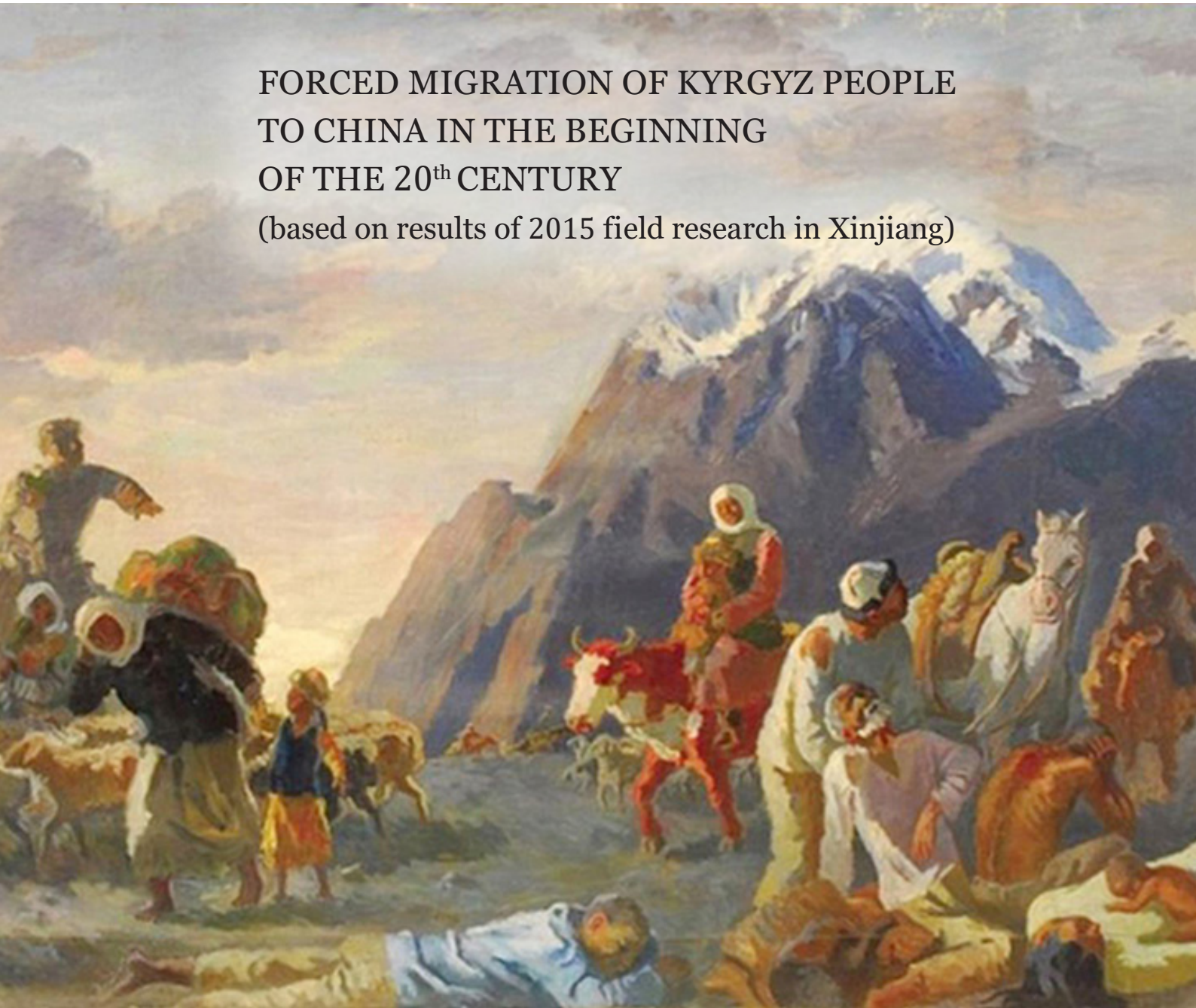




FORCED MIGRATION OF KYRGYZ PEOPLE  
TO CHINA IN THE BEGINNING  
OF THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY  
(based on results of 2015 field research in Xinjiang)





## Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit's Research Paper #8

### Forced Migration of Kyrgyz People to China in the Beginning of the 20th Century (based on results of 2015 field research in Xinjiang<sup>1</sup>)

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#### **Abstract:**

This article is dedicated to the issue of the forced migration of Kyrgyz people to China (Xinjiang region) in 1916-1934, which became known as Ürkün. Multiple field researches were conducted on the territory of China among Kyrgyz communities created as a result of the forced migration. Today seven officially recognized settlements in China are home to Kyrgyz refugees. The research is based on field materials collected in two Kyrgyz populated towns in Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture of PRC: Kulja and Nylky. Speaking on the topic, respondents clarified which of the mass exoduses, “Major” or “Minor”, they call Ürkün. Such division of the forced migration of Kyrgyz people to China into three separate phases is also reflected in archive documents of the Soviet period.

**Keywords:** The rebellion of 1916, PRC, XUAR, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Ürkün, refugees.

#### **About the author:**

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<sup>1</sup> This article was written as part of project “The consolidation of academic societies in Central Asia for acquisition of new information on the rebellion of 1916 and creation of shared academic platforms for exchange and proliferation of knowledge on ethnically and politically sensitive issues”.

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## Introduction

During the summer of 2015 I took part in an expedition to Kyzyl-Suu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture (KSKAP) and Ili-Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture (IKAP) in China. We collected field materials, interviewed residents of Kyrgyz autonomous national villages Shaty, K k Terek and Akchiy districts, (KSKAP), as well as residents of Kulja and Nylky towns (IKAP) about the rebellion of 1916 and  rk n migration of Kyrgyz people to China. The research raised many questions as local respondents mentioned three  rk n events, whereas we only knew about the one that happened in 1916. The source base of the research was conducted based on the interviews<sup>2</sup> and documents from the Central State Archive of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Central State Archive of Social and Political records of the Kyrgyz Republic. Chinese Kyrgyz people conditionally divide  rk n into the Great  rk n (the migration of 1916), the Middle  rk n (the Basmachy movement against the Soviet regime in 1920-1930s) and the Minor  rk n (collectivization in 1930-32, elimination of class enemies and expropriation). Collective memory of the forced migration period and its three phases remain alive in the consciousness of Chinese Kyrgyz people, and their narratives show deep connection between the three  rk ns. They reflect memories of an entire generation punctuated by the imperial colonization, WWI, the establishment of the Soviet rule, ruthless suppression of religious liberties, repression, violence, tragedies and forced migration. All that is closely connected to the newfound home of Kyrgyz refugees – China.

The purpose of this article is not to give a detailed analysis of the complicated political situation or the history behind it, but rather to reconstruct memories of the forced migration of Kyrgyz refugees in China based on their narratives.

There are many issues related to  rk n, which have only been partially explored. With this research I was seeking to answer the following questions: Why is the  rk n divided into three phases? How does the traumatic memory of the  rk n affect people today? How has the passage of time affected the formation process of memories of the rebellion? What are the consequences of the mass exodus of Kyrgyz people from their homeland and what is their current situation like in a foreign country?

## Memory and History of the Forced Migration.

### The Great  rk n

The tragic events of 1916 will without doubt haunt memories of Kyrgyz people for centuries to come. Suppression of the revolt led to mass exodus through snowy, icy Bedel passes (located at an altitude of 4,284 meters above sea level, Issyk-Kul region), Barskoon (located at an altitude of 3,754 meters above sea level, Issyk-Kul region), Sook (located at an altitude of 4,021), Djuuku (located at an altitude of 3,633 meters above sea level, Issyk-Kul region), Torugart (located at an altitude of 3,752 meters above sea level, Naryn region stretching from Naryn to Kashgar), Keltebek (the pass is located in At-Bashy district (Bashkeltebek), the pass connects the Kara-Koyun and Ak-Say valleys) in China (Xinjiang)<sup>1</sup>. Thousands of people died, hundreds of thousands lost their home and were forced to migrate abroad, and many were killed while on the road. This tragedy is known among Kyrgyz people as  rk n – exodus. In a foreign land refugees found themselves in an extremely difficult position. Thousands of Kyrgyz refugees were left homeless and destitute. Hunger, disease, death spread like wildfire. Refugees not able to settle in one place were forced to move from village to village in search

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1 Central State Archive Cof KR F.160-4 Op. 1 D. 91 p. 24.

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Приблизительная статистика киргизов, бѣжавшихъ въ  
прошломъ году въ Китай на I мая 1917 года.

