

## The Caspian Disputes:

### Nationalism and Nomadism in Early Soviet Central Asia

At the dawn of the Soviet era, nomadic migrations around the Caspian Sea were bookended by conflict.<sup>i</sup> As they reached their northernmost pastures west of the Ural River, each year nomads were finding larger Russian settlements where open pasture had been. When they headed south, onto the Ustyurt Plateau which sits between the Caspian Sea and what was once the Aral Sea, they encountered competition of a different kind. The Mangışhlak Peninsula had long been a theatre for hostilities between nomadic tribes, who would soon be formally divided into either the Turkmen or Kazakh nations.<sup>ii</sup> Further still across the Ustyurt, the shallow Garabogazköl Lagoon was at the heart of a landscape whose resources were contested.

No single factor explains the conflict along either strip of the Caspian shoreline and in both cases strife long predated the coming of the Bolsheviks. Yet, on arrival, Communist power set about defining and then trying to resolve the problems that beset its local nomadic subjects. The manner in which it attempted to do so - the topic of this article - is a case study in the interaction between two phenomena: first, the Soviet state's treatment of its nomadic communities and second, the Soviet state's treatment of its national minorities. The latter was and is often referred to as the National Question.

The Bolsheviks' National Question has received much scholarly attention. Studies by historians including Francine Hirsch, Terry Martin, Yuri Slezkine and Jeremy Smith analyse, in their various ways, the actions of a Communist Party seeking to create national republics and semi-autonomous territories in the former Russian Empire and the various methods employed to do so.<sup>iii</sup> This often involved negotiation with regional elites who spoke the language of national liberation and, as the Red Army's supremacy became clear, lobbied for

some form of autonomy within an emerging Soviet polity.<sup>iv</sup> While there are significant disagreements among contemporary scholars about the nature and impact of this agenda, what is most important for the resolution of conflict along the Caspian shoreline is that it entailed a certain way of understanding the people of the region.<sup>v</sup> More specifically, the National Question was the product of an assumption that people could and should be divided into different national groups. As will be shown, the typology of nationhood employed by the Communist Party squeezed out alternative systems of categorisation, with mixed results.

If the treatment of national minorities has been examined in some detail, the treatment of nomads, an agricultural minority in the former Tsarist Empire, has been investigated less extensively. Much analysis has focused on the Kazakh Republic, which contained a large number of Central Asian nomads and encompassed much of the territory under discussion in this article, and on the Sedentarisation drive.<sup>vi</sup> Beginning in 1928, militia in the employ of the Party began using violence to force nomadic communities in Central Asia to settle.<sup>vii</sup> The demographic impact of this campaign, which coincided with Collectivisation and precipitated mass famine, was catastrophic. Estimates vary, but overall Soviet Kazakh fatalities reached perhaps 1.5 million between 1928 and 1934, when Sedentarisation was discontinued.<sup>viii</sup> Russian-language analyses of Sedentarisation in Kazakhstan are often written into the country's narrative as a period of profound brutality experienced by the Kazakh people comparable to the *Holodomor* in Ukraine.<sup>ix</sup>

As scholarship looks primarily towards the late 1920s and the early 1930s, the years preceding this period are used to provide a prelude to the Collectivisation and Sedentarisation campaigns. This prelude might portend the oncoming period of mass violence or act as a point of contrast.<sup>x</sup> Yet the early 1920s offer more than just further illumination of the Collectivisation era. If that period of brutality represents one contextual framework, an alternative contextual framework facilitates an alternative analysis. The treatment of nomads

in early Soviet Central Asia may then also yield fresh insight into the Bolsheviks' understanding of non-Russian peoples and Soviet power's effect on local economic or agricultural activities which sat awkwardly alongside the regime's overall developmental aims.<sup>xi</sup>

With an understanding of the aforementioned National Question it is possible to contextualise the early Soviet state's treatment of its nomadic population differently and to begin to make new sense of it. The National Question engendered two types of boundary, one nominally physical, one subtler and more abstract. Both shaped the nomadic experience of Soviet power.

