What Lies Between

Controlling State Boundaries and Negotiating Trans-frontier Nations in the Borderlands of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and China

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Steven Parham
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The picture on the title page eulogises a Soviet border guard heroically protecting Gorno-Badakhshan (Tajikistan) and, by implication, the entire Soviet Union from the threat of invasion from beyond the frontier (statue erected in the late 1970s). Khorog, Tajikistan; November 2005 [Photo by the author].

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[*] Unless otherwise stated, all pictures were taken by the author during fieldwork between summer 2005 and fall 2006.

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Glossary[*]

AC	Autonomous County in the PRC
aksaqal	(*Kyrgyz*) Village leader
AP	Autonomous Prefecture in the PRC
ayil	(*Kyrgyz*) Village
bianjiang	(*Chinese*) Borderland
bingtuan	(*Chinese*) Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
chek-ara	(*Kyrgyz*) Boundary
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
GBAO	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast
granitsa	(*Russian*) Boundary
hokkim/akim	(*Tajik/Kyrgyz*) Political head of a *raion* or AP/AC
hukou	(*Chinese*) Residency permit
KGB	(*Russian*) State security apparatus
kolkhoz	(*Russian*) Collective farm
korenizatsiya	(*Russian*) Indigenisation
meken	(*Kyrgyz*) Homeland
mestnichestvo	(*Russian*) Localism, i.e., placing local interests over state interests
minzu	(*Chinese*) Nationality
MVD	(*Russian*) Ministry of Internal Affairs
narodnost/narod	(*Russian*) Sub-nationality; ethnic group/people
natsionalnost/natsiya	(*Russian*) Nationality (endowed with an SSR)
oblast	(*Russian*) Administrative region (immediately below the state)
OVIR	(*Russian*) Department of Visas and Registration
PAPF	People's Armed Police Force in Xinjiang
PLA	Chinese People's Liberation Army
pogranichnaya zona	(*Russian*) Borderzone
pogranichniki	(*Russian*) Individuals officially charged with guarding the frontier
PRC	People's Republic of China
propusk	(*Russian*) Special permit
PSB	Chinese People's Security Bureau (state security apparatus)
putonghua	(*Chinese*) Modern Standard Chinese (Mandarin)
qishloq	(*Tajik*) Village
raion	(*Russian*) Administrative district (below *oblast*)
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic, highest administrative unit
XUAR	Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, the province of Xinjiang
zapretnaya zona	(*Russian*) Forbidden borderzone, i.e., military access only

[*] Note: For the sake of clarity and continuity, I have retained Soviet-era abbreviations for institutions such as the KGB instead of using their present-day post-Soviet translations into local 'national' languages. Generally this also coincides with popular usage of such terms in contemporary Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Map 1: Contemporary Central Asia (Copyright Markus Hauser, the Pamir Archive)

Introduction

It takes but a brief and cursory glance at atlases, encyclopaedias, and historical compendia to realise that cartographers excel at highlighting the boundaries between discrete entities, be they natural, as in maps showing topographic, climatic, or geographic features. The same holds true for physically intangible, societal spaces depicted on maps of demography (urban centres versus rural peripheries), language areas, or political bodies (the representation of states in a multitude of colours). Learning to 'interpret' and 'read' maps is instilled in most of us at a young age and we have come to accept the graphic representation of these discrete entities as a phenomenon approaching the realm of intuition. However, how often do those contemplating a map pause to consider the assumption that these depicted objects, by their very nature, are generally unable to represent anything other than bounded, discrete entities? On maps, these bodies appear as deceptively precise sets of lines setting one entity apart from another, indeed, from all others. Too often, such normative categories are reproduced and critically ignored even in the social sciences by disciplines one would believe should be aware of the insupportability of the notion that the boundary setting two states apart represents the utmost limit of any one state's area of influence. What is frequently neglected is the fact that those neat lines on maps are often more important as a mental image, an image that reifies a boundary, than as an actual representation of boundedness in terms of the expanse of everyday lifeworlds for the people living in their immediate vicinity – people whose local notions of belonging need not coincide with the lines on maps.

While state boundaries, therefore, do not necessarily represent the limit of 'all that belongs', especially from a local perspective, they most certainly do serve an ulterior, political purpose that structures the framework of interaction and discourses between those residing at the margins of states and the respective political entity that claims legitimate control of these locals' territories and political loyalties. Political boundaries between modern territorial states are important to states *precisely because* they symbolise the existence of states as the legitimate masters of their citizens' loyalties. As anyone who has crossed state boundaries can attest to, states mark their presence in uncompromising ways at such locales; borderlanders, i.e., those people living alongside boundaries, are uniquely exposed to such rhetorics of state control institutionalised at the boundary and, therefore, their lived experiences at the state's margins will reveal critical processes betraying the supposedly unproblematic nature of the discretely bounded, territorial-political entities that are states.

The object of this thesis is to make visible that which lies on both sides of state boundaries in a very concrete region of Central Asia: the borderlands between Kyrgyzstan, the Gorno-Badakhshan region of Tajikistan, and the province of Xinjiang in the People's Republic of China. Both conventional wisdom as well as local state representation have it that today's boundaries divide Kyrgyz and Tajiks living in Xinjiang from Kyrgyz and Tajiks in their

'titular' Republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as well as dividing these groups over former internal, administrative Soviet boundaries. These boundaries stem, in the former case, from nineteenth-century conflict between Russian expansionism and Chinese national pride in territorial integrity, and, in the latter, from processes taking place in the years following the consolidation of Bolshevik control over its Central Asian periphery and the concomitant structuring and internal bordering of discrete, territorial 'nations' under the control of the Soviet state. Over the course of the 20th century, these boundaries and borderlands evolved into heavily militarised and hotly contested showplaces of vying Socialist systems' might and political successes only to then suddenly become arenas of economic decline, state disintegration, and political threat as perceived from the outside. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union newly independent states have inherited both former administrative internal-become-external territorial boundaries as well as former external boundaries which have had a long history of contention. The collapse of the Soviet Union and (some would say unwilling) birth of the independent states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the early 1990s has brought true statehood to 'the Kyrgyz' and 'the Tajiks', peoples that during the socialist era had been identified, categorised, nationalised, and, essentially, bordered by political boundaries and concomitant bordering discourses cutting through wider notions of ethnic belonging. Since then, individuals of the groups sharing the 'Kyrgyz' and 'Tajik' ethnonyms have once again come in contact with other individuals from homologous groups who are citizens of adjacent states, and they are discovering that whilst they still have certain elements of national identity in common there has also developed a new sense of alienation and difference between the segments of the tri-partite borderland. Since the tentative re-opening of boundaries closed for decades, Kyrgyz and Tajik borderlanders in the Chinese – Central Asian borderlands have discovered new trans-frontier images of one another as well as new elements of self-ascribed identity heavily influenced by their respective Chinese, Kyrgyzstani, or Tajikistani citizenships.

With this in mind, I seek to discover *whose* boundaries today's political boundaries between these states actually are; to which degree the inscription of the boundary as the uttermost limit of the state is *accepted*, *subverted*, and/or *renegotiated* by those straddling these political constructs; and how *borderlanders' lifeworlds* (their socio-cultural, economic, and political environments) are negotiated between locals, agents of border control licensed by the state, unofficial gatekeepers, and boundary-crossers. In as contested a political space as only borderlands can be, discourses of belonging and the negotiation of power become critically important nodes of narratives in which the state *must* insert itself if it is to pursue the meta-discourse of effective border control, and this thesis will at length discuss the interaction between policy, its actual implementation in borderland locales by representatives of the state, and to which degree and for what reasons borderlanders here contest or comply with such control. In order to do this I suggest that we reappraise the ways in which trans-state policies, discourses of internal control, and the functioning of trans-frontier networks all intricately mesh and together produce a framework setting the parameters of life at states' edges. Following from this, I understand 'that which lies between'

to stand for, first, a metaphor for the trans-frontier groups supposedly 'shared' by these states, an ascription that will be shown to be far more problematic than is generally assumed, and, second, the interstitial structures, narratives, and discourses methodologically tying the borderlands together.

In order to approach these topics I conducted fieldwork in all three borderland segments of these states for a twelve-month period between 2005 and 2006. Previous research and fieldwork dealing with the wider region's states and boundaries had already pointed to the dearth of literature concerning itself with on-the-ground processes along Central Asia's post-Soviet Republics' boundaries despite the profound importance these newly institutionalised constructs could have for the scientific study of the interplay between states and their citizens. While notable exceptions in this state of the literature do exist (and will be dealt with in this thesis), much research that has been conducted on and in this region has dealt with economic and geopolitical issues and the presence of a Chinese boundary here has been (ab)used as a foil for musings on shifts in regional (and hegemonic?) power. I believe that the advantage of an anthropological, bottom-up approach to borderlands lies in the point of view a researcher takes: a view of the boundary *from and at* the boundary, and it is with a view to this that this thesis has come about. The anthropological methods of participant observation, long-term residence and fieldwork, and repeat semi-structured interviews with what I term 'frontier experts' required adaptations to the very special nature of the locales in which research was conducted, and this methodology has shown itself to be well-suited in obtaining data in a field that the states involved would only too keenly prefer to represent as 'unproblematic' and 'under control'. It is the sometimes surprising themes that interviewees themselves (be they borderlanders, agents of border control, members of local elites, or boundary crossers) have chosen to focus on in their characterisation of the connection between political boundaries and their own lifeworlds that have coalesced to form the structure of this thesis. In adopting such a boundary perspective I try to do justice to what these 'experts' feel informs their interaction with the state, with 'those from beyond the line', and with the borderland itself. Furthermore, this perspective will greatly aid us in understanding just why state-induced and state-supported frames of reference in these borderlands are so strong and so fundamentally influence borderlanders' contemporary cognitive maps of the boundaries in their immediate neighbourhood.

Structure of the Thesis

In Chapter 1 I outline the basic concepts that have been developed by researchers delving into matters pertaining to states' political boundaries and frontiers. Building on typologies and categories developed in order to enable a comparative analysis of borderlands both historically and in the contemporary world, I introduce my use of the terms 'borderland', 'boundary', 'frontier', and 'trans-frontier networks'. The general thrust of this chapter, and a consideration informing my premises for approaching the borderlands forming the interface between the People's Republic of China, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan is that boundaries are non-linear and represent zones of a cloud-like nature surrounding the actual state boundary,

stretching away from this political and mental construct and thereby fundamentally influencing (and influenced by) borderlander lifeworlds, their local identities, and their political loyalties to territorial states. In order to be able to analytically discuss the ambivalence of borderlander power and the resulting framework of border control and mechanisms of physical, political, and cognitive bordering empirically encountered in the field, I introduce my concepts of *internal* (national) versus *external* (state) boundary-making and *deep borderland control* – two crucial discursive elements informing the parameters of trans-boundary borderland interaction.

Chapter 2 serves the dual purpose of introducing the physical and social environment of the three states' segments of our borderlands in Central Asia and presenting my approach as a boundary-violating outsider to a field not commonly forming the object of anthropological research. The very special nature of doing fieldwork along such heavily encumbered boundaries forms a crucial element in this, and the second part of this chapter deals with my fieldwork methodology and the measures of locating 'experts' in the field and negotiating with gatekeepers holding all the keys to all the doors granting access to (and egress from) the field. In the final part of the chapter I move from the individual borderlands to the actual boundaries themselves and a characterisation of the four boundary ports representing the bottlenecks that all trans-frontier trajectories must pass through here. I comparatively discuss actual borderzones, institutional control, and the framework of spaces where boundary crossers encounter the agents of border control; following this, I present vignettes of such encounters and show how I methodologically dealt with 'thickening' boundary crossing experiences, i.e., how I have attempted to draw grounded conclusions despite the problem of only being able to spend a short time in these zones.

In Chapter 3 I trace the evolution of the hardening frontier forming between imperial (pre-1917) Russia and dynastic and Republican (pre-1949) China and how groups later to be classified as 'Kyrgyz' or 'Tajik/Pamiri' were transformed into trans-frontier borderland groups bisected by the developing state boundaries. The birth of this borderland has been the product of changing state notions of territoriality and peripherality at a disputed frontier and was accompanied by the re-bordering of local administrative entities. Quite in keeping with the belief that the history of a boundary has much to say about the history of the interaction between peoples, I bring the concept of deep borderland control to bear on the way in which the incipient borderlands were still at this time spaces in which notions of belonging and avenues of wider regional interaction amongst 'those in between' were negotiated locally. Prior to the replacement of indirect discourses of control with direct methods of including the borderlands into the wider states, borderlander involvement in state structures remained minimal, and pre-socialist borderlander loyalties were still marginally affected by the new administrative and political boundaries appearing in the region.

The following two chapters focus on the periods in which the socialist states of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China claimed the Central Asian borderlands as spaces belonging to their respective territories. Based on the national categories and political

realities of today as encountered in fieldwork, I search for elements underlying present-day narratives of state and nation, and the boundaries informing these, in the processes unleashed during this period. I show how narratives of state inclusion into states concerned with the loyalties of borderlanders affected, and were affected by, local notions of belonging and exclusion. Both chapters comparatively present dynamics in the borderlands by juxtaposing the developing political environment of the respective segments of the borderland as this is the only method that enables a trans-boundary perspective of shifting borderlander lifeworlds.

Chapter 4 deals with the genesis of the political entities classified and delimited by both states: the Kyrgyz and Tajik Soviet Socialist Republics in the Soviet Union, two almost-states without pre-Soviet state histories that were brought into existence in adherence to the tenets of Marxism-Leninism, and the administrative Kyrgyz and 'Tajik'/Pamiri borderlands in Xinjiang. Present-day narratives of Kyrgyz-ness and Pamiri-ness are fundamentally rooted in the way in which these peoples were incorporated into these states and enfranchised to represent themselves as members of newly outlined and legitimated national units. Based upon Marxist-Leninist preoccupation with the National Question and the project of accelerating the historical level of development of less advanced peoples, both the PRC and the Soviet Union adopted policies of ethnic identification, classification, and nominal political equality whilst wedding these concepts to ethnographically delimited 'homeland' territories. This chapter focuses on what I term the *internal* bordering of these borderland nations within their states – a form of boundary-making designed to reorient a nation's loyalties inwards toward the state rather than leave space for possible trans-frontier points of reference. I argue that it is impossible to understand borderlanders' lifeworlds at the frontier without first discussing the ways in which both states concerned attempted to refocus local loyalties into a context of statehood.

The focus of Chapter 5 is on the strategies and modes of discourses between local borderlanders and their socialist states and how these have played out along the Sino-Soviet boundary during the common socialist period (1949-1991). Whereas the last two chapters dealt with evolving state control (or the lack thereof) over the borderlands at the periphery, here I take a closer look at how borderlands have been constituted in terms of the interaction between state institutions and local interests, the regulation of the framework of trans-frontier exchange and communication, and the state's symbolic inscription into the physical setting of the boundary and the reception thereof by borderlanders themselves. While the content of that which was bounded by the state boundary (i.e., the nation) was open to a certain degree of local negotiability, those elements and discourses that enabled 'seepage' across the boundary (i.e., between the respective segments of the wider trans-frontier borderland) were subject to processes that excluded the local except where trans-state policies could be projected through carefully limited avenues. Hence, I shall here be discussing the role and constitution of the gatekeepers at the boundary and in the borderlands; how trans-frontier trajectories of physical, political, and communicational exchange were subverted or manipulated; and how the *external* bordering of a formerly

vaguely bounded notion of nation had inexorably resulted in the bifurcating of borderland nations along lines of state cleavage by the end of the common socialist period. In this chapter I argue that the cognitive boundaries between trans-frontier Kyrgyz and Tajiks have over this crucial period come to approach convergency with the state boundaries between the PRC and the Soviet Union in a region that has come to represent a narrative of alienation.

Chapter 6, then, discusses that which is connecting and separating the now-three states' segments of the wider borderland in contemporary Central Asia as empirically observed at the boundaries, in the borderlands, and in the wider region. It becomes glaringly obvious that the Soviet Union bequeathed its successor states with boundaries contested by the political actors in the region as well as with boundaries that have remained heavily inscribed in borderlanders' local notions of belonging – here, boundaries have neither crumbled politically nor witnessed contestation by borderlanders. However, crucial differences exist in relation to the boundaries' administrative histories: former external Soviet boundaries with the PRC display a negligible trans-frontier dilation of interaction between groups sharing an ethnonym and memories of a distant unity, whilst the former internal Soviet boundary between today's Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is subject to borderlander subversion of the discourses of control pursued by these newly independent states. In this chapter I will approach a characterisation of how borderlanders position themselves in this new political environment and which components inform today's notions of trans-frontier proximity or distance as expressed in the images, notions, and representations of each other held by all the actors involved in the boundary in its widest sense: awareness of a local borderland identity and territoriality by locals, the ascription of 'otherness' to the various groups involved, images and perceptions of the Trans-frontier Other and of the frontier itself outside the actual borderlands, notions of (shifting?) peripherality – all of these topics will be addressed here in order to draw a cognitive map of the frontier as it is today.

Chapter 1

Concepts of an Anthropology of Borderlands

The border is the first and last thing you see of a state. Thus, if it is a traumatic experience it shows that the society you approach is traumatised, and if it is a pleasant experience then that society is at peace with itself.

(Kyrgyzstani former senior borderguard official at the Torugart port to Xinjiang, personal interview September 2005 in Bishkek)

Picture 1: PRC boundary checkpoint at the Torugart summit

1.1 Typologies of Frontiers and Borderlands

In approaching a field of inquiry dealing with the seemingly straightforward, geographically demarcated areas where discretely defined states 'rub against each other', one encounters a bewildering array of semantic differences in the terminologies of 'borders', 'frontiers', and 'boundaries'. The multiplication of terms employed in the study of the geographical limits of political entities such as states is largely due to the burgeoning body of

literature being developed from a variety of academic disciplines including political geography, political science, geo-economics, social history, and, increasingly, social anthropology, each with its own focus and research interests. Moreover, there exist several different terms in many languages often confusingly used as synonyms by some, and often these terms have undergone shifts in meaning over the decades (and sometimes centuries) since having been written down in their original sources; thus, caution and terminological consistency must be a central concern in a study such as this where central state authorities, propaganda publications, outsider 'experts', and local inhabitants employ different terms in different languages (and sometimes different dialects) to describe the state's periphery and adjacent foreign territories and the processes linking these. I will be arguing throughout this thesis that differing concepts of frontiers and boundaries between China, Russia, and the various ethnic groups living at those two states' peripheries have led to widely differing discourses of control over Central Asian borderlands right to this day. In order to systematically deal with different modes of discourses, both within the borderlands and between these areas and the state centres, we must first identify the fields in which these processes take place, the actors and agents affected by and affecting the negotiation of power and submission, and the channels and conduits by which hegemony by distant centres or immediate elites may be contested, supported, or subverted. Contributors from various academic disciplines have offered models for attempting a comparative typology of political frontiers in today's world and I shall discuss a selection of these here and, in Chapter 2, place them in the specific context of Central Asia's Chinese boundaries in the hope of offering a contribution to the wider debate on the dynamic interplay between ethnic and political identities and loyalties along state borders[1]. In the same vein, while much has been written in anthropology and elsewhere on the symbolic uses of a 'border metaphor'[2], I restrict my use of concepts of bordering and borderlands to a framework centred on communities geographically rooted at the cognitive rim of the state.

Historical Notions of 'The Frontier'

The term 'frontier' figures prominently in historical sources dealing with the expansion of (mostly imperial) state-like entities into areas under the control of groups not recognised by the expanding power as constituting a legitimate stable and cohesive political rival. Generally speaking, different languages and societies present us with widely differing concepts of what constitutes either their frontier or the content of legitimising discourses of widening circles of penetration and control over peripheral areas. Following Power (1999) and Standen (1999), common patterns do seem to emerge in relation to frontier concepts and it is possible to broadly categorise these concepts into a dichotomy between *political frontiers* and *frontiers of settlement*. The difference between these two is fundamental and has arisen from the historical development of the growth of states in different parts of the world: the former concept, mirroring the territorial spread and consolidation of European states,

[1] I have opted to largely exclude purely economistic models and models focusing predominantly on ecological descriptions.
[2] See, for example, Donnan and Wilson (2001:19) for an overview of anthropological research into social and symbolic boundaries.

implies an understanding of a frontier as a political barrier while the latter carries the American experience of expansion into a land of opportunity by way of passage into and through a zone of conflict with the environment and the 'inconsequential' resistance of 'natural peoples' living in the wilderness of the *res nullius* (the empty land), the Roman principle that regards uncivilised space as coming to belong to whoever first occupies it in the sense of putting it to some productive use (Pagden 2003:110)[3]. Frederick J. Turner's *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1920), with its ecological determinism and condescending brand of 19th century evolutionism, completely disregarded the role of political formations within the shrinking 'wastelands' into which European settlers were expanding. It therefore seems particularly ill-suited to serve as an analytical framework for dealing with frontiers elsewhere, although his ideas have certainly been applied to, among others, Russian settlers moving into Siberia and Central Asia. Guy Imart has, in the context of imperial Russian expansion, discussed the normative attitudes towards the frontiers of the Romanov Empire explicit in notions of *prostor* ('open space', 'freedom') and he concludes that (1987:14)

> the Tsars were not 'gatherers of the Russian lands' [but rather] annexed indifferently whatever came to hand, without ever bothering about the ethnic ties of the inhabitants. All territories were deemed *res nullius* and this process of self-stimulated territorial chain-reaction accurately described by a Tsarist officer quoted as saying 'our border strides forward together with us' exemplifies a very particular understanding of what a frontier is.

Prostor thus implies vastness and unlimitedness as well as elbow-room and freedom; pushing the frontier forwards converts untamed and hostile terrain into tangible space later to be ordered (and, as I will argue, bordered) by the very political entity that settlers were 'escaping into freedom from' – the state.

Both frontier concepts imply shared characteristics such as militarisation in the form of strategically placed outposts as well as weak political control by the often infrastructurally distant centre over identities and loyalties in the conceptually ill-defined periphery. As etymologists and historians point out, political frontiers in pre-modern times were frequently very different from frontiers in modern states (Febvre 1928, as quoted in Power 1999:4). Debate has raged over functional explanations and interpretations of artefacts such as the *limes* of the Roman Empire or China's *changcheng* (the Great Wall), but it seems that neither of these constructions were meant to clearly demarcate the limits of a discrete empire, a boundary to be defended and employed to limit passage; on the contrary, the *limes* series of walls and outposts served to divide the world into lands already conquered and lands yet to be conquered rather than into the empire and its neighbours; it thus exhibited an outlook which was essentially expansionist and ideological rather than defensive and territorial (Whittaker 1994). Similarly, the array of fortifications that comprised the Great Wall of China was primarily intended to reproduce Confucian ideals of the separation of civilized, organised

[3] For an in-depth discussion of the effects of this Roman principle on Catholic and Protestant strategies of settlement and the ensuing distinction between public jurisdictional authority and private ownership that was to have such an impact on European colonialism, see Moore (2003:322-3).

agricultural space from the barbarian, uncultivated nomadic wilds rather than to keep steppe peoples out of the Chinese empire's territory and limit Chinese spheres of influence (Lattimore 1968:377). Indeed, the afore-mentioned dichotomy comes to bear when 'settlement' is extended to include 'society' and, therefore, comes to present a *frontier of contact and interaction* (hostile or otherwise), a zone in which "regions of competing political control were therefore also regions of colonisation and often of cultural interaction" (Power 1999:11-12), that is, regions in which identities and political loyalties are confronted with competing modes and frames of socio-cultural lifeworlds. According to Kristof (1959:127), traditionally "the frontier was not the end [...] but rather the beginning [...] of the state; it was a spearhead of light and knowledge expanding into the realm of darkness and of the unknown", the front of the hinterland, i.e., of the core of the state, kingdom, or empire. Here, the frontier has come to represent an interface at which the state metaphorically presents itself to the outside world and presages a relationship with political entities beyond its territorial expanse. In fact, frontiers become "integrating factors because they are zones and ways of life which allow outsiders to adapt to the behavioural patterns of the state, and enable people from within the state to have an orderly transition to the places and people beyond [it]" (*ibid.*). Naturally, the powers-that-be in many states (pre-modern and modern) have seen such frontier zones with a mixture of dread and hope, on the one hand fearing possible adverse effects of potentially corrupting outside influences 'filtering in' through a fuzzy periphery whilst, on the other hand, seeing potential for expansion and influence beyond the pale[4].

The Semantic Diversity of Frontier Concepts

The dichotomy formulated above is by no means a clear and exclusive binary pair of notions and we must be wary of seeing frontiers as static concepts. While small, local political entities were very much bounded in the form of city walls, boundary stones, or natural features such as rivers or forests (all of which were frequently sacralised as presenting the boundary between 'here' and 'out there'), notions of some kind of periphery providing an outer zone of use to the inhabitants within their 'pockets' must certainly have existed; this use may range from fields to be used for agricultural production in the service of city dwellers to areas of danger and ritual transgression in rites of passage. With the development of larger political entities and their concomitant need for administrative control over territory, frontiers took on new significance due also to their increasing distance from the metropolis. Etymological evidence points to these evolving meanings associated with 'the frontier'. According to Power (1999:6-8), the coining of terms such as *frontier* in English, *frontière* in French, and *Grenze* in German takes place simultaneously with the development of concepts of 'territorial sovereignty' and its related idea of control over 'borders' in the late Middle Ages in Europe. Whereas the French expression carries heavy connotations of military control and is used to denote areas in which the armed forces ensure the state's control, the English term

[4] See Power and Standen's excellent selection of nine case studies of pre-modern frontiers in *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700 – 1700* (1999), ranging from medieval Spanish frontiers to 10th-century China's northern frontier and the Mediterranean frontier, all of which focus on the distinction of different societal forms of organisation at the frontier.

has figurative dimensions and therefore has come to be used in a more symbolic way; the German term, adopted from the Slavonic (*granica*) and made commonly known by Martin Luther, has consistently been used by German-speaking states to denote both outer boundaries (frontiers) and inner, administrative units (for example *Stadtgrenze*, 'city limits', or *Staatsgrenze*, 'state border')[5]. Outside Europe, the Arabic term *thugur* came to be associated with the conflict zone between the Islamic caliphate and the Byzantine Empire and, thus, the territories containing the lonely military outposts (*ribat*) where uncertain sovereignty was negotiated in a transition zone (Hashmi 2003:197). In the Confucian canons underlying classical Chinese notions of frontiers, both natural geographies and social boundaries are conceptually entwined with a primary focus on military defence (as expressed in the Chinese term *bianjiang*) and have been understood as ultimately denoting "a situation encountered by people" (Ling 2003:89). This plethora of denotations suggests the existence of unique frontier experiences, and the development of unique frontier concepts depending on the specific historical contexts of the frontiers in question: there can most likely be no universal (read: eurocentrist) model of 'The Frontier' that goes beyond the general statements made above concerning expansion, the attempt at some form of control by military means, and the presence of groups of individuals related in some way to their own hinterland but also caught in the process of entering into some form of interaction with 'the outside'.

From Zones to Lines

However, the same does not hold true for a second term closely related to the development of the frontier: that of 'the boundary'. Often used by unscrupulous writers as synonymous with 'frontier', we should be aware of the salient differences between these terms so as to shed light on a concept that has come to be accepted in today's global system of discretely defined states and, thereby, enable a comparative analysis of the way in which states have come to officially place themselves on maps. The development of political frontiers into territories clearly marked (at least in the minds of those enacting the marking) has in no way been linear and simultaneous throughout the world. This process has been far more intricate and case-dependent than simply an evolution of conceived state barriers from vague border zones (Power 1999:9). However, in respect to the modern world's system of legally defined and delimited states it can be argued that states since the 19th century have sought to delineate territories and fix boundaries as a direct consequence of the idea of exclusive and uncontested territorial state power (Baud&van Schendel 1997:217). I find Lord Curzon of Kedleston's (1907) statements on this process to be illuminating, especially as they

[5] Other European examples include the Spanish *frontera*, introduced in the Reconquista and therefore carrying strong military connotations; Germanic *mark* ('marches' in English), used in Scandinavia but also in medieval France and England, referring either to local divisions or broad, often militarised zones of competing control; and Slavonic *krai* (used in contemporary Russian for example), referring to a distant and contested border area – as opposed to Russian *granitsa*, which denotes a boundary.

were made on the eve of the war that was to change imperialist notions of territorial expanse and control of colonies[6]:

> Just as the protection of the home is the most vital care of the private citizen, so the integrity of her borders is the condition of existence of the State. But with the rapid growth of population and the economic need for fresh outlets, expansion has, in the case of the Great Powers, become an even more pressing necessity. As the vacant spaces of the earth are filled up, the competition for the residue is temporarily more keen. [...] When all the voids are filled up, and every Frontier is defined, the problem will assume a different form. [...] We are at present passing through a transitional phase, of which less disturbed conditions should be the sequel, falling more and more within the ordered domain of International Law. [...] Time was when England had no Frontier but the ocean. We have now by far the greatest extent of territorial Frontier of any dominion in the globe. [...] These Frontiers have to be settled, demarcated, and then maintained.

Here is explicitly formulated the desire for a shift from expansion into the 'fuzzy' areas between states to clearly marked and monitored outer edges: a boundary was to be established to separate territories subjected to different sovereignties. *Frontiers* were shifting to come to imply areas of friendship and danger which exist beyond the state while *boundaries* were to become inner-oriented, neither denoting nor connoting relationships: the physical manifestation of the sovereign limits of state power and territory (Kristof 1959:127-9). In other words, while frontiers carry a strong meaning of 'transitory zone', boundaries serve to represent the line at which a state clearly marks off a territory deemed to belong firmly within its orbit – a line of separation meant to divide populations and political bodies and cartographically represented as a *borderline*. Much early research on territorial boundaries focused on criteria by which boundaries were drawn and these were classified as 'natural', 'artificial', and so on. However, by the second half of the 20th century political geographers had begun to focus on the functions such boundaries performed as contact points between territorial power structures as opposed to their simple role as demarcations of state sovereignty (Minghi 1963:146). Thus, studies of boundaries have attempted to transcend purely descriptive and classificatory themes by focusing on these lines expressing the territorial limits of state power and seeing them as elements of the cultural landscape, their impact on populations living in their vicinity, and their effects on state policies (see Prescott 1987). Similarly, recent research into the role frontiers play in regard to boundary establishment concludes that frontiers are both institutions and processes (Anderson 1996:1-3): from this perspective, frontiers are institutions because they provide the frame for a range of boundaries crucial to the state such as the real and symbolic enclosure of territory and citizens; and frontiers are multidimensional processes that exhibit state policies promoting national interests but also indicate how well governments can actually politically control state frontiers. These are topics which will lead us to the notion of *borderlands* discussed in the following sections and throughout much of this thesis.

[6] Lord Curzon was the Viceroy of India (1898-1905) and British Foreign Secretary (1919-24) and intricately involved in Boundary Commissions on British India's western and northern frontiers. The quote is taken from the text of his famous *Romanes Lectures*.

Use of the Terms 'Frontier' and 'Boundary'

As stated above, while frontiers are the (still evolving) products of regional political history and are frequently older than the modern (bounded) states they now find themselves framing, boundaries have forms and functions which are broadly comparable in today's world (Kristof 1959:129). Thus, frontiers exhibit on-going historical discourses in relation to territorial control, frequently discourses that figure prominently to the present day in and between states that have inherited these historical frontiers (for example, the persistent conflict over the Alsace between France and Germany, the never-resolved conflict over territorial loss between the Soviet Union and China in Central Asia and the Russian Far East that was handed down to the post-Soviet successor states, or the continued wariness in Poland regarding the Oder-Neisse boundary); boundaries are institutions monitored and (usually) controlled by the state that serve to legally distinguish insiders from outsiders and are intended to regulate and control rather than to invite interaction across. They are, therefore, symbols of social facts and the political status quo. The shifting of such boundaries over time (what Prescott (1987:63) terms 'evolution') tells us much about the way in which states themselves project power and negotiate or dictate control. Throughout this thesis I will be using the term *boundary* as synonymous with 'borderline' and, hence, in its legal and political sense as denoting both the thin space between states (the external boundary) and the line between internal divisions of administrative space (internal administrative boundaries). In this way, 'boundary' becomes the most precise translation of the Russian term *granitsa* and the Chinese *bianjie*, both of which themselves carry no zone-like connotations[7]. I prefer the use of 'boundary' over 'borderline' because of its flexibility in denoting both inner and outer limits and because the latter term hides a crucial element of boundary analysis – that of the no-man's-land surrounding modern state boundaries on both sides[8].

In contrast to 'boundary', the term 'frontier' will be used to connote territorial fuzziness in accordance with Donnan and Wilson's definition of frontiers as "territorial zones of varying width which stretch across and away from state borders [i.e., away from the boundary (S.P.)], within which people negotiate a variety of behaviours and meanings associated with membership in their nations and states" (2001:15-16). It follows that compound terms will be used accordingly: trans-frontier thus denotes processes and discourses taking place across the entire width of the frontier and penetrating non-frontier regions of states while trans-boundary refers to such processes on a trajectory crossing state boundaries in their strictest political-territorial sense.

[7] The zone-like nature of Russian *pogranichniy* (lit. 'along the boundary') and Chinese *bianjiang* ('border region') are better suited to express the fuzzily connoted English *borderland*.

[8] For lack of a better term, I use this conventional expression throughout. No-man's-lands can be as thin as several meters (as between most contemporary European Union states) or as thick as 100km or more (as, most extremely in my own experience, between the Manchurian and Russian Far East borderzone checkpoints of Suifenhe and Pogranichki on the trajectory from Harbin in the PRC to Vladivostok in Russia); and some are the length of a structure such as a bridge (as between the PRC and Vietnam at Lao Cai).

Borderlands

Research into frontiers and boundaries conducted over most of the 20th century has been seen to take for granted an inherent centre-based perspective, i.e., they have presented us with a view of the peripheries of states firmly based on which functions the state itself perceives its periphery as fulfilling. If the drawing of boundaries and the pushing forward of frontiers was seen as problematic, then this has been analysed at a predominantly state-centred level: the problematic demarcation of certain boundaries, territorial disputes, the infiltration of undesirable persons, to name just a few classic topics. Recently, however, more attention has been directed at questions dealing with the role of those locales immediately and directly affected by the drawing of boundaries (Baud&van Schendel 1997:211-12): how do inhabitants of such regions adapt to or struggle against the imposition of a boundary? How do the local social dynamics of these regions affect the formation and territorialisation of states? What are the on-the-ground consequences, often unintended and unanticipated, of the drawing of boundaries? In other words, from a local perspective, what exactly does a boundary find itself sundering? And, furthermore, is it conceivable that social forces originating in these regions can in some way in turn affect the centre (similar to a backdraft effect)? These questions point to the growing concern over a lop-sided state bias that controls representations of peripheries as 'integral parts' of state territory, a concern also underlying the fundamental motivation for this particular case study of Central Asian and Chinese frontiers. It becomes obvious that the notions of *frontier* and *boundary* alone cannot provide a theoretical container suited for wider comparative analysis of such processes and covert realities.

As the anthropologists Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson conclude, a redefinition of the focus of case studies has taken place "in order to recognise and understand the differences as well as the similarities between borders. This new history of borders is in fact a history of *borderlands*, the region bisected by the boundary line between states" (2001:50, emphasis in the original) – *pogranichniy* in Russian and *bianjiang* in Chinese. This focus on regions structurally exposed to processes, influences, discourses, and movements in part originating from outside the territorial state allows researchers to uncover hithertofore invisible frameworks of negotiation and power that are constituted through supra-state networks and avenues of exchange. Inhabitants of these regions – *borderlanders* – can hence be made the centrepiece of an inquiry into the state's relationship with its boundaries. Anthropological research in particular into questions of citizenship, sovereignty, and national identity can ideally be pursued in this environment. As the historians Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel note, "borderlands have been represented as far more passive and reactive than is warranted. The study of borderlands assigns an active historical role to borderlands and their population" (1997:235). I conclude that in order to understand the local processes involved in the rejection or acceptance of discourses of control over such regions we really must relocate our point of view to the actual borderlands themselves.

Borderland Typology

In a first attempt to classify these regions lying at the territorial interstices between states, Oscar J. Martinez has developed a typology of the dynamics of borderlands' interaction with the aim of enabling theoretical comparativity (1994:1-5). The basis for this model lies in the realisation that trans-boundary movement and avenues of contact between two states' adjacent borderlands are fundamental indicators of lifeworlds and livelihoods in borderlands. He suggests the existence of four types: *alienated borderlands* are those where mutual state animosity either toward each other or toward the borderland population has led to heavy militarisation and the establishment of stifling controls over trans-boundary traffic and prevents any form of regularised ties across the boundary. *Co-existent borderlands* exist when the states involved are capable of reducing the threat of armed conflict along the border and officially allow limited trans-boundary interaction, generally within formal parameters established by the neighbouring states. *Interdependent borderlands* are to be found where borderlands are symbiotically linked in terms of economic climate and probably social and cultural systems but where concerns over 'national interests' in either or both states compel the governments to carefully monitor the boundary and borderland and only allow an opening to the extent that this serves the state's agenda; interdependence does not imply a symmetrical relationship but rather can include economic complementarity. Finally, *integrated borderlands* represent a stage in which neighbouring states have decided to eliminate the boundary in all but name between them, there no longer exist significant barriers to economic transactions or human movement and exchange, and borderlanders for all practical purposes mingle economically and socially with their neighbouring counterparts in an environment of political stability, military security, and economic strength[9].

Implicit within this idealised typology of the relationships between borderlands across a state boundary is the assumption that borderlands are tied both to one another and to the states to which they territorially 'belong'. Inter-state conflict and rapprochement will all be felt within the borderland; the borderland population is subject both to "processes that have the potential for generating conflict [and to] opportunities unavailable to people from heartland areas" (Martinez 1994:14). This is by no means a static concept as the historical development of borderlands is determined simultaneously by developments in two states and the social, economic, and political interactions between them. Shifts in the situation of states will be reflected in the shared borderlands (Baud&van Schendel 1997:219); borderlands will not remain within the same category throughout time – many borderlands will display characteristics of different types at different times and must, therefore, be understood as dynamically situated regions ideally placed to take advantage of or to be disproportionally damaged by such shifts. Indeed, in many ways borderlanders are frequently more exposed to

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[9] Examples for these four types may include: the Central Asian Sino-Soviet borderlands from the 1960s until 1990 (alienated), the Israel-Jordan borderland (co-existent), the USA-Mexico borderlands (interdependent), and European Union borderlands between states having signed the Schengen Agreement but also the administratively generated borderlands between the Soviet Republics within the Soviet Union (integrated). I will be tracing categorical shifts over time within this study's borderlands in Chapters 3, 5, and 6.

and more involved in the implications of a state's relationship with its neighbours than the majority of the state's population themselves will ever directly be.

From 'borderlands' to a Trans-state 'Borderland'

Of central importance in determining the role of borderlands and borderlanders both within and in transcending their states is being able to locate these entities in time and space. While traditionally geography has thought in terms of two separate borderlands straddling a common boundary, Baud and van Schendel argue for an approach that sees two adjacent borderlands as segments of a single, trans-boundary borderland (1997:221) which, for clarity, I will here term 'the Borderland' (with a capital B) and which can be assumed to be analogous to a trans-state social, economic, and/or cultural unit in all but administrative practice. Following this, it becomes crucial to delimit the extent of the areas being dealt with and to explore the disparities between official spatial representations of borderlands and the area that border studies deal with: how far away from the boundary does the Borderland extend in each direction? How far from the boundary must one go to no longer be able to identify frontier-related social, political, and/or economic phenomena? Baud and van Schendel attempt to answer this by offering a typology of spatial zones based on the strength and omnipresence of the trans-boundary social networks that serve to distinguish borderlands from the rest of their states (1997:221-3): starting on both sides of the boundary, there is first the *border heartland*, a zone where social networks are shaped directly by the boundary and depend on its vagaries for their survival. Following this there is the *intermediate borderland*, the region that continually feels the influence of the boundary within its social networks but in intensities varying from moderate to weak. Finally, there is the *outer borderland* which only feels the effects of the boundary in relation to local social networks under exceptional circumstances (such as the flaring up of armed hostilities or a radical change in economic permeability).

The value of this typology lies in providing a tool that aids us in approaching the Borderland with a critical eye to administrative territorial units and normative assumptions: borderlands are changeable spatial and temporal units that are hidden on maps. As far as the state's administration of its borderlands is concerned, it readily becomes obvious that administrative internal boundaries between primary sub-state level units such as provinces, cantons, or autonomous (minority) regions would rarely, if indeed ever, conform with Baud and van Schendel's spatial typology[10], a fact that raises essential questions as to how states attempt to administer and control their segment of the Borderland. The social networks that serve as the defining element of this typology and which shall be now more closely examined will be found to transcend official categories demarcating states and administrative units,

[10] In respect to my interpretation of this typology, examples for these three zones may include: urban border cities such as Shenzhen between the PRC and Hong Kong, Basle between Germany, Switzerland and France, or Tijuana between the USA and Mexico; and lowest-level administrative units immediately along the boundary like Murghab *raion* in Tajikistan or Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County in the PRC (border heartland); parts of mid-level administrative units like Naryn *oblast* in Kyrgyzstan or GBAO in Tajikistan (intermediate borderland); and parts of the highest sub-state level of administrative units like southern Xinjiang in the PRC or the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic during Soviet times (outer borderland).

thereby making these into "impassioned zones of political dispute [that] can never be passively accepted" (Donnan&Wilson 1994:7). Ever mindful of over-essentialising a concept as politically charged as 'the borderland', an anthropology of frontiers must focus on rooting such typologies in local perceptions of social networks between adjacent borderlands and between borderlands and their respective states whilst also taking into account that official categories do indeed influence (and are influenced by) local realities. A cognitive map of the Borderland must be developed that takes into account the fuzzy areas of the meaning that boundaries and border control have on borderlanders and how this affects local perceptions of ascribed identity and actual loyalty.

1.2 Borderland Processes

Neither the establishment of frontiers nor the mapping of boundaries takes place in a vacuum. The development of borderlands, only made into such areas by the imposition of boundaries, is fundamentally influenced and characterised by the socio-cultural spaces in which they are rooted. Borderlanders and their trans-frontier networks loom large both in non-local (i.e., non-borderland) notions and images of these groups at the state's margins and in local (i.e., internal Borderland) concepts of culture. This focus on borderlands' culture is critical for an understanding of the discourses structuring negotiation – be this accommodating, subverting, or influencing – between the Borderland and the state centres involved. The cultural interstitiality resulting from living between political entities that believe in the homology between culture, identity, territory, and nation and that, as the states that they are today, represent structures of power in the Weberian sense (Donnan&Wilson 2001:10), must have an effect on borderlanders' concepts of ethnic belonging, national identity and state loyalty, and local socio-economic life. Borderlands are areas where a local population must and generally does deal with two states; frequently, this local population constitutes a 'national minority' within at least one of these states and, thus, by implication it represents a 'cultural frontier' between ethnic state majorities and minorities, influencing for example policy decisions and diplomatic arrangements. Indeed, "border communities are implicated in a wide range of local, national and international negotiations" (Donnan&Wilson 2001:12) of cultural and political frontiers. Their active role in these negotiations has been stressed in recent research, and Peter Sahlins (1998) points out that borderland elites and borderlanders in general can be adept at using such discourses to their advantage and, in the process, undergo cultural transformations. Uncovering the elements and processes of borderland culture and identity is crucial and will be the focus of this sub-chapter; thereby I will show how, whatever their real impact, political boundaries and their borderlands become part of the perception and mental maps of borderlanders by being simultaneously institutions and processes of separation *and* of uniting (Baud&van Schendel 1997:242).

It goes without saying that many of the characteristics of culture and discourse in borderlands are similar to processes found both in other segments of state society (majority – minority discourses and the contestation of state power among different members of the state, to name but two examples) and in other geographic regions of the state (as, for example, in urban spaces or in areas that contain groups perceiving themselves as constituting minority regions); and, likewise, many things occurring at a political or social level in today's states are facts of life for members of states regardless of whether individuals are located at the state's centre or in its borderlands (for example subversive trans-frontier networks, or political contests over the loyalties of local elites). However, some things *can only* occur in borderlands at the territorial margins of the political state (Donnan&Wilson 2001:4) and some things *never* occur here; in other words, the mental construct of 'a boundary' invokes a social reality in the Borderland around it. Concerning the former category, it is readily observable that economic free trade zones that can offer duty-free goods really only make

sense at the edge of a state's economic space; similarly, the cohabitation of local populations with special military zones (and the effects thereof on settlement restrictions) can only be found at the frontier. Beyond the obvious, it is borderlands that witness media influence from the adjacent state (both inadvertent seepage and purposive propaganda), physical population flows, and blatant systemic economic differentials. In regard to the latter category, freedom of movement is never to be found in the vicinity of boundaries just as purely locally-run state institutions do not exist here; and even in states that generally do not restrict the ownership of land and property rights, buying and selling land in the immediate vicinity of the boundary always becomes a matter of political concern or, indeed, is outrightly forbidden.

Being a Borderlander

As with all groups constituting a larger social complex and tied together by a primarily territorial space, the assumption of a single type of 'borderlander' would be erroneous. Wilson and Donnan (1998:13-14) point out that not all communities of borderlanders are affected in the same way by the existence of boundaries. There will exist very different processes of identity and negotiation depending on the appreciation of bonds transgressing the boundary, bonds in effect potentially tying the Borderland together. They differentiate between three basic types of borderlanders: *first*, those who share ethnic ties across the boundary as well as with those within the core of their state; *second*, those who share ties across the boundary with borderland communities in the adjacent state but not with those within either state's core; and, *third*, those who share ethnic ties only with members of their state's core population and not with borderlanders across the boundary (i.e., those borderlanders who could be regarded as members of their state's nation, or ethnic majority)[11]. While this typology serves to classify a first look at borderlanders and their ties with the state-transcending Borderland, I believe it to be fundamentally important to view such ties diachronically for the simple reason that ethnic ties are by no means static and unchangeable – the states involved can (and so often do) pursue a 'rhetoric of difference' that will have effects on perceptions of 'relative trans-frontier ethnic proximity'[12]. Furthermore, while borderlanders may be regarded by foreign anthropologists and journalists – and sometimes also by concerned politicians at the cores of the states involved – as belonging to one or another of these types, local attitudes within borderland communities towards such communities in the wider Borderland may very well be in conflict with such representations. In other words, local (borderland) and non-local (state or outsider) ascriptions of ethnic proximity and the similarities and the differences, affinities and antagonisms this implies can vary widely depending on who is asked, thereby in effect representing a parallactic

[11] The authors mention the following examples in accordance with their types: first, the Irish-Northern Irish Borderland and the Hungarian Borderland (shared by Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, and Slovakia); second, the Basque Borderland between France and Spain (Douglass 1998); third, the Hatay Turks in the Turkey-Syria Borderland. Closer to the region under consideration, I would add the following three examples: ethnic Russians in the Russia-Kazakhstan Borderland (first); Uighurs in the PRC-Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan Borderland, or Tibetans in the PRC-India Borderland (second); Turkmen in the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan Borderland (third).

[12] See Anthony D. Smith (1986) and John Armstrong (1982) for an in-depth treatment of the utilisation of mythical and linguistic symbols constructing such a 'rhetoric'. I will return to their considerations in Chapters 4 and 5. See also Standen (1999:24-25) for examples.

phenomenon depending on the point of view of the observer. In addition to this, borderlands can be territories inhabited both by 'new' trans-frontier peoples and 'old' groups, especially in cases where vaguely defined imperial frontiers have mutated into modern state boundaries and witnessed an influx of members of the state's ethnic majority who frequently are perceived as displacing or 'diluting' indigenous populations now finding themselves the subjects of new minority discourses[13]. However this may be, the degree of political loyalty to the state *as perceived by* representatives of the state hinges crucially on how a state's borderlanders are classified according to this typology: state discourses on 'dangerous' borderlanders will focus on the second of these types whereas borderlanders of the third type will be more likely to be represented as 'innocuous'. In the borderlands between Xinjiang and Central Asia there are to be found groups seen as constituting all three types, and this will be presented in the first part of Chapter 2 (in particular in connection with the schematic Borderland map there).

Borderlander Ambivalence and Loyalty

This state-centred political and ethnic ambivalence is underlined by other ambivalent factors in borderlanders' lives: they find themselves in interstitial economic and linguistic fields – confronted with dealing with two (or more) different economic systems (currencies and fluctuating exchange rates being the strongest symbols of such a boundary) and languages. They are subject to meta-discourses of international relations and the international community's unwaveringly arrogant monolithic belief in the territorial integrity of 'nation-states', and they are, at the same level, the object of suspicion in regard to their assumed role in illegal trafficking (of narcotics, people, and subversive 'terrorist' ideologies) and other clandestine activities. Images of borderlanders within their states' cores frequently carry derogative connotations and contain stereotypes such as 'economically backward', 'immoral', and 'opportunistic'. Borderlanders are, however, often also seen as powerful: they stand to gain from their position economically in an illicit manner through smuggling and regional 'brokerage' thanks to their boundary proximity but also politically in the form of special institutional attention (in the form of infrastructural aid projects, minority laws, and lobby groups). From this perspective, these images of power can be subsumed under the twin metaphors of 'mixing and matching' and 'dining and ditching', that is, on the one hand borderlanders are able to pick and choose the most advantageous elements of either system and, on the other, they are ascribed with the power to 'exit' (by becoming rebellious and contesting state hegemony, for example, or by attempting to play off states against one another). States have therefore seen it in their best interest to attempt to decisively orient borderlanders' loyalties inwards to the state. The interplay between territoriality, loyalty, and local discourses will be discussed in the final part of this chapter.

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[13] This of course is the situation as perceived locally within large parts of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, where the massive migration of Han Chinese is perceived by Uighurs as a policy of demographic engineering directed at frontier control (see Chapter 3). Similarly, Kyrgyz perceive Uighur relocation within Xinjiang's borderlands as a threat (see Chapter 6).

In order to deal with these conflicting elements and to uncover a set of criteria based on local perceptions and distinctively influencing borderlander loyalties, Oscar Martinez has attempted to characterise a 'Borderland Milieu' with an eye to describing how borderland inhabitants relate to one another because this "reveals much about their immediate surroundings and the policies followed by nation-states in shaping that environment" (1994:8, *sic.*)[14]. This milieu is fundamentally influenced by the observation that borderlands are set apart from interior zones through unique processes: transnationalism, international conflict and accommodation, ethnic conflict and accommodation, otherness, and separateness (*ibid.*:8-14).

First, 'transnationalism' denotes avenues of contact between adjacent borderlanders that foster substantive trade, tourism, local migration, flows of information, cultural and educational exchanges, and other personal relationships such as close family ties and religious or ritual attachment to locations across the boundary[15]. The level of 'transnational' contact and exchange will depend on the afore-mentioned type of borderlands involved: in all except for alienated borderlands this contact and exchange will be slight (mostly clandestine) to very high (and officially encouraged); borderlanders here are frequently active participants in a local Borderland society.

Second, due to their immediate proximity to the boundary, frontier-related strife between states is distinctive to a borderlander identity because of the possibility of being subject to attack (either physically or politically or even economically) from either their own state (which may well doubt local loyalties) or the neighbouring state (which may be suspicious of the trans-frontier influence borderlanders exert on their own territory). Borderlands can be battlegrounds, and usually have been at one point in their past, and a local feeling of 'being threatened' or 'embattled' will persist while the boundary exists, even if the states concerned are fraternally related – however close states may come to be politically or economically, borderlands always witness boundary-inherent restrictions that frequently may seem to be more abrasive than the international climate would suggest.

Third, borderlanders tend to be faced with complex ethnic realities both in relation to their states' majority population and borderlanders across the boundary. Conquered peoples often have oral traditions describing the intrusion of unwelcome cultural 'aliens' into their homelands; mainstream societies in modern states often attempt to forcefully assimilate peripheral minorities. Borderlanders' role in negotiating cultural and ethnic adversity within and between states can be profound, and an understanding of this role either as embattled

[14] As with all of Martinez' writings, these concepts devolve from his insights into the USA-Mexico Borderland. The applicability of concepts from that heavily studied border to the areas under consideration here will be continuously tested throughout this thesis.

[15] Due to the difficulty in clearly delineating the term 'transnational' (especially in light of the confusion surrounding the term 'nation') I prefer and will use the term 'trans-frontier' throughout this thesis.

minority or as 'bridgehead'[16] representing the state across the boundary informs borderland culture and society.

Fourth, the uniqueness of a borderland environment leads to both local and national perceptions of the otherness of borderlander society. State laws deemed injurious to regional interests (in particular language and economic legislation) are bent or ignored because they are felt to fail in taking into account the unique conditions of the boundary due to having been passed by distant, insensitive, and often nationalistically minded politicians. Contact with members of other states and with mobile individuals from diverse ethnic groups and foreign places leads to higher rates of multilinguality and multi-faceted hybridity in many borderlands. Non-borderland populations within the state see borderlanders as having such opportunities not available to other citizens. In effect, borderlands are different from the heartland precisely because people in all regions of the state deem them to be different.

Fifth, a sense of separateness and possibly even alienation is not uncommon in many borderlands due to the development of local interests that frequently and fundamentally clash with central governments or mainstream cultural codes. The open negotiation of such interests (for example with the aim of differentiated enforcement of state laws) in political arenas such as parliaments or national assemblies is often made difficult by lack of direct political influence at the centre, leading to local frustration and methods of 'self-help'. The transitional nature of borderlands produces integrative local processes that blur differences with adjacent borderlanders and lead to ambivalent loyalties in borderlanders.

Trans-state Positioning

While unique processes certainly can and do take place within borderlands, between borderlands and the state's heartlands, and within the wider Borderland, the growing literature of case studies on particular borderlands warns against over-essentialised assumptions that normatively assign identities to groups based upon their belonging to a Borderland milieu. Donna K. Flynn's (1997) intriguing anthropological study of the Shabe Borderland spanning the Bénin-Nigeria boundary presents what I deem to be a case in which Martinez' milieu is excellently reproduced: the presence of the boundary fundamentally influences local identities, and borderlanders have been able to successfully appropriate the zone around the boundary from state regulations with their territorial claims to the borderland (*ibid.*:326). Identity as a borderlander is affirmed here in the face of state representatives, and locally ascribed membership in the milieu is based on duration of residence within the borderland rather than on ethnic factors or state citizenship (*ibid.*:319; original emphasis):

> 'Because we are the border!' they exclaim when arguing with customs guards or when explaining their belief that they should be allowed to cross the border at will. What does it mean to 'be a border'? In a very literal sense, locals *embody* the border: they

[16] I shall return to the notion of 'bridgehead' in Chapter 5, especially as posited in Olivier Roy's *The New Central Asia – the Creation of Nations* (2000).

> conceive of their cluster of communities [...] as constituting the international boundary. The 'border' is not merely an arbitrary line dividing two nations [i.e. states; S.P.]; it is a social grouping based on historical, residential claims to the [...] region.

It would be a mistake to expect such strong sentiments in all borderlands, as the present case study will show. I argue that it would seem that the strength of the processes informing borderlanders' identities (the milieu) depends not only on borderlands' distinctiveness to the states involved but crucially also on whether borderlanders, so frequently members of the first type described by Wilson and Donnan above, are members of a trans-frontier *state* group (i.e., with titular status in another state) or trans-frontier *non-state* group (without any titular status abroad). The former type of borderlanders see themselves, or are seen by those with the power to ascribe such ties to borderlanders, as a minority group within their own state and simultaneously as being closely related to a dominant ethnic majority in the neighbouring state, whereas the latter represent a group without such a state on either side of the boundary, in other words as belonging to a non-state ethnic group[17].

Both the identities and the political loyalties of borderlanders of the first kind are influenced by the proximity of such a state – whether to the detriment or advancement of their status within their 'host' state depends largely on what Donnan and Wilson (2001:85-6) term 'hierarchical social and political relations'. These relations, always situational and relative to discourses of power within borderlanders' states, are often framed in terms of majority – minority discourses. Hence, borderlanders of the first kind can find negotiating their role within their state influenced by, and influencing, inter-state relations, often manoeuvring themselves into a central position in such relations by representing an ethnic minority 'exclave' within their state and thereby, to use Albert Hirschman's (1970:90-107) terminology, gaining sometimes powerful avenues of 'voice' and the implicit threat of 'exit'. Borderlanders of the second kind must find other avenues to negotiate their hierarchical relations within their state; generally speaking, such groups are at a first glance more exposed to state-centred hegemonic and inclusivist policies geared towards locating them at the bottom of this hierarchical scale through majority – minority discourses. Opportunities for 'voice' and, in particular, 'exit' are far more limited and must, if they are not to be deemed irredentist or 'splittist'[18], take place within the severely limited areas of expression allowed by their state. For such groups, contesting state policies in the borderland and promoting local identities can be seen by the state as an attempt at delegitimising that state's control over its (officially rarely emphasised) ethnically heterogeneous borderlands. In both cases of borderlanders' hierarchical social and political relations with their states, then, avenues to the centre(s), networks of communication, and modes of expression are the contested fields of negotiation which shall be the subject of the remainder of this section. First and foremost,

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[17] Examples of the first type are Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland, Hungarians in Romania, Russians in Kazakhstan, or, in the context of this thesis, Kyrgyz in Xinjiang; examples of the second type are Basques in France and Spain and, in the Central Asian – Chinese borderlands, Uighurs in Central Asia and Xinjiang.

[18] The term 'splittist' carries strong connotations of both the Soviet and Chinese socialist states' vituperative propaganda aimed at groups (by no means just ethnic minorities) deemed to contest the monolithic state's legitimacy of control over all forms of ideological expression and political loyalty.

we must approach the question as to who is given the franchise by both the state and borderlanders themselves to negotiate local Borderland loyalties and 'interpret' the narrative of control over borderlands.

Borderland Elites and Trans-frontier Networks

At the interface between state and borderland population there is to be found a group that I term 'the borderland elites'. Local and regional elites are crucial in the relationship between states and those to be governed, regardless of the location where state power is meant to be applied. Such elites affect interaction involving competition and conflict for political power, economic benefits, social status, and the negotiation of ethnic identities within multi-ethnic settings between competing elite, class, and leadership groups both within and among different ethnic categories (Brass 1991:25). While scholars of nationalism and ethnicity have identified elites as central actors in resource distribution and as proponents of ethnic identities designed to promote ethnic consciousness through ethnic mobilisation (and, hence, the creation or formalisation of ethnic boundaries), in borderlands another dimension is added to these characteristics: here, the power of a state pursuing the project of total control (militarily, economically, socially) over its territorial integrity is also circumscribed by local borderland political networks that can be trans-boundary in nature, and therefore 'international' in an immediate way. I fundamentally argues that, thus, the focus must become not one of ethnic identity but rather one of political loyalty as mediated by elites – borderland elites become mobilisers of political loyalties. Most contemporary boundaries were conceived in the centres of the affected states following processes of negotiation, military campaigns, and the ratification of treaties. The state elites were often internally divided over a demarcation that would, depending on the faction, best serve individual interests – be it those of the armed forces, bureaucrats, politicians, the aristocracy, landowners, traders, or of industry (Baud&van Schendel 1997:217).

Nationalised and Trans-frontier Borderland Elites

Relationships between borderland elites and elites at the centre are influenced by the internal cohesion of the respective groups (in other words, whether the state manages to mediate between factions' interests in the centre and whether local elites could agree on common ground regarding their dealings with the centre), the strategic and economic importance of the borderland *per se* for both groups, and the actual presence of the state in the borderland in the form of state representatives[19]. In cases where states are successful at integrating local elites into networks of state power, these elites derive much of their local power through their legitimation by the state and become *nationalised borderland elites* – their success at upholding their political position within the borderland depends crucially on their success in assuaging doubts both at the centre (over the degree of control the state has

[19] My categories described in this paragraph loosely correlate to what Baud and van Schendel have described as 'borderland control patterns' (1997:226-9): quiet borderlands, unruly borderlands, and rebellious borderlands. While illuminating, I find this typology to be too state-centred and prefer to focus here on the elites themselves in negotiating types of control.

over the borderland) and within the borderland itself (over the degree to which local interests can be addressed in the state)[20].

Often, however, states find themselves dealing with borderland elites with at least some degree of political networks transcending the boundary, networks that are based within the wider Borderland and offer an alternative, regional legitimation of power. In cases where these networks are relatively weak and persist in domains tolerated by the Borderland's states, local elites will find themselves defending local interests towards the states' centres by employing state-sanctioned codes of expression as their continued political survival will still largely depend on state tolerance[21]; in cases where networks are stronger, alternatives to state legitimation will enable local elites to oppose state policies deemed detrimental to local interests more openly, possibly using state institutions within the borderlands to their own ends and playing states off against one another. Such elites could be termed *trans-frontier borderland elites* – their success at upholding their political position depends crucially on maintaining avenues of contact and frames of negotiation with the state(s) whilst cementing their local power base through representing borderlander interests; in other words, here local elites can fulfil a role as political 'brokers' between the centre and the borderland as long as both the state *and* borderlanders see their interests (state control over the periphery for the former, and mediation of policies and 'localness' for the latter) as being addressed. However, if states fail to incorporate borderland elites into the state structure or if borderland elites fail to be integrated into a Borderland Milieu in the eyes of borderlanders, the chances are that state control will be severely hampered. In cases of local elites being excluded from the participation in state power, these elites are likely to side with (or indeed incite so as to protect their claim to power) borderlanders in contesting state hegemony over the borderland, sometimes precipitating rebellion, in particular when states decide to regain control through military means[22]. In cases where local elites are not (or no longer) accepted as representing borderlander interests and identities, borderlanders will regard these elites as betraying 'localness', as agents of an undesirable and distant hegemon rather than as protectors and spokespeople. Rebellion may be held in abeyance but certainly will not be far from the surface; those I have termed 'nationalised borderland elites' above will be seen by borderlanders as 'nationalised turncoats' or 'corrupted elites' (in cases of traditional borderland elites having distanced themselves from local identification), or as 'agents of exploitation' or a 'colonial upper-class' lording it over the local population (in cases of the replacement of traditional local elites)[23].

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[20] An example of such nationalised borderland elites would be titular nationalities in the periphery of the Soviet Union, particularly during *korenizatsiya* (indigenisation of power) from the 1950s until 1991 (see Chapter 4). Furthermore, independent Kyrgyzstan's borderland governors can be seen as belonging to this type.

[21] For example, the Borderland between Chinese Inner Mongolia and the Republic of Mongolia. See Borchigud (1996) and Khan (1996). Examples of such modes of expression are choice of language and formulation, and the incorporation of ideological mantras into local political discourses (such as formulaic invocation of state integrity).

[22] Pakistan's tribal Northwest Frontier Province seems a good example of this process.

[23] A frequently heard accusation from Uighurs in Xinjiang when talking about certain Uighur politicians in the provincial government; similar examples exist in the case of Tibet. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of such changes in the interaction between elites and borderlanders over time in the Central Asian Borderland.

Boundary-transcending Networks and Discourses

In order to move away from a simple and essentialised description of the functions of borderland elites and a state-biased focus on what they 'are to accomplish' in borderlands, an anthropologically guided inquiry into the nature of the afore-mentioned trans-frontier networks seems particularly well suited to characterise borderland elites and their central role in negotiating loyalties and political realities in and between states. Who are these groups? How are they constituted? What interests do they pursue, and how do these interests fit in with borderlanders themselves? In order to approach the construction of the political Borderland and to discover which avenues exist and tie the borderlands together internally and across the boundary, locating local elites and differentiating between the types of networks crossing the boundary is crucial, and this is where the fieldwork on political boundaries and borderlands to be discussed in the next chapter is located. In accordance with their concept of 'the Borderland', Baud and van Schendel (1997:217-221) propose regarding the dynamics informing borderlanders' and borderland elites' local conceptions of power in the Borderland as constituting a double triangle of relations, as shown in Figure 1:

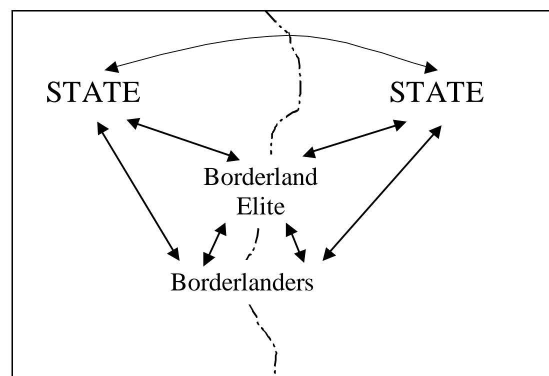

Figure 1: Double triangle of power relations in the Borderland (adapted from Baud&van Schendel 1997:219)

There is one set of triangular relations on either side of the boundary and one triangle tying the sides together and "whose points may overlap to a greater or lesser extent, according to how far the two states involved have been able to break up the unity of the elite as well as the 'common people' in the [B]orderland" (*ibid.*: 227).

A closer look at the actual forms that the connections between all protagonists take reveals that there exist basically three types of discourses within these triangles: first, those between states, usually routed through the respective state centres, which I shall term *trans-state policies* as these forms of discourse frequently are constituted in form of bilateral (but not necessarily equitable) treaties and agreements based on policies of states' self-interest. Second, the *discourses of control* referred to above are geared, from the state's perspective, towards including the borderland within its territorial and political orbit and exerting some form of control over internal Borderland processes, and, from the borderland's perspective, towards mitigating and negotiating this control. Third, *trans-frontier networks* between the two state segments of the Borderland are those social networks that underlie the ways in

which borderlanders relate to one another and influence locally held notions of proximity and a sense of borderland identity and competing state loyalties. These three types are displayed in Figure 2:

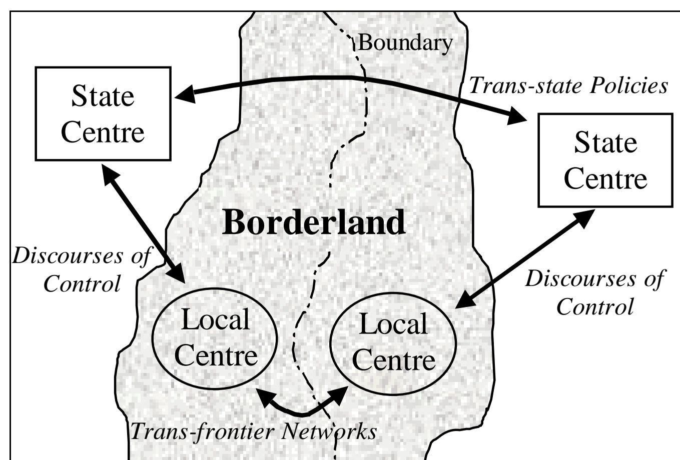

Figure 2: Framework of Borderland discourses

Influence over a state's adjacent segment of the Borderland (i.e., the neighbouring state's borderland) will often be attempted through mobilizing certain trans-frontier networks via discourses of control and depends crucially on borderland elites' middleman function in accomplishing this[24]. State cleavage of local borderlander identities designed to promote state loyalty will take place by 'bordering' such trans-frontier networks through the limitation of avenues of exchange and contact, for example with the introduction of new scripts and the promotion of communicational differentiation through changed language use. As discussed further below in regard to the routing of permissible avenues of communication, the infrastructural cementation of cognitive state control through accessible trajectories reflects an interplay of all three types of discourses. In fact, none of the three types of Borderland discourse takes place without influencing, and being influenced by, at least one of the other two types. Thus, for example borderland militarisation takes place against a backdrop of trans-state policy (e.g., keeping the other state informed of troop movements or abiding by agreements of troop levels within a defined zone) and a discourse of control (e.g., in the level of local involvement in requisitioning and participation in troop formations). From this angle, economic reality in borderlands represents a case in which, as I will now outline more closely, all three types of discourse are intricately involved.

Frontier Economics

Following from the logic of the notion of a state's sovereignty over its territory, state economic space is, in theory, bounded by international boundaries: terms such as the 'national economy', 'national currency', and 'national bank' are obviously linked to an imagination of a discretely defined and economically sovereign actor on an international

[24] An example of this strategy can be seen in Soviet attempts at influencing ethnic relations within Xinjiang through propaganda published and disseminated through trans-frontier networks in Central Asia. See Chapter 5 for such strategies of subversion and projections of control.

stage. From the perspective of trans-state policies, the boundary between two states is negotiated as representing the limits between internal economic affairs and foreign economic affairs, with the latter of interest to a neighbouring state only inasmuch as this affects international, state-condoned trade. Seen like this, boundaries serve primarily as barriers – a line of control both containing the domestic market and excluding foreign forms of exchange. Such barriers are institutionalised through trade tariffs, administrative obstacles to population flow, and restrictions on external investment and the flow of goods. However, from the same state- centred approach, boundaries can surely also be regarded as fulfilling a filter function, one which mediates discrimination "between a number of political and economic systems [and brings] in the key concept of differential revenue" (Ratti 1993:244-5). Differential revenue, deriving from macroeconomic features such as currency value, the labour market, and production regulations, accrues through differences between states' 'market spaces', 'production spaces', and 'support spaces'[25]. Economic value deriving from filtering processes (such as customs payments or 'official' exchange rate differentials) will be seen as belonging to the state and its representatives in borderlands but, as Anderson and O'Dowd (1999:597) warn, political aspects of borderlands generally take precedence over the economics of borderlands. Representations of boundaries as being barriers or filters invariably stem from the centres' political needs and not from considerations of economic opportunity, especially when a boundary divides (from the state's point of view) two political systems and two economic systems that are potentially in conflict with one another. A major characteristic of borderlands, especially in such cases, is economic peripherality (Hansen 1981:23-4), often caused by states' efforts to curb cross-boundary trade and trans-frontier systems of production or, in other words, either keeping market, production, and support spaces national rather than trans-national, or indeed redefining them as such. This is a particularly salient point when we consider that boundaries very often artificially fragment market areas, with states seeking to re-orientate economic networks within their borderlands towards the centre and away from the Borderland. The effect state policies have in doing this will differ on both sides of the boundary, thereby creating degrees of trans-frontier difference, complementarity, or asymmetry and affecting economic in/equality, political in/compatibility, and borderland loyalties; thus, the political economy of borderlands is particularly revealing of unequal and differential relationships between states (Anderson&O'Dowd 1999:596-8).

Dynamics of Local Borderland Economics

If states tend to frame their boundaries in terms of 'filters' or 'barriers', the tendency in borderlands often is to view the boundary as a 'corridor of opportunity', bridging two different state economies and located in the interstitial area between what is condoned by the

[25] According to Ratti (1993:245-54), writing on strategies to overcome state barriers, these three spaces can be characterised as follows: first, relations characterised by the number and intensity and evolution of markets relative to their environment ('market space'); second, relations determined by the localisation of production and its organisation according to the spatial division of labour and of flexible production ('production space'); and, third, the strategic behaviour maintained directly or indirectly by producers with their environment ('support space').

state and that which it prohibits: in effect, "the disparities of the political economies (with their particular regulations on taxes and customs) provide the currency for possible economic ventures and shape the outlines of trading and smuggling scenarios [...]" (Wendl&Rösler 1999:18-9). While the economies and productive structures of borderlands will be influenced by macro-economic factors (generally tied to state policy and globalised economic and technological trends), it is the immediate presence of an adjacent state economy that influences borderlanders in their (economic) lives and livelihoods. Considering the dynamic nature of economic systems, dealing with changes in two states' economic policies and realities is part of everyday life for borderlanders. Donna Flynn (1997) has shown how economic differentials have been appropriated by borderlanders in the Bénin-Nigeria borderlands, and recent anthropological fieldwork conducted by Mathijs Pelkmans on the post-Soviet Georgia-Turkey borderlands of Ajaria elegantly shows how major shifts in state economic policies affect borderland economies and local perceptions of trans-frontier trade (2006:174-186). Nugent and Asiwaju (1996:7) relate how changes in the price of commodities such as petrol have led to the scarcity of these commodities in the state in which they are cheaper, and Andrea Chandler's (1998) astute discussion of the Soviet Union's 'institutions of isolation' that border control represented revolves around ideological issues developed in that state's legitimation connected to the omnipresence of contraband in its vast European borderlands. Such examples reveal the trans-state nature of the economic relations between states' borderlands and give lie to the notion of discrete economic units on the ground. Furthermore, they point once again towards the usefulness of considering adjacent borderlands as representing, from an economic point of view, one Borderland spanning the boundary.

Economically speaking, trans-frontier networks and discourses between borderlanders focus on their "unique locational ambiguity by building [Borderland] lives and livelihoods around the particular resource which borders offers" (Donnan&Wilson 2001:87), a resource consisting of trading, migration and migrant labour, consumption, and transporting. This resource, and the exploitation thereof, is the subject of a narrative of 'legality' versus 'illegality' entertained both between states as trans-state policies and between states and their borderlanders as discourses of control. It goes without saying that what states regard as being illegal does not necessarily need to match individually held beliefs, and interpretations of the grey areas in between state categories of legal and illegal forms of economic exchange and transactions vary widely depending on situational contingencies. State representatives are eager to underline the detrimental effect of illegal income-generation both in terms of loss of state income (through taxes or damage to internal production, for example) and the cost to the state in regard to costly surveillance operations (staffing of customs posts and internal checkpoints, for example, but also intelligence gathering). While this holds true for all forms of illegal economic activity anywhere on state territory, it "is most evident in the borderland, and this gives the entire border economy an air of stealth and subterfuge in the eyes of the state" (Baud&van Schendel 1997:231) – the borderland becomes a region of danger to 'national economic interests' because

borderlanders transgress the legal boundary for their own economic interests when they see fit, thereby subverting official rhetoric on loyalty to the state.

Subversive Borderland Economics

Donnan and Wilson list three major elements of the borderland's 'subversive economy': prostitution, the passage of undocumented migrant labour, and smuggling (2001:88)[26]. These activities do not conform to the laws set up by states in most cases and ignore, contest, and thereby subvert state power in the borderland (*ibid.*), challenging state-driven discourses of control and attempts at constructing the 'terms of engagement' with the adjacent state. All three activities are carried out by entrepreneurs criminalized by states; and these entrepreneurs are represented as threats to security and state power. However, such entrepreneurs rarely would seek the overthrow of state power or even want to damage the wider state economy: such business is conducted merely due to the existence of the boundary and the opportunities it offers. Hence, contraband is imported or exported not due to a desire to undermine the law but rather because of a demand at home or abroad[27]. At a more general level, it becomes obvious that a dynamic field evolves within the borderland: trans-state policies setting boundaries and contextualising 'legal' economic interaction between states is projected into borderlands in the form of state institutions ensuring this framework (and simultaneously propelling discourses of control) which are subsequently reinterpreted by borderlanders living at the *pièce de résistance*, who thereby reflect a form of reality back at the state and sometimes succeed in forcing the state to rethink or change its policies[28].

'Second' economies such as the three domains mentioned above are by no means separate from regular or legal economic life, often providing income and work in areas which generally experience a dearth of legal opportunities. Smuggling is a case of the discrepancy between states' and borderlanders' respective interpretation of permissible economic pursuits: it develops when states impose restrictions on trade that are not acceptable to (some) borderlanders and, therefore, cannot be enforced (Baud&van Schendel 1997:230). Sometimes such trade is just the continuation of traditional exchange networks which now happen to be trans-frontier in nature, and sometimes such trade springs up precisely because state policy makes certain goods lucrative to deal in due to price differentials; in either case, the legal boundary itself is the crucial normative element in defining 'smuggle', and this category of economic activity is rarely seen by borderlanders themselves as being criminalized to their own benefit. Therefore, smuggling (either actively through participation

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[26] The authors qualify their usage of the expression 'subversion' in this context but state that in these three domains state institutions are subverted "by compromising the ability of these institutions to control their self-defined domain" (Donnan&Wilson 2001:88). For an excellent collection of examples to these three domains see *ibid.*:91-105.

[27] Obviously, in regard to what might be termed 'ideological contraband', usually consisting of published or recorded media, 'demand' has to be seen as being centrally influenced (if not created) by a state's political desire to ideologically influence its neighbour through the use of propaganda and the like. The smuggling of ideological materials is important in the context of the Soviet-Chinese Borderland and will be closely analysed in Chapter 5.

[28] A famous example of this is the argument put forward by Owen Lattimore in his discussion of the frontier between agricultural China and nomadic steppe populations (1968:374); see also Chapter 3.

or passively by not reporting it to authorities) can often be seen as constituting a part of local borderlander identity[29], and it is because of this local perception that states can decide to influence the physical avenues of contact and exchange between borderlands by limiting trans-boundary trajectories and increasing internal connectivity.

Economic Discourses of Control

But how do borderlanders 'throw back' economic policies at the state? What can such 'rethinking' at the centre entail for the borderland and its economy? One strategy pursued, in particular in the area under consideration in this study, is the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the immediate vicinity of the boundary[30]. Such zones serve to ease price differentials in the borderland by regularising market spaces, and settlements included within these become 'gateway cities' – borderland cities "given the function of entrance-exit gates, of bridges for the flux of international merchandise, services, capital and human beings" (Ratti 1993:249) and serving to nationalise the surrounding support space. However, as I will show in Chapter 6 in regard to Chinese SEZs along the Central Asian boundaries, such zones and cities, while purporting to benefit borderlanders can also be used to bring the centre right up to the boundary by institutionalising (and hence legalising) former smuggling networks and ingenuously making these serve the state; locating such gateway cities and discovering their on-the-ground role in serving local economic interests will form a vital part of fieldwork conducted at state boundaries. A further strategy pursued by states in reaction to borderland economic exchange networks is the regularisation of (or the finding of a *modus vivendi* with) so-called trader-tourists: individuals crossing boundaries on short-term permits (usually 24 or 48 hour special permits) and conducting petty trade[31].

To conclude, it is vital to note that economic relationships do not always conveniently stop at state boundaries: those involved in pursuing trans-frontier economic exchange will continue to do so whenever possible, and the act of doing this influences borderland society and state attitudes. Furthermore, and crucially in the context of the role of state institutions attempting to curb 'illegal' practices, criminalized economic relationships within and between borderlands are by no means limited to borderlanders themselves but frequently include representatives of the state (who are rarely, if ever, themselves locals[32]) such as customs officials, borderguards, and immigration and military authorities. Indeed, the borderland

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[29] As a selection of examples, see Flynn (1997) on West Africa, Pelkmans (2006) on Georgia, Driessen (1999) on the Mediterranean, Barrett (1997) on the Caucasus in the 18th century, and van Spengen (2000) on Tibetan trans-frontier trade.

[30] Ratti (1993:248) notes that such special 'free zones' are a characteristic of "borders seen as barriers" (as opposed to open borders or borders fulfilling a filtering function). I will not go into his three-fold typology here due to its over-essentialising functionalism but nevertheless I make use of his three types of 'space' along boundaries due to this concept's applicability to economic policy in borderlands (see above).

[31] See Wendl and Rösler (1999) for a collection of essays in the second part of their book dealing with such political economies, with contributions by Hastings Donnan (on 'shopping the Irish border'), Henk Driessen (on smuggle and petty consumerist contraband in enclaves), and Paul Nugent (on state pragmaticism in dealing with smugglers in West Africa).

[32] In Chapter 5 I will return to this important element in relation to the role that borderguards' origins and ethnic identity plays in their posting at specific boundary ports in both the PRC and the Soviet Union.

provides sustenance, both legal and illegal, to these individuals consigned by the state to make boundaries less penetrable and negotiable in the political and economic interests of the state (Donnan&Wilson 2001:89). These relationships are crucial in understanding frontier economics and play a central role in anthropologically approaching trans-frontier realities in borderlands, especially as they are 'hidden' and often 'invisible' in accounts of the ways in which states 'exist' at their frontier.

Gatekeeping and Crossing

Negotiating boundaries, attempting to cross lines, and narratives of permission, transgression, and prohibition include not only official policies and unofficial strategies but, most centrally from an 'on-the-ground' perspective, revolve around dealing with those groups of individuals actually acting as wardens at the state's portals and arbitrating on passage on a case-by-case basis: the gatekeepers. In a first step, a classification of a 'gatekeeper class' will serve to uncover the agents holding the means to grant or refuse the crossing of state boundaries. I suggest that gatekeepers are to be found in, on the one hand, the official domain of state-endowed legitimate agency ('border control'), and on the other hand the domain of agents controlling the negotiation of the boundary in degrees of legitimacy ranging from the legal to the strictly illegal-but-nevertheless-crucial. Representatives of the former class include borderguards, customs officials, immigration authorities, and members of various security forces charged by the state with ensuring against infringements on the boundary and, frequently, that region of the state officially recognized as the administrative borderland[33]; furthermore, bureaucrats (in the borderland or, more frequently, in the state's centre) endowed with the power of granting the 'papers' necessary for negotiating a boundary crossing are included here.

Picture 2: Kyrgyzstani borderguard at work, Torugart boundary checkpoint

[33] I will return to the important difference of 'administrative' versus 'locally perceived' borderlands in Chapter 2. In effect, administrative borderlands represent an administrative sub-division of a state's territory with its own rules and regulations pertaining to, for example, the movement and stationing of troops and checkpoints.

The latter class of gatekeepers consists of private persons who, under varying circumstances, control the means of negotiating passage to, through, and beyond a state's borderland in ways not necessarily in accordance with officially condoned strategies. This group includes criminalized networks operating in a trans-frontier manner, individuals with personal access to or influence over members of the first class (such as members of the borderland elite, family members, and persons with large social or economic capital resources), and the euphemistic 'travel agents' and their transportation companies operating trans-frontier trader-tourist routes.

These categories should under no circumstances be understood as static classes: interlopers and brokers abound and the edges between officially accepted and officially condemned methods of gatekeeping at state boundaries are very fuzzy indeed. Thus, narratives of corruption in connection with state officials loom large in public discourses on boundary violation whilst corruption simultaneously figures prominently in making boundaries permeable for those who will not, or cannot, employ solely official channels of passage across the boundary[34]. However, whomever border crossers negotiate with in their passage they must, at some point in their trajectory, "enter into dialogue with the agents of the state and engage in practices ultimately determined by the state: either directly through compliance with and acceptance of state regulation, or indirectly, through avoidance, dissimulation and concealment" (Donnan&Wilson 2001:108). Such agents will figure prominently in discussions throughout this thesis on aspects pertaining to boundary access and research methodology.

Movement and Identification

The driving force behind boundary gatekeepers' status and their ability in enabling or preventing the crossing of boundaries between states is modern states' monopolisation of the 'means of movement', structurally akin to states' appropriation of the means of violence in the Weberian sense (Torpey 2000). The argument here is that states seek to exclusively control the authority to restrict movement across state boundaries (and sometimes internally, too, as in the case of both the Soviet Union and the PRC) although they often fail to do so effectively. According to Torpey (*ibid.*: 5-10), states do this by introducing techniques of identification, codifying the notion of 'national communities' and thereby unambiguously establishing state identities ('citizenships') through documentation such as passports, identity cards, and internal passes. The success of this enterprise hinges on the creation of elaborate bureaucracies fulfilling functions reminiscent of Foucault's dystopian Panopticon[35]. States thereby pursue such objectives as the extraction of military service, taxes, and labour; the facilitation of law enforcement; the restriction of access to areas deemed 'off-limits' by the state; the exclusion, surveillance, and containment of 'undesirable elements' (be they ethnic,

[34] See Bliss's analysis of corruption in regard to Russian bordertroops on the Tajikistan-Afghanistan boundary (2006:336-9) for an excellent example of such narratives of corruption.

[35] John Torpey qualifies his use of the Foucaultian metaphor but states that his "emphasis on the intimate connections between power and knowledge, and on the crucial importance of individual surveillance in modern administrative systems, has proven enormously suggestive" (2000:16).

national, economic, religious, or ideological in nature); and the supervision of the distribution, growth, and social composition of populations on state territory (*ibid.*:7). In his critique of Jürgen Habermas's notions of the penetration of societies by the modern bureaucratic state and the capitalist economy through the 'steering media' of money and power, Torpey astutely considers the institution of identification papers as constituting the bureaucratic equivalent of money – these documents are the currency of modern state administration (*ibid.*:10) and serve to 'embrace' those seen to be either permanent members of the state (citizens) or temporarily present within the state (legally accredited visitors and foreign residents with permits)[36]. It becomes evident that trans-state policies of accrediting international identity documentation serve to strictly divide groups of people into discretely defined bodies of citizens anchored in law and policy, and this division – this need to distinguish 'who belongs to what' – is particularly acute in the regulation of movement across state boundaries.

The Power of Gatekeepers

Beyond merely elaborating upon categories of belonging and transgressing, a state must *implement* its control over the means of movement, and this it does by focusing its attentions on gatekeepers: those agents placed at both the ports of entry/exit and at the desks charged with processing permission or rejection of applications to enter/exit. Through their resources of bureaucratic capital and their ability to trace a path through (and often around) the thicket of documentation, these gatekeeping individuals become powerful brokers in the wider context of boundaries and borderlands. In order to understand how this power pertains to social practices of crossing state boundaries, Donnan and Wilson (2001:155) find it useful to consider Eric Wolf's Marxian approach to four types of power at work in society so as to relate this to the negotiation of crossing. First, *personal power* is the capability of a person to act but does not indicate the type or direction of action. Second, *interpersonal power* is the ability of a person to affect another person based on transactions between people but does not indicate the arena of such action. Third, *tactical or organisational power* allows individuals or groups to structure others' actions within a setting but does not control the setting itself in which this takes place. This, in turn, is accomplished through, fourth, *structural power*, which influences the social field of action and thereby makes certain kinds of behaviour possible whilst restricting other forms of behaviour (Wolf 1990:587). The articulation of power in regard to gatekeepers at and around state boundaries is to be found in their ability to affect the implementation of boundary control. As this implementation is not solely to be found in the institutions of formal and official politics but, centrally to as contested a domain as boundary crossing, in the informal relations orbiting around negotiating passage, gatekeepers wield all four types of power – although states do vigorously strive to limit 'unlicensed' gatekeepers' structural power through the imagery of illegality and organised crime.

[36] Obviously, policies of registering foreigners (in the sense of 'laying hold of' aliens) and ramifications for migrational contexts are topics that go far beyond the scope of this study. I shall be using these notions here solely in the way in which documentation pertains to the construction of state identities as mediated by gatekeepers.

The relationship between gatekeepers and the states whose gates they 'keep' is one of great interdependence. Officially sanctioned gatekeepers such as borderguards, customs officials, and immigration officers at all levels embody the state's institutional control over boundary and borderland alike. In other words, the state imbues members of border control with the power to arbitrate over case-by-case trajectories crossing the boundary. Simultaneously, the state guarantees the framework for these gatekeepers' social and political environment and lifeworlds, thereby theoretically keeping this power in check – without the backing of the state they lose their legitimacy and status as licensed intermediaries at the interstices of states able to impose sanctions on transgressors.

Picture 3: Chinese Slogans at a Central Asian boundary port
Be politically qualified – Be truly militarily proficient – Have moral integrity[37]

A state's influence over its official gatekeepers will generally be enhanced through a careful balance of a local and non-local mixture of individuals employed at any one crossing or checkpoint, and an analysis of such processes will be fundamental to comprehending the interplay between gatekeepers and states. Borderguards and frontier security forces are mobilised by the state to cement discourses of control, reconnoitre and keep under surveillance trans-frontier networks (and, when necessary, to attempt to terminate them), and implement trans-state policies; customs officials are charged with perpetuating the state's rhetoric of economic hegemony (and, where applicable, guarding against ideologically threatening material). Relations between the different classes of gatekeepers (within the group of the first type just as between these as a whole and the gatekeepers at the margins of the law) are centrally based upon reciprocity: effective border control (as opposed to mere rhetoric on border control efficacy) will depend on cooperation (or at least pragmatic tolerance) between all forms of gatekeepers empowered by the boundary. Likewise, the

[37] Translation of the slogan above the building (the last three characters (*feng zheng tai*) are missing).

relationship between gatekeepers and borderlanders is informed by interdependence, either supportive in nature (when both sides profit) or subversive (when one side profits from undermining the other). While few states go as far as the Soviet Union did in regard to nurturing an intimate relationship between members of border control and local borderlanders (culminating in what could be termed a mythological Cult of the Borderguard; see Chapter 5), states do generally pursue a depiction of official gatekeepers as beneficial to borderlanders, sometimes through the imagery of security or stability. Finding faultlines in such rhetoric, unlicensed gatekeepers find room to thrive and come to play a crucial role in borderland processes.

To conclude this sub-chapter on borderland processes and the individuals involved therein, I have discussed what may be called the multiplicity of degrees of partnership involved in life in the vicinity of state boundaries and how anthropology can focus on the different registers of discourses and networks in the wider Borderland. After having addressed the social, cultural, and economic lifeworlds of both borderlanders and the representatives of the states involved in negotiating borderland realities, I now turn to discourses enacted at and through the agency of the boundary itself. Much has been said in the preceding sections regarding trans-frontier networks, subversion, and local negotiation and positioning; but boundaries are contested at a more fundamental socio-political level: they are meant to delimit, connect, and/or separate the discrete entities that modern states understand themselves to be.

1.3 Bordering Discourses

Taking a step back from particularities informing borderland life between two states, Anderson (1996) calls to mind that political boundaries and the spaces around them are not merely lines representing the limits of political entities but rather crucial elements in achieving a more general understanding of political life in today's states and nations. Going slightly further, Donnan and Wilson (1998, 2001) convincingly argue that borderlands are ideal vantage points from which social scientists and, in particular, anthropologists can theorise changing definitions of peripheries and their relationships to their centres, and are territorially and temporally defined zones linked to the existence of the boundary. They are physical, literal structures of the state, which also structure a range of meanings and belongings associated with a variety of identities and help us to understand the imprecise fit between nations and states. The study of territorially inscribed borders is part of a wider ensemble of studies of boundary-crossings and frontiers of identity, and they are by no means clearly defined and uncontested locations of centralised power. Dramatic questions are raised here regarding processes of inclusion and exclusion, political loyalty and ethnic identity, citizenship and nationalism, all of which will to some degree reveal why boundaries are important to an anthropological study of borderlands.

In his refutation of notions of a developing 'borderless world', Anssi Paasi suggests that political boundaries "are social constructs and processes rather than stable entities [and] part of the historically contingent processes of territory building. [...] Maps of state boundaries are hence also maps of meanings – and vice versa" (2005:19). That is, with all political state boundaries having a unique history of contestation and acceptance, and all state boundaries serving the function of defining the territorial limits of states, the histories involved represent narratives of national identities on both sides of the boundary; the social and political meanings inherent in these boundaries occur through spatial socialisation and the territorialisation of meaning. Such practices and discourses are the vehicles by which people identify with bounded spaces such as states (or against which they rebel) – they serve to define the 'national' (i.e., that pertaining to the state) from the 'foreign' at the highest level of identity and they form a target of political loyalty. Yet, and this is the crux of boundary-related inquiries, the state ideal of cultural homogeneity (the so-called nation-state) and centralised political control is both confirmed (through heavy state institutional presence) and disrupted (through non-state points of reference) at the boundary itself and in the state's borderlands (Anderson&O'Dowd 1999:596).

The aim of this sub-chapter is to take a closer look at the versatile and ambiguous functions and meanings that political state boundaries have in political action. I will here discuss how bordering borderlanders' political loyalties and national identities takes place at boundaries and can be characterised as an instrument of state policy, of territorial control, the marking of identity, as well as discourses manifesting themselves in legislation, diplomacy, and academia (Anderson 1996). Such instruments and discourses are very much

evident in a state's borderlands and they represent parameters borderlanders must deal with in their lives at the state's margins. The ensuing rhetorics of difference, policies of state cleavage, and focusing of borderlanders' loyalties inwards towards the state can be accepted, subverted, subtly reinterpreted, or rebelled against but they cannot be simply ignored by borderlanders and their local elites – here, the state cannot be taken out of local discourses. The borderlands that are the subject of this thesis present us with an array of such bordering discourses, and I have chosen here to introduce a number of topics pertaining to my discussion in later chapters of the local negotiation that has taken place amongst Kyrgyz and Tajik borderlanders in regard to discourses of control emanating from their respective Socialist or post-Socialist states. Thus, here I discuss the interaction between states and trans-frontier nations, the institutionalisation of border control, the territorialisation of identities through administrative bordering, and processes structuring loyalties in a Borderland environment.

State and Nation

This thesis aims at discovering the development and present-day political status of the trans-frontier Kyrgyz and Tajiks in the borderlands between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Xinjiang in the PRC. Theirs represents a not uncommon case of two peoples absorbed at different times into the expanding orbit of the frontiers of two rival empires. With the emergence of modern states from the ashes of these empires, also at different times in the 20th century, centralised Socialist state systems were introduced that for most of their shared existence were political antagonists. The collapse of the Soviet Union and (some would say unwilling) birth of the independent states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the early 1990s has brought statehood to ethnic groups identified, categorised, nationalised, and, essentially, bordered by political boundaries and concomitant bordering discourses cutting through wider notions of ethnic belonging. In order to understand how spatial socialisation and the territorialisation of meaning influence the present-day fit between nation and state at this frontier and to discover *whose* boundaries today's political boundaries between these states actually are and whether a renegotiation of these is taking place, a number of categories and processes must be clearly outlined that will clarify the afore-mentioned parameters underlying borderland discourses.

Terminologies

Shaky terminology, confusion over the focus of loyalties towards political and politicised entities, and ideologically induced debates over legitimacy and acceptance of official categories and the policies behind them have all long hampered keen appraisals within the scientific community of the impact and status of discourses of *state* versus *nation* within (and after) in particular socialist regimes[38]. To come to terms with present-day ascriptions of loyalty and identity by members of this or that nationality or state, a clear

[38] See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the importance that such states accord to clearly defining nations within the state and the effect of this on the political legitimacy of socialist states in having resolved answers to converting multi-ethnic empires into modern states.

terminological distinction is a paramount precondition. To my knowledge, the most stringently argued terminological clarity is to be found in Walker Connor's works and in writings of scientists who have adopted and expanded on his injunction to purge the interutilisation of the terms 'nation' and 'state' so as to prevent confusion between two different concepts connoting two different sets of loyalties (Connor 2002:24) and points of reference for processes of inclusion and exclusion. In terms of an ascending hierarchy of political organisation, from the local to the global and from the individual to the societal, I will here make a distinction between ethnic group, nation, and state. Classic distinctions between ethnic groups and nations are to be found in Max Weber's work and serve as a basic statement of the problem of self-differentiation versus outside observation (1978:389):

> The belief in group affinity, regardless of whether it has any objective foundation, can have important consequences, especially for the formation of a political community: We shall call 'ethnic groups' those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent [...]; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not objective blood relationship exists. Ethnic membership (*Gemeinsamkeit*) differs from the kinship group precisely by being a presumed identity [...].

In regard to 'the formation of a political community' with some form of understanding of continuities between a putative common past and projected common future or destiny, ethnic groups can thus be understood to represent 'proto-nations', i.e., "communities of belonging that have not yet developed into future-oriented politicised communities of interest" (Kaiser 1994:6). In other words, and from the perspective of outside observers, for clarity's sake it is convenient to describe an ethnic group as a group of people who have not coalesced into a self-aware, self-differentiating national group but who are most apt to form a nation; in Anthony Smith's words, "a named human population with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity" (1986:32). It follows that a nation is thus a self-differentiating ethnic group that has in fact achieved group self-awareness (Connor 2002:25) as ascribed by non-members and/or a state. Furthermore, 'national identity' is a form of group identity that includes both an 'instrumentalist' and a 'primordial' dimension; this refers to groups with an agenda of pursuing policy in their own common interest (the former dimension) and a shared perception of common and mutually compatible origins (the latter). To conclude the triad of political organisations presented here, 'state' refers to the major political subdivision of the globe into discrete and nominally equal territorial units and can contain a plethora of nations and ethnic groups as defined above[39]. States legitimate themselves through the construction of a focal point of political loyalty superseding that to one's nation. States in the Weberian sense claim the right to enforce their laws within their territory and to extract resources from the population to support its activities (Chandler 1998:18-19), activities supported by a level of organisation and threat of force that go beyond the limited field of action legally granted to nations.