	Кульджинскій рай- онъ/р.Текесъ/.	Кашгарскій рай- онъ/Учъ-Гурганъ Аксу/.	Итого
Бѣжало	80.000	84.000	164.000
Убито по пути русскими отрядами при преслѣд.	7.000	5.000	12.000
Погибло въ Китай	38.000 <sup>37.000</sup> /45%/	20.000 <sup>25.000</sup> /30%/	58.000 <sup>62.000</sup> /35%/
Вернулось изъ Китая	30.000	34.000	64.000
Оставалось въ Китай	13.000	25.000	38.000
На I июля 1917 года.			
Погибло	55.000 / 69% /	28.000 / 33% /	83.000 / 51% /
Вернулось	25.000	44.000	69.000
Остается въ Китай	-	12.000	12.000
Въ Кульджинскій районъ бѣжали изъ Джаркентскаго, Варненскаго и съ сѣвер- наго берега Иссык-Куля.			
Въ Кашгарскій районъ бѣжали изъ Пржевальскаго и Пишпекскаго уѣздовъ.			

CSA F. 160-4. Op. 1. D. 91. p. 23. Approximate number of Kyrgyz people, who fled to China.

of shelter. Those, who survived and reached safety in China, heard hopeful news from distant Russia by the end of winter in early 1917. On March 2nd, it was announced that Tsar Nikolas (*ak pashaa*) had abdicated the throne and that the empire had been placed under the rule of a temporary government. This did a lot to convey to the Russian public the depth and scope of the Kyrgyz tragedy. Thus, began negotiations for the return of Kyrgyz exiles as soon as permitted by snow melt in the mountain passes. Most refugees returned home, though many for various reasons stayed abroad.

While some Kyrgyz people have lived on the territory of China since the Qing Empire, thousands more were forced to move there, because their homeland had been ripped away from them. These people still remember how and where they came from, even though most of those who experienced Ürkün firsthand have since passed away. The tragic events of this period are remembered in Kyrgyzstan as a single calamity – the Ürkün. However, the Kyrgyz community in China remember it as three Ürküns, which begs the question: why?

We interviewed 80-year-old Asanakun Mukan uulu, former professor at Xinjiang Pedagogical University. In 1962 the political situation forced him to move to *oodan* (district), where he worked as a schoolteacher until retirement. Asanakun Mukan uulu was born in Shaty village. He is a member of Köldük clan, which is what Kyrgyz people in China call those who came from Issyk-Kul region. He says: “Our ancestors came from Issyk-Kul. Since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century up until the Great Ürkün they roamed northern districts of the Qing Empire, mainly in Ili which is now known as Ili-Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture”<sup>2</sup>. Residents of Ili unanimously claim that their people have lived here for centuries. During the spring months their ancestors would move with their livestock to pastures on the shores of Issyk-Kul in the west, and to Kenes and Jyldyz – in the east. In fall they returned home. Kyrgyz people living in the Ili valley say that the right shore of the Tekes river was always populated by Kyrgyz people, and the left one – by Kazakhs.

<sup>2</sup> Attokurov S. *Kyrgyzdar jana Tsyndik Kytay//Kyrgyzdar XVIII kylymda.* – Bishkek, 2002. P. 48.





Photo by A. Stein: Kyrgyz men of Üch-Koochu.1907. // Xinjiang People Publishing House. 2006. p. 8.

The Great Ürkün took place during the rule of the Russian Empire. The tsar ordered Kyrgyz people to send their children to work on the frontlines the war. They refused to comply, and a revolt (“munt” in Kyrgyz) broke out. “Send your son – he’ll die, refuse – you’ll die” (*Barsa bala ölot, barbasa chal ölot*) is what people said about that period. The other two Ürküns, known as the Middle and the Minor, occurred during the Soviet occupation. When reminiscing on hardships they endured during those times elders said: “Mournful blood run through our veins” (*Bizdin kanybyz kaygyga jyk tolgon*), and “Kyrgyz soup will burn your tongue even in 40 years” (*Kyrgyzdyn shorposu 40 jyldan kiyin ooz küygüzöt*). Is not easy to convey the full meaning of these expressions to younger generations.<sup>3</sup>

Ancestors of the respondent, who suffered great tragedies, used folklore to convey their emotional trauma. Oral tradition is well developed among the Kyrgyz people, and it is often employed to pass on

history to younger generations. In this way, folklore serves as a pulse of time. In defining moments, it takes on condensed and integral form in Kyrgyz society.

Kyrgyz people attach great importance to the preservation of their historical roots and folklore plays a major part in this<sup>4</sup>. Traditional Kyrgyz society was shaped by ancestral wisdom, which was passed on in oral form. The folklore of Kyrgyz refugees is another such example of cultural memory. Retelling significant moments of the past enables people to see their history clearly and intimately. Folklorization of Ürkün helps preserve accounts of Kyrgyz refugees, which would unlikely be documented in written form. As we said, there are no direct witnesses of those horrible events left, which is why folklorization and mythologization of Ürkün is not only a vital, but also a natural process.

This psychological and emotional trauma of Kyrgyz people is manifested in many of their songs, legends, proverbs, *sanjyra* (genealogy), etc. For instance, the Kyrgyz saying “*Bedeldin belin*

3 Interview with Asanakun Mukan uulu (Ili-Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Mongul-Küröö district, Shaty village 82 years old) /Interviewer G. Abdaliev// From the author’s field research. – 2015. – June 17th.

4 The earliest and perhaps the most profound piece of literature inspired by the rebellion of 1916 and subsequent exodus to China was a tragedy “*Kayran el*” (Hapless people) by Y. Shaybekov, which became instantly famous by word of mouth. Later Shaybekov wrote two more books on the subject: “*Azgan el*” (Lost people) and “*Kaytkan el*” (Returning people). The poetic trilogy relates the tragic fate of people who revolted against imperial oppression. Many other Kyrgyz poets and writers also explored this topic as well: Akdash Moldo, A. Jutakeev, K. Akiev and others. “Ürkün” – a lesser known poem by Aldash Moldo is dedicated to the events of 1916, so is A Jutakeev’s poem “Runaway people” [Ibraimov O. History of Kyrgyz literature of the 20th century. B. 2014. P. 43-44].



*ashkanda, beldemchi kaldy shashkanda*<sup>5</sup> translates as “We didn’t even have our *beldemchi*<sup>6</sup> when fleeing through Bedel pass”. This expression conveys the haste and panic that Kyrgyz people were in when escaping to China by mountain routes, as only in a state of great distress could a Kyrgyz woman leave her most important piece of clothing – *beldemchi*. Bedel pass is located on the border between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) at an altitude of 4,284 meters above the sea level. It is a long, airless and icy pass that Kyrgyz refugees often had to cross at night<sup>7</sup>. Stopping to rest even for a few hours was a deadly risk as the imperial army was trailing close behind. Many Kyrgyz people paid the ultimate price for a chance to escape to China – a large number of refugees and their livestock remain forever frozen in those mountain passes, barren steppes and dark ravines.

During a field expedition in Ak-Chiy district of PRC I heard a saying “*Kachkyn menen argyn kyiy*”<sup>8</sup>, which means “a refugee and a cross-breed of yak can survive anything”. It conveys perseverance and versatility of refugees, which comes with enduring hardships of forced migration such as loss of loved ones, foreign environment and having to rebuild a life from scratch for themselves and their children.

Those Kyrgyz refugees who fled for their lives to left behind all their material possessions. In a foreign land, bearing the status of refugees they found themselves destitute and homeless. Starting a life over for Kyrgyz people in China was a long and painful process due to a lack of the family and financial support they had back home.

### **The Köldük Clan as a Replacement for Lost Homeland**

Kyrgyz people use oral tradition to preserve memories of hardships their ancestors endured for younger generations. The structure of Kyrgyz society is based on their fundamental philosophy of genealogy, which is why traditions such as *sanjyra* is especially important for those residing abroad. Many Kyrgyz authors of the generation, which experienced Ürkün, wrote about genealogy of Ili, Aksuu, etc. (The books were written in Kyrgyz and published in Kyrgyz publishing houses in China<sup>9</sup>), as these areas are mostly populated by Kyrgyz refugees. These books provide general information about the genealogy of Kyrgyz migrants and its connection to geographical features, such as mountain passes, terrains, border districts, etc. Based on this data we can analyze the generational memory of Ürkün refugees. Every Kyrgyz boy, who has reached the age of seven, is expected to know the names of his seven closest ancestors. From time immemorial Kyrgyz people trained their children to answer such questions as “Who are you?” “Who is your father? Grandfather?” “What clan do you belong to? What tribe?” *Sanjyra* was created to answer these questions, which is why it is referred to as “the tree of life”, as it contains memory of all major events in the history of Kyrgyz people.

At first glance when examining genealogical narratives of Kyrgyz refugees, we get an impression that it is all historical past. The most common phrase I heard during our interviews conducted in the

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5 Nurmambet Osmon uulu, Kyzyl-Suu Autonomous District, Ak-Chiy district. “Bedeldin belin ashkanda, beldemchi kaldy shashkanda”// <http://www.azattyk.org/>.