First, the jurisdictions of each new national territory had to be bounded, and so geographical boundaries had to be drawn. Of course, borders were not an unheard of phenomenon in Central Asia before the Soviet period. The last administration to govern the north-eastern Caspian shoreline was the Tsarist Empire and it too was fond of boundary lines. But the Tsarist and Soviet approaches to border-making were markedly different, and this had further implications for nomadic communities. Tsarist borders were often drawn along topographical features for administrative expediency, whereas the Bolsheviks sought to reflect the predominant languages and cultures of different areas in spite of the fact that 'Diverse peoples lived interspersed; many had at one time been nomadic, and some still were.'<sup>xii</sup> Thus Hirsch states that the delimitation of the region into republics in the 1920s '...changed the political and social terrain of Central Asia.'<sup>xiii</sup>

The second way in which the National Question contextualises the earliest treatment of nomads is in its system of categorisation. As already stated, the National Question was derived from a social typology in which Central Asian peoples could be neatly divided into different national groups or cultures. In other words the Bolsheviks drew classificatory

boundaries between peoples which they came to treat as discrete nations. Acceptance of these boundaries necessitated certain interpretative assumptions for administrators operating around the Caspian and elsewhere. The Bolsheviks' early recognition of the differences between, for example, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz rendered obsolete their Tsarist predecessors' Governor-Generalship of Turkestan, which at one point housed them all.<sup>xiv</sup> As new national territories were carved out of old imperial structures, conflict over resources and jurisdictions proliferated, and these were understood by administrators as disagreements between nationalities.<sup>xv</sup>

While this may not preclude a refined understanding of the differences between nomadic and sedentary groups, the typology of nationality would prove so compelling, and would perhaps require so much intellectual exertion, as to make the nomadic-sedentary divide seem less relevant.<sup>xvi</sup> Furthermore the creation of national borders complicated nomadic life in ways which sometimes exacerbated rather than mitigated conflicts such as those associated with nomadic communities around the shore of the Caspian Sea. The Communist Party's attempts to resolve these conflicts are hereafter divided into two geographical regions, the first to the north beside and beyond the Ural River, the second to the south around the Garabogazköl Lagoon. In both cases, the National Question affected the state's approach and effect.

### *Beyond the Ural River*

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1921 the People's Commissariat for Agriculture (Narkomzem RSFSR), based in Moscow, turned its attention to two pending territorial disputes between the governates of Bukey and Astrakhan.<sup>xvii</sup> The first dispute concerned 10,677 desiatinas of land connected to Lake Baskunchak, a landlocked body of salt water around 160 miles north of the Caspian Sea and not far east of the Volga. The second related to the 50,977 desiatinas

encompassed by the ‘Regular Nomadic Encampment’ (*Ocherednoe Kochev'e*).<sup>xviii</sup> This ‘encampment’ was in fact a swathe of land once claimed by Kazakhs but increasingly leased to Russian farmers. It sat between Lake Baskunchak and the Volga River.<sup>xix</sup> 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.

Both of these pockets of land were located between the Volga River to the west and the Ural River to the east, in a region where historical claims of ownership were complicated. In the late eighteenth century Kazakhs had been forbidden from crossing the Ural River from the east and using nearby pasture because this had led to clashes with nearby Cossacks.<sup>xx</sup> Then in 1801 Tsarist authorities gave a collection of Kazakh families permission to emigrate across the Ural River and establish a new khanate named after their leader, Sultan Bukey.<sup>xxi</sup> The subsequent creation of a nominally autonomous Bukey Khanate, sometimes called the Inner *Juz*, was also done with the Tsar’s sanction.<sup>xxii</sup>

The fortunes of the khanate fluctuated over time, as did its relations with local Russians. First rumours of forced conversion to Orthodox Christianity, then bad winter weather had encouraged some members of the Bukey Khanate to again cross the Ural River, west to east, and return to their former *Juz*, only to be repeatedly driven back by Russian forces. As it would again later in the early 1920s, the Russian habit of leasing land to nomads led to mutual accusations of exploitation and ethnic conflict.<sup>xxiii</sup> Imperial soldiers eventually intervened to prevent an uprising within the khanate.<sup>xxiv</sup> On the death of Bukey’s successor, Khan Jangir, in 1845, the khanate was officially abolished, though the Kazakhs remained.<sup>xxv</sup> Their land came under the jurisdiction of the nearby city of Astrakhan and they became part of the Astrakhan Governate, a governate being an administrative sub-division of the Russian Empire. New systems of imperial administration were introduced.<sup>xxvi</sup> In spite of this,

importantly, the resident Kazakhs' agricultural customs persisted and therefore remained predominantly nomadic.<sup>xxvii</sup>

The pre-Soviet story of the Bukey region, thinly told, provides background for later disputes in the early 1920s but also exemplifies an important aspect of the Tsar's approach to border-making in Central Asia. As argued by Alexander Morrison and Svetlana Gorshenina the Tsar's colonial officers had operated on the assumption that there existed topographical features which placed geographical limits on the expansion and consolidation of imperial power.<sup>xxviii</sup> The Ural River was first used to divide Cossacks from Kazakhs. Then after 1801 it was used to divide two groups of nomads, one set more assimilated into the Empire than the other. The river, therefore, was an important administrative symbol, used to define the terms of St Petersburg's control.

