Union.'⁸⁶ The famine became more severe at a faster rate in the Kazakh Republic, then, but the genocide model does not fit if famine was neither intentional nor unique to one nationality across the USSR, otherwise we may also accuse the Soviet state of seeking to exterminate Russians in the Volga region but not elsewhere. The fact that targeting nomadism was in effect targeting Kazakhs is clear from the particularly egregious impact of the collectivisation drive in the KASSR, but official Party policy refused to recognise nomadism as an aspect of Kazakh national culture, so the resulting impact on Kazakhs as a group was ideologically incidental.⁸⁷ Prejudice against Central Asian culture certainly played a part, but was not tied to any one genus or race. This would further complicate any accusation of ethnic cleansing on the steppe at this time. It has been argued previously in this chapter that the Kazakh national paradigm is useful for studying the collectivisation era because it amounted to a republic-wide transformation, worse than in the Soviet Union's other national territories. But for the

⁸² Omarbekov, *Golomodor v Kazakhstane*, p. 6. L. D. Kuderina, *Genotsid v Kazakhstane* (Moscow: 1994).

⁸³ Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," p. 60.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁸⁵ Some have argued that the Kazakhs' experience may have been the product of a genocide caused by negligence, though Michael Ellman notes that this excludes the event from the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide's definition of the phenomenon: Ellman, 'Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Revisited,' p. 682.

⁸⁶ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 125.

⁸⁷ Certainly the scale of collectivization in the KASSR was as comprehensive as anywhere in the USSR at the time: Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, p. 43.

purposes of studying sedentarisation specifically, accusations of genocide are yet another imposition of the national paradigm onto a story principally about nomadism. This lifestyle was the intended victim. This is confirmed by some explanations for the origins of sedentarisation, the final topic for this section.

Explaining Sedentarisation

One of the concluding aims of this thesis will be to offer some explanation for the brutal treatment of nomads in the early 1930s, including but not limited to sedentarisation. But there is opportunity here to ask the narrower question of why the state began perpetrating specifically violent, forced sedentarisation when it did. This section will consider and assess some of the explanations which have been offered for the emergence of violent sedentarisation in the late 1920s.

First, some historical summaries prefer to cite the Communist Party's ideological antipathy to nomadism to explain the events of 1929 onwards. It is true that, 'The ideology of sedentarisation was closely linked to the full transformation of the economic form.'⁸⁸ It was explicitly designed to undermine the power structures of rural Kazakh society, characterised by the Party as patriarchal, chauvinistic or in some other sense unequal.⁸⁹ But as argued in Chapter Three, the association of nomadism with economic backwardness was a constant throughout the 1920s, and anxiety about class structures in the nomadic *aul* had been debated since the very earliest days of Soviet power. In other words, when the Party began experimenting with sedentarisation, there was nothing new its view that nomadism was economically useless, and compelling evidence of emotional hostility towards nomads among Party leaders remains elusive. The Party had acted on its concerns and ideas already, seeking to incentivise settlement through a host of policy areas, but it did not implement systematic, violent sedentarisation until 1929. There must have been novel factors at work at this later time.

Alternatively, the confluence of unprecedented events in the late 1920s, including mass collectivisation, Stalin's increasing centralisation of power, and the first Five Year Plan, have led many historians to a more convincing macroeconomic explanation. First, it is argued that the nomadic economy was prone to cyclical crises, particularly in the form of *dzhut*, and was characterised by 'long-term

⁸⁸ Kozybaev, Abylkhodzhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, p. 15.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3. TsGARK 1179/6/3: 18, 20.

unsustainability'.⁹⁰ Even if this depiction was unfair, and the crises experienced by Kazakh nomads before and during the 1920s were the result of Russian imperial encroachment, Civil War and Soviet mismanagement, it is clear that the majority of those in the Communist Party held the Kazakhs' lifestyle to blame by 1929.

Second, it is asserted that this perceived or real unsustainability contrasted unfavourably with the onerous demands of the first Five Year Plan. The argument follows a traditional pattern. The rapid industrialisation and urbanisation demanded by the Plan required a massive increase in available foodstuffs and a subsequent grain shortage. The Kazakh Republic was imagined as a major grain-producing region of the USSR, and vast arable projects were envisaged across the territory.⁹¹ In the context of these new economic exigencies, nomads were worse than useless.⁹² They wasted land with their unproductive agricultural practices while their republic was being placed under ever greater demands.⁹³ If their lifestyle were terminated, large tracts of migratory land could be put to the tractor and plough without conflict. Meanwhile, settled nomads could be set to work on the new collective farms.⁹⁴ From a problem to be managed, nomadism became an obstacle to be surmounted, and as quickly as possible.⁹⁵

There are problems with this argument. As is clear from any Party communique produced in the 1920s, Soviet authorities had always justified almost anything they did in terms of the imposing macroeconomic necessities of the day. Further, there is possibly some evidence that, in 1927 when the majority of the republic's population still practiced some form of seasonal migration, the Kazakh economy was stabilizing after a decade of turmoil.⁹⁶ This evidently did nothing to improve the Party's overall assessment of nomadism, but organs of state cannot have failed to notice, especially as sedentarisation took this improving economy and obliterated it. The productivity of

⁹⁰ Davé, *Kazakhstan*, p. 30. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 264. Kozybaev, Abylkhodzhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, pp. 15-16.

⁹¹ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, pp. 268-270. Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive,' p. 123.

⁹² 'The Russian peasants worked the land and grew grain, while the herdsmen ate grain but did not grow it...' Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' p. 187.

⁹³ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 254.

⁹⁴ Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 70.

⁹⁵ Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, pp. 132-135. TsGARK 1179/6/1: 1.