6 *Beldemchi* is a loose apron with a wide belt, which is worn on top of a dress or a robe.

7 Interview with Asanakun Mukan uulu (Ili-Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Mongul-Küröö district, Shaty village, 82 years old) /Interviewer Abdaliev G. // Author’s field research. – 2015. – June 17.

8 Interview with Abdymoldo Bake (Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Mongul-Küröö district, Shaty village, 82 years old) /Interviewer Abdaliev G. // Author’s field research. – 2015. – June 20.

9 *Ile kyrgyzdary. Book 1*. Urumchi, 2004; Nurdin Junus. *Aksuu Kyrgyz sanjyrasy*. Artush, 2010, p. 27.

Ili valley was “I am a member of the Köldük clan”. Interestingly enough, there was never such a clan on the territory of Kyrgyzstan. Naturally, I was intrigued, so I asked the respondents what branch of the Köldük clan they belonged to. Their replies included *bugu*, *sayak* and many other genealogical branches which do exist in Kyrgyzstan. The name “Köldük” bears a special meaning for Kyrgyz refugees in China, because it comes from their place of origin – the Issyk-Kul region (Yssyk-Köl — “warm lake” in Kyrgyz). Coincidentally, Issyk-Kul is also where the author’s grandparents are from. During the Great Ürkün a mass exodus took place in Przhevalsky county in which residents of almost all districts lying on both coasts of Issyk-Kul lake fled. Thus, when Kyrgyz refugees in China proudly say that they belong to the Köldük clan, what they mean to convey is that their ancestors migrated from the Issyk-Kul valley. Attaching a geographical location to the name of their clan ensured that the younger generations would remember their roots. They are the custodians of the history of the Ürkün. Today even the young generation of Kyrgyz refugees can relate the tragic events of that period with great detail, as the memories have been passed from father to son for over a century.

The trauma of the Ürkün has become a source of identity for Kyrgyz refugees. The commonality of their suffering was the social and emotional foundation, on which they built a community bound by shared loss. The Köldük clan demonstrates how the trauma of forced migration can lead to the creation of new forms of social organization. In other words, the pain and suffering shared by many can sometimes give birth to something beautiful – a new family. Kyrgyz refugees compensated the loss of their homeland (Issyk-Kul) by building a community named after it. And although the name no longer depends on geography, members of the Köldük clan will continue to keep the memory of their sacred ancestral home alive.

### **Traumatic Memory of Child Trade During Uluu Ürkün (the Great Ürkün)**

The anguish caused by the Ürkün was not limited simply to the loss of homeland and its communal support. Another painful, but important part of Kyrgyz history is child trafficking during the period of extreme poverty in the beginning of the 20th century. Not being able to provide for their children in China, many refugees were forced to sell them to Uyghur, Kalmyk and Hun people. We discussed the issue with our respondents: some touched on the topic briefly, others, who were directly affected by the trauma, provided deep and intimate narratives.

Junus Jumadyl, who lived through the Great Ürkün, is a resident of Kulja city. In 1959 he started collecting stories of Kyrgyz refugees, who were sold during that time. Here is what he says:

During the Ürkün Kyrgyz people sold their children to Uighurs and Dungans hoping that the kids would be fine in care of fellow Muslims. Sometimes, however, by mistake they would also sell children to Huns and Kalmyks. Beautiful girls often were forced into marriages, where they were treated as servants. There was even a human market. In some instances, girls who were sold as brides were then resold as slaves in big cities. Many not being able endure such abuse resorted to suicide, choosing death over degradation.

Maraltashy (Kök-Terek, IKAP) used to have a human market, where Kyrgyz refugees sold their children. Junus Jumadyl was told a tragic story by a woman, who along with her sister was sold there as a child to Dungans:

I was twelve at that time, and my little sister was five or six. In Maraltashy we were sold to strangers. My real name is Sara, but the new family called me Mayulo, which is what I go by now. My sister's name was Gulbara, but now everybody calls her Guliy. We both wept inconsolably when we were sold, but as we got older, we realized how fortunate we were to survive and thank God for that. Now every 2-3 years we visit Maraltashy to pay tribute to the memory of our ancestors. There are many people like us in Ili, who when asked about hometown reply with "We are from Maraltashy".

Similar cases of name changing are also common in narratives of those, who were sold to Kalmyks, who named boys of Kyrgyz refugees Badynjab, Oshurjab, Molon, Bayirta, and girls – Suua, Soson, etc.<sup>10</sup> While members of the Köldük clan claimed their identity based on their historic region of origin – Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyz refugees, who were sold as children, call Maraltashy their homeland. For most, it is the place where they last saw their real family, their parents.

Many Uighurs in China (XUAR) are descendants of Kyrgyz people. When a Uighur person says that his grandmother was Kyrgyz it is safe to assume that she migrated during the Great Ürkün.

The most painful and traumatic memory for Kyrgyz refugees in China is selling their girls into marriages to other ethnic groups<sup>11</sup>. Sometimes it was the only way to save other family members. Many Kyrgyz *aksakals* (elders) attempted to collect information about the fate and location of Kyrgyz girls, who were sold to Uighurs and Kalmyks. However, today it is almost impossible to trace the Kyrgyz girls, who were sold to other ethnic groups during Ürkün.

Another interesting point in narratives of the Kyrgyz refugees is that trade of boys is rarely mentioned. So why did Kyrgyz people sell their daughters, but not sons? There seem to be two reasons. Firstly, there was likely a desire to preserve their bloodline. Secondly, a common myth that girls tend to adapt more easily to challenging psychological environments due to higher emotional intelligence and ability to connect with others.

Selling one's own child is undoubtedly a decision of a desperate person. Many Kyrgyz refugees, hungry and exhausted from their travels, gave their children to strangers with the intention of later returning for them. Others did so believing that their children would have a better chance in life with a new family. Some parents sold their teenagers to feed younger children. And in some cases, it was the last resort of a starving family, who otherwise would not survive. The history of the Great Ürkün is full of tragic stories. In attempting to save their children from starvation, the Kyrgyz refugees were sometimes forced to rely on the kindness of strangers. Those who were lucky enough to survive the migration now reside in China.

Another horrible element frequently mentioned in narratives of Kyrgyz refugees is violence against women, particularly, from Kalmyks. When Kyrgyz people were crossing the border during Ürkün, Kalmyk men preyed on attractive girls, often forcing them into marriage. Many Kyrgyz residents of the Ili valley still remember sufferings they endured at the hands of Kalmyks:

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10 Interview with Junus Jumadyl (Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Kulja city, 76 years old) / Interviewer Abdaliev G. // Author's field research. – 2015. – June 23.

11 Approximately 4 000 girls were sold to Chinese people during the period of September 1916 – April 1917. [Usenbaev K. U. *Vosstanie 1916 v Kirgizii*. – Frunze, 1967. p. 242].

... “My name is Cholponay, some call me Cholponhan. I had a sister, whose name was Tulunay. My parents had no sons, so my sister dressed and carried herself as a boy. In August of 1916 residents of the Chuy valley started fleeing their homes, because there was a rumor that “Russians were coming to kill us”. It was the end of peaceful life for my family. We decide to leave too. I was 14 at that time. When I asked my father where we were going to go, he replied: “To China”.

*At dawn Russian Kazaks arrived firing bullets at everyone. Many people were killed including my parents. My sister and I abandoned our livestock and fled. We managed to reach the border, but then six or seven Kalmyk men began pursuing us. I ran away, but my sister stayed on to hold them back. Later I learnt that she had managed to hit one of them in the eye with her whip. She was then beaten to death by the other men. I managed to escape and later was sheltered by a Uighur family. They raised me as their own.*

This one of countless tragic stories of Kyrgyz women who experienced violence at the hands of Kalmyks. The unspeakable crimes committed by Kalmyks against Kyrgyz refugees have not been forgotten by residents of the Ili valley. To this day there is a common belief that God punished the Kalmyks for their evil deeds by unleashing a deadly disease that wiped out an entire Kalmyk village. Although none of the respondents could provide any evidence that the story is based on real events.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Great Ürkün as the Loss of Kyrgyz Identity**

A critical component of the narratives of Kyrgyz refugees in China is admitting a shift in their way of life, customs and traditions, i. e. loss of their culture despite preserved memory of their place of origin and their Kyrgyz identity.