Following the Russian Revolution and Civil War the river's political significance ran dry and a dual process had begun. 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. Thus the inclusion of a Bukey Governate into the new Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic 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.<sup>xxix</sup> Simultaneously, of course, Moscow would steadily gain more power over the jurisdictions of Orenburg, the first capital of the Kazakh Republic, and any other national capital as time progressed. Nevertheless the national basis for the border beyond the Ural River was new and important.

Though both the Bukey and Astrakhan Governates were officially within the boundaries of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), the Bukey Governate was part of the Kazakh national republic as well. In contrast, territorial membership of the RSFSR alone did not designate a governate as Russian, and so the neighbouring Astrakhan Governate had no formally national definition. With its significant Russian population, however, Astrakhan might have been described as de facto Russian. Thus the disputes to come between Astrakhan and Urda 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.<sup>xxx</sup> These affiliations were magnified by the Bolsheviki's National Question, and would add a new dimension to matters of administrative jurisdiction, profoundly political and deeply contentious in comparison to topography.

By 1921, then, when a dispute over land-use between Bukey and Astrakhan arose, the local organs of power lobbying Narkomzem RSFSR had been substantially transformed by the Revolution, though the fundamental differences between sedentary and nomadic practices in the area had largely survived 1917 and so had the tensions arising from those differences. Also in 1921, Narkomzem RSFSR had tried to direct the migratory path of nomads along the Ural River itself after receiving complaints from Cossack fishermen.<sup>xxx</sup> The Ural's riverbanks had apparently been undergoing a 'mass occupation' by nomads whose herds had trampled plant fodder and scared fish into deeper waters.<sup>xxxii</sup> Narkomzem RSFSR's response was to delegate investigation and resolution of this issue to Kazakh governing bodies, which prefigures its later dealings with Astrakhan.<sup>xxxiii</sup> There was an augury, too, in angry remarks from Glavryba, the body charged with supervising the Cossack fishing enterprise. In an address to Narkomzem RSFSR, Glavryba blamed the 'connivance of the local economic organs' for the nomadic invasion of the shore.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The suggestion appears to have been that local Kazakh authorities were looking after Kazakh nomads at the expense of non-Kazakh

nationalities. The assumption that the institutions of the KSSR would act in this manner was not restricted to Glavyba and would be tested to destruction at the nomads' expense.

Regarding the dispute between Astrakhan and Bukey, after a preliminary appraisal and a consultation with the Administrative Committee of the All-Union Central Executive Committee (VTsIK, also based in Moscow) the presidium of the Federal Committee of Narkomzem RSFSR produced a declaration.<sup>xxxv</sup> Present at the presidium were two representatives of the Kazakh Commissariat for Agriculture (Narkomzem KSSR) and one member of the Astrakhan Governate Committee (Gubkom).<sup>xxxvi</sup> The presidium decided that both the land near Lake Baskunchak and the Regular Nomadic Camp 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 and under governance from Urda. 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 1<sup>st</sup> March 1922, and all Russian farmsteads newly deemed illegal had to be dismantled by 1<sup>st</sup> March 1923.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The presidium's ruling is evidence of the decolonising potential of nationalist thinking very early in the 1920s.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Its intended benefit for Kazakhs is clear, but there is also an implied benefit for the predominantly nomadic citizens who migrated north of the Caspian Sea. The forced emigration of sedentary Russians would leave vacant contested pastureland and other resources essential to the lives of local nomads.

Appeals to Moscow's decision were made long before March 1922. Astrakhan was informed of the commissariat's decision, and ordered to fulfil the requirements of the protocol, on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1921.<sup>xxxix</sup> 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.<sup>xl</sup> The report made the concession, possibly tactical, that the fifty thousand desiatinas of the Regular Nomadic Encampment had been de jure owned by Kazakhs.<sup>xli</sup> 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.<sup>xlii</sup> Besides, it was argued, the Kazakhs did not even use the land. It had become Russian by custom.<sup>xliii</sup> 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 Territorial (Krai) Congresses of Soviets since the revolution.<sup>xliv</sup> 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 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.<sup>xlv</sup> These statistics should be treated with a high degree of scepticism given the paucity of available sources at the time and the 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 a study. 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.<sup>xlvi</sup> Most probably, ambiguity arose from the lack of consensus on what constituted residence and land-ownership. Because much of the Kazakh population was regularly 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.<sup>xlvii</sup>

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

Faced with the involvement of the central Kazakh authorities, Astrakhan's resistance continued after Narkomzem RSFSR's original deadline for complaints had passed. Twice in 1923, on 23<sup>rd</sup> April and 24<sup>th</sup> August, Narkomzem RSFSR made declarations stating that it saw no credible reason to reverse the original decision it had made in October 1921.<sup>xlix</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>li</sup>