[39] The use of the term *nation-state* is a malapropism and entirely unsuited to help uncover the discourses between nations and states because, as Connor (1978) elegantly shows, it should denote a political entity in which 'nation' is coterminous with the state's territory – a fact only very rarely the case. I do not employ this term for this reason.

Objective and Subjective Dimensions of Nationalisms

In order to come to terms with discourses over nationhood and narratives of belonging, scholars have found it appropriate to differentiate in their discussions of 'the nation' between an 'objective' dimension, a set of characteristics visibly shared by members of a nation, and a second, more 'subjective' sense of belonging, a national self-consciousness (Shafer 1972). The first dimension includes tangible elements such as language, homeland, religion, customs, diet, and modes of production that serve as markers enabling members to draw boundaries around ethnonational communities[40]. Nationalist literature and discourses frequently seize upon such objective criteria to portray the nation as essentially timeless and immutable (i.e., primordial) and not the product of active construction as an 'imagined community' (Kaiser 1994:7), and it is the content of precisely such narratives of belonging and legitimacy to represent nations that will be the focus of Chapter 6. Objective national characteristics can have two functions that serve to support an evolving national sense of self: first, the symbolic, which promotes objective elements to become part of a subjective 'myth-symbol complex' (Smith 1986) as represented in a nation's iconography and utilised in nation-building; thus, language can become a 'gift from God' (Kohn 1945, as quoted in Kaiser 1994:9), religion can enable a nation to regard itself as a 'chosen people', and land can become priceless, sacred soil (Kaiser 2002). Second, there is the instrumental function, pertaining to the utilisation of objective elements for the perceived benefit of the nation (or, as would seem to be more frequently the case, its elites) – as Kaiser (1994:9-10) points out, language often figures in this category and is employed to gain an edge in the competition within a state for scarce resources and prestige[41].

The second dimension of subjective feelings of belonging and national self-consciousness binds individuals together by focusing on two temporal aspects: a backward-looking sense of common origins and a forward looking sense of common destiny (Emerson 1960:95). Kaiser (1994:11) argues that nations, including those in the Soviet Union albeit more recently than their European counterparts, have over the course of the 20th century undergone processes of horizontal (inter-ethnic) and vertical (intra-ethnic, especially between elites and the masses) consolidation[42], thereby allowing members of nations to imagine themselves as belonging to an extended family in Benedict Anderson's sense. Such consolidation has been achieved through myths of common descent, a shared ancestry that creates a powerful narrative for national cohesion and that goes hand-in-hand with the writing of a national history – a historiography of inclusion; and with the grounding of this narrative in an ethno-territorial space – a territorialisation of identity and loyalty in a local

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[40] The term 'ethnonationalism' here refers to a subjective loyalty to one's nation. To complete the dyadic relationships between loyalties and political structure, ethnonationalism is to patriotism as nation is to state (Connor 2002:24).

[41] As Kaiser continues (*ibid.*), this is most evident in the nationalist push for the promotion of new national languages within the successor states of the Soviet Union on the eve of their independence.

[42] This national consolidation has, according to Smith (1986:130-4), been due to the 'triple revolutions' of economic integration, the centralisation of political power, and the standardisation of culture and education, all of which lowered the barriers to socio-economic, geographic, and cultural integration.

landscape, a national homeland. In the promotion of the identification with discrete national groupings, the socialist systems of the Soviet Union and the PRC both officially supported the elaboration of particularistic historiographies and essentialising territorialisation. The second temporal aspect of subjective national self-consciousness, the sense of a common destiny, is rooted in the sense of the past and constitutes a dynamic process, "a dialogue between past and future conducted in the present, and with the nationalization of the masses it is a dialogue engaged in not only by an elite few, but by the national membership generally" (Kaiser 1994:21). This sense of a national future is mobilised through appeals to an inviolable right to self-determination often argued by referring to a period in the past deemed to represent a 'golden age of independence'[43] – a narrative obviously informed by present-day discourses of oppression and foreign rule. In this context, states and their respective policies on dealing with the various nations within their boundaries will adopt certain strategies in their attempts to limit such an impetus towards the logical conclusion of independence for a minority nation from its state, and these strategies depend crucially on the way in which a state legitimates its control over various nations. We shall see that in the case of a trans-frontier nation such as the Kyrgyz in Central Asia, the Chinese Kyrgyz and former Soviet Kyrgyz have adopted different forms of accommodation and discourses in dealing with their respective states.

State Formation and Bordering

If nations are characterised by, among other things, a specific territory which their members regard as a homeland then it becomes immediately obvious that they can be in competition with states as masters over their own demesne. With the broadening of the concept of 'nation' to encompass territories within a state or even the state itself, the subjective dimension through which a community identifies with a certain area as its ancestral homeland has shifted from originally focusing around villages or very local regions in which one was born (Hobsbawm 1990:15). As argued throughout this chapter and thesis, including peripheries within a state means bounding perceptions of local belonging; in the context of including nations within a state's orbit this means bordering that which stretches beyond the state's territory – in effect developing discourses institutionalised through coercion and persuasion aimed at bordering formerly unbordered nations. Academic literature on state formation and political boundaries shows that at a crucial early phase of the state-building process border controls are introduced (Hirschman 1970:100-104). As I will discuss in Chapter 4 at some length because of the ramifications this process and institutionalisation has been having on our Central Asian borderlands, I suggest that the interplay of state strategies and locally held notions of the boundedness of the nation can be seen as an attempt by states at the bordering of national identities to focus on state loyalty rather than on state-transcending national units:

[43] For examples of such nationalistic discourse in the former Soviet Union (with an emphasis on the Caucasus and Central Asia) see Smith *et al.* (1998).

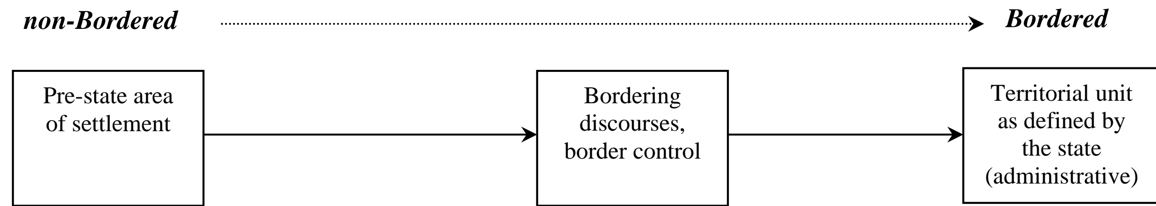


Figure 3: Process of national identity bordering

The precise strategies employed in this process of bordering shown in Figure 3 are vital components of understanding the evolution of political boundaries and the parameters that border control operates within at the boundary, and the uncovering of these processes forms a fundamental part of an anthropology dealing with the negotiation of local identities in the context of a state's territorial limits. The territorial units thus defined by the state are the administrative borderlands which will figure in following attempts to achieve congruency between homeland and administrative unit, i.e., narratives that focus on depicting , in our case and for example, Qyzyl Suu prefecture as the homeland of Chinese Kyrgyz or GBAO as the Pamiri homeland.

Territory and Border Control

States are territorial beasts that regard their bounded territories as the primary focus of the economic, political, and cultural lives of their pack, a tradition that traces its origin back to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 that marked the end of the Thirty Years' War in Europe. International law has cemented the notion of exclusive, bounded territories by institutionalising the state as a territorial organisation that equates the violation of its territorial integrity with aggression against the state itself (Moore 2003:334). Territoriality is essential to the state and is the essence to which many non-state nations aspire in their quest for self-determination and, ultimately the aim of all nationalisms[44], statehood. In this context, Sack defines territoriality as a spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources and people by controlling area that is enforced by controlling access into and out of specified areas (1986:21-34). Such control over state space is important to states because it provides enclosure, which helps to enable the exercise of functions vital to the state such as surveillance (Giddens 1984), and this takes place at the state's boundaries.

[44] That is, nationalism defined as "fundamentally an ideology and political action program designed to convert land into national territory" (Kaiser 2002:231) which is "linked in varying degrees to a past, present or hoped-for future national territory and nation-state [i.e., state (S.P.)] sovereignty" (Donnan&Wilson 2001:6).

Picture 4: Boundary fence between Tajikistan and the PRC on the Pamir Highway near Murghab (GBAO)

Functions of Border Control

Boundaries are the line at which the state's authority ends and are, thus, places where a state's hegemonic power is vulnerable. *Border control*, the controlling of individual physical access to and through borderlands and across boundaries, is the logical political conclusion to the shift from vaguely defined frontiers to territorial boundaries enclosing modern states and therefore represents state attempts to address such vulnerabilities[45]. Following Chandler (1998:19), border control can be defined as "the sum of a state's institutions to regulate the movement of people, communication, and goods across its international frontiers [here: external boundaries (S.P.)]". These institutions are one of the main objects of investigation in this thesis and I will closely discuss the agents (both local and non-local) and discourses surrounding such institutions elsewhere; here, the focus in this section on a general characterisation of bordering discourses is on parameters regulating actual physical movement at the limits of the state.

[45] However, as Standen (1999:22-24) shows, methods of traditional frontier control and methods of modern border control are in many ways normatively very similar.

Picture 5: Chinese boundary port (to Kazakhstan at Khorgos in the Ili Valley)

As discussed earlier in this chapter in regard to Martinez' typology of the dynamics of borderlands' interaction, the degree to which states control (or claim to control) their boundaries will range from open or light control (integrated borderlands) to closed or tight control (alienated borderlands). The functions that such control are meant to have are easily divided into vigilance, monitoring, and restriction: vigilance against outside threats, in other words, against processes deemed detrimental to the state's control of the *res publica* such as military aggression or rebellion at the periphery supported from outside forces; the monitoring of movement and the avenues of exchange of ideas and goods; and the restriction of access to state territory of unwanted persons, ideologies, and goods often couched in terms of 'being in the national interest'. These functions are accomplished through militarisation, surveillance bureaucracies, and state-endorsed gatekeepers such as borderguards and customs officials. But border control also goes beyond such readily observable processes and affects a whole range of behaviours and parameters of boundary processes.

Borderland Control: Non-linearity and Depth

While boundaries symbolically and institutionally embody a state's control over its territory, I have argued that we must also centrally include the locales and their inhabitants immediately and directly affected by the boundary in an inquiry into borderland discourses. Borderlands are very much seen as an integral part of state territory in all official rhetoric – to believe otherwise is seen by state representatives as calling into question a state's territoriality: its integrity and, thus, its very existence. And yet, as discussed, this is precisely what processes within borderlands, the Borderland, and between borderlands and centres seem to point to on the ground: while the state may be seen by many as the geographical

container of modern society[46], borderlands give lie to such trivialising assumptions by being non-linear in their very nature. Similarly, beyond its methods and means at the actual boundary, modern states' border control can, I suggest, be characterised as *deep borderland control*, which is just as non-linear. Such non-linearity becomes evident in the fuzzy zone-like nature of borderlands. Zones imply in-between areas of hybridity, transition, and depth hidden in the linear depictions of territories on maps, be they cartographic or cognitive, and Baud and van Schendel's typology of borderlands (heartland/intermediate/outer) attempts to characterise such depth. Borderlanders are the denizens of these zones and whether they accept, reject, or reinterpret bordering discourses will hinge on the contextual framework of spatial socialisation and the territorialisation of meaning within those zones. Deep borderland control is enacted, in my opinion, by thickening state discourses of control whilst thinning out non-state points of reference such as derive, for example, from trans-frontier networks or wider notions of trans-boundary identities.

Considering that borderlanders and their networks can and do find ways of evading state control in many instances, deep borderland control also carries the central function of at least routing potential exchange through controllable avenues and along observable trajectories in addition to its regular border control functions. The zones in which this takes place are themselves social and political constructs rather than stable entities, just like the boundaries they stretch along. The depth of such zones waxes and wanes depending on how states perceive their efficacy in accomplishing deep control and can be found far from the boundary itself, underlining the non-linearity of borderlands and border control: at the extreme, they even exist to a limited degree at all ports of entry well away from the physical boundary in the form of *pockets* to be found, for example, at airports and seaports. Not many states go as far as the Soviet Union did in institutionalising such pockets scattered throughout the state's territory: so-called 'regime zones' surrounded cities like Moscow or Leningrad thereby placing urban populations at the state's very centre under what Chandler (1998) terms 'a border regime' and having the effect of cognitively bringing political boundaries (albeit of the internal type; see Chapter 4) right up to non-borderlanders' doorsteps; similarly, the PRC has to this day institutionalised a number of pockets on its territory – so-called restricted or closed cities such as Shenzhen, the perimeter of which is controlled by the forces of border control. Aside from such pockets, states practice deep control along certain strips of territory extending back inwards from the boundary: *grooves* are generally infrastructural arteries along which border control can penetrate state territory to a sometimes considerable depth, in my experience extending to what can be termed *gateway cities* – nodes that themselves allow unrestricted access from the wider state territory but from which further progression in the direction of the boundary must take place along precisely these grooves, i.e., sanctioned and controlled trajectories[47].

[46] See Agnew (1987) for the 'territorial trap' this image presents social scientists with. Others such as Hobsbawm (1990) and Paasi (2005) discuss how historians and geographers, for example, produce and perpetuate such normativity.
[47] See Chapter 2 for an application of the notions of grooves, gateway cities, and trajectories in the Central Asian borderlands.

Infrastructure and Trajectories

Identifying the depth of such zones, the existence of pockets and grooves, and the importance of gateway cities presents a major element of actual fieldwork at state boundaries. Refocusing on actual borderland processes going beyond officially admitted processes taking place in a narrowly circumscribed container hinges upon characterising the physical parameters of access and finding the parameters of the interplay between deep borderland control and trans-frontier negotiation structuring cognitive maps of the frontier. The typologies introduced in this chapter are valuable theoretical contributions to approaching borderlands and their structural connection to state boundaries. With an eye to comparing borderlands through time and space and thereby tracing shifts in these categories, the ever-changing and fluid relationships between peripheries and centres over time can come to be regarded as an important element in understanding the parameters of control and subversion and the functioning of deep borderland control. However, in order to discover how livelihoods around boundaries are framed by the presence of the boundary itself it will not suffice to only find clues in such regions' histories and power relations; actual borderland political geography will reveal the framework of physical accessibility to, from, and through borderlands that fundamentally influences perceptions of peripherality, opportunity, and connectivity. By this I mean in particular the availability and accessibility of avenues of contact, exchange, and/or threat that tie borderlands together or split them apart, that is, actual trajectories and their relationship to the boundary itself. Crucially, these are factors unobservable from a distance due to, on the one hand, their fluidity and, on the other, official reluctance to loudly proclaim the existence of such control mechanisms, evident in the surprising realisation at how imprecisely many maps show boundary-crossing infrastructure[48].

In this context I suggest two terms that aid in comparatively identifying the cognitive and political territorial depth of borderlands as expressed in infrastructural and/or communication avenues: *collaterality* describes such avenues tying a borderland together internally in a way that can be seen as running parallel to the boundary itself with few (if any) avenues leading out of the borderland and into regular state territory; and *transversality* refers to an opposite form in which locales within a borderland are connected by avenues to the rest of the state rather than to one another within the borderland. An extreme example of both types is shown in Figure 4:

[48] Thus, many maps depict roads that seemingly end before the line on the map, thereby suggesting that no infrastructure actually exists connecting both 'dead-ends'. For a particularly striking example see maps of Finland as shown in Paasi (1999).

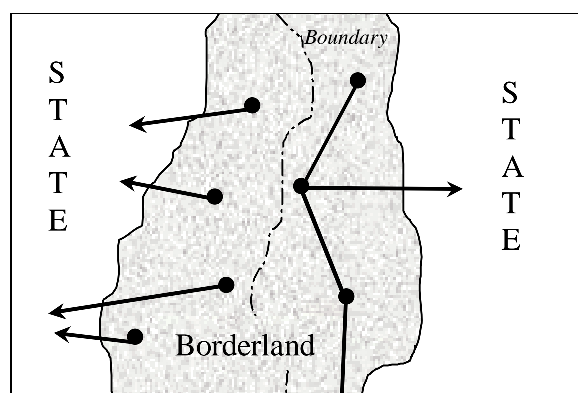


Figure 4: Access to settlements in borderlands: high transversality and no collaterality (left), high collaterality and the minimum in transversality (right)

This figure focuses on avenues of access regarding the borderland itself rather than the boundary and, thus, from a political point of view represents the existence of trajectories established independently of any boundary treaties agreed on in trans-state policies; rather, they reflect the realities of negotiation taking place within internal discourses of control between borderlanders and their state (see Figure 2 further above). Whether high transversality or high collaterality predominates would seem to depend on how exactly deep borderland control is enacted. Basically, collaterality creates networks within the borderland that establishes direct communication between a borderland gateway node and the centre from which then internal borderland control is enacted, thereby directly confronting the existence and communication power of trans-frontier networks as well as the possibility for a neighbouring state to subvert borderland control whilst leaving borderlanders' notions of internal cohesion relatively untouched or at least subject only to top-down, outside discourses. Transversality empowers a multitude of individual borderland nodes in their dealings with a state and has the effect of thinning out local communication between these nodes within the borderland whilst thickening a local feeling of political proximity to the state. In terms of the power of local borderland elites, collaterality supports centralised control and thus is likely to empower a select group within the borderland that mediates between internally connected locales and the state through the gateway node while transversality would seem to create multiple voices negotiating control. Of course, fluid discourses of control, changing trans-frontier networks, and the framework of trans-state policies all lead to shifts in deep borderland control; a history of such discourses and control will show changing negotiation constellations within the borderland – shifts in such control represent shifts in cognitive maps and hint at shifts in trans-frontier images and the parameters of borderlander interaction. In other words, a history of the boundary and deep borderland control grants a glimpse of changing notions of local Borderland ties (i.e., between trans-frontier nations sundered by a state boundary).

In the borderlands of the Chinese – Central Asian frontier we witness both types generally in their respective extreme forms: on the Chinese side, Qyzyl Suu AP (the Kyrgyz autonomous territorial unit) exhibits strong collaterality just as Tashkurgan AC (the Tajik autonomous territorial unit) does. In Soviet times, GBAO (bordering on Tashkurgan)

exhibited strong supra-regional transversality with direct avenues to its own state centre of Dushanbe (through the regional centre of Khorog), the neighbouring Kyrgyzstani centre of Osh, as well as direct trajectories to Moscow; whereas both Osh *oblast* and Naryn *oblast* were, once again, more collateral than transversal. In the post-Soviet situation, independent Kyrgyzstan has institutionalised collaterality whereas in GBAO with its supra-state actors and extreme peripherality deriving from the Tajikistani civil war transversality is a matter of economic survival.

To conclude, in these sections I have argued that actual control over the territorial limits of the state is often deep borderland control and thereby reflects the non-linear nature of state boundaries. In effect, what figures as a line in the official rhetoric of the boundaries between states and is so depicted in cartographic representations is in reality a zone with increasingly dense inscriptions of state control in the borderland landscape in the form of nodes such as checkpoints and surveillance posts. Remapping borderlands to expose such fluid control we discover that the imprecise fit between the territorial state and its borderlanders' local identities is very much a political concern inscribed into the physical borderland. This section has focused on the political framework structuring such inscriptions, but bordering discourses, as hinted at before, are also crucially a matter of constructing an inclusivist narrative and maintaining a rhetoric of difference accepted by borderlanders. A state's aims in this can range from merely co-opting rival sources of loyalty to forcefully imposing restrictions on rival reference points, but in no way are borderlanders silent receptacles or oblivious participants in this: it is precisely the existence of locally held notions of belonging that find their way into narratives aimed at cleaving formerly non-bordered (and thus trans-frontier) loyalties.

Cleaving Loyalties

I began this subchapter by delineating spatial socialisation and the territorialisation of meaning at the interface between states and asking whose boundaries political state boundaries actually are. I argued that states in their modern form seek to legitimate their political control over their citizens by constructing focal points of loyalty to the state that supersede possible local loyalties to individual nations. As I have discussed, borderlanders exhibit ambivalence due to their possible and immediate access to frames of reference regarding political loyalties that need not conform to state discourses of control. It is this ambivalence that can threaten states' claim to control their territories and be the legitimate and, crucially, sole focus of political fidelity. In the case of both the Soviet Union and the PRC the state found it crucial to its own representation both at home (in ensuring the successes of socialism) and abroad (in carrying the revolution outwards) to decisively circumscribe the parameters of its citizens' allegiances: state before nation, nation before region, region before settlement (or collective state enterprise), and settlement before family or traditional solidarity group (invariably termed 'feudal survivals' in both states). Of course, such a simple linear progression of successive degrees of permissible local loyalties will serve us little in discovering the negotiation of actual loyalty in the interstitial spaces in borderlands, and such

a depiction remains exclusively a top-down representation of model behaviour by citizens; the question of importance in regard to borderlands is 'to which degree are local borderlander loyalties to political entities influenced by the existence of a boundary, and in which way do bordering discourses structure trans-frontier frames of competing loyalties'?

The process of bordering local loyalties is in itself neither unique to borderlanders nor does it necessarily involve mutually exclusive categories or focus points: allegiance to a state need not compete with local loyalties to solidarity groups or local elites, and citizenship in a state by no means always precludes membership in other domains of political life[49]. It is, however, indisputably a fact that the territoriality of modern states seems to demand a clear division of loyalties in cases where local or non-state focus points of loyalties are bisected by a boundary: narratives of inclusion into a state and exclusion from another state arise. With the evolution of the spaces between states from vaguely defined frontiers to clearly demarcated jurisdictional state boundaries, traditional local solidarity groups finding themselves now spanning such a boundary need to negotiate the framework of loyalty. Again, states adopt varying degrees of flexibility and permissibility depending on, crucially, trans-state policies (i.e., those influencing the status of the borderland in terms of the continuum from alienation through integration) and the strength of trans-frontier networks (in this context, local perceptions of proximity and notions of a wider Borderland). The actual degree of this negotiation and whether loyalties truly do become bordered and inward-directed towards the state rather than outward-directed to include a wider Borderland must be a central concern in an inquiry into borderlander lifeworlds and will figure prominently in the analysis of topics encountered during fieldwork at and across state boundaries, and I now proceed to shed light on the parameters structuring the processes of borderlander loyalties.

Internal (National) and External (State) Bordering

In a political environment of state-building in which vague frontiers are to be converted into state boundaries, the bordering of groups transcending the boundary between states has been shown to be a central concern (see Figure 3 above). In effect, this process can be described as the consolidation of local solidarity groups with their own individual identities and local foci of loyalties into a larger group that can come to be regarded as a national group with its own specific territory (an administratively defined homeland) and national self-consciousness. I argue that this process (presented here in a much simplified manner) can be seen as the *internal bordering* of groups, i.e., the differentiation at a political level between different groups that are endowed with the ascription of a political community. Internal cohesion and notions of belonging and exclusion held by members of such groups, in other words the survival of such a community as a community, is linked to the identity and structure of the community, which engenders the rise of certain norms that in turn reinforce

[49] Permissible other such memberships can range from dual citizenships (not in socialist states, however) and membership in supra-state organisations such as a church (again, not in socialist states, and especially not in the contemporary PRC that regards the Vatican, for example, as a rival focus for Chinese citizens' well-being) to participation in labour unions, secret societies, and political parties. It is important to note that both the Soviet Union and the PRC have a history of severely limiting the accessibility of such other political domains.

this community (Collins 2006:31). These norms are crystallised in local institutions and are more strongly reproduced at the local level than at the non-local level; they are collective social facts that make cognitive and behavioural claims on individuals, thereby becoming nested, and the more nested they are the more powerful they become over time (Katzenstein 1996:15-19, Collins 2006:31-33).

Following from this, norms establish focal points within specific socio-cultural environments for the embedding of collective identities. Elites function at these nodes or focal points and, in the context here of bordering, they are the actors supporting or subverting non-local (here: state) influence over bordering discourses. In regard to the presence locally of a state boundary, such elites' classification as *nationalised* or *trans-frontier* borderland elites points to their role in this support or subversion, as discussed further above: the former type will operate at focal points that can more easily be integrated into discourses of state loyalty while the latter type derives at least part of its position due to its operating within partly non-state frames of reference. With these elites representing the mobilisers of political loyalties they are also at the centre of what I term the process of *external bordering* – those discourses developing within the Borderland that can lead ultimately to the decay of trans-frontier frames of reference and locally held notions of loyalty through the strengthening of narratives of trans-frontier Otherness that approach a bifurcation of a former trans-frontier group or nation that now converges with the state boundary in its internal boundaries of belonging.

From a state perspective, external bordering is 'successful' if local discourses come to exhibit a blurring of domestic difference (that is, local acceptance of a narrative of belonging within the state's territorial confines) and a highlighting of trans-frontier difference (the development of narratives of exclusion in regard to the trans-frontier Borderland). Refocusing on a boundary perspective, the crucial question that arises is: does the existence of a state boundary that involves processes of deep borderland control and strong bordering discourses propelled by the collusion between nationalised borderland elites and the respective states over time lead to the emergence of two separate nations (one each in the respective segment of the Borderland) where before there was a trans-frontier sense of national belonging and identity/loyalty? Bifurcation and cleavage need not be the result of bordering (Flynn's (1997) study of the Shabe borderlands, for example, being a case in point) *but it can be*, as this thesis seeks to portray in the Central Asian borderlands. Figure 5 shows the thrust of this inquiry into the processes of shifts from local loyalties to the development of a sense of loyalty to the territorial state in the case of the Central Asian borderlands:

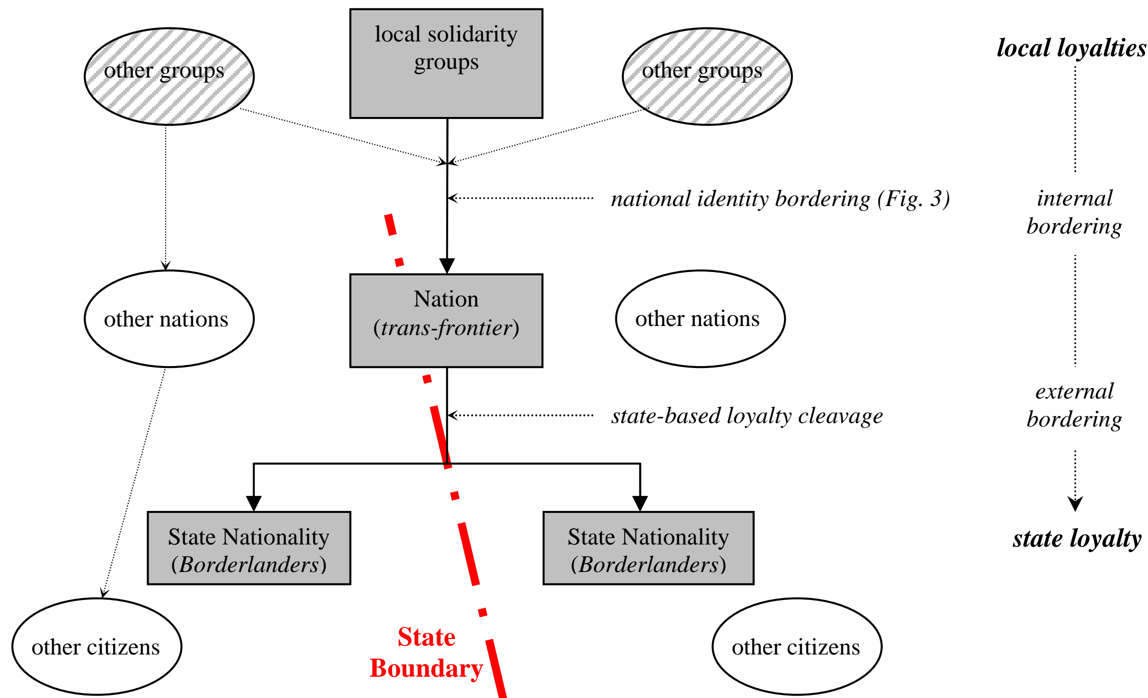


Figure 5: Process of state-based national loyalty cleavage across a state boundary

Here I suggest that the interplay of nationalised borderland elites, socialist states pursuing comprehensive discourses of control, and processes of national consolidation (internal bordering and the development of administrative national units) following the imposition of the boundary all interact in converting formerly localised loyalties bounding allegiances between solidarity groups such as clans, kinship groups, or lineages into, ultimately, formulations of loyalty to the supra-local entity of the state. In terms of Othering, while local loyalties within solidarity groups can be expressed as differentiating such groups from other groups, the development of a national identity through internal bordering leads to a juxtaposition of a group as part of a nation to other national groups beyond the Borderland; external bordering of such trans-frontier nations then confronts borderlanders with both other state citizens and borderlanders across the boundary who are citizens of that state.

I do not in any way imply that state loyalty supersedes local loyalties in importance for borderlanders or that these categories are mutually exclusive; however, states such as the Soviet Union and the PRC formulate strong demands and set a narrow framework of negotiation in regard to the power of local loyalties in an environment of 'belonging in the state'. Thus, in both states former (pre-Revolutionary) trans-frontier elites able to mobilise local loyalties in a boundary-transcending way were either euphemistically 'removed' and replaced by individuals owing their position to the *apparat* (the Soviet case) or co-opted and coerced in a carrot-and-stick way to participate with the forces of military and para-military

control in an unruly province (the Xinjiang case in the PRC era) – trans-frontier elites were being transformed into nationalised borderland elites. The promotion of certain histories over others, the standardisation of particular linguistic systems and the scripting of local tongues along with their varying institutionalisation, and the mobilisation of myths of cooperation symbolically connecting disparate groups in a 'historic mission of self-determination and fraternal national development' within the confines of the territorial state's political boundaries all figure as specific bordering discourses that can (and in this case did) result in Borderland cleavage[50].

In the context of conducting anthropological research in and on borderlands we must focus in particular on the way in which borderlanders themselves regard such questions of trans-frontier connectivity or distance because locally held notions of belonging to a wider Borderland need in no way be congruent with the respective states' representation of such connectivity or distance. Bifurcation of national identity and cleavage of local loyalties along boundaries are borderlander realities rather than merely elements of state propaganda or trans-state policies *only when* they are reflected in the actual functioning of regular trans-frontier networks and cognitively figure in representations of the trans-frontier Other. Let us not forget that states very much do at least attempt to set the parameters of the norms that are to become social facts in the borderlands; whether or not borderlanders succeed in carving out spaces in which external bordering can be contested and local dynamics of nationalising space and territorialising national identity can be incorporated will depend on a variety of factors ultimately revolving around the interplay between the three types of discourses taking place in the borderlands (see Figure 2 above). Over the course of the following chapters I will be outlining the nature and fluid frameworks of such discourses leading to the 'bordering of the borderlands' and will return to the contents of the categories of borderlander loyalties in connection with shifts in the meanings of the temporally and spatially defined zone surrounding the developing boundary between the Chinese and Central Asian segments of the Borderland. As a first step, however, I now turn my attention away from the conceptual level of borderland anthropology and refocus on methodological matters pertaining to actually generating data on the contents of these discourses and the actors involved in negotiating Borderland connectivity or disjunction. I have throughout the present chapter argued for the adoption of a boundary perspective in order to shed light on hidden discourses in the contested spaces that are states' borderlands – anthropological fieldwork with its methods of participant observation and personal presence in the field of analysis is ideally suited to identify the framework of borderlanders' everyday dealings with state boundaries and the meanings associated with this political construct.

[50] In his discussion of 'homeland making and territorialisation' with its particular focus on the post-Soviet world, Robert J. Kaiser enumerates a number of 'instruments' employed by nationalists in the social construction of national homelands (2002:232-238) that are in part similar to what I here term 'bordering discourses'. I find his notions of homeland to be pertinent to the processes in post-Soviet Central Asia and return to such considerations in my specific discussion of nationalisation processes and boundaries in the region in Chapters 4 and 6.

Chapter 2

The Central Asian Borderland Experience

To be a good borderguard means to establish a window of civility!

(President Jiang ZeMin on the occasion of the opening of a Central Asian – Chinese boundary crossing in 1990, slogan at Khorgos port)

"Your registration is insufficient for Badakhshan – come to the police station and we will discuss what is to be done with you". This, my first but by no means last conversation with a representative of one of the numerous Tajikistani police forces in Khorog, the administrative regional centre of GBAO, came to encapsulate a *leitmotif* in the uncertain field of officially required documentation and local enforcement of regulations issued by a distant centre. Sitting in the unheated Spartan office of the head of the Khorog branch of the Kumitai Amniyat-i-Milli (the Tajikistani Ministry of Security, generally referred to in Tajikistan as the KGB) I patiently waited in the November chill for my gatekeeper to appear while turning the excuses I had prepared for just such a situation over and over in my mind and leafing through my passport and collection of papers I had obtained in Dushanbe that were meant to grant me access to far-flung areas of GBAO. Doubts were certainly foremost in my mind: doubts over whether I would be deported for lack of credibility or willingness to pay exorbitant 'fines', whether I should have made sure my *propusk* (special permit) for GBAO had been endorsed by an additional ministry back in the capital, and whether I should risk inquiring about possibilities of actually accessing the boundary with China itself during the imminent interrogation. Previous dealings with post-Soviet KGB franchises had taught me the absolute importance of the right mixture of impeccable documentation, careful deference, and naïve inquisitiveness in order to assuage official doubts over the precise purpose of my interest in an area that by many in the region was still regarded as strictly off-limits to casual visitors. The abrupt opening of the door tore me from such thoughts and I was confronted by an affable Tajik about as old as myself, dressed in khaki and carrying both a cup of instant coffee and a pistol. After sitting down on the wooden stool opposite me and studying me for a minute or two he grinned and asked me whether I was as afraid of him as I must be of Fifty Cent (the American gangster rapper), seeing as I was Caucasian, British, and obviously a person who enjoyed rock music (due no doubt to the combination of long hair and my attire). A dreaded interrogation had transformed into a somewhat surreal conversation about music and London nightclubs; only gradually was the topic of my actual presence approached and

he asked for my documents. Immediately putting aside the sheaf of papers he focused on the GBAO *propusk* issued by the MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) and countersigned by the Dushanbe KGB: "those louts in Dushanbe misspelt 'Murghab *raion*' – it is invalid. I will correct it if you pay the 10 somani fine [about 3 US Dollars]."

After returning from the bank to pay the fine I received the corrected version and a glass of vodka – the interview was to continue. Deciding to push my luck I quickly brought the topic of conversation around to my intention to travel across the new boundary crossing at Qolma and on to Tashkurgan in Xinjiang. After telephoning Khorog Customs, who told him that they were not sure whether they could allow me to leave Tajikistan there, he called up a Russian friend who was part of the *voyennyi otriad* (military detachment) in Khorog in charge of the Qolma Pass. This man appeared at the office about one hour later and a long discussion ensued about the permissibility of my request. It was decided that if Chinese citizens were "unfortunately allowed to enter and exit at will" there could be no reason not to allow me to do the same. Making a decision, the KGB officer wrote a permission on the back of my GBAO *propusk* that read "crossing at Qolma possible without problems". I was warned by both men that the checkpoint just outside Khorog on the Pamir Highway to Murghab was "staffed by corrupt louts working for OVIR [the state document registration bureau, controlled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs MVD] who would cause problems" if they saw this additional permission not authorised by Dushanbe; hence, a second copy was made of the GBAO *propusk* for the purpose of showing at this one checkpoint which I was told to throw away once through the check. Furthermore, I was to bring a bottle of vodka as a gift to the KGB-staffed checkpoint just outside Murghab – these individuals there were to be trusted, but I should make no mention to the local regular police in Murghab of my plans to cross to China because they would not like the idea and "were working for the Chinese anyway", a reference to the wide-spread rumour that Chinese 'businessmen' could somehow evade visa regulations in eastern GBAO.

Гражданин Великобритании
к паспорту № 500316000
на имя [illegible]
убыл в ГБАО, г. Хорог, Дарвазский, Ванчский, Рушанский, Шугнанский, Рошткалинский, Мургабский, Ишкашимский районы (кроме озера Сарез)
с «08» 11 2005 года
по «27» 11 2005 года
Начальник ОВИР и ПР УООП МВД
Республики Таджикистан
М. П. [signature] — [illegible]

Picture 6: *Propusk* for GBAO listing permissible *raions* to be visited

I was released from the office with hearty handshakes and well-meant advice to stay away from the Kyrgyz of Murghab and the Chinese in general, my mind reeling from the implications of the circumstantial evidence I had gathered regarding border control, negotiability, and borderland processes. My passport had not once been checked, my Tajikistan visa was of no interest here, and the weeks I had spent in Dushanbe and farther afield trying to gain access to the immediate Sino-Tajikistani boundary had been made a mockery of within a couple of hours in a surprising KGB office in Khorog. I never was able to cross the boundary at Qolma – the Chinese borderguards adamantly would have none of such irregularity ("just because the Tajiks do not know how to control their boundary does not mean we are just as unprofessional"[51]); but the Khorog KGB had shown me that border control – that discourse of state power at the all-important limits of its sovereignty – did very much also have a personal component so easily overlooked or categorically written off as 'corruption' or 'incompetence'.

This, then, is the aim of this chapter: to show how I, as a researcher with preconceived notions of frontiers, boundaries, and borderlands, have been very much myself part of the object of analysis by embodying that which border control is meant to actually 'control', its *raison d'être* – a *grenzgaenger* violating the social and political construct at the state's periphery and questioning its role and function. Anssi Paasi (2005:22-3) reminds us that the researcher himself or herself has been a crucial element of state-centred ideological assumptions of spatial categories and that anthropologists in particular have been more interested in the ways in which political boundaries have been marked than in questioning *whose* boundaries they are. It follows that, from a methodological point of view, the researcher must constructively integrate his or her presence in the field with strategies aimed at uncovering ways in which borderlanders themselves move through this field. Research that reproduces state-level discourses of control, either historically or socially, cannot attempt to approach an uncovering of the elements of actual border rhetoric. Actually violating the legally accepted categories of borderland activities is the only way in which participant observation can be practised in such an encumbered environment; and the informed search for 'frontier experts' will take on especial importance, as I will discuss in this chapter. Finding individuals enacting and negotiating state boundaries will by necessity involve the researcher in 'doing border things' and moving in the ill-defined grey areas of trans-frontier networks, representations of the trans-frontier Other, and state control of the means of movement in politically sensitive areas.

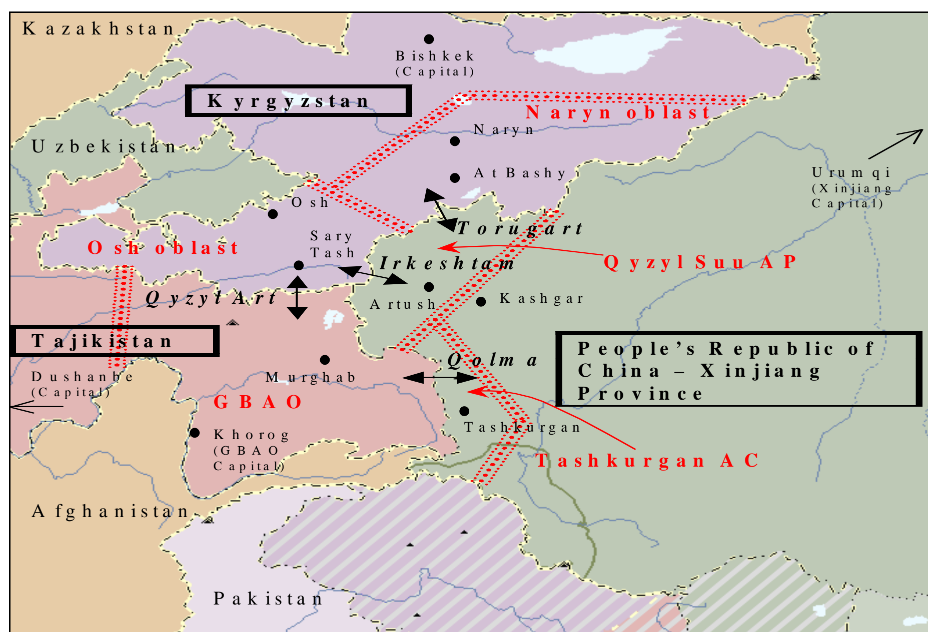
This chapter, first, introduces the region in which fieldwork was conducted and situates borderlanders within their locales, thereby granting a first glimpse of the contemporary settlements and borderland groups in the Xinjiang – Kyrgyzstan – Tajikistan borderlands. Here I will also locate the avenues of trans-frontier exchange that exist today

[51] Interview with a senior police official at the Ghez borderzone checkpoint towards the Qolma/Kara-Su boundary crossing, November 2005.

and connect the respective segments of the wider Borderland. Following this, the remainder of the chapter is dedicated to introducing and discussing the methodology employed in my approach to the field and I conclude by presenting a number of boundary-crossing vignettes that serve to 'thicken' research at and around the actual boundaries.

2.1 Central Asia's Borderlands and Borderlanders

The people and groups who are at the centre of this thesis' inquiry into boundary and borderland processes reside in three states and a total of five administrative borderlands today. They are ascribed with inclusion into three different 'national' groups, and interact on a regular basis with a number of other groups classified in varying ways in the different states. To avoid confusion arising from the respective states' differing practice of classification (and from local use of the conflicting ascriptive terms that will be the subject of analysis in Chapter 6) I here introduce the region's borderlands and borderlanders in descriptive terms that serve as the foundation of a characterisation of a region that exhibits an exceptional richness in designatory terminology. Map 2 serves to place borderlander localities within the context of the three states of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and the PRC's Xinjiang and to portray both the administrative-territorial borderland units (Naryn and Osh *oblast* in Kyrgyzstan, Gorno-Badakhshan AO in Tajikistan, and Qyzyl Suu AP and Tashkurgan AC in Xinjiang) as well as the four boundary crossings connecting these entities (Torugart and Irkeshtam, Qyzyl Art, and Qolma).



Map 2: Borderland localities and boundary crossings

A First Glimpse of the Region

Generally speaking, the entire region in which our borderlands are situated is characterised by high mountain ranges with peaks of up to 7500 metres punctured by a handful of accessible passes of between 3000 and 4000 metres, extreme continental climates, remote valleys, and, on the Chinese side, deserts and oases – in effect, the entire Chinese – Central Asian frontier can be described as geographically extremely remote and difficult to

traverse with the few settlements serving as focus points for a vast and sparsely populated, predominantly rural mountainous hinterland.

Picture 7: Khorog – the capital of Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan AO

Borderland Centres

The borderlands we are dealing with here contain what I term four regional centres, that is, locales that serve as the seats of the administrative borderlands' respective governments and therefore represent borderland centres:

Naryn, the capital of Kyrgyzstan's Naryn *oblast*;
Osh, the capital of Kyrgyzstan's Osh *oblast*;
Khorog, the capital of Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous *oblast* (GBAO);
Kashgar, the regional centre of the PRC's southern Xinjiang province[52].

Naryn, the centre of Kyrgyzstan's geographically largest *oblast* (but containing just over 5 percent of Kyrgyzstan's total population), is the most ethnically homogenous *oblast* centre in that state and home to nearly 50,000 Kyrgyzstani. The *oblast* is characterised by high-lying valleys and plateaux in the mountain ranges that belong to the Tian Shan massif and the Kyrgyz here are overwhelmingly more rural and less affluent than in other regions of Kyrgyzstan. Osh, the centre of Kyrgyzstan's most populous *oblast*, is an ethnically extremely diverse market centre in the Kyrgyzstani segment of the Ferghana Valley (that is shared between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan) that is home to over 300,000 Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Uighurs, and others; the city serves as the largest regional market and transportation

[52] Urumqi in northern Xinjiang is the capital of the province. Technically, Kashgar is the political centre of Tashkurgan AC due to classification of the Tajik region as a county (but not to Qyzyl Suu which is classified as a prefecture); see Chapter 4 for such internal splintering of administrative power in Xinjiang.

hub. The *oblast* outside of the immediate vicinity of Osh is characterised by the northern outskirts of the Pamir range, and the entire frontier with Tajikistan is part of the Pamir Kyrgyz Alay range with peaks of up to 5000 metres. In Tajikistan's GBAO (with a total population of over 200,000, that is, just 3 percent of the Tajikistani population on 45 percent of Tajikistan's total territory), Khorog is a mountain-valley town of 30,000 right on the Afghanistan boundary penned in by vertical peaks; the town's population is predominantly Pamiri and, in 2005, unemployment officially stood at 95 percent. Khorog is one of the anchoring nodes of the Pamir Highway that leads all the way to Osh in Kyrgyzstan and thus the market hub for trade between the Ferghana Valley, Xinjiang, and Afghanistan. Kashgar in southern Xinjiang is the administrative centre of that province's southern region and home to a predominantly Uighur population (with a total population of over 300,000). The Kashgar Sunday market is the largest bazaar in Inner Asia and attracts traders from all the Central Asian Republics as well as Pakistan and other parts of the PRC. As opposed to the regional centres in Central Asia, Kashgar's surroundings are characterised by deserts circled by ranges of the Tian Shan to the north, the Pamirs to the west, the Karakoram to the south, and the Himalayas to the east.

Closer to the actual boundaries between these states, a number of local centres figure prominently in this thesis:

> **At Bashy**, in Kyrgyzstan's Naryn *oblast* (gateway to Torugart);
>
> **Sary Tash**, in Kyrgyzstan's Osh *oblast* (gateway to Irkeshtam and Qyzyl Art);
>
> **Murghab**, capital of Murghab *raion* in Tajikistan's GBAO (gateway to Qyzyl Art and Qolma);
>
> **Artush**, capital of Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz AP in the PRC's Xinjiang province (gateway to Torugart and Irkeshtam);
>
> **Tashkurgan**, capital of Tashkurgan Tajik AC in the PRC's Xinjiang province (gateway to Qolma).

All these settlements are administrative centres for the immediate borderlands abutting the boundaries serving as both seats of government at the lowest administrative level of *raion* (in post-Soviet Central Asia) or county/prefecture (in Xinjiang) as well as gateways to boundary ports (see next section). In Kyrgyzstan these are At Bashy (Naryn *oblast*) and Sary Tash (Osh *oblast*); both towns have populations of around 6000 (in winter), a majority of which are engaged in herding in the surrounding high valleys, and both have weekly livestock markets that attract traders from the regional centres. From both towns peaks are visible that form the boundaries to Xinjiang (for the former) and Tajikistan's GBAO and Xinjiang (for the latter), and both have a long history of housing considerable contingents of non-local border control forces (see Chapters 3 and 5). In Tajikistan's GBAO, the local centre of primary interest in respect to these borderlands is the settlement of Murghab (the centre of Murghab *raion*, the largest but most sparsely populated of the eight districts of GBAO), also a town of around 6000 (in winter) predominantly Kyrgyz herders. Lying at over 3500 metres on the Pamir Plateau, Murghab's surroundings are extremely inhospitable and severe dust storms as well as arctic temperatures of as low as –50°C in winter contribute to this area's economic

marginality which has been further exacerbated in recent years by the decay of the Pamir Highway that connects Murghab with Khorog to the south and Kyrgyzstan's Sary Tash and Osh (via Karakul, another even smaller and predominantly Kyrgyz settlement just to the north).

Picture 8: Town centre of Murghab in GBAO

Across the boundary to Xinjiang marked by the peaks of the Tian Shan and Pamirs, the local centres of Artush (in Qyzyl Suu AP) and Tashkurgan (in Tashkurgan AC) are the administrative centres of, respectively, the PRC Kyrgyz and Tajik administrative-territorial autonomous units. Artush, a city of around 150,000 (mainly Uighurs and Kyrgyz), is at the junction of the roads leading to Irkeshtam and Torugart and, thus, all traffic between Kashgar and Kyrgyzstan passes through this rapidly growing city. The city contains the only livestock market in all of Qyzyl Suu and serves as a stage from which the Kashgar market is supplied with goods; aside from the far smaller (and mainly Hui and Uighur) settlement of Wuqia (also within the AP, known also by its Turkic name Ulugqat), all the small *ayil* of the AP, most of which are located in the many mountainous side valleys of the Qyzyl Suu river, are dependent on Artush's educational and economic infrastructure. Tashkurgan, with its population of around 30,000 (the vast majority of which is Tajik, followed by Uighurs), lies in a sweeping valley of the Sarykul Pamir range at nearly 4000 metres and has witnessed rapid economic development over the last ten years as well as an influx of Uighurs and Han Chinese who nowadays run the booming local bazaars. The town lies in the immediate vicinity of both the Pakistani and new Tajikistani boundary ports and is the largest Chinese settlement on the Karakoram Highway that connects Kashgar with Gilgit in Pakistan's Hunza Valley.

Picture 9: Tashkurgan town (Tashkurgan AC in Xinjiang)

Borderland Groups

A first superficial glimpse of the people inhabiting these borderlands that lie at the heart of the Eurasian continent reveals that, while physically difficult in terms of accessibility, the entire region has had a dynamic history of interaction, exchange, and communication. If we take the massive mountain ranges of the Tian Shan (and its sister systems such as the Kyrgyz Alatau and At Bashy ranges) and Pamirs (along with the Kyrgyz Alay and Sarykul ranges) as widely defining the general frontier separating the steppes and deserts of Central Asia (in today's Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) from the plains and deserts of the Tarim Basin in Xinjiang, then we can observe that the entire frontier region is home to groups who are spread across today's states' boundaries. Thus, in the region of this study we can locate seven groups that inform interaction taking place across our boundaries:

Kyrgyz, in Kyrgyzstan, GBAO, and Xinjiang [and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan];

Pamiri, in Tajikistan (within GBAO and the rest of the state) and Xinjiang (where they are termed 'Tajiks') [and Afghanistan];

Uighurs, in Xinjiang and Kyrgyzstan [and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan];

Dungani/Hui, in Xinjiang (and the rest of the PRC) and Kyrgyzstan [and Kazakhstan];

Tajiks, in Tajikistan (both GBAO and the rest of the state) [and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan];

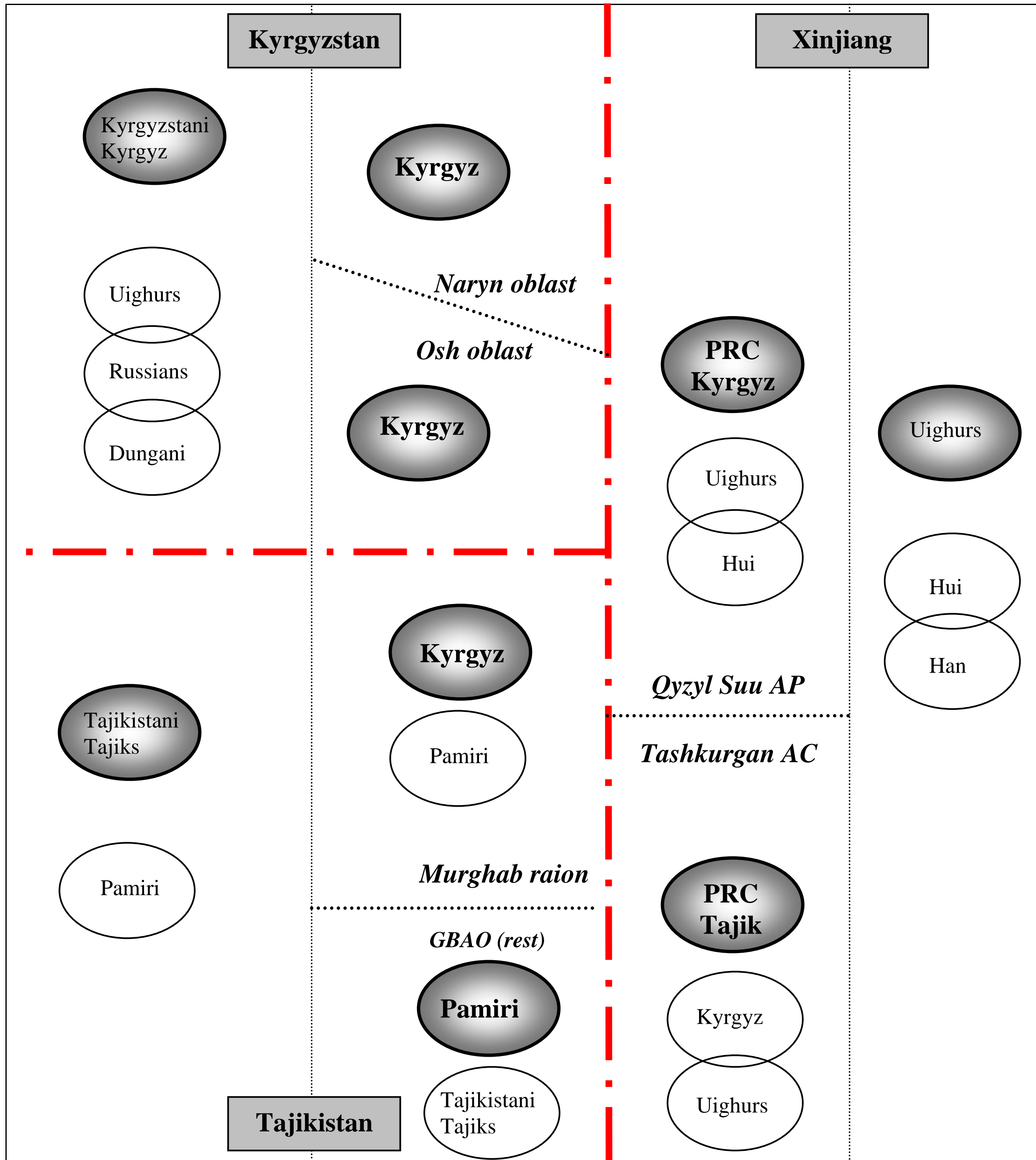
Han Chinese, in Xinjiang (and the rest of the PRC), Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan [and Kazakhstan];

Russians, in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan (both GBAO and the rest of the state), and Xinjiang [and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan].

While this overview is very simplified and does not take into account the differing ascriptions of ethnic belonging and local notions of inclusion and exclusion (to be discussed in later chapters) it does serve to provide a very basic schematic map of the groups in our borderlands. Importantly, the terminology in the list above adheres to official terminology employed by the states of the region for the sake of clarity and consistency – all of these groups are regarded by the respective political systems as 'nations' (*minzu* in the PRC and *natsionalnost* in post-Soviet Central Asia) with but one exception, namely that of the Pamiri. This group, classified not as a *natsiya* in the Soviet period but rather as a *narod*, a type of 'sub-nation', is termed 'Pamiri' (locally) or 'Mountain Tajik' (officially) in Central Asia whilst termed 'Tajik' in the PRC. Thus, I employ the term 'Tajik' *minzu* when referring to the 'Tajiks' of Xinjiang and the term 'Pamiri' for the titular group of GBAO in Tajikistan. A further anomaly are the conflicting designations 'Dungani' and 'Hui' used to label the same group of what is also known as 'Chinese Muslims': the former term is used in post-Soviet Central Asia while the latter is used throughout the PRC, and my usage follows this cleavage[53].

In order to illuminate the distribution of these groups and their location in the administrative-territorial borderlands along the Chinese – Central Asian boundaries, Map 3 shows the essentialised relationship between titular group (in shaded circles) and other groups in the respective state segments of the wider Borderland as well as within the state as a whole (where the respective titular group is also in shaded circles):

[53] This I feel to be justified by the observation that members of this group generally follow this cleavage as well in cases where they have been resident on the respective state's territory for several generations (see, for example, Allès 2005 and Gladney 1998a).



Map 3: Schematic map of trans-frontier and borderland groups

The groups at the heart of this thesis are Kyrgyz and Pamiri borderlanders and the ways in which state boundaries are and have been negotiated from their perspective; other groups such as Uighurs, Dungani/Hui, and Tajiks enter into my discussion of borderland dynamics and trans-frontier interaction only when they figure in processes structuring and influencing trans-frontier networks and local discourses of control, an influence that derives from

considerations pertaining to administrative (titular) power-sharing, migration, and economic structures.

Roughly 160,000 members of the Kyrgyz *minzu* claimed Chinese citizenship in the 2000 census[54], thus making up 0.8 percent of Xinjiang's total population of 18.4 million; most of these Kyrgyz reside in Qyzyl Suu AP (around 130,000) and the remainder in the Ili Valley (along the Kazakhstan – Xinjiang boundary farther north), Urumqi (the province capital), and Tashkurgan AC (around Lake Kara-kul, on the frontier to Qyzyl Suu). The 'Tajiks' of Tashkurgan are 40,000 strong (0.2 percent of Xinjiang's total), three-quarters of whom reside in the AC and the rest of which are to be found in Kashgar, Qyzyl Suu AP, and Urumqi. Across the boundary in Kyrgyzstan there live around five million Kyrgyzstani, two-thirds of whom profess membership in the Kyrgyz national group; Tajikistan is home to 7 million people, roughly two-thirds of which are classified as Tajiks (hence, also including Pamiri) and three percent of whom reside in GBAO (which is nearly half of Tajikistan's entire territory); roughly 90 percent of GBAO's population outside of Murghab *raion* is Pamiri, and roughly 90 percent of Murghab *raion*'s population is Kyrgyz (who do not reside at all outside of the *raion*).

It is generally assumed in the literature that the trans-boundary existence of Kyrgyz and Pamiri at these state boundaries points to an unproblematic relationship between these various trans-frontier groups: ethnic 'wholes' are implied that in effect hide the importance of state political boundaries in this relationship. To show that this is not at all unproblematic or uncontested is one of the aims of this thesis. I refrain here from attempting to ethnographically characterise the various groupings amongst these borderlanders because the dynamic nature of these nations' attributes and the concomitant fluid notions of inclusion and exclusion, national identities and political loyalties will be the on-going focus of the following chapters of this thesis – ascribing static characteristics here that would be meant to assign concrete elements to this or that group of Kyrgyz or Pamiri will not serve us in an inquiry into how belonging is negotiated today. In this context I call to mind Donnan and Wilson's (1998) typology of borderlanders discussed in Chapter 1[55]: while an outside glance at Map 3 (the kind of view that the Chinese government seems to hold) would suggest a classification of PRC 'Tajiks' as a Type 1 category of borderlanders, I will show that this does not approach local perceptions (which would approach a form of Type 2 category). Similarly, cleavage in local notions of belonging exists amongst trans-frontier Kyrgyz that suggests their classification not as Type 1 but a fuzzy form of Type 3. It is such erroneous categorisation that has clouded non-locals' understanding of 'what lies between' these states.

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[54] All statistics in this section are based on the state-published *Tabulation on Nationalities of 2000 Population Census of China* (Beijing: Nationalities Publishing House) [*sic.*].

[55] In essence, Type 1 borderlanders are those sharing ethnic ties across the boundary as well as internally; Type 2 borderlanders share ethnic ties solely across the boundary but not to either state's majority population; and Type 3 borderlanders share ethnic ties only to others within their state and not across the boundary.

Locating Avenues of Exchange

The largest part of this thesis is devoted to shedding light on the ways in which borderlanders' lifeworlds relate to the presence of state political boundaries in their immediate neighbourhoods and how we can understand the interaction between state, borderland, and trans-frontier frameworks of reference from a perspective of and at the actual boundary. It follows that, in order to sensibly approach the methods and means of such interaction we must first understand the availability of avenues of exchange, especially in light of the physically restrictive terrain. Thus, I here locate that which physically lies between the borderland locales introduced above and how such avenues figure as what I have termed 'trajectories'. In following chapters, then, these trajectories will be seen to serve not only as avenues of physical exchange along which boundary crossers encounter the gatekeeping agents of border control but also as discursively negotiated avenues of trans-boundary communication, trans-frontier state projection, and symbolic grooves of threat and subversion from whence the respective states pursue deep borderland control.

Boundary Ports and Gateways

As portrayed on Map 2 above, our borderlands contain four boundary ports, that is, points which serve as physical locales of territorial finality – thresholds at which the respective states are represented as offering official access/egress. While the states here in reality and on the ground will be shown to present us with differing (and conflicting) actual boundedness, these ports are crucial elements of states' symbolic interfaces. From north to south these are:

Torugart, mountain pass (3752m) between Naryn *oblast* and Qyzyl Suu AP;

Irkeshtam, mountain pass (2841m) between Osh *oblast* and Qyzyl Suu AP;

Qyzyl Art, mountain pass (4282m) between Osh *oblast* and Murghab *raion* (GBAO);

Qolma, mountain pass (4762m) between Murghab *raion* (GBAO) and Tashkurgan AC[56].

A more precise characterisation of these four ports follows below in the last section of this chapter; here, it suffices to state that these ports are subject to varying degrees of accessibility depending on the citizenship of the crosser, require different documentation, and involve different modes of permissible transportation. Furthermore, just one of these ports is a formerly internal Soviet port (Qyzyl Art) whilst the other three are new interfaces between former Soviet Central Asia and the PRC (opened between 1986 and 2004) – factors that will figure in the type of trans-boundary interaction to be found in the borderlands enveloping these ports.

The infrastructure that is the physical artery passing through these ports connects the respective borderlands with each other and, hence, certain settlements along such infrastructure have become gateway towns or cities. Furthermore, it is along such grooves

[56] Qolma is known as Kara-Su throughout Xinjiang (including in Tashkurgan); the former expression is Pamiri whilst the latter is Uighur. I employ Qolma and only refer to Kara-Su when the context demands this.

that borderland control is enacted, and we shall see that the precise nature of this boundary-crossing infrastructure informs what I term the collaterality or transversality of state-internal borderland access and the sheer availability of boundary access for borderlanders. The nature of this infrastructure, i.e., the way in which the respective states have inscribed the wider Borderland with observable connectivity representing the political negotiation between the borderlands and the state centres, has made the settlements of Kashgar, Naryn, Osh, and Khorog into gateways for trans-frontier trajectories: these are the places from which boundary crossing is negotiated and, therefore, they are fundamentally important locales which must be included in a study dealing with the parameters of trans-frontier interaction. The agents of border control charged with keeping the state's gates at the boundary work in collusion with other agents and both official as well as unofficial gatekeepers in these gateway locales[57].

Pocket Trajectories

Beyond the physical borderland-connecting trajectories that are the focus of this thesis there are to be found several trajectories that connect 'pockets' on the respective states' territories directly with each other. Such trajectories, in this region without exception taking place by air[58], are an important backdrop to avenues of exchange passing through the borderlands because they represent by far the easiest mode of exchange between these three states. Because of the cost involved in air travel between these pockets, this option is generally pursued only by what can be characterised as members of state and, sometimes, regional economic and/or political elites – borderlanders themselves in no instances were encountered who had made use of this connectivity. I mention these trans-state trajectories because such transport has only very recently become available (thereby underlining the importance that central state control still has over offering possible avenues of interaction). Thus, prior to 2001 there existed not a single such trajectory between Xinjiang and either Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan – travel by air had to take place via Beijing (several thousand kilometres from Urumqi). Even today, with not a single pocket trajectory available that would connect the individual segments of the borderlands with each other, all such travel is routed through the state capitals of Bishkek or Dushanbe and the provincial capital of Urumqi: the airport of Naryn has been closed for years due to lack of infrastructural maintenance; Khorog airport operates infrequent and often cancelled flights to Dushanbe only (with seats only available at short notice or through the black market); and Kashgar airport only connects to Urumqi, Beijing, and other provincial capitals. An intriguing anomaly in this picture of collateral control is the military airfield in GBAO's Murghab: technically closed since the withdrawal of the Russian/CIS bordertroops it still operates clandestine flights directly to

[57] A narrative characterisation along the entire length of the boundaries and borderlands follows in the introduction to Chapter 5.

[58] Due to geography there are no traversable waterways connecting these states; furthermore, the only rail connection between the Central Asian Republics and Xinjiang passes through Kazakhstan (at Dostyk/Druzhba) far to the north. There are plans for the construction of a rail link through Irkeshtam, an avenue that would in the future (outstanding political agreements allowing) connect Kashgar with Osh.

Dushanbe and Moscow and, therefore, represents a window of transversality otherwise non-existent in these borderlands[59].

Internal Borderland Movement

To conclude this introduction to the avenues of exchange between these borderlands, a final but fundamental parameter of the borderland environment must be illuminated because of its influence on borderlander lifeworlds at the edges of the territorial state. Understanding state-internal regulations regarding movement within the respective borderlands is a precondition to placing trans-frontier trajectories in their proper context. Hence, here I briefly characterise the framework of mobility within the borderlands themselves, all three segments of which exhibit three different frameworks of internal movement by individuals resident within the respective borderland. In effect, it is these frameworks which make administrative-territorial borderlands into territories *actually perceived as being borderlands by locals* due to the special nature of control pursued at all visible levels in locals' everyday lives.

GBAO presents a system in which internal travel documents (the GBAO *propusk*), just as in the Soviet era, theoretically severely limit locals' freedom of movement; however, in 2005 Badakhshani residents temporarily living outside of GBAO were made exempt from needing this document to gain access to their homes – all other Tajikistani citizens (as well as all other visitors) still need the *propusk* to enter the region, which is valid for just one entry at a time and costs 15 somani (about 3 US$) per visit for Tajikistani. The permit lists the *raions* within GBAO which the bearer may visit (see Picture 6 above) and is valid for a specific period of time, after which it must be re-applied for. Application must be made in all cases to the MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) in the Tajikistani capital and is granted pending consultation with the central office of the Tajikistani KGB in Dushanbe, but, following central approval by both authorities in Dushanbe, the actual document can be issued in either the state centre of Dushanbe, the regional GBAO centre of Khorog, or the local centre of Murghab by the respective MVD and KGB authorities. In theory, until 2005 only Badakhshani residents were able to receive their *propusk* in Khorog or Murghab; all non-locals must apply in person in Dushanbe or commission an agent to do so for them there. Possession of the internal permit is supposed to be enforced at a KGB and MVD checkpoint on the only infrastructural route into GBAO that does not also cross a state boundary, namely the M41 road leading to Kalaikhum[60]. Once within GBAO, every administrative district has a small checkpoint run by members of the *oblast* MVD located on every road crossing *raion* boundaries. In practice, the officials charged with enforcing the *propusk* requirement for movement into GBAO and between the *raions* of the region are exceedingly negligent in maintaining the stringency of such checks – since the departure of the Russian troops (who

[59] This transversality is not surprising in light of other forms of discourses of control enacted in GBAO, discourses institutionalised in the Soviet period. See Chapters 4 and 5.

[60] The unnamed checkpoint lies 12km before Kalaikhum, which is the first settlement within GBAO. Until the hand-over of the checkpoint from the Russian/CIS borderguards to their Tajikistani colleagues in early 2005, *propusk* checks were unavoidable here.

officiously carried out such checks at the *raion* boundaries) it is only at the checkpoints on the Pamir Highway that this document is reliably checked.

As opposed to this intricate system, access to locales within the Kyrgyzstani borderlands is no longer restricted for local borderlanders in any way today, although memories of such regulations from the Soviet period are still very present in locals' narratives. Internal movement is not systematically controlled by Kyrgyzstani institutions and, since the Russian/CIS forces left the *pogranichnaya zona* to the PRC, in effect even possible within the theoretically off-limits *zapretnaya zona* beyond At Bashy (towards Torugart) or Sary Tash (towards Irkeshtam). In terms of borderland movement for non-locals, prior to 2002 all non-Kyrgyzstani citizens were obliged to register at the OVIR office in the respective *oblast* centre within three days of having crossed the boundary; thus, movement within the borderlands of Kyrgyzstan was a matter of passing through regional centres and keeping the MVD (that controls OVIR) informed of all activities. However, even then this requirement was more of a formality and way of generating financial income for the Ministry than an effective and consistent form of control. Since 2002, the only form of control that the Kyrgyzstani authorities wield over movement within the borderlands is vis-à-vis foreign tour groups seeking to spend more than 24 hours in the *zapretnaya* zona, for example for trekking expeditions; apart from this special case, the Kyrgyzstani borderlands are accessible to all individuals – a fact that has had repercussions locally on notions of borderlander power, as I shall discuss in the final chapter of this thesis.

In Qyzyl Suu AP and Tashkurgan AC, to my mind the only segment here in which the means of movement are stringently enforced by a state, internal movement within the autonomous units for local residents requires no special permit except for the *hukou* (a residency permit that thereby functions also as a *laissez passer* document) – however, lack of transversal infrastructure effectively routes such movement through nodes within the borderland that lie on boundary-crossing infrastructure (that is, checkpoints lying on the Artush – Torugart, Artush – Irkeshtam, or Kashgar – Tashkurgan trajectories, respectively). Thus, borderlanders are forced into collaterality and visibility. Non-locals must be in possession of a *tongxingzheng* – the only document allowing deep, locale-to-locale movement within the borderland; neither passports nor non-local *hukou* suffice in this case and, thus, PRC citizenship by no means allows citizens to claim access to such a (Chinese) territory. In effect, gaining access to the borderlands of Qyzyl Suu and Tashkurgan differs considerably depending on whether one is a Chinese citizen or not: citizens of the PRC find it very difficult to access either borderland if they are not resident there whereas non-PRC citizens (such as foreign tourists but also citizens of neighbouring states) can gain access to Tashkurgan AC when merely in possession of a passport but find it all but impossible to gain access to Qyzyl Suu AP.

To comparatively summarise, official rhetoric in Tajikistan's GBAO revolves around documentation and surveillance whilst the Kyrgyzstani state seems to have retreated from such remnants of the Soviet style of territorial control; in Xinjiang's national minority

autonomous borderlands, official and effective control appears to envelop all access to and movement within these regions. This, then, provides us with a first cursory overview of the types of political environment experienced in this region, and now I proceed situate the parameters of doing fieldwork within such an environment.

2.2 Approaching the Borderland and Its Gatekeepers

After having briefly introduced the social and geographic environment of the three states' segments of the Sino-Central Asian frontier I now turn my attention to the actual site of my fieldwork: the administrative borderlands abutting the boundaries between the PRC, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Here, after reflecting on the general nature of multi-sited fieldwork in politically contested spaces and environments of surveillance and suspicion and how I position myself as an anthropologist forced to replace long-term residence with mobile 'repeat penetration', I adopt a structure that to me seems the most suitable way in which to reproduce (within the medium of this thesis) my methodology of travelling encounters, participation in boundary-crossing trajectories, and observation of borderland artefacts. Thus, in this sub-chapter I have chosen a narrative structure that approaches my actual movements into, through, and out of these states' borderlands; both failed attempts and shifts in my own status as a 'border-violating outsider' can thus be portrayed. Instead of structuring the text along thematic concepts it has appeared more intuitively coherent and clearer to present such concepts based on a geographic division by Borderland segment. Furthermore, this allows a more consistent analysis (that will follow at the end of this sub-chapter) of gatekeepers and 'frontier experts' and the way in which these borderlanders figure in my discussion of discourses of control and the negotiation of trans-frontier networks.

Finding the Field

The 'field' of borderlands is subject to a number of particularities that makes fieldwork exceptional from an anthropological point of view. Primarily, while much anthropological fieldwork in the modern world must take into account the fact that states and representatives of the political centre wield at least a degree of control over the anthropologist's access to his or her field site, conducting research in locales in the vicinity of state boundaries usually will depend on the researcher's prior acquisition of multiple categories of permission to even access the desired site or sites of research: visas for longer stays in several states must be obtained, internal travel documents can be required to access sensitive border areas, and special permission and registration is often needed to remain in the immediate neighbourhood of a state boundary for longer than just a cursory moment. Passports are in this context also a form of documentation that record a person's history of interaction with state-sanctioned movement that can have ramifications outside of the immediately obvious arena of actually 'passing ports of entry and exit' by indisputably revealing the frontier researcher's predilection for crossing and re-crossing boundaries. In states attempting to control contested borderlands and boundaries such an officially recorded history can make obtaining further visas and special documentation impossible and can lead to problematic encounters with security personnel at checkpoints and the actual boundary itself. The web of regulations surrounding a state's borderland is intricate and opaque frequently even to those enforcing such regulations, and successfully negotiating with gatekeepers includes walking the fine line between forthrightness and the selective providing or withholding of information, between legitimate reasons and a motivation to test the

possibility of violation. It is crucial to note here that while states generally provide information on how a boundary can be legally transcended (e.g., through the possession of an onward visa and an impeccable record of lawful behaviour on the state's territory), information on the types of internal documents needed to access the boundary *but not cross it* is rare: seldom do states pursuing a rhetoric of territorial integrity condone such suspicious behaviour from non-locals in their borderlands. It is in this context that the requirement of learning the 'language of bureaucracy' becomes obvious, a jargon that must be understood by the researcher (just as it must be by locals dealing with such questions on a regular basis). Trial and error in regard to borderland access becomes an integral part of the research itself, and this process and the discourses thus revealed crucially contain a vital part of the objective of frontier fieldwork: the uncovering of the actual framework underlying border control and boundary maintenance.

Fundamentally, fieldwork on state boundaries must include the realisation that the person of the researcher (the anthropologist as a boundary-crossing individual) is not, cannot be, and certainly should not be an impartial figure in borderland and boundary processes. Indeed, it is precisely also against such individuals that border controls are meant to be implemented – the very topics that an anthropology of frontiers takes an interest in are topics that touch upon the violation of state discourses of control over its periphery, and the anthropologist becomes party by association to such 'violation' by pursuing both a line of inquiry as well as a trajectory of personal presence that both question a state's ability to control its boundaries. Experiencing at a personal level (both through on-the-ground observation and as a subjective target) the workings of state institutions in borderlands that are designed to complement and support actual border control at the boundary (i.e., deep borderland control) is an indispensable element in approaching a narrative dealing with state efforts to 'secure its territory'; however, as I argue throughout this thesis, state institutions are but one of the mechanisms constituting such control discourses, and the interaction of borderlanders themselves as well as non-local citizens of the respective states with these discourses and within trans-frontier networks beyond the state's pale is the second reason for actual personal presence in the borderlands due to the generally hidden nature of such forms of interaction. This invisibility is enforced by the state in its desire for control over the parameters of trans-frontier interaction and local borderland processes, and uncovering such unsanctioned or officially unrecognised dynamics is difficult for researchers caught between upholding legal requirements and entering into domains regarded as fundamentally illicit such as smuggling and clandestine political resistance to state regulations.

Obviously, from a methodological point of view, it will not be enough to employ officially sanctioned channels of information pertaining to economic, social, and political reality and livelihoods in borderlands. Similarly, an approach that deals solely with lifeworlds in a single borderland location cannot be suited to uncovering boundary-transcending networks and discourses even if such an approach takes into account the wider political environment of such a locale. The methodology adopted must mediate between an automatic state bias so predominant in much existing literature and the classic anthropological focus on

self-contained 'out of the way' places; neither must a concept of 'the Borderland' be over-essentialised, as Anssi Paasi (2005:26) warns. From an academic perspective, there is a dearth in guidelines and empirical precedents for conducting fieldwork transcending boundaries and aimed at uncovering processes that connect the wider Borderland. Despite the existence of a small number of inspiring borderland studies it seems to me that researchers have been rather reticent about their own personal access and official status in contested places[61]. One common element of all such studies, however, is the realisation that research must by necessity be multi-sited and adopt a trans-state perspective. Similarly, a comparative approach that attempts to discover similarities and discrepancies between borderlands and states suggests itself, as I now proceed to discuss.

Methodological Guidelines

The methodology I have developed was based upon the aims that fieldwork was meant to accomplish. To summarise, the goal of my field research in Central Asia was to discover how, where, and by whom the boundaries can or cannot be crossed and negotiated and along which trajectories this takes place; to interview 'frontier experts' in the three states and their borderlands who could uncover the different levels of discourses pertaining to border control and borderland access; and, centrally, to find actors who would help me to understand how notions of state, nation, and political loyalties in regard to trans-frontier ethnic ('national' and/or 'titular' in local jargon) affiliation are negotiated, constructed, and, in light of the recent political upheavals in the region, rediscovered. The basic methodological approach adopted in my fieldwork for this thesis was to

> secure official sanction for a maximum possible stay in the three states' segments of the Chinese-Central Asian frontier by locating and negotiating with gatekeepers;
>
> locate those 'frontier experts' in the three states and their borderlands who, in the widest sense, were engaged in 'doing border things';
>
> conduct loosely structured interviews with borderlanders, state representatives in the borderlands and on the boundaries, and observe the interaction between security forces, locals, and boundary crossers;
>
> participate in boundary-transcending economic networks;
>
> observe how the respective states represent themselves both within their borderlands and across the boundaries;
>
> record the way in which notions of a wider Borderland are evident in the form of representations, images of the trans-frontier Other, symbolic boundary maintenance, and historical memory.

A three-state focus was adopted in order to be able to draw more general conclusions about borderlands and borderlanders in relation to their states because, as will become obvious in the following sections, all three states employ differing discourses of control over their respective segments and entertain different trans-state policies in regard to the 'shared'

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[61] Naturally, I assume that such access and questions of researchers' official status will differ widely depending on the borderlands in question. Thus, the U.S.-Mexico frontier will most likely involve a different degree of negotiation than does the post-Soviet frontier.

ethnic groups[62]. Furthermore, while the geographical expanse of these three states' segments seems large at first glance, it contains just three border crossings between the ex-Soviet Union and Xinjiang and only one between the two post-Soviet states; the decision to include GBAO and its Qolma crossing was based, first, upon the very recent new opening of this port and the fact that the Tajikistani borderland is itself home to a large trans-frontier Kyrgyz population, and second upon the realisation that the Irkeshtam crossing between Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang is intricately connected to its proximity to the Kyrgyzstani-Tajikistani boundary with this boundary's implications, as a former administrative inner-Soviet boundary, for processes evolving in a place that was formerly not a state borderland *per se*.

Most fundamentally, the goals I intended to accomplish with fieldwork at these state boundaries by their very nature excluded the on-the-ground gathering of quantitative data and the use of either questionnaires or recording devices. In the case of the former, none of the three states concerned, to my mind, provide unbiased information on economic or socio-cultural data concerning life in the borderlands and trans-frontier networks, or give insight into the framework of negotiation taking place between local borderlanders and the forces of border and borderland control: the Tajikistani government publishes little material regarding GBAO and processes at the Chinese and Kyrgyzstani boundaries, with the little material available generally stemming from supra-state actors (such as the Aga Khan Foundation and its local NGO affiliates) – all of which contains some material on village-level economic change but little on borderland processes; Kyrgyzstan's government makes little or no differentiation between precise avenues of trade with the PRC and the actors involved; and the PRC is notorious for publishing material supporting its own discourses designed to channel attention away from social and cultural issues and into the economic domain – much can be read about the Special Economic Zones in the borderland (see Chapter 6) and campaigns to 'enrich' peripheral parts of Xinjiang, just as there are many official statements available on the 'blooming' of trans-state relations and cooperation, but this tells us nothing about the renegotiation taking place in the borderlands to the newly independent Central Asian Republics. While such information does indeed point towards official attitudes and discourses of control, and will throughout this thesis be (sparingly) employed to point out such discrepancies as exist to actual processes taking place, it in no way gives answers to my research questions. In the case of the latter observation above on the use of material and equipment aimed at acquiring larger sets of data within the borderland for use in later evaluation, these mainstays of anthropological fieldwork are impossible to employ due to considerations of practicality (as will become clear in the following discussion of interview and research parameters in contested spaces): questionnaires and recording devices are easily construed as evidence of the researchers' subversive behaviour, provided one even succeeds in convincing informants to record their personal opinions which is by no means

[62] My initial objective of including an overview of other Chinese borderlands and other post-Soviet boundaries in order to achieve a larger comparative regional analysis failed due to considerations of clarity in the present thesis. I include field notes on such borderlands (in particular research trips conducted in spring 2003 on the Kazakhstan-Xinjiang boundary, summer 2004 on the Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan boundary, and winter 2004 in the Russian-Mongolia-Manchuria borderlands) only sporadically throughout this thesis.

likely considering the information one is trying to access – such artefacts can too readily be turned against either researcher or interviewee and lead to accusations of espionage and illegality, with all the unpleasant repercussions this entails.

A first step in designing an effective method that evaded such problems was a provisional answer to the question of 'where is the field?' As a basis for situating locally held notions of the extent of the borderlands, I focused on what I term the administrative borderlands containing border checkpoints to the respective other states. As my conceptual basis for questioning the view of a state boundary as a line dividing self-contained socio-political units, and in the interest of unearthing the zone-like nature of such boundaries, Baud and van Schendel's typology that distinguishes between heartland, intermediacy, and outer zone (see Chapter 1) suggested itself: do administrative units in any way reflect such a typology? In other words, can locales be identified that point to their relative importance to the boundary and boundary-controlling mechanisms and that thereby 'become the field'? Whilst focusing on an area that is defined as a 'frontier' administrative unit may seem contradictory in light of my aim to question precisely such top-down discourses of regional identity and state loyalty ascription, I strongly argue that in these borderlands territorial-administrative bordering has had a profound effect on locally held notions of nationality, regional identity, and trans-frontier networks. Thus, locales such as gateway towns and settlements springing up along infrastructural support routes exist *because of* the boundary and the fact that a region is deemed an administrative borderland. Towns such as Murghab in GBAO exist only because of the boundary, and most regional and local centres in this area, as will become evident through a brief glance at the history of these locales, took on functions as centres due to their frontier location; some towns such as Kashgar and Tashkurgan have a long history of serving both as garrisons and as economic support spaces along trans-regional avenues of exchange where locals have traditionally interacted with non-locals in both the economic and political domains. Researching boundary-related discourses between borderlands and their wider political environment will, therefore, have to focus on these interfaces because this is where states assert their control and this is where borderlanders either support or subvert 'their' state; geographically, this is where the field lies. In addition to this political geographic dimension, of course, there is the crucial fact that the field also resides in borderlanders outside of the actual borderland: individuals personally connected to the putative socio-cultural unit of the borderland whose lives are spent at least in part elsewhere. Such borderlanders as live and work in non-borderland regional and state centres as well as those who actually cross the boundary into the neighbouring state's borderland represent vital components of the field due to their trans-frontier lifeworlds that contain biographical mobility.

Second, following this location of the physical components of the field and its representatives outside the borderland, the methods employed in my fieldwork hinged upon actually being able to access the field in such a way as to be able to obtain data from observation and conversation. It would not suffice to just travel through the borderlands – return trips as dictated by official documentation and permissible duration of stay had to be

negotiated in order to establish some kind of embeddedness and diachronic depth. The practical difficulty that boundaries present the anthropologist with was succinctly stated by a senior official of the Kazakhstani borderguard detachment near Lake Alaköl in eastern Kazakhstan on an earlier research visit to the region who, after arresting me at a market within the *zapretnaya zona* (forbidden zone) to Xinjiang, perused my documentation after I protested that I was in possession of both Kazakhstani permission from the Foreign Ministry (in form of a longer term visa) and a valid entry visa for China. He shook his head at the documents presented and stated that "yes, you are permitted to come here and to cross to China but no, by no means are you allowed to be on the ground so close to the *granitsa* – come and cross, by all means, but don't stay, don't talk, don't shop, and certainly don't walk around here"[63]. The researcher cannot just 'pop up' at the centre-piece of his or her research interest, namely the boundary itself, and remain there. Rather, he or she will have to travel there through zones of increasing boundary proximity to then find themselves in the place of the actual object itself, the symbolic nexus of the field, only to be forced to move beyond it and relive the experience in reverse 'on the other side', akin to riding a wave and being helplessly propelled over its crest. Negotiating a longer duration of stay within the immediate neighbourhood of the boundary itself depends on a mix of finding the right gatekeepers who can enable this – in my experience only ever to be contacted and negotiated with impromptu and unofficially; and of careful violation of the uncertain and frequently unwritten regulations regarding duration of stay – not violation of the boundary in the legal sense but violation of the officially permitted trajectories of access and length of stay. In other words, successfully managing to extend one's personal presence in such areas depends crucially on the researcher's skill in speaking the 'language of bureaucracy', a language without a dictionary and one which will differ fundamentally over time and political space. Methodologically speaking, the only way in which to question possible discrepancies between what officially is presented as accessible or off-limits and what in reality is negotiable and feasible is to test the limits of violation; contact with vital institutions and processes surrounding the boundary can only thus be accessed, and only in this way can one approach, on the one hand, those actors charged with preventing or guarding against such behaviour and, on the other hand, those borderlanders negotiating the vagaries of the boundary.

Third, in order to concretely establish in which ways the states concerned attempt to control the means of movement to the all-important borderlands enveloping the boundary – i.e., the infrastructural and communicational routes and avenues existing both within the borderlands and between borderlands and the rest of the state – the possibilities of transversality and collaterality as defined in Chapter 1 must be mapped. This enables research to uncover the parameters underlying locally held notions of the cognitive and political depth of the borderlands. While it can be argued that such an approach may well not be suited to all borderlands due to its exceptional focus on the physical rather than social environment, the frontiers under analysis here are situated in difficult terrain: networks of

[63] April 2003 in Koktuma near Ucharal (Taldyqorghan *oblast*), some 20km from the boundary with Xinjiang. I was subsequently deported.

communication, movement, and exchange must rely on infrastructure, and attempts by the state to control its borderland will be expressed in its control over such trajectories just as attempts by borderlanders to influence, support, or subvert such control will focus on these trajectories.

Picture 10: High altitude pass on the Pamir Highway (Murghab *raion* internal boundary)

Finally, in order to comprehend the discrepancies between official rhetoric and actual borderlander livelihoods, and to give first clues to the parameters of local arenas and domains of negotiation and to open up conversation and interview opportunities, all fieldwork was accompanied by observing what borderlands actually look like. That is, particular attention must be paid to artefacts of state presence in spaces that are potentially contested either by borderlanders or by visitors from adjacent states as this can point to the existence and pervasiveness of bordering discourses. Markets, educational institutions, work opportunities in the industry, commerce, and service sectors, and the visibility of state or regional bureaucratic and political institutions: all are interfaces between locals and regional and/or state inscriptions of control or the lack thereof. Noting the presence at markets of goods from the other side of the boundary begs questions on such goods' trajectories and purveyors' ascriptions; public use of non-local languages can be geared towards policies of political projection of control (Chapter 5) rather than reflect actual local comprehension or language use; the availability of adjacent borderlands' currencies (especially when unofficial) suggests chains of supply and demand as will discrepancies in exchange rates; media networks available in the borderland can be trans-frontier in nature. Some such elements can be of a wholly symbolic character and often instantly visible such as the presence of statues representing central control, official street names (and even settlement names) betraying their non-local origin, the tendency by socialist regimes (and their post-socialist successors in Central Asia) to ideologically promote certain forms of cultural expression, or the

requirement in public life to employ state-wide time zones that do not reflect actual working hours. Thus, observing the way borderlanders either accept or reject such symbols becomes a crucial part in analysing local discourses: while statues of Lenin have disappeared in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in general they are still very much evident in both states' eastern borderlands; street names such as Sovietskaya have disappeared in favour of local heroes (usually stemming from the Soviet period themselves) but are still used by locals; Xinjiang's settlements are officially marked in *putonghua* on maps, tickets, and in publications but never thus referred to by locals[64]; museums promote 'fraternal cooperation' and 'state unity'; and both GBAO and Xinjiang unofficially employ a different time zone than the one all public life adheres to[65].

In the year between summer 2005 and autumn 2006 I crossed the boundaries between Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang several times, the boundary between Kyrgyzstan and GBAO just twice, and never successfully managed to proceed beyond the final checkpoints on the GBAO-Xinjiang boundary; the former of these last two boundaries became inaccessible to me for a further crossing due to my "suspicious border-crossing behaviour"[66] and inability to acquire a new passport whilst in the field[67] and the latter due to, from the Chinese side, "unacceptable security concerns involving my lack of Tajikistani documents"[68] and, on the Tajikistani side, "the incomprehensible resistance of those Chinese pig-heads"[69]. In addition to these actual boundary crossings I repeatedly entered and left both the borderlands and approached the immediate border zones whenever possible. Furthermore, I repeatedly returned to my 'base' in Bishkek to acquire new documents and follow up on informants that had only gradually become accessible, and I shall here briefly introduce this base.

Research Base

The decision on which of the three states to base myself in first and from which to negotiate access to the border crossings to the adjacent states' borderlands was quickly made. Kyrgyzstan is by far the most accessible of the three in terms of obtaining long-term

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[64] For example *putonghua* Wulumuqi for Urumqi, Yining for Gulja, or Kashi for Kashgar. Interestingly, there also exist examples where local names have been officially replaced by Uighur names, such as Varshidi (in the Sarykuli tongue) which is known today as Tashkurgan.

[65] *Xinjiang shijian* (Xinjiang time) is two hours behind the official time employed throughout the territory of the PRC; Badakhshan time is one hour ahead of official Tajikistani time. Locals predominantly use the unofficial time for private arrangements and personal reckoning when amongst themselves. Interestingly, in my experience local Han in Xinjiang and local Tajiks in GBAO never employ this 'subversive' reckoning. As a bizarre detail, the out-of-general-use train stations in both Bishkek and Dushanbe still publish train times in Moscow time according to Soviet practice.

[66] Quote taken from a prepared affidavit to be signed by myself upon deportation from the Bor-Döbö checkpoint; December 2005. It further read that I had "violated the Border Code of the Soviet Union", presumably the USSR Law on the State Border from 1982 – bizarrely referring to a state that no longer existed, a 'Border Code' that never entered Soviet legislation, at a boundary that did not even exist during Soviet times.

[67] I must add that the former boundary would have been more negotiable to me if only I had not steadfastly refused to resolve the 'financial gridlock' presented by exorbitant and ethically irresponsible demands for bribes by, in particular, the Kyrgyzstani customs officials at Bor-Döbö. As it is, I never once paid a bribe in currency to cross a boundary despite the difficulties arising from this refusal.

[68] Statement by a Chinese Tajik borderguard at Kara-Su on the GBAO-Xinjiang boundary.

[69] Senior customs official at Qolma, November 2005.

permission to remain on its territory and grants the largest degree of personal freedom of movement into, out of, and throughout its territory[70]. Previous stays had introduced me to its capital Bishkek and the practically universal presence of Russian speakers there served as an ideal place for linguistic preparation. Due to the relative openness of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek also contained a number of institutions such as the International Organisation for Migration, the American University of Central Asia, and a host of local NGOs I felt to be helpful in order to approach various informants. Obviously I had not reckoned on the political turmoil taking place especially in the state capital throughout 2005 following the relatively surprising ousting of long-term President Akaev in the so-called Tulip Revolution of that spring – turmoil that led to the sporadic closing of border checkpoints to Xinjiang[71]. Nevertheless, the city turned out to be the right choice in terms of gaining important insight into a number of boundary-related topics, in particular regarding the recent revival of a degree of trans-frontier migration in form of family reunions, students from Xinjiang, and businesspeople. Locally held images of China and its population of Uighurs and Kyrgyz, notions of the strategic role Kyrgyzstan's frontier had played over the last century, and attitudes towards the presence of 'people from China' and 'refugees from Tajikistan' were accessible even in casual conversation – a fact that greatly facilitated a first sounding of topics and themes that would eventually point the way to my own discovery of the relevant issues surrounding the Kyrgyzstani-Xinjiang borderlands. Furthermore, the presence of several large bazaars frequented by traders and buyers from the entire region would enable first contact with economic trans-frontier networks and possibly subversive economic practices. From a technical point of view, Bishkek was the natural choice as it is the only state centre in the region that allows both road and air access to the other two states and therefore allowed me to pursue my strategy of penetrating the borderlands from both the boundaries and from the respective other state centres. And it remains the only city in all of Central Asia that contains state representatives of China (the embassy and various trade representatives), Xinjiang (provincial travel agencies and trade representatives), and Tajikistan, thereby offering numerous opportunities to obtain information on trans-state processes at the state-level and point the way to discrepancies that might be observed once within the borderlands and actually crossing the boundary.

Interviewing the Expert Informant

As has become evident over the last paragraphs, accessing contested spaces such as borderlands depends to a large extent on trial and error, the gathering of information from multiple sources that can be official or unofficial, speaking the language of bureaucracy, and walking a thin line between compliance with regulations and the calculated violation thereof.

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[70] In Kyrgyzstan I was able to obtain a one-year multiple entry business visa. Both other states only offered the option of one-to-three month tourist visas. I never applied for 'research' visas because of the unwanted official attention this attracts, especially in the PRC, and the requirement of official endorsement of research questions it would have entailed; this endorsement would not have been forthcoming in Xinjiang, as I knew from my futile attempts over months preceding fieldwork.

[71] However, the boundaries most affected in that year and also in 2006 were those with Uzbekistan, a situation exacerbated by the Andijan massacre in Uzbekistan in May 2005 (in which hundreds of protesters were killed by Uzbekistani riot police).

Gaining access to informants in the field exhibits many of the same uncertainties and risks: in an environment of suspicion and greyness of degrees of legality or illegality surrounding a researcher's personal presence in the borderland, care must be taken both in identifying 'experts' and in actual conversation, and this becomes even more important if acquaintances such as local hosts and gatekeepers could by implication suffer the consequences of one's inquiries. Of course, by no means all interview situations will exhibit such an aura of danger; but certain informants can through their own professional or biographical background indeed threaten the researcher's continued presence in a locale such as a town, the borderland, or even the state, or possibly possess the ability to endanger an acquaintance's personal safety or one's own well-being. It quickly becomes obvious that continued research depends crucially on the ability to negotiate with local gatekeepers and to find informants in some way knowledgeable about borderland processes, trans-frontier networks, and boundary maintenance mechanisms – but where and who are these individuals?

Locating Experts

In my search for informants knowledgeable about boundary processes of importance to borderlanders, the negotiation of non-local trajectories, and wider discourses of control and trans-frontier networks, I focused on a variety of settings in which certain categories of informants could be assumed to be accessible. The interview parameters would depend on the setting, with certain locales being more fraught with ethical considerations than others and some locales requiring more unorthodox methods than would be expected from a typical interview situation. Before turning to a characterisation of such typical interview situations, I here present the types of experts located and their categorical relationship to the boundary, the borderland, or wider discourses touching upon questions of state power and trans-frontier negotiation. As discussed above, the nature of my presence in the borderlands as a boundary crossing individual brought me into automatic contact with a number of actors critical for informative interviewees: state representatives were accessible through the very fact that I was crossing a state boundary and were therefore easily located. All boundary crossers must negotiate with official representatives along the boundaries in question here. As becomes evident, there exist no possibilities to cross the state boundaries between these three states without dealing to some degree with border officials – guardians who can be bribed, and sometimes must be bribed, *but cannot be ignored*. A whole range of individuals that seem crucial for the research, however, are not located at the actual boundary but rather dispersed throughout the borderland and even the state: trans-frontier actors such as trader-tourists, migrants, and people visiting family or educational institutions had to be located at varying distances from the actual boundary, and borderlanders had to be found outside the borderland who had direct and personal experience of interaction with non-borderland members of the titular majority. A third type of individuals that was to be accessed was that of borderlanders who did not necessarily actually cross the boundary but who, for political, social, or economic reasons, had either a vested interest in matters regarding boundary maintenance or violation or who had acquired networks spanning the trans-frontier Borderland: members of the borderland elite and borderland 'technicians' (drivers, economic

brokers, workers, and caterers, for example), but also people acting in the domain of what official jargon terms 'organised crime'[72].