For instance, in Nylky city there are many Kyrgyz residents who no longer speak their ancestral Kyrgyz language and now speak Kazakh instead. Nylky respondent Mukanbet Abdykerim uulu<sup>13</sup> states:

*The population of Nylky (IKAP) is 1,000 people. We migrated to the area during the Great Ürkün, before that there were no Kyrgyz people living here. Descendants of Kyrgyz refugees attended schools, where they were taught either in Kazakh or Chinese. And, thus, we lost our language. Many Kyrgyz people have Kazakh relatives due to mixed marriages. Although there are a lot of similarities between traditions of our people, there are also some differences. We are trying to open Kyrgyz classes in schools, but it is hard to find qualified teachers or books in Kyrgyz. This kind of challenges makes it hard to preserve our native language, few of us today can speak or write in Kyrgyz, but we hope to change that soon<sup>14</sup>.*

Another resident of Nylky, Bekzatkan Aray, was reluctant to be interviewed, because she was embarrassed by the fact that she could not speak Kyrgyz. She said:

*My great grandfather Toktorbay, who was sentenced to exile in Siberia, fled with his family to China during the Minor Ürkün. We ended up living in a predominantly Kazakh environment and started*

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Junus Jumadyl.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Mukanbet Abdykerim uulu (Ile-Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Nylky city, 63 years old) / Interviewer Abdaliev G. // Author's field research. – 2015. June 20.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

*to forget our own language. I have relatives in the autonomous Kyrgyz national village Kök-Terek. When I visit them, I always feel so bad, because Kyrgyz people in the village all speak their native language fluently, and I can't<sup>15</sup>.*

As we can see, both respondents have lost a part of their culture. But whereas Mukanbet remains hopeful that his children and grandchildren could one day acquire Kyrgyz language and customs, Bekzatkan believes that she is completely detached from her ancestors. They are both accustomed to Kazakh traditions. For refugees, meeting other Kyrgyz people can be a source of anxiety and guilt for having failed to keep alive their culture, language or customs. Still, despite obvious challenges Kyrgyz communities living abroad are fighting to preserve their historical roots.

Regardless of whether Kyrgyz refugees live in a secluded community or are assimilated with other ethnic groups, whether they speak their native language or not, they all claim Kyrgyzstan as their homeland. Even those who have never set a foot in the country retain memories of it acquired from previous generations. Kyrgyz refugees emotionally and in detail relate the history of their clan and locations in Kyrgyzstan connected to it.

Summarizing the memories of Kyrgyz refugees about the great Ürkün, we can distinguish three major structural components:

1. The exodus, loss of the historical homeland and creation of the Kolduk clan as a response to it.
2. Physical threat to Kyrgyz heritage – death of elders and child trade.
3. Expansion of clan relations due to assimilation.

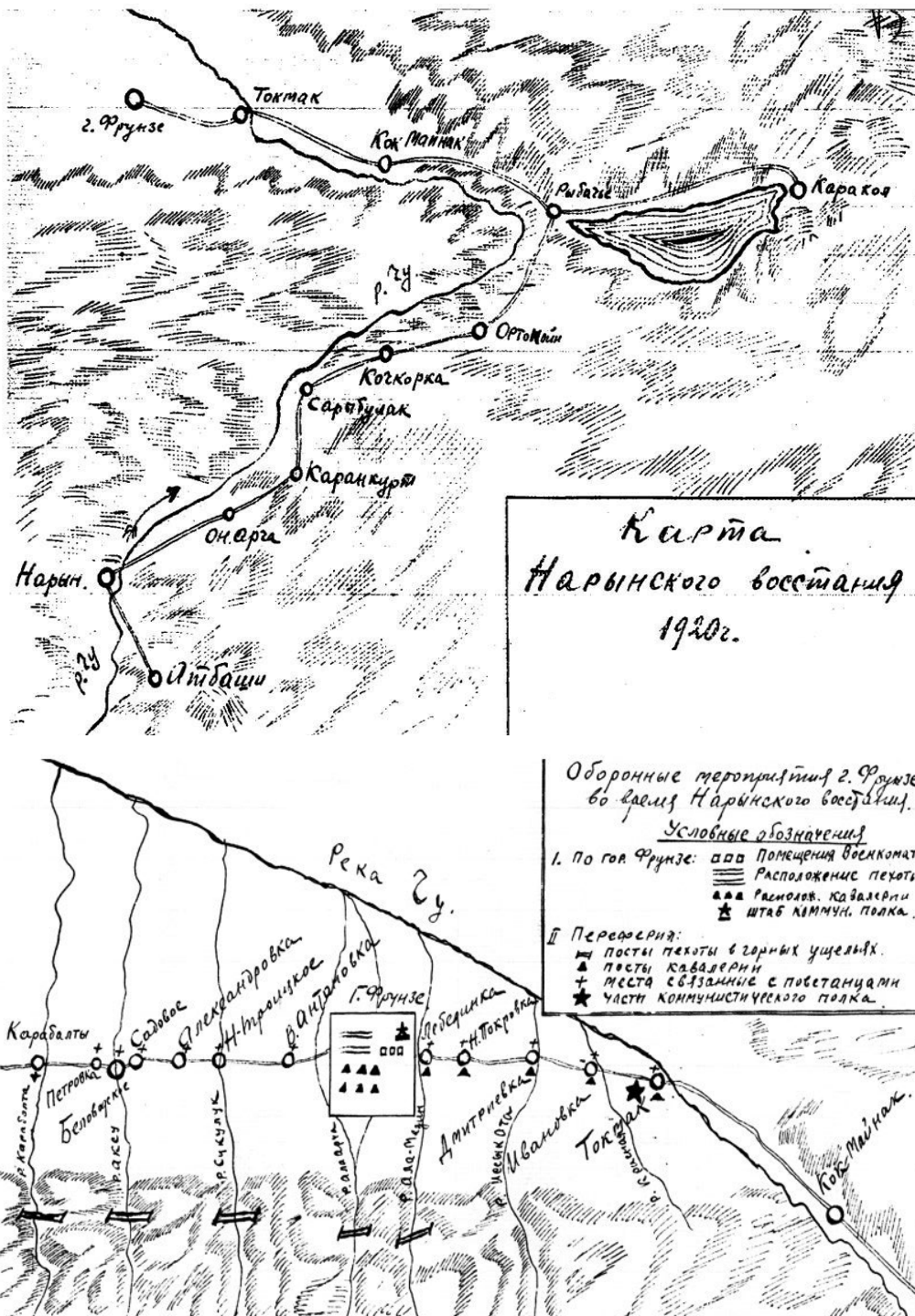
The Great Ürkün is an example of loss of Kyrgyz identity as a result of migration. The consequences of the mass exodus not only include initial loss of homeland, but also subsequent loss of native culture and language. At the same time, the Great Ürkün gave birth to a community of symbolic kinship – the Kolduk clan. It demonstrates that Kyrgyzstan does not necessarily lose its people to migration, but rather migrants bring a part of it with them.

## **The Middle Ürkün**

While the Great Ürkün was a result of Russian imperial aggression, the second wave of forced migration occurred during the Soviet period. For Kyrgyz refugees the critical events in their history occurred one after another with little rest in between: the WWI, the rebellion of 1916, the establishment of the Soviet rule and, finally, the civil war. The Great Ürkün is defined by its theme the loss of homeland and its compensation with a symbolic kinship among Kyrgyz refugees. The Middle Ürkün, on the other hand, was predominantly a forced migration of White Guards, Kulaks, and local bourgeoisie. However, the ethnic aspect which united and then radically divided people in 1916 receded during the following mass exodus (the Middle Ürkün). During this time both ethnic Kyrgyz and Russians, who were opposed to the Soviet party, fled to China. This migration wave is known among Kyrgyz people in PRC (Ak-Chiy county) as “Mondurov’s Revolt” or “Mondurov’s Rebellion” (“*Möndürüptun muntu*”, “*Möndürüptun kötörülüşü*”).

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15 Interview with Bekzatkan Aray (Ile-Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, national village Kök-Terek, 66 years old) / Interviewer Abdaliev G. // Author's field research. – 2015. – June 18.



The map of Naryn rebellion CSA of KR, F. 1283. Op. 1. D. 98. P. 13.

One of the rebellion leaders was K. Bondarev. Unlike the Great Ürkün, the Middle Ürkün among Kyrgyz refugees in China aroused a single narrative, which is based on the theme of Soviet Party's violence and abuse of power. Many residents of Ak-Chiy county (Xinjiang) still vividly remember those events. Speaking about Mondurov's (K. Bondarev) revolt, a respondent told us: "Kakshaal was populated by people who fled the Soviet rule after Mondurov's revolt. The Red Army, however, came shortly after and killed them all (on the territory of China). Elders showed us the location where the killings took place, I can't remember it now. I just remember that we always read the Quran while passing by to honor their memory". Examining this particular event through the narratives of Kyrgyz refugees helps us to better understand the history behind the second wave of forced migration (November 1920). Obvious questions here are: "Who was Mondurov (K. Bondarev)?" and "why do narratives of these violent events continue to persist in the collective memory of the Kyrgyz people?"