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.<sup>liii</sup> 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 colleagues involved in agricultural policy.<sup>liiii</sup> Nomadism was complicating the western border of the Kazakh Republic, but not only because nomads came and went. It also affected the behaviour of sedentary communities. Counter-intuitively, it was sedentary Russians rather than nomadic Kazakhs who 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.<sup>liv</sup>

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, just as Cossack fisherman had had their trade disrupted. 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 before 1917. But a further reason is that 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.<sup>lv</sup> 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.<sup>lvi</sup> 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 likely to 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 sedentary farming thundered eastwards. The defence of national jurisdiction was taking priority over the defence of nomadism here and elsewhere along the Caspian, such as around the Garabogazköl Lagoon.

*Around the Garabogazköl Lagoon*

In mid-July 1922 a report was produced by the Executive Committee of the Krasnovodsk Uezd, an administrative division containing many Turkmen in what was then the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>lvii</sup> The report 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.<sup>lviii</sup>

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.<sup>lix</sup> The Adai region was itself notorious. The Adai were originally a tribal grouping within 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.<sup>lx</sup> 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, a second type of administrative region.<sup>lxi</sup> It was also enlarged to encompass two nomadic districts of the Krasnovodsk Uezd to the south.<sup>lxii</sup>

The Krasnovodsk Uezd was then part of the Turkestan Republic but would join the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic in 1924. Both before and after this point, administrative bodies based in Krasnovodsk itself (now Türkmenbaşy) felt able to speak on behalf of local communities who would be assimilated into the single Turkmen nation.<sup>lxiii</sup> In post-Soviet historiography the Turkmen tribes are sometimes distinguished from the other titular nationalities of Soviet Central Asia by their particular interpretation of Islam.<sup>lxiv</sup> As with Kazakh tribal confederations, however, genealogy and kinship were vitally important to Turkmen allegiances.<sup>lxv</sup> 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 national groups.<sup>lxvi</sup> This is the suggestion made by many of the Soviet sources, though there is evidence that a more nuanced position could be found within the Soviet administration as well as outside it.

Alibi Dzhangil'din was a major figure in Kazakh politics in the early 1920s who visited the Adai and Turkmen borderlands in 1922-1923. He reported that the population of the Adai Uezd, whom he called *adaevtsy*, migrated perpetually throughout the year. This migration took them annually over the Kazakh-Turkestan border and into land used by Turkmen. Though he 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.<sup>lxvii</sup> *Adaevtsy* were also used as examples of the most destitute of the republic's population by foremost Party members.<sup>lxviii</sup>

It is itself notable that some reports contain no references to Kazakhs at all, preferring instead a derivation of the Adai title.<sup>lxxix</sup> 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 more those of kinship than 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 incorporated into the Turkmen nation.<sup>lxxx</sup> 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.<sup>lxxxi</sup>

The Turkmen-Kazakh border, which sat close to the shore of the Garabogazköl Lagoon, was in 1921 taken seriously by Soviet administrators but largely ignored by local nomads. The border was both cause and symptom of the Communist Party's insistence that violence between nomads should be understood in national terms. That this was so is immediately clear from the measures taken by the state to bring order to the Ustyurt Plateau.

On 6<sup>th</sup> April 1921 the Krasnovodsk Uezd-City Executive Committee decided to convene a 'Kazakh-Iomud' Conference in Krasnovodsk.<sup>lxxii</sup> 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 Kazakh migrations
- 2) The liquidation of the Kazakh-Iomud conflict<sup>lxxiii</sup>

The conference felt unable to resolve the first matter. Kazakhs of the two districts 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 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. Turning to the second item on their agenda, conference members demanded an immediate cessation of all hostilities. A second Kazakh-Iomud Conference was scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> July 1921, which would discuss conflicts in areas which had not dispatched a delegate to Krasnovodsk.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

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.<sup>lxxv</sup> This might be associated with what Edward Schatz calls ‘criminalising clans’, the Soviet intrusion into traditional forms of authority in Kazakh society.<sup>lxxvi</sup> In other words, already in 1921 the Soviet state was motivated to sweep away some habits of nomadic life.<sup>lxxvii</sup>



Second, the Krasnovodsk conference spoke of a Kazakh-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 plight of nomads in the Bukey Governate, the idiosyncrasies of nomadic life and death on the Ustyurt were again subsumed into a nation-based understanding of Central Asia. Even a peace agreement signed on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1921 bore the names of representatives from the Kazakh and the ‘Turkmen-Iomud’ people, both quasi-national rather than tribal affiliations, in the fashion of a diplomatic accord.<sup>lxxviii</sup> Similar efforts were made to establish peace between Turkmen and Uzbeks around Khiva.<sup>lxxix</sup>