⁹⁶ Michaels, *Curative Powers*, p. 154. Abylkhodzhin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstana*, p. 41.

livestock-herders plummeted when they were forcibly settled, and attempts to remake the KASSR as a breadbasket republic resulted in environmental catastrophe.⁹⁷

These are largely cavils, however. The abject failure of a policy, even when that failure seems so predictable in retrospect, is no reason to expect the policy not to have been implemented in the first place. Administrators and officials always spoke of their economic obligations but the Five Year Plan added meaningful bureaucratic pressure to the rhetoric. It heralded a transformation in the management of state priorities and nothing but a complete transformation in the productive capacities of the Kazakh countryside, improving or otherwise, would likely have seemed sufficient.

With the first Five Year Plan and its attendant administrative restructurings taking a leading role in the march to sedentarisation, then, it may intuitively seem correct that the central Party apparatus in Moscow be held to blame for the violence that followed. As Jeremy Smith concludes: 'While the famine appears to have been the result of incompetence and ill-thought-out implementation of drastic policies, the decision to sedentarise and the callousness of implementation underlined the new priorities of the regime. Not only did the economy come first, but also national development was no longer to be organic and was taken out of the hands of national communists.'⁹⁸ But does this mean that the order came from Moscow? A consensus emerges from the historiography that the process Smith describes was more subtle and indirect than might be assumed. The political atmosphere in Alma-Ata changed as a result of Stalin's actions, but the policy of sedentarisation itself did not originate in Moscow. Stalin was complicit in sedentarisation, but according to contemporary research his involvement does not go much further than this.⁹⁹ It should be added that this is in contrast with the broader policy of collectivisation. Historians have argued over the level of Stalin's personal culpability regarding collectivisation, but certainly he was far more directly responsible for collectivisation than he was for sedentarisation specifically.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Maindanali, *Zemledel'cheskie raiony Kazakhstana*, p. 273.

⁹⁸ Smith, *Red Nations*, p. 106.

⁹⁹ Ryspaev, *Istoriia Respubliki Kazakhstan*, pp. 250-251. Cameron, 'The Hungry Steppe,' PhD thesis, p. 126. See also Pianciola's use of Terry Martin's 'hard line' and 'soft line' formula to explain the connection between centre and periphery somewhat differently: Pianciola and Finnel, 'Famine in the Steppe,' p. 187.

¹⁰⁰ Davies and Wheatcroft, 'Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33: A Reply to Ellman,' p. 628. Ellman, 'Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Revisited,' pp. 676-677.

Stalin aside, another figure afforded utmost importance by historians is Filipp Goloshchekin, Stalin's man but not without his own autonomy.¹⁰¹ 'Goloshchekin wanted to show himself as a far-seeing strategist and a good organiser' and led Muscovite authorities to believe that the KASSR was so far behind other parts of the USSR that a most radical step was needed, a second revolution or Little October.¹⁰² Goloshchekin moved against dissenters within the Kazakh Party branch soon after his appointment, and is presented as a fierce and unforgiving Party manager who pushed cells and government organs on to ever greater excesses of intervention, alienating and intimidating other Party members as he did so.¹⁰³ His uncompromising statements and the attitudes revealed therein have already been explored in this thesis, and justify the significance attributed to him in other accounts of sedentarisation.

However, it would again be misleading to lay the blame for sedentarisation squarely on the shoulders of Goloshchekin and his closest associates. Goloshchekin was only the figurehead of the larger Kazakh Party branch, and the statements of other historians suggest that sedentarisation ultimately came not just from Goloshchekin but from this entire local cadre. It was neither the larger Moscow-based administration nor the solitary figure of Goloshchekin which made the ultimate decree in December 1929 or supervised the 'Committee on Settlement', but the Kazakh Central Executive Committee and the Kazakh Council of People's Commissars respectively.¹⁰⁴ Further, Sedentarisation was not imposed by a select militia under the control of a central committee. As legislation produced by the Ural Regional Committee (*raikom*) in May 1932 makes clear, all its regional organisations were responsible for the swift and unconditional implementation of directives connected with sedentarisation.¹⁰⁵ Thus Party members and state employees on the lowest rungs of the hierarchy were expected to collaborate in the policy, and they appear to have done so with alacrity and without regard to the desperate conditions of the people they governed.¹⁰⁶

Arguments made elsewhere in this thesis, regarding the increasingly optimistic and self-confident temperament of the Communist Party in its relationship with nomads, reinforce the case made above. With regard to the first Five Year Plan and the

¹⁰¹ Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, pp. 281, 302.

¹⁰² Ryspaev, *Istoriia Respubliki Kazakhstan*, pp. 250-251.

¹⁰³ Aldazhumanov et al., *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, pp. 8-9. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, pp. 260-261. Kassymova, Kundakbaeva, and Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, p. 101.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, *Red Nations*, p. 105. Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive,' p. 126.

¹⁰⁵ RGASPI 17/25/339: 136.

¹⁰⁶ Rouland, 'Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation,' PhD thesis, p. 297.

exigencies of industrialisation, we see the same confidence in technological advancement which led administrators to assume newly sedentary nomads could be effective farmers. The idea of an arable Kazakh Republic was not one without precedent in 1928, but it seemed eminently achievable to an ever larger number of Party members by that time. To take one example; the Soviet administration had insufficient agricultural machinery to realise the grand vision of its first Five Year Plan, but broadly speaking it seems to have convinced itself that it would produce the requisite amount of tractors and so on in time for collectivisation to be successful. Failure to realise this expectation exacerbated the consequent famine as state quotas could not be met sustainably by poorly-equipped collective farms.¹⁰⁷ This can only have a greater problem for former nomads, who were less familiar with even the most rudimentary arable farming equipment.¹⁰⁸ The idea of an encroaching faith in progress and man's dominance over nature also embellishes and refines our understanding of the centre-periphery dynamic in the sedentarisation drive as in other, earlier policy areas. Triumphalism filtered from Moscow to Alma-Ata to the Kazakh regions.