The event took place in Naryn in 1920. It was the last attempt to overthrow the Soviet rule in the northern part of Kyrgyzstan. On the night of November 5, White Guards and migrant kulaks rose in revolt led by the captain of the first battalion of the fifth border regiment, former officer of the Russian Empire D. Kiryanov (he was also son of Zachuysk district marshal). His main collaborators were K. Bondarev and five brothers Nesterovs.

Before the October Revolution K. Bondarev worked as a clerk and policeman in several Naryn counties, but being also a trader his influence extended across the entire district. His main competitor in the local market was famous trader of the second guild Shukurbek Kurbanbaev. Although after the October Revolution K. Bondarev did not hold any prominent position in the administration, he remained influential in Naryn district due to his work in an opium organization.

Like Bondarev, Nesterov brothers lived in Naryn city holding various positions in the Imperial Administration. From 1918 to 1920 one of the brothers worked as a military commissioner, one as a police chief, another worked as a prosecutor, and yet another as a judge. And, as with Bondarev, all of the brothers were highly influential in Naryn district. Recognizing Nesterovs' political power local residents nicknamed the brothers "Besh Balka" ("five hammers").

On November 5, 1920, Red Army soldiers of the 1st battalion of the 5th Border Regiment who were serving at the border between the Kyrgyz territory and Xinjiang, led by their captain D. Kiryanov abandoned their posts, leaving the border completely open. Under the pretext of celebrating the third anniversary of the October Revolution the soldiers returned to their base located in Naryn city. There, the insurgents arrested the battalion's commissioners, disarmed the local military unit, freed and armed all inmates of a local prison and made multiple arrests among the Soviet party workers in the city.

After taking over Naryn, the rebellion forces established a local government headed by K. Bondarev. Operational headquarters were also set up; all Soviet agencies were declared illegitimate and all decrees of the Soviet party were reversed. Free trade was restored, guaranteeing the sanctity of ownership, and the borders were opened for the flow of goods.

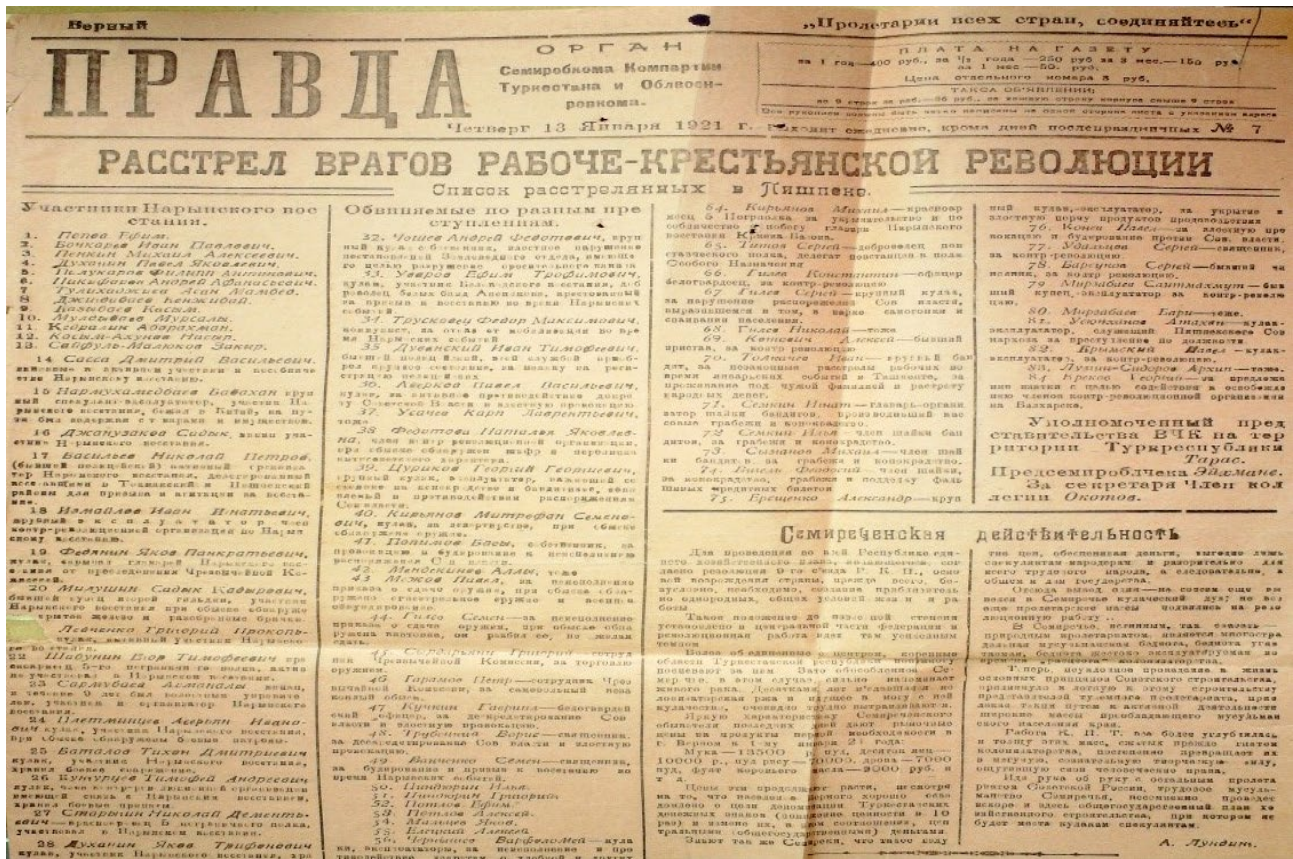
In response to the insurgence Bolsheviks immediately mobilized communists and Komsomol members from Prezhivask and Tokmak. In addition, the second Turkmen regiment was sent from Pishpek. The first major battle between the Red Army and the rebellion forces took place on the outskirts of the Orto-Tokoy valley. On November 16 the Red Army crashed retreating insurgents in Kochkor district and captured D. Kiryanov. On November 18, remaining rebellion forces suffered



their final defeat at the Dolon pass. A number of mutineers including K. Bondarev fled to Xinjiang in an attempt to escape physical and psychological violence from the Red Army; others retreated back to Naryn, whereby that time the Soviet Party had regained control.

The battle took many lives and remained in the memory of Kyrgyz people for a long time. "The Naryn mutiny was brutally suppressed. An itinerant session of the Regional Emergency Commission sentenced 213 people to death in Naryn; in Pishpek 96 people were sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Military Tribunal. More people were shot dead in Karakol, Tokmak, Pishpek and Alma-Ata - 3000 total". Violent punitive actions by the government went on until 1921. Below is a horrifying article published on January 13, 1921 in Pravda (Newspaper), which is titled "Execution of enemies of the proletarian revolution".

The Soviet Party was open about its tactics, which included mass terror and violence. They printed the full list of those executed in the official state newspaper in order to intimidate the opposition. Those few who managed to escape this tragedy alive fled to China. However, the Red Army was not satisfied and conducted punitive operations targeting political refugees even on the other side of the border. Perhaps, the sheer magnitude of the violence is the reason it is still remembered among Kyrgyz people today. That is why "Mondurov's revolt" plays such an important role in translation of cultural memory. It is a catalyst, which vividly brings out other historic events of 1918-1920 that otherwise would be forgotten. It is unknown whether K. Bondarev survived on the territory of Xinjiang or was killed by the Red Army soldiers. However, to this day among Kyrgyz refugees living there, the Middle Ürkün is often referred to as "Mondurov's revolt".



Newspaper copy. The archive of the President of Republic of Kazakhstan. F. 139. Op. 2. D. 9. P.1. The list of executed in Pishpek. Naryn rebellion participants.

“Mondurov’s revolt” is mainly associated with the forced migration of White Guards, who were mostly comprised of Slavic people, which is why among Kyrgyz refugees ‘Orto Ürkün’ (the Middle exodus) is considered to be less consequential than the Great or Minor Ürküns. It is therefore not surprising that the interviews we conducted in Xinjiang among Kyrgyz refugees were mainly focused on the Great and Minor Ürküns, because those historic events affected the ancestors of the respondents directly.

Nevertheless, today Russian is spoken in the homes and streets of Xinjiang cities and villages. The modern Russian diaspora or “the Russian club” (officially established on November 5, 2007 in Urumchi) in Xinjiang can be classified as the fourth migration of Eastern Turkestan. Although genetically it is not connected to the first waves of the exodus, the community plays a major part in supporting the Russian spirit in the land of lost “Belovodye”. “The Russian club” of Urumchi is the backbone of the Russian speaking community in Xinjiang, which includes Ukrainians, Tatars, Kazaks and other ethnic groups of the former Soviet republics. The history of the Russian Xinjiang is becoming more and more popular in the region. Culture and history books in libraries, as well as personal archives containing information about White Guards, who have lived in Xinjiang, find new readers. Volunteers care for White Guards tombstones and restore their generational memory.

