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ИСТОКИ КЫРГЫЗСКОЙ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ ИДЕНТИФИКАЦИИ В ПРЕДСОВЕТСКИЙ ПЕРИОД

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Прослежены корни кыргызской национальной идентичности в досоветской истории Кыргызстана. В противоположность модернистским аргументам, согласно которым народы – это современное изобретение (феномен), в работе принимается этно-символистический подход.

Ключевые слова: кыргызская история; Енисей; племена; Чингисхан; ханства; Царская Россия; этно-национальная идентичность.

“From Herodotus on, historians have provided rich and dramatic accounts of events occurring on the Central Asian stage” [1]. “The territory of Central Asia has one of the longest recorded histories of human settlement, and has been both the subject of innumerable invasions and the seat of glorious civilizations at different times.” Under different political formations that emerged in the region, rather than a national identity, loyalties to family, tribe and clan were central [2]. It is not so easy to separate specific Kyrgyz history from the great history of Central Asia, in other words, Inner Asia. Current Central Asian nations such as the Kyrgyz, the Kazakh or the Uzbek all coexisted and intensely interacted with one another in grand history of Central Asia. At times, they fought against external enemies together. There were two great names in the region, which included a variety of ethnic or tribal affiliations: Turks and Mongols. The word ‘Turk’ referred to a variety of kin groups speaking closed languages, such as Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Kipchak, Uzbek, Turkmen, etc. These horse-breeding, highly mobile, and Turkic-originated nomads of Eurasia and Inner Asia founded several khanates and empires together. As a result of climate conditions or wars, the region witnessed great migrations, transformations and political regrouping. Pastoral nomads were usually called ‘Kyrgyz’ in the region [3]. The Kyrgyz became almost exclusively mountain nomads while the Kazakhs were steppe nomads.

The first written information about the Kyrgyz is found in ancient Chinese chronicles. Kyrgyz history has been written mainly from external sources in various languages such as Chinese, Arabic, Iranian, Greek, Turkic, Mongolian, and Russian [4]. The

ancient Kyrgyz people generally did not use scripts to record events. For the most part, their history is oral; and their narratives are recited by *akyns* (nomad bards) and accompanied by the *komuz* (Kyrgyz traditional musical instrument) [5]. The references to ‘Yenisei Kyrgyz’ can be found as early as the first century B.C. in ancient Chinese, Turkic, and Eastern Roman records. Some scholars claim that the Yenisei Kyrgyz should be differentiated from the Kyrgyz of Tien Shan [6; 7]. In opposite to the dominant argument of the Soviet historiography and the ‘old school’ which continued after the Soviet period, both of which claimed that the Kyrgyz were not a nation before 1936 and they were only a sub-national group, given the feudal-kinship structures of their settlements, the main approach in the post-Soviet historiography adopts a primordialist historical understanding and claims that the Kyrgyz have been always a nation with ancient historical roots. Several Kyrgyz historians argue that the Yenisei Kyrgyz were not the only ancestors of the Kyrgyz nation; the Kyrgyz instead lived in different regions and migrated within wide expanses of Central Asia and Southern Siberia [4]. Some historians state that the people who inhabited the area along the upper Yenisei were the Kyrgyz in antiquity and the Middle Ages. They mostly migrated west and eventually constituted the principal population of modern Kyrgyzstan. Some of the scholars regard the Altai Mountain Kyrgyz who migrated to Tengri-Too as the ancestors of the Kyrgyz nation.

Most of the scholars agree on the fact that the Kyrgyz have been fully aware of their distinct identity, different from that of even their close kinsmen, the Kazakhs; and this identity was so strong that it absorbed different alien tribal elements which came