Conclusion

Alongside a massive shift in macroeconomic policy, then, we see a coterminous change in the political atmosphere of the whole Soviet Union. Both these factors precipitated, exacerbated, and reacted to a series of interdependent phenomena: political repression, collectivisation, migration and famine, and in the meeting rooms of Kazakh Party committees across the KASSR a new consensus was forged. Nomads, politically regressive and economically useless, were a problem needing a new solution. From a de facto process of managed decline for nomadism as a lifestyle, the Party moved in 1929 to sedentarisation, the systematic settlement of nomads by violent force. Though some disquiet was expressed in and outside the Party, this policy was effectively implemented by many in the administration, with tragic results. By 1934 most traces of nomadism had been eviscerated and the policy was discontinued, though not before the deaths of over one million Kazakhs.

This simplified story can be retold a hundred different ways. Matthew J. Payne, one historian who reminds us of the culpability of opportunistic local Party cadres, also distances himself from the analytical presumptions of revisionists like J. A. Getty who, in Payne's view, understate the power of the Soviet centre to coordinate its

¹⁰⁷ Davies and Wheatcroft, 'Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33: A Reply to Ellman,' p. 626.

¹⁰⁸ Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe*, p. 201.

periphery.¹⁰⁹ Others describe and debate sedentarisation in far more depth, and in various shades of nuance, than is possible here. But from this summary it is possible to draw out a few pertinent observations which will inform the larger conclusion.

First, in contrast to the years prior to 1928, the personal autonomy of nomads to resist or conform was diminished to almost nil by the violent actions of the state. Sedentarisation ostensibly presented nomads with a choice to perish or settle, but in fact the options were more circumscribed even than that, as the conditions of forced settlement presented Kazakhs with a simple need to do anything to survive. Conventional migration was made not only illegal but impossible. The autonomy of the state to settle the nomads violently was absolute, but its subsequent ability to stabilise the newly-settled economy was limited by the unforeseen consequences of the policy, by bad weather, poor harvests and further massive movements in population. Therefore both in its conception and implementation, sedentarisation was a crude, poorly-conceived and brutal policy which turned into a disaster.

¹⁰⁹ Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," pp. 68-69, 74. J. A. Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: the Soviet Communist Parts Reconsidered, 1933-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Chapter Nine:

Conclusion

Nomadic peoples had long ago formulated a simple response to persecution and injustice, and even family quarrels: they would simply up sticks and move away. Within the great expanse of the steppe, it was easy to find new places in which to lead free and independent lives...¹

Nomadism was once the foremost social and economic form on the Kazakh Steppe, though it can be hard to keep this in mind reading Mukhamet Shayakhmetov's memoir. By 1931 nomads had already 'long ago' become accustomed to moving around the Central Asian landscape to evade the abuses of more powerful sedentary cultures. Organised resistance was not unheard of but displacement or acquiescence was the general trend.

For Kazakh nomadism, this long-established power dynamic between sedentary and nomadic cultures is the most important contextualising detail for any discussion of the 1917 Revolution and its aftermath. For nomadic communities living far from Petrograd, the most important outcome of the Revolution was what it meant for the behaviour of the sedentary culture, unassailable in its dominance, which governed nomadic lands.

Soviet power would go on to form a singular kind of sedentary culture, with features relevant to the management of nomadism in its ideological foundations, its intellectual influences, its rhetoric, its approach to governance, its manner of administration, its fixations and its indifferences. What were the most salient of these features, and how did they manifest themselves? What were their results?

On 26th October 1924, Yanis Ruduztak made an interesting comment at a meeting of the All-Union Central Committee. The meeting concerned the national territorial division of Central Asia and, having previously worked with Filipp Goloschekin and Mikhail Frunze on the earlier delimitation of Turkestan, Ruduztak was an authority on the region among his colleagues in Moscow.² Speaking of the various subgroups of Kirgiz who populated the borderlands between modern day Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, he complained that these groups' cultural differences caused conflict in

¹ Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe: The Memoir of a Nomad under Stalin* (New York: Overlook/Rookery, 2007), p. 39.

² Frunze was a prominent Bolshevik and had been a celebrated Red Army commander.

spite of the fact that they were all nomadic cattle herders, and therefore led very similar lives.³ The national, cultural distinctions between these Central Asians were politicising simple budgetary deliberations over whether or not to subsidise settled communities, he added.⁴

Ruduztak may have had a point, but it is ironic that he should make it at a meeting convened to discuss the ongoing national delimitation of Central Asia. He held nomads themselves to blame for the political conflict which distracted administrators from the more fundamental economic questions of who was nomadic, who was sedentary, and who was in need of assistance. But the new Soviet state had been guilty of this misdirection, as Ruduztak would have it, from its very recent inception.

Though the Soviet state itself was undoubtedly new in the 1920s, many of the attitudes which informed its treatment of Kazakh nomads predated 1917 by some margin. Some of the youngest came from late-Tsarist scholars, others from Marx and Marxist writers; the rest emerged from older ideas about the superiority of European civilisation, the backwardness of nomadic peoples, and the linearity of human progress.

The prevalence of these older assumptions reveals the relative ideological indifference of the new Soviet state towards its Kazakh nomads. Tsarist Orientalist scholarship was still establishing itself as a discipline when the revolution occurred; Marx did not write at great length about nomadic cultures, and what he did write was not broadly accessible to the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks themselves were led by urban European intellectuals interested primarily in the revolutionary potential of urban European workers. This bias was corrected to some extent by the variety of peoples who eventually joined the Communist Party in Central Asia and elsewhere, peoples of different languages and cultures but, for the most part, of sedentary if not urban backgrounds. This is the political organisation which came to govern the nomads of the Kazakh Steppe.