The first type of informants was to be found most visibly at the boundary itself and at checkpoints dividing the borderzone from the borderland in general. Customs officials, borderguards, members of state security organs and those affiliated with Ministries of Internal Affairs, and military security personnel are found in the greatest density here and are readily observed fulfilling their duties of boundary maintenance. While sporadic interviews were possible, depending on luck and unforeseeable events such as delays in processing boundary-crossers or myself becoming the object of intense interest by borderguards unaccustomed to foreigners, generally speaking such individuals had to be accessed in a more informal environment so as to be able to actually interact with them. I found it most expedient to locate local headquarters of such state representatives in local and regional centres – places where borderguards and security personnel retire to when off-duty. In all three borderlands under consideration it was a rather simple matter to find such headquarters (usually an official building or housing complex more often than not marked as such by emblems such as flags or plaques) and to discover the places where these individuals could be observed in a neutral setting such as cafes. Frequently one had already encountered such individuals either when crossing the boundary or, more likely, upon the prerequisite visit to official places in order to register one's papers. I found this type of localisation easiest in Kyrgyzstan and GBAO, possibly due to the fact that the local and regional centres of Sary Tash, At Bashy, Naryn, Murghab, and Khorog are all small towns where such information is easy to come by. In Xinjiang, too, official headquarters are readily visible but there exist factors aimed at regulating a certain social distance in public between such individuals and non-security personnel. Here it was most practical to gain access through the aid of an intermediary – usually individuals with personal contacts to individuals who performed services for border officials such as drivers and businesspeople and who could, thus, arrange a situation in which I could converse with such experts.

Second, locating trans-state actors and borderlanders outside 'their' local borderland had to be approached systematically and consistently due to such potential informants' personal mobility. Due to my initial penetration of the respective borderlands on a trajectory leading from the respective state centre through regional and local centres and on to the border crossing, I consistently started by searching for such individuals in institutions like universities and bazaars and travelling to locales outside the actual borderland that had become a second home to trans-frontier migrants either through official relocation or family reunion. In Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek was ideally suited due to its university that had attracted a number of Chinese Kyrgyz students from Xinjiang, its Osh Bazaar brimming with traders who bought directly from Chinese truck drivers, and its cafes run by Uighurs and Dungani who had family members in towns such as Karakol and Alexandrovka. Dushanbe in

[72] Known as 'the mafia' in post-Soviet Central Asia and as 'terrorist/separatist networks' (if containing non-Han members) or 'economic saboteurs' in the PRC.

Tajikistan is home to a large number of Badakhshani migrant workers, many of whom work in cafes, hotels, and factories for several years before returning home or going farther abroad; they belong to tightly-knit networks of mutual support that connect the migrant population with villages throughout GBAO. In Urumqi, Xinjiang Normal University has a small number of Tajik and Kyrgyz nationality students from Qyzyl Suu, Ili, and Tashkurgan, and the large Russian Market near the university hosts many trader-tourists from Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan who entertain economic trans-frontier networks. All such individuals presented me with experts knowledgeable about borderland, boundary, and/or trans-frontier processes at a personal level, and frequently contact with these informants opened up opportunities of gaining access to various nodes of wider networks both within the borderland or beyond the boundary[73].

Closer to the boundaries, within the borderlands, a similar focus on accessible interfaces was pursued. In all regional and local centres I concentrated on following up various nodes that had been opened in the state centres as well as, with the exception of Murghab[74], searching for informants at bazaars, transportation 'markets', and similar locales that offered the opportunity to unobtrusively converse with individuals knowledgeable about local frontier discourses and events. Growing proximity to spaces regarded by two of the states involved in particular (the PRC and Tajikistan) as being potentially rebellious and harbouring subversive discourses now started to involve serious considerations of informants' security and, in some cases, my own well-being. Two near-disastrous incidents had alerted me to the fragility of the situation that individuals dealing with trans-frontier negotiation found themselves in: in Murghab a Han Chinese truck driver near the bazaar I had approached to talk to about the nearby Qolma crossing narrowly escaped arrest by local KGB personnel only because a passer-by testified that it was I who had established contact; and in Tashkurgan a local Han friend who had acted as translator on two occasions in encounters with local road construction workers (who spoke no *putonghua*) was visited by local security forces (the PSB) and interrogated at length on his association with me the very night after I had entered an application at the PSB Border Office in Kashgar for permission (subsequently rejected) to access the boundary to GBAO – thankfully, an Uighur friend in Kashgar with good connections to one of the *xiangzhang* (local politician) of Tashkurgan AC was able to credibly explain that our relationship had been purely economic in nature with me paying him as a guide to show me around the local bazaar there. Obviously, a great deal of circumspection was required in such threatening locales, and the interview parameters were accordingly adjusted.

Third, and quite similar in mode to the interview environment just described, locating experts 'servicing' the frontier was a matter of applying for such services at taxi stands, travel agencies, bazaars, and the like. Such informants usually turned out to be knowledgeable about shifts in processes over time, witnessing events, changes in custom, and the dynamics

[73] For example, I was able to meet with trans-frontier students' friends who had stayed at home or with business partners of traders who bought products from acquaintances and associates across the boundary.
[74] Where the bazaar is under intense surveillance by both visible and clandestine security personnel.

of work opportunities due to their reliance on the wider frontier as a space that functions as their economic niche. Furthermore, such individuals, especially those themselves working in a mobile way such as drivers and petty traders, tend to have a wide local network of colleagues, thereby offering comparative qualitative insight into the borderland as a support space for the boundary. Members of the borderland elite with their precarious position between state representatives and local borderlanders are valuable experts on local political and/or cultural negotiation taking place but also pose a methodological and ethical problem for unofficial research: while a handful of highly informative interviews were possible, practically all such conversations took place without the informants' knowledge of my intent and, therefore, I have consequentially elected to exclude any potentially incriminating content from such interviews whilst at the same time gleaning important themes and topics from their statements pertaining to their role as political intermediaries between borderlander and state. A similar disclaimer applies to individuals operating within the domain of 'organised crime' (as opposed to individual trans-boundary traffickers, for example): from such 'interviews' I have sifted out insight on trans-frontier avenues and the types of actors involved while consistently hiding the sources' identities. Interestingly, both borderland elites and powerful actors in the illegal boundary-spanning networks of commodity trafficking were not as difficult to gain access to as may have been assumed prior to arrival in local and regional borderland centres due largely to the attention aroused by my longer-than-average-term presence in such locales. Usually it was I who was approached, either in a hotel (often frequented by such individuals themselves) or the up-market restaurants I specifically visited for that purpose.

Interview Parameters

With the experts located and access gained, I adapted the question catalogue I had prepared prior to arrival in the field. In order to facilitate the structuring of interviews and enable the development of analytical categories and the comparison of interviews in different locales, I divided the questions to be asked into four roughly defined domains:

> **Nature of the Borderland**: How is the borderland geographically constituted in the three states' respective segments (depth, transversality, and collaterality of the borderland, the existence or absence of infrastructural bottlenecks such as border posts and checkpoints)? How is administrative and physical access to the borderland governed? How can structural differences on each of the sides be interpreted? How permeable is the actual boundary and, thus, how easy or difficult is trans-boundary movement? Who are the gatekeepers controlling this crossing? How is transgression of the boundary seen, and is the boundary felt to be a corridor of opportunity or a division/barrier?
>
> **Economy in the Borderland**: How do borderlanders figure in trans-frontier economic ties (where these exist)? What is the nature of economic transactions in the borderland and how do economic differentials play a role (existence of a shadow economy and/or smuggling, the existence or absence of markets)?
>
> **Trans-Frontier Networks in the Borderland**: Which role do attitudes, connections, and images amongst those who constitute a 'trans-frontier ethnic group' spanning both sides of the boundary play? What types of majority/minority and titularity discourses exist in the borderland? Does the infrastructure support or obstruct these networks? How is membership in the group of borderlanders (i.e., a

'border identity') defined locally in the borderland and does this point towards the existence of a state-transcending socio-cultural Borderland (in the sense of Baud and van Schendel's use of the term)?

The State and the Nation as seen from the Borderland: What is the interplay between state and local interests and how do the regional and local elites influence this? How is the centre dealt with at the periphery? How are both elements represented in the borderland and who is instrumental in this discourse? Is there a multiplicity of degrees of partnership in the construction and maintenance of the boundary and how are discourses of state loyalty and national identity negotiated at the territorial frontier?

A constant and critical element of my interview questions was the incorporation of a view of possible shifts in these domains over the last fifteen years which would point to the possible effects that the recent opening and renewed accessibility of border crossings and the independence of titular states in post-Soviet Central Asia had been having on the possible rediscovery or renegotiation of wider notions of a trans-frontier Borderland across these previously heavily militarised and politically contested boundaries. Or, in other words, how had the collapse of the Soviet Union at the political centre (i.e., the disappearance of the former and relocation of the latter to nascent states) affected the cognitive fit between state boundaries and national boundaries on the Chinese frontier *at that frontier*?

It goes without saying that most interviews by no means included conversation on all four domains, and in particular interviews that had to be hedged considerably focused on just a handful of questions or even only probing on innocuous-seeming topics. Thus, with members of border control forces it seemed expedient to limit initial questions to casual inquiries on general boundary-crossing regulations; often this led to further conversation on wider ranging topics such as borderland control (its efficacy in terms of depth), especially at remote and languid checkpoints[75]:

'Why do you intend to be in Murghab for longer than three days? This time would be enough to visit a pasture and the hot springs! Then you must move on to Karakul and Qyzyl Art [the boundary to Kyrgyzstan]!'
'Is it not then possible to stay in Murghab and visit friends? I have a permit and an invitation from a Murghab resident...'
'It is possible if the commanding officer decides it is possible. Otherwise no. But he is not here – he went to Khorog this morning and will be back later this week depending on the road. You cannot stay that long!'
'But how long will it take for him to drive to Khorog? We could call and ask his permission? And I could wait here until we reach him...'
'It takes too long on the road these days. When the Russians were here we all used to fly. Today only *hokkims* are allowed to fly, or generals – expensive petrol. No flights, crap road, no money...'
(*genuinely surprised*) 'An airport out here? Sweet, that would speed up getting around...'

I regard this incident as taking a fairly normal direction and to represent the fact that 'interviews' in such situations (as opposed to with private persons) were generally propelled through what informants were willing to offer themselves. Similarly, 'interviews' with

[75] Beginning lines of a conversation with an MVD official who had accosted me at the checkpoint outside Murghab; November 2005.

members of 'organised crime' were approached with a great deal of circumspection when trying to elicit answers on questions within these four domains: in such cases I always focused on discovering strategies of 'bending the regulations' regarding boundary control, that is, how negotiable certain trans-frontier trajectories and restrictions could be and how much local depth and borderlander involvement existed.

One parameter I had decided in advance to impose on interview situations was the consistent application of a certain mode of self-representation in the vicinity of the boundary. Thus, in previous research I had realised that the researcher's personal presence in the field had to have an acceptable reason for gatekeepers, border officials, members of borderland elites, and security personnel. I never enjoyed official endorsement for the research conducted, partly due to the realisation that this would neither have been forthcoming (especially in the PRC) nor desirable because of the restriction it would have imposed on my ability to 'unofficially' access individuals I rather than official 'minders' would consider to be experts, and partly because I could not risk the possibility that a negative reaction from a state would prevent me from even entering it in the first place or, if I could, the surveillance that would be likely to ensue on both myself and people I came into contact with. Realising by trial and error that the discipline of 'anthropology' carried negative connotations with a wide range of people in all three states, especially amongst members of non-titular nationalities in the former Soviet Union and of smaller nationalities in Xinjiang[76], I found it imperative to emphasise my personal interest in historical and regional processes rather than on the political aspect of uncovering hidden discourses and the negotiation of local loyalties and trans-frontier identities. Furthermore, casual conversations with individuals who could threaten either my continued presence in a locale or acquaintances' personal safety were not informed of my interview objective and research motivation[77]; individuals I had longer term and repeat contact with, and all informants quoted by name and place throughout this thesis, were made aware of the nature of my interest. I underline that ethically conducted research has always necessitated careful consideration of possible acquaintances who could be assumed to suffer sanctions in relation to such activities bordering on what the states concerned could deem to be illegal: their names were never mentioned to representatives of border control and I do not give clues in this thesis as to their identities[78].

Finally, all interviews were conducted without exception by myself in either Russian (in Kyrgyzstan and GBAO) or in *putonghua* in Xinjiang. All informants were fluent in either

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[76] See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the role that anthropologists have historically played in Soviet Central Asia and the PRC in general in the legitimation of state control and the allocation of political rights and power to certain nationalities at 'different evolutionary stages'. In addition to this, the *putonghua* term for 'social/cultural anthropology' (*minzu xue*, literally 'nationalities studies') carries a strong element of 'minorities studies'. Crucially, also, *minzu xue* (when unclearly pronounced as, for example, by myself) is often confused with *minzhu xue*, the 'study of people's freedoms', obviously inviting a host of political associations best avoided in this context in Xinjiang.

[77] The importance of this was illustrated by two situations in Naryn *oblast* in which witnesses were brought in by the police to corroborate my statements in regard to what exactly I was doing in the Torugart borderzone.

[78] Likewise, neither individuals supporting my long-term visa applications in Kyrgyzstan are mentioned nor are the two people in Xinjiang who made so much possible there.

of these two languages with the sole exception of a handful of Pamiri in Tashkurgan who only spoke Tajik/Sarykuli and Kyrgyz or Uighur, the first of which I do not understand and the latter two my understanding of which is very rudimentary. In these situations I had the support of two local friends in Xinjiang who acted both as gatekeepers organising the interviews and as translators into a mix of *putonghua* and English. Initial doubts over the willingness of non-Han informants in Xinjiang to speak Chinese with me were short-lived: while many Uighurs dislike using the language with other Chinese citizens I have never encountered any such reservations towards an obvious outsider such as myself, and Kyrgyz, Tajiks, and Kazakhs frequently prefer the use of Chinese over that of Uighur (which does, however, bear many similarities to Turkic Kyrgyz and Kazakh). In post-Soviet Central Asia Russian is a first or second language for the vast majority of people and, in my experience in the two states concerned but especially in Kyrgyzstan, very much a language not laden with personal negative connotations but rather an everyday language of communication, especially in public settings and with non-family members[79].

Limitations of the Method Employed

As becomes obvious, several automatic limitations arise from a method of pursuing qualitative research in a setting so fraught with considerations of circumspection, indirectness, and vagueness. Multi-sited fieldwork, while ideal for the observation of trajectories and comparative elements, does indeed carry the risk of superficiality. I have attempted to make up for such potential limitations by, on the one hand, revisiting locales several times for the maximum amount of time allowed and thereby profiting from the effect this has on informants in showing my sincere interest in the field and, on the other hand, taking an active part in certain processes taking place in the field; thus, often my interaction with forces of border control was seen by acquaintances as proving that I was just as much at their mercy and played 'by the same rules' as they had to play by. Such equality can be seen as constituting to a certain degree a 'community of solidarity' in the face of discourses of control and, through my gradual inclusion therein, I was able to gain people's confidence that I was not 'just a reporter or tourist' (both of whom knowingly or unwittingly end up paying large bribes to secure their passage). My participation in trans-frontier economic trajectories (to be detailed in the next sub-chapter) gained co-participants' trust and also enabled me as a researcher to distance myself for a moment from observations of boundary processes primarily informed by my own person.

As far as interview settings are concerned, an element that proved to be both a boon (in terms of accessibility and informality) and a bane (in technical terms) was the fact that most interviews were held in public places, predominantly in cafes, outdoor tables at a bazaar, and in parks. As discussed above, it was easy to access and meet informants in such places, but the public nature of the setting always precluded the use of a recording device or the

[79] On the contrary, it is important to note that using anything but Russian in GBAO would have been difficult due to Pamiri dislike of using the Tajik language and the inability of most Murghab Kyrgyz encountered to speak anything other than Kyrgyz or Russian.

taking of more than the most cursory of notes – jotting down that which was said at such meetings had to take place in private, either at the restrooms or from memory after the event. Another locale that carried its own very special restrictions on technical support for conversations/interviews was that of a 'cell': the three times I found myself in a confinement situation during research all proved to be invaluable in terms of information gathered from personnel charged with overseeing my presence or 'interviewing' me and who were, therefore, readily accessible[80]. This has generally led to not being able to use direct quotes from informants and instead paraphrasing much of a conversation's content, and also made codification and analysis of terms used difficult. In this thesis I only use quotes and expressions when I am absolutely sure that they reflect precisely what was said by informants – otherwise I have paraphrased roughly the content and diction used. A further 'disadvantage' of, in particular, the café setting is the traditional habit, especially in Kyrgyzstan, of consuming copious amounts of vodka at such social meetings: as the host that I often was at such interviews, I was expected to entertain my counterpart(s), and as guest (usually the case in interview situations with border control officials in local and regional centres and members of 'organised crime') I was expected to honour my host's generosity. There is no need to deliberate on the fact that interviews under such conditions could become highly unpredictable both from the point of view of believability and consistency as well as from the fact that inebriation in such contexts can lead to startling frankness as well as sudden hostility.

Evaluating Information

Information gained from these diverse sources in interviews and conversation forms the main body of my fieldwork and has fundamentally influenced both the structure and the themes in this thesis. Originally searching for clues to a boundary-transcending Borderland identity with local borderlander and possibly trans-frontier elements of loyalties, I was indeed initially surprised to discover that such a Borderland does not exist on the ground – all the theoretical literature and most regional literature had led me to expect that opening boundaries and increasingly permeable frontiers were leading to greater regional and local interconnectivity in the economic and socio-cultural if not the political domains. This is not so, as I will discuss in Chapter 6. All interviews and on-the-ground observation presented me with sometimes startling evidence of the strength that state-induced and state-supported frames of reference had had and still have within the local borderlands. A direct effect of repeatedly encountering the importance individuals accorded to the Socialist period in Kyrgyzstan and GBAO has been the expanded discussion of processes taking place over the lifetime of the Soviet Union in interview situations: the strategies of titularity, territorialisation, and internal and external bordering all gained in significance for me for

[80] Once at Torugart (Kyrgyzstani side), where the suspicious nature of a fellow traveller from China aroused much attention along with my foolish forgetting to remove my camera from my coat pocket (May 2006); once in Murghab for the afore-mentioned conversation with a Chinese truck driver at the bazaar (November 2005); and once in Xinjiang on the road to the Irkeshtam crossing to Kyrgyzstan for trying to board a local bus (April 2006). As opposed to similar arrests on a previous research trip to Kazakhstan in 2003, none of these periods of confinement exceeded 24 hours and deportation was only from the immediate region rather than from the administrative borderland.

understanding today's borderlands in the independent Central Asian Republics *precisely because* of the fact that people believe this was a system that had worked and benefited them in general. State cleavage of trans-frontier identities and state-centred loyalties are a readily observed fact in these borderlands, and I discuss these themes in this thesis in order to find the reasons for this. Thus, larger parts of the thesis have come to be devoted to territorial-administrative delimitation and bordering, Stalinist ethnic classification, and state legitimacy in structuring nationality discourses than originally intended because it became evident that such themes were crucial pieces in understanding the reality of lives at today's frontier. And in Xinjiang, while the state may well be challenged by counter-narratives of independence (but for whom and from whom?), disenfranchisement (only of non-Han nationalities?), and resistance (only against Beijing or also against 'local national chauvinism'?), it is the state rather than a Borderland that is supported to a high degree by the inhabitants of the Kyrgyz and Tajik borderlands.

2.3 Crossing the Line

Experiencing borderlands and the discourses between borderlanders, representatives of their states, and across the wider Borderland is but part of the picture of what constitutes the frontier and in which way borderlander lifeworlds are negotiated at the utmost periphery of the state. The boundary – that symbolic line that serves to officially and legally mark the limits of what is deemed to be politically internal and an irrefutable part of the domestic domain – is the location at which states concatenate, where border control meets boundary crosser, and the place where inscriptions of two states' control force trans-frontier avenues of contact, exchange, and confrontation through a bottleneck trajectory and, hence, into visibility. After having presented the administrative borderlands and discussed avenues of actual access, I now proceed to focus on the three boundaries and four ports of entry and egress they contain. Following this short descriptive part I discuss my methodology of 'thickening' the actual boundary-crossing experience so as to show how in later chapters of this thesis I have amalgamated the registers of personal observation and border crossers' vignettes of boundary and trans-frontier processes.

In, Through, Across, and Out

The momentum of the metaphorical wave invoked earlier that carries those on a trans-frontier trajectory inexorably across the boundary and leaves the crosser beached at some point on the other side can be precisely correlated with three politically defined zones that, in their totality, make up what can be glossed as 'the boundary': the crest is the no-man's-land lying between the ultimate boundary checkpoints of either state, while the crosser is in the grip of irreversible propulsion from his or her state of origin's first borderzone checkpoint (the place where this state's administrative borderland ends and the borderzone itself begins), pulled towards the 'line', until his or her state of destination's last borderzone checkpoint (where that state's administrative borderland begins and the borderzone itself ends), pushed away from the 'line'.

Picture 11: No-man's-land in the Kyrgyzstani *zapretnaya zona* (between At Bashy and Torugart)

In our borderlands there are four state boundary crossings, all of which connect the borderlands in different ways and for different people: the formerly internal crossing between post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan at Qyzyl Art, and the three crossings that today puncture the former Soviet – Chinese boundary at (from north to south) Torugart and Irkeshtam (Kyrgyzstan's Naryn and Osh *oblasts*, respectively, to the PRC's Qyzyl Suu AP), and at Qolma (Tajikistan's Murghab *raion* in GBAO to the PRC's Tashkurgan AC), as summarised in Figure 6:

State Boundary Crossing	Borderland	Boundary checkpoint location	Borderzone checkpoint location	Official Classification
Qyzyl Art	Osh *oblast* – GBAO (Murghab *raion*)	Bor-Döbö Summit Qyzyl Art Pass	Sary Tash Karakul	Grade 1
Torugart	Naryn *oblast* – Qyzyl Suu AP	Torugart Summit Torugart Pass	Ak Beyit Artush	Grade 2
Irkeshtam	Osh *oblast* – Qyzyl Suu AP	Nura Simhana	Sary Tash Wuqia	Grade 1
Qolma	GBAO (Murghab *raion*) – Tashkurgan AC	Summit Qolma Pass Kara-Su	Murghab Ghez	Grade 2

Figure 6: State boundary infrastructural trajectories

For the sake of completeness, this figure includes both the location of the entry into the borderzone as well as the names of the actual boundary checkpoint locations. Each of the crossings is officially given a grading that defines who is permitted to cross at which port – a grade 1 crossing is a port deemed to be open to all possessing the necessary documentation as agreed on by both states, a grade 2 crossing is officially deemed to be negotiable only for citizens of either state and not for citizens of third states. The state boundary crossings give rise to different trans-frontier trajectories: the Qyzyl Art trajectory is synonymous with the Pamir Highway connecting the two gateway cities of Khorog in GBAO with Osh in Kyrgyzstan's Ferghana Valley passing through the borderland locales of (from south to north) Murghab, Karakul, and Sary Tash. Thus, Qyzyl Art physically connects the two state centres of Dushanbe and Bishkek. The Torugart trajectory connects the gateway cities of Artush in Xinjiang's Qyzyl Suu AP with Naryn in Kyrgyzstan's Naryn *oblast* passing through the borderland locale of At Bashy. Thus, Torugart physically connects the regional Chinese centre of Kashgar with the state centre of Bishkek. The Irkeshtam trajectory connects the gateway cities of Artush with Osh in Kyrgyzstan's south passing through the borderland locales of (from east to west) Wuqia and Sary Tash, thus physically connecting the regional Chinese centre of Kashgar with the state centre of Tashkent (in Uzbekistan) and offering an alternative route to the state centre of Bishkek. The Qolma trajectory connects the gateway cities of Kashgar with Khorog in Tajikistan's GBAO passing through the borderland locale of Murghab *but not through Tashkurgan*. Thus, Qolma physically connects the Pamir Highway with the so-called Karakoram Highway that runs from Kashgar to Islamabad in Pakistan, passing through Tashkurgan and continuing over the Khunjerab Pass into Pakistani Kashmir – the fact that the Qolma port is a grade 2 crossing (open only to Tajikistani and Chinese

citizens) in effect means that this connection between the Karakoram Highway and the Pamir Highway is closed to Pakistani traders, and we shall in Chapter 6 see how this is affecting local borderland connectivity.

Figure 7 below is intended to comparatively present the actual geography of the boundary, and shows the width of the borderzone (the *pogranichnaya zona* and the *zapretnaya pogranichnaya zona*), that is, the 'point of no return' for trans-frontier trajectories, as well as the distances from the boundary to the respective local and regional centres. This gives us an image of accessibility, and it becomes clear that these boundaries are sparsely populated and not practically traversable without motorised means of transport – due to the closed nature of the space between borderzone checkpoint locations and, hence, the lack of settlements, crossing the zones that range in depth from between nearly 100km to 180km is a logistical consideration for crossers.

State Boundary Crossing	Width No-Man's-Land	Width Borderzone	Distance to local centre	Distance to regional centre	Date of opening
Qolma	10km	96km (GBAO) ~60km (PRC)	90km (Murghab) 200km (Kashgar)	401km (Khorog) 200km (Kashgar)	1997 (2004)
Qyzyl Art	1km	42km (KG) 55km (GBAO)	45km (Sary Tash) 188km (Murghab)	229km (Osh) 500km (Khorog)	1934
Torugart	12km	70km (KG) 110km (PRC)	165km (At Bashy) 110km (Artush)	190km (Naryn) 160km (Kashgar)	1986
Irkeshtam	7km	78km (KG) ~50km (PRC)	90km (Sary Tash) 135km (Wuqia)	275km (Osh) 255km (Kashgar)	1996 (2002)

Figure 7: Frontier geography

With but one exception at the boundaries here (the Irkeshtam port)[81], outsiders (i.e., individuals who are not citizens of one of the two states on either side of the boundary) find themselves obliged to organise private transport that carries one on the entire 'wave' between both borderzone checkpoints. Such transport considerations will figure below and in Chapter 6 in connection with boundary accessibility for borderlanders.

Crossing at Qolma, Torugart, and Irkeshtam

Physically crossing the boundary from Xinjiang to either Kyrgyzstan or GBAO is more heavily regulated on the Chinese side than on the Central Asian side; it also takes place exclusively through officially endorsed channels. Thus, Chinese citizens basically require an array of documents to secure exit from their state, while entry into Kyrgyzstan is fairly straightforward, requiring only a passport and a visa; entry into GBAO is officially more

[81] There is sporadic public transport also for outsiders across the Qyzyl Art boundary from Khorog to Osh depending on weather conditions, petrol prices, and the political situation of the day. In the months around my research this mode of transport remained unavailable to all due to political instability in Kyrgyzstan and the soaring price of fuel.

complicated but also more easily negotiable on the ground. Exit from the PRC is granted pending the possession of (in this order of acquisition):

> a **passport**, granted only after an extensive background check and a letter of support by local authorities (depending on the political status of the applicant);
>
> an **exit permission**, basically a special permit issued by the PSB in Beijing (not in Urumqi) that is stamped into the holder's passport;
>
> **internal travel documents** that, in conjunction with the *hukou* (residency permit), allow travel between administrative regions within the PRC;
>
> a **bank statement** declaring the height of funds available for the person's return to the PRC;
>
> a **visa** for Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan from the respective consulate pending the possession of a letter of invitation from relatives (in Kyrgyzstan), a business partner (either state), or a travel agency (especially Tajikistan that also demands the possession of a GBAO *propusk* for physical travel across the boundary, but also to a lesser extent Kyrgyzstan);
>
> a **travel ticket** (bus or plane), with non-public transport forbidden at Torugart and Qolma (but not Irkeshtam) except for truck drivers.

Taking a closer look at the documents needed to leave the PRC, one factor immediately becomes evident: the financial burden of acquiring the necessary documents is prohibitive to individuals. Hence, a passport, in the PRC generally valid for up to 5 months for individuals making private trips and up to 5 years (the absolute maximum) for students intending to study abroad, in 2005 cost around 3000 RMB (roughly 400$) for five-month validity and about half of that for five-year validity[82]. However, I encountered not a single Chinese citizen who had actually paid that much for their passport: private connections (*guanxi*) are mandatory to cut costs. These are also vital to cut processing time in regard to the exit permission: applying for this can take up to six months[83]. Obtaining permission to travel internally within the PRC is connected to the *hukou* and granted in conjunction with procuring the exit permission: individuals without a *hukou* (such as internal migrants working illegally outside their home area but also members of the *bingtuan*) will not apply for this document for fear of sanctions (incarceration or at the least a significant fine). In effect, the need for such internal travel documents make air travel across a boundary easier than physical boundary crossing. The visa for the state of destination is granted by the respective consulate: in the case of Kyrgyzstan, this is the consulate in Urumqi (newly opened in late 2004); for Tajikistan it is the consulate/embassy in Beijing. However, most individuals seeking to apply for a visa to Kyrgyzstan evade the consulate and go through the official Kyrgyzstan Airlines office in Urumqi if they can afford their prices for organizing both an

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[82] This seemingly absurd inversion of the price-to-duration ratio was explained to me by one borderguard officer (interview May 2006, at the Ghez checkpoint near Tashkurgan) as "meaning that private people are discouraged from private trips: technically possible, financially prohibitive". However, prices have been falling over the last years (in 2002 a passport could cost up to 5000RMB, or over 600$)

[83] This can take even longer depending on the destination of travel the permission is meant to be employed for; an individual wanting to travel to the United States or the European Union can expect to wait for up to one year.

invitation and the visa[84]. Application for visas must be made in person or, alternatively, through the intermediate services of an officially licensed travel agent, thereby incurring further expense either through a possibly very time-consuming trip to the distant consulate or through an agent's commission. Finally, exit from the PRC is granted only in connection with a mode of transport. Except at the Irkeshtam port this means possession of a ticket on a public bus or, as a truck driver, on a certified truck (with the necessary export papers, but see the vignette below), a ticket that can only be purchased by individuals in possession of a valid visa; at Irkeshtam non-public transport is permitted for petty traders. Tickets for public buses from Kashgar over the Torugart and from Kashgar over Qolma cost 25$ to Naryn or Khorog and 35$ to Dushanbe or 50$ to Bishkek[85] – thus, the bus is in all cases considerably cheaper than the flights to the respective state capitals (between 100-150$).

Trajectories from the Central Asian Republics to Xinjiang require considerably less paperwork for Kyrgyzstani or Tajikistani citizens. Here, exit (from these states) and entry (into the PRC) requirements are of a more balanced nature, with boundary crossers needing a passport, a visa (with a letter of invitation), and a statement of financial resources. This last requirement is only of interest to Chinese border control whereas all other elements are checked on either side of the boundary. Visas for the PRC are available through travel agents in these states' centres; thus, outfits such as the 'China State Tourism Agency' in Bishkek (newly opened there in 2004) or agencies at Bishkek's Hotel Ilbirs organise visas for Kyrgyzstani citizens in a far cheaper and faster way than would the Chinese Embassy in Bishkek; in fact, the embassy there as well as in Dushanbe deals mainly with student visa applications (coordinating communication with a Chinese university or similar institution) and leaves tourist and business visa applications in the hands of agencies accredited or run by the Chinese state. Kyrgyzstani citizens can obtain a two-month-maximum tourist visa for 70$ through an agency; Tajikistani citizens can obtain a one-month-maximum tourist visa for 10$ in Dushanbe or for 50$ in Khorog through an agency. In reality, letters of invitation to support visa applications are needed only in Tajikistan (and must state family or business connections in the PRC); vice versa, only Kyrgyzstani citizens need to provide a bank statement proving that they can secure their own return journey[86].

Crossing at Qyzyl Art

Crossing the boundary between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan requires a visa for citizens of either state and a passport. The possession of passports, and in quite a few cases the

[84] Roughly fifty percent more expensive than through the consulate (which will not organise invitation letters anyway) but considerably faster. The invitation letters issued there are hazy regarding the status of 'relatives' or the exact nature of the 'business' to be conducted in Kyrgyzstan but seem to suffice for Kyrgyzstani officials.

[85] Such boundary-crossing transport is always quoted in US dollars in the PRC but only payable in Chinese currency. The black market salespeople at Kashgar bus station take full advantage of the ensuing currency discrepancy.

[86] The height of this 'collateral' depends on a number of factors I have been unable to conclusively identify. Generally, for Central Asian citizens it lies at around 500$ while for Western citizens crossing these Central Asian boundaries into the PRC it can be as high as 3000$. Significantly, this bank statement requirement is unknown along other Chinese frontiers.

possession of both a Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani passport, is wide-spread in both states. In regard to crossing the boundary, one interviewee knowledgeable about trans-boundary networks and their use of several passports told me that "with the right financial incentive and a good network of relations in Osh it is possible for us Murghab Kyrgyz to possess two valid passports: one for the boundary and one for the GAI [traffic police] in Kyrgyzstan"[87]. That is, the boundary is generally crossed with the Tajikistani passport as this enables the easiest type of negotiation with the forces of border control: the Tajikistani borderguards and customs officials are quicker to grant egress to Tajikistani citizens than to Kyrgyzstani citizens, and the Kyrgyzstani borderguards and especially customs "are corrupt no matter which passport you show – better to show the one you left Tajikistan with and avoid unpleasant questions" (*ibid.*). Furthermore, in terms of an official force that could be poised to enact duties of border control beyond the boundary, the traffic police GAI with its large number of officers distributed throughout the state's territory would be ideally suited for this purpose; however, its agents are notoriously easy to co-opt through the paying of 'fines'.

The visa regulations between these two states present us with a convoluted system that is, in the cases of citizens of these two states, rarely implemented as prescribed. For Tajikistanis seeking to enter Kyrgyzstan a visa is required today that can only be issued in Dushanbe by the Kyrgyz consulate there; however, arrival at the Qyzyl Art port without such a visa does not prevent entry because the Kyrgyzstani KGB is only too happy to issue a temporary *propusk*, valid for between three and six days, for a negotiable sum to be paid alongside a similarly flexible fine (for 'unlawful entry')[88]. According to interviewees here, it is always cheaper and faster to 'sort things out at the boundary' rather than to go through the difficult and distant official channels. Tajikistani citizens with accredited family members in Kyrgyzstan do not need a visa but rather a *propusk* that is valid for the same duration as the crosser's passport and cheap and easy to obtain through those relatives' local branch of the KGB in Kyrgyzstan – however, the borderguards at Qyzyl Art do not always respect the authority of this document and frequently force crossers to 'purchase' further documentation (and pay a fine for the pleasure). For travel in the other direction (from Kyrgyzstan to GBAO), the visa requirement is supplemented by the requirement for the possession of the GBAO *propusk*. However, interviews held revealed that neither the visa nor the *propusk* requirement are enforced at the boundary. It is entirely possible to travel to Murghab without either if one is in possession of just a Kyrgyzstani passport (or, for non-local citizens such as Russians or Uzbeks but, importantly, not for Chinese, with a valid Kyrgyzstani visa); usually, such boundary crossing without the official documents will involve a small fine at the Tajikistani side of the Qyzyl Art port and another fine at the Karakul borderzone checkpoint, the combined sum of which is lower than the cost of a visa which would have to be organised through an agent in Osh.

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[87] Interview with Ayilbek, a 50-year-old Murghab Kyrgyz whose business is plying the route between Osh and Khorog (see the vignette below), November 2005, Karakul.

[88] Crucially, the temporary *propusk* is always paid for in Tajik somani (and therefore is an official transaction) whereas the fine is in Kyrgyz som and goes straight into the officers' pockets.

Thickening the Trajectories

At the boundary itself, the haunt of borderguards and other personnel where interviews can be conducted only sporadically and in a highly hedged way, it is imperative to 'thicken the crossing experience' in order to gather data that allows a more in-depth view of that which lies between the two borderzone checkpoint locations; a necessarily superficial personal experience, influenced as it is by the researcher-as-crosser, must function as supplementary to other observational methods and, crucially, vignettes provided by informants. Once again, the lack of tried and tested methods in this regard presents the researcher with a situation of trial and error: previous attempts in earlier research involved the violation of official regulations by, for example, extending my personal presence within the *zapretnaya zona* by overstaying the duration permitted to non-locals or testing the limits of negotiation possible with those charged with control over such matters[89]. Whilst this can be effective in assessing the reality of borderzone accessibility, such a strategy will not hold up to the serious ethical guidelines I believe must be imposed on this field and also add further danger to the already tenuous position of the researcher and his or her associates. Furthermore, such behaviour will not serve to characterise boundary processes beyond the trivial realisation that state officials in these borderlands are prone to corruption and wield structural power (in Eric Wolf's sense as introduced in Chapter 1) over boundary realities.

It is rather more revealing to find answers to the questions of, first, the relationships between boundary crosser and guardian in regard to how borderlanders operate within a locale invested with such political salience and, second, how this boundary interface affects regular trans-frontier exchange. This I attempted to do by means of three methods which will be the focus of the following sections: first, to cross the boundaries in the company of local borderlanders or local elites; second, to cross the boundary as part of a trans-frontier network operating within the wider Borderland and tying the sides together economically; and, third, not to cross at all. These three methods were all complemented through comparative observation of the way in which fellow crossers interacted with members of border control (customs and security control), how the frontier was negotiated (possession or lack of documentation), and the reception of official discourses and symbolic inscriptions of the territorial state (fences, flags, official language use, currency exchange, panoptic observation and military infrastructure, propaganda artefacts). In the following, I choose to present each of the four cross-boundary trajectories at this frontier as characterised by one of these three methods in order to present the application of such a methodology and to let fellow boundary crossers, nodes of networks, and guardians speak for themselves. An analysis of much of the content in the following sections will follow in Chapters 5 and 6.

Due to the very transitory nature of one's observations at the actual boundary itself, a method must be devised that enables a maximum of insight into the boundary and its immediately adjacent borderzones: crossing with individuals who cross the boundary

[89] Admittedly, a euphemism for the testing of corruption opportunities in order to discover just how flexibly official discourses are interpreted within the zone by its guardians.

regularly is an ideal method to add depth to the crossing experience. Sharing locals' travelling trajectories and encounters with border control enables the identification of processes invisible to the outsider, who has by necessity had to access non-local channels in order to secure his or her own crossing – that is, the gatekeepers for outsiders will not necessarily be the same gatekeepers locals deal with to secure their own comings and goings. In other words, outsiders such as tourists (or researchers travelling on tourist visas) and foreign businesspeople need certain gatekeepers to cross the boundary: they use official channels to organise their boundary crossing as mediated through a gatekeeper such as a tourist agency that organises all the required paperwork; borderlanders may need 'tourist agencies' (and do indeed need such institutions at the Chinese boundaries in question here but not at the Kyrgyzstan – GBAO boundary) but these agencies are solely for citizens of the states concerned, and this requirement may be waived in certain cases for certain reasons[90]. The uncovering of these elements was the motivation for this method and was to allow the differentiation of the various registers employed by border control at the boundary.

Crossing in Company (1): Borderlanders at Qyzyl Art

In a region such as the Kyrgyzstani and GBAO borderlands, where transport is prohibitively expensive for locals even when it is available, it was easy to find individuals desiring to participate in travel through the borderzone from Karakul in GBAO to Sary Tash in Kyrgyzstan's Osh *oblast*. The driver of the jeep I had organised in Murghab to travel to Kyrgyzstan, a 50-year-old local Tajikistani Kyrgyz whom I shall name Ayilbek, recommended to me by a local friend aware of my research interest, had a network of friends in Karakul and arranged for us to pick up as many people and their belongings as would fit in the 4WD. Ayilbek frequently made this run from Murghab to Osh (the location of the largest bazaar in the entire region) when the road was passable and the weather agreeable; however, in the weeks preceding our trip both conditions had been less than ideal – this would be the first private transport of any kind in over a fortnight and, considering it was November, probably the last for an unforeseeable period. At the borderzone checkpoint location just before entering Karakul Ayilbek, who knew the borderguards on duty, instructed me not to mention the passengers we would be picking up just down the road for the boundary crossing: "coming the other way, from Kyrgyzstan, we would have to because the vehicle details [total weight and number of passengers (S.P.)] are radioed ahead to Bor-Döbö; here, their radio was stolen three years ago and hadn't worked for years before that, so why mention it?". The passengers we picked up, all members of one local family of Tajikistani Kyrgyz, filled the jeep with bags of mutton they had collected from neighbours and friends destined to be sold at the central bazaar in Osh; the profit would cover the return trip and the bribes necessary at Bor-Döbö as well as providing roughly a two-month income for the family. Arriving at the summit of the Qyzyl Art Pass (the Tajikistani boundary checkpoint), Ayilbek introduced me to the borderguards who, after perfunctory questions regarding my possible possession of nuclear

[90] See Chapter 6 for an in-depth discussion of borderlanders' methods of access to and beyond the boundaries. Briefly, travel agencies in the PRC need special permission to deal with non-Chinese citizens, and foreign citizens may generally not access franchises of the 'China State Tourism Company', the organisation that acts as intermediary for locals' access to and egress from the PRC.

materials, narcotics, and firearms focused on interrogating me on the amount of cash I had with me and how much I should at the most 'spend' on the 'money-grabbing prostitute-officials' at Bor-Döbö; there followed stories about non-locals being robbed and jailed 'on the other side' because they refused to 'play the Moscow game', a reference to the common practice at Bor-Döbö of planting narcotics in travellers' bags only to then demand hefty fines[91]. Armed with such advice I was sent to passport control along with my fellow passengers. For me this meant a stamp on the exit visa (but, interestingly, no check of the GBAO *propusk* which, I was told, was only of interest to the KGB and not border control itself, "and if you want to return don't bother with it as long as you come back with Ayilbek – he knows those assholes pretty well in Murghab and Karakul…"), for my compatriots it meant tea and a leg of mutton. According to all concerned, this was a typical exchange at Qyzyl Art with border control not really interested in paperwork, an impression corroborated without exception in later interviews with both Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani boundary-crossers.

Border control on the Kyrgyzstani side of the boundary was, indeed, a very different experience and stood in direct contrast to my encounter with the boundary checkpoint just passed. In no-man's-land Ayilbek had already briefed me on the best way to handle this Kyrgyzstani checkpoint: my presence would jack up the price of potential 'fines' but he had already calculated roughly how much this would be and 'it was included in the price I had paid for the jeep', thus excluding me from having to deal with the officials. My job as 'jeep host' (I had invited my fellow travellers to the price of the fuel) was to protect the jeep itself while he was engaged with the officials and to prevent the 'guests' from Karakul from having to pay a fine before Ayilbek was finished with clearing the passage of the vehicle. At the checkpoint, where Ayilbek was engaged with negotiating passage for over three hours, I was indeed accosted by what turned out to be the most senior of the Kyrgyzstani border guards at the post; I succeeded in preventing the puncturing of the tyres (by convincing the spiked rod-wielding official that I had 'important friends in Osh' who would take a very dim view of such behaviour in light of their expecting my imminent arrival) but failed in 'protecting' my co-travellers from Karakul – we did however manage to negotiate the amount of their fine. After Ayilbek's return we hurriedly left the checkpoint and proceeded to customs, some 25km on the road to Sary Tash, where our passports were to be stamped and all entry declarations filled in. On the way I asked the eldest of the Karakul travellers what exactly had transpired and whether I could somehow make up for having failed in my duty to him and his family:

> It is always the same at Bor-Döbö. The *pogranichniki* [border guards] hate us Kyrgyz from Badakhshan. They call us *myrk* [disparaging term for non-Russified Kyrgyz-speaking sedentaries (S.P.)] even if we speak Russian and herd sheep. They are paid by a Russian-financed *komitet* [committee] to find Afghan heroin but let all the Osh mafia through the checkpoints because they are rich. So many Kyrgyz people come to Badakhshan and our *pogranichniki* let them pass because they bring goods from Osh, but we from Badakhshan are at the mercy of corrupt people in stolen uniforms. By law,

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[91] A practice thus named because of the fact that the customs officials at Bor-Döbö are paid for by the Russian FSB (formerly KGB) through a CIS fund earmarked for the protection of the Commonwealth's 'outer frontier' from narcotics stemming from Afghanistan, a large amount of which passes through precisely this checkpoint and on to Osh and, from there, to Istanbul or Moscow. Locals do not seem to be affected by this due to their lack of funds.

> we are allowed to come here these days without passports [since 1997 and the change in passport regulations in Kyrgyzstan (S.P.)] if we have family members in Osh *oblast* but the guards shit on this. I just paid 5 [Tajik] somani for a temporary *propusk* for each of us [nearly 2 US dollars] and a 250 [Kyrgyz] som fine [over 6 US dollars] – all that is my daughter's monthly salary as a teacher in Karakul. It is not your fault – last time we paid double the fine and lost a tyre which Ayilbek's brother had to then replace from the stock they keep up here, and that cost him 3000 som [75 US dollars]. Ten years ago there was no *granitsa* here, and no *zona*, no *pogranichniki*, and no money economy – we were Soviet and who cared what Bishkek said. Now the Russians are gone and we have Taliban heroin, *pogranichniki*, mafias, and no fuel and everybody wants money for us to use this piece-of-shit road to get to market.

My passport had neither been checked nor stamped and only cursorily whisked through in search of a valid visa; the customs post down the road was shut and the customs official I queried regarding an entry stamp angrily snapped at me that there was no ink available and that I should inquire in Osh regarding entry formalities: "it's not my problem if you can't eventually leave Kyrgyzstan because you're not legally even in the country. Just tell them to send ink for the next tourist." Ayilbek never showed either of his two passports (neither the Kyrgyzstani nor the illegally retained Tajikistani one), and my fellow travellers, who did have distant relatives near Osh itself and the papers to prove it, had not been in possession of the one document they would not have needed and could never have financially and physically obtained but was in this moment required – the temporary *propusk* required by borderlanders without trans-frontier family ties.

Crossing in Company (2): Local Borderland Elite at Torugart

In the Xinjiang borderlands the situation is very different as regards crossing the Kyrgyzstani boundary with locals: as becomes evident in Figure 7 above, the administrative borderland of Qyzyl Suu is co-terminous with the actual borderzone and this zone is stringently enforced by Chinese border control and customs at Artush, which thereby becomes both borderzone checkpoint location and borderland checkpoint. It was here, at the entrance to town at the bazaar, that I had arranged with Almaz, a PRC Kyrgyz businessman from Artush whom I had met in Urumqi through a mutual acquaintance working at the Kyrgyzstan Airlines office there. When I informed Ablimit, the Uighur driver I had hired in Kashgar through a travel agency and who had been recommended to me by a Han friend, that we would be taking Almaz with us across the boundary to Kyrgyzstan his discomfort immediately became obvious[92]:

> Have you checked his papers? Does he have the necessary exit permission? Has he been across Torugart before? And is he aware that he must also possess a borderzone *tongxingzheng* [permit] from the PSB [state security] in Kashgar if he does not take the public bus? He is local so I will not organise this for him – it would be too *mafan* [hassle]. If he is rejected exit you will not pass the boundary; if the Kyrgyz driver picking you up at the summit refuses to take him, you will not pass the boundary either – you know what these Kyrgyz are like: they either love each other or hate each other. Don't become a victim of this, especially not with borderguards watching. What's his business anyway? Is he a smuggler or a terrorist? I warn you: do not take a risk!

[92] Both Ablimit and Almaz are fictitious names; all other details of their identities remain unchanged.

After allaying his fears by assuring him that all would be organised correctly we picked up Almaz and passed customs at Artush. Border control there was indeed interested in knowing why he was unconventionally travelling through his homeland in the company of a foreigner; this, Almaz explained, was due to his having to save money by not flying but needing to cross as quickly as possible to visit his son studying in Bishkek who had fallen sick and urgently needed medicine unobtainable in Kyrgyzstan. After a close check of papers he had obtained to secure egress (in this order of importance, respectively, his internal travel documents and *tongxingzheng*, residency permit (*hukou*), his passport and Kyrgyzstani visa, and a Bank of China account statement on reserve funds) our passports were stamped and Ablimit's vehicle (which would not be crossing the line) was issued with a sticker stating the latest permissible time of return – the window allowed to him for the entire return trip, from Artush to the Torugart Pass and back to Artush, where he had to be by nightfall that same day.

We were not to travel alone through Qyzyl Suu: from Artush until the beginning of the ascent to the Torugart Pass itself we were joined by a senior borderguard officer belonging to the provincial PAPF (Peoples' Armed Police Force; see Chapter 5). A dour Han of about 50 from Shanxi province, Mr. Jiang took a back seat and was to supervise our activities in the borderland, in effect guaranteeing that we neither stopped anywhere nor took pictures of the villages and infrastructure we passed. Conversation was nigh impossible with this guardian monitoring what was said and took place during his frequent naps on the nearly three-hour journey, usually only revolving around Almaz pointing out various places he knew and making benevolent comments on how money was being invested in roads here and how much easier life had become in the years since the "Soviets had become extinct" in regard to military tensions and the decrease in *bingtuan* presence in Qyzyl Suu[93]. Mr. Jiang left us several kilometres before the pass at the last inhabited settlement where, he informed us, he would board the next vehicle going the other way to continue his supervision duties. Passing a derelict checkpoint shortly after, and just before the hair-pin bends leading to the summit, Almaz asked Ablimit to stop the vehicle for a moment, upon which he got out and left a little package by the roadside: "an uncle was shot here by Chinese borderguards attempting to flee the Cultural Revolution. They left him to be eaten by the birds but this checkpoint is his grave. Since 1999 the checkpoint has been at the top of the hill – I guess to show the Kyrgyz who is the master of the pass – and so I can now pay my respects here."

At the summit, crowned by a large, brightly coloured arch and containing a spanking new building, our stamped visas were checked and Ablimit was sent home the moment the onward transport I had organised through a friend in Naryn arrived. The new driver, an affable elderly man from At Bashy driving an ancient Opel, carefully wound his way down from the summit and brought us to the Kyrgyzstani Torugart checkpoint.

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[93] For the importance of the *bingtuan* (the paramilitary and predominantly Han-populated Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps with its over 2 million members) and its militia in the borderlands see Chapter 5.

Picture 12: Kyrgyzstani boundary checkpoint at Torugart

Here we were received at gunpoint by three MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) officers and escorted to a dingy waiting room replete with memories of Soviet times that has for me become characteristic of the aura of danger and feeling of powerlessness one encounters at so many external boundaries of the former Soviet Union. Here, interaction was business-like and professional: the image that was projected was one of the impossibility of violation. With immigration procedures behind us we set out onto the high plateau stretching ahead of us and made our slow way along the abominable road towards At Bashy. I mentioned my impressions of the checkpoint to Almaz and he, full of mirth, put my observations into context:

> Welcome to Kyrgyzstan! They drink vodka here instead of tea, and they mingle their blood and minds with Russians. This makes them poor despite independence. Just look at how this road is neglected, and how the fence to China over there has holes in. Those 'professionals' back there are the very people stripping the barb wire off the fence to sell it to us. Do you remember Artush and all the trucks from Kyrgyzstan standing around waiting for their goods to be inspected and reloaded onto Chinese trucks? How many trucks did you see at Torugart? Not one was waiting – they all continue straight through the port and right into Naryn these days. The truck drivers bring some *baijiu* [Chinese vodka] for your professionals, and maybe a Hong Kong porno movie or two, and they're through. Good for business at home, good for the guards, good for the Naryn market I suppose – but the people here know who makes the decisions these days and ever since the Russians left: it's us.

Indeed, at the borderzone checkpoint at Ak Beyit, 70 kilometres farther, there was not a soul to be seen. While obviously at least temporarily manned as proven by the presence of a sheep pen and tyre marks, the only information announcing the limits of Kyrgyzstan's borderzone to the PRC was a rusty signpost that announced to the traveller that one was approaching a 'special military permit zone of the Soviet Union' and that unauthorised individuals would be shot on sight. Almaz laughed after I had translated it into Chinese and asked our driver if he

would pose for a picture next to the signpost, something he willingly obliged to whilst commenting that 'the border was no longer what it used to be'.

As can be gleaned from these first two descriptions of actual crossing experiences for locals in these borderlands, actual border control (rather than what the state propagates its border control as) touches upon domains containing the legal and illegal, the negotiable and non-negotiable, and exhibits discourses between borderlanders, guardians, and outsiders not readily accessible outside the field of the borderzone: diachronic shifts in negotiation and control (here, the recent establishment of checkpoints, the shifting loyalties of borderguards, and the power of these guardians invested with bureaucratic capital to loosely interpret or invent regulations), economic dynamics (the currencies in which fines are paid and locally perceived trans-frontier economic differentials), and the reality of trans-frontier movement and trans-frontier perceptions of belonging or exclusion. All these are elements of borderland lifeworlds that inform research into what actually happens at political state boundaries.

Crossing in a Network at Irkeshtam

Crossing the boundary with fellow travellers is suitable to observe conflict between official rhetoric of boundary maintenance and crossing procedures as implemented on the ground. Likewise, clues to a conflict existing between policies aimed at giving border control a 'filter' or 'barrier' function and possible local perceptions of a boundary trajectory as a 'corridor of opportunity' only come to light when a closer look is taken at actual economic exchange taking place in the Borderland. This is a domain where participant observation can very well be practised by the researcher because it will not suffice to merely observe the existence of border markets and analyse official statistics. In order to 'thicken' understanding of such economic trajectories, the objective here must be to discover who is actually involved in such trans-frontier interactions, what role border control plays in such interactions, how state policies must be reinterpreted in light of possibly subversive economic activities going on at the micro-economic level, and how borderlanders themselves are involved in this. While a closer discussion of the results of my research activities in this domain will follow in Chapter 6, here I present insight into the method I employed in gaining personal access to one such economic trajectory at the Irkeshtam crossing. The network I have chosen to present here is one that included both legal goods (i.e., items considered by both the Kyrgyzstani and Chinese states as legally importable/exportable) as well as goods that strictly are beyond the legal sphere of transactions permitted (in particular, the export of *yuan*, the Chinese currency, and an illegal excess amount of legal goods as well as goods bought at domestic prices and in places not designed to serve such trans-frontier trade). Access to such a network was, as can be surmised, not easy and achieved solely through the crucial aid of acquaintances in both Xinjiang and Kyrgyzstan who were informed of the reasons for my interest; in Xinjiang it was these intermediaries who provided me with the credentials necessary to take part in this network, and all contact with other nodes of this network in Xinjiang was mediated by them and not by myself personally. In Kyrgyzstan no such care

needed to be taken, and meetings with other individuals representing nodes of the network was not considered problematic.

With most trans-frontier trade between Xinjiang and Kyrgyzstan taking the Torugart trajectory, that boundary crossing was originally the target of my inquiries into taking part, if at all possible, in a trans-frontier economic network. It quickly became obvious, however, that because of the Grade 2 nature of this crossing this would in no way be tolerable to local entrepreneurs due to my arousing more attention than necessary and my inability to bring an edge to the boundary negotiation that would potentially have to take place. Irkeshtam, with its higher proportion of private minibus and car rather than just truck traffic and its classification as a Grade 1 port, was more suitable and, hence, more agreeable to acquaintances acting as intermediaries. Being a part of trans-frontier trade involves financial investment, and I participated by financing two boxes filled with entertainment electronic equipment such as VCD players and laptop computers. In effect, these boxes were mine and it was my own business to calculate sale prices at the final destination; the agreement I had reached in Kashgar was for me to pay the original supply cost plus a ten percent surcharge there and then, plus fifty percent of the profit I might make at the final destination. In return, the minibus was organised and a set of export papers issued for customs at the Chinese boundary checkpoint at Simhana. Upon my question regarding import papers for Kyrgyzstan my intermediary curtly informed me that "you take care of that there and then – if I could organise them here I wouldn't be operating this way, would I now?"

We had agreed on me being a member of a small group of people (all of which were PRC citizens: six Uighurs from Kashgar, an Uzbek also from Kashgar, and three Dungani/Hui from Wuqia in Qyzyl Suu AP with distant relatives in the Bishkek area in northern Kyrgyzstan) who were entering Kyrgyzstan on tourist visas in a Chinese minibus with Mr. Wu, the Han driver; thus, the group I travelled in could be considered trader-tourists carrying goods either by personal pre-order or designed to garner a profit roughly double the price of what had been spent on securing the boundary crossing (i.e., the costs accruing from obtaining visas, exit permissions and passports, the rental of transport, and the projected height of the bribes to be paid at the Kyrgyzstani boundary checkpoint of Nura). Somewhat surprised by the ethnic composition of the group considering it contained neither a single actual borderlander of a trans-frontier group nor Kyrgyzstani citizens, the amiable Mr. Wu, who was himself an integral part of the 'operation' due to his gatekeeper function at the Chinese boundary checkpoint (he had to countersign all transportation papers) and stood to make most profit from the transaction but also risked having his vehicle impounded should complications arise, explained:

> Listen, Kyrgyz can't make this trip like this – it's too expensive for them. At the SEZs [Special Economic Zones, located near the borderland (S.P.)] they buy the goods we then buy off them. If that's the illegal part it is because stuff from the SEZs is not supposed to then cross the boundary like this, so we need papers from Urumqi saying we bought the stuff there. Kyrgyz don't know the right people, and if they do they don't need to take the risks at Irkeshtam but rather fly it to Bishkek or send it by train through Dostyk [the boundary checkpoint on the Almaty-Urumqi train line between

> Kazakhstan and Xinjiang (S.P.)]. Anyway, Kyrgyz raise suspicion at Simhana – it is possible, and sometimes it is done these days, but most use Torugart because it leads to Bishkek, where they know people sometimes, and not to Osh, where they rarely do. And apart from all that, Kyrgyz are rubbish at trading.

Interestingly, Mr. Wu's observation concerning the non-borderlander nature of those trading across the boundary was, as far as I could tell, quite accurate: the long line of minibuses, pick-ups, and (rarely) trucks was dominated by Han and Uzbeks[94] with the odd Uighur or Dungani amongst them. Surprisingly for me, the only Kyrgyz ever encountered on this trajectory were non-local individuals generally from the Osh region, and the goods they transported across the boundary were small in number and obviously destined for private use or as gifts.

Passing Chinese checkpoints was time-consuming but essentially a straightforward matter of unloading the entire vehicle at both checkpoints and at customs in between: papers were filled in (export declarations at customs and personal exit visa and Kyrgyzstani visa checks at the Chinese checkpoints) and boxes were examined in the most cursory of ways. One could be forgiven for believing that the Chinese officials were indifferent to the manner of goods passing the boundary in this direction but far more interested in the documentation identities of those crossing; thus, questions were asked pertaining to personal connections my fellow travellers might have in Kyrgyzstan and the regularity of past crossings (none of my companions made more than one crossing a year because of the 'potential to arouse suspicion', and Mr. Wu would not actually be driving into Kyrgyzstan). Mr. Wu's function here was to allay suspicion concerning the trader-tourists and to present documents guaranteeing that the 'tourist group' would be accompanied by himself (as 'tour leader') as well as a Kyrgyzstani counterpart (the driver on the far side of the boundary). At Nura, on the Kyrgyzstani side, we were to unload all boxes and pass Kyrgyzstani customs on foot with the boxes to then reload what was left onto the Kyrgyzstani transport waiting for us.

[94] Uzbeks have not figured as an integral part of my research into trans-frontier processes and borderland lifeworlds due to their numerical invisibility in Xinjiang (where this officially recognised *minzu* makes up just 0.08 percent (about 15,000 individuals) of Xinjiang's population) and my decision to largely exclude Ferghana Valley boundary processes and trans-state conflict between Tajikistani, Uzbekistani, and Kyrgyzstani citizens. Most Uzbeks encountered at Irkeshtam and Osh were Kyrgyzstani citizens but some did indeed come from Andijan or even Tashkent, both in Uzbekistan.

Picture 13: Mr. Wu's minibus at Kyrgyzstani customs (Irkeshtam at Nura)

Enviously watching a public bus sail through the checkpoint with little more than a collective stamping of passports, our Kyrgyzstani officials were busily inspecting our possessions – nobody was interested in the export papers we had, and the lack of import documentation was not noted. While Chinese officials had officiously checked our identities and individual reasons for crossing, Kyrgyzstani officials were solely interested in our visas and, primarily, the contents of the boxes. My presence as a non-local citizen was not addressed and discussion focused on obtaining permission to keep hold of my possessions:

> 'What's in the two boxes?'
> 'Some electronic equipment for a friend in Osh.'
> 'How much will you sell it for?'
> 'Actually, these are not going to be sold, at least as far as I know. They are for use by a family I know.'
> 'Whatever. How much did you buy them for? I know you bought them, you and these Chinese. I won't let you in without a declaration. You don't have one, so declare it now or else I will have to confiscate it.'
> 'But I have Chinese papers stating the worth and that we may bring them.'
> 'I don't give a damn what the Chinese say. Does this look like China here? For all I care you can go right back there and stay there. If you want to come here, you declare and I will decide.'

In the end, obtaining the 'declaration papers' was a matter of paying a 'fine' for not possessing the import papers (not obtainable in the PRC outside of Beijing or Urumqi), and this amounted (for the whole group's belongings) to roughly the original purchase price of one new computer. After the crossing, this expenditure was split evenly between all eleven of us (Mr. Wu was exempt). The boundary had been negotiated for what was regarded by my companions as a very advantageous price[95].

[95] Mr. Wu recalled a trip he had 'organised' about a year before when the entirety of the goods had been confiscated due to the group's inability (or unwillingness) to pay what had been asked for.

At the security checkpoint outside Nura, on the road to Sary Tash, we loaded the boxes onto Mr. Wu's Kyrgyzstani associate's minibus waiting for us and proceeded on the way towards Osh. I divested myself of the Chinese currency I was carrying on me at Sary Tash by having Mr. Wu sell it at a marginal profit to an Uzbekistani trader at the local bazaar and, in Osh, I sold my boxes to my fellow travellers for a part of the original purchasing price – they would be able to manage sales deals more easily than I and it seemed an appropriate gesture. Allegedly, one box was to cross the boundary to Uzbekistan and probably found its way to the Navoi electronics shops near Chorsu Bazaar in Tashkent, the place where most Chinese consumer electronics finally surface. The other box was sold at Jayma Bazaar in Osh through the network of Uighurs there who have lately come to dominate such trade at the expense of local Kyrgyz salespeople. In a later meeting with Mr. Wu back in Kashgar he grinningly told me, after I asked him whether my participation in the enterprise had had any repercussions for him, that he had told the firm he usually worked for the 'tale of the foreigner who had worked for him'; in light of later research into the nature of his 'firm' it has become clear that I actually brought profit, however small, to an export firm controlled by the Xinjiang *bingtuan*.

Not Crossing at Qolma

The Qolma/Kara-Su port presents another type of boundary crossing: that of the non-negotiable port. Overcoming initial frustration at my failure to access this borderzone I realised that such inaccessibility in itself bespoke of processes of fundamental interest in discovering what this port means to the borderlands and borderlanders of GBAO and Tashkurgan AC. Thickening an experience I did not personally have is, of course, problematic under these circumstances and I resorted here to collecting vignettes of others' successful or failed own crossings and comparing these to my personal experiences as close to the actual boundary itself as possible. As has been hinted at over the course of this chapter in the various observations taken from statements made regarding this port, the Qolma crossing from GBAO into Xinjiang presents different discourses than does the Kara-Su crossing from Xinjiang to GBAO. Here, two differing modes of border control implementation clash with one another, thereby having the effect of making this boundary impenetrable to all but two types of crossers: those transporting goods in trucks and those travelling on public Chinese buses that connect Kashgar (but not via Tashkurgan) with Khorog (but not stopping in Murghab). The window of opportunity in which the crossing is open (from the 15th to the last day of every month between May and October) is rigorously enforced, unlike the documentation needed to transcend the boundary, and this presents the crosser with the problem of being stuck in GBAO for up to a fortnight if weather and road conditions cause delays on the Tajikistani side of the boundary. It readily became obvious that Tajikistani border control and personnel at checkpoints along the Pamir Highway from Murghab to Khorog take economic advantage of such circumstances created by infrastructural vagaries and the steadfastness of Chinese border control to refuse entry outside this temporal window: Chinese travellers on the buses, who in all cases encountered and to the best of my knowledge absolutely do require both a Tajikistani visa and a GBAO *propusk*, can extend both expired

documents on a day-by-day basis in the form of paying 'fines' to officials encountered both in the borderland and at Qolma. The same theoretically holds true for Chinese truck drivers but, as one such Han driver told me at the Khorog main bus terminal (which is also where Chinese trucks are unloaded)[96], this is generally not necessary:

> Ah, the *propusk*. Yes, I heard that bus passengers need one. I have a friend in Kashgar operating such business trips for private people. We [i.e., truck drivers (S.P.)] don't need them. Well, we do but we don't bother because it's so much cheaper and easier like this. Sometimes it's just a matter of bringing gifts for the borderguards that they can then sell – last month I brought a box of boots for the Murghab boys; sometimes it's fines. Getting out of China is more difficult without papers but there's a guy in Urumqi who is great at copying the documents needed – doesn't work with the suspicious and greedy Tajikistanis but seems to be enough for our boys. Apart from that, since it opened Kara-Su has become very important to the authorities because of politics, you know, giving aid to poor neighbours and the 'Connecting the West' stuff [officially, the 'Remake the West' campaign launched in 2000 (S.P.)]. Business isn't that great, especially as there's not much to take back with you from here on the return trip, but my boss seems to think it's getting better year by year – just wait for that new road to Afghanistan!

With bus travel infrequent through this crossing, the dynamic presented in this and other similar statements seems to represent a fairly accurate image of how Qolma/ Kara-Su is negotiated: it is far more Chinese border control that is in charge of this boundary crossing rather than a border control consisting in the joint efforts of both states involved. This begs the conclusion that the Qolma port (opened to actual traffic in 2004) and the new trans-frontier processes taking place there are intricately connected to the official withdrawal of Russian and CIS bordertroops from Murghab *raion* in 2002/2003. This conclusion was corroborated by my negotiation of the borderzone at Qolma on the Tajikistani side: with the permission obtained from the KGB in Khorog and with the support of a Russian military advisor there (as described in the introduction to this chapter), the KGB outside Murghab saw no reason not to help me organise transport through the borderzone to the penultimate checkpoint before the boundary (the second of the two customs checkpoints). The regular checkpoints before this had posed no problem to me due to my endorsement by the local KGB. At this customs post, the head officer of the borderguard detachment, an ethnic Tajik from Kulyab (southern Tajikistan), mulled over my case. After asking whether I had informed local regular police in Murghab of my intentions (I had not, following the Khorog KGB's advice) he nodded and set out alone towards the Chinese boundary, leaving me to wait at the desolate and wind-swept arctic post near the summit. Two hours later he returned shaking his head and fuming:

> I am sorry, friend, but they won't allow it. The resistance of those Chinese pig-heads is incomprehensible to me. They said 'no way – maybe next year'. Can you believe it? We let them in but they don't bother to reciprocate. We'd let you out but only if the

[96] November 2005. This truck driver was himself stuck in Khorog due to having missed the window the month before. He was lucky because in 2005 the ports opened again in November due to exceptionally dry weather conditions at the pass. Had this not been the case he would have had to abandon his truck and travel to Dushanbe so as to leave Tajikistan as quickly as possible or face deportation or incarceration (or, as he succinctly stated, a very expensive 'super-special permit' securing his traversal of Qolma).

> Chinese will let you in – wouldn't want to be stuck up here in the middle of nowhere, would you? They said you'd have to get on a bus back in Khorog. But you know, that bus is only really for those Chinese workers, you know, the guys working on the Dushanbe road upgrade. Oh, and of course for the guys coming here to see the Afghan prostitutes down in Khorog. It's best if you go up to Irkeshtam, seriously!

Attempts at boarding said bus were indeed doomed to failure. While the Tajikistani ticket salesperson in Khorog happily obliged in selling me a ticket at the regular price of 150 Tajik somani (roughly 50 US dollars), there was no way the Chinese bus driver would allow me to board the bus. Despite my Tajikistani permission to cross, and the possession of a valid Chinese visa, the bus was "just for Chinese or Tajiks".

Circling around the closed (closed to me, that is) boundary crossing between GBAO and Tashkurgan AC, it became my goal after the port had opened again for the season six months later to discover the possibilities for the negotiation of trans-boundary trajectories from that side. An application at the PSB Border Office in Kashgar, the place all truck drivers and bus passengers to GBAO need to obtain permission from, for the very document that I had lacked six months before (a special borderzone transit permission) was as unsuccessful as was a visit to the local PSB in Tashkurgan. In both cases I was informed that the crossing at Qolma/ Kara-Su was a crossing only to 'promote friendship between Tajikistan and China' and therefore not open for non-Chinese or non-Tajikistani citizens; furthermore, an exception could not be made because of security threats for foreigners 'arising from Qolma's proximity to the Afghan borders'[97]. Deciding to check the rigour of borderzone control on the ground, I hitchhiked my way by truck to the ultimate checkpoint just outside Kara-Su itself after I had passed the borderzone checkpoint at Ghez (which, due to its dual function as checkpoint both to Tashkurgan, which I was permitted to access, and to the Kara-Su port, was negotiable without further problems). The customs checkpoint officials between Ghez and Kara-Su were only interested in my host's goods[98]; not so at the final checkpoint. Here my trajectory came to an end in the friendly but firm manner as expressed by one PRC Tajik borderguard:

> This is not a port for you here. You are not Chinese or Tajik and there would be unacceptable security concerns involving your lack of the right passport. A British cyclist was shot by terrorists here some years ago and people working here were criticised heavily. Over there it is too dangerous. So no. Fly from Urumqi.

The truck driver set off up the steep unmetalled road without me and I was driven back to the Ghez checkpoint and warned not to come back.

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[97] In light of the fact that Tashkurgan itself and the boundary crossing to Pakistan at Khunjerab just south of there (which is open to anybody possessing the necessary visas even without special permission) is even closer to Afghanistan's Wakhan corridor this cannot but be interpreted as an excuse.

[98] The forty-tonne truck was loaded with road construction material such as cement and metal rods and included some small construction machinery. According to the driver, an Uighur from Turpan who worked for an Urumqi-based construction firm, his destination was to be a town outside Dushanbe where he was to supply Chinese construction workers.

Picture 14: Ghez checkpoint on the Xinjiang Karakoram Highway (between Kashgar and Tashkurgan)

At Ghez I was interrogated by a Han officer belonging to the PAPF (Peoples' Armed Police Force) whose purpose it was to establish whether I had clandestine or illegal motivations to violate boundary crossing procedures at Kara-Su. In keeping with my strategy to tell such individuals about my interest in the history of the region I told him about my experiences in GBAO and hinted at the way in which border control was interpreted there. He snorted and, before releasing me to go back to Kashgar, took me outside the building where he showed me the truck checkpoint off to one side of the road[99]:

> We've invested a lot of money here, and more will come because we export things everybody wants in this region. Come back in five years and we'll have several such truck stations – ten years ago this was a dirt track and now we have internet here. A driver here once told me that those Tajiks don't even have telephones anymore, or power [since the Russians left (S.P.)]. We have lots of both, and they're going to get it one day whether they want it or not. Just because the Tajiks do not know how to control their boundary does not mean we are just as unprofessional. Actually, Kara-Su and Torugart are the two most prestigious postings in the country.

Indeed, the differences between the two borderlands could not have been more striking, just as my experiences with officials maintaining the boundary in between them could not have been more different. Frustration at failure was mixing with an intense interest in rethinking the role this newly opened and only port between Tajikistan and Xinjiang actually played.

[99] The following statement is, exceptionally, not a verbatim quote due to altitude-related health problems I was experiencing at the time it took place. I have pieced together the salient points of the conversation that took place for the sake of clarity.

Chapter 3

Frontier Policies – Birth of a Borderland

The direction of the boundary depends on political considerations and, in view of the importance of government interests, it is necessary to sacrifice the local interests, in essence, of the most inconsequential part of the boundary inhabitants. In this connection, the separation of [Kyrgyz] groups by the boundary [...] is necessary owing to political necessity.

(Colonel Babkov of the Imperial Siberian Corps and co-signatory of the 1864 Sino-Russian boundary treaty [as quoted in Paine 1996: 91])

Despite frequent exhortations by successive Chinese governments that Xinjiang (just as Tibet or Inner Mongolia) has been 'part of China for millennia', the Central Asian frontier of China evinces a complex and fluid history of interaction with the rest of what is today known as 'China'. The representation of these contacts as proof of Chinese control over a region so fundamentally different from any other part of its territory has come to figure in the myth of continuous Chinese sovereignty over the entirety of its present-day borderlands and looms large in arguments that the present socialist regime has legitimately inherited the reins guiding the political fates of its borderland minorities here and elsewhere. "China and the Central Asian states have been cooperating from Time Immemorial – geography is not the only factor of our closeness: there is also spiritual affinity", I was told smugly by a Han Chinese official working for Chinese state security (PSB) in Urumqi in the spring of 2003. Not so flatteringly but just as representatively clichéd, a PRC Kazakh in the Ili region (near the city of Gulja/Yining) a week later retorted angrily that "the Chinese are like cockroaches: there are too many of them and once your house is infested you won't be getting rid of them any time soon!" The aim of this chapter is to locate shifts in interaction between Central Asian populations (understood in the geographical sense of the succession of peoples living in the steppes and mountain ranges of Central Asia) and the two imperial states that were to lay the framework for 20th and 21st century socio-political realities. This I do by tracing both historical continuities in frontier policies (such as settlement policies, military control, and local elite co-optation) and the tremendous disruption caused by the Sino-Russian concatenation of two fundamentally different conceptions of boundaries and territorial sovereignty. The Central Asian borderlands thus created in the political sense in the late 19th

century will become the focus of my discussion as soon as they begin to figure in historical documents dealing with local lives at the interface of both imperial states; I shall then move away from the necessary state bias inherent in state histories and attempt to localise discourses involving borderlanders themselves.

Cognitively, this region, so often seen as merely a peripheral frontier of inhospitable conditions (the *res nullius*), has undergone a number of fundamental representational shifts over time, nearly all of these bearing strong connotations of the exotic and liminal, the dangerous and the alien: from representing a wilderness inhabited by the lethally barbarian, nomadic Other, on through nearly two centuries of representing an area where peoples were to be subjugated militarily and ideologically for various reasons, and finally to an area promising both vast riches but also a vaguely understood ethnic and religious tinderbox. At times seen as an area connecting vast trade networks; at times known only to but a few frontier commanders and their troops, in effect exiled from civilization; at times the centre of colonial ambition and ideological principle, and until very recently off-limits to all but a select few outsiders – mainly military advisors, Soviet ethnographers, and the respective political centre's bureaucrats. However, as I will show in this chapter's final section, traditional identities and their expression in what were later termed 'Kyrgyz' and 'Tajik' (Pamiri) loyalties were to play a fundamental role in the following common socialist period of control over this region that over the pre-socialist period (imperial tsarist in Russia, dynastic/Republican in China) evolved from a vaguely defined frontier into a Borderland.

3.1 Imperial Frontier Relations in Central Asia

Contrary to contemporary historiographies mobilised to legitimate today's respective states' and ethnic groups' claims to control over Central Asian spaces, neither Xinjiang nor the Central Asian Republics have a long history of existence either as administrative-territorial entities or as homelands for groups living there today. If Uighurs or Kazakhs in Xinjiang claim that they have been the target for oppression and exploitation by Chinese invaders for centuries if not millennia then this represents but one side of a much more intricate historical mode of interaction in this region that has been neither linear nor inevitable in the deterministic sense. Rather, a host of symbiotic and reactive relationships have characterised discourses of control and frontier policies throughout the periods in which non-local political actors (such as dynastic China but also steppe empires and nomadic raiders based outside the immediate region) have found themselves moved to interact with ever-changing local political entities (such as oasis qaghanates). Understanding present-day historiographies (be they state legitimising or in form of ethnogenetic myths such as the Kyrgyz Manas epic) necessitates a discussion of the historical depth of this interaction; often such discussions limit themselves to focusing on the late dynastic period of Qing China (starting in the late 17th century), and indeed, as James Millward forcefully argues, "many of the legacies of Qing conquest 250 years ago are still playing out: in Xinjiang today, many economic, political, demographic, commercial and ethnic issues are structurally linked to policies of the Qing era" (2000:121). However, the vague frontier zone of Central Asia has figured in Chinese conceptions of state power and sovereignty for much longer and I believe that a brief glance at a selection of earlier modes of interaction will help us approach an understanding of how power was negotiated at and beyond the limits of Empire.

Imperial China's Traditional Frontier Discourses

The building of walls, which in China has a 2500 year history, served to organise the orbit of Chinese 'civilisation' around an imperial centre and represent it as a cultural space surrounded by oceans and, beyond concentric circles of diminishing civilisation, 'barbaric' peripheral peoples[100], and thereby "constructs China as a single and unified Other, its surface marked, but not divided by, dykes and dams" (Hay 1994:11). Furthermore, the importance of the regulation of units of land "was one of the main political, economic and culturally significant and symbolic acts of government. It was one of the means by which the state claimed legitimacy [...] and all space was *civilized* space, organized space" (Yates 1994:62). Traditionally in dynastic China, the observance of Confucian ideals[101] was synonymous with its obligation towards the stability of the unified state and thus "boundaries were perceived to

[100] According to Naquin and Rawski (1987:127), there was further differentiation between 'inner barbarians' (*shu*: 'ripe' or 'cooked'), those peoples just beyond the frontier or within the frontier zone who employed semi-agriculture, and 'outer barbarians' (*sheng*: 'raw' or 'uncooked'), the pastoral nomad society of the steppe. See also Lattimore (1968:377).

[101] Hsü stresses the social and political obligations of Confucian rulers by stating that they "be moral, virtuous, and attentative to the needs of [their] subjects [...] and to follow the good precedents of the past; [they] should not run counter to traditions and social customs [...]. To neglect these restraints would be to justify remonstration by the censors or a *coup d'état* or even a rebellion" (2000:46).

form an interlocking and integrated structure that had to be maintained in order for the Qin [founders of China] to fulfil its role as unifier of the world and harmonizer of the cosmos" (Yates 1994:79). Preserving the order of the cosmos as formally dictated by *tianxia* entailed maintaining the balance between 'the Chinese' and 'the barbarians' and this meant preserving a boundary between the Chinese way of life and the non-Chinese way: "The preservation of territory depends on walls; the preservation of walls depends on arms. The preservation of arms depends on men, and the preservation of men depends on grain. Therefore, unless a territory is brought under cultivation, its walls will not be secure" (*The Book of Master Guan*, translated by Ricket and as quoted in Hay 1994:13).

Walls had thus become a paradigmatic symbol for the differentiation of the state from the steppe, agriculture from pastoralism, and hence the frontier region between northern China and the nomadic peoples of the steppe acquired a new systematic connection: the frontier resembled a bipolar region of semi-agriculturalism and semi-pastoralism, "an in-between, border world of the Inner Asian Frontier itself – a world permeated by the influences of both China and the steppe but never permanently mastered by either" (Lattimore 1951:468). In northern China, this frontier zone is ecologically defined by a critical watershed with the rivers to the south flowing into the Yellow River and the streams to the north generally losing themselves inland and making agriculture increasingly difficult and dependent on sporadic rainfall. Ultimately, this zone then gives way to the Mongolian grasslands where herding becomes the only rational economy. In Turkestan[102], the vast and intimidating distances involved in travel between the oases led to a far deeper frontier zone: "In the nearer territory [of Gansu and Ningxia within the Great Wall] the mass of China is close enough to dominate each oasis-like area separately [...]. In Chinese Turkestan the potency of China is diminished by the greater distance, with the result that the influence of China over any one oasis has historically tended to be less important than the separateness of each oasis from other similar oases" (Lattimore 1951:502).

Expansion and Integration

As regards attempts by early Confucian China to integrate the frontier periphery into the Chinese orbit, these geographical and ecological considerations form the crux of frontier discourses of control. According to Lattimore (1968:380), three central strategies were of central concern: *First*, because the radius of military action was much greater than that of the civil administration, military hegemony divided the frontier into two areas. On the one hand, an inner frontier where conquest and occupation was feasible due to the presence of cultivatable land and state-supporting resources and, on the other hand, an outer frontier where occupation became astronomically expensive and precarious and thus was only of interest to the state due to its strategic importance for the inner frontiers it surrounded. *Second*, because civil administration in the Confucian system possessed a regional rather

[102] Turkestan is the most appropriate historical term for the region that today encompasses Xinjiang and most of Central Asia; 'Chinese Turkestan' in this case then refers to Xinjiang prior to its ultimate conquest in the 18th century.

than a national character, the solidity of the state was guaranteed, or in times of dynastic decay threatened, by the duplication of similar administrations from region to region. This "multiplication of the centre" (Schmidt-Glinzer 1997:33) was also evident in the fact that the senior bureaucrat of a region resembled 'a minor emperor'. Nevertheless, the posting of Chinese civil administrators to frontier regions was often seen as punishment in the form of exile and these individuals' loyalties to the imperial centre were frequently less than staunch. The danger arising from these potentially subversive frontier commanders constituted itself in the threat they represented to the Confucian cosmic order and often it was from them that the centre experienced most challenges to its authority. As Naomi Standen notes, "frontier lords acknowledged the overlordship, however nominal, of one (or more) central ruler, whom they thus acknowledged as their superior [but] only while it suited them; their allegiance could change if it seemed advantageous" (1999:21). *Third*, the economic interaction of the frontier areas with the rest of China was regional in nature[103]. Due to this regionalisation, the inhabitants of the frontier were the main benefactors of economic transactions in the frontier areas. However, "the business in which they engaged, whether farming or trade, contributed more to the barbarian community than it did to the Chinese community" (Lattimore 1951:240), thus explaining why frontier Chinese, especially in times of political turmoil and poor markets in China proper, often affiliated themselves quite readily with the 'barbarians'. The only gain for the centre was political in nature and consisted of the imperial court maintaining an economic hold over the frontier peoples. From a systemic point of view, however, the drawbacks for the centre were, especially in times of a perceived increased threat from nomadic invasion, immense: it was precisely this 'creolisation' or hybridisation which was so contrary to Confucian concepts of 'the proper way of doing things' that led Chinese authorities at the centre of power not only to fear the nomadic peoples' capabilities of adaptation but also to attempt to restrict the interaction of these people with the Chinese in the borderlands. In other words, "the Great Wall of China for centuries not only attempted to hold back invasion but to limit the spread of its own people [so as to prevent their breaking] away from the main body of the nation" (Lattimore 1951:206) – a discourse of control aimed at both the domestic *and* the alien zones of the frontier and, thus, representative of a form of Borderland process tying both sides together from the perspective of the centre.

Symbiotic Relationships

Such discourses and the expansion of China into new and culturally alien areas was, in turn, to have immense effects on the centre itself. Expansion was propelled by the official policy of integrating the non-Chinese population by giving members of the tribal elite in the frontier regions positions in the local bureaucracy[104]. Indeed, "the expansionistic frontier policy [...] was always also accompanied by policies of internal politics. Thus, the families of the victims of wars on the frontier were awarded with military grades, as were the 'barbarian' leaders who had subjected themselves to the state. The conflict between the world of the

[103] The markets of China were mainly concentrated to the south where rivers and easy terrain simplified the transportation of goods and minimised costs.

[104] A surprisingly similar strategy has been used throughout Chinese history, including during the Qing dynasty and even in times of the PRC.

nomads and the agriculturist settlers on China's northern frontiers [...] remained an element of Chinese frontier and foreign policy until the nomadic peoples either disappeared, were assimilated, or were incorporated *within* the boundaries of the expanding empire" (Schmidt-Glinzer 1997:94, my translation, emphasis added). However, expansion of the state was seen as a mixed blessing: on the one hand, by extending the depth of the periphery, that is, pushing the frontier further away from the centre, the state's stability and security would be increased. On the other hand, the more extended and thus the more tenuous the hold over the frontier, the higher the cost would prove to be to maintain it[105]. In times of stability and dynastic viability (when the imperial administration within China proper was largely uncontested), the effort of allocating sufficient resources to maintain these frontier policies was rewarded with relative stability along the frontier. Yet in times of internal turmoil, often linked with but not solely dependent on the economic strain placed on the Chinese population, maintaining these frontier policies was too great an economic burden for the imperial administration. It seems to be a fact that "Chinese dynasties did not normally weaken along the Frontier until they had first decayed at the core" (Lattimore 1951:125). The complex interplay between core and periphery from the Han dynasty (that ended in 220 CE) until the last conquest of China by a foreign people, the Manchu, in 1644 has invariably always led to ever-increasing tensions along the frontier and, ultimately, the implosion of Chinese control over these areas. The interest that successive Chinese dynasties have had in favouring the view of the northern frontiers as rigid, static boundaries to include that which was truly Chinese and exclude whatever could not be fitted into this mould neither realistically represents historical events nor the social and economic reality of the inhabitants, both Chinese and non-Chinese, of this frontier.

Turkestan as a Frontier

By the end of the Han dynasty, the uneasy balance of power along China's northern frontiers had more or less remained intact but the civil wars in China proper that were to last from the third century CE until the consolidation of 'reunified' China under the auspices of the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE) had given rise to numerous nomadic states founded by foreign dynasties and based on the Han style of rulership. However, "the traditional view of the fall of the Han dynasty assumes that it was overrun by tribal peoples pressing at its frontiers [and] portrays the border tribes as merely waiting for China's defenses to weaken before beginning wars of conquest that would establish direct control over north China" (Barfield 1989:98). As shown above, this view does not reflect historical reality: it was not the weakening of frontier defences which led to nomadic incursions but rather the end of the subsidies and trade advantages coming out of China which adversely affected the internal structures of the nomadic empires all along the northern frontier and thereby causing massive upheavals in the power relationships between individual groups. For our purposes here, a brief overview of the interaction between the originally nomadic Uighurs and Tang China will reveal important aspects of the history of Turkestan.

[105] Both of these arguments are found in political debates in successive Chinese dynasties right into the 19th century.

The Uighur Empire and the Kyrgyz

The Uighurs, a Turkic people from western Mongolia and the successors to the Kök Turk empire stretching from western Mongolia all the way to the Syr Darya which had fallen due to successful campaigns by the waxing Islamic expansion to the south and west, had formed a qaghanate in western Mongolia and northern Turkestan and allied themselves to the sedentary Sogdians, who inhabited the oases of the Taklamakan and Tarim Basin and were in nominal control of the Pamirs (Badakhshan) and parts of today's Tajikistan. The Uighurs, while still at this point in time (the 8th century CE) mainly pastoralist nomads, were considerably more sedentarised than their predecessors and had a capital city at or near Karakorum[106] in Mongolia. Traditional histories cast the steppe nomads as dangerous enemies whose ultimate aim was the subjugation and humiliation of China, but the case of the Uighurs is a good counterexample. According to Barfield, "from the very beginning, the Uighurs provided support for a weakening Tang dynasty, preserving it from internal rebellions and foreign invasions" (1989:150), in particular protecting Tang China's frontiers along the Great Wall, Gansu, and Chinese Turkestan from rebellious Chinese warlords. The strength of the Uighur state was based on the military domination of the steppe, aid from China, and practically exclusive rights in the trade with Chinese silk onward to the west. Furthermore, "marriage alliances bound China and the steppe together [and] made the Uighurs rich" (Barfield 1989:153). This wealth led, in the mid-ninth century, to the overthrow of the Uighur qaghanate by the Kyrgyz, a Turkic people who at that time lived in southern Siberia along the Yenisei in what is today Russian Tannu Tuva and who exploited the Uighurs' increased reliance on non-mobile sedentarisation. After their overthrow, the Uighurs fled to Gansu and Turkestan where they established the Qocho kingdom around Turpan in the Tarim Basin, and later spread to Kucha and present-day Kashgar and became thoroughly sedentarised. The Uighur introduction into Turkestan came at a time when Tang China was consolidating its suzerainty over the Iranian-influenced Sogdian oasis-states in wider Central Asia. Thus, the Uighurs became members of Tang China, their kingdom rapidly becoming "an amalgam of an indigenous people and civilization [...] practicing agriculture of the irrigated oasis type, and professing one or other of the three religions (Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Nestorian Christianity) and cultures brought along the Silk Road, with a ruling layer of originally nomadic Uighurs who Turkicized it linguistically but merged with it culturally" (Soucek 2000:81).

Following the fall of the Uighur empire, it was only a matter of a couple decades until Tang China fell. As Barfield notes, "the [Kyrgyz] victory did not lead to a [Kyrgyz] empire, but to anarchy. All the Turkish empires had relied on China to finance their state formation [but the Kyrgyz] had no conception of how this relationship worked and made no attempt to deal with China [and thus] the internal order which the Uighurs had maintained on the steppe was ended" (1989:164). However smugly the Chinese court must have reacted to the news of

[106] The Mongols were later to adopt many of the Uighur's innovations in steppe governance and administration; among other things they also chose the vicinity of the old Uighur capital to be their new capital city.

the Uighurs' defeat, it was not long before they realised that the severing of their symbiotic relationship now made them vulnerable to internal revolt (which the Uighurs had so effectively helped to quell) and raiding by Manchurian steppe Khitan. Without the support of nomadic warriors, insurrections along the frontier became legion and the Tang dynasty fell. The years between the end of the Tang dynasty and the *tour de force* reunification of China under the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279-1368 CE) were marked by incessant internecine warfare within China and the resurgence of the importance of internal Chinese boundaries. During this period, Turkestan witnessed the rise and fall of a multitude of states, generally tribute states to China, with the tensions between sedentarised oasis-dwellers and nomadic steppe warriors a constant source of instability. In many cases, trade was used as an economic weapon to prevent nomadic peoples from overly threatening the oasis states and keeping them in a state of uneasy dependence. Khazanov portrays the example of the Kazakhs/Kyrgyz as typical of this time: "several times there was issued the most august edict that the population of Turkestan should have no trading deals with Kazakh merchants and that no reciprocal visits and journeys of merchants between them and the inhabitants of these lands should take place" (1984:207).

In the case of China in this period, subjected nomads were often the victims of a "policy of forcible assimilation in its most extreme manifestations, forcing them into marriage with Chinese" (Khazanov 1984:218). At the same time, the states of Turkestan very often lacked sufficient Chinese protection and the subjugation of oases by nomadic peoples did not require great strength. As Khazanov (1984:231-234) convincingly argues, however, the conquest of isolated oases in most cases led to the sedentarisation of the nomadic invaders. The conquest of China by the Mongols in the 13th century represented precisely such a process, albeit on a much larger scale. The qaghans were well aware of the old Chinese adage that 'although you can inherit the Chinese Empire on horseback, you cannot rule it from that position'. In Inner Asia, the process of sedentarisation was by no means linear and continuous, but "sedentary states on the borders of the Eurasian steppes, including those created by nomads, in the period between ancient and modern times, developed and became more and more powerful [...] and the only way they could meet a challenge was by extending and strengthening their sociopolitical organisation [...]. It was only in the modern period [i.e., from about the mid-17th century onward (S.P.)] that the strength of nomads could no longer be compared with that of sedentary peoples" (Khazanov 1984:263).

Early Qing China: Expansion and Increased Control

In contrast to their predecessors (the Ming dynasty), the Manchu Qing (1644-1911) appeared to have a better understanding of the intricate mechanisms involved in the politics of the steppe peoples. The Manchus had already begun their conquest of the Qalqa Mongols before they came to power in China. This they accomplished by recruiting Mongols into their armies and bureaucracy as vassals and allies, and by adopting a bilingual system for their administration. In addition, "the Manchus also arranged a web of marriage alliances that linked the Mongol and Manchu elites" (Barfield 1989:275), something the Ming court had

never considered, in effect allowing the expensive tribute system to be abolished. These policies were retained and extended under the early Qing rulers with the Mongol tribes becoming reorganised in 'banner units', basically entailing the incorporation of Mongols into the regular Qing armies within their former tribal network but also successfully weakening the tribal ties between local tribesmen and their leaders through such co-optation, a strategy to be replicated in a very similar way by the People's Republic of China from 1949 onwards. This system "allowed the [Qing] to control southern Mongolia at low cost with little direct intervention" (Barfield 1989:276). With the disappearance of Qalqa independence, the Jungars, a branch of the Mongols living in Northern Turkestan, became a major force in Inner Asia. By the late 17th century they had extended their power south into the Tarim Basin and Tibet, west across the Kazakh steppe, and east into most of Mongolia. While the Qing government was at first unable to prevent this advance due to the effort of consolidating its power over southern China, the Jungar's conquest of areas in Gansu directly threatened Central China. By this time the Russians had already advanced into western Siberia and an uneasy alliance had been formed to guarantee the Jungars' northern flank. The Qing court, which had only vague notions of who the Russians actually were and presumably saw them originally as being yet another steppe empire arising to the far Northwest, saw the Qalqa severely threatened by invasion from all sides and decided to militarily crush the Jungar forces on their frontier. This was made possible due to the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689 between Qing China and Russia (see below), thus pre-empting a similar treaty between the Jungars and Russia. This treaty was, once again, an example of the lengths China was prepared to go to so as to out-flank the threat from the steppe.

The campaign against the Jungars was not decisive as the Qing armies were not logistically able to pursue the retreating armies to their base in the Zhungarian Basin in northern Turkestan and, thus, the threat posed by them to northern Mongolia and western Gansu remained a Qing preoccupation for the Manchus saw these territories as the key to their own defence. Hence, the Qalqa were forced "to man and patrol key border points, to keep troops in readiness, and to maintain a postal system of horse relays that conveyed news of the frontier quickly to [Beijing]" (Barfield 1989:286). With the additional problem of aggressive campaigns launched by the newly invigorated Kazakhs to the west and thus occupying the Jungar armies in that area, the Jungars turned inward to reorganise and revitalise their political and economic power. The importance of Tibet as Central China's south-western flank had increased by the early 18th century with the conversion of parts of the Jungar leadership to Tibetan Buddhism. As a result, the Qing court cemented its suzerainty over Tibet by "strengthening [its status] into a protectorate with a substantial degree of control [and incorporating] Tibet firmly into the Manchu Empire" (Mackerras 1994:34), leading to the withdrawal of Jungar troops in the face of Tibetan hostilities[107]. This was followed by Qing military advances into Turkestan proper, with Urumqi being occupied in 1722. Jungar attempts to negotiate a treaty with Russia to strengthen their position once

[107] For the symbolic importance of maintaining nominal control over semi-nomadic Tibetan and Mongol groups in Qinghai (northern Tibet) and the subsequent imposition of ritual control by the Qing centre, see Bulag (1998:63-5).

again failed due to the pre-emptive signing of the Treaty of Kiakhta between China and Russia in 1728, thereby "creating the framework for Sino-Russian relations for the next hundred years" (Barfield 1989:291).

The Qing dynasty's greatest problem in securing Chinese frontiers was, however, not Jungar resistance but once again a factor generated by the frontier's societal nature: the ignorance of Chinese commanders and generals, who under native dynasties generally lacked personal experience with conditions in Mongolia "because service at the border and knowledge of the nomads was culturally devalued. [With only very few exceptions,] Chinese officials viewed the land north of the border as *terra incognita*, the only region in East Asia that continually rejected Chinese conceptions of world order" (Barfield 1989:285). To combat this problem, the Qing dynasty went to great lengths to familiarise frontier commanders with the peoples they were dealing with, and first attempts at classifying the frontier's inhabitants were undertaken. The campaign against the Jungars in the Northwest, the objective of which was a 'taming of the frontier', was afflicted with the same problems earlier dynasties had encountered in their campaigns against other steppe empires. Two main problems are critical here: *First*, the fact of the Jungar's highly superior mobility versus the static nature of Chinese control over Turkestan. As Perdue states, it is probably a fact that "larger boundaries offered space for peasants to flee exploitation at the core by moving to the frontier [in addition to the] population density gradient push[ing] marginal settlers from the core to the periphery" (1996:770). The Qing court took an ambivalent stance on this fact: on the one hand, by supporting the settling of the frontier region by these people and thus introducing settled agriculture where possible the frontier could be 'tamed' and brought into the Chinese world order. On the other hand, these frontier regions were the least subject to control by the centre and most likely to revolt or be 'negatively' influenced (from the centre's perspective, that is) by the confrontation with other world orders[108].