to live among the Kyrgyz. The loyalty to the ancestral identity among the Kyrgyz is so strong that they are expected to know their ancestors through (at least) seven generations [8]. There are also arguments among some historians for the existence of a powerful Kyrgyz state in the late fifth century [9]. However, it was difficult to draw clear-cut boundaries between Central Asian ethnic categorizations with their specific geographic locations in the long common history. For example, while the majority of the Kyrgyz tribes were mountain nomads, some of them lived in the Ferghana Valley near Uzbeks. Current Kyrgyz homeland in history is situated in an area known as *Jetyssuu (Semireche)* meaning 'Seven Rivers' where sedentaries and nomads coexisted. During the early medieval era, many cities flourished in this area flanked by the Tien Shan Mountains in the south and Balkash Lake in the north, such as Balasagun. Bumin Khaghan (also called Tuman Han) united numerous tribes in the Altai region and by the mid sixth century established control over the territory from Mongolia and China to the Aral Sea area. The *Kokturk* Khanate later was divided into two; and Western Khanate maintained control over *Jetyssuu and Mawara-annahr* areas [10]. In the eleventh century, this region became the senior province of the Qaraghanid Dynasty and housed a brilliant civilization. Jusup Balasagun is one of the fruits of this civilization among several others. Under the leadership of Batu Khan in 1242, the peoples of the region together with the Mongols established Golden Horde state. Mongol invasion brought this civilization to an end on one side, and transformed it to another on the other side. Chingis Khan and his descendants held sway over the area from 13th to 15th century, when an autonomous Kyrgyz Khanate was established. This period was important for the consolidation of the identity of the Kyrgyz people who developed a distinctive dialect, and stronger ethnic awareness linked to a common territory and a shared oral narrative [9]. *The Secret History of Mongols*, which was written in 1240, used the term 'the steppe of ten thousand Kyrgyz' for the Central Asian region [11].

The evolution of systems of government, society and legitimation which emerged in Mongol times remained in force until the nineteenth century. The process of differentiation was a largely political one, centered around the creation of tribal confederations and loyalty to strong leaders, most of them descended from Chingis Khan. In regions of Central Asia, power was not highly centralized, nor was it wielded entirely by the dynasty. Unlike European national kingdoms and successor nation-states, Central Asian political entities were organized as multi-ethnic states. The khans retained their power neither through their cen-

tral bureaucratic structures, nor through the monopoly of force, but by their ability to win the loyalty of tribal chiefs and to balance the ethnic groups beneath them [12]. Political regroupings emerged during and after the periods of Chingis Khan and later Timur (Tamerlane). Throughout most of its history, traditional organization of nomadic Kyrgyz society has been mainly based on extended family and clan. Tribal confederations were formed from clans; however, they lacked of royal dynasty and demarcated territories. Tribal structure has been composed of two great federations: the *Otuz Uul* and the *Ich Kilik*. The *Otuz Uul* is divided into *Ong Kanat* (Right Wing) and *Sol Kanat* [13]. According to Roudik, the Kyrgyz formed a large tribal union in the northern parts of present-day Kyrgyzstan in 1480s, through the cooperation with other local non-Kyrgyz tribes and the consolidation of Kyrgyz tribes. Khan Junus, a descendant of Genghis Khan, became the union's leader. By the second half of the 18th century, the population of the Kyrgyz was approximately 800000 people. In the 19th century, the majority of the Kyrgyz population was located on the Kokand Khanate territory; however, Kokand Khan could not interfere in the Kyrgyz affairs, which were under the control of local tribal chiefs. In 1852, after a revolt against Tashkent and Kokand, the coalition of Kyrgyz tribes had chosen their own Khan [14]. Central Asia in the 19th century was loosely organized under the administration of the three khanates of Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand, unlike highly centralized and homogeneous national kingdoms of Europe [15]. As most of the Kyrgyz were nomads who lived in the mountains, freedom was their distinctive character.

Although there is a consensus for the fact that the Kyrgyz nation have been a lengthy and epic nation throughout Asian history, according to some western writers, a unified Kyrgyz state, named after the Kyrgyz nation, with a central authority and a royal dynasty in a unified Kyrgyz territory did not exist in pre-modern era. Indeed, this is the case for almost all nations in the world, because it was not an era of nationalism and nation-states. Until the Russian occupation of Central Asia, a number of Khanates and traditional political entities unlike modern nation-states dominated the region, such as Kokand Khanate in and around the Ferghana Valley in the recent centuries. Rakhat Achylova states that: 'The political mentality of the Kyrgyz, as its more than two thousand-year history has shown, has always been expressed in a constant striving for independence and autonomy' [9]. Although there were sporadic competitions and conflicts between different Kyrgyz tribes, they could easily go to coopera-

tion against a foreign threat. Nomadic life in hard geographical conditions with high ranges of mountains contributed to autonomy of Kyrgyz tribes; and slowed the rise of a supra-tribal state with a central authority. They were about to establish their own independent state with a central authority around the mid-19th century. However, the conjuncture was not suitable for the emergence of such a state as the region fell under expansionist Tsarist Russian rule in the same era. In spite of the nomadic lifestyle, Kyrgyz people had a loose political entity around their leaders of tribal confederations or their own khan. For instance, *Mamatkul* was the elected khan of the Kyrgyz people in the mid-18th century. These loose tribal confederations can be seen as political entities and as traditional Asian-type states [16].