Borders negotiated between nations created new problems for migrating nomads, whether Kazakh or Turkmen-Iomud. In the 1920s the Mangışhlak 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 legal ownership was agreed.<sup>lxxx</sup> The People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (Narkomvnutdel RSFSR) had to try and supervise the expulsion of communities who found themselves on the wrong side of the divide.<sup>lxxxii</sup> 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.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

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 at times exacerbated them. As in the Bukey Governate, nomads on the periphery of Kazakh territory were at the epicentre 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 apparent empathy for nomadic communities.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> 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. Russian and Kazakh identities were at least made clearer through the juxtaposition of their agricultural practices. 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 Kazakh-Iomud conference took place in Krasnovodsk on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1922, but it was hardly constructive. 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.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

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.<sup>lxxxv</sup>

Iomudskii, as a member of the Turkestan Central Executive Committee, is likely to have espoused a particular conception of those social realities. Whereas Adai committees chose to emphasise the number of armed Iomuds on Kazakh land, reports originating from Krasnovodsk and its higher authorities tended to present the Kazakhs as perpetrators of violence.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> 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 local questions of agricultural practice. Regardless, Iomudskii did not get his way. Documentation from the Central Asian Bureau in 1924 describes 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 ethnic heterogeneity of the borderlands 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.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> The Krasnovodsk area is noted

for the predominance of only two major livelihoods: sedentary fishing and nomadic animal husbandry.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> But no extension of Turkmen jurisdiction into the Adai Uezd is recorded at this time.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

It is difficult to say whether a border better placed, 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 10<sup>th</sup> April 1929 it had been made into an okrug, a new Soviet economic region, and the Kazakh Central Executive Committee (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'.<sup>xc</sup> In the two years since the process of *raionirovanie* turned the Adai Uezd into an okrug, the declaration claimed, the region had consistently underperformed economically.<sup>xc<sup>i</sup></sup> With only 177,000 registered residents, despite its considerable size, the Adai Okrug contained a disproportionately small amount 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 radius of 1,000 versts or more. These nomadic communities reportedly remained impoverished 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.<sup>xc<sup>ii</sup></sup> 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.<sup>xc<sup>iii</sup></sup>

Back in 1922 the Kazakh and Turkmen communities of this region had shared a nomadic lifestyle. As even top agents of the Russian Communist Party became aware, 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.<sup>xciv</sup> 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 more neatly with nationality. Disagreements arose over where to draw the line between nomadism and farming, Kazakhs and Cossacks, 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 Lagoon and on the Mangışhlak Peninsula. This made the establishment of two national jurisdictions considerably more difficult. But the Party's use of national identity as a diagnostic tool to identify social ills had comparable effects in both cases.

Like disputations taking place north of the Caspian, disagreements between Kazakh and Turkmen organs around the Garabogazköl were shaped by the emerging national administrative structures which sought to resolve them. It might first be assumed that these new structures would have benefitted nomadic populations. As with those in Urda, the notion of Kazakh national jurisdiction prompted Adai Uezd authorities to defend the interests of their residents even when they wandered beyond the borders of their republic. Yet the interests of the nation in fact acted as a *doppelgänger* to the interests of the nomad; they looked alike but were quite different and the prioritisation of national interests was a bad omen for nomadic communities. In the long term, from the later economic underperformance of the Adai region and the continuing expansion of arable farming east of Astrakhan it is

clear that the assertion and retention of Kazakh jurisdiction around the Caspian Sea did local nomads no special favours.

### *Wider Implications*

Central Asian nomadism and Soviet border-making literally and theoretically intersected as frequently as might be expected. It is too simplistic to say that nomadism was 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 was likely to find that such a line deprives its people of essential resources. Similarly, it would be misleading to claim that 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 have allowed.<sup>xcv</sup>

More significantly, Soviet border-making was a feature of the Bolsheviks' predilection for categorising Central Asian peoples by national identity. This was not just novel for some of those they categorised; Adrienne Lynne Edgar says of the region: 'It is hard to imagine a less congenial setting for the late-nineteenth century European doctrine of nationalism.'<sup>xcvi</sup> It distracted Party members from other systems of categorisation which were arguably more indicative of local social realities and were surely more congruent with the world view of their leaders. Though it built its political ideology from a materialist philosophy, it identified citizens by their notional economic function and claimed its legitimacy from its association with a particular class, the Communist Party disregarded the nomadic-sedentary division between peoples around the Caspian Sea - surely as material and economic a cleavage as it is possible to find - and strained to accommodate their national divisions instead.<sup>xcvii</sup>