The Party's homogeneity in this regard did not create as much internal consensus as might be expected. As has been shown, nomads and their treatment were debated intensely. But the effect of the Party's demographic and intellectual foundations was not a single blueprint for nomadic communities, nor a vivid and wide-

³ L. C. Gatagova, L. P. Kosheleva, and L. A. Pogovaia, *TSK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros. Kniga 1, 1918-1933 gg., Dokumenty Sovetskoi Istorii* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2005), pp 243-244.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

ranging argument about the correct course of action, but a weak and incoherent agenda which was easily overwhelmed by more concerted and refined priorities.

The Paradox of National Reductivism

Though Ruduztak's comments do not suggest it, the Communist Party saw Central Asians primarily as a group of nations. This is why so much mental energy was expended delimiting the republics of the region and their borders. Referred to as the National Question, the desire to respect and represent the national minorities in the former Russian Empire, and to prevent a resurgence of what was called Great Russian chauvinism, affected much of the new Soviet state's treatment of Kazakh nomads.

In its earliest manifestation, sensitivity for the National Question worked to the nomads' advantage. It was plain to low-level administrators that nomadism correlated to some extent with a non-Russian nationhood, and efforts to renounce Great Russian chauvinism therefore led to less onerous tax rates and more generous land-use rights for nomads. Nomads themselves learned how to benefit from these circumstances. The disadvantageous side of associating nomads with Kazakh identity was the readiness of some organs to make accusations of bourgeois nationalism against policies favourable to nomads. But more damaging than this was the gradual dissociation of nomadism from Kazakh identity as national categories formalised and certain social realities were disconnected from national culture. Conflicts between nomadism and sedentary agriculture were no longer tainted by fears of bourgeois nationalism, but they were also deprived of the importance which the National Question continued to afford to other social realities, especially language. It became a legal requirement for Kazakh organs of state to operate in the Kazakh language, but not for those same organs of state to contain token nomadic representatives or to consult with nomadic community leaders.

Though it precipitated a series of vivid scholarly debates, the National Question was therefore profoundly reductive in the nomadic context, and became more so. The Communist Party assessed its impact in accordance with its treatment of Kazakhs, not nomads. It taxed Kazakhs instead of nomads, counted Kazakhs instead of nomads, and defended national jurisdiction instead of migratory paths. Nomadic interests for much of the decade were less attacked than overlooked. The paradox is that a political force guided by materialist philosophy was led to ignore the material realities of steppe life.

The effect of this was maladministration and mismanagement. In localised incidences, Russian administrators were aggrieved by the implications of the National Question and penalised the nomadic representatives of the Kazakh nation in response. On a broader level, nomads consistently found themselves competing with the interests of their titular republic, and losing out. Settling Kazakhs were preferred to nomadic Kazakhs, and sedentary non-Kazakh communities were allowed to impose on local nomads if their productive capacity was judged beneficial for the republic overall. Where Kazakh interests and nomadic interests coincided, which was not infrequent, nomads gained, but nomads found that an administrator of the Kazakh Republic was often as blind to nomadic needs as any other.

This was not the only cause of poor governance, however, and it is here relevant that the Soviet state was new. Much is connected to what James W. Heinzen calls 'the paradoxes of revolutionary institution building.'⁵ The new Soviet state was badly constructed, disparate and poorly informed in Central Asia, largely due to the Tsarist Empire's minimal legacy and the Civil War which ravaged it. The problems which may be associated with governing any itinerant population, including assessing their wealth, calling them to face justice, and educating their children, were compounded by this weakness. Soviet administrators were further limited in their ability to control external and internal borders, to prevent corruption and bribery and to dictate the terms of use of natural resources. From an already low standard, the state sought to learn more about nomads, but every item of knowledge was won through serious exertion. The consequent ignorance of nomadic life and what constituted a nomad was another contributory factor for the Party's preference for nationhood and class, social categories many members felt they understood with more confidence.

Development and Nomadism in Opposition

Nevertheless, the Communist Party was utterly committed to economic development or 'modernization'.⁶ Like the National Question, this commitment to development crowded into any considerations of nomadism and dictated terms. Of all demographic groups across the USSR, nomadic Kazakhs were among the very least empowered by the tumult of revolution and its aftermath. Their power and wealth in Central Asia had already been in long decline when they were annexed by the Tsar, and

⁵ James W. Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State: The People's Commissariat of Agriculture under Proletarian Dictatorship, 1918-1929,' *Slavic Review* 56, no. 1 (1997), p. 74.

⁶ As Heinzen writes: '...in an important way, the state system was quite fragile and tension-filled during the 1920s, as the party pursued two, often conflicting, goals: modernization and class politics.' *Ibid.*, p. 99.

the Russian Empire did much to accelerate this trend. After violence and property confiscation by military forces from 1917-1920, when Communist Party members sought out role models for their new vision of an economically prosperous east, they found the opposite among nomads. The future was not nomadic. This feeling was augmented by ideology and scholarship, and was a point of commonality for all Communists. The simple consensus, less Marxist than simply modern, was as follows: nomadism was a wretched and unproductive existence, and nomads could be changed.

Yet, importantly, sedentarisation was not the immediate answer. As mentioned, there were disputes. A very small number of early participants in the administration argued that Kazakhs were nomadic by nature, and that settlement was unlikely, unnecessary or even undesirable for them. This view was short-lived. A more commonly held view in the administration maintained that the unforgiving conditions of the steppe meant sedentary farming would never be feasible in large patches of the republic, and that leaving this land for nomadic use was no inconvenience for the regime. Furthermore, any inconveniences that did arise would be ephemeral. Nomads would soon settle voluntarily if shown the benefits of socialism; some believed that nomads desperately wished to settle and only needed the opportunity.