The final defeat of the Jungars in 1757 followed years of civil war amongst the Jungars themselves and the Qing army "instituted a policy of annihilation. [Their general] hunted down and killed most of the surviving [Jungars] that could be found, while a few groups were deported to Manchuria. Those [Jungars] that eventually remained were given grazing lands in the Ili [valley] under strict supervision. To finalize his victory, [the general] proscribed the very name [Jungar]" (Barfield 1989:294). Thus ended the last of the steppe empires and the threat to China's frontiers ceased to stem from nomadic warriors and increasingly became a contest between two large sedentarised, imperialistic empires with the "nomads reduced to a subordinate status as internal colonies of the Russian and Chinese empires" (Perdue 1996:760) and a "changing world economy, better transportation and communication, and the decline of the old imperial structure in China itself [...] putting an end to old patterns and relationships" (Barfield 1989:294).

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[108] Perdue (*ibid.*) notes that all the major rebellions which broke out in China from the 17th to 19th centuries originated in peripheral areas only incompletely subdued by the centre, such as Taiwan, Gansu, Xinjiang, and Guangxi. A similar problem existed in Russia in about the same time span.

As will be seen, Han colonisation of these frontier regions took on a new fervour with the disappearance of the Jungar threat. The Qing government made extensive use of frontier settlers and took advantage of the pressure these agriculturalists put on nomadic pastoralists in the competition for land in their winning-over of the Qalqa and, later, the pushing back of the Jungars: aid was offered by the bureaucracy in settling disputes over pasturelands and thus the mostly independent nomadic pastoralists came under increased domination by the administration[109]. *Second*, the question of logistical practicality was greatly enhanced by the construction of a supply route through the Gansu corridor and into Turkestan. This was essential in counteracting strategies of nomadic warfare so similar to guerrilla tactics. Thus the importance of the fall of Urumqi in 1722. From a theoretical point of view, the expansion of China's permanent frontiers, defined here by the centre's ability to claim authority *right up to* the boundary, was made possible due to the expansion and replication of social and economic structures in the newly conquered territories, culminating in the proclamation of the region's status as a province in 1884. Naturally, this expansion of the Chinese system and world order into regions hitherto only tenuously, if at all, held by the centre in Beijing by military expeditionary forces did not go uncontested, either by the peoples inhabiting these regions such as the Muslim Uighurs and Kyrgyz or by the new power which was beginning to make itself felt in China from beyond the Jungar empire: Romanov Russia.

Tsarist Russia Encounters Qing China in Central Asia

Russian expansion to the east of the Ural mountains, beginning under the rule of Ivan IV ('the Terrible', ruled 1547-84) and actively promoted by Peter the Great (ruled 1682-1725), initially focused on the exploration and exploitation of Siberia. This conquest was largely the work of Russian explorers, adventurers, hunters, and trappers, all of whom, mainly Cossacks under the authority of the powerful Stroganov merchant-family, contributed ultimately to the annexation of over four million square miles between the Urals and the Pacific Ocean in just over 70 years. In 1648 Kamchatka was reached and it was possible for St. Petersburg to claim at least suzerainty over all of northern Siberia. From the Siberian peoples the Cossacks learned of the rumoured riches of the Amur region, said to be abundantly endowed with gold and silver, and exploratory expeditions were sent to the south and east to secure these resources. Nerchinsk was subsequently founded on a tributary of the Amur in 1658, an area geographically belonging to Manchuria. Conflict with the newly installed Qing government in Beijing was inevitable but was delayed due to the fact that the tentative Russian advance coincided with the rise of the Manchus in China who, due to internal rebellions and general unrest associated with dynastic change, were forced to postpone punitive action directed against these infringements.

The Sino-Russian Treaties of 1689, 1727, and 1858

Russian knowledge of China in the 17th century was pitifully limited and St. Petersburg believed that it was neither sizeable nor wealthy; indeed, "completely surrounded by a brick

[109] In fact, this was roughly the same strategy (in an inverted form) as the steppe empires had used for centuries to pressurise and control the oasis-states of Turkestan. See Perdue (1996:774).

wall, from which it is evident that it [China] is no large place" (Baddeley 1919, as quoted in Hsü 2000:108). Initial diplomatic contacts by the Russians met with little success and in 1685 the Qing government sent an army to destroy the Russian outposts in the far north of Manchuria. After prolonged hostilities which neither Russia, militarily engaged in European Russia, nor China, attempting to recover after decades of civil war, were willing or indeed able to sustain for an indefinite period of time, both sides agreed to signing what was to become the first treaty ever signed by China with a European state. The importance of this treaty for the Qing government lay primarily in the assurance that it would prevent the Russians from forming an alliance with the increasingly powerful Jungars. The Treaty of Nerchinsk, signed in 1689, was drawn up in five languages: Chinese, Russian, Manchu, Mongolian, and Latin, with the last serving as the official text. Of the six articles contained, three are of importance in the context of the Chinese-Russian borderlands (Hsü 2000:110-11)[110]:

1. The Siberian-Manchurian boundary would be set along the Argun [River], would continue along the Amur to the mouth of the Kerbechi, and along the Outer Stanovoi Mountains to the sea.
2. Subjects of the two countries [i.e. China and Russia] with passports could freely enter each other's territory for trade.
3. Deserters and fugitives would be extradited, and under no condition given refuge.

Despite the demarcation of the Siberian-Manchurian border, the general Russian-Chinese boundary was to remain a thorny issue for the next three centuries. No mention was made of the Siberian border to Mongolia and, likewise, neither was the eastern extent of Manchuria nor were any Central Asian boundaries clearly defined. Russia gained nearly 100,000 square miles of territory and was given commercial privileges no other European state at that time possessed (article 2), and China felt it had gained Russian neutrality regarding the Jungars, whom the Chinese regarded to be an internal affair (article 3). Nevertheless, both sides realised the short-comings of the treaty: on the one hand, the Russians were dissatisfied with the limited trade opportunities, in effect restricted to the frontier market of Nerchinsk, and, on the other hand, the Qing government became increasingly worried about the potential power the Qalqa Mongols wielded by acting as intermediaries and economic brokers between Siberia and Manchuria, a threat considerably heightened by the absence of a Mongolian boundary to Siberia under strict Qing control.

Thus, in 1727 the Treaty of Kiakhta was signed between Russia and China. The important terms of this eleven-article treaty were as follows (Hsü 2000:113)[111]:

1. The Mongolian-Siberian frontier would be delimited by a joint Sino-Russian commission. The boundary was to run from the Sayan Mountains and

[110] The remaining three articles dealt with the destruction of a Russian outpost on the Chinese side of the Argun, the permission of already resident people being allowed to remain where they are, and the disregarding of all past violent incidents.
[111] Other articles dealt with the establishment of a Russian religious mission in Beijing, the permission for Russian students to learn Chinese in Beijing, and the official recognition of ambassadorial lines of communication.

> Sapintabakha in the west to the Argun River in the east. The area from the Uda to the Stone Mountains in the east was to remain undecided because of the lack of accurate information about it, but elsewhere the commission would demarcate the boundary on the spot.
>
> 2. In addition to the existing trade at Nerchinsk, the Russians were allowed to trade at Kiakhta on the frontier.
> 3. Russian caravans of not more than 200 men would be allowed to come to [Beijing] once every three years, free from import and export duties.

In the territorial settlement, China lost 40,000 square miles around Lake Baikal and along the Irtysh River (later to be incorporated partially into Kazakhstan) but gained the 'security' of having a clearly demarcated border between the Mongolian Qalqa and Russia. By limiting Russian trade to the frontier markets of Nerchinsk and Kiakhta, the Russians furthermore lost the right to trade freely with the various Mongol peoples but also gained the unprecedented right to enter the Chinese capital with relative ease. Generally speaking, "the Treaty of Kiakhta established a unique relationship between China and Russia" (Paine 1996:30) and Russia was able to maintain its special privileges until the Second Opium War was over in 1861. The early Qing rulers recognised that Russian neutrality was essential to China's ongoing consolidation of its northern and north-western frontiers, and that to gain this neutrality Russia had to be granted special privileges otherwise denied to what the Chinese court usually regarded as inferior states. In hindsight, the Qing government probably need not have worried about heavy Russian involvement in North Asia at this time due to the problems that country was experiencing in its European territories. Indeed, "the century and a half immediately preceding the first modern Russo-Chinese border treaty in 1858 [was] characterized by stability and relative harmony [and] the frontier area between the two countries [remained] a backwater for both empires, whose attention had been focused elsewhere" (Paine 1996:28).

By the early 19th century Russian revenues from the economically important border trade with China through Kiakhta and Nerchinsk[112] were in a process of steep decline due to the opening of British maritime trade routes through Hong Kong, which was ceded to the United Kingdom in 1842 after the First Opium War. Russian products, often of inferior quality, were no longer in great demand in China and tea was more cheaply imported into Russia via Europe than over the circuitous Siberian trade routes. Anglo-Russian rivalry was responsible for galvanising the tsar into action regarding British penetration of East Asia: "the growing attention, paid to China by the Russian government in the mid-nineteenth century, did not represent an independent policy decision regarding Russo-Chinese relations, but was more a reaction to a perceived British challenge [...]. In this sense, Russian foreign policy in China was reactive" (Paine 1996:33) and intended to forestall possible threats to its remote Far Eastern frontiers. The Russian government, however, had only the vaguest geographical knowledge of these frontiers and the precise Sino-Russian frontier remained unclear and in many instances officials in St. Petersburg were dangerously misinformed

[112] Paine (1996:32) shows that the Kiakhta trade prior to 1850 accounted for about 15 to 20 percent of the total revenues for the Russian empire and about 20 percent of all government revenues from direct and indirect taxes.

about the basic topography of Eastern Siberia and Central Asia. After over a century of believing the Amur to be an unnavigable river, and therefore making Siberia impregnable to invasion by sea (i.e., by the British) and Sakhalin to be a peninsula, Russia realised its mistake and officials were pressing for more favourable treaties with China. Russia's misfortunes in the Crimean War (1853-56) redirected its interests to the Far East and, for the first time, major resources were invested to systematically explore Eastern Siberia. Due to the crippling problems the Qing government was experiencing internally at that time and teetering on the brink of dynastic collapse because of the Taiping Rebellion which started in 1851 and several Muslim rebellions in Turkestan, China was unable to do more than protest the Russian military presence on the Amur and a number of military outposts were constructed. In 1856 the tsarist government formally incorporated the region between the Amur and Ussuri Rivers into the Russian empire, creating the Maritime Region east of Siberia (*Primorskiy Krai*) and presenting Beijing with a *fait accompli*. Matters were further complicated by the fact that officials in Beijing simply had no idea of the geographical reality of the Manchurian frontier, as a memorial written by one of the emperor's advisors shows: "Originally the border was at the [Xing An mountains]. As for the Ussuri River and the Sui-fen River, we do not know the location of these places [mentioned by the Russians], nor do we know the location of their [proposed] borderline" (as quoted in Paine 1996:67). It took the emperor years to learn of the general locations of the scattered Manchu settlements along the largely uninhabited Amur River because Beijing officials knew little about the northern extremities of their empire.

In 1858, under severe pressure from the Russians, who knew that China could not afford to go to war with Russia at that time, and in an acrimonious atmosphere with much display of Russian technological superiority, the Treaty of Aigun was signed, the first of the so-called 'Unequal Treaties'[113] between Russia and China, a set of trans-state arrangements that were to form the later narrative of territorial loss still encountered in the PRC today. It contained four articles (Paine 1996:69, my formulation):

1. The boundary between Russia and China was to be set along the Amur River, ceding to Russia the entire northern bank of the Amur, from the Argun River to the sea. Those lands between the Ussuri River and the sea, which had been left undelimited under earlier treaties, were to be jointly administered. The Amur, Ussuri, and Sungari rivers were to be open to Russian and Chinese navigation exclusively. Manchu residents on the northern bank of the Amur would be permitted to remain there under Manchu administration.
2. The inhabitants along the Amur, Ussuri, and Sungari rivers were to be permitted to trade freely with one another.
3. The Russians were to retain copies of the treaty text in Russian and Manchu, the Chinese in Manchu and Mongol.
4. The restriction that trade be confined to Kiakhta was to be lifted and made permissible all along the border.

[113] The 'Unequal Treaties' are a term used in the modern PRC to describe the concessions European states such as Britain, France, and Russia persuaded China to sign, usually at gun point (what the British ever since have termed 'gunboat diplomacy'). The majority of them involved the handing over of large territories.

Article 1 in effect gave Russia control of 185,000 square miles of what the Qing court regarded as the birthplace of the ruling Manchu dynasty and, therefore, the handing over of this area was seen as an act of treason by the Chinese negotiators. Hence, the Qing emperor not only refused to ratify the treaty, he completely ignored its existence much to the frustration of the Russians. According to Paine (1996:79-84), ratification of the Treaty of Aigun would probably have been seen by the Qing court as a sure indicator of the emperor's unfitness to rule given the fact that the government was anyway beset by severe problems with the British and the Taiping Rebellion. However, when British troops marched into Beijing in 1860 in the Second Opium War the government had no other option but to acquiesce to Russian demands in return for their mediation with the British. Thus, in 1860 the Treaty of Beijing was signed which involved the ratification by the Chinese of the Treaty of Aigun and the settling of the eastern boundary along the Ussuri River to the Korean border in Russia's favour. Furthermore, Russia was able to fulfil another of its major demands: the opening of Russian consulates, the first such institutions on Chinese territory proper, in Qiqihar (in Heilongjiang), Urga (later Ulaan Baatar in Mongolia), and Kashgar (in Xinjiang). In addition, the Treaty for the first time addressed China's Central Asian frontier with the expanding Russian empire and called for a detailed boundary survey to be conducted[114]. Russian penetration of what had become Xinjiang had begun, the second arm of a double-pronged push into China's northern frontier areas via, on the one hand, the Amur River and, on the other, the Ili River (situated in contemporary Kazakhstan's borderland with China). These treaties are important in the context of understanding the political discourses structuring the birth of the Central Asian borderlands.

The Subjugation of Central Asia

In the late 18th century, Russian penetration of the Kazakh steppe, which until then had been slow and gradual, began to increase mainly due to the increased mobility of Russian peasants. Tatar traders spread south and were in turn protected by Russian military outposts. Russian policy in the northern Central Asian steppes was "to consolidate control through the at first sight surprising device of tying the still only marginally Muslim Kazakhs more firmly to Islam; the idea was that this would entice the unruly nomads to a more sedate way of life, especially since it was the tsar's subjects, the Tatar mullahs, who spread among the Kazakhs as preceptors and even built mosques and madrassas" (Soucek 2000:197). Russian interests were served by the expansion of the Oyrat Mongols which entailed the respective Kazakh qaghans to seek Russian protection. Then, between 1822 and 1848, Russia decided to suppress the political structure of the traditional Kazakh hordes[115] so as to remove any ambivalence about Russia's dominance over the bulk of Kazakh territory. There then followed decades of skirmishing with the oasis qaghanates of Khiva and Khoqand, and the emirate of

[114] In particular, the treaty simply stated that the boundary began in the Sayan mountains in the north and terminated in the south in accordance with Khoqand's frontier. See Polat (2002:21-2/Appendix 1) for the full text.
[115] In Kazakh, the term *jüz* ('hundred') is used instead of 'horde' (Russian *orda*). The Kazakhs to this day belong to one of the three hordes: *Ulu jüz* (Greater Horde), *Orta jüz* (Middle Horde), or *Kisi jüz* (Little Horde). See Benson and Svanberg (1988:5-6).

Bukhara[116]. By the mid-19th century, these three political entities controlled all of the territory of what was later to become Uzbekistan (then split among both qaghanates and the emirate), Tajikistan (split between Bukhara in the west and Khoqand along the Pamir frontier), and Kyrgyzstan (belonging to Khoqand) – large parts of today's Kazakhstan already formed the Russian *oblast* of Semirechie. The emirate of Bukhara was subjugated by expanding Russian forces in 1868 but remained as an informal Russian protectorate until 1920, when it was fully incorporated into the nascent Soviet state during the Civil War. Khiva was conquered in 1873 and lasted as a Russian protectorate until 1919. In eastern Central Asia, the qaghanate of Khoqand, centred on the Ferghana valley, plays a central role in any inquiry into the Russian encounter with China in Central Asia due to its geopolitical situation consisting of control over the most fertile areas of the region (Ferghana), its historiographical claim to be the successor state of ancient Sogdia (Transoxania proper), and its trade links to China and Persia over the Tian Shan and Pamir ranges.

As opposed to the two other Central Asian polities, Khoqand (that controlled the Kyrgyz and Pamiri parts of what was to become our Borderland) was, until 1840, a comparatively stable entity that increasingly competed with Bukhara for pre-eminence in the eastern borderlands and that underwent an astonishing technological development (as evidenced by the construction of irrigation channels and a considerable increase in agricultural production). The contemporary qaghans worked hard to undermine the settled Uzbek chieftains' traditional influence in the area and promoted the status of mercenary troops from Badakhshan – mainly Pamiri highlanders (Soucek 2000:192). The ensuing tensions between the settled portion of the qaghanate (mainly Uzbeks and Tajiks[117]) and nomadic elements (the Qipchaq, recently displaced from the Kazakh steppe, and the Kyrgyz pastoralists of the mountainous periphery) caused the decline and collapse of the qaghanate's political structure: by 1876, Khoqand had been invaded, occupied, and carved up by Bukhara (who had been supported by the afore-mentioned sedentary segment of the population) and only survived in a reduced form due to the timely invasion of Bukhara itself by the qaghanate of Khiva from the west.

These wars, and the internecine quarrels within Khoqand itself, eventually deprived the qaghanate of what was left of its socio-political stability and induced Russia to annex its northern territories (today's Kyrgyzstan) and impose a treaty on the qaghan, making him a *de facto* vassal of the Russian Empire. However, as opposed to Bukhara where the emir retained nominal control over his territory until after the Bolshevik Revolution, a series of rebellions (precursors to the Basmachi revolts of the 1920s) broke out that threatened to spill over into

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[116] Qaghans traced their political legitimacy through Genghisid descendants (either biological or symbolic) of the Mongol Empire while an emir (from 'Amir', Commander of the Believers) evokes Islamic legitimation and a reference to the once prestigious Arabic title of the Caliph. See Soucek (2000:180).

[117] In connection with later arguments over ethno-territorial ethnonyms (see Chapter 4) Soucek notes that in this context these settled peoples distinguished amongst themselves those who spoke Turkic (called Sarts) and those who spoke Persian dialects (called Tajiks). I employ the term Uzbek for sedentary Turki speakers who nowadays identify themselves as such, especially in light of the fact that *Sart* is no longer used in Central Asia except as a derogatory label.

the neighbouring *guberniya* (imperial province) of Turkestan and its new capital Tashkent and, as a result, Russia occupied the entire territory and annexed it in 1876, attaching what remained of Khoqand as the Ferghana *oblast* of Turkestan province. Finally, with the fall of Merv (in today's Turkmenistan) in 1884 all of what was to first become Russian Central Asia then Soviet Central Asia, and is now the territory of the five independent Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan had lost any elements whatsoever of independence from Russia and now together formed the new Russian southern borderlands to Persia, British India/Afghanistan, and China.

Limits of Russian Expansion

Russia's rapid advance into Central Asia had two reasons: "a desire to secure defensible borders and a mission to civilize its neighbors" (Paine 1996:117). The former argument, a strategy with which imperial China had had centuries of experience, was directed mainly against nomadic Kazakh and Kyrgyz warriors who frequently raided and looted Russian territories all the way north into southern Siberia. Indeed, Russia "as the more civilised State [was] forced, in the interest of the security of its frontier and its commercial relations, to exercise a certain ascendancy over those whom their turbulent and unsettled character make most undesirable neighbours [and therefore] the tribes on the frontier [had] to be reduced to a state of more or less perfect submission." (Gorchakov 1864[118], as quoted in Paine 1996:116). The commercial interests alluded to by Gorchakov consisted of the Russian government's plans to use Central Asia as a base for cotton manufacturing. In a wider context, Russian trade through its eastern and southern borderlands always operated at an enormous deficit with China. This, however, seemed to be of no consequence because a larger purpose was being served (LeDonne 1996, as quoted in Paine 1996:194-5):

> Russian foreign policy took for granted a number of geopolitical assumptions – that space is power; that autarchy is the highest goal because it guarantees the security of a supposedly immutable political order; that a continental economy (*Grossraumwirtschaft*) must be protected by a 'ring fence', a 'red line' to keep foreigners [i.e. other Europeans] out, even though the line kept advancing. An exclusion policy was always a built-in component of the Russian outlook.

Following from this, the expansion of the Russian empire could only be halted by encountering a polity under the control of another colonial state – Qing China did not represent an antagonist worthy of enforcing a limit to this expansion, but the British Empire did[119]. Despite arguments presented *post facto*, the final limits of the Russian empire in Central Asia had more to do with increasing pressure from European powers and the overall political economy of Russia in relation to Europe than with 'natural boundaries' in the region.

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[118] A.M.Gorchakov was the foreign minister of Russia at this time and one of the key architects of Russia's Central Asia policy in regard to what has become known as the Great Game, the imperialist rivalry between Russia and Britain in the 19th century.

[119] The infamous Great Game, referring to a supposed struggle between Russia and Britain over access to British India, took place from about this time onward and has become an integral part of a romantic mythology involving adventurers, explorers, and vagabonds and the role such individuals played in securing territories for 'their' empires. We shall ignore this imperialist daydream.

Indeed, as Witt Raczka argues, the developing boundary between Russia and China in Central Asia adheres neither to hydrographic nor topographic features, that is, it represents neither a watershed nor does it follow any of the numerous mountain ranges in the region (1998:374-6). The orientation of the boundary was to be north-south, hence cutting across the great majority of rivers that all run east-west or vice versa. Those natural barriers which did exist look more absolute and insurmountable on maps than they do in reality: the Tian Shan ranges and the Pamir contain several low-altitude passes that have always enabled migratory movements and contributed to the existence of a wider socio-cultural system. Thus, Russia's quest for defensible boundaries, just as imperial China's similar drive, was by no means destined to grind to a halt where it finally did but was the result of factors and trans-state policies external to the actual borderlands and frontier itself.

Picture 15: The Pyanj boundary river between Tajikistan (left bank) and Afghanistan (near Khorog, GBAO)

The annexation of Khoqand led Russia into direct territorial conflict with areas that had witnessed some degree of Chinese control and military presence and was in some cases still seen as part of Chinese territory. Khoqand at the time of the annexation controlled the physically accessible parts of the Pamir region of Badakhshan (including Shugnan, Darvaz, and the north/east bank of the Pyanj river that today forms the boundary between Tajikistan and Afghanistan as shown in the picture above); furthermore, the qaghanate had extracted the right to send tax collectors across the Tian Shan and Pamir and among the Uighurs of Kashgar (Soucek 2000:190). Simultaneously, the qaghan had entered into a tributary relationship with Qing China already in the late 18th century and formally acknowledged Qing suzerainty over today's southern Kyrgyzstan (Osh *oblast*) and eastern Badakhshan (Murghab *raion*). With the overthrow of the Jungar Empire in 1757 by Qing forces, local Kyrgyz clans in the trans-Tian Shan borderland had become increasingly troublesome raiders of Khoqand territory until they were forced to pay tribute to the qaghanate by 1830 (Lowe 2003:107).

Thirty years later, these same Kyrgyz clans were crucially involved in assisting Russian troops to annex northern Khoqand (including today's capital city of Bishkek) and, by the time Khoqand had fallen, all Kyrgyz tribes had submitted to nominal Russian rule (*ibid.*). Further south, in Badakhshan, the Chinese presence had been extended as far the Pyanj river after the fall of the Jungar Empire until the tributary relationship with Khoqand made the costly maintenance of military outposts such as the one at Bash Gumbaz[120] superfluous. However, as Garver (1981:110) notes, Qing China did retain a foothold in Badakhshan and, prior to the overthrow of Khoqand by Russia, its authority extended westwards as far as lake Zor Kul. Chinese military presence did not, however, present a deterrent to Russian expansion because, as Russian frontier commanders very well knew, Qing troops were increasingly involved in quelling unrest across the boundary. Most of Xinjiang throughout the entire mid-19th century had been going through a succession of violent uprisings and the ensuing lawlessness in the entire region had, from Russia's perspective, become a grave security threat to its own frontier with China in Central Asia (Chu 1966:4-22).

Muslim Rebellion in Xinjiang and the Ili Crisis

After the final defeat of the Jungars in 1757, Chinese Turkestan, hitherto known as Xiyu ('Western Frontier'), was renamed Xinjiang ('New Territories') and the Qing court, for reasons of pre-emptive national defence as shown above, encouraged the influx of settlers from central and eastern China to 'pacify' this strategic area. Throughout the following century there were regular uprisings by the indigenous peoples in Xinjiang[121] mainly due to the immense corruption of military officers and religious tensions between Dungani (Muslim Chinese, or Hui as they are officially known today) and Han Chinese settlers. Thus, Chinese control over Xinjiang depended on military occupation and the Han settlers required protection by the armed forces. Despite the resultant expansion and specialisation of the economy, "many [Uighurs] regarded the imposition of Qing rule as an onslaught on their traditional way of life" (Mackerras 1994:35), that is, not in keeping with Islamic tenets. This popular unrest was seized upon by Yakub *beg*, a member of the local elite in Kashgar, and in 1867 he established a qaghanate in western Xinjiang by taking advantage of turmoil amongst the Qing troops caused by the Muslim rebellions in Gansu and Shanxi provinces. Preceding this, the entire area north and south of the Tian Shan range had fallen to the rebels and no longer even remained under nominal Qing control. Simultaneously, on the western side of the Tian Shan the Russian government found itself coming under increased pressure by Kyrgyz irregulars who supported Kyrgyz fighters amongst Yakub *beg*'s rebels in Xinjiang (Garver 1981:110). Russia, in direct violation of the Treaty of Beijing, allowed fleeing Kazakh and Uighur refugees to settle in its eastern borderland so as to populate this remote area and ingratiate itself to the anti-Chinese rebels. When the Qing government finally found itself able to begin to regain control over the situation from 1869 onwards, the rebels moved into

[120] The tomb of a Chinese frontier commander is still visible at this village today despite anti-Chinese sentiments that led to the destruction of similar monuments in Badakhshan during Sino-Soviet tensions. Furthermore, ancient cenotaphs from Tang times are locally mentioned throughout Badakhshan, pointing to an intriguing and largely unknown history of Chinese military presence in earlier times.
[121] Specifically, in the years 1755-58, 1765, 1815, 1817-26, 1830-35, 1847, 1852, 1854, 1857, 1862-78.

Mongolia and threatened Russia's main communication and trade lines with China. At the same time, many rebels decided to retreat to the Ili valley and, in 1871, an Uighur sultan declared independence from China. From this base, the sultan "interfered with Russian trade, harbored Russian fugitives, clashed with Russian boundary troops, and, most important, had territorial ambitions beyond the border set by the 1860 Treaty of [Beijing]" (Paine 1996:120). Hence, the Russian government decided to occupy the entire Ili valley in an 'act of self-defence' and to 'protect Russian interests in the region'.

By the late 1870s the uprising around Yakub *beg* had been crushed and China was demanding the unconditional return of the Ili valley. After the disastrous Sino-Russian Treaty of Livadia (1879)[122] which the Qing court refused to ratify and over which Russia did not have the will nor the resources to go to war, China was able to negotiate the important Treaty of St. Petersburg (also known as the Treaty of Ili) in 1881. The twenty-article treaty included the following points (Paine 1996:161-3, and Polat 2002:23-5/Appendix 3):

1. China was to regain control over the entire Ili valley with the exception of its westernmost section [on the shores of Lake Kapshagay, well within today's Kazakhstani territory].
2. Russia would gain the area around Lake Zaysan in the Altay Mountains.
3. Residents of Ili who preferred Russian citizenship were to move to the western part of Ili retained by Russia and the Chinese government was not to interfere with those choosing Russian citizenship.
4. The Chinese government was not to punish any inhabitants of Ili for actions taken during the uprising.
5. Russian consulates were to be opened in Jiayuguan [Gansu province] and Turpan [Xinjiang].
6. A 33-mile duty-free zone was to be implemented along both sides of the Mongolian border but traders were to be permitted to cross at only certain designated points.

The successful signing of this treaty was the first time that China had been able to force a European state into retreat and as such represented a milestone in China's adoption of European diplomatic methods despite Russia's success at pursuing its traditional strategy of including articles territorially unrelated to the matter at hand (articles five and six, in this case). Indeed, it could be argued that even article two of the Treaty, which seemingly conceded a reasonably large chunk of territory in northwestern Xinjiang to Russia, was actually in China's favour: the region around Lake Zaysan had only ever been tenuously held anyway (Polat 2002:225) and the previous boundary had "been found defective [and in need of rectification] in a manner which remove[d] the defects and establishe[d] an *effective* boundary between the Kirghiz [i.e. Kazakh[123]] tribes subject to each Empire" (Prescott

[122] This treaty would have left Russia in permanent possession of the entire valley and with control over all the access routes to Kashgar and would have allowed the local inhabitants of the entire region to choose their citizenship with the provision that naturalised Russian citizens would be given full protection within China from Chinese reprisals (Paine 1996:133). The treaty was obtained under duress from the Chinese negotiators and based on (possibly deliberately) erroneous Russian maps.

[123] For confusion over the terms 'Kyrgyz' and 'Kazakh' see in particular the next chapter.

1975:72, my emphasis). The Ili Crisis had awakened the Qing state to the danger presented by Russian territorial ambitions and that Russia "was particularly dangerous since it combined the traditional threat of an invading northern barbarian people with the military forces of a European nation" (Paine 1996:165). China's realisation of this changed its attitude toward the role that uncertain boundaries could play in relation to the uncertain loyalties of trans-frontier ethnic groups such as the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. Its subsequent success in the Treaty of St. Petersburg for the first time aroused Russian concern that China was learning how to defend itself and would pose a growing threat to Russian control over the vast frontier regions it had acquired by diplomatic subterfuge.

Mapping the Boundary

Over the course of the 1880s, several boundary commissions were sent out into the field to for the first time physically map the frontier between China and Russia in the Tian Shan and Pamir ranges, following which additional demarcation protocols were signed relating to today's Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani borderlands with Xinjiang. These protocols, and the pickets that were subsequently erected along the boundary, represent China's first precisely marked boundary ever in the region. In no uncertain terms, the entire length of this boundary from the Altay mountains and Tannu Tuva all the way to the Uz Bel Pass in Badakhshan (just north of present-day Murghab town) was acerbically described; for some reason, however, the remainder of the boundary from Uz Bel to the Wakhan corridor (the Afghan 'finger') – some 300km in total – was left open to interpretation. Both Polat (2002:25-7) and Garver (1981:110-2), after perusing original protocol texts, come to the conclusion that, in effect, thus a wedge of no-man's-land was to be constructed that comprised the bulk of the Eastern Pamir range (including the Sarykul range around Tashkurgan), a total of 20,000km^2. The motivation behind this unusual move may have lain in topographic ignorance but is far likelier to be sought in British involvement, who desired a Chinese buffer zone between Russian-controlled Badakhshan and British-controlled Afghani Badakhshan (Garver 1981:113). Due to China's war with Japan, which erupted in 1884-5, China was unable or unwilling to maintain a military presence in the Pamirs at that time, and the last Chinese frontier troops encountered in Badakhshan (in 1883 when they were challenged by a Russian detachment near lake Rang Kul) withdrew without a fight (Garver 1981:111), after they had already been under increased pressure from British-sponsored Afghan invaders further west in Rushan and Shugnan. Advancing Russian troops removed Chinese boundary markers from the area and demolished Chinese military outposts on the plateau.

In his introduction to the history of Murghab town, Hermann Kreutzmann (2004) states that "Murghab's place in history commenced with the actions of early Russian military explorers who in 1891 founded an outpost in the Pamirs named Shah Jan. Two years later this was renamed Pamirski Post (at 3640m) [and] became known as a market for Russian goods and for traders from Kashgar and Osh". Local Kyrgyz herders were informed by Russian officials that they were now subjects of the Russian tsar and were no longer to take

orders from Chinese officials (Garver 1981:114). Thus, by 1893, "the Sarykul range had become the de facto Sino-Russian boundary [and while] China claimed the Pamirs as far as the line from the Uz Bel Pass to Lake Zorkul, it agreed [...] in 1894 to maintain the border *temporarily* on the Sarykul range" (Raczka 1998:384, emphasis in the original). The discrepancy between *de facto* control and *de jure* agreement was to linger until 2005 or 2006; the stage had been set for territorial claims persisting for over a century and that played a most central role in the Sino-Soviet disputes of the 1960s, 70s, and early 80s as the 'Czarist Russian Seizure and Occupation of Chinese Territory' (depicted as such on a map published in Beijing in 1978 and reproduced in Garver (1981:112)). In the meantime, however, Russian efforts to expand their influence did not end with the delineation of the Sarykul line-of-control. Between 1901 and 1917 the ancient fortress of Tashkurgan[124] was occupied by Russian troops; this followed the repeated return of Chinese irregulars who replaced Russian-appointed officials in eastern Badakhshan with pro-Chinese local officials (presumably from amongst the Kyrgyz elite probably originating from Xinjiang itself, as an interview with a descendant of one such 'local' official hints at[125]).

Frontier Discourses between Empires

Prior to China's disastrous diplomatic encounter with European empires pushing into eastern Asia, 'foreign relations', that is, avenues of political contact between China and the states surrounding it, had been instituted as a hierarchical system with China occupying the position of leadership and states such as Korea, Annam (Vietnam), Siam, Burma, and other 'peripheral' states in East and Southeast Asia accepting the status of junior members (Naquin&Rawski 1987:27-32). This conformed to Confucian notions of proper relations between individuals and, thus, the basic principle underlying this system "was inequality of states rather than equality of states as in the modern West, and relations between the members were not governed by international law but by what is known as the tributary system" (Hsü 2000:130). In accordance with these Confucian ideals the Chinese emperor was seen not only as the emperor of the Chinese but rather as the emperor of all civilization and his role "was to maintain the harmony of [*tianxia*] through the proper performance of rituals [meaning that] unsinicized peoples interacted with the Chinese government only through the carefully choreographed strictures of tribute missions to [Beijing]" (Paine 1996:50). In Confucian thought the tribute system insulated the centre of civilisation, China, from the 'lawless' world beyond its boundaries, the barbarians' abode, by minimising any interaction between the centre and the periphery of civilisation. Infractions of this system could not be tolerated by the court because it indicated that unrest had penetrated from the periphery, a sure indictment of the emperor's inability to rule *tianxia*[126]. The tribute system was the

[124] Local lore has it that fortresses at Tashkurgan (which means 'stone fortress' in Turki) have a 2000-year history and that the famous Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuan Zang passed by this remotest of Tang-era frontier outposts on his way to Central Asia (see also Shahrani 1979:24-5).

[125] Interview with a (Kyrgyz) retired People's Armed Police Force official, May 2006, in Artush.

[126] Joseph Fletcher (1968, especially 212-16)) has done much to qualify traditionally accepted notions as to the omnipotence of the tribute system and argues that it was by no means as inflexible as I have presented here. I have elected to present it in this way as this nevertheless comes close to the way in which the system was *presented* to the outside world.

mechanics of the celestial commandment of *tianxia* and entailed that under it China in theory could have no *fixed* boundaries "but rather a web of bilateral relations with a changing assortment of frontier peoples. This web was organised in a concentric arc of frontier territory surrounding China proper" (*ibid.*), the size of which oscillated with dynastic fortune. This web was meant to guarantee China's superior cultural status, its security, and its inviolability from some vaguely imagined 'outside' and was implemented through the giving of tribute (*kong*). *Kong* was a vague term and could include anything from regular taxes to gifts presented through diplomatic missions from distant rulers. Importantly, in the case of Central Asian rulers, "relations with China meant trade [while] for China, the basis of trade was tribute" (Fletcher 1968:209) and, thus, a status quo was generally reached through this system, albeit with different points of view from the different nodes of exchange that were to influence later claims by China pertaining to the areas 'where it had held sway'.

It was this system that the Russians encountered when they attempted to establish contact with a court that "mistook the Russians for a traditional enemy of the Central Asian variety" (Paine 1996:52). A foreign entity named Russia which was outside the Chinese orbit was initially unimaginable and so this "foreign polity was simply considered a frontier polity further removed geographically, and equally subject to tribute payments" (Wade 2000:31). Thus, when China was confronted by the fact that Russia saw its boundaries in terms of definite lines drawn on a map and legitimised by treaties, the Qing court decided to operate within the traditional system of vague and shifting frontiers, "which were given up in times of troubles to 'placate the barbarians' only to be retaken at a later date when it was possible to 'bridle the barbarians' once again" (Paine 1996:69). China was, however, not dealing with a nomadic steppe empire but rather an entity that was technologically superior in terms of mobilisation and determined to gain territory. The Qing court decided to remain faithful to the traditional system of bilateral relations, a tactic which actually benefited Russia greatly in pursuing the settlement of its frontier issues without the interference of the other European states. In addition, China's legal system differed considerably by placing considerable emphasis on 'acts of moral or ritual impropriety'[127] and left disagreements in commercial matters to the *hong* ('guilds') which arbitrated not by abstract legal principles but rather in terms of *guanxi* ('personal relations'). Similarly to the structure of 'foreign relations', *guanxi* operated (and still does today in China) as a web of interrelationships based on common ties. The primary consequence of the tribute system and the related legal structures and their effect on diplomatic negotiations with Russia (and Britain, in the south and along the maritime frontier) was complete mutual incomprehension and therefore inflexibility with regard to the threat posed by the European 'invaders'. Furthermore, from the mid-19th century onwards, the Qing court was in an increasingly precarious position with regard to the treaties it was forced to sign with Russia, with one of the main issues being the handing over of what was seen as the Manchu homeland under the Treaty of Aigun: the loss of this area was, from a hagiographic point of view, equivalent to the loss of the mandate from heaven to

[127] The Qing court's attitude to European legal systems was that it was too overwhelmingly penal in emphasis. See Paine (1996:79-82).

rule, and to admit this would be equal to admitting the inferiority of China's position vis-à-vis Russia.

Establishing Buffer Domains

By the late 19th century, both China and Russia were empires which had acquired a vast territorial extent largely because of the requirements of frontier defence. In both cases, expansion into Central Asia, Siberia, and Mongolia had derived its impetus from the quest for defensible frontiers. Russia's situation was that of a huge country with few natural boundaries but with vast plains to defend. The subjugation of nomadic peoples was seen as the best guarantee of the security of the Russian plains north of Kazakhstan and, between 1858 and 1864, Russia acquired 350,000 square miles on the Siberian periphery by way of treaties with China. On the other hand, China's northern frontier was the only area lacking natural boundaries in the form of mountains or ocean until it was extended to the rim of the Pamirs in south-western Xinjiang, the Tian Shan in the west, and the Altay in the Northwest; hence also the importance of the Amur in Manchuria. The Gansu corridor had been a constant irritant in the eyes of successive Chinese dynasties due to its traversability by mounted cavalry and thus Xinjiang was seen as a more feasible, and indeed cheaper, defensive option. The successful defence of Xinjiang entailed a greater degree of control over Mongolia, in particular of the territory of what is today the independent Republic of Mongolia, and Qing officials were very well aware of this (Zuo ZangTang[128] 1877, as quoted in Chu 1966:176-7):

> As the Mongolian tribes guarded the north, there have been no invasions [from Mongolian territory] for almost two centuries. [...] The security was guaranteed by the past emperors who accomplished the successful conquest of [Xinjiang]. Hence, stress on [Xinjiang] means an effective defense of Mongolia, and the effective defense of Mongolia means the sound security of [Beijing]. [...] If [Xinjiang] is not secure, Mongolia will be in trouble; then not only [Shanxi, Gansu, and Shaanxi provinces] will often be disturbed, the people in the area of the national capital will not have a good night's sleep.

While the modern-day province of Inner Mongolia (*Nei Menggu*) was tied closely to Qing administrative structures and institutions[129], Outer Mongolia enjoyed considerably more leeway and Chinese rule there until the late Qing was of the traditional 'divide and rule' kind (*yiyi zhiyi*) and served as a militarised buffer zone. To preclude Russian excuses pertaining to the non-existence of a Han population serving as a pretext for occupation, traditional restrictions on Han in-migration were relaxed and the Qing government attempted to absorb Mongolia in terms of administrative structures by establishing territorial boundaries within Mongolia that served to anchor the nomadic tribes to a fixed territory (Lattimore 1951:89). It was precisely these policy changes, however, which served to induce the Mongols to first seek Russian protection and then to invite them to help secure Mongolian independence from

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[128] Zuo ZangTang was the general in charge of quelling the Muslim Rebellion in the Northwest in the 1860s and 1870s.

[129] In fact, this is due mainly to historical ties between Inner Mongolia and northern China which had been cemented by the Yuan dynasty, which had arisen from Inner Mongolia. Outer Mongolia had been far less integrated into the following Ming dynasty and even the Qing only tenuously held the region.

Qing China, a clear example of the unforeseen ways in which discourses of control can be subverted by those to be targeted. Thus, "Chinese policies in Mongolia backfired, for they wound up greatly augmenting Russian influence in Outer Mongolia and ultimately culminated in its separation from China [accomplished in 1911 with Russian support]" (Paine 1996:281). Given the realities of Mongolia's geographical location and its geopolitical importance in terms of the Sino-Russian frontier, Mongolia was in no position to survive politically without the cooperation of both Russia and China. With Russian expansionist interests redirected towards Mongolia, the tsarist government saw its position there endangered by the imminent fall of the Qing dynasty (Neratov[130] 1911, as quoted in Paine 1996:289):

> I venture to say that, from the point of view of our interests, the collapse of the current Chinese empire could be desirable in many respects. [...] We can use these [ensuing chaotic] circumstances to finish the matter of settling and strengthening our frontiers [...].

Thus, supporting the formation of an independent *vladenie* ('domain') of Mongolia would be in Russia's interests as it could be used as a buffer zone to the decaying and possibly imploding Chinese empire. Suspicion had been aroused in China that if this be allowed to happen then something similar was to be in store for Xinjiang: the true motives of the Russian strategy of supporting ethnic groups' desire for independence in the state form of *vladenii* seemed to Qing officials to be obvious.

As far as Xinjiang itself was concerned, the original basic Manchu policy pursued to guarantee its survival as a Chinese (rather than a Russian) territory can be described in two phases: first a primarily military occupation of the region beginning with the overthrow of the Jungars, and second the expansion of control over the area after the Ili Crisis to cement Chinese claims to its right over Xinjiang. In the first phase, emphasis was laid primarily on holding the natural frontier line along Xinjiang's western rim. Logistically, if this line were broken a defence of the major cities in Xinjiang would become very difficult indeed. The strategic value of the Ili valley was of paramount importance in this endeavour because it provided access to the lines of communication between south-western Xinjiang (the Tarim Basin and Kashgar) and central Xinjiang (Urumqi) through the Muzart Pass in the Tian Shan; it also represented the easiest route of access between China and the Central Asian steppes since the remainder of the frontier followed difficult terrain. Furthermore, the Ili valley constituted one of the largest and most fertile oases of Central Asia and was the richest area in Xinjiang. With the Russian occupation China saw its control over most of Xinjiang in danger. Hence, the adamant insistence of Russia to retain the area and China's adamant response to oust the Russians from it. The Qing court was well aware of the inherent importance of the entire Ili valley to Russia's territorial ambitions and had learned much from the disastrous Treaties of Aigun and Beijing. They had also learned to treat demands for commercial penetration with suspicion because they generally served as a precursor to permanent territorial acquisitions. Their fears may be summed up as follows and represent

[130] Neratov was the minister of foreign affairs at this time.

the guidelines of general Chinese mistrust of Russian intentions well into the 20th century and the Soviet era (various Qing officials, as quoted in Paine 1996:143):

> China and Russia set the border during the reign of [QianLong] and did so again in 1864. China and Russia have already reset the border several times. Statutes given imperial authorization should be respected forever, but now Russia has invaded again and wants to reset the boundary. In the future, the more we rearrange the border, the more unclear it will become. […] Since the Russians did not honor the old statutes, why would they respect the new ones? Therefore, the Russians will not stop their invasion until they have occupied all of our territory. […] Now the Russians are arbitrarily requesting the right to use [important trade routes] in every province [and plan] to spy thoroughly on all the strategic areas in the northern and southern provinces as if these were uninhabited areas.

China had realised that in European, and specifically Russian, law boundaries once fixed were precise and immutable except by war and that, thus, treaties dealing with borderlands were to be treated with the utmost circumspection. Increasingly aggressive Russian activities on Xinjiang's frontier must be seen in this context: the Russian government expediently recognised Yakub *beg*'s claim to power and simultaneously pursued an active policy of placing the Chinese military under economic pressure by monopolising supply routes and increasing food prices, thereby extracting territorial concessions from the rebels *and* from Beijing. After the Ili Crisis, the Russian occupation, and China's subsequent diplomatic victory in the Treaty of St. Petersburg, all the Sino-Russian borderlands from Manchuria to Kashgar were opened up to Han settlement. This "represented a conscious policy to use Han settlement […] to retain Chinese control over them [and thus] prevent easy Russian annexation" (Paine 1996:181). The adoption of such practices, reminiscent of imperialistic Russian strategies, by the Qing government in the frontier areas must, therefore, be seen as a *reactive* policy and not as part of a natural Chinese drive towards empire. Similarly, in its attempt to incorporate Xinjiang as an 'integral' and inherently 'Chinese' part of the Qing empire, "long-term hegemony over the region depended on convincing both Han and non-Han subjects that the conquest [and further retention (S.P.)] was 'natural', foreordained, and irresistible" (Perdue 1996:783, my addition); thus, the foundation of hegemonic and inclusionist historiography still actively proposed and pursued by 21st century Socialist China was laid in the late Qing period and frontier policy from this period onwards evinced extrinsic rather than intrinsic imperialistic qualities.

3.2 The Republic of China

After the demise of the Qing dynasty and until 1928 when Chiang KaiShek commenced the successful campaigns against various insurgent warlords in the north, the Republic of China (ROC) was ravaged by constant civil war with many areas under the control of *de facto* independent warlords. This situation was particularly pronounced in the peripheral regions of China, and Nationalist central control in the borderlands was virtually non-existent. With the founding of the ROC in 1911, Dr. Sun YatSen, the leader of the Nationalists, became aware of the need to construct a modernised bureaucratic structure to deal with the centrifugal forces driving the border regions away from central control. A new understanding of China as a so-called nation-state, based on elements of both European countries and the strong example of Japan under the Meiji Restoration, had to be formulated (Schmidt-Glinzer 1997:198-201). Of central importance to Sun in accomplishing this goal was the vision of "the existing cultural division/distinctions eventually dying out, resulting in a new single nation able to 'satisfy the demands and requirements of all races and unite them in a single cultural and political whole'" (as quoted in Benson&Svanberg 1988:47). From the perspective of China proper, change was felt to be in the air and initial support for such new and Han-nationalistic notions was great. In the borderlands scattered around China's periphery, however, such ideas, if they ever became known to local, non-Han populations, cannot have promoted the Republic's legitimacy locally. Warlords, Han or otherwise, controlled vast sections of the borderlands, encouraged in their undertakings by the power vacuum emanating from the new political centre, Nanjing.

Republican 'Control' of Xinjiang

In regard to domestic discourses of legitimacy and control of the state, one of the most important areas for the Guomindang government (GMD) was Xinjiang with its newly discovered vast potential resources. The Uighurs and other minorities were restless and their inundation by Soviet propaganda from the new SSRs of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan just across the border was well underway (Kamalov 2005:150). Furthermore, the outbreak of the Revolution in 1911 had initially made very little difference to the way the province was run except for the fact that now the provincial government was able to pursue its own, usually corrupt, policies without central interference. Xinjiang's Muslims resented the warlords' rule because it left them entirely at their mercy. From 1931 until 1942 most of the province had become practically an independent state under the control of a Han warlord (the notorious Sheng ShiCai) who enjoyed the logistic support of the Soviet Union. The warlords of Xinjiang reluctantly recognised the need to trade with the Soviet Union but did what they could to resist its influence within the province. In time, however, the local government's dependence on Russian supplies, due mainly to the presence of the civil war to the east which cut trade lines to the Chinese interior, led to the opening of Soviet consulates and trading agencies from Kashgar over Yining to Urumqi (Mackerras 1994:88-9). Furthermore, successive warlords independently signed secret agreements with the Soviet Union which guaranteed

Soviet military assistance[131]. As in dynastic times, the threat to the frontier was exacerbated by the uncontrollability of local frontier governors. In 1944 a joint Uighur-Russian[132] uprising rebelled against oppression and declared Xinjiang's independence, naming their entity, which comprised mainly the Kazakh areas of north-western Xinjiang, the East Turkestan Republic with its capital in Gulja (the Kazakh name for Yining, in the Ili valley). Soviet assistance came upon official 'request' by Urumqi to quell the insurgent East Turkestan Republic. Ironically, all parties involved (that is the Xinjiang governor, the independent Republic, and the general sent by Nanjing to set things aright) ended up appealing to the Soviet military for help. Sheng ShiCai, the governor of Xinjiang and the victor of the confusing episode, had turned Xinjiang into a Soviet client-state, on the very verge of becoming a *vladenie* of Russia – precisely the situation the former Qing government had feared throughout its last decades in power. Until the mid-1940s and Sheng's defeat when Moscow was forced to withdraw its explicit support, the Soviet economic and political impact on Xinjiang was immense. The Soviet Union was blamed for instigating the Ili uprising and supporting secessionist ideas among the Uighurs and Kazakhs in the region. In fact, Soviet influence increased in the last years of the ROC in the Kazakh part of north-western Xinjiang due to increased suppression, or 'pacification' as it was termed, by Chinese authorities afraid of resurgent secessionism (Benson&Svanberg 1988:50-2). Realistically speaking, the GMD government only managed to assume control over Xinjiang after the end of this rebellion in 1946, and then only until the 1949 Communist takeover.

The Boundary under the Warlords

Russian policy on the demarcation of the Xinjiang border to Russian Central Asia had been formulated on the basis of topography and not ethnicity and is best summed up in the words of Colonel Babkov quoted in the introduction to this chapter. His 'inconsequential' Kyrgyz, however, along with the Kazakhs were to figure strongly in Stalin's mobilisation of trans-frontier networks. With the break-down of central policy implementation on minorities, the treatment of the Uighurs, Kazakhs, and other peoples in Xinjiang was open to the interpretation of the warlords in Urumqi. With their dependence on the Soviet Union, the dual bridgehead that the official cleavage of especially the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz represented came into play. Traditionally, "because the border reflects geographic and not ethnic considerations, these ethnic minorities have had much more in common with their counterparts across the border than with their culturally and geographically remote central governments" (Paine 1996:345), even the local ones in Tashkent or Urumqi. The warlords, while never happy to acknowledge explicit central control by the GMD, were neither interested in the establishment of an independent Xinjiang because this would have severely limited their possibilities for personal power and increased trans-frontier networks' power[133].

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[131] Officially, the GMD did not have diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union at all in the 1930s. Nanjing was not informed of Xinjiang's special agreements and would anyway have been in no position to have done more than protest them. In effect, Xinjiang was thus acting as *de facto* independent state.
[132] 'White' Russians, that is. These Russians had fled from the Bolshevik Revolution in Central Asia.
[133] All three of the warlords between 1911 and 1944 were Han Chinese, a fact that would no doubt have cost them dearly in an independent Turkic state of East Turkestan.

Thus, their policies towards minorities were always repressive and assimilative in nature, albeit probably less so than the implementation of GMD policies would have proved to be (Mackerras 1994:100-4, and Benson&Svanberg 1988:49-53).

However, despite policies aimed at repressing trans-frontier networks and avenues of migration it was not possible "to stem the continued growth of Muslim Turkic nationalism in [Xinjiang] which was spurred on by a conference of Turkic Muslims of Central Asia held at Tashkent in 1921 [when] native renaissance became sophisticated enough to rise above local particularism and reach for a common denominator, which was the historic but long extinct name 'Uighur'" (Soucek 2000:270). This portrays a typical example of the functioning of the afore-mentioned dual bridgehead: the strengthening, or re-invention, of an ethnonym served the purpose of defining a minority's identity *vis-à-vis* the encroaching Han presence. The introduction of these notions was accomplished by the instruction of Uighur refugees in Soviet Central Asia (Baabar 1999:396). The migration of Kazakh pastoralists into Xinjiang in the late 19th century due to the increased immigration of Russian peasants onto traditional pasture lands intensified the ethnic trans-frontier networks, with the migrant Kazakhs pushed deep into Chinese territory by political unrest and Russian claims on the Chinese frontier (Svanberg 1988:112-13). Similarly, Kyrgyz pastoralists found themselves on the Chinese side of the solidifying frontier for much the same reasons. However, with the instability of the Republican period and their dislocation stemming from Mongolian independence (which, in the nationalist language of the time, did not seem to guarantee any minority rights to non-Mongols) many Kazakhs moved from the reaches of the Altay to the south, an area already populated by Chinese farmers. The Chinese government had realised the threat of these Kazakh groups being used by the Soviet Union to support their own possible claims on the Ili valley where many had finally settled and decided that only a small number would be allowed to re-emigrate to Soviet Central Asia (Svanberg 1988:114). On the other hand, the last warlord of Xinjiang, Sheng ShiCai, regarded "the Kazakhs as an obstacle to the peaceful development and construction of Xinjiang *as well as* to his continued friendship with the USSR (Benson&Svanberg 1988:52, emphasis added); the Kazakhs were in the unenviable position of being *personae non grata* in both the Soviet Union and the ROC, with the former using them to put pressure on the Urumqi regime and the latter suspecting them of collaboration[134]. The pressure exerted by the Soviet Union took the form of support for the Kazakh rebellion against Urumqi aided by goods and arms supplied by the Soviet Union through Kazakhs living in the Mongolian People's Republic (Baabar 1999:396-8).

Frontier Policies in the Republic

Unlike preceding dynastic governments, the GMD found itself confronted with a plethora of new problems arising at its frontiers. China in the early 20th century was heavily exposed to international attention in regard to its internal policies. On the one hand, the

[134] Interestingly, today's Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan seem to regard Chinese Kazakhs and Kyrgyz living in Xinjiang with a similar kind of fear: the fear of them serving as a precursor to increased Han penetration of the former Soviet Central Asia as I was able to observe during my field research.

Soviet Union had developed a system by which it successfully (in the political sense) ruled over its Central Asian domains and, on the other hand, large parts of north-eastern China were under the direct occupational control of Japan. Simultaneously, the independence of Outer Mongolia, the Mongolian People's Republic, which had been brought about by direct Soviet intervention and was openly supported by Moscow, 'threatened' the stability of the ROC's entire northern frontier with the Soviet Union. The importance of a policy dealing with 'appeasing' the minorities in the borderlands cannot be overstated, for "compared with the Han, the minorities occupied considerably more of that area which the governments of the Republic of China regarded as legitimately part of their national territory" (Mackerras 1994:53).

Classifying Borderlanders

To achieve Sun's vision of a newly empowered and monolithic nation-state, a new assessment of the role of what were to be called the 'national minorities' had to be made and how they figured in the Nationalist attitude to territorial integrity, an attitude that was later to be adopted by Mao's Communist government. In a lecture given in 1924 on the occasion of the Guomindang's (GMD) first national conference, Sun YatSen outlined his vision of a post-dynastic, Republican China, calling on the strengthening of the Three Principles of the People: nationalism (*minzu zhuyi*), democracy, and people's livelihood. In Chinese there is an ambiguity inherent in the term *minzu*: on the one hand, it means 'nation' as synonymous with 'state' and, on the other hand, it refers to 'nationality'. In Sun's view, "the nation-state depends upon force of arms, but the nationality depends on what he [Sun] calls 'natural forces' (*ziran li*) of which [...] the first and most important is [the force of] blood relationships (*xuetong*), the blood of ancestors being transmitted down through nationality" (Mackerras 1994:55)[135]. Despite never developing a clear theory on what exactly constituted a national minority as such Sun went on to acknowledge the existence of five nationalities (*minzu ren*) within China, on which he then based the proclamation of the 'Republic of Five Nationalities', namely the *Han ren* (Han), the *Menggu ren* (Mongols), the *Manzhou ren* (Manchu), the *Xizang ren* (Tibetans), and the *Huijiao Tujue ren* (Muslim Turks, including the Uighurs, Kyrgyz, and Kazakhs) – all of which (except for the Han in general) were and still are simultaneously borderland ethnic groups with strong trans-frontier networks. However, despite the existence of these peoples, the vast majority of China was, in his eyes, Han[136]. Furthermore, "the political nation as a whole would be better off if they [the other *minzu*] were assimilated [...] because their presence in China militated against its unity as a nation-state" (Mackerras 1994:56) and thereby distorted the 'meaning of a single Republic'. This was to remain the single most important element of the GMD's nationality policies which never ceased to attempt to hammer out a solid and powerful state-nationality (*guozu*) and thereby make the distinction between the individual *minzu* defunct. Under Chiang KaiShek much use was made of expressions such as *zhonghua guozu* (the Chinese state-

[135] According to Sun, there are four other such forces: livelihood, spoken language, religion, and customs and habits, in this order of importance.
[136] Included in the Han category were the peoples of Southwest China who were probably seen as 'assimilated' Chinese. See Gladney (1998b) on the construction of the Han *minzu*.

nationality) and *guozu zhuyi* (state-nationality-ism), implying the desire for the fusion of all subgroups into one grand nation/state of China.

The Doctrine of the Five Nationalities was the earliest official recognition of China's multi-ethnic composition. Due to the dearth of information on the cultural and political organisation of the non-Han peoples in China mainly due to the preceding political disinterest in this matter under the Qing dynasty, Sun's policy on national minorities became heavily influenced by Soviet advice[137]. Thus, in the GMD's 1924 manifesto, the government felt itself obliged to "help and guide the weak and small nationalities (*minzu*) within its [the ROC's] national boundaries toward self-determination (*zijue*) and autonomy (*zizhi*)" (Sun, as quoted in Mackerras 1994:57). Equality among the peoples of China seemed a necessary prerequisite for Sun's vision of a unified and strong China in the face of the international turmoil of the 1920s and the internal strife evoked by the rampant warlordism dominant at that time. Furthermore, the formal declaration of the independence of Outer Mongolia in 1924 galvanised the Republican government into action concerning the advantages of inclusionist strategies to keep China's territorial integrity intact. The permanent loss of Mongolia in fact represented the GMD's most conspicuous failure in retaining territorial integrity as it meant a substantial loss of former Qing territory and an indication of what was possibly to come in other parts of the country due, no doubt to a large extent, to Soviet anti-GMD propaganda and support of borderland minorities. The strategy of creating buffer zones was no longer of such acute importance to the Soviets as it had been to the tsarist government, but the legacy of the treaties between Russia and Japan was still honoured, mainly because the Soviet Union, still preoccupied with securing the success of the Revolution in the peripheral areas, did not have the will or resources to militarily contend them.

The Drive for 'National' Unity

All in all, an assessment of the policies on borderland minorities during the Republican era is difficult due to "the diffusion of the decision-making process among sundry warlords, several foreign powers, and numerous [GMD] factions" (Dreyer 1976:39). After Sun YatSen's death in 1925, Chiang KaiShek retreated from the ideals of Sun's policies of self-determination and autonomy by claiming them to be Communist propaganda aimed at strengthening Soviet influence in the minority borderlands. In this new policy, it was claimed that, in terms of "history, geography, and the national economy [...], Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang were part of the Chinese nation" (Third Congress of the GMD, 1929, as quoted in Mackerras 1994:58), implicitly stating an increased policy of cultural assimilation not into the Republic of China but rather into the nation of Chinese, the *Zhonghua guozu*[138]. Theoretically, the GMD still promised equality and self-determination to the four main minorities as defined by Sun. In reality, however, due to squabbling between the afore-

[137] This was also the time of the United Front formed between the GMD and the nascent Chinese Communist Party under Mao, forged in order to combat the Japanese invasion in Manchuria and elsewhere.

[138] As Mackerras (*ibid.*) notes, Chiang KaiShek believed that all five official nationalities belonged to the same 'racial stock' and shared common ancestry.

mentioned *dramatis personae*, much harm was done to relations between the ethnic groups: land seizures on the basis of centuries-old imperial edicts, encouragement of Han in-migration into minority areas, depletion of economic resources, the failure to implement reforms. The GMD's emphasis on rapid assimilation of minority groups backfired in Mongolia and Tibet and very nearly went wrong in Xinjiang due, in part at least, to the government's belief that education was the best way to achieve full assimilation; education solely in *putonghua*, a language which only few non-Han at that time spoke. Summarising this period of Chinese frontier history, Dreyer (1976:40-41) states that

> in working toward its stated goal of assimilation, the [Guomindang] was hampered by poor transportation, improperly trained officials, and a policy that placed too much emphasis on education and threats of force. [...] Judged by [this], [Guomindang] policy was a failure. Judged by that of keeping Qing boundaries intact, its record is a good deal better: with the exception of Outer Mongolia, territories either remained within the boundaries of the Chinese state or its claim to them was kept alive.

For the Chinese, the ensuing transformation of Outer Mongolia into a Soviet client-state and Soviet calls for a zone of exclusion in Inner Mongolia was simply the latest step in a long history of Russian expansion into Chinese territories[139]. Soviet economic imperialism in Mongolia and Manchuria, that is, the exploitation of natural resources and the prejudicial treatment of Chinese trade interests, continued unabated until the end of World War II.

The GMD's insistence on territorial integrity was so vital to the Republican government that it outweighed all idealistic considerations of policy (autonomy and self-determination) on the minorities in the borderlands. In fact, "the identity of the minorities was irrelevant, except insofar as it was opposed to Chinese unity, in which case it needed suppression" (*ibid.*). The Republican government was convinced of its right to inherit the territories ruled by the Qing dynasty and subsequently regarded any infringement on this territory as a direct challenge to its authority to rule. Officially, the term *bianjiang* ('borders') was used to designate the territories which were home to the minorities, which included the Manchurian provinces, Inner and Outer Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet[140]. In its attempt to tie the *bianjiang* more closely to central rule and thereby preclude any loss of territory whatsoever, new structural administrative bodies were created, such as the creation of the province of Qinghai in 1928 and the extension of Xizang (Tibet) into parts of Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. These reforms were based on the assumption that the inclusion of areas settled by Han would prove to have assimilatory advantages, thereby facilitating central control and making the promise of autonomy redundant. However, central control remained tenuous throughout the entire Republican period and the government remained unable to implement any policy at all in most areas.

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[139] Despite the fact that the new Soviet government had issued the Karakhan Declaration in 1919 that proclaimed all secret imperial treaties 'enabling the Tsar to enslave the Peoples of the East' null and void. In regard to territorial acquisitions from that period, the Bolsheviks quickly reneged on this (Paine 1996:320).

[140] Yunnan, Guizhou, and Guangxi were not included because those minorities were seen as having been assimilated (see *ibid*). Interestingly, this differentiation between north-western and southern frontiers appears to go back to Han times and the first formulation of a Sinic world order in regard to international relations and notions of *tianxia* (Fairbank 1968:2-7).

3.3 The Incipient Imperial Borderlands

By no means have all the world's former imperial frontiers undergone a transformation from vaguely defined 'transitory zones' to areas limited on the outside by boundaries and on the inside, state side, by hardening internal administrative boundaries – not all imperial frontiers become post-imperial state borderlands. They did in the case of the Sino-Russian Central Asian frontier. Produced or, one might say, provoked by aggressive Russian notions of *prostor*, the solidifying jurisdictional boundary bisecting Central Asians lifeworlds became just as much a product of the Chinese need to make newly defined sovereign rule coincide with the pragmatic reality of frontier control. The borderland thus created is, first and foremost in the very reason for its existence, a product of changing state notions of territoriality and peripherality rather than due to local dynamics of interaction with encroaching states. Only in a second step, after trans-state policies had led to a mental drawing of a line on a map did local political authority (as a function of political negotiation between local elites) come to influence the underlying realities of trans-frontier negotiation and acceptance or rejection of state discourses of control in what was becoming a borderland with all the characteristics of ambivalence, fluidity, and positioning introduced in Chapter 1. In other words, the borderland was still, in this time, a potentiality rather than a social reality. Strictly speaking, the Central Asian borderland as a social construct was born in 1884 with the Chinese decision to convert the north-western dominion of Xinjiang into a fully-fledged province; thus, a frontier buffer zone between China proper and what dynastically had been understood as tributary states beyond the pale was converted into an integral part of Chinese territory. The dissolution of this traditional vague frontier indeed actually created what I term 'trans-frontier networks': a foil now existed against which loyalties and local networks could be negotiated and projected. In this sub-chapter I discuss the birth of the political borderland that was, over the decades following the common imperial period, to sunder groups of people holding local notions of Kyrgyz-ness or Pamiri-ness. After presenting the two states' evolving concepts of administration, state inclusion, and embryonic discourses of borderland control, I proceed to analyse how the new boundaries re-scaled interaction within the incipient socio-cultural Borderland, how local elites adapted to new borderland realities, and what influence these elites had on the actual implementation of the boundary.

The Province of Xinjiang

China's recorded relations with Central Asia date back at least until the 2nd century BCE and have throughout history been characterised by walls, military campaigns, and strategies of subterfuge and accommodation in regard to its native inhabitants. The direct consequence arising from the Ili Crisis was the realisation that the Qing court could no longer rely on its traditional mode of formulating trans-state policy: the defunct tributary system could not ward off territorial encroachments, and "retaining control over [Xinjiang] would require closer administrative ties with the rest of China" (Paine 1996:165). With the conversion of Eastern Turkestan into the province of Xinjiang in 1884 a fundamental and

innovative shift took place in discourses between the Chinese centre and the Turkic/Muslim periphery. For the first time Xinjiang ceased to be a vaguely defined frontier area surrounding the approaches to China proper and was incorporated into the Qing empire as a fully-fledged province.

Province Dynamics

To understand the importance of this territorial-administrative categorisation and discover in which way such a status vitally affects discourses and power structures between a minority/borderland region such as Xinjiang and the state, a brief overview of provinces in Chinese administration is necessary. Throughout Chinese history provinces (*sheng*), as the highest tier below the central government, and counties (*xian*), the lowest echelon, represent an absolute continuity to the present day and represent the core units of territorial administration (Fitzgerald 2002:11-12)[141]. The province's function has, since Mongol times, been to facilitate central command and give the state access to that most fundamental unit of the population – the inhabitants of counties. The drawing of provincial boundaries has rarely coincided with social, cultural, and economic criteria and seems to have primarily served the state by severing undesirable cultural or economic units and supporting new, *provincially* induced (and, thus, state focused) local identities and economic spheres of activity; these boundaries frequently mutated from dynasty to dynasty, depending on levels of state capacity and the degree of state intensity that imperial governments could command (Fitzgerald 2002:18). Xinjiang's elevation to this status can, thus, be interpreted as the state's desire, and belief in its capacity, to separately administrate the region. Basically, the relationship between province and central administration has, since late imperial times, been characterised by, respectively, the desire for more autonomy with decentralised decision-making and a check on too much autonomy while retaining lower echelons' effectivity in managing local affairs. As Fitzgerald remarks, however, since the 19th century the province has been "instrumental not only in administering the state but in building the state. [...] From the last decades of the Qing, administrative reformers sought to penetrate below the level of the county, to town and village level, in order to develop state structures at sub-county level" (2002:20). The aim behind the conversion of Xinjiang from a loosely defined frontier area under military central command to a province with a civilian administration was most surely greater access to the frontier inhabitants and an attempt at redefining (or, in the case of the actual borderland population, of creating) loyalties to the state through the intermediary of the province.

Thus, the focus of discourses of control moved from purely military occupation to a more aggressive integration of the region into China as a political entity in the European sense, thereby entailing an intensification of hegemony over the inhabitants of Xinjiang (Chu 1966:18-22) and leading to what Paine (1996:166) has described as the adoption of the

[141] According to John Fitzgerald's research (2002:18-19), over the centuries provinces have accounted for a fraction between a tenth and a thirtieth of the total Chinese state's population; counties for between a thousandth and two-thousandth of the total. Thus, counties were too numerous to be handled by the central state administration itself.

practices of Russian imperialism. The emphasis was now laid on keeping a delicate balance of power between the various peoples in the region so that the Qing government could rule them all and retain control over this conspicuously volatile region. The western boundary to Central Asia in particular followed geographic features and disregarded ethnic boundaries and long established ethnic ties by nomadic peoples traversing the formidable natural barriers. Both expanding empires saw themselves confronted by the reality that "these peoples had indisputable ties with each other that were historically far stronger than any ties they had with Russia or China" (Paine 1996:115). By the mid-19th century, Xinjiang incorporated an ethnic mix including Uighurs, various Mongol peoples, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyz who, generally mutually hostile to one another, shared a common overriding animosity toward Qing overlordship with periodic uprisings by every group involved directed against the Chinese. Initially, the Qing governments were very circumspect in their policies towards these ethnic groups: while Han immigration was encouraged and settlers were given financial incentives to move there, the government "attempted to maintain clear cultural and physical boundaries between Han and non-Han natives [and] viewed the various peoples brought under its rule as discrete ethnic blocs, components of a greater empire" (Millward 1996:123)[142]. It tried to protect non-Han natives from depredations by the commercially more powerful migrants but this proved to be extremely difficult considering the level of reported corruption among Chinese officials in the region[143].

Dissatisfaction among all ethnic groups was high, including amongst the Han as the government still pursued the policy of allowing only Manchus into the ranks of the provincial government with Han Chinese being forced to serve as junior officers (Benson&Svanberg 1988:40). This did not change until the late 19th century when the Qing court, under the increased financial strain induced by rebellions and foreign indemnity demands, actively pursued a policy of increased agriculturalist Han immigration so as to achieve "a concomitant strengthening of the agricultural tax base [to finance and] enhance Qing control of the frontier territory" (Millward 1996:125). As Millward goes on to note in a later publication, the system of *tuntian* was established which served the multiple objectives of securing sufficient food supplies for the armed forces by reclaiming new land and farming more intensively in fertile regions (2000:126). *Tuntian*, the settling of soldiers in remote frontier environments, came to also include the settling of exiled convicts, the relocation of Uighur farmers from the south to the north of Xinjiang, and the creation of farms for Chinese migrants and demobilised soldiers. Crucially for later developments in Xinjiang after the 1949 revolution, large parts of these *tuntian* institutions were to be converted into the *bingtuan* – the Xinjiang

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[142] In fact, this 'ethnic bloc' policy and its segregational nature was evident in all major Han settlements of the time, most importantly Urumqi, Kashgar, Hami, Yining, Tacheng, and Kuqa; all these cities were marked by the fact that they were meticulously partitioned into an Old City in which indigenous inhabitants resided, and a walled-in New City which incorporated Han officials with their families and the armed forces. As any visitor to the area can attest to, this partitioning is probably even more evident today in nearly all the cities of Xinjiang, albeit on a far larger scale with most of the local industries and services located in the modern part and the old sections being relegated to 'quaint' and 'primitive' suburbs.

[143] See Paine (1996:117-8). Many Han settlers were in fact criminals who had been exiled to Xinjiang for crimes against the Qing court.

Production and Construction Corps, the veritable 'army' of para-militaries so vital in today's discourses of control in the borderlands. In the meantime, however, increased financial burdens engendered more unrest in the volatile frontier regions, and increased migration strained the Qing's 'ethnic bloc' policy and exacerbated tensions with the indigenous peoples[144]. Nevertheless, the fiscal and military advantages overrode the concerns of the hard-pressed Qing policy makers.

Incipient Deep Borderland Control

A major element of Qing frontier policy, quite in line with the state's desire to secure local loyalties, was the implementation of 'indirect governing institutions', with members of local elites or tribal chiefs (known in Turkic Xinjiang as *begs*) being employed as Qing officials (Millward 1996:123) who were responsible for their respective 'ethnic bloc', or the ethnic group in that specific region; thus, local elites became members of the Qing bureaucracy. Central control over these local elites was tenuous at best, with the presence of the military representing Beijing's strongest claim to a semblance of hegemonic order, and the *begs* increasingly began to squeeze the local land-owning classes so severely that internally displaced and dispossessed people started to present a threat to the stability of the region (Fletcher 1968:221). Furthermore, as Naquin and Rawski note, this system of incorporating local elites most likely never applied to Xinjiang's nomadic groups: Kazakhs and Kyrgyz were subject instead solely to the tribute system while they remained pastoralists and the Qing tried to limit their trading opportunities and mobility whenever this was possible (1987:188). In regard to the sedentary native population, it was only when this system broke down that it became possible for local *begs*, such as the infamous Yakub *beg*, to assert their own power and challenge Qing control over Xinjiang[145].

With the decay of the Qing, the following decades' political instability at the centre, and the rise of warlords in the periphery, competing revolutionary regimes at the centre struggled to replace old imperial structures within the province with local elite organisations and to bureaucratise and centralise local government to prevent further involution. The aim of Republican governments was to undermine the secessionist tendencies of provinces by attempting to by-pass the province and gain the loyalty of the counties; Sun's vision of self-determination and autonomy I think must be seen in this light. Internal control over the Kyrgyz and Tajik borderlands of Xinjiang under the warlords is a topic that still awaits the

[144] I think it is important to emphasise the fact (as Millward 1996 and 2000, Paine 1996, and Mackerras 1994 do by making use of Manchu sources) that increased Han in-migration was financially and not racially motivated, as Benson and Svanberg (1988), who only use Western sources, seem to think. Naturally, the imperialistic advantages of a Chinese population cannot be disregarded, but the Manchus, as is evinced by their 'banner' strategy of restricting positions of power to Manchus and not Han Chinese, did not equate the *presence* of the Han as such with the existence of a 'more Chinese' region.

[145] Bulag (1998:76) makes an interesting case for the mechanisms of the break-down of Qing ritual control over the religious Tibetan and Mongol elite in Qinghai and its implications for subsequent Republican control over the area; thus, the shift from the political institution of a religious cult to a symbolic representation of 'nationalities unity' made central hegemonic discourse possible.

discovery of archives in Urumqi that may have survived the turmoils of those years[146]. The frequent transgression of the boundary by Soviet troops sent to 'aid' the pro-Soviet regimes of Xinjiang and the Uighurs point to a heavy military presence in Qyzyl Suu and Tashkurgan (Garver 1981:116), and interviews conducted by Shahrani in the 1970s indicate that Kyrgyz elders recalled that regular trans-boundary migration continued "for a number of years after the Soviet suppression of the peoples of Turkistan [*sic.*]" (1979:40); indeed, local memories of this time I encountered in Xinjiang's borderlands agree that, until at the latest 1933, the boundary in the Tian Shan at Torugart was negotiable from the Russian side because 'there were no Chinese borderguards'. It seems as though access for Kyrgyz traders to traditional markets in Kashgar, where furs and meat were traded, was no longer possible by the late 1930s (Shahrani 1979:41-2) but the presence of Soviet-run markets in several towns in Xinjiang (Benson&Svanberg 1988:51) may well point to changed patterns in trans-frontier trade with local Kyrgyz supplying their goods to semi-official Soviet-sanctioned traders. The effect that the Kyrgyz-supported *basmachi* rebellion had on the closing of the frontier was profound and it is likely that the reinforcement of border controls played a crucial role in suppressing this local unrest (see Chapter 4).

Tsarist Administration of Central Asia

Russian expansion into Central Asia was accompanied by two processes, both of which derived from the colonial nature behind the conquest of the territory, that were to have a critical effect upon native populations throughout the imperial borderlands. First, due to the Empire's desire to benefit economically from its new contiguous colonies, agriculture was promoted, mainly cereals and cotton, and a vast number of settlers (mainly from Russia and Ukraine, and especially following the liberation of the serfs in 1861) flocked to Central Asia, in particular to today's Kazakhstan and northern Kyrgyzstan. These areas, the most fertile in Russian-controlled Central Asia[147], were expropriated from the pastoralists who depended on these tracts as grazing grounds, thereby severely hampering their seasonal movement in search of water and pastures (Soucek 2000:203). The new cities of Central Asia became ethnically European with locals increasingly pushed out into the urban fringes: Tashkent, formerly a trading post situated between the powerful cities of Samarqand and Bukhara to the south and the Qipchak steppe to the north, came to quickly surpass all other settlements in size and political importance – after its fall in 1865 it quickly became the political and administrative centre of Tsarist Central Asia. Almaty (then named Vernyi) was built, and the small post of Pishpek (today's Bishkek) was expanded and became a Russian-controlled military town.

[146] The lack of information and materials from this period is also evident in the fact that there was not a single population census conducted between 1907 (curiously based on material gathered by the General Staff of India) and 1953 (the first PRC census) amongst Xinjiang's borderland minorities.

[147] The Ferghana valley, the breadbasket of Central Asia, was not yet accessible for such settlers and remained a less desirable region for Russian settlement ever after due to its image as the most conservatively Muslim region of the borderlands.

A New Administrative Order

The second process to affect the Central Asian colonies was imperial delimitation – the first of many such reorganisations of administrative internal boundaries. In contrast to later attempts at the administrative territorialisation of the inhabitants of Central Asia, Soucek (2000:202) summarises that

> the native population played little or no active part in this process, which only took account of a reality that in the Soviet period would play a paramount role, namely the ethnolinguistic one. Yet the life of the natives was immediately and increasingly affected by the new order. The break with the past brought about many radical departures, but two deserve special mention: the relative peace and order installed by the European conqueror in an area where internecine warfare and marauding had been endemic, and the surrender of the population's overall destiny to the discretion of a new and alien master who was an infidel.

The 'new order' consisted, at an official level, in the establishment of the *Turkestanskoye General-Gubernatorstvo* (also known as the *General-Guberniya Turkestan*) – the Governate-General of Turkestan[148], adminstered by the military governor in Tashkent and divided into five *oblasts* and two protectorates (the afore-mentioned Khiva and Bukhara): Syrdarya (northern Uzbekistan and southern Kazakhstan), Ferghana (the Ferghana valley and eastern Badakhshan), Semirechie (eastern Kazakhstan and eastern Kyrgyzstan), Samarqand (central Uzbekistan and northwestern Tajikistan), and Transcaspia (Turkmenistan); the Protectorate of Bukhara included southern Uzbekistan and western Tajikistan with western Badakhshan.

As Arne Haugen claims in his astute analysis of administrative boundaries in Central Asia throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the main aim of this new order was not to change or reform Central Asian society in any fundamental way – a society that the imperial adminstration did not purport yet to understand – but rather to attain a maximum of control at a minimum of cost (2003:30). Governance of the southeastern imperial borderlands had, in the words of V.F. Timkovski[149] in the first half of the 19th century, been proven flagrantly ineffective (as quoted in Yaroshevski 1997:66): Catherine the Great's 18th-century attempts to create special district courts and build mosques for Kyrgyz and Kazakhs, thereby converting them into 'loyal citizens', had been sabotaged for decades by Russian frontier commanders and Russian settlers in the steppe, who lived by plundering the pastoralists (*ibid.*). A new programme was to be launched that assaulted traditional frontier policies of repression and bureucratic controls and instead promoted the cohesion of the empire through civic law-giving.

[148] The second Governate-General, that of the Steppe is only of very peripheral interest in the context of this thesis due to its distance from the Chinese boundary, but it included the two *oblasts* of Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk (northern Kazakhstan); the remaining territory of today's Kazakhstan was divided into two *oblasts* governed from today's Russia (Uralsk and Turgai). See Soucek (2000:194-201).

[149] Timkovski was the director of the Border Commission in Orenburg from 1819 to 1821 and assistant to the Chairman of the Department of State Economy in the imperial State Council.

Borderlander Involvement

In order to accomplish this, and in the atmosphere of the Great Reforms in Russia itself in the 1860s[150], a citizenship strategy was introduced in the borderlands which was hammered out and supported by the host of Russian ethnographers and orientalists who followed in the imperial armies' tracks. New concepts of citizenship in the Tsarist Empire, *grazhdanstvennost*, were extended to the 'rude *inorodtsy* tribes' – the imperial Other in the new borderlands: non-Christian, non-Slavic, and (as the term increasingly came to denote) non-sedentary; tribes who in no way saw themselves as subjects of the Tsar (Khodarkovsky 1997:10-16). *Grazhdanstvennost* was coming to imply mechanisms of citizens' participation in governance, and in the newly conquered areas of Central Asia peaceful coexistence between the *inorodtsy* and the settlers, between the local elites and the administration was seen by the centre as a precondition to the reinforcement of the Tsar's power in the borderlands. Soucek's claim as quoted above that the native population played no role in this delimitation is, I assume, based upon the fact that the new administrative boundaries overlapped the territories claimed by individual kinship groups and larger tribal affiliations such as the Kazakh *jüz*. However, akin to other recent reappraisals of delimitation processes in the Soviet era which I will present in the following chapter, by using newly accesible sources Yaroshevski convincingly argues that "the strategy of citizenship turned into a negotiation with the natives' leaders [who] succeeded in incorporating the Russian policy into their political routines [and thereby] created a revised political balance on the local level and in many cases redefined Russian proposals to their benefit" (1997:70-1). He goes on to state that, in the end, such reforms had the unforeseen effect of producing networks of clan elders (*aksaqals*) who succeeded in subverting direct Russian control at local and even *uezd* (district) levels. In effect, Russian imperial control of Central Asia was primarily indirect in nature (Collins 2006:79-80): attempts made at codifying indigenous customary law (*adat*) for use in relation to the local population went hand-in-hand with legitimating locally elected *aksaqals* (often also enfranchised to collect taxes locally and administer justice) created parallel systems of administration – a Russian one and a local one – at the local level amongst the nomadic Kyrgyz and Kazakhs. Citizens of the Empire they may well have been, but the identities of locals were left largely unaffected by this and native institutions, including many Islamic ones such as the *waqf*, continued to operate. It appears as though, from the centre's perspective, the imperial administration was content to leave Central Asians in their own lifeworlds as long as the goals of the Empire were not affected by this, namely geostrategic control and expansion, new tax revenues, and economic exploitation of regional resources.

Incipient Deep Borderland Control

The expanding empire did not, in Central Asia, encounter modern state structures, not even in the qaghanates of Khiva and Khoqand or the emirate of Bukhara; these polities had not disrupted traditional structures of political life such as kinship ties and clan

[150] In particular, the emancipation of the serfs, the introduction of limited forms of self-government at the local level, and the introduction of a reformed judicial and penal system.

organisations and had neither declared fixed boundaries nor imposed 'national' identities (Collins 2006:77). Hence, for Russia at this time, there was no distinction between the Kazakhs of the steppe (today's Kazakhstan) and the Kyrgyz of the Tian Shan and Alay ranges (today's northern and eastern Kyrgyzstan); the former known to the first generation of Russian ethnographers as 'the Kirgiz' (today's Kazakhs) and the latter termed 'the Kara-Kirgiz' ('black Kirgiz', today's Kyrgyz)[151]. The founding of towns in the mountain ranges along the Chinese-Russian frontier (such as Karakol (the Przhevalsky of Soviet times) in 1869 which was to become the place of refuge for Dungani fleeing from Xinjiang, and the garrison town of Naryn in 1868) made the traditional areas of Kyrgyz pastoralist activities accessible to a small degree and it was realised that the entire area served Kyrgyz herders as pasture grounds. These Kyrgyz moved from region to region depending on current climatic conditions, with the Pamirs serving as their main summer bases (*jailoo*) and excursions into the Alay only undertaken when fodder failed in the Pamir and in winter. According to Frank Bliss in his unique monograph on the Badakhshan area, "it is very probable that the Alay-Pamir zone, divided today among four countries (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, China and Afghanistan) should be considered as having [...] existed as a single entity" (2006:45). Numerous accounts by travellers to the region attest to the porosity of later states' boundaries at this time, the weakness of both (*de facto*) Russian and (*de jure*) Bukharan control over the region, and warfare between the pastoralist Kyrgyz, local Pamiri groups, and Afghan invaders[152].

Based upon Bliss' analysis of historical sources it appears safe to state that, by the early 20th century, Russia seemed to have gained confidence in its *internal* control over the region and had withdrawn soldiers from small posts in Badakhshan and the Central Pamirs while simultaneously maintaining its heaviest presence on the Chinese frontier and the Pamir passes to the Wakhan. Indeed, there is no account of resistance to Russian 'occupation' by the Pamiri themselves prior to the Bolshevik Revolution (Bliss 2006:74, and personal interviews held during field research in GBAO); quite to the contrary, there are accounts both in the Khorog archives and in living memory of the protection Russian soldiers granted to Pamiri individuals *vis-à-vis* Bukharan and Afghan tax collectors. Relations between the Kyrgyz of the Murghab region and Pamiri, especially those from Shugnan in western Badakhshan, had been tense ever since the Kyrgyz had started to migrate into the Pamirs in the early 19th century due to population pressure in the Alay and the subsequent expulsion of individual clans such as the Kesek and Teyit, followed by the Nayman and Kipchak (Bliss 2006:194-6)[153];

[151] Late nineteenth-century Russian ethnographers distinguished solely between sedentaries ('Sarts' and Uzbeks) and nomads ('Kyrgyz' and Turkmen). The Sart category included Tajiks but increasingly also came to designate Uzbeks in a confusing muddle deriving from ethnographers' desire to differentiate between Persian-speaking segments of the population and Turkic elements. A distinction between Uzbeks and Tajiks was not officially made until the Soviet era. See Haugen (2003:30-4) for an overview of this discussion and how linguistic practice, socio-economic categories, and social organisation were simultaneously used to classify the Turkestan *guberniya*.

[152] For example, Younghusband (1896, as quoted in Bliss 2006:72-3), Hedin (1899, as quoted in Hangartner 2002:47), Montgomerie 'the Mirza' (1871, as quoted in Shahrani 1979:31-3).

[153] Partly due to conflict with Pamiri, itinerant Kyrgyz groups eventually found themselves moving on to later Afghan and Pakistani territory and were in the following decades prevented from returning north through what Shahrani has termed 'the closed frontier conditions' of the 20th century (1979:46-50).

there was repeated serious conflict between both groups and, by the 1870s, the Kyrgyz area of activity in Badakhshan had been limited to the Murghab region.

Picture 16: Sary Tash in today's Osh *oblast* (Kyrgyzstan);
the Pamir range in the background marks the entry to GBAO in Tajikistan

The advent of Russian rule was to be beneficial to these Murghab Kyrgyz because grazing rights were accorded to them by the military commanders of Pamirsky Post/Murghab where none before had been claimed and, similarly, herders were granted with freedom of travel, that is, the right to rotate their grazing land in the sparse environment of Murghab *raion*. It remains open to speculation whether the Russian administration intended to thereby extend its potential future claims to trans-frontier pastures on the Chinese side of the boundary but it seems clear that pre-Soviet Russian frontier troops in Badakhshan were considerably more accommodating to such movements than were their Chinese counterparts in the Tashkurgan area, at least according to the memories encountered during field research. From the perspective of Pamiri-Kyrgyz relations in what later became Tajikistan, a foundation had been laid by imperial governance for future disgruntlement and conflict between these groups.

Borderlander Loyalties before Socialism

The transition from ever-expanding and thus temporally fluid frontiers to hardening territorial and jurisdictional boundaries produced both incipient borderlands at the limits of the two modernising states as well as new borderlanders whose lifeworlds were now, from the perspective of political negotiation of citizenship and state inclusion, truly trans-frontier by definition. A Borderland was born that exhibited a high degree of interaction of borderlanders with one another that took place either with the silent and grudging acceptance by the states involved or by simply evading the very rudimentary border control that existed at the time. Local elites now becoming borderland elites were, as discussed,

relatively untouched as yet by actual discourses of control geared at implementing effective border control, and trans-frontier networks operated freely even if increasingly clandestinely. Many of these seem to have survived the Bolshevik Revolution and continued to operate for years after and until the imposition of Soviet border control – I argue in the following chapters that several of them (those considered beneficial to trans-state policies pursued by the Soviet Union) even continued to thrive with the concession of the Soviet state until the beginning of the common socialist era in 1949. The aim of this section is to focus attention on the realities of local ties crossing the new boundaries at the eve of the introduction of Socialism

'Kyrgyz' Borderlanders

Implying that there existed a commonly held and explicitly formulation of 'a Kyrgyz identity' can only be problematic and probably an erroneous supposition – a Kyrgyz national identity did not crystallise until the Soviet period and was then subsequently imported into China. However, the peoples who were later to be included within such internal bordering discourses did share a set of locally agreed-upon common characteristics that set them apart from others, in particular groups collectively coming to be known as the Uzbeks (including Tajiks at this time), Pamiri, Uighurs, Dungani, Mongols, and, crucially, Han Chinese and Russians. Similarly, while Kazakhs and Kyrgyz even today are seen at a general level by Kazakhs and Kyrgyz themselves as being closely related the differences between them were already evident in the 19th century (Collins 2006:72-3). Migrations, both seasonal between winter and summer camps and more permanently away from areas contested through warfare and conflict with groups such as the Uzbeks and Kazakhs had, by the early 1800s, led to a distribution of peoples regarding themselves as belonging to one of the Kyrgyz tribes ranging from Kashgar in Xinjiang, the Talas River in today's north-western Kyrgyzstan, the Ferghana Valley in the southwest, to Murghab in Eastern Badakhshan.

Picture 17: Kyrgyz herders at Kara-kul in Tashkurgan AC (Xinjiang)

An ethnography dealing with tribal and clan affiliation over such a geographic spread that is unbiased by Soviet historiographic tradition has yet to be produced and those that are available disagree considerably in their presentation of internal tribe and clan divisions amongst the Kyrgyz[154]. Generally speaking, the ethnonym itself is contested both in the oral sources of the Manas Epic and in local variants: *qirgh qiz* (forty daughters/girls), *qirgh jüz* (forty hundreds), *qirgiy* (to destroy), and *qirkir* (mountain dwellers) are all encountered, the first of which is however the etymology introduced in Manas and the most widely held explanation – its claim to the fact that the forty girls alluded to refer to 'Chinese maidens' is a fascinating allusion to pre-modern interaction between the then-nomadic 'Kyrgyz' of the steppe with imperial China's tradition of appeasement of steppe empires[155]. The most comprehensive contemporary analysis of pre-socialist Kyrgyz political organisation was probably produced by the Russian historian V.V. Radlov in 1869 (and as quoted in Krader 1971), although he dealt exclusively with Kyrgyz groups on the Russian side of the frontier. He argues that the core of the integrated socio-economic and political organisation of Kyrgyz was the family that included various levels of extended members all of which formed an *ayil* (also known as a kin-village). Several such *ayil* comprised a clan, membership in which was determined by oral genealogies. *Ayil* were led by *aksaqal* (lit. white beards) who acted as mediators in conflicts, political leaders who distributed sheep and herds of cattle, and representatives to tribal meetings. Clans were headed by *bii* (Russian: *vozhd*) and such authoritative leaders mediated conflicts between different camps and kinship groups making decisions based on *adat* (customary law) (Geiss 1995). Islamic law (the *sharia*) was usually reserved for the settling of disputes concerning actual property and irrigation conflicts and was mediated by mullahs, who were also charged with matters of education amongst the elite and who were generally non-locals due to the lack of the *ulama* (people of religious learning) amongst the pastoralist Kyrgyz (Haugen 2003:36-7). While Islam was less institutionalised amongst the non-sedentary peoples of Central Asia, its representatives certainly did enjoy great social authority in its structuring of relations in contact situations between sedentary and non-sedentary individuals (*ibid.*). Prior to the processes of internal bordering of the 1920s and 1930s that were to result in the construction of a political narrative of 'Kyrgyz Nation', broadly defined regional or non-lineage identities had little if any prominence in Central Asia with the possible exception of notions of 'being Muslim'[156].

[154] For such conflicting data see, for example, Kreutzmann (1995) who bases his material predominantly on old travel accounts, Collins (2006) who attempts to integrate Soviet and Russian ethnographers' accounts, and Jones-Luong (2002) whose sources seem to be a collage of personal post-Soviet research and Soviet-era documents.

[155] According to Professor Mambet Turdu, whom I thank for his insight on this topic. Professor Turdu (originally from Gulja/Yining on the Kazakhstani – Chinese boundary) is possibly the most acclaimed expert on Manas in the PRC and has become well-known in academic circles in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan through his participation in several trans-frontier conferences over recent years.

[156] And this, as Haugen (2003:36-40) argues, can in no way be understood as a territorial aspect of identity unifying Central Asians except in regard to the increasing presence of Russians (non-Muslim *chuzhaki*, or outsiders); basically, an Islamic 'identity' was (and still is) not one phenomenon but rather representative of a variety of identities on different levels.

In regard to the arising trans-frontier nature of a Borderland populated by Kyrgyz living in *ayil* and belonging to clans, certain generalisations can be made regarding the areas of settlement of different groups that held local notions of Kyrgyz-ness (as opposed to local neighbouring groups seen as 'not Kyrgyz') in the form of belonging to the afore-mentioned clans and tribal groupings. According to Mambet Turdu, a prominent Kyrgyz scholar on Kyrgyz ethnography and the Manas Epic in today's Xinjiang[157], the four major clans in Xinjiang today are the Nayman, Qipchak, Teyit, and Kesek clans, all of whom are part of the tribal group of *Ichilik*[158]; further, several smaller clans and even some *ayil* claiming clan membership in clans not numerically important in Xinjiang can be found (with most of these latter sub-groups being descendants of the various migration waves of the late 19th century and early 20th century). The second major tribal group, the *Otuz Uul*, contains two tribal wings (the Ong and the Sol), with both wings predominantly to be found in what is today Kyrgyzstan and non-Badakhshan Tajikistan (and parts of the Uzbekistani segment of the Ferghana Valley). The Sol ('left wing'), the smaller of the two wings, was and still is mainly focused around the Talas region of present-day north-western Kyrgyzstan; the Ong ('right wing'), by far the larger of the two, contains the Tagay, Adygine, and Mungush tribes. The first of these have predominantly been concentrated in northern and eastern Kyrgyzstan (thus including today's Bishkek and Naryn *oblasts* as well as the Chui Valley); the latter two tribes could be described as generally concentrating in southern Kyrgyzstani areas but also having a strong affiliation with the Ichilik tribal group. Attempting to give an overview of which groups found themselves largely on which side of the hardening boundary between Russian Central Asia and Chinese Central Asia at the beginning of the 20th century is difficult, but the sources presented here in this section seem to generally agree that the southern Xinjiang side of the boundary (southern Qyzyl Suu towards the Irkeshtam Pass, and Tashkurgan) became areas dominated by the Ichilik, while northern Qyzyl Suu (around Artush and towards the Torugart Pass) contained largely members of the Otuz Uul (Ong, or right wing)[159]. Across the boundary in today's Kyrgyzstan, Naryn *oblast* resembles northern Qyzyl Suu in Xinjiang while eastern Osh *oblast* (in the Alay Range) resembles southern Qyzyl Suu in terms of clan and tribe affiliation. To the south of this, Murghab *raion* in Badakhshan is dominated by the Teyit and Kesek clans of the Ichilik – just as is Tashkurgan in Xinjiang (or, rather, the Kyrgyz settlements around Lake Kara-kul in that AC).

Local notions of *chek-ara* (Kyrgyz 'boundaries') were, according to Professor Turdu as well as a further interview conducted with a historian of the Sarybagysh clan[160], informed mainly by marriage prescriptions and *ayil* membership; a traditional perception of *chek-ara* had more to do with local kinship and a feeling of immediate homeland (*meken*) than with larger political units, as expressed in the latter of these two interviews: "*chek-ara* were spaces

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[157] Interview May 2006, in Urumqi.

[158] Incidentally, these are also the four major clans that were present in the Afghan Wakhan (see Shahrani 1979).