The Caspian disputes of the early 1920s open new perspectives on both the National Question and nomadism in Soviet Central Asia. For the National Question, it uncovers a deficiency in the Bolsheviks' initial approach to nationalities. This is measured not by the extent of its success in constructing or accurately representing nations. Instead, it is visible in the way the National Question frustrated the governance of nomadism, a social phenomenon which did not sit easily within new national boundaries, geographical or theoretical. A notionally emancipatory doctrine for formerly colonised non-European peoples actually expedited the ongoing decline of a Central Asian agricultural practice. This is easily overlooked in historical studies of the National Question precisely because nomadism was overlooked during the creation of national boundaries. On the matter of nomadism itself, the significance of the National Question's influence should not be underestimated. It contributed to the maladministration of nomads which may eventually have led frustrated Party members to take drastic measures. We also begin to understand, on the other hand, what dictated relations between state and nomad *before* Collectivisation and Sedentarisation turned that relationship into a process of mass violence.

A little later on in the decade, on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1924, the All-Union Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) would meet to discuss the next national territorial division of Central Asia. One attendee, Yannis Ruduztak, was an authority on the region among his colleagues in Moscow. Speaking of the various subgroups of Kazakh who populated the borderlands between modern day Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, he would complain that these groups' cultural differences caused conflict in spite of the fact that they were all nomadic cattle herders, and therefore led very similar lives. The cultural distinctions between these Central Asians were politicising simple budgetary deliberations over whether or not to subsidise settled communities, he added.<sup>xcviii</sup>

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 inception.

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<sup>i</sup> As the key variable here is habitual migration, and in the interests of intelligibility, ‘nomad’ and ‘nomadic’ will be used throughout this article to describe a broad range of agricultural practices all involving one or more annual migrations.

<sup>ii</sup> Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton, 2006), 60.

<sup>iii</sup> Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, 2001); Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, 2005); Yuri Slezkine, 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,' *Slavic Review* 53 (Summer 1994): 414-452; Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (Cambridge, 2013).

<sup>iv</sup> Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 71; 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, 2011): 94-118.

<sup>v</sup> Scholars diverge, for example, on the theoretical position taken by Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin on the existence of nations and the extent of the two men’s disagreement. See: Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 14; Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-23* (London, 1999), 15-19.



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<sup>vi</sup> The Kazakh Republic's first formal title was the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic (KSSR), changed when the borders of the territory were redrawn in 1925 to the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (KASSR). Kazakhs and their republic were referred to as *Kirghiz* until 1925 by state and Party operatives, but in the interests of intelligibility *Kirghiz* has been translated into 'Kazakh' throughout this article. The 'autonomous' qualification would again be dropped from the name of the republic in 1936. Didar Kassymova, Zhanat Kundakbaeva, and Ustina Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan* (Lanham, 2012), 145, 158-159.

<sup>vii</sup> Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI) f. 17, op. 25, d. 339, l. 92. 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, 2011): 65-66; M. K. Kozybaev, Zh. B. Abylkhodzhin, and K. S. Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane: tragediia krest'ianstva* (Alma-Ata, 1992), 16; Sarah Cameron, "The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934", (Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 2011).

<sup>viii</sup> Niccolò Pianciola and Susan Finnel, "Famine in the Steppe. The Collectivization of Agriculture and the Kazak Herdsmen, 1928-1934," *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 45 (2004): 137; Kozybaev, Abylkhodzhin, and Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane*, 27. Martha Brill Olcott, "The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan," *Russian Review* 40 (1981): 122. See also: Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow Soviet Collectivization and the Terror Famine* (London, 1986), 189-198; Robert Kindler, *Stalins Nomaden: Herrschaft und Hunger in Kasachstan* (Hamburg, 2014).

<sup>ix</sup> Talas Omarbekov, *Golodomor v Kazakhstane: prichiny, masshtaby i itogi (1930-1931 g.g.)* (Almaty, 2009).

<sup>x</sup> Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," 61.

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<sup>xi</sup> An application of similar themes can be found here: Paula A. Michaels, *Curative Powers: Medicine and Empire in Stalin's Central Asia* (Pittsburgh, 2003) 7-8.

<sup>xii</sup> Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 165.

<sup>xiii</sup> *Ibid.*, 165. It is worth adding that, while emphasising the top-down nature of the delimitation, Svat Soucek does credit the Bolsheviks with ‘fairly competent work.’ See: Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge, 2000), 225.

<sup>xiv</sup> Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, 78.

<sup>xv</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 55-56.