Apologists for nomadism in the Party were most successful in the earliest years of the decade when the emancipatory rhetoric of the Bolsheviks was interpreted in Central Asia as justification for decolonisation and post-colonial reparations made to non-Russian peoples. The wretchedness of nomadic life was more often blamed on Tsarism than on nomadism, and the vexations of governing nomads was contextualised by the colonial history of the region and the injustice of the Tsar's rule.

In line with these attitudes, the 1920s witnessed various attempts to induce settlement without resorting to violent sedentarisation, beginning in the first days of Communist rule. Some techniques were realised repeatedly throughout the decade. These included: border-making which would make migration harder and settlement easier; exhortation and propaganda; penalising *bai* families economically and agitating against them in an effort to undermine their power and liberate paupers hoping to settle; confiscation of livestock; preferential tax rates for those who settled. Other methods were notional, in that they were explicitly endorsed by higher organs of state but were never likely to be widely or systematically implemented because of the poverty and disorganisation of the Soviet administration. These methods included: subsidies of fodder, building materials, equipment and currency for newly-settled

families; offering agronomic expertise; recruiting large numbers of nomads into the Communist Party.

Other measures were taken to manage nomads on a pragmatic day-to-day basis and did not take settlement as the ultimate goal. Again these are detectable late in the 1920s. They included: changing patterns of animal husbandry; veterinary assistance; education; the emancipation of women; the tax-in-kind early in the NEP period; some acts of border making (designed to redirect, not stop, migrations); adaptations to water access. Although these policies were a kind of compromise, in that they brought nomads closer to a Communist ideal without explicitly undermining their lifestyle, they were likely conceived as a stop-gap. The inevitability of mass voluntary settlement was a presumption which never quite left most administrators.

Difficulties of Governance

The single greatest compromise made by the Soviet state in this vein was its decision to go mobile. Various institutions and state undertakings made the effort of traversing the steppe in a remarkably concerted effort to engage with these most marginal of citizens. This was most often seen in areas of social policy (the Red Yurts), but there was an element of this in economic policy (use of nomadic markets) and in infrastructural development (the Red Caravan; nomadic volosts). Nomads were less participants than targets of these and all other state projects of the time, and in this sense the case study confirms the old dichotomy between state and society so often seen in historiography of the USSR. Yet the state was proactive in its engagement with Kazakh nomads. There appears to have been a genuine desire to recruit them into the Party and otherwise increase awareness of the revolution and their place in the post-revolutionary world, in a manner which may even compare favourably with the relationship between similar modern states and their minority groups. It may have lent nomads more control over their lives and enabled them to better negotiate with the bureaucratic system which was quickly emerging around them, but it is also an example of the Soviet state exerting and consolidating power. The failure to recruit many nomads into Party and state processes was therefore also an ongoing failure of the state to make itself powerful for nomads in the 1920s, at least by its own ambitious standards.

To summarise, such were the demographic and intellectual qualities of the Soviet administration, it could agree on little more than this most basic assertion about Kazakh nomads: nomadism was inherently backward, nomads need not be. Beyond this the

Party lacked ideological direction, and this is why a stronger ideological agenda, the national delimitation of Central Asia, was allowed to complicate the proper management of nomadic groups, a task which would have been difficult enough given the infrastructural weakness of the early Soviet state. A variety of programmes were implemented in nomadic regions, some designed to incentivise settlement, some intended to mitigate nomadism's backwardness in the short term. The perceived failure of many schemes demonstrates a kind of impotence of Soviet power among nomads; though Soviet administrators had immense power to affect the lives of Kazakh nomads, it proved difficult to make these nomads complicit or cooperative with Soviet power. With a few notable exceptions they remained subjects but not participants.

The limitations of the state's administrative structures and processes were a source of unending anxiety for Party figures. The option of limited governmental autonomy for conglomerations of nomadic families was never considered; various governing frameworks all prescribed an element of state supervision or direct interference. Measures were taken, particularly in 1924-1925, to clarify and strengthen these frameworks. This was motivated principally by the economic ambition of the Kazakh Communist Party branch and their leaders in Moscow. Areas of the Kazakh Republic were selected for special treatment. Oil fields, fishing enterprises and railway lines were prioritised and developed, and their nearby towns became important administrative centres. Land in these areas was more jealously guarded from migrating nomads, and these areas were getting bigger. Overall the state's treatment of its nomadic citizens was becoming increasingly systematic; by 1928 the nomads' experience of Soviet power was less arbitrary and personal and more consistent and regulated, more bureaucratic.

Problems remained. First, the nature of Soviet power in nomadic areas was still blunter and more reactionary than in sedentary areas. Nomadic lives could be profoundly changed by decisions made in Kyzyl-Orda, but not with the precision and nuance that was desired. Large numbers of nomads could be encouraged back and forth across the Sino-Soviet border, but what of *kul'turnost'*, law and order or, most importantly, productivity? Nomads, on account of their lifestyle, were as much unable as unwilling to engage in a dialogue with the state about techniques of animal husbandry and efficient use of pasture, and when they did hear about state schemes through rumour and hearsay they reacted with understandable suspicion if not hostility. Mobile herds were harder to count and tax; nomadic pasturage was harder to delimit.

Second, administrative structures charged with managing the nomadic population were largely the same structures available to the sedentary population. The Party created few nomad-specific institutions, partly because nomadism was thought to be a temporary problem and partly due to the lack of ideological clarity over what nomadism was and how it should be treated. This created concerns no matter how well the infrastructure functioned. The land commissions, for example, also resolved disputes between sedentary communities. Nomads were simply an extra burden on bureaucrats' time. Organisations were modelled on those elsewhere in the USSR where communities did not migrate habitually, and bodies such as the public prosecutor's office in Gur'ev came to see nomads as a nuisance, and presented them as such to central authorities.

It may seem counterintuitive to emphasise the impotence of the Soviet state given that, from 1928 onwards, it would implement one of the most profound transformational campaigns ever witnessed in Central Asia, albeit in tandem with auxiliary phenomena for which the state was not wholly responsible. How did the state come to choose and enforce sedentarisation?