### **Akchubak Revolt and the Minor Ürkün**

The Minor Ürkün occurred during the period of collectivization accompanied by eradication of class enemies of the Soviet Party and mass expropriation (1928-1933). The violent policies employed against the upper- and middle-class citizens forced many of them to flee to Xinjiang. Those were dark years in the history of Kyrgyz people. The 1930s saw mass collectivization, including in a traditionally nomadic farming community located in At-Bashi district. The mountainous region had little cultivable land, so local residents were forced to sell their livestock in order to buy and supply the government with grain as they were ordered. The collectivization policy was conducted with disregard to basic human rights, often subjecting people to violence and humiliation. Indigenous communities, who for centuries had led a nomadic lifestyle, were forced to settle in one place and organize collective agriculture in order to comply with the grain production plans set by the Soviet party. Naturally, public discontent began brewing in the region.

Rising political tensions finally erupted into violent riots in the northern Kyrgyzstan in 1930-1932. Known in archive documents as the Talas (Dmitriev’s) Rebellion of 1930, the Balykchy Rebellion of 1931, the At-Bashy Rebellion of 1931, revolts in Temirovka, Grigoryevka and Bosteri (1931), all mutinies were brutally suppressed. Those who were fortunate enough to escape the Soviet wrath, fled to the neighboring China.

Data on forced migration during the period of collectivization

No	Location	Number of households
1	Issyk-Kul region	220
2	Chuy region	90
3	Ketmen-Tobo	805
4	Alay district	300
5	Nookat district	50
6	At-Bashy district	100
Total:		1565

The causes of the forced migration of Kyrgyz people to China were the political campaigns of the Soviet Party targeting agriculture (state grain, livestock, wool procurement, etc), as well as class warfare and other communist reforms. The wealthier segments of the population, unwilling to part with their livestock and property migrated to China (XUAR). Many of their relatives and even middle- and lower-class people in their communities followed.

Family stories and archival documents relate details of the Basmachy movement, which gained momentum in 1920-1930 during the mass collectivization in agriculture but was ultimately suppressed by the Soviet Party. Political dissidents of all creeds and ethnicities migrated from the region. A part of the historical legacy of the collectivization between 1928-1932 is the significant spike in Kyrgyz migration to Xinjiang. The following years were just as tragic, as they were marked by mass terror and repression. Dissidents were persecuted by the Soviet party even in exile. At the Torugart pass alone, 200 people who were attempting to escape to China were shot dead. One of our respondents says this about the horrific incident:

*“In 1931 a huge number of Kyrgyz refugees (from At-Bashy) crossed the border. Revolting against expropriation of their land and livestock Kyrgyz people supported by their Chinese brothers destroyed border posts and killed border patrol. To this day the At-Bashy terrain is known among the general public as “the boss valley”. In response the Soviet government opened fire at people crossing into China murdering 200 people. Only a nine-year-old boy named Kurmanakun survived. His father shielded him with his own body and told him not to move. Kurmanakun fell unconscious from the loud noise of never-ending bullet rounds. When he woke up he heard what he thought was a river murmur. But when he looked around he realized it was the sound of blood running from dead bodies all around him. Everyone in the procession, including his father, was dead. In the memory of Kyrgyz people this tragedy is known as “the Akchubak Rebellion”.*

On June 13, 1931 the Kirobkom bureau held a meeting to discuss the state of immigration and political revolts. A resolution was adopted: “The regional commissions’ leaders must raise awareness in regards to the repressions of *bay-manaps* (the wealthy), influence of “anti-Soviet elements” in the Soviet party cooperative organizations, especially, actions of Cherik tribe members, who provoked the public revolt in At-Bashy district”.

Participants of the Akchubak (Cherik) rebellion fled to China by two routes. The first one, taken by Abdylida Jaanbaev, Kulchun Umrailiev and Kazybek Mambeteminov went through Beshkeltebek. The group, who took this route, in three days safely reached Toyun terrain (modern Kyzyl-Suy Kyrgyz Autonomous prefecture of the PRC). Those who took the second route through the Arpa pasture, were pursued by Soviet soldiers, who were shooting and killing innocent people. People’s Artist of the Kyrgyz Republic S. Andanbekov recalls the events:

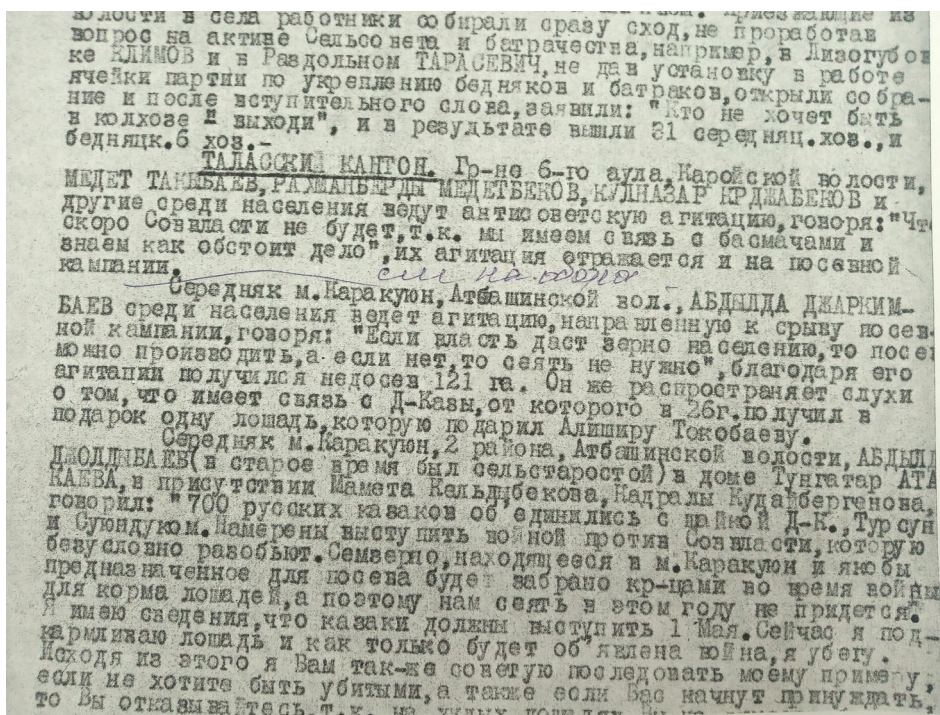
I was seven at the time. We heard that Cheriks were abandoning their homes and fleeing to China. We saw yurts left open with piles of blankets in them. When we travelled to Arpa, Chatyr-Kul, my father Andanbek and brother-in-law Adigine showed us human skeletons lying in a trench. They told us that those remains belonged to Cheriks, who were killed by the Soviet Army, and a man named Kulchun was their leader.



A poem by Kazybek, who participated in the revolt, provides an important insight when studying the exodus of Kyrgyz people to China. Kazybek was a member of an organization fighting against the policy of forced collectivization implemented by the Soviet Party in high mountainous districts of Kyrgyzstan in 1930s. In his work Kazybek relates the Akchubak rebellion and the subsequent exodus of its leaders and At-Bashy residents to China. His poem "Fleeing from At-Bashy, lost and distraught people" reflects the turmoil of the forced migration:

*People, who escaped persecution,  
Are still abused on the other side.  
Is this a part of the Soviet ideology  
That promised to protect and feed us?  
On the path to socialism  
People got pushed into a foreign land.*

Suyunduk, Tursun, Abdylda and Kulchun led the *basmachy* groups, which united in At-Bashy district during the early stages of collectivization. Suyunduk was a member of the Monoldor tribe born in Ak-Muz village (At-Bashy district). According to elders who knew him personally, he was a moderately wealthy man of average height. Suyunduk was disappointed in the Soviet ideology after numerous false denunciations and organized an interest group. Later he travelled to Kulja, where he met with famous Janybek-kazy, a *basmachy* from Uzgen. Suyunduk had roughly 500 young men under his command. They were supplied with arms and tactical orders from the mentioned above major Kurbashy located in Kashgar.



Copy. Central State Archive of public-political records of Kyrgyz Republic. F. 10. Op. 1. D. 292. P. 33.