<sup>xvi</sup> In Hirsch’s rendering, the ethnographic and anthropological work required to delimit the former Russian Empire into nations necessitated the construction of a ‘revolutionary alliance’ between the Bolsheviks and a wide range of imperial scholars. Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 21.

<sup>xvii</sup> Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 1318, op. 11, d. 32, l. 84. A governate (*guberniia*) was one of the largest administrative sub-divisions of the late Russian Empire, also used by the Soviet state until the mid-1920s.

<sup>xviii</sup> GARF f. 1318, op. 11, d. 32, l. 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 f. 3260, op. 1, d. 30, l. 1.

<sup>xix</sup> References in the secondary literature to the *ocherednoe kochev’e* are sparse. Clear information on its geographical location can be found in this report from the Astrakhan Governate’s Agricultural Department (Gubzemotdel), dated 20<sup>th</sup> October 1921: GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 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. The Astrakhan Governate Congress of Soviets referred to Kalmyk as well as Kazakh land in relation to the disagreement in 1922: GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 30, l. 1. Since the Soviet authorities ultimately

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treated the camp as *Kirghiz* (Kazakh) this article treats the *ocherednoe kochev'e* case as representative of the treatment of Kazakh nomads generally.

<sup>xx</sup> Didar Kassymova, Zhanat Kundakbaeva, and Ustina Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan*, 54-55.

<sup>xxi</sup> Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington, 2002), 182.

<sup>xxii</sup> A *Juz* was a confederation of Kazakh tribes.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 200; Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, (Stanford, 1987), 63.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 64.

<sup>xxv</sup> In Svat Soucek's summary of these events, the 'elimination' of Bukey's polity in 1845 was an act of deliberate suppression by St Petersburg: Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, 197.

<sup>xxvi</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> to the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, ed. Anke von Kügelen, Michael Kemper, and Allen J Frank (Berlin, 1998): 218; Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 61-62. The particular transliteration of Kazakh names also comes from Olcott.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Allen J. Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia: The Islamic World of Novouzensk and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1880-1910* (Boston, 2001), 91.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Alexander Morrison, 'Russia, Khoqand, and the Search for a "Natural" Frontier, 1893-1865,' *Ab Imperio* 2 (2014): 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): 102-165.

<sup>xxix</sup> 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 f. 1318, op. 11, d. 32, l. 86.

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<sup>xxx</sup> 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: Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, 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, 2001): 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*, 39.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 25, l. 115.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 25, ll. 110-110 ob..

<sup>xxxviii</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 25, ll. 120, 115, 121.

<sup>xxxix</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 25, l. 110.

<sup>xl</sup> GARF f. 1318, op. 11, d. 32, l. 84. Evidence of a dialogue between the Administrative Committee VTsIK and Narkomzem RSFSR on this issue can be found here: GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 31, l. 3.

<sup>xli</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 30, l. 2. This document, dated 19<sup>th</sup> October 1921, informed members of Narkomzem RSFSR of the decision made by the presidium fifteen days previously.

<sup>xlii</sup> The relevant protocol from the meeting can be found here: GARF f. 1318, op. 11, d. 32, ll. 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’: Payne, "Seeing Like a Soviet State," 61.

<sup>xliiii</sup> Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, 88.

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<sup>xxxix</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 31, l. 1. The Kazakh People's Commissariat of Agriculture was also informed around this time: GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 31, l. 2.

<sup>xi</sup> The first communiqué from the Astrakhan Gubkom can be found here: GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 5-5 ob.. Its report was received the next day, on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1921: GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 6-6 ob..

<sup>xli</sup> 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 f. 3260, op. 1, d. 31, l. 6

<sup>xlii</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 31, l. 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 f. 3260, op. 1, d. 31, l. 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, 1974), 89.

<sup>xliii</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 31, l. 6.

<sup>xliv</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 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. George J. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan, 1896-1916* (Bloomington, 1969), 65.

<sup>xlv</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 25, l. 144.

<sup>xlvi</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 25, ll. 143, 144-146.

<sup>xlvii</sup> 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*, 133-136.

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<sup>xlviii</sup> To be precise, a communique was dispatched on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1921, less than a less before Astrakhan's response to the ruling: GARF f. 1318, op. 11, d. 32, l. 86.

<sup>xlix</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 19, 21.

<sup>l</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 30, l. 1.

<sup>li</sup> See, for example: Arkhiv Prezidenta Respublika Kazakhstan (APRK) f. 139, op. 1, d. 2, l. 79.

<sup>lii</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 30, l. 19.

<sup>liii</sup> GARF f. 3260, op. 1, d. 30, l. 15.

<sup>liv</sup> 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, 2005), 406.

<sup>lv</sup> GARF f. 1318, op. 11, d. 32, l. 86.