[159] The situation further north in the Ili Valley borderland between today's Kazakhstan and Xinjiang is even more complicated, where local Kyrgyz generally belong to the Sol (left wing) of the Otuz Uul.

[160] Interview with Kanai, himself a scion of the clan from Kochkor in today's Naryn *oblast* in Kyrgyzstan, September 2005, in Bishkek.

across which you were permitted to rustle horses and look for a wife; and *chek-ara* bounded your *meken* – the boundaries drawn around and through Kyrgyz as they exist today [in the 21st century (S.P.)] are not *chek-ara* but rather *granitsi*[161]". The birth of the 'Kyrgyz' Borderland with the imposition of a boundary was not accompanied by attempts to conform to local notions of belonging or affiliation; when such notions became important to the states concerned in their effective controlling of the new boundaries, local notions were to be adapted *post facto* to the existence of this boundary. At this point in time, however, the new Kyrgyz borderlanders largely were able to ignore or negotiate their lives at a local level and in a trans-frontier way – individual notions of *meken* and the *chek-ara* around it, as well as loyalties to local elites such as to the *aksaqal* experienced little state influence noticeable to the individual Kyrgyz. The Kyrgyz local elites such as *aksaqal* and *bii* were indeed frequently brought into the administration as Russian or (far more rarely) Qing state officials but, as discussed above, this did not affect lower-level power structures informing everyday lives.

'Tajik' (Pamiri) Borderlanders

As with the above considerations of the problematical nature of Kyrgyz-ness, 'Tajik' is an even more difficult classification of peoples in the southern-most section of the Russian – Chinese frontier. The inhabitants of Badakhshan, the actual borderland with Xinjiang and Afghanistan, have referred to themselves as Pamiri since at least the sixteenth-century conquest of the lower-lying and more westerly parts of the region by 'Uzbeks' (the Shaybanids) that caused the population in Badakhshan to swell and led to increasing conflicts between locals and outside political entities repeatedly attempting to establish their rule in Badakhshan (Bliss 2006:60-3, 143-4). Although frequently owing nominal allegiance to such entities (enacted in paying tribute extracted from the local population), Pamiri groups were usually ruled by one of many local lords interchangeably called *shah* or *mir* (or *begs* by Turkic-speaking outsiders). Power and authority by local elites was based for the most part on a combination of ideological legitimacy through descent (in the Pamirs either through descent from the Prophet or, contradictingly, from Alexander the Great) and power; loyalty from local *qishloq* (villages) inhabitants derived from the *mir*'s obligations of *zakat* (alms), hospitality, and protection and locals' obligations to support the elite through taxes and military service (Grevemeyer 1982, as quoted in *ibid.*). Throughout the time of Bukhara's control over Badakhshan (especially from the mid-eighteenth century on), local *mirs* were at the mercy of rival claims of both the Emir and a strong rival Afghan state, with incessant warfare and changing degrees of sovereignty a constant element of Pamiri life; Bliss (2006:63) cites local sources showing that some *mirs* paid taxes to both potentates at times. By the early 19th century, present-day GBAO was *de facto* independent and its population had been reduced to a third of its former size (Bergne 2007:33-4); *mirs* became increasingly despotic and it is in this context that support for advancing Russian claims must be seen.

[161] The differences between local boundaries (*chek-ara* in Kyrgyz) and state-drawn boundaries (*granitsa* in Russian, *bianjie* in *putonghua*) expressed in such sentiments will be more closely analysed in Chapter 6 together with the effect of this on notions of *meken*.

It is evident that such long-term political instability coupled with extreme infrastructural remoteness certainly promoted strong fragmentation of socio-cultural identities amongst Pamiri groups. Broadly speaking, there is general local agreement on the fact that 'the Pamiri' consist of six separate groups: Shugnani, Rushani, Wakhani, Yazgulyami, Ishkashimi, and Sarykuli, all of whose designation is connected to the valleys in which these groups reside. Linguistically, there are further sub-divisions in smaller valleys that figure as sub-groups[162]. These major groups have all in pre-socialist times had periods of conflict with one another as well as (as a group in fluid internal alliances) with non-Pamiri such as Kyrgyz or Tajiks from the lowlands and the sparse sources available seem to be unable to agree on whether there was indeed a strong degree of identification locally with an overarching Pamiri identity (see Bliss 2006:91-5). However, one element informing feelings of internal cohesion has certainly been the fact that all Pamiri groups are followers of the Ismaili Sevener Shia, thereby inducing religious tensions over orthodoxy and heresy with lowland Tajiks who professed themselves as followers of the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam. The Ismailiyya and its religious head, the Aga Khan, remains to this day possibly the most influential focus of Pamiri loyalties as mediated through the traditional *pir* (Ismaili functionary, today known as *khalifa*) – due to the traditionally informal nature of Ismaili religious institutions (particularly striking in the absence of mosques or public religious spaces), the *pir/khalifa* system actually persisted unscathed in Pamiri society throughout historical periods of repression, including the later Soviet attempts to eradicate the Ismailiyya in the Tajik SSR that were to remain unsuccessful.

In regard to the arising trans-frontier nature of a Borderland populated by Pamiris professing an Ismaili faith and belonging to one of the vaguely defined Pamiri sub-groups, what was to become Soviet GBAO more or less resembled the settlement areas of all groups save the Sarykuli and Wakhani; after the boundary delimitations of the late 19th century, the former found themselves on Chinese territory in what today is Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County, and the latter were bisected by the Soviet-Afghan boundary marked by the Pyanj River. The new boundary, as yet not enforced to much degree, politically fragmented a vibrant network of economic and social exchange between the Pamiri groups as well as between Pamiri traders and Ismaili communities in the Northwest Frontier Province of today's Pakistan (then still part of British India), who acted as middlemen between Kyrgyz producers of felt products and salesmen in Chitral and Hunza trading in household utensils and grain (Cobbold 1900, as quoted in Bliss 2006:142). The sole three small markets in the entire Pamir region itself (Khorog, Murghab, and Tashkurgan) all reflected Pamiri nodes of interaction with non-Pamiri groups that had come to be established in the early 19th century: Khorog served trade networks between Tajiks and Pamiri, Murghab between Kyrgyz pastoralists and Pamiri, and Tashkurgan between Pamiri, Kyrgyz, and Uighurs from Kashgar[163].

[162] I return to the extraordinarily complex linguistic situation in the Pamirs in Chapter 5.
[163] Interview with Mullo-Abdol Shagarf, November 2005, in Khorog. According to him, as well as several other comments made by salespeople at Murghab bazaar later, intra-Pamiri trade is not traditionally practised due in part to the subsistence economy in the Pamirs and, in part, to Pamiri traditions of generosity and hospitality.

Picture 18: Kashgar Sunday Market (Xinjiang)

It was in Tashkurgan that the Sarykuli Pamiri encountered nominal contact with Qing officials and their later ROC (or rather warlord-led Xinjiang) counterparts as, by this time, Tashkurgan was being militarised and coming under direct control of imperial and Republican China's gateway city of Kashgar[164].

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, the close of the common imperial period in Central Asia in the early 20th century witnessed the abrupt dissolution of a vaguely defined frontier region in which frontier populations such as Kyrgyz, Tajiks, and Uighurs (none of which were so categorised as yet and would most likely not have represented themselves as such) had experienced state control as distant and weak, leaving local identities and loyalties relatively untouched. While the boundary between imperial Russia and dynastic China had indeed hardened over the 19th century it remained a very negotiable boundary for local populations in the incipient borderlands, and internal control by the respective states remained colonial in nature and limited to what one can term 'indirect rule': local loyalties were not linked to internal administrative boundaries but rather revolved around local notions of belonging. This was to fundamentally change, first on the Russian (Soviet) side and then, several decades later, on the Chinese side of what was becoming a Socialist boundary: notions of state territoriality were soon to be applied to the populations of these states and new discourses of state legitimacy were going to be pursued in regard to the spatial socialisation of what would very soon be 'national minorities'. The involvement therein by borderlanders 'caught in between' will be the focus of the following chapters.

[164] Raczka (1998:381) notes that Kashgar was one of three such gateway cities on the Central Asian frontier through which the newly hardening boundaries were to be supervised, the other two being in the predominantly Kazakh areas of Gulja/Yining and Tarbagatai/Tacheng (both on today's Kazakhstan – Xinjiang boundary).

Chapter 4

Internal Bordering in the Socialist Central Asias

After 1933 all Turkic peoples started drawing apart because by then the Soviet Union had created boundaries between different families now in different 'stans and so divided everybody. Before this there had been centuries-long unity, now there is disunity and more local nationalism and mutual dislike, but also more peace than before.

(PRC Kyrgyz student at Xinjiang Normal University, personal interview May 2006 in Urumqi)

The view expressed in the above citation, made by a 22-year-old future member of the local Kyrgyz borderland elite in Xinjiang, points to the importance that the process of nation-building that took place in the Soviet Union during the 1920s and 1930s (and its subsequent influence on nation-building in the PRC from the 1950s on) has had on present-day discourses of national identity tied to state citizenship. The system of titular nation and sub-titular proto-nation institutionalised in both socialist systems still provides groups in our borderlands (as well as, I suspect, in the wider post-Soviet world) with the parameters of the negotiation of political power; it also forms the basis for understanding today's trans-frontier networks and cognitive maps of groups outside the units thus delimited. Neither state invented the categories to which people were to ascribe themselves to but both states objectified the categories of Kyrgyz-ness and Pamiri-ness and made them exclusive categories; in both states a language was developed that implied hierarchy through evolution and in both states administrative territorial boundaries were drawn that mapped the fringes of national categories. Pre-socialist notions of belonging were adapted to a larger narrative of state inclusion and new forms of interaction developed within the new 'brotherhood of nations' that the Soviet Union and the PRC liked to characterise themselves as. In our search for discourses and trajectories transcending state boundaries and for the way in which borderlanders interact with their states' modes of control and battle for local loyalties, I argue that the internal bordering of groups straddling a state boundary plays a vital role: through this internal bordering state-influenced cognitive and behavioural claims are made at the local level and lead, as discussed in Chapter 1[165], to nested norms that serve to embed

[165] See in particular Figure 3 in Chapter 1. The elements of this figure will be re-applied to the borderlands analysed here in Figure 8 below.

collective identities within the specific socio-cultural environment of the respective state. This chapter will discuss the parameters of these norms and how they have led to different focal points for loyalties in the segments of the Kyrgyz and Pamiri Borderlands.

Elsewhere I have stated that discourses of control tend to portray a state's boundaries as contiguous with its nations' boundaries, i.e., that ideally domestic state-internal differences should pale before trans-state differences. Throughout this chapter I pursue answers to the question as to how the socialist period engineered perceptions of vaguely defined local-level affiliation in a vaguely defined territory to result in the strongly defined, present-day national consciousness of Kyrgyz and Tajik/Pamiri borderlanders where state boundaries figure prominently in local cognitive ascriptions of nationality. We shall find that the language of nationality with its vocabulary of territoriality, titularity, and indigenisation was used by Central Asian peoples to contest internal boundary-drawing and to stake local claims in the acquisition of resources for their respective regions. It is my contention that this language is still used by people today in their positioning of themselves in relation to national identity and state loyalty. The following citation that I have taken from a conversation with a Pamiri woman working in Dushanbe is important because it expresses such categories of belonging in the language pursued by the Soviet state but, in this case, subverts it by reapplying the Stalinist criteria for nationhood (to be discussed further below) to a group deprived of highest-level national titularity throughout the Soviet period[166]:

> We Pamiri are an independent *natsionalnost* [nationality], not just a *narod* [people] belonging to the Tajik *natsiya* [nation]. We aren't feudal primitives scratching around in the dust but neither are we like the Tajiks: we have different languages, a different religion, we live in mountains rather than in the lowlands and practice a different way of life, our dress is different just as our traditions are different – women are much freer in Badakhshan than they are in Tajikistan and our men don't practice polygamy. Actually, we believe in equality for everybody, also equality for Pamiri and Tajiks, but there truly are no elements in common between us from Badakhshan and those from the rest of the state – we are in truth neighbours but not brothers.

To be able to place this in its context, the first part of this chapter deals in an in-depth manner with the ideological foundations of nationality policy in socialist systems. Only by understanding the way in which socialist regimes dealt with national matters can we understand how concepts of national belonging inform processes in today's wider Borderland. In order to come to terms with the conflicting categories of nation and state and the relationship between the two, it is important to first deal with these individual parameters and the way in which they have served as the basic structural elements of discourses of control and locally held notions of loyalty. Throughout this chapter I attempt to find a balance between state-level policy designed to both control the periphery and limit its borderlands' points of reference and identity that transcend the state's boundaries and local-level acceptance of such policies, and the influence the periphery has had on the evolving narrative of inclusion and exclusion. I argue that understanding how the Soviet and Chinese socialist regimes defined the contents and limits of national awareness is crucial to an

[166] Interview with Aziza (a Pamiri resident in Dushanbe), November 2005, in Dushanbe.

understanding of frontier dynamics. If the pre-socialist period did not overly concern itself with borderlanders' socio-cultural lifeworlds, the socialist period in both states started out with a fundamental claim by both states to centrally include these borderlanders' lifeworlds into a greater narrative of statehood and resulted in a cognitive reorientation towards state membership rather than trans-state Borderland membership.

State of the Literature

From the perspective of the post-1991 ex-Soviet world and with the benefit of hindsight, it is striking that the entirety of those titular nations defined by Soviet scholarship and policy have come to be independent states with the vast majority of their boundaries unaltered since the delimitation processes of the 1920s and 30s – states which in most cases, and in all Central Asian instances, have had no history of pre-socialist statehood. The scholarly literature on the uniqueness of this nationalising process has, generally speaking, adopted two approaches to explain how the Soviet Union acted as midwife in this process. One school of thought, propagated mainly by an older generation of former Sovietologists and often presenting us with ideologically informed scientific debates, portrays the Soviet regime as an imperialistic 'breaker of nations' subjugating its 'colonies' to despotic, totalitarian, and top-down governance from Moscow and thereby creating narratives of oppression and powerlessness in the periphery of the Soviet 'prison of peoples'[167]. This school has regarded the National Question and its implementation as an instrument by the regime to divide and rule its restless minorities and prevent them from forming larger, potentially subversive alliances between groups militating against Soviet rule; the policies leading to the categorisation and territorialisation of ethnic groups is seen as an insidious plan to disrupt pre-Soviet identities and loyalties and to remould peoples into pious Soviet citizens by stripping them of their traditional lives. As a logical conclusion to this train of thought, today's nations and states in the post-Soviet space are 'rediscovering' their true selves and avid to find their way back to some form of pre-Soviet community.

The second school, evolving largely in the late 1990s and basing many of its observations upon actual fieldwork rather than on publications by think-tanks and interest groups, has taken a different approach and focused on the interactivity and participatory aspects of Soviet life on the ground. Scholars such as Francine Hirsch (2005), Robert J. Kaiser (1994), Andrea Chandler (1998), Arne Haugen (2003), Pauline Jones-Luong (2002), Kathleen Collins (2006), and Adeeb Khalid (2007) have stressed that coercion, force, and propaganda have played but one role and that processes of negotiation and accommodation by both the centre and the periphery have been central to the evolution of the Soviet system. Here we also find numerous case studies conducted since the collapse of the Soviet Union that aim at uncovering themes as diverse as the influence of *samizdat* (unauthorised publications) on public opinion, intra-ethnic divisions and urban dispossession, Islamic

[167] See for example Robert Conquest (1970, *The Nation Killers: The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities*. London: Macmillan) and Hélène Carrère d'Encausse (1979, *Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Socialist Republics in Revolt*. New York: Newsweek Books).

coexistence and proxy religiosity, and clan and *kolkhoz* loyalties[168]. It is this second evolving approach to Soviet processes and the effects these have had on post-Soviet discourses of bordering and belonging that informs this dissertation, and I contend that the existence or absence of trans-frontier networks and their possible connection to the rediscovery and/or renegotiation of Borderland unity can only be approached from a differentiated view of the way in which nationalities in the borderlands negotiate their loyalties with 'their' states.

This is all the more pertinent when we consider that the state of the literature across the boundary in China is just as polarised, albeit with different actors taking stances on ideological matters. Here, the state and its state-sponsored research, along with a majority of outside scholars *critical* of the PRC's policies on minorities, propagate the 'success effect' of heavy-handed central control over borderland nationalities' loyalties and sense of belonging. Contrary and less ideologically influenced opinions are voiced by scholars such as Dru Gladney (2004), Colin Mackerras (1994), Prasenjit Duara (1995), and James A. Millward (2000), who all point to the fissures in the myth of Chinese hegemony and the inconsistencies and errors in foreign scientific and popular literature on the perceived and much demonised Han-dominated state's dealings with its minority Others. However, an anthropologically informed study on bottom-up processes of centre-periphery relations in the Chinese periphery has yet to be produced, due no doubt to the difficulty of actually conducting such research in areas deemed off-limits to potentially critical social scientists[169]. Noteworthy examples of case studies conducted in and on the PRC's borderlands include themes such as Tibetan avenues of trade and the negotiation of localness, the representation of local nationalities within their respective borderland provinces, and analyses of provincial strategies to influence central decision-making in respect to trans-frontier trade[170]. The province of Xinjiang has over the last decade begun to attract the attention of researchers, and a number of critical and important studies have been published dealing with trans-frontier processes such as migration and return migration, changing political identities in the context of changing centre-periphery discourses following Beijing's 'Remake the West' campaign of the 21st century, and the new dynamics developing in the wake of the Central Asian Republics' independence[171]. The primary focus of most published texts dealing with

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[168] In this order, respectively, see Dina Zisserman-Brodsky (2003, *Constructing Ethnopolitics in the Soviet Union:* Samizdat*, Deprivation, and the Rise of Ethnic Nationalism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan); Joma Nazpary (2002, *Post-Soviet Chaos: Violence and Dispossession in Kazakhstan*. London: Pluto Press); Stéphane Dudoignon (ed.) (2004, *Devout Societies vs. Impious States? Transmitting Islamic Learning in Russia, Central Asia and China through the Twentieth Century*. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag); and Olivier Roy (2000).

[169] Several such studies, on a smaller scale, have indeed been conducted in contested national minority regions (for example Rudelson 1996), as has the fieldwork underlying this thesis, and I assume that most research like this is conducted 'illegally' within China, that is, without official sanction in form of 'research visas' and permits especially outside of the seemingly more accessible Southwest of China. See Chapter 2 for ethical implications of such fieldwork conditions.

[170] In this order, respectively, see Wim van Spengen (2000); Stevan Harrell (ed.) (1995, *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press); John Fitzgerald (ed.) (2002, *Rethinking China's Provinces*. London and New York: Routledge).

[171] In this order, respectively, see Zhang YongJin and Rouben Azizian (eds.) (1998, *Ethnic Challenges Beyond Borders. Chinese and Russian Perspectives of the Central Asian Conundrum*. Basingstoke: MacMillan Press); S.

Xinjiang has been on Uighurs and the way in which the changing political environment both within China and in its immediate neighbourhood has been affecting and is affected by their position in the midst of historic realignments in Central Asia; other Muslim minorities[172] such as the Kyrgyz and 'Tajiks' of China have received barely any academic interest outside of China. Thus, I here attempt to apply insights from the literature to the specific cases of Kyrgyz and 'Tajik'/Pamiri borderlanders at the fringes of the province.

Frederick Starr (ed.) (2004, *Xinjiang. China's Muslim Borderland*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe); Touraj Atabaki and John O'Kane (eds.) (1998, *Post-Soviet Central Asia*. London: Tauris Academic Studies).

[172] Due to their numerical size, the Kazakhs of China have been the object of more studies than any other ethnic group in Xinjiang save the Uighurs. For two excellent publications see the slightly out-of-date Linda Benson and Ingvar Svanberg (eds.) (1988, *The Kazaks of China. Essays on an Ethnic Minority*. Uppsala: Centre for Multiethnic Research Uppsala University) and Sean R. Roberts (1998).

4.1 The Socialist State and its Nations

At the point of their inception, both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China found themselves confronted by the stark reality of cementing their control over former multi-ethnic empires whose frontiers included a vast panoply of smaller and larger groups of peoples speaking different languages, adhering to different religious beliefs, and holding an array of loyalties based upon a complex mix of local, regional, ethnic, religious, historic, and socio-economic factors. Both nascent socialist states understood themselves as heirs to a territory that had been conquered by military and sometimes economic means and had been administered with little regard to the on-the-ground quotidian life of its subjects; neither state seriously considered down-sizing its territory so as to release the former 'victims of imperialism' into a future of their own design; and neither state was willing to be dominated or violated by non-state, *foreign* actors ever again, emerging as they did, in the Russian case, from decades of ruinous imperial wars and falling standards of living and, in the Chinese case, from decades of civil war, occupation, and famine. These general similarities led, through Revolution and internal reinvention, to the imposition of socialist systems according to the Marxist-Leninist creed that shared various mutual ideals and beliefs on the nature of the relationship between state and citizen, between ethnic groups, and (despite initial emphasis on the importance in classical Marxism on world revolution and the withering away of states) on the absolute importance of the inviolability of its territorial boundaries. New state identities were to be promoted, new modes of expression for diverse peoples' socio-cultural ways of life. Indeed, a battle was begun for the loyalties of the 'fraternal nationalities' with the goal of legitimising Soviet or Chinese control over their respective 'national' territories and homelands and inducing members of all national minorities to accept the new status quo as the logical conclusion to their individual nation-building destinies. Borderlanders, those groups at the state's interface with the surrounding world, were to figure centrally in such discourses of legitimation, and no space was to be officially left for non-state frameworks of reference except where these served state interests.

Picture 19: Ethnographic Museum of National Minorities, Urumqi (Xinjiang)[173]

In order to approach an analysis of discourses of bordering and cleavage in the new borderlands predicated by both socialist states, this section of the chapter will deal with one of the most fundamental concerns of both the Soviet and Chinese leaderships in securing state hegemony over its diverse borderlands: that of the so-called 'National Question' (*natsionalnii vopros* or *minzude wenti*, respectively) and the implementation of territorially defined state loyalties which were to be brought about, maybe somewhat ironically for states subscribing to the dream of *inter*nationalism, by the strengthening (or creation) of *intra*-nationalistic tendencies within as yet vaguely understood (by central authorities, that is) ethnic groups. The inherent incompatibility of Marxism and nationalism has been noted by Walker Connor and derives from the following important observation (1984:5):

> Nationalism is predicated upon the assumption that the most fundamental divisions of humankind are the many vertical cleavages that divide people into ethnonational groups. Marxism, by contrast, rests upon the conviction that the most fundamental human divisions are horizontal class distinctions that cut across national groupings. The nationalist would therefore contend that, in a test of loyalties, national consciousness would prove more powerful than all *intra*national divisions, including that of class. Marxists, on the other hand, would maintain that class consciousness would prove the more powerful.

While I will neither concern myself here with the finer details of Marxist creed concerning class struggle nor with debates on nationalism *per se*, the socialist obsession with states' oppressed masses and the focus of these masses' loyalties has been crucially important for socialist regimes' legitimacy and the mechanisms of bordering employed by them.

[173] The *minzu* displayed within are exclusively portrayed as Chinese minorities rather than as trans-frontier groups; see Chapter 5.

The National Question

'National in Form, Socialist in Content' was Lenin's mantra in describing what was to be known as 'The National Question' and which came to comprise a policy of the most fundamental importance in the formation of the Soviet Union, subsequently to be invoked for the remainder of its lifetime[174]. In the light of Marx' vagueness throughout his works on the topic of nationalism and national identity, it fell to the Bolsheviks and in particular the Commissar on Nationality Affairs Joseph Dzhugashvili (Stalin) to design an inclusivist strategy towards the numerous ethnic groups on the territory claimed by the revolutionary party. The aim was not only to merely establish control over the peoples of the former Empire but to bring them into the fold of the revolution and to have them actively participate in the 'great socialist experiment'. To accomplish this, alliances were forged with former imperial 'experts' (ethnographers, anthropologists, economists, historians, and linguists), certain local elites were either co-opted or eliminated and their loyalties were sought through the distribution of administrative and advisory positions, and administrative and social structures were introduced that encouraged or demanded active mass participation (Hirsch 2005:4-5). In order to secure support locally immediately prior to the 1917 Revolution and especially during the Civil War (1918-1922), concessions had to be made to the 'oppressed nationalities' for them to overcome "the milieu of national suspicion and mistrust [which was to] be exorcised by a period of national equality [and] cultural pluralism" (Connor 1984:201). Old antagonisms were to be eliminated so that the Soviet peoples-to-be would voluntarily see the benefits of moving together and cooperating in a new, federally structured state. The inclusivist strategy that was adopted bore all the trappings of what was becoming a Marxist-Leninist *weltanschauung*: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had proposed the 'logic of history' and that it was possible to deduce the stage in which one's society was located along the historical trajectory from feudalism through capitalism and socialism to the final stage of communism. The Bolshevik agenda consisted of accelerating the historical processes propelling societies through the seas of time so as to actually influence the level of development (the 'stage' of a society) of any given people or group; this was to be accomplished by acting on the economic base and social forms and cultures (the 'superstructure') simultaneously (Hirsch 2005:6). Populations had to be transformed from their feudal stages straight into a socialist environment – the predominant loyalties and identifications with clan and tribe structures in Central Asia and elsewhere (the 'feudal-era' social forms) had to be replaced with an individually held awareness of Nation. This drive towards formalising and institutionalising larger, *national* rather than smaller, fractitious, *regional* and/or local groupings must be understood against the background of the Bolshevik promise for peoples' self-determination (in contrast to the lack of just that in imperial times) and the Bolshevik desire for centralised rule. Furthermore, in regard to the evolving borderlands, this process took place against the backdrop of a desire to synchronise

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[174] The *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (1974-1983) defines the National Question as follows:

> National Question: the totality of political, economic, territorial, legal, ideological, and cultural relations among nations (*natsii*, nations in the historical sense), national groups, and nationalities (*narodnosti*) in various socio-economic formations.

borderland nations' networks with state networks, that is, to make national boundaries approach congruity with the state's boundaries.

The young Soviet Union was now embarked upon a course of rapid modernisation of the economic base (through the collectivisation and nationalisation of the New Economic Policy 'NEP' period of the 1920s), cementation of the bureaucratic and political control over its vast territory, and what Francine Hirsch (2005:7-8) has termed 'state-sponsored evolutionism' to legitimise its hegemony over its numerous and diverse peoples and thereby enfranchise these to an unprecedented degree in the state and nation-building processes of the 1920s and 1930s. This evolutionism was instrumentalised to overcome the Marxist *bête noire*: nationalism. Thereby, the Marxist-Leninist architects of Soviet Nationality Policy found themselves to be walking a narrow line between promoting national consciousness (in order to protect minorities from an overwhelming numerical majority of Russians and propel these forwards within their own cultural systems) and limiting it to forms of expression that could not be directed against the Soviet state (in the form of secessionist national movements). In the long run, "national loyalties were to be overcome by the creation of a new, allegedly a-national, Soviet man" (Conversi 2002:5). However, faced with the reality that many peoples in the new Union lacked an easily classifiable sense of 'subjectively felt national cohesion' and, thus, were not in a situation to realise their right to self-determination as formulated by Lenin (who was afraid of disgruntling non-Russians whom he believed would experience Soviet control as intrinsically *Russian* control if they were not granted some degree of cultural pluralism), categories had to be created that ideally would reflect the reality of a 'brotherhood of nations with equal rights'. These categories were to consist in hardened ethno-national units that were to allow national self-ascription by every Soviet citizen.

The Argument for National Consciousness and Its Pitfalls

The promise of self-determination was designed to promote socialist revolutions across the globe (Connor 1984:582); in order to retain their legitimacy in the eyes of minority peoples, the Soviet leadership could not be seen to renege explicitly on this core principle although renege they in fact did [175]. Connor (1984) has argued convincingly that Lenin truly did believe that minorities would not actually resort to demanding independence from the Soviet Union once they came to see the benefits of belonging to the larger entity; it fell to his successors, and in particular to Stalin, to limit the centrifugal drive for secession: former discourses of self-determination and voluntary participation in a state union were shifting to become discourses of autonomy and assimilation. State-sponsored evolutionism was the mechanism that was to amalgamate vaguely understood clans and tribes into nationalities and 'assist' the potential non-majoritarian victims of modernisation and that was to culminate in the creation of Soviet man (Hirsch 2005:7-8), thereby precluding any future

[175] While the right to secession was anchored in all Soviet constitutions right up until its demise, implementation of this right by Union Republics was never permitted and minority politicians hinting at such tendencies were designated bourgeois splittists in league with foreign imperial powers (see Connor 1984: 45-51). The decision to proclaim independence from the Soviet state was seen to be the prerogative of 'the toiling masses' and, hence, of the Communist Party as those masses' representative and not that of individual national leaders.

desire for secession. Hence, national consciousness was to precede Soviet consciousness and was seen as a means to an end, not as a goal in itself. Simultaneously, the unleashing of a national element into discourses of control between the Soviet *apparat* and national groups was liable to backfire and, thus, the appearance of 'bourgeois nationalism' was tantamount to high treason against the state and greatly feared by the authorities. It follows that the Soviet state fought a constant battle on two fronts: both against instances of Great Russian chauvinism (directed against minority nationalities) and against local minority nationalism that called into question the legitimacy of the state in controlling peripheral regions[176]. Indeed, as pointed out above, socialist regimes subsume two conflicting currents within their ideologies: a Marxist and a nationalist one, with the former maintaining that class consciousness will always prove more powerful a tie than national consciousness and the latter holding that *intra*-national divisions are weaker than the divisions *between* nations. This cleavage in loyalties was one which, with historical hindsight, the Soviet state was doomed to not be able to bridge[177].

In the case of China, the Long March (1934-5) of a radicalised Mao and his nascent Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to evade GMD forces took them through areas most heavily populated by minority peoples in the course of which the "Chinese Communist leaders became acutely aware of the vibrant ethnic identity of [...] the peoples they encountered [there]" (Gladney 1991:87). They realised that a strong Chinese state could only survive in the light of adversity by means of a more intense policy of inclusion towards minorities than the ROC had ever implemented and that the internal security of China and its defensibility towards the external threats so omnipresent in those decades was crucially dependent on the cooperation of frontier peoples. Thus, Mao's concept of a socialist state is intricately connected to policies towards particularly these minorities. In regard to the National Question and the success of the Chinese Revolution of 1949, Mao as Chairman of the CCP and head of state of the PRC stated (as quoted in Dreyer 1976:261):

> The Chinese Communist Party has consistently recognized the nationalities question as being one of the major questions of the Chinese revolution and the liberation of the national minorities as being a part of the liberation of the Chinese; what has been called nationality struggle is in reality a question of class struggle.

Mao avidly supported Marx' theory of the homogenisation of proletarian culture once all peoples within China reached the same level of affluence. Initially, he believed that to achieve

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[176] A famous vituperative statement by Stalin in 1923 denounced this chauvinism in language usually reserved for the most dangerous of enemies of the Soviet state (as quoted in Connor 1984:393):

> Great Power chauvinism is growing in our country daily and hourly – Great Power chauvinism, the rankest kind of nationalism, which strives to obliterate all that is not Russian, to gather all the threads of administration into the hands of Russians and to crush everything that is not Russian. [...] It is this danger, comrades, that we must lay to rest at all costs. [...] That is the first, and the most dangerous, factor hindering the amalgamation of the peoples and republics into a single Union. It must be understood that if a force like Great Russian chauvinism begins to flourish and gets its way, farewell to the confidence of the formerly oppressed peoples[.]

[177] Although the Soviet state did not break apart due to this cleavage in peripheral regions but rather due to weaknesses and discursive failure at the centre. See, for example, Khalid (2007:129) and Tishkov (1997).

this an intermediary stage of democratic revolution for those cultures who were 'lagging behind' the Han was needed. In this interim stage a patriotic section of each nationality would be needed to bring the fruits of the revolution to the masses; this meant on the one hand re-enacting the old Qing policy of promoting local minority elites and, on the other hand, introducing 'ethnic education programmes' which should emphasise government policies. Because of the 'considerable backwardness' of some regions, Mao anticipated this transitional period taking quite a long time and therefore nationality characteristics could be tolerated, at least until those nationalities had 'caught up with' the Han. After that there would no longer be any need for special treatment, because "as trust among ethnic groups increased, the close connection between ethnic group forms and political loyalties would weaken, creating the basis for a more homogeneous culture. Thus, paradoxically, the first step toward eliminating nationality characteristics was to allow them to continue unrepressed" (Dreyer 1976:262), just as in the Soviet Union under Lenin.

In terms of the Chinese attitude towards self-determination, the CCP early on and before its rise to power adopted a stance on this topic every bit as jargon-laden as had the Bolsheviks, continuing "until the eve of total victory [in 1949] to hold out the grail of political separation before China's minorities" (Liu ShaoQi, as quoted in Connor 1984:83). Following the revolution in 1949, such promises came to be branded as anti-revolutionary and seen as deriving from outside imperialist conniving to 'split' the unity of China. New efforts were introduced to combat 'local minority nationalism and Great Han chauvinism' in order to dialectically unite Han and minorities into one great, indivisible state in keeping with Marxist-Leninist evolutionary ideology; in the words of Article 3 of the 1954 constitution of the PRC, the situation was one in which the PRC is a single, multinational state that prohibits acts which undermine the unity of the nationalities and where the 'national autonomous areas' are inalienable parts of the PRC. This focus on autonomy is, from the perspective of the CCP, the logical conclusion of orthodox Marxism and merits a longer citation as present-day official statements on autonomy and the role of nationalities still are based on this ideological foundation (Zhang ChiYi 1956, as quoted in Connor 1984:89):

> Marxists have never regarded the demand for the right to national self-determination as an invariable thing; generally it has been regarded as a factor in the struggle for democracy and socialism. [...] In sum, the principal aim of Marxist-Leninists in insisting on the necessity of recognizing the right of national self-determination is that of opposing imperialism by seeking to make allies of the oppressed nationalities in the socialist revolution of the international proletariat; it is clearly not their aim to advocate indiscriminately the separation of each nation nor to urge the establishment of a great number of small nation-states. With each nationality in our country having achieved liberation, with the system of nationalities' oppression basically abolished, and with the nationalities in our country having already entered the era of nationalities equality, can 'national liberation' still be regarded as the task of each national minority? Of course, it cannot.

Assimilation as a program to implement a *post facto* excuse for this ideological back-tracking was to follow and will figure further below.

National Terminology in the Soviet Union

But what was the Bolshevik understanding of 'a nation', and how have definitional categories and the National Question affected trans-frontier 'nations' across socialist boundaries? Stalin's 1913 essay on definitional categories is illuminating in this context and warrants a more elaborate citation (1973:57-61, emphases in original):

> What is a nation? A nation is primarily a community, a definite community of people [...] formed into nations from people of diverse races and tribes.
> Thus, a nation is not a racial or tribal, but a historically constituted community of people [that does not form] a casual or ephemeral conglomeration, but a stable community of people.
> [...] What distinguishes a national community from a state community? The fact, among others, that a national community is inconceivable without a common language, while a state need not have a common language. [...]
> Thus, a *common language* is one of the characteristic features of a nation.
> [...] A nation is formed only as a result of lengthy and systematic intercourse, as a result of people living together generation after generation. But people cannot live together for lengthy periods unless they have a common territory. [...] Difference of territory [leads] to the formation of different nations.
> Thus, a *common territory* is one of the characteristic features of a nation.
> But this is not all. Common territory does not by itself create a nation. This requires, in addition, an internal economic bond to weld the various parts of the nation into a single whole. [...]
> Thus, a *common economic life*, *economic cohesion*, is one of the characteristic features of a nation.
> But even this is not all. [...] Nations differ not only in their conditions of life, but also in spiritual complexion, which manifests itself in peculiarities of national culture. [...] Of course, by itself, psychological make-up or, as it is otherwise called, 'national character', is something intangible for the observer, but insofar as it manifests itself in a distinctive culture common to the nation it is something tangible and cannot be ignored. Needless to say, 'national character' is not a thing that is fixed once and for all, but is modified by changes in the conditions of life [...].
> Thus, a common psychological make-up, which manifests itself in a common culture, is one of the characteristic features of a nation.
> [...] It must be emphasized that none of the above characteristics taken separately is sufficient to define a nation. More than that, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation. *It is only when all these characteristics are present together that we have a nation.*

Here, Stalin draws a direct line connecting pre-socialist solidarity groups ('races and tribes') with the 'stable community of the nation' that socialism was to deal with. Territory, that space that the Soviet state saw itself as legitimately controlling, was welded to identity through history, or historical affiliation over 'generation after generation', but culture (the 'national character') is not a stable entity but modified by its environment (the 'conditions of life'). A picture emerges that accords much importance to the way in which history, territory, socio-economic reality, and language use are the deterministic elements that result in a common culture – changes in economic parameters, language use, and/or territorial affiliation as well as the representation thereof as a 'historical process' will affect the constitution of The Nation. Borderlander 'nations' with their histories of changing territorial 'lengthy and systematic intercourse' with state boundary-spanning territories would obviously be at the centre of attention in regard to delimiting nations on Soviet soil – the SSRs that were to represent the national-territorial units of the Soviet Union and that constituted the administrative

containers of all such Soviet Nations were all spun out along the entire frontier of the Soviet Union; not a single SSR did not form at least part of a Soviet external boundary[178].

A vocabulary of nationality was developed to terminologically come to grips with the desire of the Bolsheviks to structure ethnic groups at different stages along the evolutionary ladder (Hirsch 2005:10). Thus, in Russian, the terms *plemya*, *narodnost*, *natsionalnost*, and *natsiya* were institutionalised to describe, respectively, tribe/'clan', ethnic group/people, nationality, and nation, with 'nationality' to be understood as 'those people or groups of people (historically united) constituting a nation'. *Narodnost*, frequently and confusingly translated into English as 'nationality', in its strictest sense refers to an ethnic group lacking, in Stalin's sense, one of the attributes of nationhood – thus, an ethnic group on the verge of becoming a nationality (*natsionalnost*) and constituting a nation (*natsiya*). In keeping with the tenets of Marxism-Leninism and the National Question, all *natsionalnost* on the territory of the state (*gosudarstva*) were fraternal and equal and each had the right to 'self-determination' and the right to a separate federal unit at the highest administrative level – the Soviet Socialist Republic, SSR[179]. These *natsii*, then, were deemed as constituting 'titular nations', that is, groups with *natsionalnost* status who possessed their 'own' SSR, their own unit at the highest federal level that was named after that group – the Kyrgyz SSR as 'land of the Kyrgyz', a Union Republic in which the Kyrgyz nationality had titular status and deserved representation at the highest levels of the government of the Soviet Union as well as being the target of the highest efforts to promote their local national characteristics (e.g. language, history, customs, etc.). It was only the *natsionalnost* that deserved titularity, and all *narodnost* can in this context be understood as constituting sub-titular groups: 'minorities' of lesser standing, deserving of their own particular protection from 'titularity-chauvinism' and particularistic policies, including the right to an officially delimited territory – Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSRs), Autonomous Oblasts (AOs), and Autonomous Raions, in descending order of hierarchical autonomy.

National Terminology in the PRC

In China, Mao and the CCP adopted the central concepts of Soviet nationality policy, which, as shown in Chapter 3, had been introduced already in Republican times under Dr. Sun. In the Soviet Union, Stalin created a terminology revolving around *natsionalnost*; in China the concept of *minzu* was introduced and then expanded to include a more rigorous adherence to Stalin's definition of a nation. Sun's notion of the existence of just five *minzu* in China was replaced with a more comprehensive (but certainly not at all exhaustive) list of nationalities deemed to represent what the Soviets termed *natsii*. However, as Colin Mackerras (1994:141) points out, the rigid application of Stalin's vital four criteria in the case of China, with its long history of migratory movements by different peoples under different

[178] However, I have found no hard proof that possessing an external boundary was a precondition of SSR-hood for a Soviet nationality despite this fact being mentioned occasionally in the (Western) literature.
[179] At the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union there were 15 SSRs: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Russia.

dynasties and, in some cases, centuries-long interaction with Chinese-speaking populations, has caused problems in cases such as the Hui and the Manchu *minzu*, neither of which have a clearly defined territory and both of which speak Mandarin as a native tongue. In relation to thoughts on the majority-minority dichotomy, the Chinese situation differed greatly from that of the Soviet Union due to the fact that what the state regards as the non-Han population (i.e., separate *minzu*) in the 1950s constituted but barely six percent of the total population; thus, all non-Han *minzu* can be regarded as 'national minorities'. The term 'nationality' will here be used only when describing the totality of officially recognised nations on Chinese territory – 56 in number in today's PRC[180]. All *minzu* in China are allotted so-called autonomous territories, with the size and importance of the *minzu* determining the level of that territorial unit within the hierarchy of territorial divisions in the PRC. At the highest level, on a par with a regular province, the Autonomous Region (AR, *zizhiqu*) was created, followed, in descending order, by Autonomous Prefectures (or prefectural districts, *zhou*) and Autonomous Counties (*xian*)[181]. In terms of titularity, the ARs contain in their official titles the name of the titular *minzu* – hence, the Xinjiang *Uighur* Autonomous Region, XUAR. Xinjiang in its entirety can be (and certainly is by Uighurs) seen as a territory 'belonging' to them – their national homeland, often clandestinely called Uighuristan, the land of the Uighurs. Due to the differences in the implementation of titularity status in the PRC as opposed to that in the Soviet prototype, I believe that the term 'sub-titularity' cannot be used in the Chinese case: all officially recognised *minzu* are titular groups in their respective administrative-territorial units; here, it is more appropriate to speak of 'smaller *minzu*' (like the Kyrgyz or Tajiks) as opposed to 'larger *minzu*' (like the Uighurs or Mongols).

I conclude my brief overview of the importance of the National Question and its ramifications for the construction of the socialist state and its control over ethnically diverse population by recalling one of the basic theses underlying this dissertation: that state-driven discourses of control affect and are affected by local borderland processes and locally held notions of loyalty and identity, and that the construction of the state is most visible along its fringes. Truly, the institutionalisation of SSRs exclusively along the Soviet frontier underlines this assumption. It is my central point of departure that cleavage in subjective national self-consciousness between two states 'sharing' a group defined by both states as a respective nation will, in turn, affect the objective characteristics of that nation – as borne out by Stalin's criteria of defining a nation. In the context of this thesis any discussion of groups of people categorised by states must revolve centrally around concepts employed by the states and people in question; concepts which always also point towards states' policies of 'national integration' and processes of assimilation into a state-wide community of citizens. Hence, in

[180] 55 national minorities plus the Han nationality. This number has remained unchanged since 1979 although over 400 groups have applied for official recognition and, in the 1990 census of the PRC, nearly 750,000 individuals were still listed as 'unidentified'. Unrecognised groups are deemed to be sub-groups of one of the officially recognised *minzu* (Fei 1980:98).

[181] The five ARs today are: Xinjiang Uighur AR, Ningxia Hui AR, Guangxi Zhuang AR, Neimenggu AR [Inner Mongolia], Xizang AR [Tibet]. I have here glossed over historical shifts in sub-provincial administration over the course of the PRC for sake of clarity. See Fitzgerald (2002:25-29) for a more complete description of such internal processes.

order to uncover the dynamics and processes of state and nation and their relationship towards political boundaries, I will throughout this thesis use terms such as 'nation' and 'nationality' as they were institutionalised by the Soviet and Chinese socialist states and, to my mind, *still are used today* by the inhabitants of the newly independent Central Asian states and in Xinjiang.

In their projects to promote the evolution of a new type of post-feudal citizen, socialist leaders such as Stalin and Mao chose to reorganise their territories along national rather than 'tribal' lines because the nation was deemed to be a modern form of social and economic organisation (Hirsch 2005:164) – an ideally suited vehicle for propulsion towards the Communist ideal state of existence. Expanding upon this basic assumption, Francine Hirsch provides us with a concept that differs fundamentally by those put forward by other scholars of Soviet nationality policy: that of double assimilation, meaning "the assimilation of a diverse population into nationality categories and, simultaneously, the assimilation of those nationally categorized groups into the Soviet state and society" (Hirsch 2005:14), a process structured in an interactive, participatory way. The parameters of categorisation provided by the states in question focus almost exclusively on the objective dimension of national affiliation described in Chapter 1[182].

Post-revolutionary socialist states have implemented dramatic socio-economic changes that have called for a radical policy of inclusion of national minorities and the construction of what Andrea Chandler has termed an 'ideology of isolation' (1998:25-6) aimed at thwarting nation-building attempts that take place across state boundaries and, hence, have points of reference and ties of loyalty outside of the state, Theoretical musings on the National Question must be seen in the context of this ideology: nations and nation-building were to be supported and implemented only within the confines of the state in question, and trans-frontier ties became ties of subversion, indicative of 'reactionary-bourgeois nationalistic tendencies'. National identity and state loyalty in the borderlands was (and in the PRC still is) a security concern, and processes of participation in the state and assimilation into state identities (or, at least, the development of a loyalty towards that state) were and are fundamental to the interactive political role that borderlanders play within and between states.

The ubiquitous public exhortations so visible throughout Chinese territory, in particular in minority regions, calling for unity and nationality cooperation in building a better future are artefacts underlining this central point (Introductory text in English at the National Literature and Arts Centre of Tajiks in Tashkurgan, 2004[183]):

> The Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County was founded on September 17th 1954. From then on, the Tajiks ended their poor and backward ways and began to lead a new life, going on the way to make their own decisions and build their own homeland. [...] During the past 50 years, the leaders of all levels and the entire people carried on the

[182] Soviet censuses did, however, distinguish between objective attributes and a sense of national belonging by asking questions on both the language use and national identity of the respondents (Kaiser 1994:10, fn7).
[183] Visited May 2006 (and see Picture 37 in Chapter 6).

> Tashkurgan spirit of struggling arduously and contributing willingly to promote the local economy and to guard the motherland's [i.e., the PRC's (S.P.)] frontiers. [...] During the 50 years, the people of all ethnic groups defended the national borders, developed the local economy, and promoted the construction of Socialist material, spiritual and political civilization. [Text reproduced as *sic.*]

Putting off such exhortations as simple propaganda designed for consumption by non-locals is too trivial. Rather, I believe the crucial point here to lie in the state legitimacy deriving from borderlanders' 'willing contribution' and 'cooperation'. The National Question and the policies derived from it provided the basic parameters of the expression of ethnic difference within the socialist state and was incontestable at the local level; the implementation of these policies, however, was very much up for discussion and adaptation to the particular local circumstances of the nation in question, as I will now proceed to show. We need a more differentiated view of the interaction between socialist theoretician and target and the fundamental need for the state to have its policies and institutions *accepted* by just those nations, in particular in the borderlands. Lenin's mantra-like injunction that nationalities policy be 'national in form, socialist in content', the centre-piece of socialist presumptions on how nationalism could be made to operate in the service of the state, stemmed from his belief that disgruntled (and, hence, secessionist) nationalism originates with the subjective feeling of inequality and that overt symbols of national uniqueness are not tied to nationalism (Connor 1984:513). However, absence of inequality does not eradicate nationalism, and symbols of group uniqueness perpetuate and reinforce precisely that self-identification with a national group on the subjective level that no socialist theoreticians on nationality adhering to Stalin's criteria ever deemed worthy of inclusion into a list of 'what constitutes a nation'.

Policy Implementation and the Bordering of Nations

The implementation of the solutions posed by the problem of the National Question has proceeded unevenly over the course of both socialist regimes, with periods of radicalism alleviated by periods of pragmaticism. Whilst in the Soviet Union policy following the uncertain years of Stalin's rule moved more or less in the direction of a greater acceptance of local particularities (within strictly defined parameters) and culminated in the fateful policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the Chinese Communist system has always been liable to be subject to the personal interpretation of local politicians in times of social and political unrest (best exemplified in the period of the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76 and the post-Tiananmen crackdowns of the early 1990s). Nevertheless, a constant in both states' dealings with their nationalities has been the implementation of assimilative strategies – strategies termed *sblizhenie* ('drawing together') and *sliyaniye* ('eventual merging') in Russian, *ronghe* ('melting together', 'amalgamation') in Chinese, both of which, respectively, would be in the interest of the *druzhba naradov* ('friendship of peoples') and the emergence of a state-wide, state-focused citizenship loyalty culminating, ideally, in the emergence of the post-national *sovietski narodnost* (Soviet people) or *zhongguo ren* (Chinese people). The aim here is to show that nationality policies were implemented as policies designed to give nationalities the feeling (whether warranted or not) of equality within the socialist state by providing mechanisms of nation-building at all levels of society; and to create intra-state loyalty while

obscuring inter-nation solidarity. In other words, we are dealing with nation-building in the service of the state's ideology. It is important to note, however, that the expression 'assimilation' is rarely if ever used in socialist jargon due to, on the one hand, its implications of a society rife with inequality and oppression where coercion is used to achieve minority acculturation (supposedly typical of 'capitalist societies') and, on the other, the silent assumption that minorities are to be absorbed by the state majority.

In the Soviet Union, the choosing of groups that were to be privileged in a system of titularity centrally involved Central Asian elites in the construction of their respective nations who took an active, participatory role in the scramble for titularity and power at the local level, attempting to take advantage of the new dynamics of the system (see Haugen 2003 and Khalid 2007). Contemporary discussions of granting titularity status and performing the delimitation show that identities were in a state of flux in the first decades of the 20th century due mainly to the locally perceived possibilities of declaring oneself a member of a group (especially amongst local elites)[184]. The nature of Soviet rule was not primarily one of imperialism but rather of modernisation along secular and ideological lines that defined itself as sum of its parts rather than as an amalgamation of colonised peripheries in opposition to the civilised metropole (Hirsch 2005:164); in other words, a state whose survival in the face of international adversity depended crucially on the 'ethnohistorical' development of the totality of its 'ethno-territories'[185]. In the PRC, a slightly different dynamic played out in the reasoning behind the drive to grant some groups titularity status: Dru Gladney (2004:13-17) has convincingly argued that identifying certain groups as minorities and endowing them with *minzu* status has played a fundamental role in forging a notion of 'Han' in juxtaposition to 'the minority Other', thereby securing support for the CCP by guaranteeing the 'vanguard role' of the civilized and modern Han. Non-Han *minzu* categorisation has entailed both advantages and disadvantages for those thus classified depending on the political environment of the times – in spite of official remonstrations to the contrary, it could be potentially lethal to be a member of a non-Han *minzu* in times when 'local nationalism' was targeted by the government (for example during the Cultural Revolution). However, as Gladney further shows (2004:20-3), by the mid-1980s real advantages were associated with such membership[186] and there has ensued a veritable 'scramble' for re-classification in many parts of China, with membership rising in non-Han minzu by 35 percent between 1982 and 1990 (compared to the ten percent amongst Han).

[184] Most evident in archives made accessible since the collapse of the Soviet Union and presented by, for example, Hirsch (2005).

[185] I do not intend to practice historical revisionism in this context and find Collins' qualifications on the dichotomy between colonialism and communism in the specific case of Central Asia pertinent (2006:65-6):

> Colonialism is not a perfect metaphor for Soviet rule; Soviet colonialism in Central Asia was in many ways less discriminatory, less economically exploitative, and more developmental than European colonialism in Africa and Asia. [...] [But] although the Soviet Union was not a typical colonial empire, the Central Asian republics experienced socialism, from the 1920s through the 1980s, as colonies [in that] the Bolsheviks viewed their mission in the 'backward and primitive' regions of Central Asia as a 'civilizing mission'.

[186] The most widely-recognised of these being exemption from the one-child policy, paying lower taxes, fixed quotas for university access, greater access to public office, and easier access to cultural and artistic institutions.

Care had to be taken by the centre because it was realised that nurturing cultural pluralism would be more likely to result in a unilateral path of increasing awareness of national uniqueness than in a dialectic route toward transnational fusion. This would have to be counterbalanced by the state apparatus as the instigator of political socialisation, thus calling for total control of the media and education. Stalin (1942) is quoted as saying: "What is it that particularly agitates a national minority? A minority is discontented not because there is no national union but because it does not enjoy the right to use its native language. Permit it to use its native language and the discontent will pass of itself. [...] Thus *national equality in all forms (language, school, etc.) is an essential element* in the solution of the national problem" (as quoted in Connor 1984:215, emphasis in original). Similarly, economic equality was to give a minority back its self-esteem by enabling it to take part in the economic interplay of the respective ethnoterritorial units [187]. Political equality called for self-determination and the constitution of internal political structures meant to reflect ethnonational distributions and catering to the ambition of nationalities for their own political unit. The mechanisms of cultural and political equality, represented by the policies on, respectively, classification through linguistic, ethnic, and historiographic processes of construction, and administrative autonomy, were to create a powerful incentive to identify oneself with one's nation within the confines of the state. The dialectal route to a state-wide, Soviet or Chinese identity had a precondition which was to cement state discourses of control over its Central Asian periphery: the national classification of those to be governed (the compact national groups) and the construction of a narrative of their inclusion as the product of historical forces. In this way, as discussed in Chapter 1, non-bordered, non-territorial identities and proto-national units were to be converted into bordered national identities fit for socialism. The elements involved in this process are shown in Figure 8:

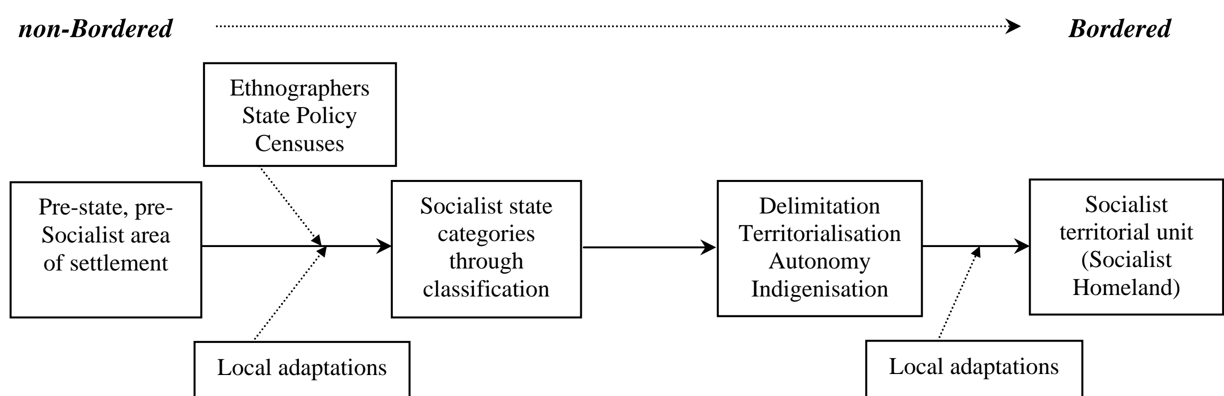

Figure 8: Process of Socialist national identity bordering

[187] The economic dimensions of equality within the Soviet Union are beyond the scope of my argument. For insight into the relationship between classification, territorialisation, and economic 'division of labour' in the newly created territorial units of the Union, see Haugen (2003).

The figure shows the influence of state institutions and policies (such as censuses and 'experts' charged with delivering information serving state policy) as well as the areas of involvement by the targets of this bordering process (the members of the nations-to-be) in regard to the steps that were to 'freeze in place' the official framework of national homelands, administrative-territorial units, and the groups to thus be targeted. Hence, classification on the ground as a precondition was to enable the equalities mentioned above by providing the parameters for delimitation, territorialisation, and indigenisation. The remainder of this section will now focus on the classification process in the Central Asian administrative units, and in the following sections making up the remainder of this chapter I shall deal with the way in which the socialist regimes of the Soviet Union and the PRC institutionalised this process by granting titularity or sub-titularity to those who had been classified, by delimiting their territory, and, finally, by pursuing a policy of indigenising power structures in the socialist (administrative) homelands.

The Quest for Normative Categories

In the Soviet Union the KIPS (*Komissia po izucheniyu plemennogo sostava naselniya Rossii*, Commission for the Study of the Tribal Composition of the Population of Russia) was set up in 1917, in China a host of ethnologists under the aegis of Fei XiaoTong [Fei Hsiao-tung] was sent into the field in the 1950s; both groups of expert-consultants were charged with conducting censuses providing their governments with much-needed information on its minorities, assist the government in deciding where one group ended and the next began, and help formulate new approaches in transforming restive nationalities and borderlanders into productive and loyal citizens (Hirsch 2005:7). While Hirsch, as mentioned, speaks of 'double assimilation' it is important to note that this did not fundamentally entail assimilation in a *cultural* sense but rather *politically*: while socialism attempted to establish equal socio-economic conditions and combat class differentials within all segments of the evolving society there was never, except in the dark years of political extremism at the centre, a concerted attack on cultural distinctness as such; on the contrary, "if the concept of the nation and national identity had first presented a problem, the Bolsheviks gradually began to see it as a part of a solution to a number of problems experienced throughout the Soviet state" (Haugen 2003:235). The expert-consultants sent into the field by both regimes were to provide the tools of state inclusion and control by discovering the salient cultural parameters of identification. Crucially, I note that none of these specialists were to operate in a trans-state manner: the quest for normative categories took place within the confines of the boundaries of either state.

To first deal with the Soviet case, what these minions of state control found on the ground in the ethnic mosaic that is Central Asia was an incredibly diverse intermix of groups using various languages in a multilingual environment and employing shifting and vague (to the contemporary anthropologist's and politician's eyes, that is) categories of identity. The search for categories in tune with Marxist-Leninist thought on ultimate fusion had to produce categories that indicated permanence, a stable and essentialised ethnic identity, but

simultaneously ones that could then be malleable in the state's interest. Language and language-use seemed to Stalin particularly well-suited for precisely such a vehicle (Roy 2000:63). Prior to the ethnographic invasion, it can be argued that there existed on Soviet terrain in Central Asia three observable factors lending themselves to a differentiation between *narodnost* and serving as pre-Socialist foci of identity and loyalty: sedentary versus nomadic/semi-nomadic, Turkic-speaking versus Farsi-speaking, and clan ties. Interestingly, and as opposed to revisionist claims arising in the 1990s within the (generally expatriate and disgruntled) intellectual elite[188], censuses at the time showed very little, if any, identification with an imagined 'Turkestan' that would comprise the entirety of Central Asia (Kaiser 1994:135), save for a vaguely conceived notion of general adherence to the tenets of Islam and of belonging to the *dar al-Islam* ('territories of Islam') rather than the *dar al-harb* ('territories of war')[189]. Early attempts at classification along a continuum incorporating these three factors were doomed to failure because reality and social practice did not conform with such an objectivist approach: "existing patterns of group identity did not conform to the categories employed [due to] the fact that the group designations in question had no precise or unambiguous reference, but were attributed different meanings by different people at different places and times" (Haugen 2003:33).

While a distinction between socio-economic forms of organisation was relatively simple and the dichotomy settled-nomadic was the least contested of these three factors, classification by language use was heavily encumbered by centuries of bilingualism and admixture, and the use of a Turkic language or Farsi generally did not translate into a correlation between ethnic self-ascription and linguistic connection. As Roy (200:16-17) rightly points out, for example, the term 'Kazakh' did not traditionally refer to ethnic affiliation but rather to a political choice: the split with the Uzbek confederation after the 16th century and the maintenance of a nomadic life rather than the Uzbek adoption of settled ways. The 'Uzbeks' of the time were members of this Shaybanid tribal confederation where various Qipchak dialects were spoken and who were seen by the settled Turkic-speaking population of Central Asia (and in particular Babur's stronghold of Ferghana) as a foreign and conquering population. Upon these proto-Uzbeks' adoption of a settled way of life their conquered subjects ended up calling themselves Uzbeks as well whilst retaining their own language (known as Chaghatay) which the conquerors adopted. The ethnographers attempting to come to grips with such admixture and linguistic sub- and superstrates were confused in their search for a neatly explicable ethnogenesis of the categories they were discovering on the ground: a typical trajectory of confusion could have started with the desire to find out how a Kazakh differed from an Uzbek and would pass through the discovery that 'Uzbek' was not an uncontested category itself, only to end with the discovery that there were those who spoke 'Uzbek' but described themselves as descendants of people who 'delightfully

[188] See, for example, Timur Kocauglu (2000, *Turkistan Abroad: The Political Migration – from the Soviet & Chinese Central Asia (1918-1997)*, in: Komatsu, Hisao *et al.* (eds.): *Migration in Central Asia: Its History and Current Problems*. Osaka: Japan Center for Area Studies. 113-126).
[189] See Hashmi (2003:196) for meanings of this binary pair.

spitted the Uzbek invader'[190]. Forced to deliver census categories and produce results in keeping with Stalin's high-browed and sweeping statements on the relation between language, ethnicity, and territory, and all the while attempting to approach locally held notions of ethnic reality, ethnographers simplified such confusion as much as possible. Thus, Chaghatay was renamed Old Uzbek in the 1930s and "the Uzbeks of today have always been Uzbeks and have always spoken Uzbek" (*ibid.*), a succinct example of the way in which the quest for ethnogenesis has been translated into contemporary political identity.

In the PRC, the ethnographers under Fei XiaoTong's supervision encountered similar problems to their Soviet counterparts: faced with a post-revolutionary upsurge of ethnic self-identification throughout the PRC by members of groups perceiving themselves to be different in some way from 'the Han', by 1953 over 400 names of groups had been registered by the authorities. To bring order to this multitude of voices so as to be able to implement the CCP's promise of self-determination and regional autonomy, expert-consultants were set to work to clarify the categories to be employed (Fei 1980:94):

> Were there really so many nationalities in China? A preliminary examination revealed that some were different names of a single nationality; others were the names of subdivisions; still others applied to different localities inhabited by members of the same nationality; and some were merely variations of translations in the Han language.

The methods employed to come to these conclusions were, first, linguistic analysis (that is, a lexical analysis to discover a tongue's relatedness to neighbouring languages) and, second, a historical inquiry into a group's contact and exchange with its neighbours and especially in relation to Han Chinese. Armed with these two objective categories as guidelines to categorisation and aware of the tremendous spatial and temporal dispersion of ethnic groups in flux and the resulting uneven socio-economic 'development' in any given region (Fei 1980:95-7), the original 400 groups 'shrank' to the officially recognised 56 *minzu* of 1979[191]. In Xinjiang classification was heavily influenced by the above-mentioned framework that had already been provided by Soviet ethnographers and the fact that the ROC had already adopted those categories in the 1930s (Mackerras 1994:141-2) – it was recognised that the Turkic groups of Xinjiang constituted not one but five *minzu*: Uighurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Tatar. Thus was the differentiation between the minorities of Xinjiang based upon Soviet *natsii*, or, in other words, those national groups enjoying titularity in the Soviet Union were granted uncontested *minzu* status in the PRC[192], including the granting of *minzu* status to the Chinese 'Tajiks' (who were separated from the Kyrgyz in the PRC due to their socio-economic and linguistic differences); furthermore, the Soviet debates of the 1920s and

[190] I derive this trajectory from an interview (December 2005, in Bishkek) I conducted with the Kyrgyz husband of an Uzbek from Andijan; he himself was a graduate student of ethnology from Tashkent.

[191] As Mackerras (1994:143) points out, this naturally does not mean that these categories are uncontested: on the one hand, especially in China's Southwest, several groups are still in the process of demanding separate *minzu* status from the various *minzu* they have been included in (especially salient in the many cases pertaining to the Tibetan *minzu*) and, on the other, nearly a million people are still listed in censuses as 'not yet identified'.

[192] The Turkmen of Soviet Central Asia are not represented in China; the Tatar were granted titular status in the Russian SFSR (the Tatarstan ASSR).

30s over the crystallisation of the Kyrgyz *natsionalnost* from the Kazakh/Kirgiz conglomerate seem not to have been replicated in any way whatsoever in the PRC.

The implications of this adoption of the result of Soviet internal delimitation amongst its nations has not been fully realised by the literature but, as we shall see, has played a fundamental role in trans-frontier processes. While territorially titular Soviet nationalities (hence, as mentioned above, *not* the Uighurs) were 'imported' in a manner generally uncontested by Chinese academia, the expert-consultants of the PRC have ever since been going to great lengths to qualify the precise meaning of 'Uighur' in relation to other Turkic *minzu* and to the Chinese state (Wang EnMao[193], as quoted in Bovingdon 2004:361):

> The Uighur nation (*minzu*) is not a branch on the great tree of the 'Turki nation'; the Uighur nation is a branch on the great tree of the Chinese nation (*zhonghua minzu*). Turcology is not a pure academic problem. [...] We must search for historical and contemporary materials and continue to write articles on national solidarity.

This quote encapsulates the importance accorded to the fact that the Uighurs do not have territorial units in the Soviet Union and an emphasis has therefore been placed less on linguistic characteristics and more on historical affiliation with a state. Similar arguments could not conceivably be put forward in regard to the Kazakh or Kyrgyz *minzu* due to their visibility across the boundary. What becomes evident here to my mind is an academically propelled focusing of loyalties – a hegemonic claim to exclusivity of state reference: Uighur presence in the Soviet Union was at an official level (and as represented by territorial-administrative units) invisible, whereas the other Turkic *minzu* were 'claimed' by the Soviet Union. This basic difference will form one of the cores of my argument in the trans-state bordering of trans-frontier nationalities as discussed in Chapter 5.

The Role of Islam

Assimilation into state loyalties by way of national units was faced with one other 'problem' identified by the Soviet and Chinese leaderships: that of Islam and the faith's central demand for political control of the *dar al-Islam* by the Islamic state rather than by unbelievers and especially atheist socialist regimes[194]. The 'internationalism' of trans-frontier Islam with its geographically dispersed institutions and points of reference[195] had to conflict with these states' desire of refocusing loyalties inwards to the state. At the same time the importance of a visibly equitable treatment of socialism's new Muslim subjects did not escape the central authorities[196]. The problem most on the minds of those formulating policy

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[193] Wang was the former first secretary of the Xinjiang CCP and, at this time, head of XUAR's advisory committee. This speech was given in 1986 at Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences, the AR's most prestigious research institute.

[194] For a more in-depth treatment of the intricate and fascinating relationship between Islam and Communism see for example Waardenburg (1991).

[195] Such as the *hajj* and trans-state administration of the *muftiyya*.

[196] The propaganda effect ideally deriving from such treatment is best summed up in Stalin's own words (1919, as quoted in Soucek 2000:213):

towards Islam is best described in the words of Bartold (1964, as quoted in Haugen 2003:35)[197]:

> The settled populations of Central Asia think of themselves primarily as Muslims, and think of themselves only secondarily as living in a particular town or district; to them the idea of belonging to a particular people (*narod*) is of no significance.

While this is most certainly overstating the point because the notion of one particular identity being superior to all others will not hold up to closer scrutiny, it does reflect the concern over the importance of Islam's role as a frame for local political legitimacy (as described in Chapter 3). In fact, where it existed the power of the *ulama* had been strengthened, as mentioned, by tsarist policy, and the construction of the Muslim Other in pre-socialist times had gained currency in the work of the ethnographers of this time of transition between regimes. The 'Christian Orthodox Russian versus Muslim Native' dichotomy, as Haugen (2003:39-40) discusses, involved terms such as 'the Muslim language' for locally used tongues and it was ethnographers who found themselves charged with noting that the 'Muslim' language could easily be replaced with terms like the 'Turkmen' or the 'Kazakh' language in local contexts, thereby providing a non-religious and pro-national frame of reference.

At the level of a higher regional, discourse between nations, the policy on Islam of "both the tsars and Stalin discouraged relations between the leading clergy of [Muslim Russia and Central Asia] and the rest of the Muslim world, out of a fear of pan-Islamism" (Roy 2000:53). This resulted in the severing of relations between religious communities, most importantly between the Shi'a communities of Azerbaijan and Iran, and the various traditional religious ties between Kashgar in Xinjiang and the former Khoqand in the Ferghana Valley. The *ulama* were transformed into Soviet functionaries and the division of the Muslim community into separate administrative entities was cemented by the 'trans-Republic' organisation of the *muftiyya*. These religious leaders, who represented the Soviet regime, played a vital role in articulating Muslim ideas in the context of Communist ideology. The success of the Revolution in Central Asia was critically dependent on Muslim support, but the Revolutionary Committee under Lenin (just as the CCP in China) was wary of granting Islam any degree of real political power[198]. To co-opt Islamic influence, both states focused on the 'reactionary elite' rather than on the religion *per se*: *sharia* courts and office of the *qadi* were abolished after the respective Russian and Chinese revolutions, and the teaching of religion outside the (government controlled) mosques was prohibited (thus leading to the abolition of the *madrassa*). Religion continued to prominently figure in the

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> Turkestan, because of its geographical position, is a bridge connecting socialist Russia with the oppressed countries of the East, and in view of this the strengthening of the Soviet regime in Turkestan might have the greatest revolutionary significance for the entire Orient.

[197] Bartold (1869-1930) was one of the pre-eminent Russian scholars and ethnographers of Central Asia of his day and a successor of Radlov.

[198] Despite the fact that there were differences between Soviet and Chinese policies on Islam, I base my glossing of these differences on the observation that these systems adopted, between 1920 and 1928 in the former case and between 1950 and 1957 in the latter, very similar measures (see Waardenburg 1991:322-3).

observable lives of Central Asians: life for Central Asian Muslim nationalities and nations was strictly divided between aspects pertaining to the ethnic and the religious and also between the sociological and religious elements of communal life (Waardenburg 1991:321). Generally speaking, Islam was seen by the expert-consultants as a social factor and, therefore, considered to be a national characteristic: "certain Islamic observations survived, and some even flourished, but they came to be seen as aspects of national culture. [...] Moreover, adherence to Islam was set against, and subjugated to, the claims of nationalism [and] although Muslimness distinguished locals from outsiders in the Soviet context [just as in the Chinese context in Xinjiang (S.P)], *being Muslim was not counterposed to being Soviet*" (Khalid 2007:98, emphasis in original). Those elements of Islam that were not allowed to thrive were all factors that I see as relating to the potentially subversive processes competing with the state's demand for exclusive rights to trans-state discourses; thus, the ideal of the Islamic state was condemned as a 'feudalistic ideology of divine right', the right to foment rebellion in form of *jihad* as 'subversive local nationalism and splittism', and international linkages through *hajj* and *madrassa* as 'reactive ideologies'. Islam as a central point of reference in people's everyday lives did indeed continue to play a role but, as Khalid has shown, the burden of maintaining Islamic traditions fell heavily on women and old men who had more leeway to practice such 'proxy religiosity' (2007:103-4).

Writing Nations' Histories: Narratives of 'Discent'

Finally, in both states expert-consultants and the humanities were mobilised not just to identify and categorise the peoples of Central Asia into units of political permanence but, as mentioned, to construct a narrative of their inclusion in the new states that was to legitimise these states' claim to rightfully be the heirs controlling their respective Central Asian territories – the new nations had to be represented as the product of historical forces culminating in their contemporary political reality and suitability for socialist 'fusion'.

Picture 20: Lenin statue in Bishkek (formerly in front of but now, since 2001, behind the Kyrgyz State Historical Museum)

The official historiography thus constructed completely served the state: an official pantheon of national heroes was selected, ethnogenetic movements and places of putative origin were territorialized on present-day state territory, and ethnonyms were extrapolated to underscore historical and constructive connections between contemporary nations. As Khalid (2007:94, 96-7) points out, this history was written and transmitted to preclude the emergence of a 'wrong' kind of nationalism (the 'bourgeois nationalism' that provided a cloak for the exploitation of one class by another) and instead to promote the 'naturalness' of Central Asia's nations by providing them with a history stretching back to time immemorial and glorifying the magnificent heritage created by each nation. Prasenjit Duara's (1995:65-9) notion of *discent* is readily applicable to the socialist state: the historiography of a narrative of descent coupled with dissent on both heterogeneous and related cultural practices is visible in the goal of ultimate *sliyaniye* and *ronghe*, respectively. New unity (or 'fusion') was to be achieved through a transformation not of cultural practices as such (provided they could be moulded into the new socialist containers) but by transforming the perceptions of the boundaries of national communities. The implementation of 'solutions' to the National Question centrally involved processes of closure and a concomitant hardening of boundaries of inclusion and exclusion to conform to, or at least to approach conformity to, political boundaries. In the PRC much emphasis has been laid on historico-ethnographic arguments serving the 'scientific' legitimation of China's unity (Lampton 1986, as quoted in Schmidt-Glinzer 1997:217, my translation):

> Historically, the entity of 'China' (*zhongguo*) is composed […] of both the various ruling dynasties as well as all those border peoples (*bianjing minzu*) living on *today's* Chinese national territory thereby making these peoples' histories a part of Chinese history. In light of this historical representation, the succession of dynasties is seen as a cumulative historical process resulting in an ever-increasing Chinese unity (*tongyihua*). Science thus delivers the historical legitimation for the one thing the state has otherwise been unable to accomplish: the homogeneous Chinese nation.

From a historiographic point of view, the PRC has a tendency to paint a picture of historical unity, the *tongyihua* of the citation above, that disregards the long periods of disunity and mutual antagonisms and conflict between what were to become the Chinese state's *minzu*. A second citation underlining the paramount importance of this narrative of *discent*, this time from the early 21st century, serves to show the persistence of this form of legitimation (Introductory text in the 2005 Museum of National Minorities in Urumqi[199]):

> The Vast Land [i.e., the Northwest] conceals deep secret that the ancient civilizations in the world converge. Xinjiang has been the multi-national home from ancient times. […] In the historical process of the Development of Western Regions, various nationalities are more united to construct together a harmonious society. We hold this Exhibition of Xinjiang Nationalities and their Conditions and Customs to represent the gorgeous conditions and contents of the 12 ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, and to show the splendor of the beautiful rarity of treasure house of Chinese National Culture. The ancient Western Regions mainly refer to today's Xinjiang Province. Xinjiang has been an inalienable part of the territory of China. […] In the long historical

[199] Visited May 2006. For a more in-depth treatment of the trans-frontier elements and notions of borderland that appear in this quote, see Chapter 5.

> development process, the people of all nationalities living in here have worked in unity and helped one another, worked together, created distinctive ancient civilizations with their own hands and intelligence. [Text reproduced as *sic.*]

The mobilisation of the humanities in scientifically 'proving' Chinese unity has best been discussed in the context of Uighur nationalism and the aggressive and mutually hostile rhetoric ensuing between state-sanctioned historians, ethnographers, and archaeologists and their Uighur counterparts[200]. Uighur intellectuals' attempts at situating an Uighur nation outside of the Chinese state, thus in just as trans-historical a way as official representations of Uighurs as 'an ancient civilisation', is pursued in the same historiographic register and, somewhat ironically, does not transcend the basic ideological assumptions of crude historical determinism wedded to Marxist-Leninist notions of the Nation; in this manner most Central Asian polities are regarded as, at the very least, Uighur-inspired if not in their essence 'Uighur'.

As opposed to China and its territorially focused self-conception as "a unitary multinational state [in which] [a]ll the national autonomous areas are inseparable parts of the People's Republic" (Article 3 of the 1954 Constitution of the PRC), the Soviet Union's narrative of *discent* sought to use national forms and symbols as vehicles for the new Soviet content; the PRC emphasised unity and cooperation in its historiography[201], and the Soviet Union sought legitimising discourses in its support of an unavoidable historical development towards national self-consciousness which would accept the benefits of a socialist framework. Local cultural heritage was revived with a socialist message and developed and adapted to the new tasks of attaining Soviet-ness: "history and language, epics and literature, folklore and traditional arts of each group were 'discovered' anew, studied, developed, and transformed into the means of carrying the new message to the people and integrating them into the Soviet body politic" (Rakowska-Harmstone 1970:232).

Two elements had to be addressed within this new narrative: first, contemporary Soviet control had to be presented in the light of the 'natural' development of any given feudal *narodnost* to a socialist *natsionalnost*. This was accomplished through emphasising local historical themes complementing basic aspects of Marxism-Leninism such as popular resistance against outside aggressors, local revolts against domestic oppressors, and the celebration of poets promoting revolutionary ideas directed against orthodox religion and the aristocracy. Thus, in the new Tajik SSR efforts centred on the study of classical Persian literature, the development and modernisation of Farsi (now declared to be 'Tajik'), and the declaration that the Tajiks were the true and worthy heirs of the Samanid empire (819-1005

[200] I will restrain myself here in the context of this dissertation to making some general remarks pertaining to historiographic construction. For two excellent discussions of this rhetoric see Rudelson (1996, on the dispute over the supposed 'Caucasian' origins of the infamous Xinjiang mummies) and Bovingdon (2004, on an overview of the 'history written by committee' style in the PRC). However, the arguments presented here form a foundation to Chinese Kyrgyz and 'Tajik' borderland discourses discussed in the next chapter.

[201] In this line of thinking, secession from the PRC was (and still is) "not merely morally reprehensible [but] went against the historical tide (*niliu*) and therefore objectively bound to fail" (Bovingdon 2004:356).

CE)[202]; in the Kyrgyz SSR the unorthodoxy of local interpretations of Islam, the presence of seemingly proto-Communist communal traditions like the *ashar*, and certain revolutionary aspects of the oral Manas epic were highlighted and given a socialist platform[203].

Second, Soviet control over Central Asian territory had to be differentiated from the tsarist conquest of colonies which had preceded it. Whilst in the 1920s official historiography had presented imperial conquest as an 'absolute evil', by the eve of the Second World War it had come to be regarded as a 'lesser evil' due to the benefits Central Asia's peoples had supposedly derived from their encounter with Russia, in particular the historically progressive effect of being exposed to capitalism (as a necessary precondition of the development of socialism), industrial development (and, thus, the emergence of a proletariat), Russian revolutionary zeal, the end of internecine warfare, and the abolition of slavery and the liberation of women (Gafurov 1955[204], as quoted in Rakowska-Harmstone 1970:82). It follows that the jargon followed suit and, by the mid-1950s, *prisoyedineniye* ('incorporation') had displaced *zavoyevaniye* ('conquest') – thereby stopping short of the radical contemporary change in terminology adopted by the CCP following the Chinese revolution which saw the introduction of *jiefang* ('liberation') and *tongyi* ('unification') rather than the *tunbing* ('annexation') reserved for 'foreign' empires (Bovingdon 2004:357).

To conclude this section on the interplay between the socialist states and their nations, I would like to call to mind Figure 8 above. This sub-chapter has discussed the first part of the process of internal bordering by dealing with the ideological framework within which national categories were developed and analysing the role of the minions of state control in Central Asia – the grounds were now laid for actually mapping discrete national units on the ground and converting now-classified people in their immediate environments into Soviet or Chinese citizens by taking a detour over the construction and negotiation of administrative boundaries between titular nations and sub-titular proto-nations.

[202] This representation of Tajiks was in obvious and direct conflict to historiographic claims in Persia (and later in Iran), which saw itself as the sole legitimate successor to this ancient and glorious heyday of 'Persian civilization'. This conflict was to figure in trans-frontier trajectories directed by the Soviet Union to the south (Chapter 5). See Rakowska-Harmstone (1970:232-6) and Chatterjee (2002:22-5).
[203] On the *ashar* see Bichsel (2006).
[204] Bobodzhan G. Gafurov, then First Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party and himself an influential historian.

4.2 Territorial-Administrative Bordering

After having discussed both the target of socialist concerns over dealing with the legacy of multiethnic empires and the object of discourses of classification, assimilation, and differentiation in the quest for the bordering of formerly non-bordered 'national' identities, I now turn to the particularities of bordering those discrete national units: processes of territorialising new national identities within the state, thereby providing a container for new state loyalties. In our particular borderlands, the Kyrgyz Nation and the Tajik Nation had now been quantified; what was yet to be accomplished was the on-the-ground structuring of national self-consciousness around these labels – the systemic internal bordering of discrete nations within the state so as to approach a fit between Nation and State (or, rather, administrative entity at the highest level immediately below the actual state). In effect, now local populations were to be confronted with these categories – a theatre was to be opened in which local involvement was to be negotiated. This process can be seen as taking place in four steps, all of which are characterised by interaction between the political centre and local elites in the new minority areas of the socialist states:

> *First*, the distribution of titular and sub-titular statuses;
>
> *Second*, the wedding of titularity to a specific territory serving as a homeland;
>
> *Third*, the discourses influencing the political and physical delimitation of these containers;
>
> *Fourth*, the refocusing of power in the hands of local elites and cadres charged with solving intra-ethnic, local problems and with cementing a new state loyalty.

It will become clear that internal bordering and the negotiation that went along with it is important to our understanding of how borderlands were to subsequently figure as the physical, political, and social interface between the Soviet Union and the PRC: internal bordering realigned the borderland actors and enfranchised new elites by promoting new forms of political interaction between borderlands and their states. And, crucially, the processes of internal bordering structure such interaction (as well as new trans-frontier interaction) to this day, with the boundaries and ethno-national names of the former SSRs only the most glaringly obvious of these continuities.

Titularity and Territoriality

Early discussions held by the new socialist policy makers before 1924 concerning the delimitation of Soviet Central Asia by way of granting titularity to the nations of the region dealt exclusively with 'the three main nationalities of Central Asia': the Kazakhs (then termed Kirgiz), the Uzbeks, and the Turkmen[205]. Haugen argues that the authorities of the time

[205] The reasons for originally focusing on these three particular groups seem to have lain in, first, their geographic distribution (Kazakhs in the northern steppes, Uzbeks in the desert oasis cities and fertile valleys, and Turkmen in the inhospitable southern wastes bordering Persia); and, second, in what was perceived as their obvious socio-economic differences. The distinction between Uzbeks, Tajiks, and the ominous 'Sart' category unfortunately exceeds the possibilities of this analysis and will only be touched upon peripherally; for more on the Sart discussion see Haugen (2003:30-4) and Collins (2006:70-2).

believed that the majority of Central Asians would identify with one of these three nations, and no mention was made of the Kyrgyz (then termed Kara-Kirgiz), the Tajiks, or the Karakalpaks[206] and Pamiri (2003:166). In connection with the development of sentiments of titularity and the concomitant formalisation of an ethnic homeland at the highest administrative level (that of the SSR), the process of bordering between what were to become the Kazakh and Kyrgyz nations casts light on a variety of topics ranging from official historiography and ethnogenesis to linguistic policies. Similarly, the status of the Pamiri within the patchwork of SSRs, ASSRs, and AOs is a telling example of the politics of titularity and power within the Union. We shall now take a closer look at such processes in order to discover how members of these new nations actually dealt with the new national vocabulary and how elites employed it to their own ends.

Evolution and Territorial Status

As described above, titular nations were the prime target of Soviet attempts at fusing and historical acceleration. Let me present this process as follows: the creation of the Kyrgyz AO as part of the Kazakh SSR in late 1924, followed by its 'promotion' to ASSR status in 1926, and concluded by its acquisition of fully fledged SSR-status independent from the Kazakh SSR in December 1936 represents, in Soviet terminology, a dialectal twelve-year-long development from *narodnost* (behind the Kazakhs on the road to modernity) to *natsionalnost* (at an equal level to the Kazakhs in terms of national development). The Pamiri never made it that far and were to remain a sub-titular nationality, first within the Uzbek SSR and then, after its partitioning in 1929, as part of the Tajik SSR: the region that was to be named the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) was established in 1925 and divided into the six *raions* of Murghab, Shugnan, Roshan, Bartang, Ishkashim, and Wakhan; with the exception of Murghab's Kyrgyz population, the indigenous inhabitants of GBAO were henceforth to be classified as 'Mountain Tajik' in order to underline their sub-titular status and inclusion into Tajikistan. A glance across the boundary to Xinjiang highlights a central difference in status regarding these two trans-frontier groups. There, the Kyrgyz were granted *minzu* status simultaneously to the Kazakhs, just as were the inhabitants of the Tashkurgan area, who were termed the Tajik *minzu*. In this latter case, the effects of granting *Tajik* titularity to a collection of groups who, in Soviet terminology, were termed Mountain Tajiks (and thus a sub-titular group subject to the Tajik SSR) has had a profound effect on trans-frontier relations and identities, as I will discuss in the next chapter. Similarly, while the Uighur *minzu* were granted the highest form of autonomy available in the PRC, in the Soviet Union where by the time of delimitation possibly 100,000 Uighurs were resident, they were never deemed eligible for any kind of administrative status, not even at the lower *oblast* and *raion* levels. The same applies to another nationality recognised by the PRC: the Hui (termed Dungani in Soviet Central Asia). One of the largest *minzu* in China (with nearly 10 million members in 2000) and very much present in primarily the Kyrgyz and

[206] The Karakalpak ASSR was created in hindsight and originally included as an AO within the Kazakh SSR before it was transferred to the Russian SFSR in 1930 and upgraded to the status of an ASSR; it ended up as part of the Uzbek SSR after 1932.

Kazakh SSRs, they likewise never attained titular status in the Soviet Union. These dynamic differences in the granting of titularity status between the Soviet and Chinese systems point to what I term the state cleavage of loyalties and identities and I will be arguing that this represents the root of present-day processes of trans-frontier (external) bordering. For now, I will focus on the causes and effects of titularity within these peoples' respective states in 'stabilising the contents' of what was to belong within the normative 'containers' of national identity.

Homeland and Titularity

Acquiring titular status as a *natsionalnost* went hand-in-hand with the allocation of a discretely defined ethnic homeland, a place serving as a territorial anchor for all things national. This allocation has had a profound effect on both intra-ethnic relations and the subjective feeling of rightfully belonging within one's nation. According to Kaiser, "the national homeland is a powerful geographic mediator of socio-political behavior" (1994:5), laden as it is with strong emotional attachment that informs a place-based nationalism that contains three dimensions: locale, location, and sense of place (Agnew 1987:230-1). In Kaiser's interpretation, these three elements can be characterised as, first, the setting in which social relations are constituted (the *locale*), that may be equated with the objective or tangible land serving as the resource or political power base of the nation; second, the external geopolitical and socio-economic environment (the *location*) within which national communities interact; and, third, the subjective dimension through which a national community identifies with a certain area as its ancestral homeland and which serves as the driving force behind what I will term the 'gathering of the nation' below (the *sense of place*). Furthermore, the development of a sense of homeland, along with a sense of national belonging has served to attach nations to specific places, places that originally focused on villages or local regions in which one was born but successively came to be expanded with the broadening of the concept of 'nation' to encompass territories within a state or even the state itself (Hobsbawm 1990:15). In other words, the territorialisation of the titular imagined community: imagined through a myth of common descent now fixed in space by the myth of an ancestral birthplace.

The points in which the territorialisation of the nation touch upon the construction of a state identity become evident in the way in which historiographic accounts of migration and mobility have been constructed and perpetuated to this day, as I have hinted at above. These accounts, in their essence based upon what Smith (1986:200-6) terms the 'legends and landscapes' of nationalisation, serve to deliver a *post facto* narrative of common ancestry on contemporary state territory and thereby enforce a nation's sense of place through state-supported claims to a particular locale. A state elite's desire to in some way wield control over its minorities' sense of historical (and historic) affiliation with the state *as it is today* has much to do with the intrinsic truth of the observation that "since members [of nations] view their nations and homelands as more ancient than any state, their claim to the homeland is perceived as more legitimate than any claim a state may make" (Kaiser 1994:19). In effect,

citizenship in a state can thus come to appear to be as 'natural' and 'primordial' a destiny as membership in a nation can be. To my mind, this is evident in state-supported historiography relating to titular nationalities' ethnohistories, as I encountered while inquiring into traditional narratives of Pamiri and Kyrgyz homeland in the field[207]. The most commonly encountered myth of origin dealing with the inhabitants of Tashkurgan, nowadays classified in the PRC as 'Tajiks' (Pamiri, as I have argued in Chapter 3), is a tale told by parents to their children as well as by teachers to their pupils and, crucially, figures in Chinese television broadcasts seen by a wider local and state-wide audience. I give it here as it was told to me by a PRC Tajik student at Xinjiang Normal University[208]:

> The origins of the Tajik people in the Sarykul range of the Pamir are from ancient times. Maybe in the 2nd century [C.E.] a Han princess was travelling through the CongLin [archaic Chinese name for the Pamir] on her way to marry a Persian king. She was escorted by an entourage of servants and a train of military protectors. The weather turned bad and she was forced to set up camp in the mountains beyond Kara-kul [Lake; the lake in today's Xinjiang and not the larger one in today's GBAO (S.P.)]. Her company, in order to make her comfortable for the winter, constructed a palace for her named Kyzkurgan, the Princess Fortress, and guarded it closely. However, she met the Sun God on top of Muztagh Ata [mountain] and became pregnant and bore him a son. After this, the servants and military escort did not dare to either continue on to Persia or to return to the Han court, so they stayed there. Her son was named *Han ritian zhong*, Han Married To The Sun, and he became their benevolent and wise king. The people settled on the land there and became known as Tajik; many centuries later [official historiography proposes the 8th century to coincide with Tang expansion into the region (S.P.)] they were rediscovered by the Han – old resentment was forgotten and thus was laid the foundation of the Han-Tajik friendship of peoples.

Here, I believe, the particular locale of the Tashkurgan region in the Sarykul section of the Pamir range is placed in direct relation to its location within the present-day boundaries of China and creates a sense of place for those living there. The age of this myth remains very much open to debate (judging by the fact that other Pamiri groups across the boundary in GBAO have no knowledge of it would suggest its genesis to be probably of modern origin), but the important factor here is that most inhabitants of Tashkurgan Autonomous County ('Tajik' and non-'Tajik' alike) cherish it as a local myth and ground their notions of homeland and the concomitant demand for titularity through it.

Titularity and Sub-titularity

Granting some groups titularity had an effect on those groups' interaction with groups that were not thus privileged. Both the Kyrgyz SSR and the Tajik SSR contained such groups and, in order to understand local discourses of belonging and bordering we must ask how intra-Republic ethnic relations between titular groups and sub-titular groups were subsequently affected by this, considering that titularity entailed the active construction by way of historiography and the promotion of national cultural elements of a 'national homeland' of the titular groups within which sub-titular groups were subordinate. One effect

[207] Due to the complex range of topics touched upon in differing versions of the Manas epic amongst the Kyrgyz, I have chosen to present the Kyrgyz myth of origin along with its respective state version and historiography in Chapter 5 alongside my argument of state cleavage and bifurcating nations across the boundary.
[208] Interview with NimTuLa, May 2006, in Urumqi.

of a nation gaining titular status was the subsequent development of accusations of titular chauvinism vis-à-vis sub-titular groups within the titular group's national homeland. This process was heightened during the implementation of the awareness of national territoriality amongst nations in the 1920s and 1930s in the Soviet Union. With the introduction of policies of indigenisation (*korenizatsiya*), themselves the logical conclusion of national self-determination and the fight against Great Nation (i.e., Russian or Han) chauvinism, sub-titular almost-nations (the *narodnostii*) found themselves excluded from discourses of power within the titular nation's territorial unit: a *narodnost* found it more difficult to attain leading positions in the republic's economic or political life and was granted smaller amounts of the budgetary pie in the allocation of resources for the advancement of their 'cultural level'. In effect, the new national minorities now faced new processes of discrimination and forced assimilation and became the targets of a new 'titular chauvinism'[209].

The *korenizatsiya* policies, to which I will return in the following sections, had, from this perspective, a profound effect on the relationship between titular nation and sub-titular nationality: they accelerated the national consolidation of sub-titular nationalities around the state through the social, economic, and political integration of localities into the broader national homeland. The federalisation of the state and promotion of a dominant local nationality to titular status "encouraged the formation of a more expansive sense of homeland that had previously been limited to locality [and] the creation of officially recognised national homelands within which indigenes were placed in a privileged position because they were indigenes, clearly enhanced the national consolidation process" (Kaiser 1994:135-6). Hence, sub-titular groups were clearly in a subordinate position: the titular nation within 'whose' homeland they resided was apt to regard them as groups potentially able to stake their own claim to their own, smaller and administratively separate homeland, thereby diverting valuable resources away from the titular republic – something which increasingly came to be called 'against the national (i.e. titular nation's) interests' (Hirsch 2005:165). At the same time, Marxist theory regarded them as potential targets for 'melting together' with the titular nation. This same theory and its implementation through socialist ethnic categories, however, was precisely the engine behind these sub-titular nations' increasing sense of self-awareness and difference to the dominant titular group.

While I am unable to state whether this was an all-Union process, there certainly exist numerous examples pointing to such mechanisms which remained largely hidden to outsiders' eyes during the lifetime of the Soviet Union and only became visible in the aftermath of the collapse and successive realignments of political power in the newly independent Republics [210]. GBAO with its sub-titular Pamiri (or Mountain Tajiks as the Soviet system labelled them) seems to have formed an exception in Central Asia due to its

[209] Well-documented examples are the Kazakh native speakers of the Uzbek SSR, the Uzbek speakers of the Kyrgyz SSR in the Ferghana valley (for both see Hirsch (2005:165-70), and the 'Tajiks' of the Uzbek SSR's cities of Samarqand and Bukhara (see Roy 2000).
[210] Case examples include the Georgian Abkhaz and Georgian Ajars (Smith et al. 1998), Moldovan Gaguz (Kaiser 1994:364-5), and Volga Germans in Russia (Kaiser 1994:367-9).

direct representation in Moscow (in the Soviet of Nationalities) thanks to its autonomous *oblast* (AO) status and the very strong presence locally of the Soviet military (that was not subject to the Tajik SSR's political decisions but rather to the all-Union Central Committee). According to interviews conducted in Khorog and Murghab in late 2005[211], the structures of subsidies granted disproportionately to GBAO had the effect of largely keeping internal tensions within the *oblast* between titular Tajiks and sub-titular Pamiris to a strict minimum because the Soviet centre in Moscow was the arbitrator of such allocations and not, as in other cases, the local SSR government; outside of GBAO, however, Pamiri had no political influence in the Tajik SSR despite a large diaspora of Pamiri throughout the SSR, and the tensions that were to erupt in the Tajikistani civil war of the 1990s (following the Soviet dissolution and the end of subsidies) must already have been present in earlier years.

The Case of the Kyrgyz

To return to the question of official historiography, ethnogenesis, and linguistic policy, the creation of a separate titular Kyrgyz *natsionalnost* at the same administrative level as the already identified and categorised Kazakhs highlights a number of these processes introduced here. According to Bennigsen, the Kyrgyz had always been distinct from the Kazakh hordes of the steppe in that they were seasonal nomads and semi-sedentary mountaineers as opposed to the Kazakh form of 'pure' nomadism in the Kazakh steppe (1961, as quoted in Haugen 2003:168). Soviet ethnographers then attempted to localise the clans practising this form of semi-nomadism in terms of historical settlement and migration and were centrally concerned with the question as to whether the Kyrgyz as a self-aware group had always inhabited the valleys of the Tian Shan, Kyrgyz Alay, and northern Pamirs or whether their ethnogenesis included migration as an ethnic group from southern Siberia (specifically, from the Yenisei and Irtysh river valleys)[212]. This controversy notwithstanding, by the late 19th century socio-economic dynamics had led to a distinction between the Kirgiz of the steppes (the Kazakhs) and the Kara-Kirgiz further south in the foothills and valleys of the mountains (the Kyrgyz), with the latter designation hinting at the sub-group nature of the second group. With the development of minority nationalism amongst the Kazakh/Kyrgyz elite directed against the Uzbek predominance in early Soviet institutions, it is significant that elites of both groups argued jointly for a common recognition of their separateness from the settled populations of what was to become the Uzbek nation. As Haugen (2003:169-70) shows, it was only *after* the recognition of the Kazakh (that is, Kirgiz) nation that Kyrgyz (that is, Kara-Kirgiz) elites began to plead for the recognition of a separate Kyrgyz nation. Claims were made employing the new vocabulary of difference about this distinctness, as the

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[211] In the words of Mullo-Abdol Shagarf, one of these interviewees (interview November 2005, in Khorog):

> Until the 1980s we had real autonomy from the Tajiks and the Khorog *hukumat* [district] had two phone lines: one to Dushanbe, one to Moscow. The first line was not important to the *oblast*, the second was. Ah, we were so much more integrated in the Soviet Union than was the rest of the SSR, and they [the Tajiks] really didn't like that but what could they do?