Soviet soldiers followed insurgents into the territory of China, employing operational tactics aiming to capture Suyunduk, Tursun, Abdylida and Kulchun. Once surrounded, Suyunduk and Tursun got shot dead. Other leaders Abdylida Djaanbaev, Kulchun Umralliev and Kazybek Mambeteminov were detained by a Soviet border patrol. The military tribunal found them guilty under article 58.1. “a”, 58-2 of the Criminal Code of RSFSR and sentenced 12 people to death penalty. The sentence was carried out against six people (A. Djaanbaev, K. Umralliev, A. Atabaev, K. Moldoyarov, H. Telemyshev and I. Toktorbaev-Bayserkhev) on October 22, 1935. Kazybek Mambeteminov’s case was reexamined by the military tribunal on October 20, 1935, and he was sentenced to 10 years in a labor camp in Tashkent. Kazybek detailed the ordeal in his poem “A letter from prison”. In it he recounts how during an interrogation by the State Political Directorate (SPD) he was accused of partaking in the Cherek revolt in 1931 and demonstrations against the Soviet government.

Many innocent people in At-Bashy district were falsely accused and sentenced in relation to the forced migration movement. Archive documents contain reports of the At-Bashy district prosecutor Kachkev to the Kyrgyz ASSR prosecutor Smirnov dated from January 4, 1935 to January 7, 1936, which provide details of about 39 cases in the district related to immigration, corruption and organized crime. In total 83 people were imprisoned, one of which received the capital punishment.

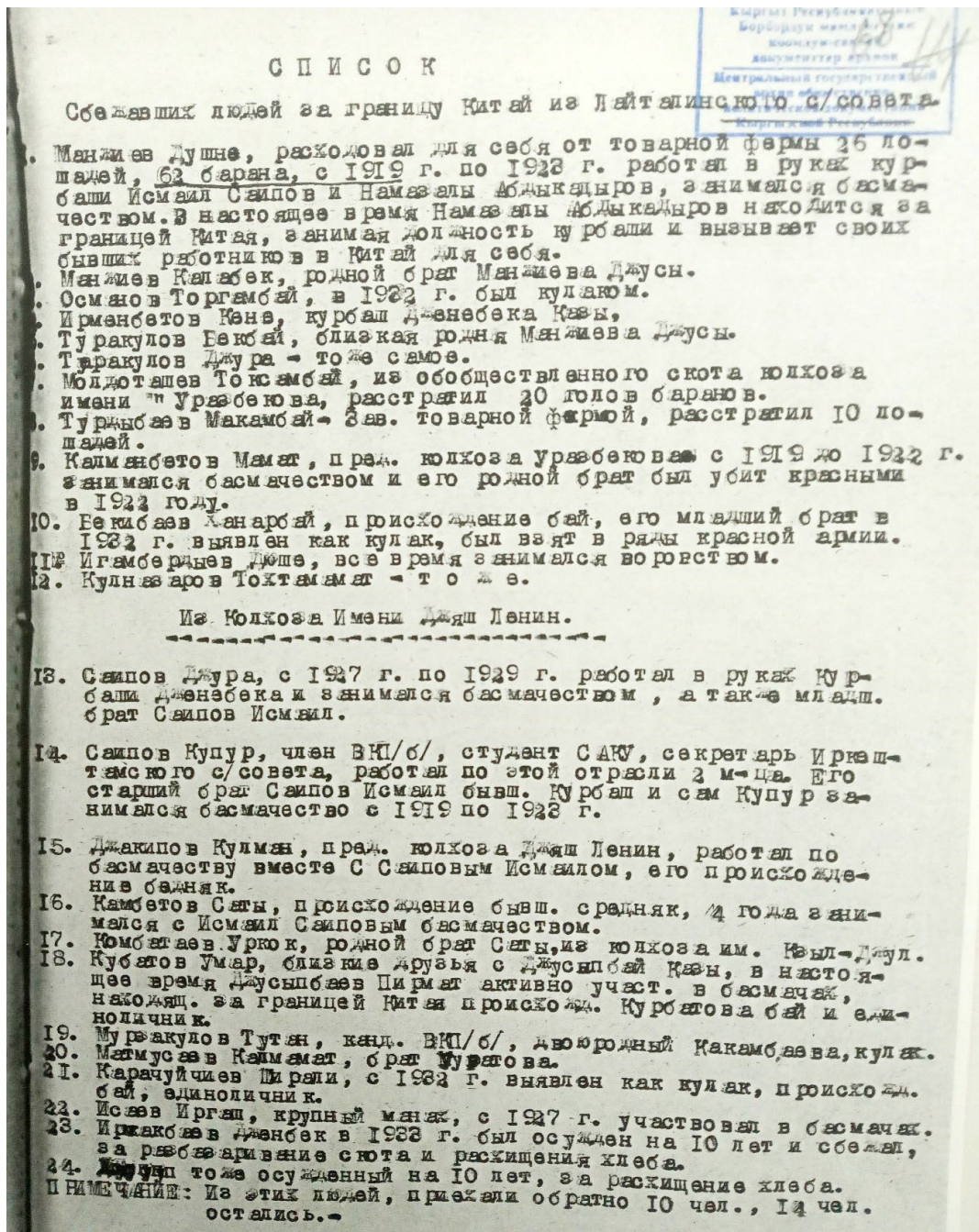
**In At-Bashy district from January 4, 1935 to January 7, 1936:**

<i>Number of convicted people</i>	<i>Sentence</i>
11 people	1 year
26 people	1-3 years
20 people	3-5 years
25 people	5-10 years
Tologenov Toktaly	Death penalty
Total: 83 people convicted	

Classified archival documents show that in 1931 the Naryn Commandment office of the SPD convicted a resident of “Kyzyl-Tuu” village, Turdybaev, of attempting to “flee to China” and sentenced him to one year in a Tashkent labor camp. But taking into account his social status (Turdybaev was from a poor family) the SPD allowed him to reside in At-Bashy district.

In 1931 many people were falsely accused of participating in the Cherek revolt in At-Bashy. Many of them were sentenced to exile by the SPD. The accusation of “attempting to flee to China” was common not only in At-Bashy district, but also in numerous villages of the Naryn region. Many were also falsely convicted of participating in the Cherek rebellion of 1931. Hence, a migration movement emerged becoming more prominent as repressions increased in the region. Brutal and unfair Soviet policies resulted for many people in the permanent loss of their homeland. Meanwhile, the NKVD (People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs) collected information on every person, who fled to China and their family and relatives, who remained in the country.





Central State Archive of public-political records of Kyrgyz Republic. F. 10. Op. 1. D. 513. P. 68.  
The list of people who escaped to China.

After several waves of migration, caused by suppressed rebellions, the Soviet Union started to strengthen its borders with China (XUAR). In 1933 a new passport system was introduced prompting refugees to attempt escape not in masses but one by one. However, the majority of those attempts were unsuccessful as the borders were strictly controlled. Most of the refugees were caught and punished. Here is only one example of many: in August of 1933, residents of Tegirmenti village in Issyk-Kul district K. Satsaev, C. Bayzakov, A. Kalpaev, S. Ashirov attempted to cross the Saryjaz border to China. In ten days, they were captured by the border patrol. In 1935 one of them, Chortolbay Bayzakov, was sentenced by the Kyrgyz ASSR court to ten years in a labor camp in Karaganda. Any attempt to escape the Soviet power was doomed. Punitive measures extended to the territory of China, where special military operations were executed against Kyrgyz refugees.

Another important aspect of the Minor Ürkün concerns the witnesses of the Great Ürkün, who were forced to retreat to China yet again as result of the Soviet policies. These people had no problem crossing the border this time having learnt from the Great Ürkün. This bitter experience helped Kyrgyz refugees to reach safety in China. Mansur's fate can be used as an example here.

*In Bay (Xinjiang) people recount the story of Mansur, who was a refugee during the Great Ürkün. He later returned home (to Kyrgyzstan), but after the establishment of the Soviet rule he was forced to flee again. The Red Army struggled to capture Mansur. The intense pursuit lasted 10 days. In desperation, the Soviet forces sent out a military plane against Mansur and his men. Mansur was shot dead. The Red Army soldiers also executed his mother proving that the Soviet power did not spare women and children.*

This narrative demonstrates the deep connection between the Great and Minor Ürküns, as Mansur was a refugee from both. He was directly affected by the events of 1916 and left for China escaping the violence of the Russian Empire. It is unknown when he returned to his homeland, but according to the respondent, in the period of collectivization Mansur was yet again forced to repeat his traumatic experience of being exiled to a foreign country.



Photo. The Central State Archive of film, photo and sound documents of KR.  
5-316 – Executed *basmachy* Mansur Mambetaliev.



Kyrgyz people living in the Ak-Suu valley shared with us many personal stories of violence of “the red terror”. In Kyrgyzstan, however, we were unable to find any information about Mansur Mambetaliev, but photos declaring his death, which matches the timeline of the forced migration of Kyrgyz people to Xinjiang. While official documents provide little insight, memories of Kyrgyz refugees of the tragic period are plentiful.

Such narratives help us reconstruct the events of 1930-1934. These years saw a mass exodus of Kyrgyz people to China. Some attempts to cross the border continued after this period, but they were largely unsuccessful – those fleeing were captured and severely punished.