The Importance of the Steppe

To the extent that trends are observable, the earliest years of the decade were characterised by a more permissive attitude towards nomads. As argued, this was partly the result of the febrile post-colonial atmosphere and the Bolsheviks' official suppression of Great Russian chauvinism. The Kazakh Party branch had also acquired many former members of the Alash Party and other recruits with a diversity of opinion which did not lend itself to firm action in regard to nomads. Furthermore, it was more common at this time to conceive of the steppe as a forbidding wasteland. In claiming that the October Revolution had not yet reached the Kazakh Republic, and that Kazakhs needed a 'Little October', Goloshchekin was largely talking of social and economic change. It is vitally important to remember that Russia, for so long considered the backward cousin of its fellow European empires, was on the whole considerably less agrarian and more industrialised than Central Asia when the Winter Palace was raided. But perhaps early members of the Kazakh Party branch also did not feel the revolution had penetrated the steppe in a more geographical sense. The region was little known, vast and inscrutable.

Steppe lands were therefore an early exception to the otherwise remarkable self-assurance of the Party in Central Asia. Post-revolutionary ardour led state organs to

promise tranches of material aid which were vastly beyond their capabilities to provide. Party members seem to have assumed that the advent of socialism would allow long-standing tribal conflicts to conclude themselves after a day of convivial negotiation. But it took time for this optimism to stretch itself fully into nomadic territory. Sceptical Party figures like Mendeshv and Sadvokasov reacted emphatically to Vainshtein's confident claims about the social structures of the *aul*. Land commissioners, commissars and governate officials recognised the impossibility of growing crops in saline soil or raising cattle without proper pasture. This changed when Goloshchekin arrived and took measures to eject naysayers, but on a subtler level a culture change was already underway. Optimism and confidence was invested in technology, bureaucracy and organisation, and in the possibility that these three working in tandem could tame steppe lands; nomadic lands. Scholars such as A. N. Donich claimed to see possibilities where the steppe's inhabitants had not.

At this point, the nomads' uncertain status was thrown into relief. Though animosity and ambivalence are wholly different, the result might be similar. Religion, to a large extent in the Soviet 1920s and 1930s, was conceived as a direct obstacle to progress. It had to be destroyed. For much of the 1920s, nomadism was less an obstacle than a forgotten laggard, frustratingly slow-paced and distanced from the main struggle. Unlike Islam, which could evangelise and propagate counter-revolution, few Party members thought nomadism would spread like a transgressive faith and unmake the gains of October. Nomadic *bais* defended migration as a means of retaining power but their reach barely exceeded beyond the outskirts of the camp. It was not until ever larger portions of the steppe, not just the odd Russian farmstead, were credited with productive potential that these straggling nomads became a concern for more than themselves. In the late 1920s nomadic land became a meaningful resource, and its occupants' lifestyle became an obstacle in the exploitation of that resource.

The Question of Imperialism

The *bais* then played a similar but not identical role to the kulak. The *bais* were blamed for nomadism's longevity up until 1928, were identified as figureheads of resistance to the campaign, and were said to be the targets of the most extreme confiscatory policies. In European Russia and Siberia, however, the hoarding of foodstuffs by reactionary kulaks was a primary justification for heavy-handed confiscation. In Central Asia the practices of all nomads justified sedentarisation.

Class, like nationality, became a system of social categorisation which was used by the Party in preference to one based on the nomadic-sedentary divide. Earlier in the decade the nomadic *aul* was sometimes presented as more insulated from the old capitalist economy and therefore less stratified, making the *bais* less malevolent figures. Debates over the proper use of *batrak* in nomadic regions show that the familiar conceptions of proletarian and bourgeois identity used on the streets of Moscow had been deployed less on the steppe. But as the decolonisation process lost its vigour and the Party again began supervising the resurgence of Russian settlers back into Central Asia, class-based discourse achieved the same pervasiveness it had achieved in European Russia. After initial attempts at treating nomads as an economic category of their own for the purposes of taxation, nomads were divided up into *bedniak*, *seredniak* and *bai* categories in exactly the same manner as sedentary communities could be. These categories were used not just to assess wealth, but applicability for membership of the Communist Party. The frameworks with which the Party made itself conscious of society's marginalised groups thus had a blinkering effect. The Party recruited economically and nationally marginalised groups with enthusiasm but failed to do the same for those marginalised by their agricultural practices.

Arguably the imposition of Russian class and national terms onto nomadic communities was one small example of a much broader way of characterising the Soviet state's actions, that of economic and cultural imperialism. The extraction of resources from Central Asia for use in European Russia, coordinated from Moscow with little to no system of exchange, might be characterised as economic imperialism. The denigration of Kazakh habits and the forceful imposition of Russian culture might be characterised as cultural imperialism. In this interpretation of the decade, the Bolsheviks arrived in Central Asia with comparable aims to those of the Tsar: the economic exploitation of the region and its people and the endorsement of Russian cultural norms and domestic practices at the expense of local variants, all to the benefit of a leading cadre of Party officials based principally in Moscow.

To address the final point first, as the Soviet Empire's hypothetical metropole, Moscow's involvement in the management of nomads is not straightforward. Much has been made in the historiography of Goloshchekin's loyalty to Stalin, and the parallels between the political repression overseen in the Kazakh Party branch with those taking place across the Union. Though it preceded collectivisation in Siberia and European Russia, sedentarisation was roughly coterminous with the state's assault on the Russian peasantry and should therefore be associated with the changing nature of

Moscow's rule and efforts to extract economic resources from the countryside. Less measurable but equally important was the ongoing cultural transmission, in which an absolute faith in man's dominance over nature made its way from the old imperial nation to its former colony. Thus the cultural and economic connection between the Kazakh Steppe and European Russia, and the latter's unquestionable dominance within this relationship, survived the revolution, and allowed Moscow to influence the direction of Kazakh Party policy in a similar way that Saint Petersburg had dictated the direction of reform in its Central Asian colonies.