[212] Contemporary general wisdom amongst Kyrgyz seems to have focused on the latter theory, no doubt due to Soviet ethnography's preference for this option, based upon what I can only describe as Soviet academia's predilection for rooting ethnogenesis on contemporary Soviet territory.

following excerpt shows that highlights categories in tune with the registers such as language and equality employed by the authorities (Kyrgyz representatives to the delimitation commission of 1924, as quoted in *ibid.*, my emphasis):

> The interests of the Kara-Kirgiz [Kyrgyz] are getting less attention than those of other peoples. [...] The Kara-Kirgiz [Kyrgyz] differ linguistically and otherwise from the Kirgiz [Kazakh], and the Kara-Kirgiz [Kyrgyz] question must be raised independently from the Kazak-Kirgiz [Kazakh] [...]. There are no schools, no textbooks, and the cultural situation of the people is ignored, even though the language differs from that of the Kirgiz [Kazakh]. As a result, Kirgiz [Kazakh] textbooks are not appropriate for us. *We must have our own.*

The subsequent establishment of the Kyrgyz SSR (after its various incarnations in lesser administrative forms) was a result of the demands that emerged and that were themselves largely the result of an emerging fear in the region among some groups of being marginalized as sub-titular nationalities (Haugen 2003:170-1). The frequently voiced claim by the Kyrgyz *natsiya* to ownership over that most important of Kyrgyz cultural achievements recognised by Soviet authorities, the Manas epic, despite its development as a wider collection of tales referring to groups not included in today's notions of Kyrgyz-ness[213] can in this context be seen as a demand for control over a history that has inexorably led to the formation of 'the Kyrgyz', a process only strengthened by the Soviet practice of classifying certain cultural achievements by titular nation. In this line of thought, the parcelling out of 'national' poets, 'national' histories, and 'national' traditions so avidly practised by the respective Soviet Academies of Sciences in the SSRs figures centrally in the evolution of the nation's self-awareness (and distinction to others). These Academies have had an influential role in characterising, for example, the Manas epic, the traditionally orally transmitted myth of origin claimed by Kyrgyz clans, as a 'pan-Kyrgyz' accomplishment: the activities figuring therein such as the combating of individual clans' enemies and the leading of nomadic groups in great migrations to the present-day Kyrgyz homeland have become part of accepted 'Kyrgyz' history. This epic today exists in various printed versions throughout Kyrgyz areas – versions published in states that wield considerable control over printed content and that, under the socialist systems of the PRC and the Soviet Union, repressed elements in the epic that could serve an exclusive 'Kyrgyz nationalism'.

Categorisation, titularity, and territorialisation in Soviet Central Asia were processes that unleashed dynamics unforeseen by Moscow and the regional government in Tashkent. In effect, the vocabulary of titularity and nationality had been adopted by local elites and used to further local interests vis-à-vis groups to whom the centre had granted nationality status – a dynamic of incremental differentiation was pursued at ever-decreasing numerical levels had developed. Delimitation, taking place between 1924 and 1936, was meant to quell

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[213] According to Professor Mambet Turdu, the much acclaimed PRC Kyrgyz scholar on the Manas Epic (personal interview May 2006, in Urumqi). The epic is wider and older than today's extent of 'Kyrgyz-ness' but was allocated by Soviet authorities to the nascent Kyrgyz *natsionalnost*. It consists of over 500,000 lines in all its entirety and takes around three days to recount by *manashi* (the singers who recite it by heart).

this dynamism: while identification by the state and the successive granting of titularity status was intended to stabilise the potential 'contents of the container' (that is, provide the parameters for officially approved national groups), delimitation was now carried out for such territories in order to administrate that 'container' for identities and state-centred loyalties.

Internal Delimitation

By the time that Soviet boundary making moved from theoretical considerations of whom to privilege to actual adoption on the ground in 1924, three main principles constituted the foundation of the delimitation itself (Hirsch 2005:160-86): the national-ethnographic principle, which called for a correspondence between what Soviet ethnographers thought belonged within a group and that group's political boundaries; the economic principle, which called for both preserving economic formations and processes across ethnic boundaries where they existed and for consideration of the economic needs of the administrative entities being created; and, third, the principle of administrative order, a principle that was based upon all-Union interests and which was fundamental to the delimitation of Central Asian boundaries in those cases where the other principles were either not to be implemented due to inconclusive evidence on the ground or because local national and economic claims conflicted with the interests of the state in general. This third principle should be considered "a collective category for the cases in which national-ethnographic and economic aspects were ignored [so as to] render administration of the new entities as simple and rational as possible by sacrificing the principle of national-ethnographic unity" (Haugen 2003:181), an argument that was provided as the official reason for at times disregarding that first principle.

The making of boundaries between national units has been conclusively shown by the archival research conducted by Haugen (2003:182-4) to have been primarily based on lower rather than upper institutional levels and, in particular, on the political interests of local elites in Central Asia, who in the 1920s became adept at using the Soviet terminology of nationality to phrase particularistic, even nationalistic, demands for territory and power[214]. This focus becomes obvious when considering the role of the Central Asian Bureau, the institution based in Tashkent that was the mediator between the Territorial Committee (in charge of coordinating information on populations, boundaries, and expert opinions) and the Central Committee in Moscow that made the final, legally binding decisions on boundaries. It was the Bureau that received letters of protest and appeals regarding delimitation from local actors, and it was the Bureau that re-evaluated contested boundaries *after* the official delimitation of 1924 by following up on this protest and seeking the advice of economists and

[214] See especially Haugen's presentation (2003:185-201) of the three examples of the Turkmen SSR (the arguments of the inclusion of Uzbek cities within the Turkmen republic, phrased in socio-economic terms), the delimitation of the Ferghana valley (the conflict expressed through the Uzbek side's use of national-ethnographic arguments versus the Kyrgyz side's focus on economic and administrative needs), and the struggle over the city of Tashkent (a fundamental argument over the city majority's nationality between Kazakhs and Uzbeks and focusing on the urban-rural divide in the region).

ethnographers and collaborating with local political actors. Indeed, in the Bureau's opinion, Central Asian boundaries were always meant to be regarded as provisional in nature rather than set in stone due to the lack of comprehensive statistical information and the dynamic environment (Hirsch 2005:163). Arbitration between claims and counter-claims was devilishly difficult, especially because different nationalities tended to stake their claims in the process based on different registers: how was one to balance the sensible Kyrgyz argument for the inclusion of market places (such as the Uzbek city of Osh in the Ferghana valley, a city that was indeed subsequently allocated to the Kyrgyz SSR) with Uzbek demands for access to the water resources so vital for their settled agriculture (such as unified irrigation systems around Andijan or the later Uzbek enclaves on Tajik and Kyrgyz territory)? In any case, whether boundaries were changed or not, the stage was set for further conflict in many instances, with local leaders equipped with a new vocabulary of intra-ethnic differentiation. In accordance with Hirsch (2005:172-80), it seems realistic to state that *in spite of* efforts by the Soviet regime to resolve conflicts, tensions escalated through the fixing of boundaries that entailed a new relationship among the categories of nationality, access to resources, and political power.

The Case of the Kyrgyz-Tajik Boundary

Much has been written about the claims and counter-claims revolving around that most well-known of Central Asian boundaries, the ones dividing the Ferghana Valley between the SSRs of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. However, to the best of my knowledge, there exists not a single authoritative published source discussing the development of the eastern segment of the boundary between the Kyrgyz and Tajik SSRs snaking its way through the Alay range and marking the northern limits of GBAO.

Picture 21: Pamir Highway leading to the Qyzyl Art Pass (near Karakul, GBAO)

A definitive answer to the question as to why Murghab *raion* with its predominantly Kyrgyz population was not to become a part of the Kyrgyz SSR must await the uncovering of archives in Dushanbe or, most likely, in Tashkent or even Moscow. Nevertheless, I will contribute to such a discussion here with material gathered during fieldwork. Murghab was first included in an *oblast* of the Turkestan ASSR in 1923 (deriving from its administration by the defunct Khoqand khanate) before then being combined with western Badakhshan (under the former administration of Bukhara) into GBAO in 1925, four years before the Tajik SSR was cut out from the territory of the Uzbek SSR (in 1929) and 11 years before the Kyrgyz SSR was split from the Kazakh SSR (in 1936). With tensions between Pamiri in the wider region and the seasonally migrating Kyrgyz herders high at times (with the *basmachi* movement and its polarising effect on both communities to be discussed further below), it seems reasonable to assume that central authorities would favour the development of a Pamiri territorial entity (that seemed resistant to the *basmachi* movement) over the territorial expansion of Kyrgyz territorial entities (that would give pastoralists more territorial-administrative space and could link rebellious areas with the contested Afghan boundary). Local Murghab Kyrgyz elites' claims that could have been made (and possibly were) arguing for their inclusion into Kyrgyz/Kazakh areas at the time rather than into the evolving Tajik entity would not have been favourably regarded by either the Central Asian Bureau or the Central Committee due to their association with the armed resistance in the region – Pamiri would have seemed more reliable and, potentially, more loyal. There are no records I am aware of that point to local Kyrgyz elites using the new language of nationality to argue for their association with a wider Kyrgyz *narodnost* or, later, *natsionalnost*.

In terms of the afore-mentioned three main principles involved in boundary delimitation, it seems probable that it was the third principle (that of administrative order) that finally led to the present-day boundary between the Alay in the Kyrgyz SSR and GBAO in the Tajik SSR. While it may be supposed that the Kyrgyz herders of Murghab were only temporary, part-year residents of the region, Sven Hedin (1897, as quoted in Bliss 2006:194-5) attests to their permanent presence in the region by the turn of the century, and they were included in a Russian census of the time (as a group being different from other local residents of the Pamirs). By the 1920s they had become an integral part of the local economy (as discussed in Chapter 3) and according to Lentz (1933, as quoted in *ibid.*) local Pamiri could even communicate in 'Turkish' (i.e., Kyrgyz) – possibly the argument was made that they were a crucial part of the economic foundations of the regional administrative entity to be delimited (akin to the arguments put forward in the Ferghana delimitations). This would also explain the fact that, since at least the 1950s, an area of around 50,000 hectares around the village of Sary Mogol in the Kyrgyz SSR (west of Sary Tash) has been 'rented' to the Tajik SSR and has figured ever since in economic statistics available locally in Murghab as 'an economic part of GBAO'[215]. However, the administrative argument seems in this case the strongest considering that this region played an absolutely vital military role for both the tsarist state

[215] Personal observations (November 2005 at the *hukumat* office in Murghab). This 'rent' situation has continued to the present day, with Tajikistan paying rent to Kyrgyzstan for the region around Sary Mogol and the residents of that village officially holding Tajikistani passports; see Chapter 6.

and the young Soviet Union: the boundary with China was contested and the need to maintain a strong discourse of control vis-à-vis the British frontier immediately to the south must have been seen to be paramount to all other considerations – hence, the establishment of an AO with its direct lines of communication to the centre. Placing such an area under administrative control of the Kyrgyz proto-national entity, as yet an ASSR (which it could have ethnographically been part of), could not have seemed a suitably reliable option. Barring its recognition as a fully fledged Union Republic (which could not have been legitimated through Stalin's four criteria especially because of the importance of the Ismaili faith for Pamiri identities), the nascent Tajik SSR was the next best solution. This situation became the status quo when the local Pamiri elites, who might have sought renegotiation due to the locally perceived dissatisfaction with their sub-titular status as 'Mountain Tajiks' within a Tajik SSR, were subsequently purged in the 1930s (Roy 2000:66).

The New Republic-level States and Their Internal Borderlands

In effect, while processes of categorisation and identification preceding delimitation must have left most Central Asians cold, the subsequent administrative bordering of nations brought the importance of group identity home to those who found themselves in the position of choosing their affiliation due to proximity to the new administrative boundaries: internal borderlanders were being created – groups of people living in villages and towns who found new administrative boundaries on their doorsteps and who had become the object of a new narrative of inclusion/exclusion. Their power in these early years of delimitation (the 1920s and 1930s) lay in their adoption of state categories of belonging so as to attempt their inclusion into the entity they perceived as being in their own, local interests. Wider notions of belonging to larger groups were present before delimitation[216] but it was the delimitation of ethno-national territories that provided a framework for political negotiations and solutions. These negotiations and interactions with the state very quickly came to be expressed in the language of nationality and in doing so helped to make official nationality categories real on the ground and in everyday life[217]: "petitioners did not question the official assumption that 'nationality' was linked to land and other resources. Instead, the petitioners argued that they were entitled to such resources as a matter of national rights" (Hirsch 2005:170). Thus, the Nation that had been classified and categorised (that is, socio-culturally bordered) was now witnessing processes of bordering within the newly delimited spaces that they were meant to represent: the State (or, rather, SSR) and its institutionalisation was becoming bordered as a supposedly 'ideal fit' between State and Nation.

The political entities thus delimited were SSRs and, by 1936 and the partition of the Kyrgyz SSR from the Kazakh SSR, all fifteen Union Republics had been delimited. The SSRs,

[216] See Chapter 3 on pre-socialist identities and loyalties.
[217] Scholars focusing on the participatory nature of the delimitation and re-evaluation list numerous examples. Hirsch (2005:166), for example, relates the introduction of language laws in the Ferghana valley and Uzbek petitioners' grievances linked to the new preponderance of Kyrgyz-language teaching in schools visited exclusively by Uzbek students on the Kyrgyz side of the boundary; after filing local complaints these students were allegedly told by Kyrgyz officials that 'this is a Kyrgyz state and you are obliged to study Kyrgyz'.

at the top of the hierarchical ladder of administration of the Soviet Union, had all the trappings of independent states barring their own military forces and independent foreign policy: a government (the soviet), a president (of the respective soviet), a flag and anthem, a national Communist party, a national language and school and broadcasting network (including a national university), an Academy of Sciences, a set of ministers (including, after 1944, a foreign minister with limited powers of interaction at the trans-state level), and a police force. ASSRs had most of these elements, albeit at a lower level: there was a soviet without a president, a cabinet of ministers without a foreign minister, primary and secondary schools in the local language but no 'national' university, a Communist party that was junior to that of the SSR, and an Academy of Sciences that was a 'specialised branch' of the national one. AOs, yet further down the ladder, had soviets but no ministers and primary schools providing a minimum education in the local language with all higher schooling in the 'national' language (or Russian). In terms of all-Union representation in the Soviet of Nationalities, a hierarchy of privilege becomes apparent (Kaiser 1994:169): each SSR had 32 representatives, ASSRs had 11, AOs had 5, and 1 from Autonomous *Raions/Okrugs* (which only existed in the Russian SFSR).

I suggest that the actual boundaries between SSRs (the 'internal boundaries' of the Soviet Union) existed on paper only: there were no customs posts, border zones, or checkpoints on the infrastructure connecting the SSRs – at least, none that were specifically present because of the existence of the boundary (in contrast to the fact that Soviet territory harboured many such institutions regardless of the existence or absence of internal boundaries in the vicinity). In all likelihood, locals in internal borderlands would have realised the boundary's existence due to the existence of the respective SSRs state institutions (e.g. language use in schools and insignia on local militias' uniforms) rather than boundary control mechanisms. While archival information on internal boundaries remains difficult to obtain (and I base most of my observations on interview material obtained personally over a decade after the end of the Soviet Union), I hold that the internal boundaries most Soviet citizens had to deal with in general were those engendered by the system of collectivisation and the subsequent restrictions on freedom of abode rather than ones between Republics. The few outsiders permitted to move around Soviet Central Asia (usually as members of pre-booked and pre-paid group tours especially of the cities of Samarqand, Bukhara, and Khiva) have never mentioned Republic-boundaries as marked by checkpoints or state inscriptions in form of flags or plaques announcing transition across an SSR boundary. All interviews conducted during my research with individuals who either themselves had moved across SSR boundaries or knew personally of such people agreed that permission needed to be obtained from authorities to leave their immediate surroundings rather than to cross an administrative boundary: "[Before 1999] there was no *granitsa* here, and no *zona*, and no *pogranichniki* [...] – we were all Soviet", an elderly man from Karakul in GBAO told me in reference to the boundary between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Another informant was even clearer (interview with Ayilbek, November 2005, in Osh):

> This boundary [between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan] marks the edges of two states that back then didn't exist outside of the classroom – in Soviet times kids in Sary Tash l[in Osh *oblast*] earned Kyrgyz and Russian and kids in Karakul [in GBAO] learned Tajik and Russian but the only boundary that was visible was the one that resulted in our school in Karakul being larger and prettier than the one down in Sary Tash because more was invested in GBAO than in Kirgizia [the Kyrgyz SSR]. And our kids then went to Dushanbe whereas the kids from Sary Tash went to Frunze [today's Bishkek], perhaps after that to meet again in Leningrad or Moscow.

Homeland and nation delimitation ('internal bordering') mattered to ordinary borderlanders because of access to local institutions (such as the schooling mentioned in the above citation) and the right to 'national particularities' rather than because of regional interconnectivity and frontier transversality, both of which were a given fact of life within the Union. Indeed, checkpoint infrastructure between today's independent Central Asian Republics was, without exception, non-existent until the mid-1990s[218]. The introduction of internal passports in 1932 was meant to limit migration to cities following the collectivisation of land in the late 1920s, and went hand-in-hand with the abolishment of regular passports (initiated in 1926). The new passport system created categories of places for which individuals needed special permission to live, primarily SSR capitals and the *pogranichnaya zona* to other states, and had the effect of tying rural people to their respective *kolkhoz* (Chandler 1998:64-5) and as such represents a central strategy in Soviet governing structures which will be handled more in-depth in the next section of this chapter.

Territorial Autonomy in the PRC

Delimitation in Soviet Central Asia preceded the creation of the People's Republic of China by some 25 years. It can be assumed that the Chinese leadership felt it had learned from Soviet pioneering in matters of internal boundary making and governance between and amongst nationalities, and the CCP was not about to make the mistake of encouraging minority nationalism in the context of autonomous units. A central difference in the establishment of national political entities was the absence of a symbolic connection between ethnic homeland and political structure: while the SSRs, through their very nature as containers for a privileged titular group, granted their respective titular nation wide-ranging elements of identification, the Chinese ARs were purposefully named to include a geographically neutral term along with an ethnonym; hence, Xinjiang Uighur AR (XUAR) and not, as the Soviet model would have suggested, the Uighur AR (or even Uighuristan). There was no desire on the part of the CCP to allow any particular *minzu* to conclude that it had an exclusive right to a chunk of Chinese territory; the authorities' fear of this stemmed from the belief that such sentiments would foster separatism and delegitimise the hegemony of the party apparatus and the Han state, thereby threatening the territorial integrity so

[218] On my first visit to the region in 1999 a local friend (who had for years prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union been charged with organising local food transports between the rural Chui valley in the Kyrgyz SSR and the major distribution centre at Almaty in the Kazakh SSR) had encountered the very first building to be erected on the Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan boundary in late 1998: it was a concrete hut without electricity. By the time I crossed that boundary a year later a plaque had been mounted on the outside stating that this was the border checkpoint; it did, however, remain unmanned until at least summer 2000.

precious to the CCP. This sentiment is best expressed in the words of Zhou EnLai (1957, as quoted in Connor 1984:498):

> We don't lay emphasis on the secession of nationalities. If we do now, imperialism will take advantage of this. Even though it will not succeed, it can add troubles to the co-operation among our nationalities. In [Xinjiang], for instance, before liberation, when some reactionaries engaged in separatist activities to set up a so-called [E]astern Turkestan, imperialism [i.e. the Soviets (S.P.)] took advantage of it. In view of this, at the time of founding the [Xinjiang] Uighur Autonomous Region, we did not approve of the name 'Uighuristan'. [Xinjiang] embraces not just the Uighurs but 12 other nationalities as well[219]. It is impossible to form a '-stan' for each of the 13 nationalities. [...] As to the two characters [Xin] [Jiang], they just mean 'the new land', and do not connote aggression [...][220].

Naturally, there is no discussion as to why the boundaries of XUAR did not undergo new delimitation with an eye to creating either a new, smaller Uighur AR alongside other *minzu* units such as a Kazakh AR, etc. Neither is the option touched upon of calling the entirety of Xinjiang the 'Turkestan AR' – a name that would have been inclusive in respect to all Turkic groups (the absolute majority of non-Han in Xinjiang) living in its territory and that would have had historical salience. In the PRC, even more so than in the Soviet Union, the dichotomy between local indigenes and the influx of members of the majoritarian nationality was profound. This is in part due to the relative strength of the respective 'main' nationalities: Russians in the Soviet Union always only constituted roughly fifty percent of the Union's total population while Han Chinese (or at least those classified as such) account for upward of ninety percent. Discourses of migration and internal colonialism have always been stronger in China, and local peripheral autonomy by non-Han *minzu* has always been coloured by the centre's fear of acknowledging indigenous peoples' right to exclude Chinese (Dreyer 1976:149-50). The ARs in the PRC had always been extended precious little power, even at the level of institutional form, and the desire by Uighurs in particular to rid 'their' homeland of a sinifying presence has never disappeared. In regard to the autonomy granted to 'autonomous regions', this is limited to more local control over the administration of resources, taxes, birth-planning, education, legal jurisdiction, and religious expression (Gladney 2004:19). While government leaders in ARs and the members of its local People's Congresses are frequently members of non-Han *minzu*, real power is located in the CCP which is very much Han-dominated.

Internal Boundary Dynamics in Xinjiang

It is in this context that the delimitation of sub-provincial units must be seen: while there was no dynamism in regard to the boundaries of the AR as a whole, internal boundaries of prefectures and counties did undergo profound changes (a process lasting to the present

[219] XUAR contains thirteen of the 56 officially recognised *minzu* of China: Uighurs, Han, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Mongols, Hui (Chinese Muslims, or Dungani), Uzbeks, Tajiks, Xibe, Manchu, Russians, Daur, and Tatars.

[220] Actually, Xin Jiang also means 'New Territories', with 'territories' referring to lands belonging to the state. As shown in Chapter 3, the province was named like this after its military conquest. I have made the experience that local interpretation of these characters can very well include the connotation of 'occupation' by non-Han locals.

day)[221]. Thus, over the nearly six decades of the PRC, numerous new autonomous counties (the lowest level of territorial administration) have been established, thereby diminishing the power of provinces and ARs because ACs are placed under the authority of local *minzu* rather than provincial *minzu* – Tashkurgan Tajik AC is under the jurisdiction of a people's congress dominated by Tajiks and Kyrgyz rather than by Uighurs. The effect on the relations between the titular group of the AR (here: Uighurs) and smaller *minzu* (Tajiks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, etc.) has been profound[222]. The 'Programme for the Enforcement of National Regional Autonomy' (which became legislature in 1953) outlines this process from an official point of view: according to this document (as quoted in Benson&Svanberg 1988:57), three types of areas qualify to organise autonomous governments. First, areas inhabited by one larger *minzu*; second, areas where one large and several smaller *minzu* live together; and, third, areas inhabited by two or more nationalities. Originally, ARs were envisioned to be of the first type but technically in Xinjiang the migratory dynamics in China (in particular in relation to the influx of Han Chinese from the east) have led to XUAR representing a type three area; it is at the other end of the scale, at the most local level of autonomous townships, that type one areas can be found. In between, in the *xian* and ACs the second type is predominant in Xinjiang, thereby showing that, in effect, administrative boundaries have been drawn at the sub-provincial level that have resulted in uniting several *minzu* in various constellations in local governments. Hence, boundaries between territorial-administrative entities in Xinjiang are also the boundaries of the local negotiation of political power that does not translate to greater solidarity at the level of the AR government: cooperation between *minzu* in autonomous prefectural or county governments does not necessarily entail cooperation at higher administrative levels and thus weakens the individual negotiation power of any one *minzu*.

Simultaneously, the recognition of a new administrative entity, the city[223], has been taking place, with cities at all levels being designated as sites of *local* rather than *provincial* government. Under the slogan of 'cities leading counties', "provinces [and ARs] are uniformly and inexorably surrendering authority over large areas of territorial jurisdiction to cities, and counties are losing the right to appeal directly to provinces for assistance or redress" (Fitzgerald 2002:28). Such is the case in Qyzyl Suu AP's capital of Artush, which has been upgraded to the status of county-level city and has undergone a veritable boom in economic development over the last years – it seems likely that the trend established in the rest of

[221] This static situation has not applied to all ARs' boundaries in the PRC, with Tibet the notable exception to the rule: the former territory of the independent principality has been split up within the PRC into the provinces of Xizang (Tibet proper), Qinghai (northern Tibet), western Sichuan, and far southern Gansu. For a treatment of these dynamics see Mackerras (1994:176-90).
[222] See my discussion of 'forced power sharing in Xinjiang' (Chapter 6).
[223] There are today three levels of city hierarchy in the PRC: *zhixiashi* (provincial level), *shengxiashi* (prefectural level), and *xianjishi* (county level). The highest level cities are under central control by Beijing and, thus, on a par with provinces themselves. There is considerable upward drift in urban areas seeking to climb this hierarchical ladder because of increasing levels of autonomous policy possibilities (in particular in the economic sphere). See Fitzgerald (2002:27-30). According to local politicians interviewed in 2006, Urumqi (the capital of XUAR) is on the verge of being accorded this highest position – it is likely that XUAR's capital city will subsequently be transferred to another city (Korla or Kuqa seem slated for this honour) further to the south.

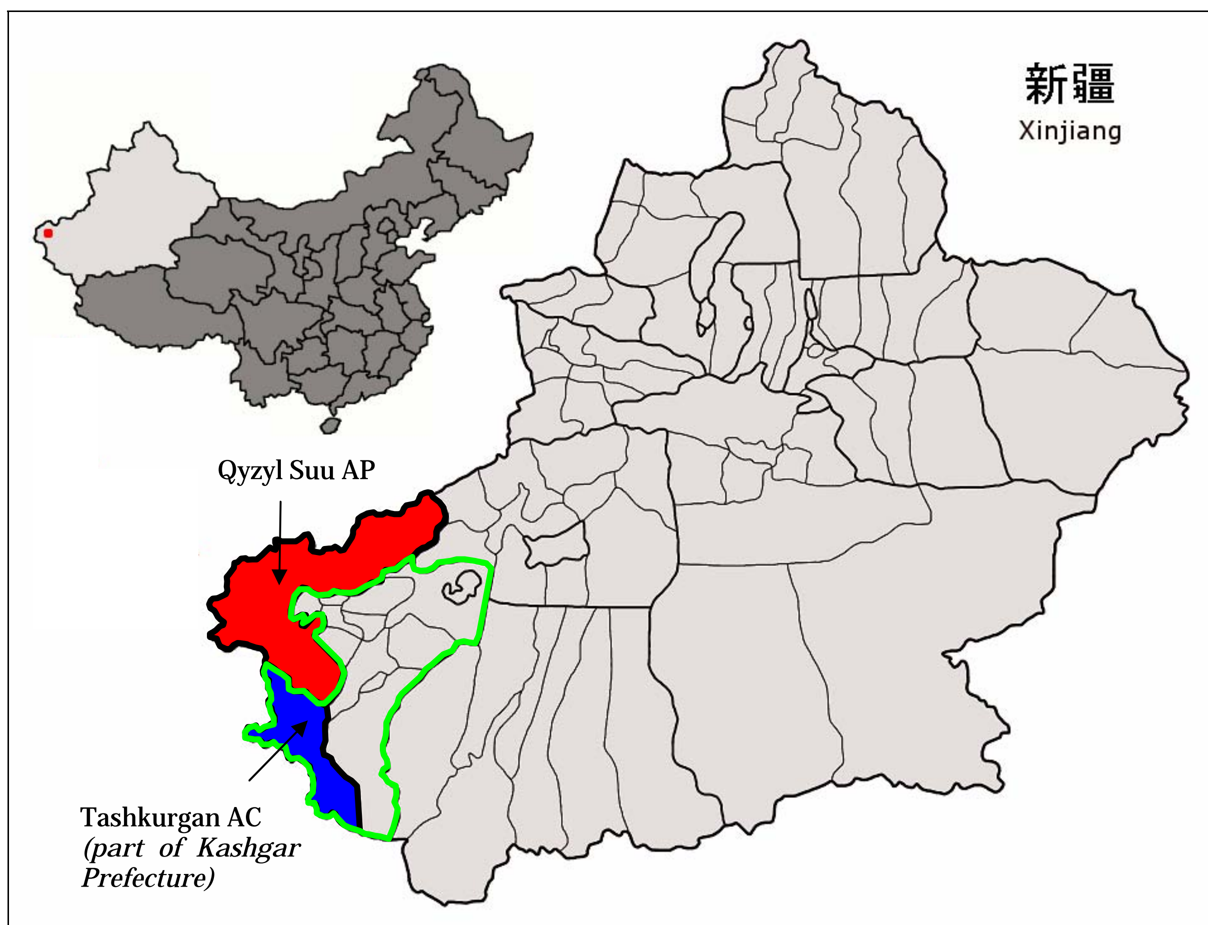
China in the 1990s (with prefectures disappearing and being replaced by county cities and a county-level hinterland, signalling a loss of autonomy of rural areas to urban needs) is seeping into Xinjiang. Significantly, I believe this process of urban 'up-grading' to represent one of the very few areas in which local participation and lobbying at the centre can have the effect of on-the-ground reclassification.

In contrast to this, while official documentation on delimitation and 're-zoning' available to the public is scarce in the PRC, personal interviews have led me to conclude that the reorganisation of local administrative boundaries (i.e., the drift towards ever more autonomous units fragmenting XUAR) is a matter of highest-level state policy rather than locally inspired dynamics. The State Council (the executive body of the highest organ of state power), while advised by the Nationalities Committee of the National People's Congress (the legislative body of the highest organ of state power), is the sole institution able to "approve the geographic division of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government, and to approve the establishment and geographic division of autonomous prefectures, counties, autonomous counties, and cities" (Constitution of the PRC 1993: Chapter 1, Article 89 §15); local people's congresses, and thus local politicians and local elites, are heavily restricted in their possibilities to lobby for sub-division or re-evaluation. This leads me to surmise that delimitation and re-zoning has more to do with state policy on economic development and central control than with the wishes of local autonomy. On the contrary, and this is a view held by numerous Uighurs in Xinjiang, a tendency becomes evident of pitting nationalities exercising autonomy at the provincial level of the AR against sub-titular nationalities exercising autonomy at sub-provincial levels. Here I agree with Witt Raczka's observation that sub-division seems to reflect a will by the central government to create hierarchies between and amongst the different *minzu* of Xinjiang (1998:397-8): administratively, XUAR consists of five APs which are partly further divided into ACs if members of a different *minzu* are present locally[224]. According to the 1993 Constitution of the PRC, the difference between prefecture and county, for all intents and purposes, consists of the fact that the former can be further sub-divided into smaller autonomous counties (with their own political representatives at higher levels of government), whereas counties consist only of townships and nationality townships (which do not entail provincial political representation)[225]. In the Central Asian borderlands, Qyzyl Suu AP is divided into three counties (some of which are rumoured to very soon be further divided into a number of autonomous counties and townships for Uighurs), whereas Tashkurgan Tajik AC contains

[224] XUAR's five APs and their respective seats of autonomous government are: Bayangulan Mongol AP (Korla), Borotala Mongol AP (Bole), Ili Kazakh AP (Yining/Gulja), Changji Hui AP (Changji), and Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz AP (Artush). In addition to their respective titular *minzu*, these APs have further *minzu* present within their territories who are entitled to their own ACs and/or townships: Bayangulan is home to a total of 12 *minzu*, Borotala includes 13, Ili 12, Changji 11, and Qyzyl Suu 11. For a more detailed list see Benson and Svanberg (1988:64-5).

[225] Townships (*xiang*) are classified as 'non-urban' and consist of an average of twenty villages (*cun*). Again, upward drift is to be observed even at this level, with townships seeking to be recognised as towns (*zhen*) or even county-level cities (Fitzgerald 2002:27). 'Nationality township' refers to a township under the autonomous control of a *minzu* in an area in which another *minzu* is nominally in the majority.

eleven townships, one of which is designated a Kyrgyz nationality township. Map 4 is provided here to show such a relationship, with the boundaries of Kashgar Prefecture (green) encompassing the territory of Tashkurgan AC (marked in blue) but excluding the AP that is Qyzyl Suu (red):



Map 4: Administrative-territorial units in Xinjiang

Comparative Conclusions

To conclude, processes of internal bordering have fundamentally differed between the Soviet Union and the PRC and exhibited differing degrees of local involvement by borderlanders in the delimitation of their homelands. In the incipient SSRs, boundary-making was based on lower rather than upper institutional levels, thus centrally involving participation by local elites who had quickly adopted the vocabulary of territoriality in order to influence political negotiations revolving around who was to have a say in the various levels of administration. This must have been seen as desirable because the Soviet system institutionalised a hierarchy of permissible local particularism for privileged groups (in form of local language schooling, for example, or the opportunity for careers in local academia). In Xinjiang boundary-making seems to have been more centrally dictated and Xinjiang's

boundaries were not open to discussion by the peoples of Xinjiang out of a traditional fear by the Chinese political centre of possible exclusion of Han in such an economically and strategically important area. The absence of ethno-territorial associations with the political structure of the AR (i.e., its function as a catch-all container) was underlined by the weakening of the negotiation power of the individual *minzu* contained therein through the fragmentation of political solidarity between the non-Han *minzu*. However, dynamism within Xinjiang in regard to lower-level administrative boundaries (counties, prefectures, and urban upgrades) was great and did not take place to this degree across the boundary in Soviet Central Asia (where *oblast* and *raion* boundaries were relatively stable after the completion of the SSR delimitation): such fluid realignments in Xinjiang have affected the loyalties of local *minzu* elites differently from those of the local titular and sub-titular elites in the Kyrgyz SSR and GBAO because the structural basis for the next step in internal bordering (that of political indigenisation) differed, as I now proceed to discuss in detail.

4.3 Processes of Inclusion and Exclusion in the National Units

To foreshadow the results of political indigenisation and the way in which this affected processes of inclusion and exclusion in the delimited national units, the involving of non-Russians/non-Han in the various levels of government (what I term 'indigenisation') has involved different discourses on either side of the Sino-Soviet boundary: indigenisation in the PRC has led to a far greater nationalisation of ethnic identity than it ever did in the Soviet Union's Central Asian SSRs where, as I argue, regionalisation at a sub-national level was the effect of indigenisation. This process came to attain a fair degree of stability through the fact that policies of indigenisation and the concomitant processes of regionalisation (in Soviet Central Asia) and nationalisation (in Chinese Xinjiang) enjoyed a period of more or less uninterrupted development in both states following the heady years of Stalin and Mao. In the Soviet Union, traditional elites were purged over time and replaced with new elites loyal to the *apparat* but who were able to carve out regional power bases; in the PRC traditional elites were co-opted by the military and central authorities but throughout were able to politically survive. In terms of loyalties to the new states developing in the the borderlands, the effect of the processes of inclusion and exclusion on both sides of the boundary to be detailed in this sub-chapter was that Soviet Kyrgyz interacted with members of other Soviet nationalities as equals, as members of the same citizenry, and as representatives of the Kyrgyz nation within Soviet state institutions, just as the PRC Kyrgyz did beyond the boundary to the east.

Soviet Indigenisation: Regionalising Loyalties

Delimitation was not meant to fragment society but rather to provide a framework for solving existing intra-ethnic tensions whilst simultaneously refocusing loyalties towards the Soviet state. The 'container' had been identified, theoretically stabilised, and was being administrated; now, it was to be filled and the contents made inert and loyal to the state. Thus, the traditional power of the *vozhd* (clan leaders) was to be broken and subsumed into new political hierarchies within the governments of the SSRs – a new elite was to be promoted that owed its position and, thus, its allegiance to the *apparat*. This was achieved in the Soviet system through the discrediting of such traditional (and religious) elites, the indigenisation of the structures of governing the various titular homelands so as to avoid "the very real risk that Marxism would be popularly perceived as a new guise for alien domination" (Connor 1984:277), and the 'gathering in of the nation'. Henceforth, in theory, the structures of the Soviet system were to shape the political landscape rather than intra-ethnic, local level intermediaries. This structure, as shown in Figure 9, was to connect the lowest level of *ayil/qishloq* with the Republic-level socialist state (SSR) by way of political representatives at all levels legitimated by the state, from *aksaqal* in the villages to the first secretaries of the various administrative units:

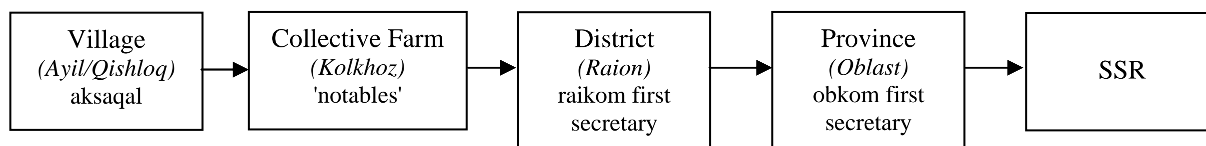


Figure 9: Soviet administrative hierarchy and its respective elites[226]

The Removal of Traditional Power

The first step in national consolidation and indigenisation of governing structures, the struggle against the *plemya* (or *rody*, clans) and the *vozhd*, was aimed at removing the basis for traditional power structures which were seen as inimical to Soviet authority (Haugen 2003:98-100). Especially among the nomadic groups of Central Asia, where descent groups and lineages were particularly predominant foci of identity, a period of 'divide and rule' (in which Soviet authorities did indeed pit clan against clan through preferential treatment) was replaced at the time of the establishment of the SSRs with attempts at unifying these clans into a single nationality. The danger posed by sub-national, intra-ethnic groups with their enormous potential for local mobilisation had become most evident in the *basmachi* revolts beginning in 1916 and lasting well into the late 1920s that cost the Red Army dearly in terms of lives and popular support[227]. The *basmachi* were loosely organised groups of partisans organised into bands by traditional elite leaders; all titular nationalities of Soviet Central Asia were, at one point, involved in this grass-roots movement that was born from the deprivations of tsarist policy of recruitment for the First World War and the ensuing famine of the Civil War years. Described as bands of robbers and pillagers by Soviet literature, the *basmachi* were the only concerted armed resistance to outside rule ever to arise in Central Asia in the 20th century[228].

Much is still obscure about the political nature of the rebels, with some arguing that they were sponsored by the Emir of Bukhara in exile in Afghanistan in collusion with the British (Rakowska-Harmstone 1970:23-4) and others noting that the term *basmachi* came to be applied to general (armed) resistance to the imposition of unpopular Soviet policies such as collectivisation and indigenisation, of particular importance in Tajikistan (Bliss 2006:77-9). What is undoubtedly true, however, is that the revolts enjoyed the support of rural inhabitants throughout Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in no small part due to agitation by religious leaders and the lack of government institutions in the countryside. However, the

[226] This structure has remained essentially the same to the present day, with the *raikom* first secretary reverting to the more traditional designation of *hokkim/akim*, and the *obkom* first secretary being known as *gubernator*.
[227] There are reports and rumours of groups terming themselves *basmachi* having still operated into the 1950s (Hayit 1956, as quoted in Bliss 2006:78). In all likelihood, however, these groups were indeed bandits and refugees.
[228] In the revisionist historiography of post-Soviet Central Asia (in particular in Kyrgyzstan), the *basmachi* have come to be eulogised as 'freedom fighters' and there has been much political debate over recognising their role as nationalistic patriots and founding fathers of independence movements (see the *Times of Central Asia*, newspaper that ran special reports throughout late 2005 and early 2006 in commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the revolts).

movement lacked unity and was mostly characterised by internecine fighting and lack of leadership – this was not centrally co-ordinated resistance to outside rule but rather the venting of local grievances against perceived injustices (whether perpetrated by Russians or, in the case of Tajik areas, by Uzbeks). Even more significantly, in some regions designated as *basmachi* territory by the Soviet authorities there were to be found groups resisting both the rebels and central control: eastern Badakhshan witnessed severe unrest between ethnic Kyrgyz (who generally supported the *basmachi*) and the Pamiri (who did not). To combat the revolts, Soviet policy changed to one of temporarily conceding religious and traditional rights whilst simultaneously pushing for the creation of a new cadre of local leaders loyal to the Soviet regime: the policy of *korenizatsiya* was implemented at the same time as new economic policies and national delimitation in Central Asia, and these three processes must be seen in conjunction so as to understand the basis of Central Asians' reorientation towards a new state loyalty.

Arenas of the Battle Against Localism

The structures that the new *apparat* was to combat in order to accomplish state loyalty were characterised by a milieu in which "the vertical linkages between ruling elites (princely-theocratic, religious, military, and mercantile) at the supra-communal level and the communal leadership of tribes, clans, and villages (including the mass of peasants and nomads) at the grassroots were decidedly weak" (Massell 1974, as quoted in Collins 2006:77). Verticality was further weakened through the absorption by the Soviet state of those ruling elites' sources of legitimacy such as *waqf* lands and Horde territory; the problem for the new system, however, were the strong horizontal linkages between the smallest units of local organisation under the control of clans, extended families, and village communities (headed traditionally by *aksaqal*), all of which were of a far more homogeneous nature. As described above, delimitation took place with a high degree of local participation; local participation, however, was to a certain degree also able to mould revolutionary territorial realignments into pre-revolutionary, pre-existing boundaries between local groups (Collins 2006:83). Realising this, the Soviet regime introduced institutions designed to foster a sense of nation (and thereby a sense of Soviet-ness) at the lowest level: the battle against *mestnichestvo* ('localism') was fought in the arenas of internal delimitation (the bordering of *oblasts* and *raions*) and, most importantly, in the new institution of the *kolkhoz* ('collective farm'). *Kolkhoz* were not simply units of production but rather socio-economic communities often bringing together several villages whose purpose was to establish the key locus of all in-depth economic development in the under-industrialised, un-urbanised South of the Soviet Union (Roy 2000:89-91). Collectivisation, economic modernisation, and sovietisation were all part of the drive behind the creation of the *kolkhoz*, and *kolkhoz* served as the most immediate encounter locals in Central Asia had with the state's territorialisation strategies.

Picture 22: Soviet monument in At Bashy (Naryn *oblast*) listing local *kolkhoz*

While Soviet policy intended for the *kolkhoz* to break the power of traditional elites, reality in this regard in Central Asia did not reflect theory and, as Collins (2006:100-1) points out, the state was less successful in eradicating traditional power structures in Central Asia than elsewhere in the Union: the centralisation of the Soviet system led to a replication of these structures in each of the SSRs, all of which had parallel governing parties and state apparatuses; in Central Asia, with its high birth rate, low urbanisation, and low rate of immigration from other parts of the Union from the late 1950s on, the indigenous population was destined to be granted a high degree of self-governance in the countryside[229]. The combination of centralisation and low penetration of rural areas by outsiders led to Central Asians themselves having almost exclusive control over the implementation of policies and economic resources at the local and regional levels through *kolkhoz* (local level) and *obkom* ('oblast party committee', the regional level) structures. The decentralisation that followed Stalin's death in 1953 and that was pursued throughout the remaining decades of the Soviet Union then built upon these structures and led to an increase in informal power in the periphery, with the "very social and economic institutions created by the communist regime instead foster[ing] social, economic, and consequently political subversion" (Collins 2006:84)

Local and Regional Subversion of State Power Structures

First, at the local level of the *kolkhoz*, this subversion, as Roy importantly notes, was not due to any survival of traditional elites such as the *vozhd* or *beys* but rather because the *kolkhoz* did not fundamentally alter the way in which 'solidarity groups' had dealings with the state (2000:85). In fact, traditional leaders and their legitimacy were eradicated only to be

[229] The Russian population and individuals from other parts of the Union in general were always to remain predominantly in urban areas (with the exception of northern Kazakhstan, which was regarded as largely Russian territory anyway due to its settlement by Russian peasants already in the 19th century); this explains why Kyrgyzstan's higher rate of urbanisation actually points to its exceptionally large Russian population (over 20 percent).

replaced by the new *kolkhoz* notables who fulfilled the same interface function as mediators between locals and state structures: the new elites could not be regarded as *apparatchiks* but rather as leaders drawing their status from the systemisation of officially condoned patron-client relationships. Territorialisation led to the reincarnation of villages as sub-divisions of the *kolkhoz* in the form of 'brigades', and an individual's belonging to a *kolkhoz* was life-long – their place of residency and that of their children. The notables always originated from within the district in which the *kolkhoz* was situated, implying very little political turnover in the Central Asian countryside[230]. Vertical relationships between notables and locals were central to the careers of the notables, and their 'home *kolkhoz'* formed the basis of their political power and their primary loyalty throughout their careers in the event of a transfer to the regional or republican centres. As patron, the Central Asian *kolkhoz* notable had every interest in the economic welfare of his (or sometimes her) *kolkhoz* because his/her wealth and acceptance was derived from its fortunes; the notable defended the *kolkhoz* in its dealings with the state and took care of bringing in outside resources and supplies. In this way, the *kolkhoz* structure very much came to resemble a clan structure[231]: elites in either structure are in the situation of needing the support of their networks to maintain their status, protect their 'group', and make gains within an overarching political or economic system; both types of elites resolve disputes, guarantee economic transactions, and provide security; and non-elites in both cases need patrons to assist them in finding jobs, dealing at the bazaar, gaining access to education and loans, obtaining goods in an economy of chronic shortage, and obtaining social or political advancement through recruitment (Collins 2006:29).

Thus, the Soviet state, its institutions, and the way its regions were governed all contributed to the continued survival of clans in the Soviet system despite its severe discourses of repression, albeit in ways influenced by precisely that state (and in ways that would necessarily differ from the way in which those clan structures would survive in another state such as the PRC, contingent upon states' respective ways of dealing with local elites): collectivisation, modernisation, and nationalities policy "all had the unintended consequences of reinforcing clan identities and empowering clan networks" (Collins 2006:64)[232], sometimes even in cases where traditional groups had not existed before Soviet rule but were then developed within the context of a particular *kolkhoz* (Roy 2000:89). The state with its policies of titularity, territorialisation, and indigenisation destroyed the old

[230] Roy notes the difference here to the Russian *kolkhoz*, where vertical relationships between notable and peasant were far less important than horizontal relationships between notables of different *kolkhoz* because of more political turnover (2000:92). In Russian *kolkhoz*, political promotion generally meant geographic transfer as opposed to in Central Asia where promotion only took place directly to the *oblast* or republic capital.

[231] It must be noted that this comparison between clan structures and *kolkhoz* structures is based upon observations made by scholars after the dissolution of the Soviet Union when it was realised that clans had somehow and surprisingly (for outside observers raised on the belief in the 'totalitarian' nature of the Soviet regime, that is) emerged from socialism in such a vibrant way.

[232] Obviously, this statement is strongly over-generalised here. Collins (2006:73-5) goes on to point out that there existed within Central Asia many variations on this theme: urban elite clans incorporate more fictive kin ties through marriage, friendship, and school whereas rural elite clan ties are more based on kinship (with Uzbeks and Tajiks having less traditional notions of kinship than Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, and Turkmen, which typically reflect more traditional descent groups).

elites and created new elites that operated in very similar ways at this lowest of levels – after the sweeping purges of the 1930s, the new local elites were entirely the product of Soviet education and beneficiaries of opportunities created by the Soviet state who created their horizontal and vertical networks within the framework of Soviet institutions (Khalid 2007:90). Promoted by the state with the hope of increasing identification with, and loyalty to, the Soviet state through its titular republics, these new-made elites were at this level primarily engaged in *mestnichestvo* and crucial to the survival of local traditions in the relative peace of post-Stalinist socialism, albeit traditions that came to have a strong Soviet flavour[233].

Second, higher up the hierarchical ladder, at the *raion* and *oblast* levels, subversion through manipulation of state institutions was practised by central elites. These elites at the *oblast* and even republican level "were an amalgamation of regional [i.e., *raion*] elites, and the latter of local [i.e., *kolkhoz*] elites; since these 'elites' were extensively networked into their respective clans, the republic institutions became a power centre within which 'favoured' clans could interact with and manipulate the Soviet state" (Collins 2006:99). As argued above, the delimitation of national homelands had taken place with strong local participation; at the *oblast* level the delimitation of SSR-internal boundaries was heavily influenced by discourses and power differentials within the respective *obkom* (*oblast* party committee). In Kyrgyzstan, for example, *oblast* boundaries were formulated and reformulated throughout the 1930s with local boundaries between clans in mind (Jones-Luong 2002:65). However, these boundary changes had to be couched in economic and political terms without reference to processes smacking of *mestnichestvo*: the vast power of regional *obkom* first secretaries to adjudicate such benchmarks of 'Soviet modernisation' led to an imbalance between local elites (and their calls for as large an overlap between clan boundaries and administrative entities as possible) and regional interests as legitimated by the Soviet state[234]. Struggles between lower-level local elites rising up through the ranks and into the *obkom* were fierce, and the fact that notables, *aksaqal*, and *hokkim* were not nominated from above but rather 'democratically elected' by the masses (but liable to be replaced if the *obkom* so desired), as opposed to the *obkom* members, who were hand-picked by the republican centre, led to the extension of patronage networks into the higher echelons of administration. In effect, regional (especially *oblast*) elites came to be the key figures in mediation between the state (as represented by the SSR) and the most local level, just as

[233] As proof of the non-static nature of supposedly ancient traditions, many examples exist of the remodelling of local traditions, a fact that becomes most evident when a trans-frontier perspective is adopted. Examples are adherence to Islamic tradition (see Khalid 2007), the Uighur *mäshräp* rite of passage for males (Roberts 1998), and marriage customs amongst trans-frontier Dungani (Allès 2005). I thank Christine Bichsel (unpublished PhD thesis, 2006) for pointing me towards the significant example of the Kyrgyz *ashar* institution (a form of labour corvee used for community construction and irrigation works) and the influence the Soviet state has had on it (through the introduction of the institution of *subbotnik* – unpaid community work on Saturdays).

[234] Of particular importance here is the element of economic specialisation, or the 'division of labour' between the SSRs (Jones-Luong 2002:67-8): at the national level, the Central Asian SSRs were to provide the agricultural basis for the Soviet economy (especially Uzbek cotton and Kazakh/Kyrgyz livestock).

republic level officials acted as mediators between Moscow and the various regional leaders of the SSRs.

During the entire Soviet period it was regional officials who were charged with the fulfilment of agricultural norms, thus making republic-level officials dependent on the cooperation of the *obkom* in order to secure their own political survival; similarly, local officials were pressured to deliver through their respective *oblasts* (Jones-Luong 2002:67-9). Thus, some regions came to be regarded by the state (and the SSR *apparat*) as more 'politically reliable' (i.e., more productive) than others and, as a consequence of this, came to be favoured in republic-level politics and administration. Successful economic specialisation by *oblast* led to the practice of long tenure for elites within the same region, and more influence of these elites at republic level – regionalisation and the concomitant strengthening of horizontal bonds within the regional elites was the unavoidable consequence of the Soviet system in Central Asia. The effect of this has been to solidify local boundedness of a region in terms of, in Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz *chek-ara*.

Official Soviet korenizatsiya

The desire by the Soviet state to promote national identities and legitimise Soviet control over Central Asia was realised through the implementation of *korenizatsiya* – the indigenisation of loyal cadres. The initial preponderance of ethnic Russians in the Central Asian cadres was to be reduced in favour of Kyrgyz, Tajik, and sub-titular groups such as Pamiri figureheads. The initial lack of an indigenous Soviet-conformist intelligentsia had led to Russian over-representation at the republic level of administration and was not in line with state policy on titularity and autonomy (Rakowska-Harmstone 1970). As mentioned above, local level administration in the *ayil/qishloq*, *kolkhoz*, and *raion* was and had been already in local hands due to the absence of Russians in the countryside and the low level of urbanisation of Central Asia, while indigenous representation at higher levels was negligible[235]. In the mid-1940s it became an all-Union requirement for titular nationals to occupy the highest representative hierarchical positions, generally seconded by a Russian deputy.[236] However, the recruitment of cadres took place through the afore-mentioned channels of lower level administration and thereby fuelled regional rivalries by institutionalising regional power networks rather than creating a truly 'national' cadre (Jones-Luong 2002:69). In fact, state power in the countryside *as represented by non-locals* was solely to be found in the institutions of KGB and militia, which only existed at the level of the *raion* (Roy 2000:89), a fact that points to central authorities' concerns with the loyalties of local elites and that will be of central interest in the following chapters because it hints at the difficult and subversive relationship between local inhabitants and the security forces of

[235] Rakowska-Harmstone states that by the early 1930s, 75 to 90 percent of local level functionaries in Tajikistan were locals while not one Tajikistani ever made it into a Moscow government institution (1970:35, 95).

[236] Scholars generally agree that the Russian deputy provided the necessary control aspects and, along with the usually all-Russian composition of slightly lower officials, served as the 'eyes and ears' of the Central Committee in Moscow due to what was deemed as their more trustworthy nature (because they were not locals). This practice of twinning certainly also served the purpose of limiting the ambitions of both parties within the upper political echelons of the SSRs. See Rakowska-Harmstone (1970:94-99).

the centralised state at its periphery[237]: *korenizatsiya* never applied to the security forces but was limited to the representational domain, a fact of particular importance in regard to the composition of border troops along Soviet boundaries to be discussed in the next chapter. This policy was implemented on the ground by almost exclusively promoting elites from within their own *oblasts*, cadres which then served virtually their entire political careers in that same *oblast* (Jones-Luong 2002:70). Due to these cadres' influence in the internal delimitation of *oblast* and *raion* boundaries, and due also to their sometimes decades-long presence on the local political stage, their constituencies became very loyal supporters in an electoral system that divided influence over the actual electoral process and its outcome between regional leaders and republic-level government but with a strong emphasis on the former rather than the latter (Jones-Luong 2002:73)[238].

Post-Stalinist Developments

The stability of the Brezhnev era (1962-1982) was reflected throughout the Central Asian SSRs in the local stability of the composition of national leaders[239]. Adeeb Khalid relates this stability within the cadres to the 'Brezhnevite social contract' (2007:86-90), a system defined by authoritarian top-down governance and an economy of distribution in which the allocation of goods took place not through market forces or cash exchange but rather through bureaucratic allotment. This quasi-formalisation of a shadow economy was centrally based upon patronage networks of reciprocity threading their way through all sections of society; this enabled the average Soviet citizen to attain individual goals (such as the best education for one's children or a prestigious consumer article) just as it allowed the *nomenklatura* a relatively free hand in running 'their' SSRs, *oblasts*, and *raions*. Specifically, as long as production quotas were fulfilled and negative publicity avoided, the central authorities in Moscow (or, by extension, in the SSR capitals or even *oblast* capitals) were happy to grant local elites an unprecedented freedom of local rule. The 'contract' could be understood as a symbiotic relationship: the ability to bring 'home' resources and 'gifts' such as major investments and showpiece infrastructure[240] went hand-in-hand with the state's

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[237] It remains to be noted here that the Tajik SSR was in fact the only SSR without a Ministry of Defence after 1946; this is particularly curious considering the perceived fragility of its frontier at this time and points to a process lasting until well after Tajikistani independence in which this state's external boundaries have remained under central (and, after 1992, foreign) Russian control.

[238] Allegations of nepotism, cronyism, and the general corruption affecting the 'election' of officials in Central Asia are best summed by citing sources such as the all-Union *Pravda* newspaper, the official Party media organ (April 16th, 1961, as quoted in Rakowska-Harmstone 1970:175):

> Executive personnel were appointed right and left because they came from the same town as officials, were their relatives, or were personally loyal to them. This gave rise to nepotism and mutual protection and led to the infiltration of alien ways into some Party and Soviet agencies [...]. Some leading officials gave outright backing to thieves, adventurers, and plunderers of state and collective farm property.

[239] Most obvious are the long tenures of Central Asian party leaders throughout this period: Kyrgyzstan's Usubaliev was in office from 1961-85, Tajikistan's Rasulov from 1961-82, Kazakhstan's Kunaev from 1964-86, Uzbekistan's Rashidov from 1959-83, and Turkmenistan's Gapurov from 1969-85. They all became 'victims' of Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* following Brezhnev's demise.

[240] A particularly significant example of this was the reconstruction of Tashkent after the devastating earthquake of 1966. It became a model Soviet urban incarnation of megalomania complete with subway and wide boulevards.

desire to present a modernising Central Asia as an example of successful socialism and the peaceful and mutually beneficial co-existence of Islam and Marxism-Leninism to the decolonialising world and surrounding Muslim states (such as the soon-to-be-invaded Afghanistan).

In regard to the National Question and from the perspective of the centre, the Central Committee reiterated the successes of the Soviet system in constructing a *sovietski narod* and the achievement of 'developed socialism' in regard to *druzhba narodov* – statements designed to reassure the mainly Russian audience in the light of accelerating economic decline. Brezhnev in 1981 declared that "there are no backward ethnic outskirts today" (as quoted in Smith 1990:10) but that much remained to be done "to increase the material and cultural potential of each republic [in order to] make the maximum use of this potential for the balanced development of the country as a whole" (*ibid.*). In relation to the regionalisation of loyalties in Central Asia, because the centre made local party officials all the way down the ladder to *kolkhoz* notables responsible for the fulfilment of planned economic quotas these local elites were enfranchised to dispense resources allocated for this purpose by the centre. Thus, these leaders acquired the aura of local and regional patrons – leaders of the units under their supervision and arbiters of local and regional interests vis-à-vis the centre whose networks tied them to a home base that supplied a steady stream of loyal recruits into the party and the *apparat*. Maybe Khalid is overstating his point when he claims that these "networks of mutual (if unequal) obligation that came to enmesh practically the whole of Soviet society [were] rooted not so much in primordial patterns of behaviour but in a logical and rational calculus of people confronted with the brutal, impersonal machinery of a modern state *and* economy of distribution" (2007:90, emphasis in original), but it does remain a readily observable fact in post-Soviet Central Asia that this Brezhnev period represents, in general, a 'glorious past' of local empowerment and relative wealth and stability[241]. This in no way means that individuals identified with this system but rather that in these decades it represented an accepted way of life that people adapted to by supporting projects that benefited them and passively resisting those that did not serve local and regional interests. Furthermore, I agree with Rakowska-Harmstone (1970:289-90) that local members of this system's *apparat* may have identified with the system's structures by viewing the party and state hierarchies as instruments of rule in which their own role could be maximised, on the one hand, by strongly supporting policies deemed to promote local progress and, on the other hand, by subverting those adopted in 'all-Union' or even 'wider national' interests without any perceived local advantages accruing to their position or enhancing their personal prestige.

Interestingly, I was told there (on a visit in the summer of 2004) that a large number of Uzbek architects were involved in the construction of the suburban apartment blocks, many of which bear remarkable 'ethnic' references in their design not to be found in other Soviet-era Central Asian cities.

[241] This often in contrast to representations of the Gorbachev period and the break-up of the Soviet Union which, in conversation, is often seen as a calamitous return to uncivilised, internecine squabbling predicated by a powerful benefactor's rejection.

Chinese Indigenisation: Nationalising Loyalties

The situation in China regarding the bringing of central control to the peripheral province of Xinjiang was both similar (in the basic quest for control) and very different (in the implementation of control) from the Soviet experience. As a result of the low penetration of rural Xinjiang by representatives of the imperial and then Republican governments, the vagaries of the warlord era, and the strong influence of the Soviet Union seeping across the boundary prior to the establishment of the PRC, the daily lives and structures of local governance had remained largely unaffected by forces emanating from the Chinese centre. In fact, Xinjiang's borderlands had had a very recent history of trans-frontier inclusion tending towards the Soviet state rather than the nascent Chinese socialist state. Sending large numbers of Chinese cadre into remote areas in Xinjiang was regarded by Mao and the CCP as an invitation to the much-feared rebellions that had plagued Chinese control for the last century.

The Continued Support of Traditional Power in Xinjiang

To avoid encouraging feelings of oppression through Great Han chauvinism, the CCP launched a massive campaign to recruit and train national minority cadre in the shortest possible time; this was achieved through a three-fold strategy in Chinese cadre policy (Connor 1984:288-91): the continued utilisation of traditional leaders (remarkably, this was to continue even into post-Cultural Revolution times), the absence of major purges in minority cadre (which has remained relatively immune to the Chinese policy of periodic purges in order to keep cadres in line), and the imbalanced assignment of native cadre to high-profile offices with little real executive authority but with the greatest avenues of contact with the *minzu* masses, i.e., the village level (in form of educator-officials) and the top-most level of the AR government (thereby enjoying most media coverage in the region)[242]. Here, policies of *korenizatsiya* were more a result of absolute necessity rather than ideological legitimacy. To underline this, the CCP was apt to regularly state that while nationalisation would "make each national group the 'master of his home' [...] Han cadre were to be viewed as permanent members of that 'household'" (Connor 1984:289).

The Chinese implementation of territorial administration was connected to the attitude that Soviet-style autonomy was not transferable to the PRC: indigenisation was not carried out in the framework of republics under the sway of centre-based party structures but rather within a structure of the regional autonomy of territories understood to be integral and indivisible parts of the rest of the state. Smaller *minzu* such as the Kyrgyz of Xinjiang were not by definition in a subordinate position to larger *minzu* such as the Uighurs save in their presence, in absolute terms, in representative organs of the AR – they were neither titular (as in the Kyrgyz SSR) nor sub-titular (as in the Tajik SSR) in the sense of the Soviet system. The discrete administrative units of the AP and AC defined by *minzu* status (i.e., the territories exercising autonomy) were granted the right to "make certain decisions and to draft special

[242] This imbalance is made all the more visible by the shortage of national minority cadre in the industrial and agricultural sectors.

regulations adapted to specific aspects and requirements of the nationality(-ies) and area(s) [...] including other special provisions in the interest of the economic and cultural development of autonomous areas; [...] additionally they were allowed to manage local finances [and] organize local security forces" (Heberer 1987:25) – rather different from the Soviet situation across the boundary. Those making such decisions at the lowest levels (the *xian*) were cadre selected from the traditional class of local leaders and trained under the watchful eye of the omnipresent People's Liberation Army (PLA) and its various militarily structured committees that had been set up in all localities to garner support for the CCP (Benson&Svanberg 1988:62-3)[243]. This military and para-military element of control in Xinjiang has, from the 1950s onward, been a clear constant of everyday life in the region and has fundamentally influenced discourses of control and intra-ethnic realities at the local level[244]. Just as minority policy in general underwent oscillations during the Great Leap Forward of 1958 and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the relationship between all forms of military presence and leaders of the various *minzu* was characterised by alternating periods of accommodation and instability; however, generally speaking, local *minzu* leaders found themselves dependent on (and therefore supportive of) the PLA, who was able to guarantee these elites' political survival throughout the radical and potentially suicidal swings in policy.

Changes in Political Legitimacy at the Local Level

While before 1958 the PLA in particular was very involved with establishing grass roots support for the state and convincing local leaders of the benefits of stability, the Great Leap Forward demanded from the inhabitants of Xinjiang greater compliance with the (primarily economic) demands of the Han state: local particularism in all its forms (from then on generally branded as 'local nationalism' that had to be 'rectified' through more state loyalty), until then a central element of the party's programme for allowing *minzu* to individually 'evolve' and modernise, was replaced with the 'revolutionary struggle of the masses' for Communism (Mackerras 1994:152-3). Communes were to be established, property collectivised, and counter-revolutionaries (in the context of Xinjiang mainly Kyrgyz and Kazakh herders refusing to hand over their livestock) eliminated. The effect of this policy swing was two-fold: the creation of communes brought an influx of Han Chinese settlers to Turkic Xinjiang (in the wake of what officially was termed *xia feng*, the 'sending down' of urban Han to rural areas), and a mass exodus from the borderlands into the Soviet Union took place (itself then in the period of de-Stalinisation and relative openness). Both of these

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[243] One of the most important para-military institutions in this context was the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), which had far-reaching and constitutionally questionable powers in especially the rural and minority parts of Xinjiang. See Chapter 5.

[244] The PLA's role in the process of establishing CCP authority in villages, counties, and towns is described as follows (Liu ShaoQi 1959, as quoted in *ibid.*):

> The military control of the People's Liberation Army is the initial form of the dictatorship of the people's democracy, which suppresses the reactionaries by force and at the same time everywhere protects the people, inspires them, and helps them to set up Conferences of People's Representatives, organs of people's power at all levels, which, as conditions become ripe, are gradually given full power.

elements – Han in-migration and borderlander out-migration – have been topics of consistent importance to the governance of Xinjiang's borderlands and will form an analytical element of the next chapter; here, I will limit myself to observing that the redistribution of land, increased military control, and shifting demographics (in favour of an increased Han presence in urban areas and the renewing of trans-frontier family ties in the actual borderlands themselves along with the forced relocation of individual households and clans within minority areas) led to an altered form of on-the-ground political reality at the local level.

While prior to the intensification of central control in the late 1950s local elites and representatives can be assumed to have been the *aksaqal/akim* (for the Kyrgyz) and *mirs/hokkim* (for the Tajiks), vested as they were with traditional legitimacy in the village environment and wielding power due to their relationship with or membership in the local clans, now new dynamics were playing out. As opposed to the case in the *oblasts* and *raions* of the Soviet Union's nationality areas in Central Asia, such lowest level leaders and representatives increasingly no longer stemmed from intact clan backgrounds as defined by residence on their state's territory but rather derived their legitimacy from their relationship with or membership in state-defined organisations such as the CCP or military borderguard units. Furthermore, despite the disastrous ramifications of forced collectivisation during the Great Leap, a permanent sedentarisation of hitherto nomadic Kyrgyz in Qyzyl Suu[245] and the dissolution of 'ethnic herding groups' had been effected that meant the inclusion of nomadic households "into the multi-nationality communes and their reduction to a position of dependence upon the Chinese state" (McMillen 1979, as quoted in Kreutzmann 1995:170). This dependence was evident in the decreasing depth of semi-nomadic mobility and increasing importance of larger regional markets (such as Kashgar and even, in more recent times, Urumqi). In this context of regional embedding and shifts in the composition of local elites, I have gleaned from interviews that both the Kyrgyz and the Tajik autonomous territories of Xinjiang have witnessed a steady rise in both the presence and local power of Uighurs. As I will present in following chapters, it is Uighurs who have profited from new settlement regulations and greater inclusion of these APs and ACs into the state, particularly in Tashkurgan, due to their dominance of these supra-local trade routes[246].

Growing Supra-local minzu *Identities*

With the increasing control of the periphery by the Chinese centre taking on more permeating aspects far exceeding previous discourses of control by earlier regimes, some ethnicised identities (i.e., the officially recognised, supra-locally delineated *minzu*) were given a platform to thrive on at an unprecedented regional level. I have argued that

[245] The capital of Qyzyl Suu, Artush, was constructed in 1952 and had swollen to a population of 5000 by 1960.

[246] In Tashkurgan the entire economic infrastructure (most of which has been erected since 2000) is dominated by Han Chinese and Uighurs (at a ratio of about 3 to 2). It seems as if Han dominate the construction and entertainment sectors while Uighurs are predominantly found in the import-export business and general commercial enterprises (where they have recently replaced Pakistani traders); beyond their homesteads, Tajiks and Kyrgyz are mostly invisible as entrepreneurs or salespeople in their territorial-administrative homelands. See Chapter 6.

traditional political identities and loyalties in Xinjiang were most important in a local context – either that of the oasis (for Uighurs) or the *ayil/qishloq* (for Kyrgyz and Tajiks). However, full political unification and the influx of institutions such as the PLA and modern communication lines and infrastructure have led to "the regional concentration of ethno-religious groups [...] reinforced by the Chinese policy of creating separate administrative divisions [...] where particular ethnic or religious groups are in the majority" (Warikoo 1998:270). As Gladney remarks, "the ethnonym [*Uighur*] was revived by the Soviets in the 1930s as a term for those peoples who had no name for themselves other than their locality, *Kashgar-lik*, *Turpan-lik* [resident of Kashgar, Turpan]" (1991:301) and was accepted by these Turkic Muslims of Xinjiang since this acceptance brought with it their recognition by the state as a *minzu* and the political status of an AR[247]. Similarly, the designation of Sarykuli Pamiri as 'Tajiks' within the PRC has gone uncontested at all levels due to state-internal advantages despite its detrimental effect on trans-frontier networks to Pamiri in Tajikistan. Hence, the Chinese authorities who helped 'invent the tradition' of an Uighur ethnicity[248] simultaneously and possibly inadvertently aided the mass dissemination of that identity through those processes of indigenisation akin to Soviet *korenizatsiya* policies. In Bellér-Hann's words, "the Uighur identity has grown and consolidated itself as the Chinese presence in Xinjiang has been consolidated in the Socialist period" (1991:224).

Post-Maoist Developments

in the PRC, after the death of Mao and the end of the Cultural Revolution the situation regarding policy on minorities once again took a turn for the better in that local particularities were once again permitted to a certain degree. The Central Institute of Nationalities in Beijing, founded in 1951 and closed during the Cultural Revolution, once again began training minority cadres and, in addition, Han Chinese who were instructed on minority languages and culture. Furthermore, in 1982 a new constitution was drawn up (with special legislation pertaining to national minorities added in 1984) granting the *minzu* more autonomy and comprising the following aspects in respect to the central right of territorial self-governance and the representation of *minzu* (abridged from Heberer's analysis (1987:26-33)):

1. Nationalisation of the Organs of Self-government: primary recruitment from among the *minzu* practising autonomy in respect to all state organs (including economics, education, health services, culture, jurisdiction, police, etc.) affecting not only cadres but also simple employees (i.e., teachers, technicians, etc.).
2. Statutory Right of Political Self-determination: within the Constitution and the unified control by the central authorities, the autonomous units were to manage local affairs on their own excepting foreign politics and military activities but including economic and socio-political measures; equal rights for all nationalities; democratic rights equally applicable to all nationalities.

[247] This acceptance has, however, also created what Rudelson (1996:173) terms 'oasis chauvinism' amongst competing intra-Uighur narratives of nationalism.

[248] The advantage of this historiographic construction was that the Chinese government could 'prove' ancient cultural ties between China proper and Xinjiang and thereby maintain its claim to sovereignty over the region.

3. Economic Autonomy: administrative rights in terms of the management of natural resources; the right to independently manage finances (including the levying of taxes); the right to manage industries and business with permission to withhold part of the profits made, and to use them for the region's own purposes.

In addition to these rights, ARs were individually assessed to allow for regional and cultural differences, thereby strengthening the process of nationalisation along *minzu* lines. In Xinjiang (just as in Inner Mongolia and Tibet) the local authorities were granted the right to control the growth of population stemming from immigration from other provinces because the growth of population had come to exceed the growth of production; this meant that non-residents (that is, Chinese citizens from outside the AR) were subject to heavy taxes and surcharges when doing business in those areas. Additionally, these three areas have been allowed to conduct foreign trade with their local products[249]. In Xinjiang, with the majority of the non-Han population being Muslim, special marriage laws were enacted, and in Tibet a special law stipulates that at least 80 percent of the delegates to People's Congresses were to come from national minorities. All in all, the new Constitution with the new autonomy laws formally granted the most liberal rights to minorities in comparison with any of the previous legislations.

Indigenising Life in the Homelands

With the institutionalisation of *korenizatsiya* at the political level formally outlined, the same principle of indigenisation began to take shape in the everyday lives of the new national groups. If ethnonational pedigrees for elites and *apparatchiks* were a reality of official policy on self-government and loyalty to the Soviet state, so, too, was the certification of indigenous forms of the transmission to the masses of ideology and inclusion: titular representatives were to represent their respective *natsionalnost* or *narodnost* and heighten the masses' national self-consciousness through the officially endorsed channels of 'national languages'. This was to indigenise lifeworlds in the delimited homelands, quite in keeping with Stalin's criteria of the 'psychological make-up or national character' of a nation: if a nation or proto-nation was to identify itself with a common territory, such a 'subjective' sense of place would be expected to exert a pull affect on members of that nation and a push affect on non-members. Thus, to conclude this chapter I will briefly discuss internal mobility and its relationship to titularity and territory within both socialist states.

'National' Languages

Linguistic policy and the relationship between language communities within a socialist system that propagates a dialectic and evolutionary assimilation into an overarching state loyalty is of profound importance to discourses of control (and in processes of state

[249] It is important to note that, in my opinion, such liberties granted to frontier ARs do not hold up to the opportunities that regular frontier provinces enjoy. Christoffersen (2002) has shown that Heilongjiang province (in Manchuria on the Russian border) has been particularly prone to boom-bust cycles originating in trans-frontier spaces; and Swain (2002) has analysed Yunnan province's role (on the Southeast Asian frontier to Myanmar and Laos) as a locus of trans-frontier, trans-provincial, and international (tourist) movements of migration and goods. Both provinces have come to enjoy (or suffer from) a large degree of autonomy in regard to their economic dealings with neighbouring states.

cleavage, as will be discussed shortly). The principal Marxist-Leninist strategy on language policy is characterised by an evolutionary three-step process (Connor 1984:254-5): first, a pluralist stage in which the codification and institutionalisation of (some) minority languages are encouraged for use in a national arena[250]; second, a bilingual stage characterised by growing pressure from above for minority-language speakers to acquire competency in the state's dominant language and usually culminating in making this state language compulsory; and, third, a monolingual final stage heralded by pressures (from above in the form of laws and from below in form of individual strategies pragmatically recognising the necessity of such a step) for making the dominant language the sole language of instruction and the sole official language. In theory, language communities were at first to be supported in their particularistic use of language (for example through the construction of a 'written form' for non-literary languages and the development of scripts) only for then themselves to realise that evolution towards a monolingual, supra-national language situation was in their best interest. In practice, especially the Chinese state erratically pursued these three steps out of order. Thus, the radicalism of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution in the PRC were actually followed by a new emphasis on the need to encourage local languages in order to build support at the local level for the legitimacy of the state.

In the language of ideology, the support of nationalities' tongues served a higher purpose: "without a language of common understanding for the members of a nationality, that nationality cannot develop [...] and contribute to the creation of a splendid and glorious historical culture for the motherland" (Ma&Dai 1988:89)[251]. Being regarded as central to the constitution of the socialist state, such a contribution was to come to fruition in the drawing together and eventual merging of nationalities, as described above; the role language played as an immediately obvious objective feature of an individual nationality was crucial, and it was agreed that one "should look at the division and unification of languages from the perspective of the division and unification of nationalities" (Ma&Dai 1988:98) because "when nations merge and become assimilated, their languages do not immediately follow suit" (Ma&Dai 1988:90-1). Generally speaking, then, the formation and formalisation of nationality languages must be seen as a strategy to further the state's interest and hegemony over nationality identities.

Flying in the face of 'national equality', the support of national languages by Soviet and Chinese authorities varied greatly depending on the political status of the *minzu* or *narodnost/natsionalnost* involved: while titular status in SSRs generally entailed a full educational curriculum in the native tongue (especially by the late 1970s), ASSRs institutionalised but primary education therein, and the lower a group was in the territorial-

[250] Codification and institutionalisation went hand in hand with linguistic standardisation and vernacularisation (through the creation of written forms where none had previously been available), which was greatly enhanced by the establishing of a central state publishing house for the peoples of the USSR (similar to the Beijing Language Institute) (Kaiser 1994:125-8).

[251] Ma XueLiang and Dai QingXia are linguists at the Department of Minority Languages at the Central Institute of Nationalities in Beijing and represent the 'official line' during Deng XiaoPing's reform era on this topic.

political hierarchy the fewer the chances were of receiving any education whatsoever in the sub-titular tongue[252]. This hierarchy (and the unevenly applied exceptions therein) had a crucial effect on the indigenisation of national homelands in socialist states. With the policy of *korenizatsiya*, discourses of belonging and exclusion in the delimited homelands came to include language use. In the Soviet Union from the 1930s onward, schools offering education in non-Russian languages were increasingly restricted to a particular autonomous republic or *oblast* whilst Russian language schools were fostered throughout the union; hence, people living outside their national homeland as defined by territorial-administrative units (for example Kyrgyz living outside the Kyrgyz SSR) "quite expectedly flocked to those schools offering the most universal language" (Connor 1984:256), namely Russian (which became compulsory learning anyway throughout the Soviet Union in 1938). As a lingua franca, Russian then came to be the language granting access to the higher echelons of political and economic society; upward social mobility was henceforth linked fundamentally to competency in Russian. Furthermore, fluency in Russian was to offer opportunities of geographic mobility in pursuing careers to people from peripheral areas such as GBAO and the hope of circumventing what was seen as the growing 'chauvinism' of republic-level titular groups such as the Tajiks. In the PRC, the trend towards linguistic assimilation, while tempered by periods of swerving from extreme particularism to extreme demands for monolingualism, has generally been discernible. Special and higher education has been made available principally in *putonghua*, and Chinese was made part of the curriculum in all nationality areas, thereby driving home the realisation amongst non-Han students that knowledge of Chinese was an essential element of upward social mobility[253]. Numerous script changes for speakers of Turkic languages had the unintended effect of underlining the importance of competency in *putonghua* so as to achieve trans-generational educational consistency (Bellér-Hann 1991; and see Chapter 5); and the selectivity of the central authorities in arbitrating on whether a spoken language qualified for further development as a written language and, thus, as a vehicle for *minzu* education enhanced the role played by Chinese in peripheral and especially in small-*minzu* regions[254]. As in the Soviet case, in Xinjiang the realities of power differentials between nationalities has led to the support of the state language (Chinese) by sub-titular peoples and small *minzu* (such as the 'Tajiks' and, to a certain degree, the Kyrgyz) in order to combat their perceived discrimination by the dominant Uighurs.

[252] This statement is true in a general fashion. There exist numerous examples that show that this principal was by no means evenly applied; for example, the Karelian ASSR contained no national language schools whatsoever, the Bashkir ASSR had national language schooling on a par with SSRs, and the Uighur *natsionalnost* (which had no territorial status at all within the Soviet Union) enjoyed extensive national language schooling. On this last example see Clark and Kamalov (2004) and Dreyer (1979). In the PRC, only 22 of the (at the time) official 54 *minzu* had written languages on the eve of the Cultural Revolution; more significantly, several numerically large groups were also excluded from having their own national language schools (Connor 1984:264).

[253] As Connor (1984:264-5) points out, even within the newly created 'Institutes of Nationalities' (created to offer special and higher education to minorities) the multi-national composition of the students enrolled led to the use of *putonghua* as a lingua franca.

[254] The process of 'scripting' minor languages is not over as the example of 'Tajik' in Xinjiang will show in the next chapter. With changing political concerns the decision on which languages to promote seems liable to change as well.

'Gathering the Nations'

As discussed over the last paragraphs, indigenisation had an effect on the perception of territorially and administratively delimited homelands both for indigenes and non-indigenes. Realities of cadre distribution, linguistic education, and control over resources (both economic and symbolic) influenced the attractivity of residence within autonomous regions depending on one's ethnic status. Originally, Lenin had envisioned the Soviet titular republics as places that were ideally to be 'ethnically homogeneous': guarantors of national equality until such a time as they were no longer needed and serving as 'containers' in which the national dialectic would play itself out, places to which members of any given nationality would gravitate (Kaiser 1994:115). Prioritisation of the titular group both administratively (in terms of 'affirmative action' policies) and linguistically did indeed lead to the gravitational pull of the SSRs: *korenizatsiya* policies made residence in one's 'home' republic much more appealing[255]. However, as Kaiser points out, much of the internal migration in the Soviet Union occurring after the 1920s "resulted not from the positive 'pull' of the homeland' but rather from the negative 'push' against the members of each national community living outside the homeland" (1994:121)[256].

This 'gathering of the nation', while apparently never explicitly formulated by policy makers in Soviet times (Kaiser 1994, Connor 1984), seems to have been a direct effect of the growing attachment to homeland (the strengthening of the *sense of place* mentioned above) and the successful indigenisation of life in national homelands that placed non-indigenes at a disadvantage in the distribution of prestigious employment despite geographic differentials in economic opportunity that may have suggested more inter-homeland mobility. With the notable exception of Russians, inter-homeland migration remained much weaker than intra-homeland movement (Kaiser 1994:159). However, and most importantly in the context of the internal boundaries between SSRs, according to statistics published by Goskomstat in 1991 (as quoted in *ibid.*) it can be observed that more than half of all members of titular nations living outside their respective SSRs reside in *oblasts* or *raions* immediately adjacent to their administratively delimited territorial unit; thus, despite these push and pull factors it seems as if such communities in close proximity to their national territorial unit remained beyond its delimited boundaries. The presence of such 'internal borderlanders' was to present the independent Central Asian Republics (as well as other post-Soviet states) with considerable boundary conflicts and local contestations during and after the dissolution of the Union[257], and the Kyrgyz of Murghab in post-Soviet GBAO will figure in my discussion of this in Chapter 6.

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[255] According to the censuses, the Kyrgyz proportion of the population of the Kyrgyz SSR rose from 40.5% in 1959 to 52.4% in 1989, and that of the Tajik proportion in the Tajik SSR from 53.1% to 62.3% over the same period (as quoted in Kaiser 1994:174, Table 4.3).

[256] However, simultaneously all five Central Asian SSRs became *less* nationally homogeneous between 1926 and 1939 due largely to Russian in-migration (see statistical tables in *ibid.*).

[257] See Tishkov (1997:135-177) for two such examples: the Osh conflict of 1990 in the Ferghana Valley between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and the Ingush-Ossetian conflict of 1992-3 in the Russian North Caucasus.

In the PRC, the situation regarding inter-homeland mobility and the relationship between indigenes and non-indigenes in the *minzu* homelands is somewhat different. Until the 1980s and the tentative economic reform policies introduced under Deng XiaoPing there was an exceptionally low degree of freedom of movement in China; residence outside one's narrow locality was generally due to either an individual's occupational skills (with qualified workers frequently sent to distant locations as the state demanded and without the company of one's family members, and military personnel generally assigned to serve outside their home province) or to their political status (with intellectuals often sent to remote peripheral areas such as Xinjiang during the Cultural Revolution) but never, at this time, due to economic decisions made at the individual or family level (Guo 1996, as quoted in Iredale et al. 2001:32-33). Lack of data in regard to residency patterns and mobility for the period prior to the economic reforms makes assumptions on the movement between local level administrative units difficult but, at least in the case of the smaller *minzu* in Xinjiang, I believe that traditional modes of residency and mobility remained largely unaltered in people's everyday lives. According to individuals interviewed in Qyzyl Suu and Tashkurgan, the presence locally of non-Kyrgyz and non-Tajiks, respectively, was limited to government officials and borderguards, both of which were temporary residents at best. The growth of a non-indigenous population (mainly in form of Uighur and Kazakh presence) can be pinpointed to the early 1980s and the relaxation of the stringent *hukou* (official registration papers) regulations[258]. Such facts point to, on the one hand, the existence of subjectively held notions of a wider sense of homeland beyond the confines of what the state accepted as the official container of the nation (or, in Kaiser's words (1994:156), the fact that the officially delimited territory can only be seen as the geographic minimum of the homeland) and, on the other hand, a dynamism of local resistance to comply with top-down pressures of conformity between nation and state. That this is the case in borderlands between states is readily discernible the world over: state boundaries often dissect regions locally believed to constitute a national homeland; but it is central to this study that the Soviet project of delimitation, nationalisation, and territorialisation did not produce the effect of achieving congruency *upon Soviet territory* between the boundaries of nations and the national 'states'. In the PRC, internal processes in Xinjiang similarly did not have this effect on Uighurs but did for the smaller *minzu* such as Kyrgyz and Tajiks.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter on the internal bordering of socialist Central Asia, I have here discussed how socialist rule affected borderland populations and in which ways they were involved as new state citizens in the negotiation of their inclusion into states that legitimated themselves both internally as well as to the wider world as political systems respecting the existence of a wide range of local particularities. Incorporating such particularities into state structures was seen as one of the fundamental charges of the

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[258] The *hukou* still exists today; 'relaxation' in this context mainly refers to the fact that since the 1980s it has become easier to get around the harsh regulations associated with internal controls or even to completely ignore them (in cases where personal networks enable an individual to financially negotiate the acquisition of alternate papers).

ideology underlying the state (that of Marxism-Leninism) – it would no longer suffice to rule the state's territory in an indirect way, and the resulting system of 'nationality' and the territoriality and boundary-making derived therefrom was to serve the spatial socialisation of, among other former Imperial Others, borderlanders in Central Asia. In effect, discourses of control now included a narrative of local participation in the respective states. The system of internal bordering, I have argued, focused local identities and loyalties into acceptable territorial-administrative units, and these units have remained largely unchanged even into post-Soviet independent Central Asia and thus form a crucial element in our inquiry into borderland processes. In other words, I contend that here it is not possible to marginalize socialist internal bordering when discussing discourses and interaction within a state-transcending Borderland.

Now it is time to move away from internal dynamics informing the relationship between borderlands and their states and focus on the boundary forming the interface between the Soviet Union and the PRC and the trans-frontier trajectories spanning this construct. It is my contention that the Soviet state did succeed in bordering local awareness of a trans-frontier existence of a wider homeland extending *beyond the boundaries* of the Soviet state. For all intents and purposes, the implementation of 'solutions' to the National Question in Central Asia through processes of territorial-administrative bordering and its wide-spread acceptance on the ground by those affected (and their participation therein) led to the bifurcation of national identities and notions of belonging. The focus of the following chapter is on tracing the expression of this state cleavage and an analysis of how these two states have made efforts at externally bordering the now-bordered nations along their mutual Central Asian frontier.

Chapter 5

The Alienation of Socialist Borderlands

With the victory of communism on a world-wide scale, state boundaries will become extinct, Marxism-Leninism teaches us. In all probability only ethnographical boundaries will remain for the time being, and even they will no doubt only be conventional. On these boundaries, if they can be called such at all, there will be no frontier guards, no customs officials, no incidents. They will simply record the historically evolved fact that this or that nationality inhabits a given territory.

(Nikita Khrushchev at a speech in Leipzig, East Germany, published in Pravda *March 27th, 1959)*
[as quoted in Connor 1984:398, fn29])

Khrushchev's utopian comments notwithstanding, the boundary between Soviet Central Asia and the People's Republic of China became and remained a central point of contention between these socialist states over the course of their common existence and developed into one of the most highly militarised and impenetrable regions in the world – it never became 'conventional' in any sense of the word, and the 'ethnographical' boundaries became the object of state legitimacy. The imperial attitude of the unproblematic nature of drawing state boundaries that did not correspond to ethnic group boundaries had given way to discourses focusing on the fit between nation and state: 'inconsequential' frontier inhabitants such as the Kyrgyz (to re-use Colonel Babkov's terminology) now figured as a central element of wider state-building processes that, through the evolving conflict between Socialist China and the Soviet Union, were to become so visible in their common borderlands. States posing as protectors of the interests of members of 'their' national groups dwelling within adjacent states are not in the least extraordinary. Marxist-Leninist states doing so in regard to trans-frontier nations they might share with a neighbouring non-socialist state can resort to sound Leninist strategy (in form of discourses of their liberation from oppressive elites). However, two Marxist-Leninist states directing such campaigns against each other cannot but be forced to find reasons for such meddling outside of socialist international dogma, and this has usually focused on 'incorrect implementation' of solutions to the National Question and the silent support by the respective other regime of 'majority

chauvinism'[259]. Such conflict remained in most cases merely verbal; not so in the Sino-Soviet case: here, military confrontation developed, first along the Far Eastern common boundary and then in Central Asia.

Briefly and by way of introduction, the initial phase of active support and mutual agreement on basic issues between both regimes was replaced by an increasing awareness within the CCP that the Soviet Union no longer was to be regarded as an 'elder brother' intent on lending a helping hand in promoting global Revolution but rather as an aberrant pseudo-imperialist power intent on wielding its power for self-serving purposes. The highly personalised falling-out between Moscow and Beijing (or, rather, between Stalin's successors and Mao) preceded the incidents along the Manchurian, Mongolian, and Xinjiang boundaries. After the political split between both states in the late 1950s specific boundary-related problems fed the tensions. Both sides accused each other of 'systematic provocations' along the Ussuri River in Manchuria and this escalated into armed conflict in the mid-1960s with the Soviets accusing the PRC of wildly provocative behaviour during the Cultural Revolution and China accusing the Soviet Union of attacking Chinese citizens. Furthermore, the CCP was very wary of the influence the Soviet Union had over Kazakh intellectuals in the Ili region and Uighur leaders in Urumqi (Mackerras 1994:170-1). Military tensions erupted around the time when the authorities decided to close down the boundary between Xinjiang and the Kazakh and Kyrgyz SSRs to prevent the flight of Kazakhs and Uighurs. This was done to counteract "large-scale subversive activities in the [Ili] region [which had] enticed and coerced these people to move to Kazakhstan" (as quoted in Mackerras 1994:171). Tensions arising over the over-representation of the (still as yet in the minority) Han population led to unrest mainly among the Uighurs and the increased repression of 'local nationalism' by the PLA as a result of this. Frequent demands by primarily Uighurs for adopting a system of more autonomy as they perceived it to exist in the Soviet Union (in the form of titularity and *korenizatsiya*) and which could serve as a model[260] were dealt with radically during the Great Leap Forward, leading to a mass exodus of Uighurs, Kazakhs, Mongols, and Kyrgyz across the border to the Kazakh SSR (Benson&Svanberg 1988:68). Soviet activities of an unspecified nature and the willingness to accept these refugees was seen by the CCP as an attempt to 'split Xinjiang' and pull it into its own sphere of direct influence. The excesses of the Cultural Revolution, while still detrimental to individuals and relations between the *minzu*, were over sooner in Xinjiang than in other parts of China due to circumstances peculiar to the region: clashes between Soviet border troops and the PLA took place in the late 1960s in the area of Tacheng in the

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[259] Examples of this phenomenon include Albanian statements regarding then-Yugoslavia's Kosovo Albanian population; Romania's campaign for the return of the Moldovan SSR; Vietnam's invasion of Khmer Rouge Cambodia; and, most lingeringly with all its fascist overtones, Hungary's continuous discreditation of the treatment of trans-frontier Magyars in socialist Romania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. None of these conflicts were resolved during Soviet times and have remained central elements of contemporary nationalist discourses.

[260] This attitude is represented in an article published in China entitled 'Marxism vs. Nationalism in Xinjiang: a Major Debate' (as quoted in Benson&Svanberg 1988:67):

> The nationalists argue that the establishment of an Uighuristan or an Uighur Republic does not necessarily mean its separation from China, but that it may form a part of the Chinese union. They think that [...] since the Soviet Union adopts such a system it should be followed in China.

Kazakhstan-Xinjiang borderland with the result that "this international threat to national security now took precedence over domestic politics" (Benson&Svanberg 1988:71)[261]. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the Chinese-Vietnamese war of the same year caused the confrontation across the boundary in Central Asia to flare up again, although actual military action was not at all as extensive as it had been in the 1960s; however, the renewed possibility of full-scale war precipitated a renewed intensification of border troop strength and the influx into the borderlands of a larger number of regular military personnel[262]. While the military aspects of the conflict are not central in my discussion of the borderland processes during the Socialist period, the ramifications of this state-level conflict for life along the boundary were fundamental and I shall turn my attention to an analysis of the interaction between agents of border control (in their gatekeeping functions) and local borderlanders (the gates to whose locales were being kept by those agents).

I do not intend to discuss here the steady barrage of claims and counter-claims and the vicious circle of accusations resulting therefrom between both states except for noting in passing that the common frontier, be it in Central Asia or in the Far East, was instrumentalised by both sides as a symbol of this conflict: historical injustice (the PRC's rejection of the Unequal Treaties and their territorial implications)[263], the unorthodox interpretation of Marxism-Leninism (as represented by Khrushchev and Brezhnev in the eyes of the PRC and in particular in regard to the National Question), and mutual accusations of boundary violations informed the antagonists' official rhetoric between 1960 and the early 1980s. Rather, in the context of a discussion of socialist frontiers and borderlands and the anthropological analysis of shifting political realities for trans-frontier peoples 'caught in the cross-fire' of such rhetoric, the focus of attention must be on the borderland processes taking place in the vital arena of the territorial and ethnic interface of state-transcending nations against the backdrop of the wider political environment. Thus, the Sino-Soviet split, whatever its general geopolitical implications, is of primary interest for the way in which it influenced border control, the strengthening of borderland loyalties to the state, and the possibilities and restrictions it entailed for borderlanders. Furthermore, and with an eye to developments taking place in the post-Soviet era, the Split and the processes unleashed by it in the borderlands have fundamentally changed the modes of trans-frontier networks and avenues of exchange in contemporary Central Asia and Xinjiang. Many of the interviews conducted during fieldwork have pointed to the importance of increased internal connectivity within the

[261] Indeed, Xinjiang was actually one of the few provinces in the PRC where the Maoist Red Guards did not successfully seize power (Shichor 2004:151).
[262] According to Shichor (2004:133-5), who makes extensive use of military intelligence sources, the military balance in Central Asia in 1970 was as follows: nearly 400,000 Soviet soldiers (Central Asia and southern Siberia/Kazakhstan) versus 300,000 Chinese soldiers, thereof 50,000 Soviet border troops versus 125,000 Chinese border troops (including militia). By 1986, the number of Chinese soldiers had decreased slightly (from 15 divisions to 14 divisions) and the Soviet number had decreased dramatically by two-thirds due to troop redeployment to Afghanistan and the Far East.
[263] Boundary disputes between the Soviet Union and the PRC amounted to a total of 34,000km^2 (in a total of 19 areas along the entire boundary of about 3000km): eleven areas (2235km^2) in Kazakhstan, five areas (3728km^2) in Kyrgyzstan, and three in Tajikistan's GBAO (28,430km^2). See Polat (2002:39-45). None of these territorial claims were resolved in the Soviet era.

administrative-territorial units such as AOs and SSRs or ACs and APs and the decrease, if not cessation, of interpersonal connectivity with individuals 'beyond the pale'; I shall be introducing a number of such statements throughout this chapter that will lead me to discuss the evolving cleavage of identity and loyalty as bisected by the boundary.

Ever mindful of an approach that adopts a perspective of borderlands based on changing lifeworlds around a state-imposed political boundary, the themes discussed in this chapter seem to me to be crucial elements of borderlander realities both in regard to the framework of interaction between the borderlands and their states as well as the parameters of negotiation available to all participants faced with living along this boundary. I argue that the overarching topic informing the discourses between these borderlands and their states as well as the drift of alienation between the borderlands is to be understood as the development of narratives of trans-frontier Otherness with a concomitant blurring of internal differences between the states' borderland segments and the respective state political systems. Searching for instances of compromise in border control, the acceptance by a state of its borderlanders' political otherness, and the local influencing of permissible trans-frontier trajectories between borderlanders within a wider Borderland (all elements of Peter Sahlins' (1998) excellent discussion of the borderlands along the French – Spanish boundary) *will fail* in these borderlands in the common socialist period: simply put, and to foreshadow the conclusions of this thesis, in the Soviet case this simply did not take place, and in the case of the PRC such dynamics were stifled with the increase in militarisation in the common socialist period.

In the first part of this chapter I argue that, while in no way merely reactive and passive recipients of such state rhetoric, border control was in fact implemented by the state and not by polities in the borderlands. Prior to socialism, border control had been rudimentary and sporadic with forces neither effectively wielding much power nor able to practice deep borderland control due to lack of accessibility as well as (especially on the Chinese side) great internal political instability. As opposed to this, the socialist period was the era in which the initially *interdependent* Kyrgyz and Tajik borderlands were to become the *alienated* borderlands of the late 1980s. Local lifeworlds at the frontier between increasingly antagonistic socialist states were re-orienting themselves towards inclusion into the respective state society – the agents of border control and the processes of deep borderland control were the substantiation of this new narrative of belonging. In the second part of the chapter I proceed to scrutinise trans-frontier trajectories – situations of borderlander contact and exchange such as the migration waves that sporadically took place as well as the development locally of modes of political communication between the states' segments of the Borderland; here, the very practical and everyday question of linguistic competence in Borderland locales will play a crucial role in our understanding of the means of communication in a region with a very vibrant tradition of multilingualism that has, in this period, been subtly influenced by script policy and education.