Almost all refugees struggled to find peace even on Chinese land, because they were still pursued by Soviet power. However, as history progressed, political vengefulness was superseded by the opposite: total oblivion. Memories of political violence are limited in scope to the families and groups that have experienced it directly. Even today, in the post-Soviet era, history books rarely acknowledge, let alone properly illustrate, the magnitude of the Kyrgyz tragedy. Only descendants of people, who were affected by the mentioned above rebellions and subsequent migrations, keep alive their painful memories.

### **Pain and Memories. Kyrgyz-Ashuu and Orton-Tokoy**

Memorials are created, when spiritual meets material and with time becomes a symbolic element of peoples’ national memory and unity. Without such commemorative monuments, history would not be fully preserved.

There is a place in the Ili-Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture (Xinjiang, PRC) called Kyrgyz-Ashuu, which commemorates the events of 1916. It is also known as “the place where Kyrgyz people were murdered”. This is the place, which was crossed by refugees from all three exoduses. In memory of Kyrgyz people, the terrain is an unofficial memorial to the victims of violence from the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. According to locals, one may still find in Kyrgyz-Ashuu notes left by refugees in Arabic or Latin scripts. It is another indication that the place contains memories of all three Ürküns. Another terrible form of evidence of the historic tragedies which one may find in Kyrgyz-Ashuu is human remains.

My father is from Issyk-Kul district, village Chon-Örүktü. During the Minor Ürkün he and his family had to flee to China. At first, they moved to Jamaaty, in Kulja, where they lived for 15 years with Uyghur people. Then in order to preserve their roots they moved to Kok-Terek. That was the year I was born. My father told me: “In 1938 along with other 17 families, mine crossed Maralty into China. The refugees were accompanied by hunters. Russian border patrols, who were always in groups of 10, knew about the hunters. The hunters killed the Russian soldiers opening Kyrgyz refugees a pass-through mountains”.

Before that the terrain had been called Saykal by Kazakh people, but afterwards it was known as “Kyrgyz Ashuu” (the Kyrgyz pass).

Another narrative was recorded from Beshe Mamy. According to him:

Kyrgyz people during all three Ürküns crossed Kyrgyz-Ashuu. It has become known as “*the land, where Kyrgyz refugees were murdered*”, because there are still human remains all over it. During the first exodus, refugees found themselves between two fires – from the Russian Empire on one side, and from Kalmyks and Moguls from the other. Many were killed. Both Kyrgyz people and their livestock. When I was a shepherd, I could only reach the terrain on a horse. I saw human remains with my own eyes, saw abandoned yurts, cauldrons and samovars. We have buried some bodies there, but some remains were in hard to reach places. To this day you can find a corpse lying between big rocks or trees. We could not reach them. When my grandmother was recalling the events, she told me: “*People left all valuables behind in order to escape to China. I only took my köshögö<sup>16</sup>, because I thought if I died at least my face would be covered. Let it be my shroud*”.

### **Orton-Tokoy**

Another prominent memorial place commemorating the three Ürküns in China is Orton-Tokoy (Ili-Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang, XUAR). While Kyrgyz-Ashuu is remembered as a place of mass killings, Orton-Tokoy was a safe haven for Kyrgyz refugees.

Orton-Tokoy is located on the territory of Ili. Right after crossing the Muzart river, Kyrgyz refugees found a dense forest. Ili was mainly populated by Kalmyks and Kazakhs. Kalmyks had murdered and robbed Kyrgyz refugees, which is why the protective cover of the forest became a safe haven for many of them. After crossing the border refugees would hide in the forest during the day, and at night they would move in the direction of Kök-Terek and Shaty, where fellow Kyrgyz people lived.

Both Kyrgyz-Ashuu and Orton-Tokoy are important memorial places of the three waves of forced migration for Kyrgyz people living in the Ili valley. Kyrgyz-Ashuu and Orton-Tokoy are monuments to the tragedy and pain that the Kyrgyz people endured in the beginning of the 20th century. These places are sacred for the Kyrgyz refugees of the Ili valley, and they honor the victims of the three Ürküns. Elders recount their stories about Kyrgyz-Ashuu and Orton-Tokoy, while the younger generations listen and commemorate. The historic legacy of the three Ürküns is preserved in generational memory of the Kyrgyz people.

### **Present Location of Kyrgyz Refugees on the Territory of China**

Based on the field research we can conclude where Ürkün refugees settled on the territory of China. In 1920 according to the “Pekin resolution”, “Resolution on establishing borders of north-western part districts”, “Tarbagatay border resolution” and “Ili regulation” the majority of Kyrgyz people remained under the rule of the Russian Empire. Others became subjects of the Qin Empire and were known in history as “Chinese-Kyrgyz”. However, the link between the two groups was never broken.

During the Great Ürkün, Kyrgyz refugees relied on their brothers living in China, however, the Daotoy (Chinese governor) issued a decree forbidding his subjects from providing aid to refugees. Fleeing Kyrgyz people had moved deep into the territory of China, where Uighurs, Huns and other ethnic groups lived.

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<sup>16</sup> *Köshögö* is a curtain behind which a bride sits when she arrives in her husband's house.



Photo: Shaty village, China.

77.4% of Kyrgyz people in China live on the territory of Kyzyl-Suy autonomous prefecture. The migration waves of the three Ürküns affected Ili-Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture most profoundly, specifically, modern Kyrgyz autonomous national village Kök-Terek (located in Tekes district, IKAP), population 17,000 people. There are 13,533 Kyrgyz people living on the territory of Mongul-Kure district, 1,732 of them live in Kyrgyz autonomous national village Shaty. The population was comprised mostly of eight ethnic groups: Kyrgyz, Chinese, Uighur, Kazakh, Mongol, Dungun, Uzbek and Tatar. There is a Kyrgyz district school. There are Kyrgyz people in Nylky (1,000 people), Toguz-Toro (415 people), Kunos (345 people), Horgos (314 people) Kulja (349 people), Chapchal Shibe autonomous district and cities (357 people), Huitun (29 people).

In addition to Ili-Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Kyrgyz people also reside in the Ak-Suu valley, specifically in On-Suu and Uchturpan *oodans* (districts), where the population is 80-90% Kyrgyz.



Photo: Ethnic Kyrgyz in China, Ak-Too.

### Ak-Suu Kyrgyz people

№	Oodan (district)	Town, village	Population
1	On-Suu	In the entire district	9536
	On-Suu	national autonomous Kyrgyz town Boz-Don; village Talak, farms Soopchu, Talak, Siyrish, Tumshuk	1876
2	Uch-Turpan	In the entire district	4342
		national autonomous Kyrgyz village Jaman-Suu	1373
3	Bay		1085
4	Kuchar, Akjar, Djildiz and Zyndan		131
5	Ak-Suu city		246

Kyrgyz people also live in the valleys of Kashkar, districts Maralbashy, Yarkent, Koono shaar and Payzivat. Opal village is populated by descendants of the three Ürküns. In the valleys of Hoten, Gum district, there is a Kyrgyz national village Ken-Kyr (population: 579 people) (50-year anniversary of Kyzyl-Suu, 1954-2004 Statistics digest 2004, 465). The three Ürküns descendants also populate districts Karakash, Kiri, Bayingole and in Mongolian autonomous prefecture in Korla, Karashaar, Lopnur, Bugur *oodans* (regions). The second and the third wave of Kyrgyz migration hit the territory of Ak-Chiy and Uluu-Chat (Kyzyl-Suu autonomous prefecture, XUAR), located near the border. Here Kyrgyz people live separately, the majority attached themselves to Kyrgyz national villages.

### Conclusion

Today the memory of the forced migration is fragmented and muddled. It is limited to the groups and families of its victims. Kyrgyz history books do not fully cover the extent of political violence that caused the three Ürküns, but the pain and grief still live on in hearts of Kyrgyz refugees living in China. Memories of the fear and persecution, which have been preserved for generations, are the legacy of the Great, Middle and Minor Ürküns. Drawing conclusions, we noted that the 20th century for Kyrgyz people was a period of mass robbery, killings and exile. As a reaction to these inhumane crimes, unprecedented in their magnitude, a new form of cultural memory emerged that is no longer bound to geographical borders – generational memory. It is aimed to publicly shame these kinds of crimes so that tragic history never repeats itself.

### **Abbreviations**

IKAP	Ili-Kazakh Autonomous prefecture
PRC	People's Republic of China
KSAR	Kyzyl-Suu Kyrgyz Autonomous Region
XUAR	Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region
Oodan	region

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#### **Informants from the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang, China. Field materials of 2015**

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2. Interview with Mukanbet uulu Abdyshukur (Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Mongul-Küröö, 63 years old) / Interviewer Abdaliev G. // Author's field research. – 2015.
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