On the other hand neither settlement nor sedentarisation were driven by Moscow. These policies appear to have originated in the Kazakh Party branch, and though they were sanctioned by the political and cultural direction of the whole Union, they were partly the product of a deeply condescending attitude towards nomadism shared by many Russian *and* many Kazakh Communists from the early days of Soviet power. Furthermore the period preceding 1928 is characterised by departmental disputes arising between bureaucratic jurisdictions, not between centre and periphery. Agronomic experts argued with educationalists and agricultural commissioners quarrelled with accountants, but Kyzyl-Orda and Moscow acted as much in concert as in contradiction of one another. Localised resistance to the actions of the state came mostly from outside the Party, and though the Party was majority European, considerable efforts were made to recruit Kazakhs.

Korenizatsiia, then, might also be cited to defend the USSR from accusations of imperialism, in that it sought not to subdue national minorities but to empower them, admittedly within the context of its own governing structures. It is true that, as with so much else, the Bolsheviks understood their anti-imperial efforts in national terms. As stated, Kazakhs were given preferential rights in a bid to undermine Russian dominance in Kazakh lands. What of sedentary dominance in nomadic lands? Sergei Solov'ev, the nineteenth century historian who worked so hard to justify Russia's imperial ambitions, may have seen something the Bolsheviks did not when he conceived of Central Asia as a battleground between European sedentary civilisation and Asiatic nomadic barbarism.⁷ Again, the Communist Party's limited respect for non-Russian cultural customs extended only to those deemed a constituent part of nationhood and compatible with socialism. Nomadism was neither. Preferential rights were ascribed to Kazakhs, not nomads; indeed, Kazakhs were encouraged to settle land

⁷ Seymour Becker, 'Russia between East and West: The intelligentsia, Russian national identity and the Asian borderlands,' *Central Asian Survey* 10, no. 4 (1991), p. 50.

if they had not already done so. Nevertheless, *korenizatsiia* complicates the imperial paradigm. It did not benefit nomads, in fact it may have contributed to their hardship. But it does not therefore follow that the treatment of nomads was imperialistic in nature, simply that aspects of the Bolsheviks' counter-imperial programme overlooked nomadic issues.

Also in defiance of the imperial paradigm, nomads may have been excluded from many of the Soviet state's efforts to accommodate and represent formerly colonised peoples, but they found ways to benefit all the same. The most obvious example is their retrieval of recently colonised land after the Civil War, but shrewd nomads were also able to harness Communist priorities for their own ends. They learned quickly to deploy the language of national and class grievance to achieve their aims. Petitions from nomads made accusations of national chauvinism or bourgeois sympathising, and could associate their needs with those of their titular republic if it was expedient. As marginal as they were, then, nomads could appropriate identities the state recognised for their own gain.⁸ This reveals a small degree of participation or complicity with the new Soviet status quo among some nomads, which an explicitly racist Western European empire, for example, may have precluded on the basis of their ethnic deficiencies.

Whether nomads participated or not, furthermore, economic resources were at least notionally granted to them rather than taken from them. In some cases this was arguably with the larger intention of making them more productive, as when loans were made to nomads who settled. Yet, settling or not, nomads were at times offered material relief from hardship and access to resources which might otherwise have been exploited by the larger state infrastructure.

The picture then is mixed. Communist thought on nomads did bear resemblance to the musings of Tsarist officials. As nomads were thought less Islamised and therefore more susceptible to Orthodox Christianity, so nomadic women were thought less submissive and therefore more amenable to socialism.⁹ Yet the Party explicitly, if only for a time, permitted the spontaneous decolonisation of the steppe. Over a longer

⁸ Jochen Hellbeck's argument is not quite that Soviet citizens interacted in this manner with state ideology in pursuit of their own self-interest, but his insights remain relevant at this juncture: Jochen Hellbeck, 'Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: the Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi, 1931-9,' in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 78-79. Hellbeck draws considerably from Stephen Kotkin for his analytical framework: Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁹ Becker, 'Russia between East and West,' pp. 59-61.

period various regional organs maintained the principle that native Kazakhs should be given first preference to land over Russians and others. Substantial efforts were taken to improve the health of nomads. Campaigns against customs such as *kalym*, if imperialistic, were tempered by an ostentatious respect for non-Russian languages and a refutation of Great Russian chauvinism. If the Soviet centre entered the late 1930s with a structural, imperialistic relationship with its Central Asian periphery, evidence from the treatment of nomads in the 1920s at least shows that this was not the inevitable direction of travel.

The research questions of this thesis ultimately allow only a limited appraisal of the imperial paradigm. There were other nomads in Soviet Central Asia, principally Kyrgyz, who have been excluded from investigation in the interests of making the thesis manageable. Their experience of Soviet power may have been substantially different, more or less directed from Moscow and more or less imperialistic. Furthermore, the ambitions of the project leave little room to discuss the Russian Empire. As an explicitly imperial enterprise, Tsarist Russia is the most obvious point of comparison when assessing the Soviet Union's imperial status, particularly as both states ruled Central Asia. An expansion of the project in time and space would also allow for a comparative element to emerge between the Russian Empire and the USSR and between different manifestations of Soviet power in different regions of the Union.

Indeed, comparisons with any other modern state containing nomadic citizens would be highly instructive when further assessing the 1920s in Soviet Kazakhstan. Again, the project's prevailing aim to learn more specifically about nomadic history in Central Asia and about the nature of Soviet power prevented comprehensive comparison with similar states, regions and epochs. Such an addition would help to answer the question of whether or not states of the Soviet kind always have trouble managing itinerant groups, habitual or not, and the extent to which there is anything uniquely challenging about governing nomads.