5.1 Border Control and the Borderlands

For just a moment, let us make an imaginary tour of the Sino-Soviet boundary from GBAO in the south to the Torugart Pass in the north and back down the other side over Qyzyl Suu to the south of Tashkurgan as it must have looked like in the early 1980s (thus, after the end of actual military tensions but well before anybody might have suspected demilitarisation). While such a tour was unthinkable for anybody prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union (in particular non-Soviet or non-Chinese citizens on the respective side of the boundary as well as locals, possibly barring respective high ranking state officials), I believe we can approximate certain observations and I give an account as it might have taken place based on interviewees' memories mentioning certain elements such a tour would have encountered:

> Arrival in Khorog, the regional centre of GBAO and its capital, is easily arranged with several daily flight services from Dushanbe and the airplanes operated by Aeroflot Domestic are full of Tajiks, Pamiri (both taking advantage of recently introduced easing of internal travel regulations to visit family members), and Soviet military personnel. The town itself, teeming with members of the Soviet Army and those engaged in supporting it logistically, is busy and the black market, supplied with scarce goods from the Kyrgyz SSR, thrives; however, Afghans from the Soviet-occupied territory just across the Pyanj River are not to be found here due to strictly controlled travel restrictions and the lack of any non-temporary bridges across the raging river (not to be built until the late 1990s and after). Leaving Khorog we travel north and east along the Pamir Highway, mindful of the heavy traffic (mainly trucks supplying the settlements between Khorog and Osh and mining equipment for the uranium and plutonium mines near Murghab) and endless columns of military vehicles (including tanks, heavy supply trucks, motorised armoured vehicles, etc.). We encounter no checkpoints until just outside Murghab where, just as today, the KGB implement vigorous checks of internal passports – the focus, however, is on the possession of a local *propusk* allowing individuals to temporarily leave their workplace. We have entered the outermost of four successively stricter borderzones implemented along Soviet boundaries[264]. Murghab at 3500m is a busy place: there is no bazaar yet but rather state-run goods outlets and supply stations; power and electricity is relatively stable, telephones work, and Murghab airport operates flights to Khorog, sometimes to Dushanbe and Osh, and under special circumstances military flights to the Russian SFSR (mainly for high-ranking military advisors). Local Kyrgyz, working for the *sovkhozes* in Murghab *raion*, exchange raw materials such as meat and wool for manufactured goods from the rest of the Soviet Union, and livestock numbers are booming[265]. Just beyond Murghab we successively pass through the next two layers of the borderzone, enforced by Soviet KGB *pogranichniki* at highly fortified checkpoints (one every 5 to 10 kilometres[266]) complete with machine-gun turrets and watchtowers

[264] In increasing order of necessary authorisation these were at 22 km from the boundary, 7.5 km, 500 metres, and 4 metres. In effect, what I term 'borderzone' (the outermost checkpoint of the actual boundary) in Chapter 2 begins in Soviet times at this outermost level; the innermost point is the actual boundary itself.

[265] See Robinson (2005) and Hangartner (2002).

[266] These are the so-called *zastavy* (line outposts); they generally had roughly fifty men in charge of a zone between 5-by-3 kilometres and 20-by-15 kilometres. Three to seven such *zastavy* formed a *kommendatura* (line command) that always comprised at least one high-ranking officer. The *otriad* (border detachment) was in command of an entire border region and probably consisted of three to five *kommendaturi*. Murghab *raion* was controlled by one such *otriad*, Osh *oblast* by another, and Naryn *oblast* by a third – thus, these administrative divisions were also military divisions. All three administrative borderlands (plus at least also the southern Kazakh SSR borderland around Ili as well as all the Turkmen SSR's boundaries) were part of the Central Asian Border District. See also Reitz (1982).

equipped with high-performance and powerful searchlights. The road runs about 50 metres parallel to the 2.5 metre-high electric double fence marking the no-man's-land surrounding the Soviet-Chinese boundary [see Picture 4 in Chapter 1]; nothing and nobody passes this live fence reportedly so highly charged as to immediately slay a sheep. In these years, motion detectors are being installed to the right of the road, and we pass many a motorised patrol. The turn-off to the east (the road many years later leading to the as-yet physically inaccessible Qolma Pass to Xinjiang) that connects the small Kyrgyz settlements of Rangkul and, to the south, Toktamysh, is lined on both sides by a similar fence, and sheep herding areas are patrolled by borderguards on foot and horseback. Travelling towards the Kyrgyz SSR, we pass Karakul where a large KGB detachment has its base; the town is ringed, to the east, by the fence and, to the west, by the vast lake. The ascent to the Qyzyl Art Pass is accompanied by more checkpoints of the same nature as before; 3km before the pass there is a sign announcing the end of Murghab *raion* and the beginning of Osh *oblast* – this is the only marking of the administrative boundary between the Tajik and Kyrgyz SSRs. At this point precisely, the boundary fence to China swings off to the east and we will not see it again for over a thousand kilometres. Subjectively, the Tajik side does not differ from the Kyrgyz side of the 'boundary' – Russian is all we encounter and we have been hearing mostly spoken Kyrgyz since Murghab anyway. The first Kyrgyz SSR flag we will see is on the school building in Sary Tash, the first settlement of size in the Kyrgyz SSR and outside the borderzone. There is as yet no open road leading to the east and towards Xinjiang barring a dirt track running parallel to a stone military road that leads to the checkpoint at Nura (now still named Beskennovski Post[267]) near Irkeshtam. The entire road is ringed by high peaks, deep gorges, and stony meadows.

Now we have to break away from the boundary and travel to Osh and from there to Bishkek and back east to Naryn because there is no infrastructural connection between the southeast Kyrgyz SSR and the northeast – the Ferghana Range is (and remains to this day) an impenetrable natural obstacle. The road to Naryn is broad and heavily used by the military forces stationed in Naryn town, the headquarters of the Kyrgyz SSR's eastern Border *otriad*; private transport generally takes place via air from Frunze (today's Bishkek) or, just as frequently, from Alma Ata (today's Almaty), the capital of the Kazakh SSR, but there do exist public buses. In the early 1980s Naryn itself presents us with two faces: in summer it is almost exclusively home to military personnel, in winter the once again permissible practice of herding brings local Kyrgyz back to their winter camps in the vicinity of the town[268]. Most buildings in the centre of the settlement are military support and administration buildings – it is very much a military town with a high proportion of Russians, Ukrainians and Baltic peoples. En route to At Bashy, itself just outside the borderzone to Xinjiang, we encounter a plethora of military installations, especially on and after the Qyzyl Bel Pass (24 kilometres past Naryn) with its commanding view of the wash valley leading to the peaks of the Tian Shan in the distance: barracks for several thousand men lie off the road here and several tracks lead to 'tank parks'. At Bashy lies off the main road to the boundary, and the two turn-offs to the settlement are heavily fortified; the settlement has, since the beginning of the Sino-Soviet conflict, sported the best secondary school in the entire *oblast* and the (Russian) commander of the border troops here sends his daughter to it; weekly school buses bring children from small settlements in the entire region to school here. Leaving At Bashy behind us, we travel towards Torugart, strictly off-limits to all but military personnel before the opening of the port there a couple of years later (1986). 40 km from At Bashy the road suddenly turns into a wide and surprisingly smooth road, roughly the width of a four-lane highway and about 3km long. The entire length of this strip is under the watchful eyes of nine high towers complete with warning lights, and is entirely fenced in. This airstrip has never been used, and never will be, but was purpose-built by an army of workers from Naryn

[267] Named after a Russian frontier officer killed there in 1931 by bandits.

[268] However, herding was not at all as widely practised during Soviet times as it is today. Local people from Naryn generally state that it was only permissible during the holiday season in summer in a kind of 'extended *subbotnik*'.

under instruction of the MVD (Commissariat of Internal Affairs) for an invasion of China in the early 1970s; the remainder of the road was first built by German prisoners-of-war in the 1940s. The turn-off to Tash Rabat, 20km further, marks the beginning of the *zapretnaya zona* – the beginning of the forbidden zone not a soul may enter without explicit permission of the Moscow-based KGB. And indeed, the old settlements ringing Lake Chatyr-Köl, itself within sight of the actual boundary, have not been inhabited for decades and have fallen into ruin[269]. Our encounter with the Soviet borderlands ends with our arrival at the Ak Beyit checkpoint, beyond which not even military personnel are allowed to travel without a formal declaration of war with China; on both sides of the checkpoint a double electric fence stretches into the distance and entry to this innermost of zones is prevented, on the one hand, by a heavily grilled massive iron gate that finds its exact Chinese counterpart 12km south across the pass and, on the other, by the watchtowers commanding a view of the no-man's-land that have their mounted machine-guns trained on all points beyond here. A flag of the Soviet Union presides over the scene and, when the wind comes from the south, the Chinese national anthem can be heard at regular intervals.

Picture 23: Boundary fence marking no-man's-land at the Torugart port

Pausing in this fictional narrative of the actual constitution of the Soviet side of the boundary, a number of points must be highlighted that will serve as an introduction to the following sections on border control and borderlander involvement therein in Soviet times. Had this hypothetical journey taken place in the early 1930s a very different picture would have been transmitted: at a local borderland level, none of the infrastructure that has come to figure so importantly in borderlander livelihoods existed then, and the political entities were being delimited and bounded at that time. At a trans-frontier Borderland level, the entire region would still have had elements of mutual economic space, with the Soviet Union in direct competition with informal, local trans-frontier interactions rather than exhibiting the

[269] According to one interview in Naryn, this lake region was declared a 'zoological reserve' – the only such reservation in the entire Soviet Union. I have not been able to confirm this statement but this is what my interviewee told me was the official reason for deporting people from that area in the 1960s. It is still a reserve today and the ruins are still the only sign of human habitation.

characteristics evident in the 1980s of the region forming an economic space within the boundaries of the Union (and intricately tied socially and economically to the rest of the Union). And at the state level, border control would have still been dealing with trans-frontier trajectories that the centre wanted to exploit in order to politically influence then war-torn Xinjiang rather than feeling the need to militarily seal the boundary to a state seen by the centre as dangerous. Border control and its many agents and heavy personnel presence in the borderlands informed all domains of borderlander life throughout the Soviet period: socio-economic life for borderlanders was inward-oriented with the state as the focus; the trans-frontier Other (to be more closely analysed in Chapter 6) had been removed from the cognitive map to be replaced with a vaguely defined 'Chinese citizen over there'; a narrative of modernisation was being enacted in the borderlands that excluded traditional modes of subsistence – the rediscovery of local self-sufficiency and the resurgent pastoralism of the later independent period was still a long way off; and internal boundaries between the two SSRs were symbolically less marked than was the non-negotiable, external state boundary to Xinjiang (i.e., the *raion* and *oblast* was the bounded space rather than the administrative SSR). Most fundamentally, I argue in this section that deep borderland control was enacted both with a high degree of transversality (in GBAO) and high collaterality (in the Kyrgyz SSR's borderlands): in the former case, multiple avenues of communication and exchange informed discourses of control while in the latter these discourses were negotiated through borderland nodes.

Let me return to a description of the Chinese side of the boundary to complete the image of two alienated borderlands facing off across a boundary controlled by non-local forces:

> The Torugart checkpoint in Xinjiang is staffed by mainly Han in a variety of uniforms. The checkpoint infrastructure and, in particular, the road leading away from the boundary are all make-shift in appearance: the former consists of several concrete buildings inscribed with four-character slogans and quotations from Mao's Red Book while the latter is a dirt track that has seen heavy use. The immediate area is watched over by a succession of watchtowers strategically placed on the hills and, it is rumoured, by a vast minefield blanketing the valleys to the south, east, and west. Just past the checkpoint is a high radio tower with three mounted loudspeakers pointing to the north (towards the Kyrgyz SSR), and the tower is decorated with a picture of Mao ZeDong and hung with several red banners complete with golden characters. Travelling along the poor road through Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture we catch glimpses of settlements of recently sedentarised Kyrgyz, frequently seeing concrete yurts rather than the traditional felt type. The reopening of the local Sunday animal market just outside Artush, a town that has just recently seen a boom in population the social infrastructure (schools and hospitals in particular) cannot yet deal with, is starting to bring a number of non-Kyrgyz (especially Uighurs, who generally dominate the service, market, and education sectors) into this town; agriculture is growing in the vicinity along with small industry enterprises servicing, for example, the demand for irrigation installations. The road branching off our Torugart road, leading back towards the Kyrgyz SSR and to what will in ten years' time be the Irkeshtam port, is in even worse condition and is traversed mainly by locals (Kyrgyz, Dungani, and Uighurs) on horses or with donkey carts bringing their livestock from Wuqia to Artush and, increasingly, the Kashgar Sunday market.

> Leaving Kashgar to the south and west towards Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County, we pass through a predominantly Uighur region interspersed by small plots of land upon which Han settlers are visible; the city of Kashgar itself, while in this decade still a largely Uighur-dominated settlement, is beginning to exhibit an increasing presence of non-military Han workers and officials from the distant parts of the rest of the PRC. The road to Tashkurgan, now the Chinese section of the Karakoram Highway to northern Pakistan, is a construction site: the trickle of trucks to and from the boundary with Pakistan (to turn into a torrent within a decade) still make their way over a mix of metalled road and dirt track, thundering through small Kyrgyz and, the farther south we go, Tajik settlements. We are now moving more or less exactly parallel to the road we took to the north on the other side of the boundary – the Pamir Highway – and the peaks surrounding Murghab in the Tajik SSR are no more than fifty kilometres distant; the boundary is, at its closest to the Tashkurgan road, a mere twenty kilometres away. Checkpoints and military surveillance towers are frequent on the western side of the road; the county is, as yet, however not connected to the rest of China by telephone lines, and electric power is rare south of Kashgar. The site of the future turn-off to Qolma is still a sheer mountainside and there are no roads or tracks leading to dispersed settlements to the east of the road. Tashkurgan at 3600m is a sleepy town and a fraction of the size it will be twenty years later, its population nearly exclusively Tajik (Sarykuli) and Kyrgyz – the itinerant Pakistani traders are secluded in a government hostel on the outskirts, as are the Han construction workers. There exists a very small animal market, but the town's possibly most striking feature is the graveyard at the entrance to the valley that has been erected in memory of the hundreds of Chinese (mainly Han) construction workers who died constructing the lethal Karakoram Highway. On the date of the grand official opening ceremony in 1978, the largest statue of Chairman Mao in Xinjiang was erected in the town centre, and every day school children attending the county's only school (located just off the central square) can be seen saluting here and singing the Chinese national anthem.

Our fictional journey along the Sino-Soviet boundary has come to an end – it has led from the Soviet-Afghan frontier to the Chinese-Pakistani frontier, as the bird flies a distance of just under 400km. Yet, in the 1980s, the two side of the boundary could not have differed more, both from each other and from what the borderlands would have looked like both in 1930s as well as they would in the early 21st century. If the 1930s could be characterised as having exhibited a very high degree of flexibility in negotiating local loyalties and border control itself as having been more or less non-existent on the Chinese side, the decades following the Chinese Revolution brought border control and state policies of Han immigration and local development to the borderlands. At a borderland level, military and para-military organs became a fact of everyday life for most borderlanders, and Kyrgyz and Tajik borderlanders were in competition with mainly Han individuals for control of local land and, increasingly, Uighurs for political representation: sedentarisation, collectivisation, and oscillating policies of assimilation altered lifeworlds in the borderlands, and the construction of new supra-regional infrastructure and the selective opening of markets had the effect of tying borderlanders to local administrative centres. At a trans-frontier Borderland level, a new ethnic dimension was added to the borderlands between Xinjiang and Soviet Central Asia with the influx of Han soldiers-turned-farmers; and, by the early 1960s, there existed no more ports connecting the wider Borderland: Soviet borderguard faced (Han) Chinese borderguard, an array of Soviet boundary-maintenance machinery faced a seemingly innumerable host of mainly Han demobilised 'farmers' installed in the immediate borderzone. And from a state perspective, Xinjiang in those years was still very much a region deemed by

the state to be a source of instability and potential irredentism and not the loudly proclaimed 'gateway of opportunity' it was to become in the new millennium.

In this sub-chapter I discuss border control on both sides of the boundary as it evolved until the end of the common socialist period. This focus on the socialist period should not be seen as a characterisation of historical processes for the sake of historical insight but rather because I argue that the post-Soviet states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have inherited not just a common Soviet legacy but, crucially, an on-going presence of agents of border control (until 1999 for the former and 2005 for the latter) from the Russian state (euphemistically termed CIS bordertroops); their constitution and the discourses of control they have been cementing in the post-Soviet period have changed very little from Soviet times, as I will show in Chapter 6. As outlined in Chapter 1, border control can be characterised as the controlling of individual physical access to and through borderlands and across boundaries; it is a state-centred rhetoric of the state's power to channel movement through permissible avenues along certain parameters. Adopting a perspective from the boundary, and aiming at uncovering clues to present realities in the borderlands through a comparative juxtaposition, I focus on what I have termed deep borderland control, the parameters of local persuasion, the officially licensed gatekeepers (that is, the agents) borderlanders were dealing with, and the degree to which borderlanders themselves were involved in such border control. Soviet border control in Central Asia entailed certain economic and socio-cultural advantages for local borderlanders accruing from their peripheral location; not so in Xinjiang, where borderlanders in this period were only able to retain local ways of life as long as the state was too weak to impose its assimilative policies – when this changed, and Kyrgyz and Tajiks elites came to be actively included in border control, the ethnic composition of the borderlands had been altered. In effect, the 'depth' of the boundary had, by 1991, changed on both sides to include a fairly clearly defined and exceptionally wide zone: no longer merely the 'Central Asian Frontier' vaguely including mountainous peripheral regions between China and Russia, it was now a zone defined by the border control checkpoints, infrastructure, and administrative units of eastern GBAO (Murghab *raion*), the south-eastern and eastern Kyrgyz SSR (Osh *oblast* and Naryn *oblast*, respectively), Qyzyl Suu Prefecture, and Tashkurgan County.

Soviet Border Control

Life in the Soviet borderlands underwent fundamental changes in the1920s and 1930s. Borderlander livelihoods at the external boundary to Xinjiang were to be fundamentally and irrevocably influenced by discourses emanating from the centre that established institutions at the frontier that borderlanders had to deal with and introduced new processes altering local perceptions of the meaning of belonging to a state. That is, infrastructure was constructed that redefined the SSRs as the point of reference in regard to ready accessibility; employment opportunities arose from the presence, in the borderlands, of large numbers of officially recognised agents of border control; and local and regional political bodies (*raikom* and *obkom,* respectively) became empowered to blur internal political differences between

the state's borderlands and the Soviet state's political system, thereby supporting a political narrative of state inclusion. Searching for the ways in which borderlanders themselves influenced the kind of discourses and processes that came to be implemented in their locales (i.e., local borderlander support of or resistance to state-induced strategies), I argue that one cannot ignore the fact that such negotiation in Soviet days was fundamentally structured by border control – its agents, its institutions, and its actual functioning, and this I now proceed to illuminate.

From the very beginning the nascent Soviet regime accorded more primary importance to securing control over its boundaries as soon as physically possible than it did to extending its (at the time) still tenuous grip on the red hinterland – state-building took place with a fundamental emphasis on the boundaries of the state and the role they had to play with regard to implementing the state's control over its territory as a whole. Borderlanders in Central Asia were of immediate concern to the new state; and the state presented borderlanders with a set of question marks in regard to what they stood to gain from the alleged 'bottom-up' revolution that had created it. It is safe to assume that the Bolsheviks, newly come to power in a state of internal turmoil and a precarious international political scene, waged a battle on two fronts: on the one hand, against domestic resistance and the forces of the *ancien regime* and, on the other, against inimical outside forces. Thus, while the state was "trying to consolidate its rule over peripheral localities, it [was] also, presumably, establishing its territorial integrity and military-defence capabilities at its borders; [hence,] state power [did] not just extend outwards from the centre *but inwards*, from the border, and military authorities there [could] contribute to the state-building process" (Chandler 1998:56, my emphasis).

Three interlocking elements and processes are important in our context of understanding the basis for the way in which the Central Asian frontier to China (at this time still in the throes of warlord control and the struggling Republican government) was 'controlled' and a framework for local livelihoods was negotiated: according to Chandler (1998:24-8) Soviet border controls derived from, first, the centre's concern over what it regarded as serious internal security threats and political instability in the new state's territorial peripheries; second, the decision to economically and politically develop the Union in an autarkic and resource-mobilising way; and, third, the existence of institutionalised bureaucratic and highly coercive state capacities that, due to their autonomy from society, their extensive deployment in the borderlands, and their highly complex intra-institutional enmeshment, were uniquely able to monopolise what Torpey (2000:6) has termed the 'legitimate means of movement' in and through the borderlands. These three factors resulted in a border control regime that was, from the perspective of the centre, both highly effective in limiting illicit trans-frontier exchange as well as increasingly crucial to the survival of the Soviet system as a whole by being "an instrument of the state-building process [...] designed to a great extent to fulfil an internal function, to extend state control inward towards the interior" (Chandler 1998:28). I argue that, from a local perspective, 'effectiveness' lay in the growing realisation within the borderlands that nation-building as circumscribed by central

policy brought a number of benefits locally that former trans-frontier ethnic identities and political loyalties could no longer provide.

Internal Political Control

In regard to the first of these elements, the internal consolidation of control has been more closely discussed in Chapter 4; the securing of the external boundaries of the Union was to provide an outer limit to the framework of identity and loyalty of the newly delimited national units contained within the Soviet Union. In this respect, the most important function of border control was the cutting of links that transcended the state's reach – the cessation of trans-frontier networks that could potentially threaten the stability of the state through irredentism fuelled by boundary-spanning groups' access to other political systems (along a trajectory originating from hostile adjacent states) or through the loss of much needed resources such as revenue or manpower[270]. The absolute importance of the borderlands for the regime was highlighted by the international animosity with which the Bolsheviks' victory was greeted; the post-revolutionary dilemma was that these borderlands were highly strategic for propaganda purposes (see next sub-chapter) and therefore politically sensitive for the centre but, at least in the Asian part of the Soviet Union, very remote and difficult to penetrate infrastructurally[271]. Instability in the borderlands was produced by the revolutionary policies of collectivisation which led to upheaval in form of the *basmachi* movement described elsewhere and massive dislocation and migration across the boundaries. Border controls responded to the ensuing centre's need for stabilisation evoked by this internal opposition to discourses of control within the borderlands.

Second, the revolutionary changes in domestic economic policy predicated the state establishing itself as the monopolistic controller of physical and human resources and, as in all socialist systems with command economies, called for border control to act as the bastion defending and enforcing these monopolies in the light of economic adversity. As Chandler points out, there is a strong link between border control and state-sanctioned dramatic socio-economic change brought about by, in the case of the early Soviet Union, rapid industrialisation and collectivisation of land (1998:24): trans-frontier trade, the importing of foreign (and therefore potentially subversive) goods and cultural artefacts, and the movement of financial assets were to be made prohibitively difficult and perilous. In their quest for economic self-sufficiency, the Soviet authorities came to increasingly employ the language of 'Soviet patriotism' and 'treachery to the masses' to denote compliance with or

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[270] This 'problem' is best encapsulated by the relocation of ethnic Germans away from Nazi Germany's frontier with the Soviet Union during World War II so as to prevent their collusion with the invaders. A similar and just as radically unnecessary move was made in regard to Koreans in the Russian Far East during hostilities with Japan (who had occupied the Korean peninsula and Manchuria) and who were subsequently deported en masse to the Uzbek SSR. At the risk of exaggeration, it seems as if, in these radical cases, Stalin's solution to potential trans-frontier irredentism was simply to dissolve the ethnic borderland through deportation of the potentially subversive borderlanders.

[271] From west to east, the Soviet Union's Asian frontiers ran through the high mountains of the Caucasus and the deserts of Turkmenistan on the Persian frontier, the ranges of the Hindu Kush and Pamir on the British India/Afghanistan frontier, the Pamir, Tian Shan, and Zhungar Alatau ranges in Central Asia, the Altai and Sayan ranges in southern Siberia, and the at-the-time impenetrable taiga of the Russian Far East.

violation of economically induced border controls; thus was economic expediency and ideology married to notions of loyalty to the state. Henceforth, those engaging in illicit economic activities came to be considered political enemies or opponents of the regime; supporting the nationalisation of private property and foreign trade, the regimentation and conservation of labour, the concentration of state resources and currency, and the collective efforts of the *kolkhoz* all became the duties of the Loyal Soviet Citizen.

Borderlanders were, in this context, automatically suspect due to their proximity to the 'corrupting' influence of contraband which, especially during the 1920s, was smuggled endemically through the Soviet borderlands [272]. It is here that we witness the first institutionalisation of the *pogranichnaya zona* ('border zone') at its most extreme, in the form of the *zapretnaya zona* ('forbidden zone') – concepts which were to outlast the Soviet Union and remain a key element of post-Soviet border control. Early examples of such zones were to be found in the Ukrainian borderlands where, in 1923, all trade in financial commodities such as *valiuta* ('hard currency') and gold was forbidden in a twenty-kilometre area of the boundary, and repeat offenders against this injunction could be exiled outside of a fifty-kilometre border zone (local resolutions as quoted in Chandler 1998:49, 51). The borderlands were to be cleared of unwanted and/or subversive economic (and, hence, political) activities. The introduction in 1932 of the internal passport system was to have a profound effect on the division of the Union's territories into zones of economic and political delicacy by dividing the state into three general zones (Hirsch 2005:275): regime zones (politically and economically vulnerable areas within the *pogranichnaya zona*, now extended to a depth of 100 kilometres[273]), non-regime zones (rural regions and smaller *oblasts* away from the frontier), and extra-administrative zones (such as the Gulag and 'secret' industrial complexes in the remote hinterland). The agencies and organisations to be discussed below that were involved in controlling these boundaries, primarily charged with guarding the external boundary but increasingly penetrating the lives of people who were not, in the strictest sense, actual borderlanders or even involved in borderland processes, were being given a growing set of responsibilities that were beginning to affect society as a whole. In fact, "the Soviet system was not just being extended to the border; the border itself was growing, extending farther and farther into the heartland, putting greater and greater parts of the country under a security regime" (Chandler 1998:66). Furthermore, the role that border control played in relation to the development of that which they were to protect (i.e., a system that ascribed to an 'ideology of isolation' and pursued a policy of planned and redistributive

[272] 'Engaging in contraband' is here understood to mean carrying goods across the state boundary without permission from the authorities; this could involve domestic contraband (Russian goods taken out of the country) or foreign contraband (bringing foreign products into the country). According to guidelines set up by the Commissariat of Trade in 1926 the category of 'qualified contraband' was introduced, which included the use of vehicles for such trafficking, forgery of customs documents, participation in organisations dealing with contraband articles, smuggling of military equipment and arms, and engaging the participation of customs officials.

[273] Significantly, the cities of Moscow and Leningrad were included within this category so as to limit internal migration to these urban hubs. Over the course of the following years many regional centres (such as Tashkent and Almaty but not, as far as I have been able to establish, Bishkek or Dushanbe, possible due to their very small populations in these decades) were included within this category.

economy) was not subordinate but rather synchronous in that military protection and surveillance of the state's boundaries went hand-in-hand with the state's control over its citizens' economic lives.

Bureaucratic Control

Third, the highly complex and multifaceted structures of bureaucracy that developed in order to enforce border control became, over time, an impenetrable Byzantine apparatus of competing organisations and bodies that in part duplicated and in part monitored each other's functions with the effect of entrenching a belief among Soviet citizens that matters relating to the boundary represented a minefield of personal risk and non-negotiability – with a significant part of this danger linguistically marked by bureaucratic jargon. In order to provide a basis for the characterisation of today's boundary gatekeepers in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan I will here attempt an overview of the key players in what can only be characterised as the labyrinthine convolutions of a bureaucracy that increasingly came to be self-serving and unwieldy[274]. Furthermore, and from the perspective of borderlanders and boundary crossers, it is these agents and institutions that have formed the on-the-ground nodes between individual and state that people had to deal with. Chandler begins her discussion of 'state-sponsored isolation and institutional politics' by remarking that "it is significant that the official responsibilities for Soviet border control have historically been diffused throughout many different state organizations rather than concentrated in clearly defined, co-ordinated government bodies [...] each of which had the right to interfere [in the implementation process] at some stage" (1998:68); in addition, the Communist Party ensured that it itself could be involved in border control processes by installing a 'feedback loop' in the form of its very own Commission on Exit that duplicated the work of other state information agencies. Figure 10 introduces the main actors residents on Soviet territory had to deal with in order to obtain permission to actually negotiate trans-frontier travel[275]:

[274] I base this overview on the archival research of Ronald Hingley (1970), the minutely conducted and insightful analysis of the vast array of Party proceedings and contemporary journal articles by Andrea Chandler (1998), the survey conducted by James Reitz (1982), and interviews I personally held in post-Soviet Central Asia. It remains to be stated that, due to the secretive nature of these organisations and the importance and political sensitivity with which their work was regarded by Soviet authorities, more in-depth material remains to my knowledge at present regretfully unavailable.

[275] I find it salient to note that, barring the 1927 statute on the Soviet state's border policy, the first comprehensive legislation passed on border control was the USSR Law on the State Border of 1982! It finally explicitly named the agencies in charge of documentation and laid down strict guidelines for confiscation and punishment.

Institution	Gatekeeping duties and functions
OGPU/KGB (political security apparatus)[276]	- approval of documents in general - political responsibility of cases
TsIK (Central Executive Committee of the Council of People's Commissars)	- granting citizenship - intervention and veto power in emigration matters - attestation of individuals' political reliability
NKID (Commissariat of Foreign Affairs)	- granting of international passports and entry visas - arbitration on the entry of non-Soviet citizens - dealing with Soviet citizens abroad
NKVD (Commissariat of Internal Affairs) (after 1956 renamed to MVD)	- passport application procedure - granting of exit visas and special permits (*propuski*) - setting individual passport fees and collection thereof
Main Customs Administration of the Commissariat of Foreign Trade	- customs-control service - inspection of *valiuta* declarations
Commissariat of Labour	- classification of individuals' eligibility to emigrate - recommendations for work trips (*komandirovki*) - arbitration on *valiuta* allowance
Work-related state bodies[277]	- issuing of letters of recommendation and affidavits
Local *soviet*, *raikom*, and/or *obkom*	- issuing of further statements of permission

Figure 10: Gatekeeping institutions of the Soviet era

In effect, the single most important agency in charge of border control and on-the-ground gatekeeping at the boundary was the much-feared Committee for State Security (KGB) – it was their duty to give the final say-so on any given individual's application to transcend the boundary and sign the papers prepared by the NKVD/MVD, thereby giving a kind of political security clearance to individuals applying for legal exit; application followed by rejection was in some cases rounded off by dangerous attention being drawn to one's person, sometimes ending in incarceration or, in the 1930s in particular, liquidation or forced labour[278]. But even successful clearance by state security was but one factor in the time consuming and opaque process that, in the end, led to the waning expression of a desire by Soviet citizens to cross boundaries. Control over this desire was wielded by authorities through the afore-mentioned *valiuta* regulations: non-convertibility of the Soviet rouble meant that only central state institutions provided potential travellers with money they could actually use outside the Soviet Union. Passport fees were prohibitive and were waived only in exceptional

[276] What became the KGB (the Committee for State Security) in 1956 had gone through several incarnations beforehand since its first inception as the infamous Cheka of revolutionary times. See below at Figure 11.
[277] That is, individuals had to apply to their employers, which generally automatically involved officials in state bodies due to the fact that all industry was owned by the state. Analogously, athletes, artists, and students had to apply to, respectively, state bodies in charge of sport, culture, or education. The necessity for these 'letters of recommendation' led to a hierarchisation: depending on whether one was a state employee, an artist, an official, or a Party member one might need permission from either the military, the workplace, or one's family. See Chandler (1998:74-5).
[278] Chilling examples of the dangers of exposing oneself to such inquiries are to be found in all their numbing pointlessness in Anne Applebaum (2003, *Gulag: A History of the Soviet Camps*. London: Random House, Inc.).

circumstances (as decided upon by yet other agencies)[279]; young males found it nigh impossible to convince the military high command of letting them out of obligatory conscription; students who had received grants from the state to study (a situation that must have applied to a high proportion of especially rural and non-Russian segments of the population) were obliged to serve their educational institutions for a number of years; and families were only in exceptional cases granted permission to leave simultaneously. The power of especially the OGPU/KGB to require paperwork from the most diverse sources only to then reject the application arbitrarily went unchecked, and even diplomats and senior officials were subject to its scrutiny. The requirement for applicants to obtain statements of permission from local authorities such as the *kolkhoz soviet* or *raikom/obkom* officials seems to have never been officially acknowledged, and does not appear in Andrea Chandler's archives, but seems to have been a not uncommon practice for borderlanders (in Central Asia at least) from about the 1940s onwards until the early 1980s[280]. Possibly this is an example of concessions to the widely rumoured attempts at subversion of the system by individuals who attempted to enlist the aid of powerful state-sanctioned patrons, especially as the examples of this practice I encountered all alluded less to an actual 'requirement' than to an 'additionally recommended document'.

Post-Stalinist attempts at reforming this institutional complexity failed, just as post-Soviet era attempts in the newly independent Central Asian Republics have largely failed (see Chapter 6) – border control and its bureaucratic legitimation as represented by the three elements and processes discussed in the preceding sections outlived the immediate reasons it had been created for by becoming a force unto itself. The momentous changes of World War II had seen the realignment of Soviet boundaries in both Europe and the Far East, though not in this part of Central Asia, and border control had been badly strained by the massive streams of displaced persons and newly incorporated borderlands; also, technological advances had been made and new methods of boundary surveillance and defence had become necessary with the advent of nuclear power, long-range bombers, radar, communication technology, and geostrategic trans-state oil pipelines. The 'Iron Curtain' and the Cold War were looming large on the western boundaries of the Soviet Union, and to the east China was consolidating itself as an initially friendly fellow socialist state. Domestically, the death of Stalin in 1953 and, in the context of border control just as importantly, the long overdue discrediting and removal of the homicidal pervert and sadist Lavrentii Beria from the helm of the NKVD had initiated an attempt at reorganisation of Soviet border control, the first since the 1920s and the last until Gorbachev's *perestroika* of the mid-1980s.

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[279] And, especially confusing to applicants, after 1926 all passports became valid for just one trip abroad within three months of their issue – hardly a time span long enough for all the paperwork that had to be obtained. This policy was later abolished again, but a similar process can be seen in the granting of *propusk* for special regions as well as in the requirement for foreign citizens to list a precise set of localities on their visas to be visited.

[280] Interview with Marat, July 2006, in Naryn, and with an elderly man from Karakul in GBAO, November 2005. I encountered memories of this practice most extensively in Tajikistan's GBAO, considerably less so in northern Kyrgyzstan, and not at all in Kazakhstan.

Agents of Soviet Border Control

This reorganisation was half-hearted, done piecemeal, and quite ineffective. Initially, border troops (i.e., borderguards and special armed units in the immediate *pogranichnaya zona*) had been under the control of the NKVD rather than the Red Army. With the abolition of SSR-level NKVDs in 1934 and the creation of the all-Union NKVD, all border troops came under the control of the new umbrella Commissariat – thus was the boundary security apparatus centralised. After Beria's removal, Khrushchev and the Central Executive Committee elected to reorganise the all-powerful and much-hated body, and the new MVD was created alongside the KGB in 1956:

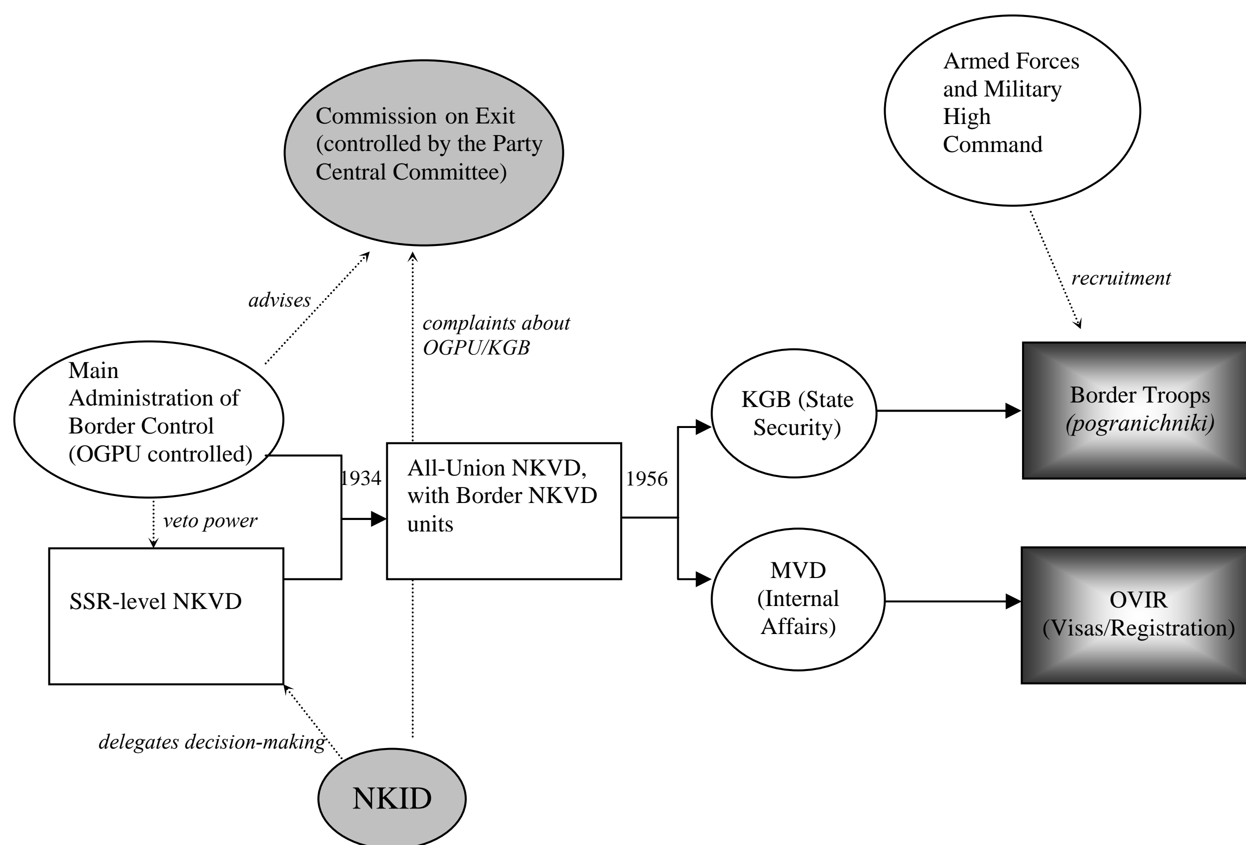

Figure 11: Soviet state bodies related to physical border control and their evolution (circles: non-local institutions; boxes: local or provincial institutions; grey: civilian authorities; gradient: border control)

Figure 11 shows the actual forces of border control (shaded in a white-to-grey gradient here). The KGB, like its predecessor the OGPU, was charged with guaranteeing the territorial inviolability of the Soviet Union's territory and to struggle against its boundaries' violation, exerting political control over the infiltration of enemies of the state (mainly counter-revolutionaries), intercepting subversive literature[281], and the confiscation of contraband and

[281] As continuously defined and re-defined by GlavLit, the Committee for the Protection of State Secrecy in Publishing.

illicit arms (Chandler 1998:74, fn51). Further, and most crucially, the borderguards and other troops deployed both at the boundary and within the *pogranichnaya zona* were under the direct command of state security (the KGB) and not the military (although the Military High Command did have some unclearly defined superordinate position over the rank and file of the border troops); they were to maintain order within the *zona*, defend the borderland population from trans-frontier aggression, and guard trans-boundary bodies of water. The new MVD was to take up the paperwork duties of its predecessor, and with the creation of its OVIR (Division of Visas and Registration), a body in charge of passports and exit visas was institutionalised that has survived the post-Soviet transition relatively unscathed right up to the present day[282]; its duties were to be pursued "following the established order" (document as quoted in Chandler 1998:84, fn26) and a system of privilege for ranking officials and the assorted *nomenklatura* was affirmed and elaborated (such persons falling under the authority of the NKID and not OVIR).

On-the-ground Soviet Central Asian Border Control

So as to bring these general trends to bear upon the Central Asian Sino-Soviet borderlands, I will now proceed to answer the following questions: How was border control implemented in actual reality? What role did local borderlanders play in the constitution of the boundary; and how did these local actors interact with the institutions now present in formerly 'remote' Central Asia? The immediate goal of border control in Central Asia was to monitor trans-frontier movements and prevent unauthorised entry and exit to and from Soviet territory. All three afore-mentioned interlocking elements and processes were very much present in this contested region in the early years of the consolidation of Soviet hegemony in the region and, as hinted at, border control became a crucial element in establishing central power in a periphery that had a long history of mobility and shifting loyalties. The bringing of such institutions did not take place evenly along the length of the frontier to China: certain parts of the boundary were deemed initially more sensitive and given a higher priority, and it is possible to state that the penetration of increasingly rigorous border control followed a rough north-to-south trajectory, with Kazakhstan being given more immediate attention than Tajikistan; this was in part due to the fact that the northerly borderlands offered more geographically open trans-frontier routes (e.g., the Zhungarian Gate and the Ili Valley) and in part because there was a considerable proportion of Russian settlers, whose loyalty in and immediately after the Civil War was seen as crucial in securing Soviet control over this largely non-Russian area (in particular, the Russian populations of the garrison cities of Ust-Kamenogorsk, Almaty, and Bishkek[283]). However, the danger posed by the *basmachi* movement quickly led to the implementation of border control in the more

[282] For the importance of OVIR in regulating present-day borderland access, see Chapters 2 and 6.

[283] Almaty was founded as Verny in 1854 as a small military outpost, served as a place of exile in the late tsarist period (Leon Trotsky representing its most illustrious resident in this context), and made the capital of the Kazakh SSR in 1927, renamed as Alma-Ata; Ust-Kamenogorsk (today's Öskemen) was founded already in 1720 as a small Russian fort and grew with the Russian and Ukrainian influx of the Second World War; Bishkek was established after the destruction of the minute settlement that had existed prior to Russian annexation as the town of Pishpek after 1862 and made the capital of the new Kyrgyz SSR in 1926 as Frunze (insultingly, the name of the military commander of the subjugation of Central Asia during *basmachi* times).

remote areas of the Kyrgyz and Tajik SSRs, where the resistance was wont to withdraw to; furthermore, rumours of their arming through trans-frontier networks called for the imposition of controls over what and who was entering Soviet territory: effective border control was considered by the Central Asian Bureau as an indispensable tool in cutting these communication and supply lines (as quoted in Chandler 1998:62, fn45). It is crucial to note that *effective* border control, what I term *deep* borderland control in Chapter 1, necessitated dealing with a number of local particularities specific to the borderlands in question: infrastructural connectivity to the state and avenues of access; the interaction between local borderlanders and agents of border control; and the parameters of the campaign for local loyalties.

Infrastructural Connectivity

First, the lack of infrastructure had to be compensated through the construction of new routes connecting mountainous peripheries with the new local centres of control. With the completion in 1934 of the Pamir Highway linking Khorog, the new administrative centre of GBAO on the Afghan boundary, with the traditional markets at Osh, the largest city in the Ferghana Valley and now a part of the Kyrgyz SSR, the entire south-eastern Soviet frontier with China and (at the time) British India became accessible to sustained and continued outside penetration. Murghab, roughly equidistant between these two centres, subsequently no longer functioned as a regional trade centre but rather as a stop-over on Soviet supply routes. Formerly home to nearly exclusively seasonal Kyrgyz pastoralists and infrequently visiting representatives of the distant political centre, now administrators, educators, and security personnel settled in towns such as Murghab and Karakul and began to consistently 'service' the borderlands. The Pamir Highway enabled both physical state control of the disputed boundary with Xinjiang and a way of accessing borderlanders whose importance for the territorial Soviet state had become profound. For the people of GBAO the Highway brought the realisation that the warring instability of previous decades had come to an end. While the entire Pamir region never became economically self-sufficient (Kreutzmann 2004, Bliss 2006), local livelihoods all along the road profited immensely from this magistrale. In the Kyrgyz SSR, the infrastructural linking of Naryn with Torugart, as well as the road between Sary Tash and Irkeshtam, both brought ancient routes through the only two accessible passes to Xinjiang into the orbit of border control, and both towns became regional centres of border control and the focus of borderlanders' access to institutions such as schools and markets/supply outlets. Physically, the avenues of discourses of control along the entirety of the Soviet boundary in the Kyrgyz SSR were collateral in nature, with transversal physical access to regional borderland centres governed exclusively through Naryn, Osh, and Khorog. In GBAO, remoteness and the contested nature of the administrative-territorial unit promoted transversality: Murghab was accessible both from Osh and Khorog as well as by air from Dushanbe and even the Russian SFSR itself.

Local Involvement

Second, borderland loyalties had to be reoriented towards the Soviet state and away from a focus on merely the most local of reference points, and borderlanders themselves had to be actively involved in securing the frontier. Special commissars' reports from the 1920s and 1930s (as quoted in Chandler 1998:59, 63) suggest that there was concern that populations and the nascent state institutions in borderlands were not offering sufficient vigilance and security for the sensitive frontier: local Party organisations were considered weak and not politically educated enough, and the Russian cadres to be found amongst the border troops at the time considered their assignment to such localities as 'exile'. In addition, initially weak border control structures promoted conflict between the military, the state security organs, and local Party members, border control was seen locally as an intrusion into local livelihoods (especially in regard to the traditional trans-frontier pasture migration routes in the Pamirs and Alay), and smuggling of suddenly scarce goods became rampant. Borderlanders had come to be regarded by the centre as a potentially subversive security threat, either through the active participation in clandestine operations or, more commonly and more generally, by their 'political indifference'. Conversely, the state and its institutions were seen by borderlanders at this time as detrimental to local livelihoods. The initial composition of border troops was here seen as contributing to local dissatisfaction considering that in Central Asia an ethnic dimension came into play: confrontation between the state and local particularities in the borderland was played out as a conflict between *chuzhaki* (outsiders) and locals. So as to preclude such friction and overcome this dichotomy efforts were taken to involve locals in securing the frontier: a policy of *korenizatsiya* was adopted but was to remain singularly ineffective in Central Asia due mainly to resistance by the non-local cadre[284]. Both the OGPU (and later the KGB) and the actual border troop regiments failed to become 'more local', especially at cadre level despite the increasingly effective *korenizatsiya* policies practised in the SSRs in general[285]. Interviews conducted in Naryn and Sary Tash, both on the Kyrgyzstani-Chinese frontier, with former members of the border troops in 2005 and 2006 all pointed to the fact that the few Kyrgyz recruited into the border control institutions were to be found in administration rather than in physical boundary keeping; the vast majority had been Russians and Ukrainians[286]. Rakowska-Harmstone makes similar observations in regard to border control in the Tajik SSR (1970:118-22): visitors to the Tajik SSR noted that the NKVD and OGPU were exclusively staffed by Russians, and her analysis of the local press at the time shows a complete lack of

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[284] As opposed to the *korenizatsiya* practised in, for example, Ukraine, where border troops were increasingly recruited with an eye to their competency in the Ukrainian language. See Chandler (1998:60-1).

[285] It can be debated whether central authorities were indeed unhappy about this. It is not inconceivable that there were fears that if the OGPU and border troops became too 'local' or too familiar with the locals their political or military effectiveness could be compromised. This notion is elaborated upon by Agabekov in his text on the composition of the OGPU (1931, as quoted in Rakowska-Harmstone 1970:120): "Most of our leaders have been wont to manifest [...] mistrust, whenever the question came up of admitting oriental communists into the OGPU machine."

[286] These interviews covered a remembered time span of about thirty years and, thus, reflected on the situation from the early 1970s until the dissolution of the Soviet Union. I have no reason to suspect that the situation was fundamentally different in the decades prior to 1970. This is in contrast to the situation on the other side of the boundary in Xinjiang, as I will discuss below.

visibly present Tajiks amongst Border-NKVD units, at least until 1954 and the dissolution of the NKVD[287]; the KGB was to remain as the only SSR institution without local participation. The Tajik SSR was obviously regarded as too politically unreliable to entrust Tajiks with the crucial mission of physically protecting Soviet frontiers.

Picture 24: KGB headquarters in Murghab (GBAO)

Involving the local borderland population had to take place in other ways that could make up for this lack of local institutional presence in actual border control: starting in the 1920s, local soviets, *kolkhoz*, and party organisations were actively required to 'sponsor' border troop units by constructing buildings to house the *pogranichniki*, securing their supplies from the local borderland population, and contributing their local budgets to their upkeep. Poor peasants were enlisted in the struggle against trans-frontier smuggling and movement and much was made of the benefits accruing to these poor areas from the presence of the border troops through greater attention by far-away centres to the local situation in regard to the dearth of educational, cultural, and economic facilities (see below). The reverse side of this early policy immediately became obvious, however: dependent on locals for their housing, upkeep, and daily support in remote areas, the *pogranichniki* were indeed vulnerable to local subversive activities in regard to central policy. Thus, in the uncertain first decades of the Soviet Union numerous cases of border troops condoning local illicit boundary violations are to be found (see Chandler 1998:58); this was most certainly a crucial part of the reason for the decision to abolish the SSR-level NKVD structures and bring the *apparat* under central, all-Union control. Indeed, by the end of World War II the vast majority of *pogranichniki* were non-locals and, more importantly, they were rotated on a

[287] Her overview of the ethnic composition of the ministries is particularly revealing (1970:114-5). Only after the fall of Beria was the new MVD headed at last by the requisite local representative of the titular nationality.

regular basis so as to prevent such close affiliation with particular borderland processes[288]. By the time of the military tensions between the PRC and the Soviet Union, depth in borderland interaction between locals and agents of border control had been achieved to a very high degree by enlisting 'auxiliary support' from borderlanders through institutions such as schools and local political organisations such as Komsomol (Young Communists): networks of school children and youths in the borderlands were mobilised to give agents of border control all the support possible and such grass-roots organisations enjoyed much publicity in Soviet media. An interview conducted in Naryn in July 2006 painted the following picture of the way in which the Kyrgyzstani-Chinese borderland near the Torugart boundary crossing figured in his own school days[289]:

> When I was thirteen years old [in 1973] our school organised a fieldtrip to Tash Rabat, the place where a very famous caravanserai used to exist. It is very close to the borderzone with China, and we were accompanied by men in uniform so that nothing would happen to us. We spent two days there and once we were allowed to visit the Ak Beyit checkpoint, you know, where the troops were located to keep the Chinese out. I was even allowed to hold a border guard's gun and my friend was given a uniform cap to keep – we were all jealous! The next week, back at school, we were given a writing assignment dealing with border control, and the friend who had received the cap wrote the best essay and was invited to read it aloud in Frunze [today's Bishkek] on *dyen pogranichnika* [May 28th, National Soviet Borderguard Day] the following year. I remember that when he came back from the capital with his father (they were so proud!) he was made an honorary member of Naryn Komsomol. After this his parents never really had problems anymore in getting holiday time up at Lake Issyk-Kul in summer – my friend even once asked me to come on holiday with him!

Similar anecdotes related by other individuals I have encountered in the wider region all contain the same elements connecting, in particular, under-age locals to state representatives in the borderlands: these narratives exhibit a system of privilege and prestige in individuals' support of border control. Excursions to locales controlled by state representatives, the presentation of the state's vitality and potency in the immediate neighbourhood of locals' settlements, and institutionalisation of locally based networks cognitively strengthening the proximity between locals and borderguards – such elements all seem to have reinforced border control with the aid of local borderlanders. In this vein, a veritable Cult of the Borderguard seems to have arisen that was to provide the faceless bureaucratic machinery of border control with a more humane face as well as garnering popular support for institutions generally regarded as impervious to negotiation at an individual, inter-personal level. As mentioned in the citation above, a state-wide Borderguard Day was introduced (still celebrated in most post-Soviet states to this day), journals such as *Pogranichnik* were published (see Chandler 1998:78), and propaganda imbued those guarding the fatherland from enemies both internal and external with mythical proportions[290].

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[288] As Chandler points out, this put a conclusive end to the twin problems of, first, having 'uninformed louts' defending the boundary and, second, the ironic reality of *pogranichniki* themselves being the most regular violators of the boundary (1998:58-9).

[289] Marat, an ethnic Kyrgyz, was born in a village just outside Naryn in 1960.

[290] This grandiose example of the imagery and symbolism shrouding the men and women at the physical and political margins of the state points to the existence of what Hastings Donnan and Dieter Haller (2000:16) have termed 'a borderland habitus'.

Campaign for Borderlanders' Loyalty

Third, the state had to be seen by borderlanders to offer opportunities other potential contesters to local loyalties could not provide. Early on, with the initial establishing of border controls, markets and trans-frontier co-operatives had sprung up within the new borderlands and in adjacent states with the purpose of supplying the Soviet black market. This trans-frontier trade was not just conducted by anti-Soviet émigrés (as claimed by the state) but was just as likely to be pursued by borderlanders themselves supplementing their vanishing income due to new economic policies and, later, collectivisation (Chandler 1998:50). At this time, the loyalty of locals in the borderlands was certainly not informed by sentiments of believing in the Soviet system, seeing as their economic livelihoods were in the process of being destroyed by central economic policy. The paradox that the new state had to deal with was that while economic development is perhaps most needed in peripheral borderlands in order to refocus local loyalties and abolish the feeling that 'life is better over there across the boundary' (a sentiment leading to wide-spread local acceptance of the necessity to subvert the state economically in order to survive), it is precisely these areas that states are loath to develop industrially because of their proximity to hostile adjacent states. Central Asia only seriously became industrialised during and following Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union because of the relocation of key industries away from Ukraine to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Combating borderland options of 'exit' (through emigration) and 'voice' (through blatant support of the black market) was undertaken by adopting two measures: first, the introduction of various positive compromises to ease friction by improving local livelihoods in the borderlands. Thus, in the 1930s (and, according to at least one interview I conducted with a border guard formerly posted to Naryn[291], well into the 1940s) borderland Kyrgyz were allowed to bring livestock and food across the Chinese boundary at Torugart duty-free, albeit with a small 'contribution' to the border troops encountered at the At-Bashy checkpoint; furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 3, partial permission was given for borderlanders to use pastures within the border zone. Another such measure was the introduction of 'hardship salaries' in regions such as GBAO and the eastern Kyrgyz SSR which were up to a third higher for employees than in other parts of the Kyrgyz or Tajik SSRs[292]. Local support was hence to be obtained through the attempt at making smuggling less lucrative an option; simultaneously, the political campaign that decried smugglers as spies and foreign agents was intensified. Second, an emphasis was placed on education, books, and learning campaigns in the borderlands so as to enable a greater career connection with the rest of the Soviet Union. It is notable that in that remotest of Soviet borderlands, in GBAO, social infrastructure was immeasurably better than in comparably remote places in other states of the region. By the end of the Soviet period, GBAO had primary schools in all but the smallest

[291] Interview with Sergei, June 2006, in Bishkek.

[292] This incentive was not limited to borderlands and was introduced early on in Siberia and arctic Russia to lure workers there (at least, those who were not pressed into forced labour in the Gulag system). The introduction of such an incentive to the Central Asian borderlands does, however, underline their importance for central authorities.

of hamlets, all of which taught Russian from first grade onwards, boarding schools had been set up in Khorog and Murghab, and every ninth school leaver was going on to university either in Dushanbe or Moscow/Leningrad (Bliss 2006:255). In fact, according to Bliss' sources and also subjectively observable in conversations both with local Pamiri and with Tajiks living in GBAO, the education system was more equitable in terms of equal opportunities between rural and urban pupils and considerably less corrupt in its promotion system than elsewhere in the Tajik SSR. Furthermore, "a higher than average number of academics, intellectuals, professionals, and technicians originated from GBAO" (Kreutzmann 2004). Not a single interview conducted in GBAO during field research allows any other conclusion than that the inhabitants of GBAO were, by and large, very loyal to the Soviet state in terms of the benefits accruing to them due to the centre's concern over local borderlander livelihoods.

Militarisation and Militarism in Xinjiang

The PRC's Xinjiang borderlands and its borderlanders were from the very first moment of the existence of the socialist state at the centre of the new regime's attention. Borderlanders here had seen a succession of warlords and competing governments attempt to impose their rule over the region, and the presence of the Soviet Union across the boundary had been strongly felt locally for at least two decades in the form of trans-frontier trajectories and policies vying for local influence (see next sub-chapter). The boundary that the PRC was to find itself maintaining had derived from Russian trans-state policies that had culminated in the so-called Unequal Treaties – it was never politically and officially accepted by the CCP until after the demise of the Soviet Union. As argued in my analysis of pre-socialist local loyalties elsewhere, borderlanders here had always experienced a very high degree of local frames of political reference, and state presence in both Imperial and ROC times had been superficial in the remote southwest of Xinjiang. This was to change abruptly. Unequal the boundary agreements may have been but the territorial integrity of the state was to be the hallmark of a successful and powerful independent China[293]; no space, neither symbolically nor politically, would be given for borderlanders (or in fact any person on Chinese territory) to question the legitimacy of the regime. Border control must have been regarded as constituting a central element in this, especially in light of the failure of governments over the last two centuries to, in Mao's jargon, maintain Chinese unity. I have discussed the internal strategies employed to legitimate socialist rule at home; here, I focus on the agents involved in border control and their interaction with local borderlanders. If military border control in the Soviet Union was implemented more or less parallel to the infrastructural incorporation of the borderlands, the PRC placed initial emphasis on militarising society and altering demographic borderland realities. Following Stalin's death, the Soviet Union's internal stability was reflected in the relatively positive local appraisal of the advantages of the Soviet system in the borderlands; in the PRC, borderlanders were to

[293] Incidentally, this has also been one of the PRC's most consistent tenets of foreign policy as enacted in the United Nations. Furthermore, the 'rebel' Nationalist government on Taiwan has to this day still to officially accept the boundaries of present-day China, including its Xinjiang frontier.

remain internal sources of perceived unrest and instability – restive minorities and, by the early 1990s, potential supporters of increased local revolts against 'Han domination'.

Until the mid-1950s the province was governed by military control committees who concerned themselves with securing local support for CCP authority in the region and armed local resistance was dealt with harshly by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which had just completed the absorption of its remaining military counterparts formerly belonging to the Nationalist (GMD) and short-lived secessionist Eastern Turkestan Republic of the mid-1940s governments. Subsequent troop deployments, demobilisation orders, and the promotion of the growth of para-military corps all reflect the CCP's focus on the integration of Xinjiang into the PRC's political and economic system. The importance of Xinjiang and the crucial role that its Central Asian frontier has played since 1949 becomes evident in the restructuring of internal military regions: Xinjiang was placed within the Lanzhou Military Region[294] and not given its own military autonomy – just as Tibet and Inner Mongolia were placed within larger, trans-provincial military regions (Chengdu in Sichuan province, and Beijing, respectively). Thus, the peripheries were to be governed militarily through more central locations; locations that were under more complete, Han-dominated control. The military situation in Xinjiang prior to the 1980s reflected a dual strategy: on the one hand, this consisted of leaving Xinjiang's defense "in the hands of regional forces that included border patrols, independent divisions and regiments, and local garrisons" (Shichor 2004:135) and, thus, in the hands of militia troops that, in case of military invasion, would take full control of the entirety of forces in the region without needing to wait for central authorisation (hence guaranteeing very rapid reaction in a region that until the 1980s was very poorly connected through infrastructure and communication lines to the rest of China). On the other hand, military control was to be supplemented by para-military organisations, the largest of which was the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC, or *shengchan jianshe bingtuan* – hereafter referred to as 'the *bingtuan*'), a Han-dominated organisation that today has grown to number some nearly 3 million members (around 15 percent of Xinjiang's total population).

It can be concluded that Xinjiang was seen as being of secondary importance despite its strategic significance: in case of Soviet invasion, a large buffer zone existed in which Soviet troop movement would have been dogged by locally organised resistance and the risk of the over-extension of supply lines. Of course, until the Sino-Soviet split, which was predicated by the internal implosion of the Cultural Revolution, military invasion from Soviet Central Asia seemed highly unlikely; and after the beginning of hostilities, internal turmoil prevented a large-scale change in troop strategy. All in all, thus, the militarisation that was to characterise everyday life in Xinjiang for the remaining decades of the 20th century included both non-local army forces, non-local security forces, and non-local political accountability as well as a

[294] With headquarters in Lanzhou (Gansu Province); this region included the provinces of Xinjiang (including western Tibet's Aksai Chin/Ladakh area), Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, and Shaanxi, and therefore is the largest such region in China (about 35 percent of the PRC's total territory). For an excellent overview of military reorganisation in the PRC see Yitzhak Shichor (2004:127-32).

para-military force of unlicensed state representatives who were to live side-by-side with rural borderlanders in the immediate vicinity of the boundary. This complex situation warrants closer analysis because of the effect especially the latter has had on borderlander livelihoods and locally felt proximity to the state.

Military Control Organs

The functions and responsibilities of both the PLA and the *bingtuan* are crucial for an understanding of Chinese border control in Xinjiang and I will here give a short overview of these institutions and their relationship to the borderlanders on the Sino-Soviet frontier. Administratively speaking, XUAR has three main organs: the provincial-level government in Urumqi, the PLA (based in Lanzhou and, thus, supra-provincial), and the *bingtuan* (accountable directly to Beijing, which finances its deficit). In terms of boundary defense, four military organisations operate in Xinjiang, all of which are under the respective nominal control of one of the three administrative organs in addition to the regular PLA forces; all four are controlled to one degree or another by the CCP (Seymour 2000:182). First, and most important of these forces, are the regular PLA troops and their rapid reaction forces ('fists') which can be deployed reasonably quickly to crisis spots.

Second, the People's Armed Forces Departments (PAFDs) which serve as local command, administrative, and supply organs for the regular Xinjiang militia under joint command of the XUAR government and the CCP; the former is in charge of appointing local civilian authorities at the county level while the latter appoints political commissars at all administrative levels (thereby guaranteeing direct reports to the central and not just the provincial authorities). In addition, the PLA wields considerable power within the PAFDs due to its control over the nomination of these forces' commanders, thereby making it an element of the military chain of command.

Third, the regional People's Armed Police Force (PAPF) which until 1995[295] was under the direct command of the central Public Security Bureau (PSB, based in Beijing; the most important state security organ in the PRC) and is directly responsible for boundary security, that is, staffing the border checkpoints and internal borderzone checkpoints in the form of border defense brigades (but not charged with more general internal security matters, which are taken care of by regular, non-local PSB staff).

Fourth, the *bingtuan* militia under the supervision of the XPCC whose members are trained, supervised, and equiped by the PLA. The role of this militia is difficult to pinpoint exactly due to the fact that the *bingtuan* is both an economic and a para-military organisation that acts in a number of local and provincial level domains such as land reclamation, agriculture, industrialisation, health care, infrastructure and construction, and, somewhat

[295] Actually, to complicate matters, prior to 1982 the PAPF consisted almost exclusively of PLA members and there was intense competition between the PSB and the PLA over the control of the borderguard units. Since 1995 they have come under complete control by the PLA (Seymour 2000:183). See Shichor (2004:125-6).

bizarrely, maintains the province's largest network of prisons and excels in the business of incarcerating criminals from around the country and meting out justice through its own judiciary institutions with little interference from the XUAR government[296]. Aside from its role as a Maoist shock force during the Cultural Revolution, the *bingtuan* militia's military role has been mainly to protect *bingtuan* operations (such as its infrastructure projects) and to act "as a reserve force of the Xinjiang Military Region and an important force to protect and construct the frontier [...]. [The PLA and the *bingtuan*] can function as two fists, one in front and another backing it up" (Fang YingKai 1997, as quoted in Seymour 2000:182). Figure 12 is meant to place these four military and quasi-military organisations in relation to the administrative organs of Xinjiang and serves to contrast the situation in Xinjiang with that in Soviet Central Asia:

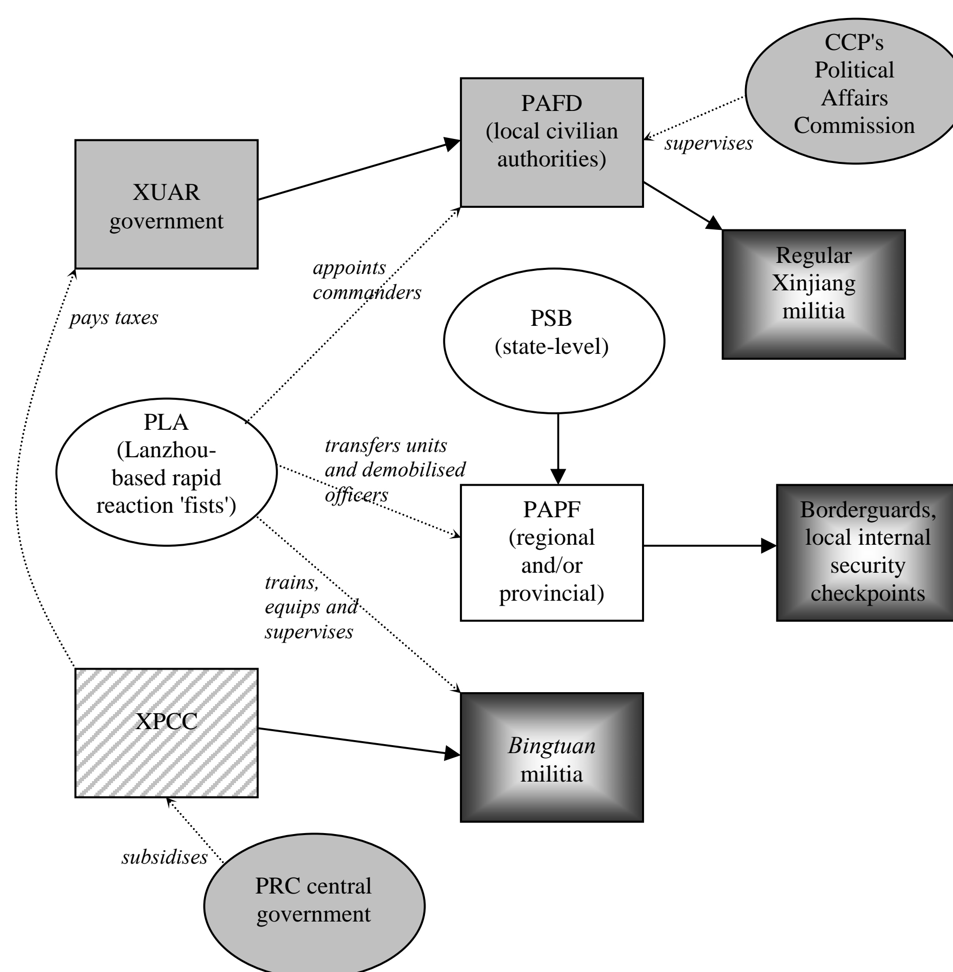


Figure 12: Military and para-military command structures in Xinjiang (circles: non-local institutions; boxes: local or provincial institutions; grey: civilian authorities; gradient: border control)

[296] See Seymour (2000:186-7). It seems as if the *bingtuan* militia also staffs these prisons. Furthermore, the income from the prison business (i.e., the one-time payments the *bingtuan* receives from provincial authorities 'exporting' criminals from their own over-filled prisons) has been used to subsidise other branches of the *bingtuan*; however, this business is not as profitable as might at first be assumed, with the biggest economic advantage most likely to be found in the micro-economic effect of relatively high wages in very peripheral localities.

Figure 12 shows that border control (the forces of which are shaded in a white-to-grey gradient in the figure) is implemented by three very different types of institution: the Xinjiang militia – the regular police force serving local administrative organs in borderland towns and county seats; the actual forces of physical border control to be found at all borderzone checkpoints and at the boundary, which are directly linked to military and state security organs; and the *bingtuan* militia, to be found throughout the borderland especially in agricultural enterprises and at local infrastructure such as minor roads and bridges, which is directly constituted by the para-militaristic XPCC and not subject to either civilian or local political control. The Army (PLA) is the one organisation here that has direct influence over the forces of actual border control (dotted arrows in the figure) and supercedes the civilian and local XUAR and its People's Armed Forces (PAFD) authorities. Politically, the civilian central government (the two grey-shaded circles in the figure) rather than the provincial XUAR government financially supports and politically supervises the two non-state security militias present in the borderlands (that of the *bingtuan* and of the regular government). Our inquiry into the agents of border control in the actual borderlands must realise that we are faced with a complex mix of military and quasi-military forces that borderlanders must deal with in their negotiation of the state's discourses of control – a fundamentally more complex situation than in the Soviet Union (see Figure 11 further above). The most locally present of these, and simultaneously the ethnically least local, is the numerically vast *bingtuan*, and I shall briefly outline this organisation's influence along the boundary before turning to local involvement in border control.

The Role of the bingtuan

The relationship between the various border defence troops is a difficult one and derives from the multifaceted tensions between all contenders stoked, a cynic might say, by the constantly shifting priorities of the central government in regard to policy on what exactly constitutes the role of the Han-dominated *bingtuan* vis-à-vis the non-Han population of Xinjiang and its borderlands. The *bingtuan* came into existence in 1954 as the organisation that was to take care of the troops demobilised by the PLA in order for the military to focus on military affairs while providing a civilianised force charged with economically and industrially developing the remote Northwest; this background explains the organisation of the *bingtuan* along militaristic lines, infused as it is with military terminology and internal command structures [297]. The Xinjiang *bingtuan* was by no means unique in post-revolutionary China, and in 1970 there were still twelve such organisations operating in eighteen provinces; the Xinjiang incarnation was, however, both the most long-lived (existing as the only *bingtuan* in the whole of China today) and the least unsuccessful financially (Seymour 2000:171) [298]. It was populated by former PLA soldiers, former rebel soldiers-

[297] For an overview of historical precedents for the modern-day incarnation of the *bingtuan* see Millward (2000:126-7). He traces proto-*bingtuan* organisations back to the first century BCE and shows how, later, both the Tang and Qing dynasties made extensive use of soldier-farmers.

[298] *Bingtuan* were usually to be found in multi-province military regions (such as Xinjiang), a fact that probably reflected the CCP's concern over providing an extra control mechanism over the PLA. Financially, all *bingtuan*

become-prisoners, regular prisoners (usually of the political type), and a host of men and women migrants from eastern provinces attracted by the propaganda hailing Xinjiang as a land of frontier opportunities and contrasting the province to the over-crowded eastern provinces that lacked sufficient employment options[299]. By 1967 the *bingtuan* population had jumped to well over one million, four-fifths of which was engaged in agriculture. Originally, the *bingtuan* had been solely the responsibility of the young XUAR government but this changed after 1956 when it became dually accountable to the provincial authorities and the central government but in reality became exceedingly autonomous[300]; simultaneously, the *bingtuan* evolved from subsistence-level self-maintenance to a business operation selling products to non-*bingtuan* members, thereby setting a trend that was to last until the present day with the *bingtuan* being an economic force unto itself within the province even including its own international trade business ventures[301]. On the eve of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the *bingtuan* had expanded its farm and pasture operations into the southern Tarim basin (the traditionally most Uighur part of southern Xinjiang), Zhungaria (with the largest concentration of Kazakhs), and, crucially, into the 30 kilometre borderzone with the Soviet Union where it established farms and aided in the defence of that ribbon of land (see below). In Tashkurgan it was involved in preparing the construction of the Karakoram Highway to Pakistan (first opened in 1969 and officially made a port of entry and exit in 1978), just as it was responsible for the metalling of roads connecting Kashgar to the Torugart Pass and to Tashkurgan itself; as far as I have been able to gather from interviews with former *bingtuan* members in Tashkurgan, the *bingtuan* was also responsible for the construction of the road to the Qolma Pass in the late 1990s and early 21st century but I have been unable to corroborate this officially[302].

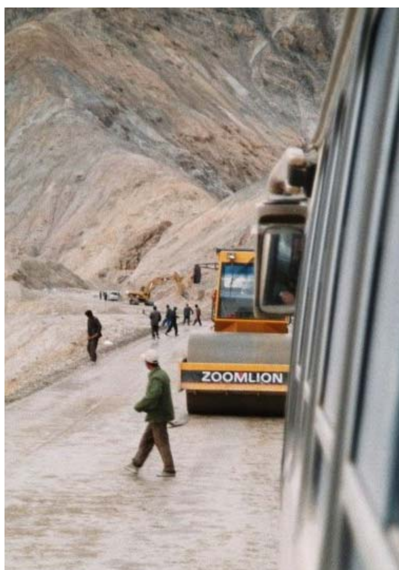
have been deficitary (as is Xinjiang's). Finally, it seems as if the XPCC served as a model for other *bingtuan* throughout China as it was the first to be created, preceding the next such *bingtuan* by several years.

[299] This propaganda is strikingly reminiscent of 19th century attempts by the US government to attract settlers to the mid-West. See Chapter 6 on the 'Remake the West' campaign.

[300] Seymour (2000:174-5) points out that this was due to the dualised leadership: the *bingtuan* cadre was able to manipulate the competition between province and state level authorities.

[301] See Chapter 2 for an example of such a venture I found myself participating in at the Irkeshtam port in 2006.

[302] For an overview of the construction of the Karakoram Highway over the Khunjerab Pass, see Kreutzmann (1991).



Picture 25: *Bingtuan* road construction unit near Tashkurgan (Xinjiang)

During the Cultural Revolution the *bingtuan* was particularly hard hit with the pathology of the times and it was torn apart from within by Red Guard units 'cleaning up' counter-revolutionary tendencies (Seymour 2000:176-7), leading to the loss of thousands of lives within the organisation. As an effect of the depopulation of the *bingtuan* and the reassertion of military control through the PLA in the wake of the Cultural Revolution (entailing an even greater financial strain on the slowly recovering state which had to deal with the complete devastation of Xinjiang's economy in the late 1960s), the *bingtuan* was dissolved in 1975 and its members were half-heartedly integrated into vertical command structures controlled by the provincial government. After it was realised that many former Han members took this opportunity to return back home to the east, therefore leading to a depopulation of the important borderzone, the *bingtuan* was reinstated in 1981 as a result of the seeming incapability of the XUAR government to deal with the rising ethnic tension in Xinjiang that had followed the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, Deng XiaoPing officially recognised the importance of the *bingtuan* in serving as a bulwark against *minzu* nationalism (1998, as quoted in Seymour 2000:182):

> No one is allowed to split the country [...]; anyone who attempts to do so should be punished [...]. The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps serves as an important force in maintaining local stability [...]. The land-reclamation forces are a key force in maintaining the stability of Xinjiang; therefore, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps must be restored.

Security and economic development were now given equal weight and the mission of the *bingtuan* was quite openly directed against 'local nationalism' but also against the XUAR government's perceived incapability of dealing with local problems arising from poor economic development[303]. From now on, the *bingtuan* was to provide a degree of security for

[303] The central government has exhorted the XUAR authorities to follow the *bingtuan*'s example in economic development, national unity, and internal stability (US Foreign Broadcast Information Service 1998, as quoted in Seymour 2000:186).

Han immigrants to Xinjiang and enable them to earn a living in an otherwise 'inhospitable' environment.

Border Control and the bingtuan

In regard to military border defence, the *bingtuan* militia's *military* role should not be overstated: the PLA rarely relied on the *bingtuan* to deal with serious problems either within Xinjiang or in regard to the securing of the boundary. Rather, its function was far more a matter of occupying and reclaiming land, turning it into viable real estate, than actually bearing arms against enemies. In numbers this meant that the original 55,000 hectares it farmed in 1950 had grown to 700,000 hectares by the 1960s (a third of Xinjiang's farmland and also accounting for a third of its economic output) and reached 950,000 hectares in 1995 (Seymour 2000:184); largely, this land had been reclaimed from the desert by extracting water reserves needed by the predominantly Uighur or Kazakh population or else it had simply been appropriated from Uighurs, Kazakhs, or Kyrgyz in the remote borderlands. The afore-mentioned settling by the *bingtuan* of the immediate borderzone along the Sino-Soviet boundary does, however, point to the fact that the *bingtuan* and its militia was relied upon to institutionalise a Han Chinese presence in regions only populated by trans-frontier *minzu*: groups whose loyalties to the Chinese state were by no means seen to be assured in the heady years of Sino-Soviet tensions. When Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Uighurs who held USSR passports they had obtained clandestinely through Soviet consulates in Xinjiang tried to flee from China to Soviet Central Asia following the Ili-Tarbagatay Uprising in 1966 and 1967, it was *bingtuan* members and the militia who acted to keep these 'traitors' within China, preventing many from leaving by force. Following this, the central government ordered the clearing of a 200-kilometre strip of land along the accessible parts of the boundary[304], deporting members of minority *minzu* living there to more easily controlled areas and larger towns such as Ili and Kashgar, and the *bingtuan* was commanded to settle this newly expanded borderzone with Han farmers and the militia (Shichor 2004:138).

This, then, I think represents the *bingtuan*'s real role in the borderlands: not as a further element in regular border defence (a mission accomplished by the police (PAPF/PSB) forces at the border checkpoints) but rather as a blanketing presence in the actual and immediate borderzone representing the state's eyes and ears in terms of keeping Chinese citizens inside the PRC rather than non-Chinese citizens out – a reliably Han Chinese borderland population and, thus, borderlanders with strong ties to China proper rather than with the local non-Han *minzu* forming the rest of the borderland population. What is more, in keeping with the definition presented in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the constitution of the actual members of the borderzone *bingtuan* companies as borderlanders entails discourses of

[304] It goes without saying that there are no precise data on the exact location of this extended borderzone. I believe that these measures applied mainly to the Kazakh-Chinese section of the boundary rather than further south towards Qyzyl Suu and Tashkurgan. I base this assumption on the statements of several Kyrgyz interviewees in Artush who stated that all areas between Artush and the Kyrgyzstani boundary had always been free of Han settlement as opposed to the Kazakh borderland to the north of the Tian Shan. Furthermore, it seems as if the PLA itself took more direct control of the region around Torugart due to its remoteness and unsuitability for land reclamation.

interstitiality. Han *minzu* membership these individuals may well claim yet their relationship with other Han settlers (who have resided in Xinjiang sometimes for generations and have in many cases found individual friendship and cooperation networks with other non-Han borderlanders) is far from simple. Their position in all regards is difficult: often demonised by outsiders as agents of colonisation and sinification who allow themselves to be manipulated by state-driven discourses of control, they more often than not had been lured to the extreme periphery of the state in search of jobs and economic opportunity. Despised with a vengeance by local non-Han borderlanders, and in particular by Uighurs, they are often held accountable for the failings of the state, the regional government, or the destructive behaviour of outside investors from China proper who exhibit utter disregard for *all* local inhabitants when it comes to the distribution of scarce resources such as water. Their uncertain para-military and official status is expressed in their lack of *hukou* registration papers and their subsequent inability to move freely due to the borderzone nature of their immediate environment.

On-the-ground Chinese Central Asian Border Control

I have discussed the forces of the state charged with guarding the frontier in Xinjiang and the degree to which military and quasi-military organisations have been engaged in this duty. Elsewhere I outline the potentially subversive, or at least obstructive role that trans-frontier *minzu* such as the Kyrgyz, Tajiks, and Kazakhs (and, increasingly, trans-frontier Uighurs) could have in the Sino-Soviet borderlands. This leads to the crucial question as to which role the borderlanders belonging to the minority *minzu* were to play in border control prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the independence of their titular namesake nations in Central Asia. Just as discussed in the previous section dealing with the Soviet side of the boundary, *effective* border control (i.e., *deep* borderland control), necessitated dealing with a number of local particularities specific to the borderlands in question: infrastructural connectivity to the state and avenues of access; the interaction between local borderlanders and agents of border control; and the parameters of the campaign for local loyalties.

Infrastructural Connectivity

First, infrastructurally Xinjiang's lines of transportation were extended to connect areas such as Artush in Qyzyl Suu and Tashkurgan to the Han communities found mainly in northern Xinjiang. Prior to 1991, these roads and tracks were rudimentary in character and rarely metalled but nevertheless represented a fundamental improvement over the former routes that had been only seasonally negotiable. The reopening of the Kashgar Sunday market after the Cultural Revolution was accompanied by the introduction of a regular if rough bus service to and from both localities, connecting the local centres with southern Xinjiang's regional centre. On a larger, provincial scale, Xinjiang was integrated into the Chinese rail network with the extension of the train first to Urumqi (at the beginning of the decade) and, in 1999, all the way to Kashgar. Simultaneously, former trans-frontier routes leading to what was now Soviet Central Asia were left to deteriorate and in some instances made impassable through the laying of land mines (as was the case in the immediate Qyzyl

Suu borderzone). An ever-present theme in regard to trans-frontier linkages in those times that appears in the memories of elder borderlanders is the rumour of Chinese border forces poisoning the local streams and sources of water in the arid Tian Shan and Sarykul ranges so as to prevent off-road movement. The roads that were maintained or (slowly) improved in Qyzyl Suu seem to have all revolved around connecting Artush with local Kyrgyz communities within the autonomous prefecture and not constructed with an eye to granting direct access to the main infrastructural artery of south-western Xinjiang (that is, the road connecting Urumqi with Kashgar and Tashkurgan). Thus, avenues of discourses of control and physical access to the Kyrgyz borderlands were all collateral in nature, with transversal access to Qyzyl Suu governed exclusively through Artush. Tashkurgan Autonomous County has exhibited a similar process: access to the eleven townships in the county is exclusively granted through Tashkurgan town itself, even when this entails large physical detours. Both borderlands are, hence, highly collateral – in effect similar to the borderlands in the Kyrgyz SSR (and in today's Kyrgyzstan) but dissimilar from GBAO[305]. The completion of the Karakoram Highway linking Kashgar with Pakistan in 1969, just as the most recent and still-ongoing upgrading of infrastructure through Artush and to Irkeshtam, all underline the importance accorded to limited transversality through selected gateways – none of these projects have opened or will open new avenues of access into the borderlands, and not much importance seems to be given to connecting new locales within Qyzyl Suu prefecture or Tashkurgan county directly with Kashgar.

Local Involvement

Second, the involvement of borderlanders in the forces of the state present in the borderlands. As hinted at, it is to be assumed that members of the small Kyrgyz and Tajik *minzu* did not play much role (if any) in constituting the forces of the People's Armed Police Force (PAPF) and, therefore, the actual borderguards and staff at internal checkpoints in the borderlands due to this forces' central structures and control by the Beijing-based PSB. Likewise, the *bingtuan*, aside from what can be assumed to be merely nominal local representation, was never a local non-Han institution. It is within the ranks of the civilian Armed Forces (PAFD) and, hence by extension, the Xinjiang militia that I deem it most likely for borderland *minzu* to have been present due to the control of this organisation through civilian and county-level officials. In keeping with the National Question and general nationalities policy, local level representation has seemed a necessity[306]. Obviously, during the most assimilative times of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution such representation would be unlikely but, in general, the trend has been for locals to be involved in the regular militia and charged with local level security enforcement. Discussing this question at the Artush checkpoint in summer 2006 with a retired Kyrgyz People's Armed

[305] I find it interesting to note that such collaterality is by no means usual in the PRC's borderlands. The Kazakhstan-Xinjiang borderlands exhibit high transversality with very low intra-borderland infrastructural collaterality (see Parham 2004), and personal observations lead me to assume that Tibetan borderlands (with physical access possible, if contested, from Xinjiang, Sichuan, and Qinghai and not necessarily routed through Lhasa or Shigatse) are similar as are borderlands in Yunnan on the Myanmar boundary.

[306] See the section on Chinese Indigenisation in Chapter 4 and my presentation there of Heberer's (1987) analysis.

Forces official I was proudly told that after 1978 and with the beginning of Deng's policy of modernisation, he and three friends were the first Kyrgyz to be hired to guard Qyzyl Suu from 'infiltration' (specifically by newly arriving Pakistani traders who were making use of the new Karakoram Highway). Unable to glean exact numbers of the development of ethnic representation at this and other checkpoints, I have nevertheless been told that this tendency has very much been on the rise and that such representation was practically nil prior to and during the Cultural Revolution.

If the Soviet Union officially attempted to include members of the local nationalities in its efforts at controlling the borderlands but failed at making bordertroops more local, in Xinjiang the non-local nature of agents of border control at the actual boundary and in the borderlands can be explained through what one borderguard, himself a member of the Kyrgyz *minzu*, termed the 'system of prestige postings' that served to both rotate higher officers of the People's Armed Police Force (PAPF) between different borderlands and to preclude horizontal movement between the regular Xinjiang militia and local border control[307]:

> I entered the Army in my home town of Korla [in Xinjiang province, on the road between Urumqi and Kashgar] and served for seven years in Qinghai and Gansu provinces before being transferred to the PAPF; I had always wanted to be a borderguard – it is a job of moral integrity [*zuo feng zheng tai*] and military professionalism. I always thought I would be able to work in Xinjiang but this would be uncommon and I'd be very lucky. Usually, you get sent to Beijing to the military academy when you enter the PAPF and then they post you to a port depending on seniority and proficiency. I'm from a poor background and was not too good at the academy so I was sent to Erenhot [on the Inner Mongolian – Mongolian Republic boundary] and then to Lao Cai [on the Yunnan – Vietnamese boundary] before coming here. In Soviet times the most prestigious posting was always Torugart followed by Khorgos [on the Kazakhstan – Xinjiang boundary], you know, because of the invasion threat. Now it is Artush and Tashkurgan – how funny, both are so close to my *zuguo* [homeland]! When you get sent there your career is at its peak, so we have the very best of the borderguards in all of China working there.

Increasingly, local borderlanders and members of the Kyrgyz and Tajik *minzu* were indeed included within military careers and sometimes found their way into the forces of border control but such individuals were not (and generally still are not) to be found at these borderland ports, postings to which are very much controlled by Beijing authorities and not Xinjiang authorities. Borderlanders involved in border control within the borderlands themselves were confined to the command of the civilian People's Armed Forces (PAFD) and its military arm (the Xinjiang militia). In other words, the officially licensed gatekeepers at Xinjiang's ports are likely to be exclusively non-locals and non-Kyrgyz/non-Tajik.

[307] Interview held at Suifenhe on the Russian-Chinese boundary in the Chinese Northeast (between Harbin and Vladivostok), January 2004. He belonged to the PAPF and was, at the time, under the command of Heilongjiang province's security forces.

Campaign for Borderlanders' Loyalty

Third, and visibly both in the borderlands and in general society as a whole, borderlanders were to become an integral part of a narrative of state unity and territorial integrity, with their official representation (in the form of propaganda geared towards a domestic audience) as 'guardians of the motherland'. Two forms of such propaganda are to be discerned in the era of the common Sino-Soviet boundary: one directed inwards and serving as a crucial element in discourses of control by the Chinese state over the borderland, and one directed across the boundary at recipients within the Soviet Union, in particular members of the *natsionalnost/minzu* shared by both states such as the Soviet Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, and 'Tajiks'[308]. While the latter type represents what I term a 'trans-frontier trajectory' of control that will be dealt with in the context of boundary crossing processes below, the former type has been a constant in Chinese representation of borderland security to the present day. Thus, in the newly constructed (2004) National Literature and Arts Centre of Tajiks in Tashkurgan town, the introductory text (in Mandarin, Uighur, and English[309]) consists largely of exhortations of the success this small *minzu* has had in enforcing border security (English text as *sic.*):

> The Tajiks [hold] together under the leadership of all levels to fight against various difficulties and natural calamities. With the support of the Policy towards National Minorities from the State, the people united as one and struggled to develop animal husbandry and agriculture steadily, to fulfil seriously the Party's policy towards the Regional Autonomy of ethnic groups, and to hasten the construction of the infrastructures such as transportation, communication, sanitation, education, television broadcasting. A flourishing age appears in [Tashkurgan Autonomous] County with stable society, fortified frontiers, booming economy, and content people. [...] [T]he leaders of all levels and the entire people carried on the Tashkurgan spirit of struggling arduously and contributing willingly to promote the local economy and to guard the motherland's frontiers. [...] [T]he people of all ethnic groups defended the national borders, developed the local economy, and promoted the construction of Socialist material, spiritual and political civilization.

The relationship between locally developing the economy (accomplished through collectivisation, infrastructure, and, ultimately, the *bingtuan*) and guarding the frontier is clearly underlined in this and other similar official inscriptions. Thus, upon entering Artush from Kashgar one is witness to fading slogans painted on outlying houses in Chinese and Kyrgyz (and sometimes in Uighur) that stem largely from the 1970s and 1980s (according to locals asked about them) reading 'The protection of the border is accomplished by cooperation between the nationalities', 'The military brings development and security to the borderland (*bianjiang*)', or 'Artush is the stage of exchange between the Kyrgyz and other *minzu*'.

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[308] Uighurs resident on Soviet territory were subject to another form of trans-frontier representation, namely that of dangerous traitors who escaped from China so as to pursue cross-border agitation.

[309] The Mandarin and English texts are identical in content and the Uighur text has an additional reference to 'the fraternal cooperation of the nationalities' inserted at the beginning of the last sentence. There is no Tajik-language text due to the fact that the development of an officially endorsed Tajik language has, according to that institution's director, "yet to be accomplished".

A Han friend in Tashkurgan made me aware of a popular film produced in 1963 ('Visitor to Ice Mountain', *bingshan shangde laike*[310]) that was widely seen by audiences throughout the PRC in the days of the Sino-Soviet confrontation. The characters in the movie speak 'Tajik' (actually the Pamiri language of Sarykuli) with the intermittent Mandarin subtitles translating the frequent bursts of song but not the dialogue itself, which actually contains a fairly astonishing amount of local-level criticism of PLA forces stationed in the area at the time (in particular their arrogant attitude towards locals). The story is straightforward and depicts a young PLA soldier Amir (who belongs to the Tajik *minzu*) who loses his childhood sweetheart to 'backward feudalistic' marriage practices (she is to marry a devout local Ismaili youth selected by her parents). After spending many years searching for her, he tracks her down at Ice Mountain and causes much friction with local residents there who distrust the PLA and are 'mired' in their localism. These residents are shown as stubborn yokels who are then reformed and 'saved' by forward-thinking Maoists after having been convinced that foreign agitators (i.e., Soviet citizens) will destroy them if they do not throw in their lot with the PLA. Symbolically, Ice Mountain becomes part of Xinjiang through the locals' new-found loyalty just as Amir becomes a resident of the village by marrying his sweetheart: the military and the locals 'are wed'. Obviously, to a Chinese audience the film depicts the importance of the local acceptance of the PLA and the advantages deriving from this for both sides: border security and local modernisation. Its propaganda effect lies in its depiction of the PLA as a multi-ethnic force containing even Tajiks within its ranks – something which Dreyer (1979:210) refutes in her analysis of the meagre documents pertaining to the ethnic make-up of the personnel involved in border defence between the mid-1960s and late 1970s. This notwithstanding, images of borderlanders acting in the state's defence were quite common in the 1970s; the poster *bianjiang tieqi* ('border cavalry') from 1978 famously portrays what I assume to probably be a Mongol woman (most likely from northern Xinjiang) professionally handling a Chinese semi-automatic rifle and parading in front of representatives of several Xinjiang *minzu* (some also armed) and a PLA officer, with a pristine alpine setting as a backdrop:

[310] *Bingshan* is, incidentally, a Chinese translation of Muztagh Ata ('Father of Ice', 7546m), the sacred peak that rises just north of Tashkurgan.

Picture 26: 'Border Cavalry', 1978 (reprinted in Landsberger 2001:167)

Comparative Conclusions

To conclude this analysis of the forces of border control at the Sino-Soviet Central Asian frontier, deep borderland control along this segment of the boundary was enacted transversally in GBAO and collaterally in Qyzyl Suu AP, Tashkurgan AC, and the Kyrgyz SSR through infrastructural connectivity, local involvement, and the campaign for local loyalties. The actual boundary was directly controlled in the Soviet Union by the organs of state security rather than the military and the physical presence of borderlanders remained limited to administrative domains rather than 'standing at the boundary' – those doing this were non-locals usually only temporarily resident in these locales. Borderlanders here were enlisted as auxiliary supporters and their support was gained through visible economic and social benefits accruing to the borderlands. In Xinjiang until the end of the Cultural Revolution the boundary was directly controlled by various military and para-military organs, all of which were non-local and not locally accountable to the civilian authorities at this time; the presence of demographically influential bodies such as the *bingtuan* led to a 'fractured' form of border control characterised by multiple border-controlling actors – the emphasis was more on physical and not bureaucratic control. From the 1970s on, borderlanders became involved in local level security enforcement and were included into the ranks of the provincial militia and came to play a central role as being represented as the guardians of the motherland – a group of symbolic border guards.

5.2 Trans-frontier Trajectories

After having discussed the constitution of the agents and the political institutions of border control borderlanders encountered and interacted with in their immediate physical surroundings and the processes of boundary maintenance taking place within the actual borderlands, I now turn to a discussion of ways in which trans-frontier networks and general processes affecting the Kyrgyz and Tajik borderlands related to the development of this Borderland into two alienated segments of contested space. An anthropological boundary perspective here calls for a focus on themes borderlanders themselves in numerous interviews today regard as characterising their socio-cultural environment; thus, I refrain from including elements here such as state-level diplomatic antagonism or wider state-specific developments only marginally affecting the Central Asian frontier and not involving borderland negotiation with the state. Interviews and observation have led me to identify three boundary-transcending processes taking place in the borderlands in the socialist periods and conceptually connecting the wider Borderland (and thus informing what Martinez (1994) has termed the Borderland Milieu):

> *First*, the periodic exchange of borderland populations in the form of migrations;
>
> *Second*, the projection of narratives of political control and legitimation first through carefully selected and mobilised trans-frontier networks and then, increasingly, through internal inscriptions and artefacts of discourses of control;
>
> *Third*, the oscillation on both sides of the boundary of choice in linguistic vehicles of communication used in the borderlands, at first unleashing dynamics of increased Borderland-wide connectivity and then evolving into the exact opposite by ensuring a communication barrier that was to coincide with the state boundary.

At a conceptual level, these three trans-frontier processes can be seen as, respectively, physical avenues of exchange, political avenues of exchange, and the communicational framework of exchange across these state boundaries, and will be discussed throughout this sub-chapter. When personal borderlander travel between former Soviet Central Asia and the still-socialist Xinjiang of today once again became possible in the mid-1990s (whilst still difficult and on convoluted trajectories) after decades of borderland alienation, I argue that it was the evolution of these three trans-frontier trajectories over the time of the common socialist period that have informed the parameters of renewed contact and is fundamentally affecting cognitive maps of the Borderland today. The one borderland process most obviously lacking in this characterisation of trans-frontier trajectories is that of frontier economics. From the time of the implementation of Chinese border control in the mid-1950s and in particular following the Great Leap Forward there was no frontier trade between the PRC and the Soviet Union, and informal networks that might have been able to conduct such economic exchange at a local level had, as discussed above, been completely co-opted by deep borderland control. The effects of this can be seen to this day when we regard the fact that present-day economic trajectories within the Borderland are largely not propelled by borderlanders themselves mobilising such informal networks.