Kyrgyz written culture does not have a long history, while oral tradition is both profound and informative. The epic *Manas* reflects Kyrgyz national identity and consciousness by narrating unification of the Kyrgyz tribes and their struggle for the independence. Kyrgyz *Manaschys* and *akyns* (poets) can be regarded as the main thinkers of the Kyrgyz society for long centuries in Kyrgyz history. For example, Kalygul Bay uulu (1785-1855), an influential Kyrgyz akyn, expressed the sufferings of the Kyrgyz people under Russian imperial hegemony. He encouraged the Kyrgyz people for unity against the foreign enemy [17].

Especially, after the period of Petro the Great, several expeditions, made toward Central Asia, led Russians see the decrepitude of Central Asians, their inferior and antiquated weapons, their backwardness and disunity, and so learn how to overpower Central Asia. Although Central Asians were in a disadvantageous position compared with the Russian superior technical and military power, they made every effort to struggle against this invasion and valiantly fought for their freedom. The nomadic Kyrgyz, Kazakhs and Turkmens played a vital role in forming an outer ring of defense to protect the last khanates of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand. The light nomadic forces skillfully carried out a series of guerrilla attacks. They captured the tsarist officers and their trains. In order to overthrow this resistance, Tsarist Russia was obliged to build a series of fortified posts, which strengthened Russia's defenses against the inroads made by the Kyrgyz and Kazakh horsemen and facilitated preparations for a further forward advance. Meanwhile, the Russians constructed about forty-six forts and ninety-six redoubts. Ultimately, they managed to occupy Tashkent in 1865. By this period, the Kyrgyz also fell under the Tsarist Russian rule. Thus, Russian occupation of

Central Asia was realized step by step through 18th and 19th centuries; and total control was established in the region in the late 19th and early 20th century [18]; [19; 20]. However, even in early the twentieth century, resistance against the Russian domination did not totally disappear. In Central Asia, groups of mounted raiders (*Basmachi*) conducted a sporadic and violent struggle against the Soviet authorities in and after 1916 for more than ten years. Moreover, traditional rulers and leaders of Central Asians declared the formation of the Muslim Provisional Government of Autonomous Turkistan in Kokand in November 1917. After the Bolsheviks consolidated their power, all remnants of such attempts and uprisings were totally eliminated during the Stalin's period [21–24].

Tsarist conquest of Central Asia started a period of massive change in the region. During the tsarist period, such intellectuals as Nikolai Il'minskii played an important role in the creation of a new identity project for the Muslims of the Russian empire. Tsarist Russian education system, inspired by Il'minskii, forced non-Russians to learn Russian language [25]. The main purpose of the education was to give Central Asians a Russified identity that would simplify Russian domination in the region. These policies depended on a strategic mentality. If Muslims of Russia, who were struggling for their autonomy, could be assimilated into Russian community and culture, they would be receptive and loyal to the Russian authority. However, the unity among the Muslims of Russia and their linkages with those outside Russia would be a challenge against Tsarist Russian domination. So, the great project also included the change of alphabets and the exaggeration of differences between local languages of Central Asian peoples. However, some tsarist educational policies, ironically, contributed to the first articulations of modern ethno-national identities in Central Asia.

The Jadid movement had also an eminent role in the first appearances of modern national identities. Jadidism brought a new understanding and methodology to the education system in the region. They tried to modernize curricula, instructional practices, and textbooks in such subjects as history, literature, and geography. They worked to establish indigenous literary languages and create native language textbooks. These were first critical steps toward modern national identities [26]. However, their attempts were interrupted by the Bolshevik Revolution; and they failed to radically transform traditional societies into modern national units. Indeed, the idea of Turkistan was more dominant among the Jadidist intellectuals; and their main goal was not the creation of ethno-national units. Radical modernization

and transformation of traditional Central Asian societies into clear-cut ethno-national units with definite national identities came during the Soviet demarcation of the region between 1924 and 1936, and about seventy-year-long Soviet 'nationalities' policy. Until the Soviet period, within the wider context of Central Asian pre-modern regional political entities which were not nation-states, Kyrgyz society, though they always had their own separate identity, was based on kinship rather than national –in modern sense– ties. Indeed, this is true for all modern nation-building experiences which realized within the last two centuries in the other regions of the world.

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