Wider Implications

The objective of this doctoral project was to investigate a little-researched period in the history of a little-researched region of the world. Kazakh archives have been a largely untapped resource, despite their accessibility and substantive holdings. Western scholarship has only recently turned to Kazakhstan as a topic of study, as for so long the country was subsumed within the larger and more conspicuous categories of 'Russian' and 'Soviet'. On its emergence as a new and independent country, there has

been an understandable desire to focus on Kazakhstan's history in national terms. This has been a productive tendency, but it has its limits, and the present thesis has reversed the trend by focusing on the nomadic element of early Soviet history in the area. The thesis has also eschewed an exclusive focus on sedentarisation as the key point of emphasis, whilst simultaneously acknowledging the campaign's importance.

The product of this approach has been a series of insights into the relationship between the Soviet state and nomads. Nomads were marginalised by their lifestyle, by forbidding environmental conditions, by recent Tsarist history, and by the Party's interest in alternative systems of social categorisation which did not reflect the nomadic-sedentary divide. In this manner an explicitly materialist political philosophy counterintuitively overlooked and mismanaged one of the most profound material realities of the Central Asian population; the difference between nomads and non-nomads. Comparably counter-intuitive is the state's subsequent decision to migrate alongside its nomadic citizens, and engage with them in spite of its own economic priorities. Nevertheless, the case study largely reinforces the dichotomy between state and society, while simultaneously complicating the centre-periphery dynamic. The Soviet state acted upon nomads, while granting them limited meaningful opportunity to engage with, influence or veto policy. The manner in which it did so was the product of mixed priorities within the administration, priorities which cannot be easily divided up between those of Moscow and those of its provinces. Overall, in the case of Kazakh nomads, the Soviet state was more distanced from the population; less centralised; more proactive; less static and inflexible; and more driven by the needs of economic development than may previously have been anticipated.

Early in the 1920s, in a short circular letter to all the Uezd Committees of the Ural'sk Governate, a prominent figure in the Governate's administration claimed that nomadism was a primitive form of economic activity which had 'long ago been separated from civilization'.¹⁰ Without a transition to settlement, he added, it would be impossible to equalise class relations, improve the nomads' economic condition, battle various epidemics, or raise the nomads' cultural and sanitary standards. He further added that 'All communist workers must ensure that national inequalities are dealt with.'¹¹ In content, no document better communicates the ambitions of the nascent administration even in the early years following the Civil War. But in its lack of clear instructions, reticence on methodology and timescale, and disregard for the material

¹⁰ The figure in question was a certain Comrade Dolgushev. APRK 139/1/40: 12.

¹¹ APRK 139/1/40: 12.

realities of the state's capabilities, no document better communicates the incoherent, lethal optimism with which Kazakh nomads were confronted after the establishment of the new Soviet sedentary culture in Central Asia.

Glossary

<i>Aul</i>	A Kazakh village or nomadic community.
<i>Bai</i>	A wealthy Kazakh.
<i>Batrak</i>	A farm labourer or, in a nomadic community, a hired hand.
<i>Bedniak</i>	A poor peasant.
<i>Byt</i>	'Everyday life', particularly regarding domestic or menial matters.
<i>Dzhut</i>	A hard frost on steppe lands, causing widespread starvation amongst nomadic livestock.
Governate	The largest administrative sub-division of the Russian Empire, also used by the Soviet state until the mid-1920s.
Gubispolkom	A Governate-level Executive Committee
Gubkom	A Governate-level Committee
<i>Kalym</i>	The Kazakh dowry or bride price.
KASSR	The Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, geographically very similar to contemporary Kazakhstan, created in 1925.
Kirgiz	The ethnonym used to describe the Kazakhs until 1925. The Kyrgyz at this time were called Kara-Kirgiz.
KSSR	The Kirgiz Soviet Socialist Republic, the precursor to the KASSR but without its southernmost provinces and including land around Orenburg and elsewhere.
KTsIK	The Kirgiz/Kazakh Central Executive Committee
Kulak	A wealthy peasant and member of a rural bourgeois class.
<i>Kul'turnost'</i>	'Culturedness', various personal virtues associated with refinement and civilisation.
Narkomfin KASSR/KSSR	The Kazakh People's Commissariat of Finances.

Narkomfin RSFSR	The People's Commissariat of Finances for the whole federative republic, including the Kazakh Republic but also Russian and Kyrgyz lands.
Narkominodel	The People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.
Narkomiust KSSR	The Kazakh People's Commissariat for Justice.
Narkomnats KSSR	The Kazakh People's Commissariat for the Nationalities.
Narkomprod KSSR	The Kazakh People's Commissariat for Food Supplies.
Narkomprod RSFSR	The People's Commissariat for Food Supplies.
Narkomrabkri KSSR	The Kazakh Inspectorate of Workers and Peasants.
Narkomvnutdel	The People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs.
Narkomzem KASSR/KSSR	The Kazakh People's Commissariat for Agriculture.
Oblast	An administrative region between an <i>uezd</i> and governate in size.
Okrug	A new Soviet administrative region based on an area's economic characteristics, introduced in the mid-1920s.
<i>Okruzhkom</i>	An okrug-level committee.
<i>Pood</i>	A unit of measurement roughly equivalent to sixteen kilograms.
<i>RSFSR</i>	The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the largest republic within Soviet territory.
<i>Saun</i>	The Kazakh tradition of renting livestock to the poor.
<i>Seredniak</i>	A peasant of moderate wealth.
Sovnarkom KASSR/KSSR	The Kazakh Soviet of People's Commissars
Uezd	A small administrative region predating 1917, typically constituting several volosts.
Volost	A small administrative region predating 1917.
VTsIK	The All-Russian Central Executive Committee.

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