<sup>lvi</sup> Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment," 416-419.

<sup>lvii</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 96, d. 751, l. 89. An Uezd was a small administrative division predating 1917.

<sup>lviii</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 96, d. 751, l. 89.

<sup>lix</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 96, d. 751, l. 20.

<sup>lx</sup> Kassymova, Kundakbaeva, and Markus, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, p. 18.

<sup>lxi</sup> K. S. Aldazhumanov et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, vol. 4 (Almaty, 2010), 196.

<sup>lxii</sup> 'District' here is a translation of the Russian *volost*'.

<sup>lxiii</sup> Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, 84.

<sup>lxiv</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire; A Guide*, First ed. (London, 1985), 101; Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union* (London, 1986), 313-327.

<sup>lxv</sup> Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 8.

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- <sup>lxvi</sup> Ibid., 18; Anatoly M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World* (Cambridge, 1984), 121.
- <sup>lxvii</sup> Grigorii Fedorovich Dakhshleiger and M. Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane v vosstanovitelnyi period, 1921-1925 gg : sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Alma-Ata, 1962), 89-91.
- <sup>lxviii</sup> APRK f. 139, op. 1, d. 541, l. 118.
- <sup>lxix</sup> Dakhshleiger and Abilova, *Sotsial'isticheskoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane*, 88.
- <sup>lxx</sup> Ibid., 91.
- <sup>lxxi</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 96, d. 751, l. 20.
- <sup>lxxii</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 96, d. 751, ll. 4-4 ob..
- <sup>lxxiii</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 96, d. 751, l. 4.
- <sup>lxxiv</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 96, d. 751, l. 4.
- <sup>lxxv</sup> Khazanov, *Nomads*, 150; Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (Seattle, 2004), 43; Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 24.
- <sup>lxxvi</sup> Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, 43-45.
- <sup>lxxvii</sup> 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, 2006), 198.
- <sup>lxxviii</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 96, d. 751, l. 108.
- <sup>lxxix</sup> Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle, 2006), 62.
- <sup>lxxx</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 96, d. 751, l. 62.
- <sup>lxxxii</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 96 d. 751, l. 84.
- <sup>lxxxii</sup> APRK f. 139, op. 1, d. 254, l. 98.

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<sup>lxxxiii</sup> The Communist Party instituted a policy of *korenizatsiia* or ‘nativization’, which was intended to recruit members of national minorities to govern in each respective minority’s national territory. Romeo A. Cherot is one scholar who has looked at this process specifically in the Kazakh case. He notes that the recruitment of Kazakhs was pursued with some success by the mid-1920s, but that the ‘unsettled character’ of the nomadic Kazakhs made the process more difficult. Romeo A. Cherot, "Nativization of Government and Party Structure in Kazakhstan, 1920-1930," *American Slavic and East European Review* 14 (1955): 53, 57-58. The result of this was that those Kazakhs who were recruited did not have an immediate cultural connection with their nomadic compatriots, meaning that a Kazakh seems to have been barely more likely to empathise with nomadic hardship than a Party member from a European national background. See also: Uyama Tomohiko, "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): 83, 87; 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, 2001): 236-252.

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 96, d. 751, l. 79.

<sup>lxxxv</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 96, d. 751, l. 62.

<sup>lxxxvi</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 96, d. 751, l. 20.

<sup>lxxxvii</sup> RGASPI f. 62, op. 2, d. 108, l. 92.

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> RGASPI f. 62, op. 2, d. 108, l. 61.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> RGASPI f. 62, op. 2, d. 108, l. 60.

<sup>xc</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 123, d. 345, l. 56.

<sup>xci</sup> For more on *raionirovanie*, see: Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 34.



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<sup>xcii</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 123, d. 345, l. 56.

<sup>xciii</sup> GARF f. 1235, op. 123, d. 345, l. 56 ob..

<sup>xciv</sup> Gatagova, Kosheleva, and Pogovaia, *TSK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros*, 242-246.

<sup>xcv</sup> Edward Schatz, for example, suggests: 'The Kazakh nomadic pastoralists had a loose, but still notable, attachment to territory.': Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, 29.

<sup>xcvi</sup> Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 19.

<sup>xcvii</sup> As they were excluded from the typology of nationhood, so nomads were also not recognised in the Communist Party's other, more explicitly economic system of social categorisation. There was no widespread conception of a nomadic class. Such a thing was surely conceivable if the 'anomalous' class of priests was permissible: Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia', in *The Russian Revolution: The Essential Readings*, ed. Martin A. Miller (Oxford, 2001): 215.

<sup>xcviii</sup> Gatagova, Kosheleva, and Pogovaia, *TSK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros*, 244-245.