Migration

The constitution of the borderland populations along the Sino-Soviet frontier has been fundamentally affected by a number of migratory waves transcending the boundary periodically throughout the 20th century and which have very much influenced both state-centred discourses of control as well as locally held memories and representations of trans-frontier trajectories, thereby in turn transforming trans-frontier networks. These waves have, depending on the period in which they took place, been directed either from Russian/Soviet territory towards Xinjiang or *vice versa*. In regard to the groups involved in these movements, most documentation that exists focuses on Uighur and Dungani groups who, as determined by state policies felt to be detrimental to local livelihoods, opted for exit strategies; in many cases Kazakhs and Kyrgyz were likewise affected and chose a similar strategy. Four periods can be identified in which trans-boundary relocation was seen by borderlanders as the only viable option to resist state policies: first, following the Ili Crisis and the Treaty of St. Petersburg that returned most of the Ili Valley to Qing control, the resettlement of some 45,000 Uighurs and 10,000 Dungani from Chinese to Russian territory was brought about by the Russian government in the 1880s (Clark&Kamalov 2004:168, Allès 2005:122). This marked the creation of the first permanent presence of Uighurs in what was later to become Soviet Central Asia and the foundation of the Uighur and Dungani towns and villages in what is today south-eastern Kazakhstan and northern Kyrgyzstan (including the Uighur and Dungani suburbs of Almaty and Bishkek).

Second, as a result of the depravations of World War I which led to the local *basmachi* movements in Russian Central Asia, the bloody reprisals by the Russian army coming on the heels of local resistance to the mobilisation of Central Asians caused some 300,000 Kyrgyz and Kazakhs to attempt flight across the boundary to Xinjiang, in particular to Qyzyl Suu across the Torugart and Bedel Passes (and thence to Kashgar) or to Gulja (today's Yining) in the Ili Valley (Shahrani 1979:39). In an interview in Naryn in 2006 I was told by the daughter of one such Kyrgyz who had fled (originally from the surroundings of Kyrgyzstan's Karakol) that her father was the only member of his *ayil* to have survived the crossing at Torugart: his entire family was butchered on the shores of Lake Chatyr-Köl, in sight of the boundary, by Russian borderguards and he himself, after successfully crossing, was shot at by Chinese bordertroops and would have perished had it not been for the aid of a distant relative who also survived the onslaught and who adopted him then and there[311]. The fate of the Kyrgyz who survived and crossed into Chinese territory has not, to the best of my knowledge, been conclusively documented; farther north, in the Ili Valley many Kazakhs found refuge amongst the Kazakh population there while at Torugart stories told today mention the corruption of the Chinese borderguards who allowed Kyrgyz to pass in exchange for their livestock (dooming them to starvation in the bitter winter that ensued) or who simply turned the refugees back, watching them be slaughtered by Russian troops. Those who reached settled territory in Qyzyl Suu (one Kyrgyz historian in Urumqi unofficially mentions the number 120,000) frequently succeeded in starting a new life in Xinjiang and were to remain there

[311] Interview with Anara Isakova, July 2006, in Naryn.

until the eve of the Cultural Revolution. This wave of Kyrgyz and Kazakhs escaping from Russian repression found its counterpart amongst Uighurs a few years later in the *köch-köch* (great movement) of 1918 and 1919 that followed the ferocity of Russian Civil War militias targeting perceived enemies of the nascent Bolshevik government; these Uighurs settled predominantly in the Chinese borderland around Gulja/Yining.

The third trans-boundary exodus took place in the late 1920s and early 1930s as a result of Stalin's campaigns against the so-called *kulak* class (rich peasants, a term that also came to be applied to pastoralists refusing to allow their livestock to be appropriated by the state). This wave affected mainly Uighurs and Kazakhs but Shahrani has documented the shifts in boundary-maintenance policy in this time (from open to closed in regard to trans-frontier pasturage and camping territory of local Kyrgyz) that were to lead to the cessation of trans-frontier ties between the Kyrgyz of Tajikistan and Afghanistan (1979:40-41). Due to the fact that those segments of the Kazakh and Uighur population most likely to choose this exit strategy at this time were economically better off than their compatriots remaining on Soviet territory, the curious situation developed of most refugees finding themselves in possession of Soviet passports or identification papers upon crossing the boundary. These were retained by many families in the hope of being able to return at some later point in time or of enabling their children to do so once Soviet repression ended – it seems likely that warlord-run Xinjiang in times of the ROC was not deemed to be a preferable place of residence for these migrants and that their presence on Chinese territory would be of short duration.

Fourth, and most significantly for an understanding of present-day trans-frontier networks and processes, the last major cross-boundary population shift in the 20th century began as a trickle in 1954 and had turned into a torrent by 1963 when the PRC resolutely closed the entire frontier to the Soviet Union and the Sino-Soviet boundary confrontation began in earnest. Shifts from the PRC to the Soviet Union were initially due to the lifting of travel restrictions in the early 1950s between the fraternal socialist states of China and the Soviet Union and many of those who had fled to Xinjiang 25 years before now did indeed follow the Soviet invitation directed at Soviet citizens encouraging them to return to their homes in the Kazakh SSR. William Clark and Ablet Kamalov (2004:170-3) have detailed this process for Uighurs and Kazakhs, showing how Soviet authorities wanted to attract expatriate Soviet citizens and their families to northern Kazakhstan in connection with Khrushchev's Virgin Lands campaign of the mid-1950s while Chinese authorities were glad to comply in order to purge the anti-Chinese migrants of the 1920s and 30s and other discontented Uighurs and Kazakhs and free up land in the Ili Valley for the *bingtuan* and its Han settlers. The early migrants were exclusively former refugees from Soviet Kazakhstan, but over time, and especially following the Great Leap Forward and its man-made famine, migration to the Soviet Union came to be seen as an opportunity for a better future beyond the influence of an ever-changing national minorities policy and increasing radicalisation in China. The rise in tensions between both states was mirrored precisely in their policies towards these migrants: initial encouragement by the PRC was followed by accusations from the Chinese side that the Soviet consulates in Gulja and Urumqi had been "issuing thousands of false Soviet passports

to those who wished them" (Dreyer 1979:209), in particular to Kazakhs taking their herds with them across the boundary and thereby depleting livestock crucially needed by the new collective farms to combat the famine.

While Kyrgyz were involved to a far lesser degree in this migration (and Tajiks, as far as I can tell, not at all), the Torugart was also witness to such relocations: an official in At Bashy recollected a scene in the spring of 1962 in which fifteen families from Qyzyl Suu appeared at the checkpoint with their entire meagre possessions (including over twenty yurts and maybe one thousand sheep and a handful of horses); initial confusion over their *minzu* status (the Russian borderguards believed them to be Kazakhs but they insisted on their belonging to the Kyrgyz *minzu*) prevented immediate access, but this was granted the following day and the families were relocated to the Kochkor area and provided with internal papers after having handed over their Chinese passports to the KGB in Naryn. Dungani migrants, however, who sporadically attempted this crossing in the early 1960s were regularly turned back, he said, due to "our fear of their real intents in the Kyrgyz SSR", an allusion to the trans-frontier avenues of manipulation increasingly taking place across the boundary that were creating a sense of embattlement and threat from outside among local borderlanders.

This stream of migrants was to come to an abrupt end in 1962 with the unilateral closing by Chinese authorities of all the Soviet consulates in Xinjiang and the cessation of allowing egress through all border checkpoints from the Altai to the Tian Shan (in the Kazakh SSR the Maykapchigay-Jeminay crossing on Lake Zaysan, the Bakhty-Tacheng crossing near Lake Alaköl, the Khorgos crossing in the Ili Valley; in the Kyrgyz SSR the Torugart and Bedel Passes). In reaction to this, the Soviet Union abolished the requirement for immigrants to possess papers in order to migrate to Soviet territory, and the boundary at Khorgos was opened on the Soviet side to allow any who wanted to come to cross over; until the Chinese crackdown several months later an estimated 100,000 Uighurs, Kazakhs, and Dungani crossed the boundary to the Kazakh SSR[312], with Kyrgyz figures unavailable. To put an end to this, all borderland transportation was abruptly discontinued in Xinjiang and, more or less overnight, Uighur and Kazakh settlements in the immediate borderlands were militarily evacuated; non-*bingtuan* members and non-military personnel were to be shot on sight in the vicinity of the boundary and there followed mass arrests and deportations to prison camps. Until late 1963 all remaining holders of Soviet papers were allowed to leave and, in fact, encouraged to do so by a directive from Beijing to "cleanse the borderland of Soviet citizens" (as quoted in Clark&Kamalov 2004:178). After this, the right to travel across the boundary was recalled and not to be re-instated until the late 1980s. The Kyrgyz of Qyzyl Suu who opted for such exit strategies seem to have chosen the Ili Valley as their point of departure from the PRC far more frequently than the Bedel or Torugart Passes. Partly this can be explained by the immense difficulty of the terrain especially beyond the passes within

[312] This is the figure that Clark and Kamalov (2004:177) give and also the number readily proposed by Soviet authorities and post-Soviet accounts; Dreyer (1979:214) claims that Chinese sources admit to 60,000.

the Kyrgyz SSR and the absolute lack of infrastructure in Qyzyl Suu itself (the Kyrgyzstani side was undergoing the afore-mentioned militarisation of its infrastructure), and partly because the avenues of exchange in form of travel group 'companies' and Soviet institutions were not present in predominantly Kyrgyz areas to the south. Furthermore, the majority of Kyrgyz leaving the PRC at this time were not natives of Qyzyl Suu but rather from the northerly area of settlement around the Ili Valley. I encountered numerous individuals or their descendants in Bishkek and Karakol who had taken the northerly route in their exodus from the PRC – all of them were Dungani or Uighurs, and most of them knew only of Kazakhs who had emigrated in this wave, with reports of migrating Kyrgyz few and far between[313].

Migration processes during this period immediately before the Cultural Revolution and during the onset of Sino-Soviet hostilities affecting the Tajik SSR's mountainous GBAO took on a slightly different character. Movement by the Kyrgyz of Murghab had been allowed in a relatively unrestricted way until the early 1930s and there had been quite regular exchange between Kyrgyz groups in GBAO, Tashkurgan, and the Afghan Wakhan (Shahrani 1979:39-40, Bliss 2006:195). The Afghan boundary was sealed by Soviet authorities in the 1930s with the effect that seasonally migrating Kyrgyz in the Wakhan entertained more regular contacts from then on with Tashkurgan and Qyzyl Suu than with Murghab: contact between Murghab groups and Kyrgyz living across the external boundaries of the Soviet Union was severed. Likewise, in the 1950s and with the increase of PRC border troop presence around Tashkurgan, the avenue of exchange between Afghanistan and Tashkurgan/Qyzyl Suu came to an end, and the Kyrgyz of the Pamirs were to remain within the exclusive orbit of their three respective states until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the flight of most Kyrgyz in Wakhan to Pakistan and abroad. The first renewed exchange between Murghab Kyrgyz and the Kyrgyz of Xinjiang was not to take place until well after the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to one Soviet-era member of the local elite in Khorog[314] there was a slight trickle of families crossing the vast no-man's land between the PRC and the Tajik SSR in the early 1960s to escape repression in Tashkurgan; they were able to negotiate entry with the Soviet borderguards near Murghab but not permitted to settle in Murghab. Local accounts of their fate, remembered by some in Murghab itself today, differ and their trajectory vanishes in Khorog – the most consistent account holds that they moved to the Batken region of southern Kyrgyzstan (Osh *oblast*).

Migrant Integration Hierarchies

Four major waves of migration transcending the Sino-Russian/Soviet frontier have had a profound effect on the constitution of the borderland populations along the boundary. While a certain degree of return migration did indeed take place in successive waves (most evident in the third and fourth exchanges of population), the liberal Soviet practice of

[313] This invisibility of Kyrgyz is in part also possible due to overlaps in the use of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz ethnonyms (as discussed in Chapter 4); another explanation I deem possible is the blanket assumption that all individuals in a Kazakh travel group would find it easiest to represent themselves as Kazakhs.
[314] Interview with Mullo-Abdol Shagarf, November 2005, in Khorog.

permitting PRC borderlanders to relocate to Soviet Central Asia in the early 1960s introduced to the area a large number of Uighurs, Kazakhs, and Dungani without a personal or family history of residence on Russian or Soviet territory. Kamalov has documented the effect of such a dynamic within local Uighur communities in the borderlands (2005:152): descendants of former out-bound migrants to China from the late 19th century who returned to the Kazakh SSR in the fourth wave are termed *yärlik* ('locals'), whereas first-time migrants from Xinjiang in the fourth wave have derogatorily come to be known as *khitailiq* ('those from China'). Thus, a grading has taken place that evinces a state-based identity that supersedes more traditional locality-based affiliations such as *turpanlik*, *kashgarlik*, etc. It is precisely this trend that is evident in present-day associations of boundary-crossers: state affiliation has come to replace other modes of belonging ascribes to 'outsiders' – citizenship becomes a foil for Othering, and I discuss the effects this dynamic is having on today's trans-frontier notions of belonging in the next chapter. For now, we can note that language and cultural orthodoxy served (and still serve today) as such cognitive elements structuring belonging: the *khitailiq* had no understanding of the Russian language that had become so important amongst local Uighurs (lacking *natsionalnost* status as they did) and, as Roberts (1998) in his monograph on the reintroduction of traditional Uighur rituals such as the *mäshräp* notes, these newcomers brought knowledge of traditions that had been either forgotten or repressed by Soviet authorities. Furthermore, with many of the *khitailiq* originating from more southerly or remote parts of Xinjiang, the Uighur dialect they spoke was influenced more by the Kashgar dialect than the more northerly versions spoken by the Uighur communities in the Kazakh SSR [315]. Villages in Kazakhstan's southeast came to reflect this grading, with new communities forming around the *khitailiq* and a general air of suspicion from both the authorities and the *yärlik* enveloping these.

Internal Borderland Migration and Settlement

In order to complete a discussion of how migration has affected the borderlands throughout the Socialist period with its ramifications for present-day borderland processes, I will give a brief overview of state-internal migration and population shifts that supported increasing borderland alienation within the Borderland segments along the frontier. The objective of forging closer ties between the Han and other peoples of China was not only accomplished politically with the granting of minority and autonomy rights but also demographically. The situation in Xinjiang in 1949 was seen as being potentially dangerous to continued rule over an area which contained few members of the national majority and a policy of 'ethnic engineering' in all the frontier regions was actively promoted. When the CCP came to power, only 5% of the population in Xinjiang were Han; by the time of the 2000 census, nearly 40% claimed Han nationality which now forms the second largest ethnic group after the Uighurs (45% in 2000). The distribution, however, of Han Chinese in Xinjiang has been uneven, with the vast majority to be found in the north (78 percent) while in the southern part of Xinjiang (south of the Tian Shan) less than ten percent of the population is Han. For the central authorities, "Han migration to border and minority areas [*bianjiang*]

[315] Interviews held in Southeast Kazakhstan, spring 2003.

has been seen as a way of correcting gross population imbalances and disparities of wealth between the highly developed eastern coastal provinces and the underdeveloped areas of the western region" (Tapp 1995:210) and would be beneficial to 'nationalities' solidarity' and serve to create a permanent solution to boundary security by means of a *fait accompli*. Reality proved to be different and Han settlement in minority areas exacerbated tensions between the ethnic groups and led to the hardening of ethnic boundaries in the region reflected by self-imposed segregation among the Han Chinese, the Uighurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Tajiks, who all live in separate settlements in their respective areas of concentration. Even a cursory look at major towns throughout Xinjiang, including borderland centres such as Artush, Gulja/Yining, and Tashkurgan town, shows the very visible difference between non-Han 'old town' and Han 'new town': while the old neighbourhoods lack sanitation and employment opportunities, the new towns (constructed from the late 1960s onwards) are home to local and regional industry and commerce[316].

In the case of the immediate Xinjiang borderlands, between 1959 and 1961 a massive influx of Han Chinese settlers were allocated traditional pasture lands in the Ili valley and north of the Zhungarian Basin with many of these new arrivals being attracted by the introduction of heavy industry and the exploitation of newly discovered oil fields in Xinjiang (Benson&Svanberg 1988:83). By 1982 the Han *minzu* had outnumbered Kazakhs by 2 to 1 in the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture mainly as a result of increased in-migration during the Cultural Revolution. This immigration affected the minority areas for the most part adversely "since Han immigration not only deprived minorities of scarce local resources but the immigrants tended to monopolize the best wage-earning opportunities" (Tapp 1995:211). In all three administrative borderlands (Ili Kazakh, Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz, and Tashkurgan Tajik) the Han-dominated *bingtuan* became active and 'reclaimed' land thus establishing a permanent Han *minzu* presence. Likewise, as Millward (2000:123-4) shows, permanent Uighur settlements in formely pastoral areas such as Ili have been the product of processes of the integration of the borderlands with the province in general and as such are a recent phenomenon that began in the early 19th century and is on-going today: the establishment of obligatory schooling for Tajiks in Tashkurgan, for example, was accompanied by the hiring of Uighur teachers from Kashgar, and the construction of the Karakoram Highway brought primarily Uighur 'businessmen' (small-time traders and currency dealers) to the area[317]. In Qyzyl Suu, the push for concisive sedentarisation of the Kyrgyz population went hand-in-hand with the local government providing new housing with television sets, and it was around this time (the early 1980s) that XJTV channel 4 went on air with its Uighur-language broadcasting and documentaries oriented towards an officially permitted discourse on religious life, thus confronting Sunni Kyrgyz with Sunni Uighur traditions that differ sometimes quite considerably with the effect of casting doubt on local interpretations of

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[316] This tendency has become even more evident over the course of the last two decades, with visible investment in form of shopping malls, classy financial districts, entertainment arcades, and high-rise hotels taking place exclusively in the new towns; old neighbourhoods have, at best, been invested in for their tourism potential (Kashgar and Turpan representing to my mind the most blatant cases).

[317] Interview with NimTuLa, May 2006, in Urumqi.

Islam. Importantly, the dynamics amongst the non-Han *minzu* point to the fact that, from a borderland perspective of smaller *minzu* such as the Kyrgyz and Tajiks, state presence in the borderlands is evident in the presence locally of *both* Han Chinese and Uighurs.

In the Kyrgyz SSR and in GBAO internal borderland migration exhibited a different dynamic. I have mentioned that Russian (and Ukrainian as well as other European Soviet nationalities') demographic penetration of Central Asia remained low throughout the Soviet era and was almost exclusively to be found in the urbanising areas of SSR capitals, regional hubs, and military nodes (such as Khorog). In particular, outside of the Kazakh SSR with its special historical association with waves of Russian peasant immigrants already in the 19th century[318], the borderlands were not demographically penetrated by civilians of these groups. In the Tajik SSR social contact between Russians and locals was minimal – there were very few mixed marriages and cultural activities were organised parallel to one another (Rakowska-Harmstone 1970:280). The Kyrgyz SSR had a far higher Russian population but this was predominantly concentrated in northern areas (the Chui Valley and the Issyk-kul region) and *oblast* capitals such as Naryn. With the Pamiri recognised as a sub-titular group within the Tajik SSR, administratively important settlements within GBAO would have witnessed an increased presence of Tajiks locally, and they would be seen as representatives of the state.

Subversion Abroad and Projection in the Borderlands

With borderlanders exposed to periodic mass movements of people from across the boundary and themselves in a position of having potential exit strategies from the territorial control of the state, we are reminded that deep borderland control must, just as borderlanders themselves, deal with processes, influences, and movements originating from outside the state, in the adjacent borderland; borderlanders and border control alike are exposed to the trans-frontier dynamics described by Martinez as 'the Borderland Milieu' revolving around an environment that is fundamentally trans-state in nature and exhibits otherness and separateness as well as state-internal and trans-state conflict and accommodation (see Chapter 1). In the common socialist period, the Sino-Central Asian borderlands were not just military and ideological battlegrounds but also proving grounds of state legitimacy expressed in terms of benefits accruing to local borderlanders accepting this legitimacy. I suggest that the geographical borderlands with their physical inscriptions of state control were a platform of trans-state projection of such legitimacy, and borderlanders were the projected message of 'success'. It stands to reason that such narratives were dependent on constructive interplay between discourses of control and trans-frontier networks for these to successfully operate – and successful they were in promoting trans-frontier otherness in the lifeworlds of borderlanders. The Borderland realities observable in on-the-ground fieldwork over a decade after the end of this period point to the virulence of

[318] In earlier research conducted in the Kazakhstan – Xinjiang borderlands I have discussed the role that Russians (as well as newly immigrated Mongolian Kazakhs) have played in the 'ethnic engineering' of those borderlands in the Kazakhstani government's effort to 'Kazakhify' those predominantly non-Kazakh areas. See Parham (2004).

such projections: new accessibility of trans-frontier networks today that could theoretically be used to subvert present-day political discourses in the borderlands are not promoting this, as I will discuss in the next chapter. Rather, networks that may promote subversion of the respective borderlands' states were strictly co-opted in the common socialist period and redirected to subvert one state in the interest of the other (primarily in this period directed at contesting PRC control over its borderlands). Simultaneously, care was taken to limit possible 'backdraft effects' that could negatively affect domestic state discourses of control; that is, subversive trajectories were selectively chosen and not all borderlanders were equally enfranchised to maintain such networks, and I shall now discuss these trajectories and the framework in which borderlanders pursued trans-frontier contacts.

From the perspective of trans-state policies, the exchange of borderlander populations and the dynamics of migration between the Soviet Union and the PRC opened a window of opportunity for the transportation of state-based ideologies and political narratives across the officially delimited boundary. Such trans-frontier trajectories were, by their very nature, subversive to the discourses of control operating on the respective other side of the boundary, and contained components such as trans-frontier publications, making the successes of the state visible for neighbours to see in the immediate borderlands, and symbolic boundary inscriptions such as security installations that silently supported and emphasised local perceptions of trans-frontier threats. Such trans-frontier projections, designed to both increase a state's self-legitimation in regard to control over its borderlanders as well as to enhance that state's influence over borderland processes beyond its boundaries, seem to have been practised on a far larger scale and over a longer period of time by the Soviet Union than by the PRC and have enjoyed a higher degree of local acceptance in the Soviet borderlands than in Xinjiang for reasons that I will now discuss[319]. From the very beginning, Soviet authorities perceived that border control and boundary maintenance would be greatly aided if borderlanders belonging to a Soviet trans-frontier group but residing beyond Soviet boundaries perceived the national situation of their ethnic brethren within the Union as superior to their own[320]. Thus would the dual purpose be served of presenting the solution to the National Question (i.e., national self-determination) as an exportable Soviet solution and, simultaneously, a lever would be created for negotiations at the state-level putting neighbouring states under pressure through Soviet promotion of ethnonationalism within adjacent borderlands, thereby creating what may be termed a 'trans-frontier national Trojan horse'.

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[319] In fact, I argue that the PRC has only systematically begun to adopt such trans-frontier projections since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. See Chapter 6.

[320] Elegantly expressed by Stalin himself in regard to the trans-frontier Ukrainian *natsionalnost* (1930, as quoted in Connor 1984:54):

> We must bear in mind another circumstance which affects a number of nationalities of the USSR. There is a Ukraine in the USSR. But there is another Ukraine in other states. [...] Take, further, the nationalities of the USSR situated along the Southern frontier from Azerbaidjan [*sic.*] to Kazakstan [*sic.*] and Buryat-Mongolia [*sic.*]. They are all in the same position as the Ukraine.

Nowhere was this practised to a higher degree than in the Sino-Soviet borderlands of Central Asia. The importance of the new Muslim SSRs for the Soviet state lay chiefly in the way in which they could be presented to a surrounding Muslim world subjugated to imperialism and, later, neo-colonialism because "Turkestan is a combination of nationalities which have more links with the East than any others" (Stalin 1923, as quoted in Rakowska-Harmstone 1970:72), an East that was struggling against warlordism (in the ROC) and imperial exploitation (British India and Persia). In 1925, on the day on which the Tajik ASSR was proclaimed, Stalin sent a telegram to Dushanbe underlining the role the Tajiks were to play in regard to such trans-frontier projections (as quoted in Rakowska-Harmstone 1970:73):

> Greetings to Tadzhikistan, the new soviet working people's republic at the gates of Hindustan. I ardently wish all the working people of Tadzhikistan success in converting their republic into a model of the Eastern countries. Workers of Tadzhikistan! [...] Show the whole East that it is you, vigorously holding in your hands the banners of liberation, who are most worthy heirs of your ancestors.

Numerous local histories published in the region point to the international significance of the creation of a Tajik 'state' in showcasing the 'affectionate' way in which the Soviet system took care of just such marginal peoples, and the museums of the Central Asian Republics are filled with images portraying individual *natsii* bringing the light of socialism and modernity to their immediate neighbourhood[321].

The Trans-frontier Factor: Uighurs and Dungani

The function of frontier *natsii* as a Trojan horse has been underlined by Olivier Roy and his concept of the 'Trans-frontier Factor' (2000:67) – a notion I find helpful in understanding the state-supported drive for cleavage between trans-frontier groups, i.e., their external bordering. Briefly, he proposes that there was a strategic logic inherent in the administrative-territorial realignments taking place in the Central Asian periphery, meaning that certain nationalities (in particular the Kyrgyz and Tajiks) were created according to a dual bridgehead principle, the idea being to favour trans-frontier groups which might serve as a bridgehead to enable the Soviet Union to extend its influence beyond its state boundaries and, inversely, to prevent other states from utilising Soviet ethnic groups as their own bridgeheads to infiltrate the Union. Thus, groups with close ethnic ties to affiliated groups in a minority situation beyond a state boundary were favoured with *natsionalnost* status. According to this train of thought, the creation of GBAO was due to the presence of Ismailis in China and Afghanistan and was accomplished so that Soviet authorities would at some point in the future be able to employ Pamiris in a strategic way. While internal bordering took place with a high degree of local participation, external bordering was state-driven and served the purpose of strengthening the Soviet state: prior to the Sino-Soviet split by spreading socialism within Xinjiang and later by subverting Chinese discourses of control.

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[321] The top floor of the Bekhzod National Museum in Dushanbe is a personal favourite in terms of such representations: the alabaster statues and large-scale murals present Soviet Tajiks as cultured and model Soviet citizens guarding over the Persian heritage of Iran and Afghanistan (visited October 2005).

In his treatise on frontiers and minorities and the ensuing discussion of categories of indigenous peoples in the frontier region, Roy (2000:68-71) is strangely silent on the situation of Uighurs and Dungani within Soviet Central Asia. While neither group nor their complex situation within both states are the focus of this dissertation thesis, an understanding of the frontier discourses taking place here cannot be approached without realising the role these two groups have played in trans-frontier trajectories. Both groups were endowed with titular status yet not given territorial autonomy; thus an 'inner' domestic Uighur population was recognised in order to reflect a population structure similar to that of Xinjiang. With the turmoil in Xinjiang under the Nationalist Chinese government and until the CCP came to power in China, the Soviet government was keen on creating institutions which promoted Uighur and Dungan culture and language, expending large amounts of time and effort on two relatively small ethnic groups. Local cadres were recruited from these institutions to enable the transportation of the Revolution into Xinjiang and to aid Soviet infiltration into the province. With the publishing of numerous books and pamphlets and their export from Tashkent and Almaty to Urumqi and Kashgar, "Soviet support of Uighur culture and language greatly contributed to the development of an Uighur ethnic awareness" (Geiss 1995:93, my translation) and, between 1933 and 1943, the Soviet Union strongly meddled in Xinjiang's affairs by employing trans-frontier avenues of exchange between Uighur and Dungani communities on both sides of the boundary. By enlisting the aid of Uighurs educated in Soviet Central Asia pressure was put on the warlord government to extend the cultural rights of Uighurs in Xinjiang, and Uighur educational and cultural institutions in the Soviet Union supported not only the needs of local Uighurs but also provided facilities such as publishing houses and vocational training centres for Chinese Uighurs (Kamalov 2005:150)[322].

Thus, Uighur trans-frontier networks were made to serve the interest of the Soviet state. A historiography was supported in publications emanating from such institutions in the Soviet Union that significantly promoted the production of a narrative of Uighur history across the boundary in Xinjiang by placing the struggle against Chinese sovereignty at the centre of an emerging sense of national homeland and belonging (Roberts 2004:230)[323]. With the migration in the early 1960s of a number of well-known and influential members of the Uighur elite from Xinjiang to the Kazakh SSR, discourses on the right of Uighurs for exclusive control over their homeland of Eastern Turkestan became an integral element of the Sino-Soviet split – trans-frontier networks that had been mobilised to serve state interests and question the control of a distant government over its borderlands now had the effect of dominating trans-state policies between inimical states; a direct correlation between borderland control and the relationship between the Borderland's states is revealed. Furthermore, a backdraft effect that could potentially undermine their own local discourses

[322] Such as the Uighur monthly journal *Biznin Veten* (Our Country), *Sharki Turkestan Avazi* (Voice of Eastern Turkestan), and the newspaper *Yengi Hayat* (New Life), to name just a few, all published in Arabic script in Almaty.

[323] It is precisely this narrative and its promotion from outside the Chinese state that became the central point of conflict between the PRC and the newly independent republics of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the early 1990s.

of control was prevented by the Soviet government by limiting the possibilities of communication between the *yärlik* and the *khitailiq* through manipulation of linguistic policy and the introduction of differing scripts: publications destined for the Chinese 'market' across the boundary were published in Arabic script whereas the *yärlik* were treated to Russification through the scripting of their language in Cyrillic. The bifurcation of the 'Uighur *natsionalnost*' into a Chinese and a Soviet segment was thus a matter of state policy.

Trans-frontier Networks and Subversion

Subversion was practised through the main channels of Uighur networks rather than Kyrgyz, Tajik, or Kazakh trans-frontier networks. While these latter groups were all mobilised as vehicles of anti-Chinese and pro-Soviet propaganda, I believe that the special role Uighurs had to play in this process is grounded in the metaphor of the bridgehead: Uighurs were never in Soviet historiography regarded as indigenous to Soviet Central Asia – as opposed to the 'true' titular nations under Soviet control. Promoting for example Kyrgyz trans-frontier networks and strengthening local discourses on their belonging within Xinjiang would frustrate their portrayal as part of a Soviet people and delegitimise their external bordering. Uighurs, however, were shown as native to Xinjiang, with that region (in Soviet terminology 'Eastern Turkestan') being their legitimate homeland where they enjoyed titularity and should be granted the historical right of control over their territory. To this day, museums in post-Soviet Central Asia exclude Uighurs as Central Asians. For example, in Ust-Kamenogorsk's Ethnography Museum[324] extensive exhibits present the five titular nations (and Russians) of Central Asia along with smaller depictions of the sub-titular groups such as Pamiri and Karakalpaks but without mentioning Uighurs or Dungani. When asked, the museum director explained that "the Uighurs protested at their original representation in such a museum because they are not a Central Asian *natsiya*", implying that the Soviet authorities had wanted to include them but Uighurs had "arrogantly opted out". Likewise, the presentation on the Kyrgyz *natsionalnost* in Bishkek's State Historical Museum[325] mentions only in passing the presence of Kyrgyz in Xinjiang's Qyzyl Suu, referring to these as part of the Kyrgyz scattered outside their homeland (and, hence, in the same category as the Kyrgyz of Turkey and the United States). Across the boundary at the Museum of National Minorities in Urumqi[326], Qyzyl Suu is presented as the true homeland (*zhende zuguo*) of Kyrgyz with not a single reference to Kyrgyzstan. My central point here is that trans-frontier trajectories employed by the respective states had a selective focus: Uighurs were at the centre of attention because of their importance to the Chinese state in discourses of legitimacy whereas the smaller *minzu* and indigenous *natsionalnost* were extensively bordered. From the perspective of Uighurs themselves, most research conducted by scientists such as Millward (2000), Mackerras (1994, 2003b), Bovingdon (2004), and Gladney (1991, 2004) points to the realisation that local acceptance of the structures underlying these discourses has been high:

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[324] Built in the late 1960s, it is the largest of its kind in eastern Kazakhstan and more comprehensive than any in Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan. Visited in March 2003.
[325] Visited in June 2006.
[326] Visited in May 2006.

the contents may be contested (in particular local acceptance of the 'inevitability' of Chinese state rule) but the categories and territorialisations mobilised in such a narrative are not.

Internal and External Projections of Control

While trans-frontier Uighur networks were successfully mobilised to disseminate subversive literature by providing émigrés with a platform of institutions and channels, the Kyrgyz and Tajik borderlands emitted a different kind of propaganda that was transmitted through trans-frontier trajectories. Here, the physical borderlands themselves served as the platform, and their inhabitants and their socio-economic life worlds were the projected message. The construction of the Pamir Highway connecting Osh in Kyrgyzstan with Khorog right on the Tajikistani boundary with Afghanistan; the widely publicised and heroically arduous work on the Fedshenko observatory in Badakhshan in the early 1930s; the inauguration of the Khorog airport in the 1930s; the creation of the world's highest botanical gardens above Khorog in the 1940s; the establishment of a large complex of hotels and conference sites in Naryn in the 1960s; the installation of a comprehensive working electricity grid by the 1970s even in remote villages in GBAO and Naryn *oblast* – all these are examples of presenting the physical development of the Soviet borderlands. Borderlanders here themselves became propaganda avatars, demonstrating a higher standard of living, better education, and the certainty that their children were being raised in a system that offered more opportunity than any of their forefathers had ever personally witnessed. All interviews conducted in GBAO in 2005 contained a high degree of awareness of these factors and the way in which they served to differentiate locals from their non-Soviet neighbours. Thus, the comments made by one 60-year-old Pamiri were, to my mind, representative of this image still very much in older people's minds today[327]:

> Following the invasion [of Afghanistan in 1979], we all became aware of the extreme luck (*mi udachniki*) we enjoyed in being Soviet. Every *pogranichnik* had a story to tell about how children could not read or write, about how women were slaves to their husbands, about how a vehicle needed an hour to cover fifteen kilometres. A friend once brought a crate of candles from Osh to trade at Khorog [the new site of an Afghan bazaar following the invasion – the predecessor of today's Tem Bazaar] and made a fortune selling them to Soviet soldiers, who used them to bribe important people in Faizabad [northern Afghanistan]. Imagine: no electricity, just like here when my father was still alive. All we ever saw across the Pyanj [border river to Afghanistan] was utter darkness and, at day, the *owringi* [rough trails] hugging the cliffs that pass as Afghan 'roads'. When I once travelled to Faizabad myself no one believed I was Pamiri because I had studied in Moscow. It was terrible to see other Pamiri in such poverty owning nothing.

In the same vein, the facilities present in the borderlands such as theatres, museums, schools, and state-run shops could not but enhance borderlanders' feeling of regional trans-frontier superiority. Dedicated Soviet citizens they may well not have been, but the system provided borderlanders with an unprecedented degree of participation in a wider state society through infrastructural connectivity and educational mobility. The invasion of Afghanistan did indeed have the effect of projecting such embodied 'successes' across the boundary and, inversely,

[327] Interview with Ergash, November 2005, in Murghab.

solidifying local loyalty derived from the new possibilities of trans-frontier comparison. The enormous expenses incurred by the Soviet Union through its development and maintenance of livelihoods in GBAO seem to have paid off in regard to the acceptance by borderlanders here of the role they played in presenting themselves as gratified and advantaged Soviet citizens.

In regard to such projections across the Sino-Soviet boundary, several elements are readily observable. First, in terms of telecommunication, technical infrastructure was erected to broadcast Soviet Tajik and Kyrgyz programmes across the boundary. In an interview with a technician at a large radio tower high up in the hills outside of Kochkor (in Naryn *oblast*) I was told that it had been endowed with state-of-the-art technology when it was built in 1962 and could easily beam information into China[328]; it had also been used by the KGB to monitor Chinese broadcasts within western Xinjiang, and I was treated to anecdotes of PLA troop communication via radio that had been picked up there and assiduously transcribed by specialists from Moscow. Similar installations were put up in Sary Tash (south-eastern Kyrgyzstan near Irkeshtam), Southeast Kazakhstan (in particular around Panfilov/Zharkent), and GBAO (with a very powerful station located in Khorog). I was informed by a former Russian borderguard who had been stationed in Murghab during the 1970s and early 1980s that the small military airport in Murghab contained powerful portable radio-broadcasting equipment that had been extensively used to supervise Chinese traffic on the Karakoram Highway just across the Sarykul Range[329]. *Vice versa*, Chinese installations, generally far more basic at the time, were erected in the immediate vicinity of the boundary in the Ili Valley (at Khorgos) and the Torugart that beamed chanted slogans across the boundary audible for at least a couple of miles: one resident in At Bashy remembered hearing the Chinese anthem regularly whenever the wind blew from the east. According to the afore-mentioned Russian Sergei, who was also stationed briefly at Torugart, the slogans that sometimes accompanied the music were always in badly accented Russian (never in Kyrgyz) and generally addressed Kyrgyz listeners to 'break free of their prison'.

[328] Interviews in May 2006.
[329] Interview with Sergei, June 2006, in Bishkek.

Picture 27: Present-day borderland projection on the Chinese side of the boundary (here, at Khorgos in the Ili Valley)[330]

A second, more insidious type of projection was designed less to be seen (or heard) by representatives of the other state but rather to be received by domestic borderlanders themselves. These internal projections and inscriptions were certainly also meant to bolster the image of control by the centre over its periphery, reminding both local potential enemies and saboteurs that resistance would be costly and, also, borderlanders in general that the state cared for their security in these times of trans-state conflagration. The mobilisation within Soviet Central Asia of fears of Chinese expansion into the Soviet borderlands was common and became a topic for debate in all three SSRs bordering on Xinjiang, officially endorsed through Soviet publications and newspaper articles such as the republic-level *Pravda* paper and the Uighur-language publications mentioned above[331]. The effect of such mobilisation was to suggest that Chinese control over Xinjiang was just a precursor to Chinese control over at least portions of these three SSRs; judging by the resilience of some of the arguments put forward from the time of the Sino-Soviet split onwards, such fears must have struck a chord with borderlanders. Numerous interviews conducted in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan over a decade after the end of official hostilities that came with the demise of the Soviet Union still uncovered what is best termed the notorious 'map myth': Soviet propaganda seized on the publication in China of a map showing territories in Central Asia that had been 'taken away' from imperial China by the Unequal Treaties with Russia that

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[330] Note the radio tower in this Chinese SEZ. I include this modern image here because, to my mind, this shows the continued importance of presenting borderlands here as a projection platform.

[331] See Dreyer (1979) for an overview. This tradition of anti-Chinese rhetoric in local newspapers has been continued to the present day by local correspondents for papers such as *The Times of Central Asia*. A salient example of this is presented by the series of articles that paper published (through late September and early October 2005) dealing with Chinese buying property in Kyrgyzstan and labelling this as an 'expansionist threat' by potentially lawless Chinese workers.

had never been renegotiated with the Soviet Union[332]. The 'myth' refers to alleged Chinese designs to militarily reconquer these territories and it is interesting to note that in the Kazakh and Kyrgyz borderlands of the Ili Valley and Naryn locals today regard Uighurs as precisely the kind of bridgehead that Soviet authorities for so long attempted to defend against.

In effect, this kind of propaganda had been projected into the domestic borderlands by Soviet authorities and there became inscribed into local narratives of belonging and state loyalties. As described at the beginning of this chapter, the construction of electric fences along the entire GBAO boundary, the mining of the frontier, the erection of watchtowers, and the installation of military equipment and buildings such as depots, checkpoints and barracks, widened roads serving as landing strips for aircraft, and stationary armaments such as anti-aircraft batteries and concrete roadblocks certainly served a military purpose; but their cognitive effect on borderlanders should not be understated. In conversation with local borderlanders both in Naryn and in GBAO I encountered not a single individual old enough to have been alive at the time of the highest militarisation on the Soviet side who fundamentally disagreed with such militarisation. On the contrary, frequently I was made aware of the benefits for local livelihoods the growing presence of such state representatives had brought to the region: money was injected into infrastructure, employment possibilities arose, and 'security' was established – security that is so commonly contrasted to the uncertainties of present-day Kyrgyzstan (with its corruption and political instability) and Tajikistan (with its civil war and 'rising Islamic fundamentalism')[333]. In short, internal projections had succeeded in creating a further narrative of protection against undesirable outside elements: the Chinese were being kept out just as was rising religious fundamentalism (increasingly and infuriatingly termed 'Wahhabism' from this time on) that was seen as lurking across the southern frontier to Afghanistan.

Scripts and Language Engineering

The shift within the borderlands from interdependency to alienation is further reflected in the shift in interpersonal borderlander communicability. The choice by both states of which scripts (that is, which vehicle of written communication) to promote institutionally and in education derived, as I will discuss here, from the developing narrative of trans-frontier otherness in the borderlands. The supra-regional, unifying tradition of Chaghatay was to be replaced gradually with new state-based forms perpetuated through deep borderland control, and this was facilitated by the ability of both states to increase literacy and internal educational and vocational exchange. Thus, initial Borderland communicational connectivity prior to the common socialist period had evolved into the exact opposite by the end of this era, with linguistic barriers approaching convergency with the state boundary. Nothing in the literature suggests that these processes were severely contested in the Soviet borderlands, and no interviews personally conducted uncover such local discourses; in Xinjiang with its oscillating assimilatory policies, borderlander rejection

[332] For details concerning this map, see Garver (1981:116-17).
[333] This theme will be taken up again in Chapter 6 and discussed in relation to border security today.

did play a factor but subsequent changes in policy did not result in renewed Borderland connectivity due to the PRC's wariness of afore-mentioned subversive dynamics this may have unleashed originating from beyond the boundary. When personal borderlander trans-frontier interaction once again became possible in the 1990s, borderlanders were to discover just how far their respective modes of expression had become politicised and externally bordered in respect to state influence. Understanding these linguistic parameters is crucial in uncovering the empirically observed narratives of today pertaining to cultural orthodoxy as expressed in linguistic competence and 'cultural corruption' induced by the state.

Trans-frontier trajectories are, by their very nature, augmented, subverted, or obstructed through the possibilities of communication between their protagonists. For their continued functioning over time, trans-frontier networks require common linguistic denominators. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 4, in both socialist states under consideration language use and language change played a central role in the recognition of nations' national self-consciousness and their classification. Just as in other modern states, linguistic standardisation was the rationale behind the allocation of resources to officially recognised linguistic units, and standardisation affected the lexicon of minority languages through the introduction of non-native lexemes. The vehicle of standardisation here was the introduction of scripts and/or alphabets by the state in order to enable publication and transmission of local content; here, standardisation also affected pronunciation through the introduction of non-native phonemes. The Cyrillic alphabet in which Kyrgyzstan's Kyrgyz language is written contains, in addition to the 33 letters of Russian Cyrillic, a further three letters (representing the *Ң*, *Ө*, and *ү* sounds alien to Russian); the Cyrillic alphabet used to write Tajik contains an additional four letters (representing the *Ғ*, *Қ*, *Ҳ*, and *Ҷ* sounds alien to Russian)[334], with two standard Cyrillic letters being pronounced differently (*Й* and *Ў*). The seven languages spoken in the Pamir range in GBAO have, with the exception of Shugni, never been officially scripted – the religious texts of the Ismailiyya are written in the Persian used in Iran (as opposed to the Tajik Persian variant) despite the fact that very few Pamiri actually actively speak this language except for learning certain religious formulae by rote (Bliss 2006:102); during Soviet times, of course, such religious texts were anyway forbidden, which would explain the lack of comprehension of Persian even amongst the Ismaili elite. Similarly, the Arabic of the Qu'ran was a script that, by the end of the Soviet period, was no longer understood by Soviet Central Asians. One of the most fundamental effects of changing from an Arabic script was that small dialect differences, in particular in the pronunciation of short vowels, became fixed in the new national languages (Roy 2000:77) because Arabic does not represent such short vowels[335].

[334] For the sake of completeness, Kazakh contains an additional nine Cyrillic letters (and thus six more than Kyrgyz): *Ә*, *Ғ*, *Қ*, *Ң*, *Ө*, *Ұ*, *ү*, *Һ*, and *І*.
[335] An example being *millet* ('state'): represented in the original Arabic script as *mlt* it is transcribed as *millet*, *millat*, or *mellat*, respectively. Another is the transcription of the 'j' sound: in Uzbek it is written as *Ж* whereas in Tajik as *Ҷ*.

A Tradition of Script Change

One of the most efficient ways of accomplishing the external bordering of the peoples 'shared' by both the Soviet Union and China was the development of scripts and the subsequent policy of script changes so as to, in my opinion, complicate simple communication within trans-frontier networks. To shed light on the intricate mechanisms involved a brief overview of historical script changes is necessary. During the 19th century, the elites of Central Asia (including Xinjiang) used the common literary language Chaghatay, an archaic form of Turkic heavily influenced by its promotion as an elite language by the Mongols during their control over the region (Benson&Svanberg 1988:94-5) and written in Arabic script. In the 1920s, script changes were implemented in the Soviet Union and Turkey to adapt the Arabic writing of modern Turkic tongues to the realities of modern pronunciation and, in 1926, the modified Arabic script was replaced by the Latin alphabet only to be once again replaced in 1940 by the Cyrillic alphabet in the Soviet Union; this represents a crucial break with the traditions of Chaghatay which until then had served as a common socio-linguistic denominator in the Turkic world.

In Xinjiang, the use of the Arabic script continued until the mid-1950s when the Chinese decided to introduce a modified version of the Cyrillic script used across the border for Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Uighurs so as to enable the introduction of books printed in the Soviet Union which had had great success in combating illiteracy. However, the deteriorating Sino-Soviet relationship in the late 1950s, the time of the Great Leap Forward and increased flight of said ethnic groups across the boundary led the Chinese authorities to introduce a Latin-based script based on the *pinyin* system increasingly used for the phonetic transcription of *putonghua*. This represented a clear break with language policy in the Soviet Union and was designed to now *prevent* the influx of books published abroad which might influence nationalist and separatist aspirations among the minorities concerned and, thus, was politically motivated (Bellér-Hann 1991:74). Simultaneously, the *pinyin* system (used to alphabetically transcribe Chinese characters) for the Kyrgyz and Uighur languages and the subsequent influence of *putonghua* on these languages in the form of new lexical elements and structural changes in their grammar went hand-in-hand with a similar process of Russification of modern Kyrgyz in the Soviet Union, thereby evoking two different trends in the development of the languages on either side of the boundary. During the Cultural Revolution most minority policies were in a state of stasis due to suppression of any form of political and cultural identity amongst minority peoples in the PRC but, by 1974, large-scale acceptance of the new Latin script was officially reported in Xinjiang (*ibid.*). According to Benson and Svanberg, however, local acceptance of what was regarded as assimilatory linguistic policies, i.e., the *pinyin* system, "was never widely accepted by Xinjiang Turkic speakers [and] in 1982 the authorities decided to reintroduce the Arabic script again among the Uighurs, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyz" (1988:97). Today, it is this script which is used exclusively in the entire area of Xinjiang, and Bellér-Hann (1991:80), quoting individuals interviewed in Xinjiang shortly after the latest reform, asserts that this change must be seen as a victory for primarily Uighur national identity *vis-à-vis* the Chinese state and as a manifestation of

increased autonomy and the possibility of political participation by national minorities in the PRC. However, this latest script change also reinforces the cultural separation of Turkic-speaking peoples and complicates trans-frontier communication with such communities beyond the PRC's boundaries.

Processes of Language Engineering

Script changes and the standardisation or formation of minority languages must be seen as a strategy of language engineering conducted with the aim of furthering the state's interests and creating a framework of linguistic expression in tune with the desire for hegemony over nationalities' lifeworlds. To reach this objective of strengthening its hold over the region, the PRC "needed to 'educate' the people and in Xinjiang, where Chinese was only spoken by a very small minority, only a reform of the local languages would serve" (Duval 1996:144). In the Soviet Union, language reform and new scripts served the ultimate policy, "in terms of the Soviet Union's policy of cultural absorption, of cutting off the Turkic peoples from their common Turco-Islamic sources and reducing the influence of Koranic schools" (Duval 1996:142), a clear break with the Islamic past of these peoples. In Xinjiang, due to the fact that modern Uighur was 'created' in the Soviet Union in the 1920s (*ibid.*), the Chinese authorities had to limit trans-frontier influences and this was accomplished by script changes and the promotion of Chinese language-borrowing for the creation of new terms in both Uighur and Kyrgyz. Prior to this, Russian had been the most important lexical source for expressions adopted into the languages of Central Asia, and these loan words were consistently replaced with their Chinese counterparts, quite in line with the environmental determinism of Marxist-Leninist linguistics[336].

Matters in Xinjiang, however, became more complicated in Deng's reform era in regard to the political acceptability of such overt sinification of Uighur, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz. Starting in 1979 there was a return to terminology that had been used prior to the Sino-Soviet split, a particularly traumatic experience for the generation of people who had been educated in the twenty years in between. Duval (1996, in particular 149-54) has minutely discussed this process for the trans-frontier Uighur language and comes to the conclusion that, while *putonghua* loan words have largely been replaced again from the 1980s onwards by terms deriving from Turkic sources, the coining of neologisms has taken place along grammatical and phraseological lines derived from Chinese: visible *putonghua*-isms have been hidden by Uighur-sounding words that have a *putonghua* structure underlying them[337]. Simultaneously, the shift of official Standard Uighur away from the Gulja/Yining variant (with its Russian influence) to the Urumqi variant, supported by exclusively broadcasting in

[336] "Difference in environment [entails] certain different characteristics" (Ma&Dai 1988:100) in the target languages which stem from the influence of "the language of the mainstream nationality" (*ibid.*).

[337] For example the *putonghua* loanword *diänti* (elevator) became *tokşota*, based on the Chinese *dianti* (lit. 'electric ladder'); incidentally, Uighurs in Kazakhstan use the term *lift*. Another obvious example is the term for 'train': originally adopted from Russian (*poyezd*) into Uighur as *poyiz* it has now become *ot harva*, based on the Chinese *huoche* (lit. 'fire vehicle').

this dialect, seems noteworthy because of the newly institutionalised linguistic peripheralisation of this Uighur borderland in favour of the provincial centre.

The Cases of Kyrgyz and 'Tajik'

While Uighur language engineering was undoubtedly the most heavily politicised of the trans-frontier languages in the Sino-Soviet borderlands, both Kyrgyz and Tajik were affected by state-based manipulation, with the latter being particularly encumbered by confusion over terminology and classification. In the Soviet Union both languages were classified, developed, and modernised with the admixture of Russian terms, and in both cases a literary form was promoted: in the case of Tajik this was not any particular dialect but rather a hybrid form derived from the phonological system of Old Persian with grammatical variations not used in other Persian languages outside of the Tajik SSR (see Roy 2000:75-6 and Rakowska-Harmstone 1970:241-5); in Kyrgyz, internal dynamics such as territorial-administrative bordering, economic specialisation, and elite promotion all favoured the northern part of the SSR at the expense of the southern part – northern Kyrgyz (the *küngei* variant), with its stronger Russian influence and more widely known versions of the Manas epic, was given the edge in 'official Kyrgyz', and southern Kyrgyz (the *teskei* variant) with its strong Uzbek influence and more extensive Islamic/Arabic lexicon became officially marginalised[338]. Thus, both officially recognised languages in Soviet Central Asia developed new, Soviet-era forms that were promoted by the official institutions of the state as represented at SSR-level such as schools, universities, the Academy of Sciences, Writers' Unions, and publishing houses. Language teaching in these 'new' state languages served to solidify this development, and the change of script to Cyrillic, in this context, made old texts inaccessible to new generations except in their Soviet-accredited versions[339]. Religious texts in general were elegantly excluded from being passed on to new generations due to the lack of comprehension of classical Arabic script; and Soviet-era national language dictionaries, touted as proof of the authorities' interest in and support of local languages, served to both harden the boundaries between Central Asia's languages and soften the boundaries between Russian and the respective national languages. Children from the 1940s on were raised no longer as bilingual speakers of their local language and a regional language (for example, a local Tajik dialect and Uzbek, or Kyrgyz and Uzbek) but rather as bilingual speakers of their national language and Russian, with members of urban elites frequently learning Russian throughout their educational careers and only retaining Kyrgyz, for example, as a domestic language, if that.

These dynamics on the Soviet side of the boundary naturally affected the linguistic situation in the Kyrgyz and Tajik borderlands in Xinjiang and their respective trans-frontier

[338] I would like to thank Professor Mambet Turdu from Gulja/Yining for his clarifying comments on this distinction (interview May 2006, in Urumqi). The differences between *küngei* (lit. 'towards the sun', i.e., the Tian Shan side) and *teskei* (lit. 'away from the sun', i.e., the Pamir side) figure in my discussion of the respective ascriptions of Kyrgyz-ness amongst the respective Kyrgyz groups in Chapter 6.

[339] Particularly salient in the case of Tajik: while the classical works of Firdawsi and Sa'adi were permitted, Iranian authors from the 19th century were purged from the literature (Roy 2000:77).

trajectories. In Xinjiang language teaching for speakers of small *minzu* languages such as Kyrgyz and 'Tajik' (actually Sarykuli Pamiri) was never consistent with laws on national minorities. Speakers of both languages were traditionally multilingual, with most Tajiks learning Uighur and the small Kyrgyz population of Tashkurgan learning to speak 'Tajik' and write Uighur. Increasingly, *putonghua* intruded upon this language-learning pattern with similar effects on both languages as those that have been discussed above in the case of Uighur. While in the 1950s many Kyrgyz from Gulja/Yining and Qyzyl Suu also learned Russian (promoted by Xinjiang authorities prior to the Split), this only became possible again following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the re-establishment of Russian schools in Gulja/Yining and Urumqi. The intermediate forty years saw the establishment of Chinese and Uighur as the languages of education for speakers of Kyrgyz and 'Tajik', the latter for secondary school and the former for all higher forms of education. In addition, 'Tajik' speakers, who lacked a written language officially recognised by the authorities, were educated from their first day of school onwards in Uighur. This, then, represents a fundamentally different pattern from the linguistic reality of Soviet Central Asia where communication between nations was generally conducted in Russian, the language of the state.

A complicating factor in a discussion of the development of trans-frontier linguistics presents itself in the dialectal relationship between the Kyrgyz spoken in Qyzyl Suu and that of Kyrgyzstan and the language spoken in Tashkurgan and its GBAO counterparts. Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz belongs to the *küngei*/northern dialect of Kyrgyz and was, thus, structurally very close to the Kyrgyz spoken in Naryn as well as the Chui (including Bishkek) and Issyk-kul regions before the admixture of Russian or Chinese/Uighur elements; the small number of Kyrgyz residing along Kara-kul in Tashkurgan speak a *teskei*/southern dialect similar to the Kyrgyz of Murghab in Tajikistan. Thus, the Kyrgyz Borderland can be seen as originally constituting a linguistic whole with trans-frontier communication relatively unimpeded by comprehension problems. Or, in other words, communication problems reflected by the north-south cleavage in Kyrgyzstan are reflected traditionally also amongst Kyrgyz speakers outside that state's boundaries: Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz (and also the Kyrgyz from Gulja/Yining) belong to the northern group whilst Murghab Kyrgyz and Tashkurgan Kyrgyz belong to the southern. This linguistic situation is today influencing notions of belonging within the Kyrgyz Borderland.

The Pamiri Language Situation

The linguistic situation in the high range of the Pamirs is even more intricate and remains a severely understudied topic. The seven languages of the Pamiri in GBAO[340] (all members of the north-eastern subgroup of East Iranian languages) are not comprehensible to speakers of the Tajik tongue of the western lowlands (which belongs to the West Iranian

[340] In order of number of speakers, these are Shugni, Roshani, Wakhi, Bartangi, Yasgulemi, Khufi, and Ishkashimi, all named after the major settlement of the areas in which the respective language is spoken. See Bliss (2006:99-102).

language group). Of the Pamiri languages it is the Shugni of the Khorog region and along the banks of the Pyanj river that is the most widely understood throughout GBAO; nevertheless, Shugni is very different from several of the other Pamiri languages and mutual comprehension is often difficult and therefore, under the auspices of the Tajik SSR authorities, Tajik was promoted to the status of lingua franca. None of these seven languages possess official written forms or scripts (with the exception of Shugni which from 1928 to 1937 was used in textbooks but then discontinued[341]) and, thus, all school education in GBAO was in Tajik and Russian. The Kyrgyz of Murghab, non-titular and heavily under-represented if not invisible in Soviet times, seem generally to have spoken Tajik in addition to their native (*teskei*) Kyrgyz but not any Pamiri language; according to interviews held in and around Murghab in winter 2005, Russian only became popular amongst the Kyrgyz there relatively late in the Soviet period (and today Russian is more widespread amongst these Kyrgyz than Tajik). Across the boundary in Tashkurgan, the language identified by Chinese authorities as 'Tajik' is, in fact, a Pamiri language unrelated to the Tajik of western Tajikistan. Speakers of this language in Tashkurgan AC, however, refer to their language as Tajik rather than Sarykuli, the expression I encountered in GBAO used to refer to speakers of Pamiri in the trans-boundary Sarykul Range (also known as the Little Pamir in old travel literature). Sarykuli is quite close in pronunciation to Shugni and Roshani but contains a host of archaisms and anachronisms[342]. In terms of trans-frontier communication, traditionally this had been either through the Persian script used in the boundary-transcending Ismaili religious texts (certainly in the case of the travelling religious elite) or through the simplification of dialectal elements to ensure comprehension between Sarykuli and Shugni. The sealing of the boundary between the Tajik SSR and Tashkurgan put an end to personal interaction, and written trans-frontier communication was to grind to a halt over the decades due to the dying out of knowledge of Persian on both sides of the boundary[343] and the lack of a shared written language: Pamiri in GBAO could no more understand the Uighur tongue or the Latin or Arabic script used by Tashkurgan 'Tajiks' than could Xinjiang's 'Tajiks' read Cyrillic or understand the official Tajik of the Tajik SSR.

Conclusions: Bifurcating Nations and State Cleavage

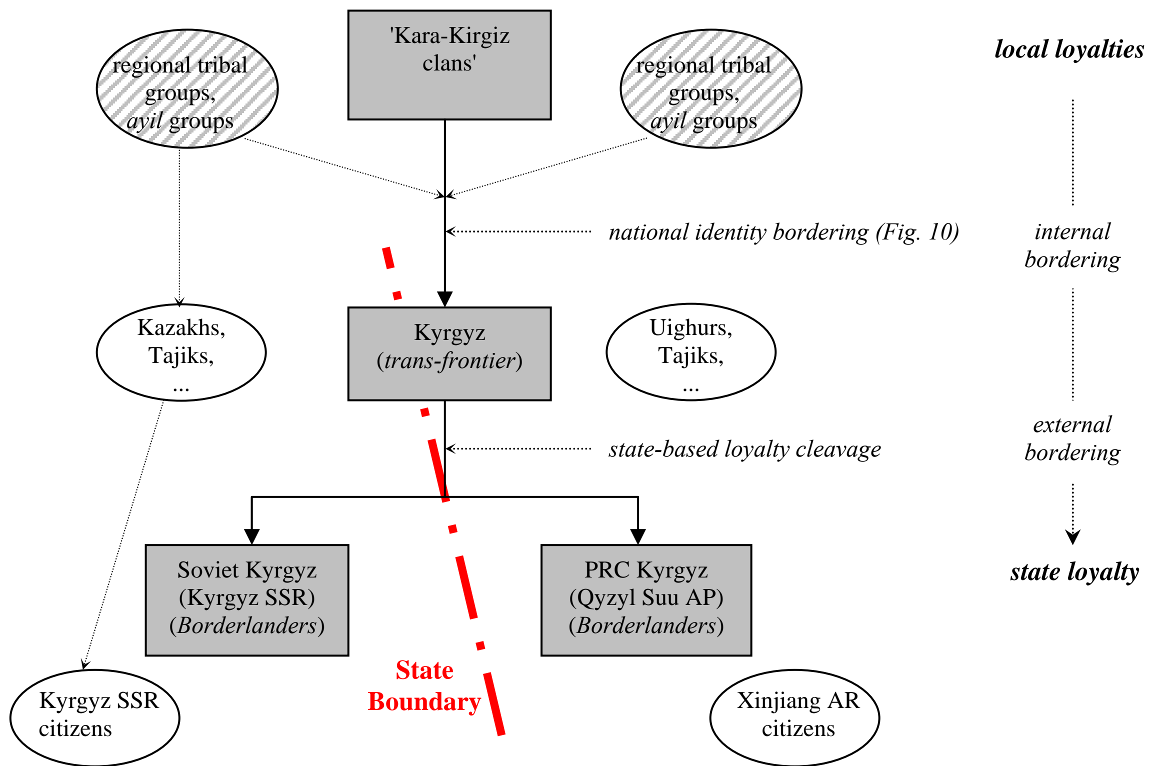
To conclude the discussion of borderland processes during the socialist era, linguistic trans-frontier trajectories and the control over them by states seeking to employ them as beneficial to their own designs whilst simultaneously limiting the unwanted and potentially subversive power of borderlanders to freely communicate with linguistic brethren across the boundary, are fundamental to the lived experience of members of trans-frontier nations. The

[341] Shugni in its written form was apparently also used by the wandering teachers (*mullah*) of the 19th century (Olufsen 1904, as quoted in Bliss 2006:102); the fate of this script remains unknown but it is certain that Soviet educators never employed it.
[342] Interview with Mullo-Abdol Shagarf, November 2005, in Khorog (himself a speaker of Shugni).
[343] In May 2006 I encountered one very old Tajik from Tashkurgan who claimed that he was one of five individuals in the AC who remembered what he called "the Farsi from Persia". He told me that it had been forbidden to speak this language until "about ten years ago" and that young Tajiks were not interested in learning it because it was a waste of time and *putonghua* was far more useful.

trajectories of migration described earlier achieved population exchanges and most certainly an awareness of members of one's nationality abroad, but did they create a sense of boundary-transcending nation that had as its territory, and as distinguished from the respective centralised states, a Kyrgyz or Tajik/Pamiri Borderland? Local acceptance of state nationality categories was high and the formation of categories fit for local loyalties went relatively uncontested although the precise contents thereof differed from region to region, as I have discussed over the last two chapters. Importantly, crucial elements of pre-Socialist notions of belonging had become subjected to state discourses of control; thus, earlier local notions of Kyrgyz *chek-ara* (boundaries) had mutated along with the introduction of *granitsi*, new local elites had much to gain from propagating conformity with state categories, languages were exposed to new language contact situations that fundamentally influenced linguistic competency, and religious traditions generally became invisible and subjected to little open (and therefore dialogic) discourse. Contacts in form of regularised and reciprocal exchange, either economic or social, were eradicated between borderlanders, and the little contact there was was heavily scrutinised by the state and easily controlled in terms of its impact on official discourses.

Wider notions of belonging in what became the borderlands between Soviet Central Asia and the PRC, vaguely formulated in imperial times, had shrunk by the time the common socialist period had ended, an observation bourne out by the empirical findings to be discussed and analysed in the next chapter. Formerly fluid and internally defined, self-ascribed boundaries between 'Kyrgyz' or 'Pamiri' groups had undergone changes through the lived reality of state-legitimated national self-consciousness; elements that came to be accepted markers of Kyrgyz-ness or Pamiri-ness were influenced by the states in which the groups respectively resided in, and the outer limits thereof were patrolled *physically* by the agents of the state in form of border control and *socially* by local accomodation with deep borderland control – the trans-frontier Other was disappearing off cognitive maps of local belonging. In terms of state inclusion and the acceptance thereof at a local level, political identities and loyalties had undergone a momentous shift. In this trans-boundary context, while Pauline Jones-Luong concludes that "region came to replace tribe as the pre-eminent political category for Central Asian elites" (2002:71) and that regional rivalries instead of a national identity were fuelled, I believe that what *korenizatsiya* and the related regionalisation of political identities did in fact create was a twofold reorientation: on the one hand a reorientation away from the most local and particularistic level of identification solely with the *ayil/qishloq* and towards a more inclusivist notion of *regionally* connected *identity* through clan ties and patron-client relationships with new elites; and, on the other hand, a reorientation away from the most encompassing and hitherto most vaguely formulated notion of inclusion into a people/group without a specific regional distribution (and, hence, including locales now defined by states as being 'trans-frontier') towards a more exclusivist notion of *nationally* induced state *loyalty* – a bordered nation complete with nationalised borderland elites, precisely delimited territories of residence, and state-ward directed domains of interaction. In other words, from the perspective of the states involved an ethnic group such as 'the Kyrgyz' was now a nation on Soviet or Chinese territory that was to fulfil

its duties as a national minority of either the Soviet or Chinese state: Soviet Kyrgyz interacted with members of other Soviet nationalities as equals, as members of the same citizenry, and as representatives of the Kyrgyz nation within Soviet state institutions, just as Chinese Kyrgyz were to fulfil the same role beyond the boundary to the east. Based on the considerations of internal versus external bordering and its effect on state cleavage discussed in Chapter 1 (see Figure 5), this process for the two trans-frontier groups of Kyrgyz and Pamiri (the latter termed Mountain Tajiks and Tajiks, respectively) is displayed in a simplified, schematic manner in Figure 13 below.



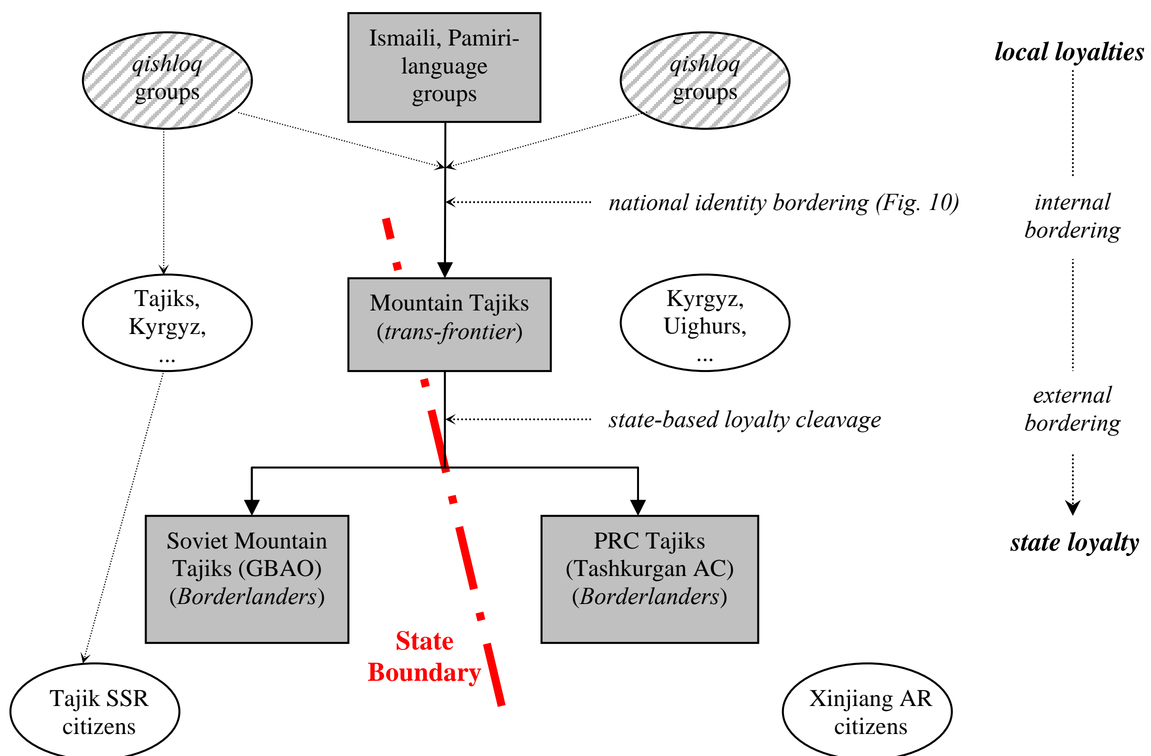


Figure 13: Process of state-based cleavage of Kyrgyz / Pamiri loyalties

Such 'group roles' within the state were accepted at a local level as long as the state was seen to provide advantages above and beyond the potential benefits accruing from continued trans-frontier interaction, and this was extensively practised in the Soviet borderlands as we have seen – a foreshadowing of a very similar form of deep borderland control so evident in the PRC borderlands after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

However, these states went much further than merely 'bribing' borderlanders through economic and political incentives – ideology did matter, just as it remains to matter to the socialist PRC today. Ever since their delimitation, these boundaries here always have been encumbered by their role as projection platforms designed to proclaim supra-local narratives such as trans-frontier political subversion or internal ideological and economic strength: subversion of these narratives by borderlanders was tolerated in very narrowly defined domains such as derived from *korenizatsiya*, and cooperation by borderlanders was ensured by the agents of border control, a type of boundary maintenance which, here, has always been enacted by the centralised state and never by local polities. In this domain there was no compromise to be found due to the fact that external boundaries were absolutely vital to these socialist systems' legitimacy and perceived vulnerability to the outside world – *there was no borderlander influence on trajectories in the common socialist period*! Following the growing ability by the state to implement border control through more professionalised troops within the state security apparatus and the concomitant expansion in general of Soviet surveillance and control in its peripheries (Reitz 1982), cooperation by borderland populations functionally came to reflect processes in wider society, albeit with the difference that borderlanders were to remain subject to discourses of *central* control (as enacted through centralised institutions) rather than regional, SSR-level control. The implication of this central mode was that borderlanders seeking official permission to negotiate a trip across the boundary were, in addition to the bureaucratic hurdles all Soviet citizens had to overcome, required to apply for special permission and clearance with the KGB due to their status as residents of a special zone: the fact that they were borderlanders subjected them to a higher level of security clearance than the average Soviet citizen was subject to. In effect, borderlanders' movements across the actual state boundary had to be authorised by a distant centre, either in Moscow or, if one had access to a powerful local broker, the KGB headquarters in the SSR centre (however not implying that SSR institutions had any say in the matter). Avenues of permission to exit were routed through central institutions for borderlanders and, therefore, represent a strong example of transversality (see Chapter 1). In addition to this, actual physical travel in these decades was routed not through the borderlands themselves (i.e., for borderlanders not through their immediate local environment) but rather through state centres as well; thus, bureaucratic and physical avenues *dilated* connections to the wider state, thereby strengthening cognitive proximity within the territorial state, whilst *contracting* trans-frontier points of reference, thereby strengthening cognitive distance across the boundary.

Borderlander lifeworlds in both the Soviet and PRC borderlands were fundamentally structured by the visible and blanketing presence of state institutions in regions regarded

politically as zones of vulnerability. While the socialist state in general wields a very high degree of control over its citizens' options for mobility and pursues a rhetoric of surveillance and the transparency of individuals' identities irrespective of state locale, such structures were amplified at the territorial margins of the state: borderlanders in general had opportunities that directly subverted state discourses of control – if borderlanders were additionally part of a trans-frontier group this could be wedded to a direct and local contestation of the state's ability to present itself as the legitimate successor to imperial states, a legitimacy centrally revolving around the socialist state's implementation of nationality policy. Battling for borderlanders' loyalties was an integral part of all internal discourses and trans-state policies, and in our Central Asian borderlands this battle was waged in the economic, political, and, crucially, the socio-cultural domains: state cleavage of a space that, prior to socialist border control, encompassed all three domains and extended beyond the hardening state boundaries was successful here – a bifurcation of notions of Kyrgyz-ness or Pamiri-ness had taken place between the respective segments of the Borderland leading to notions of national identities informed by the respective state. In effect, administrative-territorial national units and the sub-units that represent administrative borderlands were transformed into spaces figuring as homelands for nationalised groups: identities as well as loyalties became territorialized. In the SSRs of Central Asia this administrative boundary-making at the sub-SSR level came to approximate local notions of belonging; even in the PRC, where provinces are on the whole fairly arbitrary administrative units with boundaries that failed to match regional and sub-regional patterns of social, cultural and economic activity (Fitzgerald 2002:12-13), new provincial identities developed in Xinjiang as a whole and in the *minzu* APs and ACs that were generated through new and thick interactions among and between parts of the political system.

Picture 28: Slogan on the construction site of a new Central Asian export centre in Urumqi (Xinjiang)

By the end of the common socialist period, the political boundaries between Soviet Central Asia and Xinjiang had become national boundaries. The negotiability of these national boundaries, and thus their durability, at the local borderland level was about to be tested in the political upheaval taking place in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s: the groups residing in the alienated borderlands of the common socialist period were to discover that there were groups across the boundary whose lifeworlds exhibited a similarly strong sense of state-based inclusion and national identity that largely excluded discourses of trans-frontier same-ness, as I now proceed to discuss in my inquiry into whose borderlands and boundaries lie at the interface between post-Soviet Central Asia and today's PRC.

Chapter 6

Whose Boundaries – Whose Borderlands?

Why do we have to share administrative and political power in our rightful homeland when now those Kyrgyz and Tajiks are lucky enough to have their own independent states right across the border? Why are they still here in China? Why don't they just go home?

(Uighur bazaar salesman, personal interview May 2006, in Kashgar)

The passing of the Soviet Union brought the common socialist period to an abrupt end. The SSRs of the Union now became independent fully-fledged states even if it was to be years until all of them actually came to exhibit all the trappings of statehood such as national currencies (the *som* introduced in 1993 in Kyrgyzstan and the *somani* in Tajikistan in 2000) and the implementation of their own border control. The following years produced economic decline in all the Central Asian Republics and most critically in Kyrgyzstan; Tajikistan became embroiled in a civil war between various factions battling for the distribution of post-Soviet power amongst its different regions, and GBAO witnessed a calamitous cessation of outside economic support that led to wide-spread starvation and, in effect, a reconnection with the international Ismailiyya through the life-saving intervention of the Aga Khan. Over the same period, Xinjiang in the 1990s was characterised by recurring unrest in various parts of the AR; and in 2000 the 'Remake the West' campaign was launched that finally tackled the question as to how Xinjiang was to interact with both its new Central Asian neighbours as well as redefining its role within a rapidly changing PRC. By 2005/6, the year in which the field research underlying this thesis was conducted, fourteen short years after the demise of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan had gone through the so-called Tulip Revolution[344], Tajikistan had finally just acquired the military sovereignty over its own boundaries with Afghanistan (controlled until then by Russian/CIS borderguards), and Xinjiang was being presented to the world as a new land of opportunity – a booming province of China acting as a bridge between the PRC's eastern seaboard and Europe. All three states had opened new ports along

[344] Hailed by the international press as one of the 'colour revolutions' supposedly bringing democracy to post-Soviet states, the 'Revolution' of March/April 2005 saw the ousting of long-term President Askar Akaev by a group of disgruntled Kyrgyzstani (mainly from the south) with the silent support of the armed forces and the installation of a new President, Kurmanbek Bakiev from Osh *oblast*. The months following the largely non-violent coup were characterised by frequent protests and counter-protests (and wide-spread lootings of non-Kyrgyz businesses in Bishkek) by various groups, and Kyrgyzstan has remained politically exceedingly unstable ever since.

their mutual boundaries, in the case of Tajikistan even the first such interface ever with the PRC, new roads were being built, new trajectories opening up. And all three states had finally, after well over a century of contention, agreed on the precise location of their common boundary: small territories 'changed hands' and the boundary discussion forum set up for this purpose grew into a regional alliance (the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, SCO) between these states and an ever-increasing number of further neighbouring states such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and, possibly in the near future, Iran and Mongolia. At a domestic level, both the Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani governments have had to face local ire over territorial hand-overs (either rumoured or actual) to the PRC[345], but at the trans-state level the states here were cooperating to an unprecedented degree – a far cry from the thundering silence of the last four decades.

But what about our borderlands? How did these momentous happenings affect the nations 'between' the decayed state and an initially off-balance political leadership across the boundary? The Union did not collapse due to centrifugal pressure at the Central Asian periphery – the Union may not have been the socialist paradise it purported to represent but, as I have discussed, neither did people see it generally as a prison or purgatory. Indeed, the elites in the Central Asian Republics, whatever their reinvention in the following years as 'nationalist leaders', were reluctant to sign away their political legitimacy; the attempted *coup d'etat* in Moscow in 1991 enjoyed Central Asian elites' support, and these states were among the last to declare their independence from the defunct Union[346]. To this day, the Central Asian Republics (with the exception of Kyrgyzstan since the Tulip Revolution) are all governed by the successor regimes to the Soviet Communist Party and the official institutional structures of the Soviet era have remained largely unchanged, in particular in the domain of the institution of border control. Here, however, the similarities between the Republics end: while Kazakhstan has changed its internal (*oblast*) boundaries numerous times along with the seats of local governments and even the state capital (from Almaty to Astana), Kyrgyzstan has done this only in the Ferghana Valley (creating Jalal-Abad *oblast* from a part of Osh *oblast*), and Tajikistan has been forced in the interest of maintaining territorial integrity to retain Gorno-Badakhshan's AO status. Moreover, borderlanders in Kyrgyzstan have adopted different strategies of dealing with the new state's control over its periphery than have borderlanders in GBAO, with both cases exhibiting a high degree of continuity with processes set in motion during the Soviet era.

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[345] The Kyrgyzstani government's handover of the disputed Üzöngü-Kuush region (roughly 90,000 ha in the high Tian Shan range) in 2001 had an immediate effect on the popularity and legitimacy of the Akaev regime and is generally seen as having been the first serious sign of wide-spread public disaffection with the government, especially within the Bishkek elite, that led to its ultimate overthrow four years later. In GBAO, rumours persist that the Tajikistani government just recently handed over a section of disputed territory near the road to the Qolma Pass to the PRC, a region in Murghab *raion* "east of Chechekde that contains gold and uranium mines – mines that the Soviet Union successfully kept from Chinese hands and that now the ineffectual government has given away, just like that!" (interview with an anonymous official, November 2005, in Khorog).

[346] Kyrgyzstan was the first of these five states to do so in August 1991; Tajikistan was the last in September 1991.

The single most momentous change in the post-Soviet lives of Kyrgyz and Pamiris brought about by the transition of their political environment from SSRs to independent states, and the one of most interest to us here in the context of Central Asian boundaries and borderlanders' lifeworlds, has been their reclassification from Soviet citizens to Kyrgyzstani or Tajikistani citizens and the concomitant hardening of former internal boundaries (those between the SSRs, i.e., those meant to represent these nations' boundaries) into external (state) boundaries. New borderlanders have been created one might say inadvertently – the Kyrgyz of Murghab are now Tajikistani borderlanders, members of a trans-frontier state group, and Kyrgyz elites there must position themselves as nationalised or as trans-frontier borderland elites. In effect they are borderlanders within a most peripheral borderland characterised, as we shall see, by the inability of the state to enact deep borderland control. This inability stands in stark contrast to the new states' *rhetoric* of border control that, notwithstanding the ideological break with the Soviet past, reproduces many of the former Soviet systems' features and justifications for imposing controls at state boundaries. I shall be discussing the gap between such rhetoric and actual implementation as observed in our borderlands in this chapter.

Across the boundary in Xinjiang, the passing of the Soviet Union did not go unnoticed. Kyrgyz (and Kazakhs) at the Chinese Central Asian frontier, directly watching the collapse of a system long regarded as stable and immediate witnesses to the ensuing difficulties experienced by people beyond the boundary (albeit through a lense provided by the Chinese media), now suddenly became Chinese *minzu* with titular and independent Republics as neighbours. Could political loyalties be renegotiated, that is, would members of these *minzu* in the PRC see the birth of Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan as the fruition of national ambition, so readily prepared by the socialist system they lived in? Did that which had 'lain between' the Soviet Union and the PRC, the nations at these states' interfaces, stand to gain in national depth and importance in this new political environment? Politically, the 'historic opportunity for Xinjiang' presented by the disappearance of the Soviet Union should be seen as an opportunity for the PRC as a whole rather than just for the AR of Xinjiang, exposed as it now again is to the centre's renewed fears of these populations' possibility to opt for 'exit' and relocate to what one might expect represents the political incarnation of a truly independent 'national homeland'. I will be arguing in the last part of this chapter that the Kyrgyz of Xinjiang do not see Kyrgyzstan as the ultimate territorial target of national ambition; similarly, but for different reasons, the 'Tajiks' of Tashkurgan do not regard any part of Tajikistan or the people therein as beng included in their own representations of 'Tajik-ness'. In effect, I argue that neither of these groups see themselves as parts of trans-frontier borderland groups despite their characterisation as such by a number of non-local actors.

Whatever one might have expected would happen with such fundamental and visible changes in the political landscape, I observe that with the passing of the Soviet Union its boundaries did not crumble, there was no joyous reunion between sundered peoples sharing an ethnonym and distant past, and there was no brave new trans-frontier world to be negotiated between borderlanders and their new/old political centres. This chapter focuses

on shifts in borderland and borderlander interaction – structural-politically, physically, and cognitively, as observed within the borderlands themselves. Thus will I approach the question as to whose borderlands and boundaries we actually find ourselves observing today. I search for elements in discourses of control and trans-frontier networks that illuminate how borderlanders have been experiencing the new opportunities of contact and exchange that have opened up since 1991; in effect, I seek to discover whether it is possible to speak of a new Borderland evolving here, with all the elements of a Borderland Milieu introduced in Chapter 1. To do this, I have chosen to marginalize trans-state policies taking place between the PRC, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan except where they have figured in insight directly gained from my fieldwork and instead to highlight my interviewees' and local frontier experts' (as defined in Chapter 2) perspective of the borderlands from their own point of view.

Thus, after a characterisation in the first part of this chapter of the structural-political changes in discourses of control within the borderlands through as local a lens as only field research can provide, I focus on the new realities of trans-frontier trajectories as pursued by all actors involved and then proceed to remap the borderlands according to my interviewees' cognitive categories and local narratives of bordered belonging. The section on structural Borderland shifts that follows immediately below will form the first of the three related domains I believe to inform present-day bordering discourses and that will help us to understand why, despite a tentative opening of permissible trans-frontier trajectories, no wider Borderland in the sense introduced in Chapter 1 will be detected at the Central Asian – Chinese frontier and how this compares to processes taking place within the former Soviet national units of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; the following sections dealing with, respectively, physical interaction and cognitive proximity and Othering will all together reveal the strength of state-propelled cleavage of trans-frontier national identities across the Central Asian – Xinjiang boundary whilst juxtaposing this to the type of bordering taking place in the Kyrgyzstani – Tajikistani Borderland.

6.1 New States, Old Boundaries

In newly independent Central Asia, the shift of the political centre from Moscow to the Republican capitals has been supported by Soviet-era institutional infrastructure and avenues of hierarchical communication. The new Republics were already imbued with a well-developed set of formal and informal institutions stemming from the Soviet era; in the former domain these were a bloated bureaucracy, centralised economic planning, a system of being provided for that the citizens automatically expected the new regimes to continue, and, of central importance in our context, a multi-faceted system of border control in place along the external state boundaries of the Soviet Union. In the informal domain, states inherited strong regionally based patronage networks serving as the basis for the allocation of scarce economic and political resources and which had been instrumental in developing robust administrative-territorial identities. Far more contentious than discourses of an evolving new civil society has been the enforcing of the former administrative (i.e., internal, national) boundaries to adhere to new principles of national sovereign territory marked by external, state boundaries replete with the structures of border control: infrastructure such as roads and railways were constructed with supra-regional concerns in mind, that is, designed to link the periphery with the centre in the Russian part of the Union, and therefore they cross the new boundaries frequently and arbitrarily. Similarly, control over water resources, exclusively to be found in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan but mainly of importance in the cotton fields and urban areas of downstream states, has led to frequent and on-going boundary conflicts between all the Central Asian Republics, in particular between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan[347]. The area of research underlying this thesis contains one such former internal, national boundary, and its mutation into a state boundary will reveal these two states' post-Soviet discourses of control as enacted at this new interface.

The focus of this sub-chapter is on how the three states concerned have fared in their pursuit of border control and deep borderland control in the years following the end of the Soviet Union and the time of enforced alienation between Chinese and Central Asian borderlands and their populations. All three states have been forced to rethink discourses of control playing out in the Kyrgyz and Tajik/Pamiri borderlands – alienation as a metaphor for the status of the wider Borderland region has come to be replaced with careful reconnection (in the Xinjiang cases) and discrepancies between borderlander interests and state ability to structure co-existence. Each of the following sections discusses the elements underlying actually implemented borderland processes within the respective states, the actors involved therein and their relationship with borderlanders, narratives presented by states targeting the new exposure of borderlanders to neighbouring borderland populations, and, centrally, the realities of borderlanders' power in renegotiating and possibly influencing state discourses of control over their homeland units. This last point presents the core of analysis (actual borderlander lifeworlds in their respective state environments) and revolves

[347] For an excellent and comprehensive overview of all boundary conflicts in post-Soviet Central Asia, see Polat (2002).

around my inquiry into the degree of tactical/organisational power (in Eric Wolf's (1990) sense; see Chapter 1) that borderlanders wield within their borderland settings. It will be seen that such power does indeed rest in the hands of some of our borderlanders here: the Tajikistani state's lack of structural power, i.e., its control going beyond the merely symbolic, is part of a narrative of 'dwindling', and borderlanders (be they Kyrgyz or Pamiri) have succeeded in co-opting the forces of border control and in constructing new trans-frontier structures. The Kyrgyzstani state's dysfunctionality in regard to wielding control over its *oblasts* is expressed in the burgeoning political power of the various administrative regions including our borderlands. In Xinjiang, however, borderlanders will be seen to wield but interpersonal power rather than being able to structure political relations themselves – restructuring here has led to borderlanders being able to control discourses of power between the *minzu* but not with the state.

Badakhshan as Part of a "Dwindled State"

"Tajikistan as a state may have dwindled from its Soviet size but Badakhshan's [i.e., GBAO's (S.P.)] boundary is still Tajikistan's boundary!" This was the final statement in a conversation I had inadvertently provoked at a café in Dushanbe in late October 2005 when talking to two acquaintances about the withdrawal of Russian borderguards from Tajikistan: Aziza, a thirty-year-old woman from Khorog in GBAO, and Malohat, a retired local Dushanbe resident describing himself as 'just a Tajik'. Both had lost family members in the vicious civil war that had wracked Tajikistan between (officially) 1992 and 1997 yet both had friends today both in western Tajikistan and in GBAO. The emotionally charged outburst had been the result of these two Tajikistanis' differing opinions on whether the Tajikistani state would be able to 'protect' the boundaries to Afghanistan as well as the Russians had in the past and, as a last provocation, Aziza's belief that new trans-frontier trade opportunities with Xinjiang should first and foremost be to the benefit of the Pamiri population rather than the 'corrupt' Tajikistani government.

GBAO and the Civil War

The Soviet system of regionalising indigenisation with its effect of politically empowering certain regionally based groups over others had benefited mainly Tajiks from the Leninabad region (today's Khojand in the Tajikistani Ferghana Valley), and power in the Tajik SSR had generally been wielded by members of that local elite[348]; while GBAO had enjoyed preferential treatment under the Soviet system (as discussed in Chapter 4), Pamiris had been largely excluded from political power in Dushanbe throughout the Soviet period. With the dissolution of the Union and the rise of Tajik nationalist rhetoric and the explicit targeting of the large group of Pamiri living in Dushanbe and the Vakhsh valley in western Tajikistan by local armed gangs (Jonson 2006:42), a newly formed Badakhshani political party (Lal-i Badakhshan, 'Ruby of Badakhshan') declared independence from the Tajikistani state in late 1991. The immediate effect of this was the imposition of blockades against the

[348] For an excellent overview of factionalism in the Tajik SSR and changing patterns in Tajikistan, see Collins (2006:280-285).

break-away *oblast*, the left-overs of which are still evident in form of the internal borderland checkpoints between GBAO and Tajikistan proper. De facto, until 1997 GBAO was independent from the government, and its re-integration into the state was not accomplished until after the Taliban had taken power in Afghanistan and thereby provoked a Russian initiative to present a 'united front' against radical Islamic groups from the south (Bliss 2006:274-5). The peace deal brokered in 1997 by Russia, Iran, and the United Nations in effect resulted in maintaining the status quo of political power concentrated in the Communist Party successor regime of President Rakhmonov even if the regional group now in power was not from Leninabad/Khojand but rather from Kulyab – GBAO and its regional elites were completely excluded from these negotiations, its population swollen by displaced persons from western Tajikistan and its heavily subsidised economy irrevocably ruined.

The civil war has had severe consequences for the lives of people living in GBAO and has affected the borderland discourses in all domains, as the rest of this section will discuss. *First*, the open politicisation of regional loyalties based on locale, present but hidden during the Soviet period, has included discourses of religious affiliation and differentiation between Ismaili Pamiri and Sunni Tajiks and the Sunni Kyrgyz of Murghab (Roy 1998): the declaration of Badakhshani independence in 1991 was legitimised by mobilising a discourse of national difference between Pamiri and Tajiks that revolved around Stalin's criteria of "what constitutes a nation" and extended to include the argument that the Ismaili faith was incompatible with the Sunni traditions of the non-Pamiri titular majority (an argument that had never been possible during Soviet times due to its emphasis on religious identity). In numerous interviews Pamiri today emphasise that there is no religious tension with Tajiks as such but that the rise of 'Tajik Islamic radicalism' as perceived by the Ismailis of GBAO is incompatible with peaceful coexistence within the Tajikistani state.

Second, the vagaries of the war and its aftermath have caused shifts in the distribution of the Pamiri within Tajikistan and abroad as well as within GBAO itself. Many returned to their hometowns in GBAO to escape personal persecution in the 1990s[349] (Chatterjee 2002:110) while others made use of Soviet-era personal networks to migrate to Russia (where possibly around 20,000 live today). The swelling of GBAO's population beyond the even remotely sustainable maximum in this marginal region has had severe repercussions on the relations between Pamiri and the Kyrgyz of Murghab, up to 35 percent of which left for Kyrgyzstan during the war[350]. Russians from Dushanbe and also from Khorog left for Russia at this time (Poujol 1998:101) and thereby caused critical brain-drain in regional administration and the education sectors (Bliss 2006:278).

[349] Bliss (2006:276) concludes that between 30,000 and 50,000 people fled to GBAO in the 1990s. Furthermore, up to 100,000 people were killed in the fighting, with many more raped and traumatised.
[350] Personal interview with Ken Nakanishi of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, September 2005, in Bishkek, himself a long-term resident of Bishkek and advisor to Japanese research councils and the Japanese embassy there.

Third, the economic collapse precipitated by the withdrawal of Soviet subsidies was made complete with the destruction of much infrastructure and the closing of businesses during the war. As a consequence, new local economies arose: the Kyrgyz in Murghab with their production of meat and the establishment of networks to Kyrgyzstan that could enable the sale of their produce at the bazaar in Osh attained a form of local power through guaranteeing the survival of Murghab residents; the Russian/CIS borderguards stationed along the boundaries to Xinjiang and Afghanistan became local motors of employment and represented the major purchasers of goods at the pathetically understocked bazaars at the time in GBAO; and the trade in narcotics such as opium and, increasingly, heroin from Afghanistan grew immeasurably (see Madi 2004).

Fourth, the war in Tajikistan directly resulted in the penetration of GBAO by two outside forces: on the one hand, the imposition of non-local border control in form of Russian/CIS bordertroops that guarded the boundaries to Xinjiang and Afghanistan (basically a continuation of Soviet border control) and, on the other, the aid agencies of the Aga Khan Foundation that took care of the import of supplies to the starving population of GBAO. Both of these supra-state actors were introduced into the borderland in 1993 and were to remain fundamental components of the political realities of GBAO: I argue in the following that it has been through *these* two agencies rather than through the post-Soviet state of Tajikistan that trans-frontier networks have been circumscribed and that discourses of control as well as deep borderland control have been negotiated.

New Supra-state Dynamics in GBAO

From 1993 until 2000 the entire *oblast*, experiencing up to 90% unemployment and terrible starvation, was run by the Aga Khan Foundation which, to this day, remains the largest provider of jobs, development programmes, and infrastructural maintenance and support[351]. In fact the involvement of this supra-state Ismaili organisation in GBAO has had far-reaching implications for this borderland both domestically and across the boundary to Afghanistan in terms of creating new avenues of contact such as new border bridges and roads that supercede state-sanctioned policies of permissible trajectories, thus effectively competing with the Tajikistani state. The Aga Khan, spiritual head of the Ismailiyya, quickly moved to lend substantial financial support to the Pamiri and he is widely seen by the inhabitants of GBAO as "having saved Pamiri lives when the Tajikistani state could not have cared less"[352]. Indeed, with the war and the subsequent drying up of supplies organised by the state, local administration within the *oblast* basically lost all efficacy in providing the fundamental necessities of life to the inhabitants, and the administration's legitimacy became void in the eyes of the population. The Aga Khan's support agencies over the following years came to institutionalise a system of 'coordinators' elected informally by locals at the lowest administrative level of the *qishloq* who took charge of such supplies, the distribution of food,

[351] For a more in-depth overview of the functions and structures of the Aga Khan Foundation and its related Mountain Society Development Support Programme (MSDSP) see Chatterjee (2002:111) and Bliss (2006:297-329).
[352] Interview with Aziza, October 2005, in Dushanbe. Echoed verbatim by Ergash, November 2005, in Murghab.

and, increasingly, the communication of the need for locals' involvement in infrastructural schemes such as road maintenance and the formalisation of market places. By and large, the individuals thus employed were well-educated men and women such as teachers and Soviet-era *kolkhoz* notables who supported the Aga Khan's revolutionary call for land privatisation in GBAO[353]; according to interviews, frequently the incipient new village-level elite were Pamiri returnees from other parts of Tajikistan. Since 2000, the direct influence of the Aga Khan Foundation has been diluted by the introduction of new NGOs in GBAO[354] as well as a shift in the organisation's financial support from GBAO across the boundary to Afghanistan and the substantial Ismaili population there[355]; it is since then that new boundary-transcending infrastructure has been most actively promoted in the form of bridges at Khorog (erected 2003/4) and other settlements along the Pyanj River.

Picture 29: Bridge across the Pyanj river between GBAO and Afghanistan at Roshan (financed by the Aga Khan Foundation)

The second non-local, non-Tajikistani actor present in GBAO that has critically influenced the way in which this borderland has experienced the Tajikistani state's discourses of control over its borderlanders has been the Russian and CIS military forces charged by the Russian Federation with guarding the post-Soviet frontier with Afghanistan. The dissolution of the Union stranded three bodies of such forces on Tajikistani territory: an airforce

[353] As Bliss (2006:308) discusses, 'privatisation' in GBAO, which is unique in Tajikistan, means 'private land management' rather than 'private land use'. This difference points to the fact that land may not be owned but rather is leased and that this lease is inheritable on former *sovkhoz* lands; in addition, 'managers' of pasture land in Murghab *raion* are, as opposed to in the rest of GBAO, exempt from all land tax (Robinson 2005:204) meaning that Kyrgyz herders around Murghab are unpopularly given an edge in the local GBAO economy.
[354] Such as the French NGO 'Acted' that has established a strong presence in Murghab.
[355] Interview with Mullo-Abdol Shagarf, November 2005, in Khorog.

regiment, the infamous 201st Motor Rifle Division[356], and, significantly, the border troops of the KGB – the *pogranichniki* discussed in detail in Chapter 5. The lack of a Tajikistani Ministry of Defense at the time of independence and the non-existence of a regular army throughout the civil war gave the new state very little say in the continued presence of these troops and the boundaries to Xinjiang and Afghanistan remained firmly under control of the KGB (now renamed FSB) of the Ministry of the Interior of the Russian Federation rather than Tajikistan. The old Soviet system of the *zapretnaya pogranichnaya zona* (forbidden borderzone) was upheld and, thus, Tajikistani sovereignty over its territory was entirely a myth until their official final withdrawal in 2005: internal borderland access to GBAO was granted by these Russian troops just as was movement within GBAO – entirely as in the Soviet period. The make-up of these forces is crucial to understanding their gatekeeper function in regard to borderlander negotiation with these 'occupiers': the 201st consisted overwhelmingly of a Russian professional cadre of officers and a large number of Tajik conscripts, mainly from the west of the state; the *pogranichniki*, with their personnel bases in Murghab, Khorog, and three other towns, consisted of an entirely Russian officer cadre and mainly Tajikistani citizens (many of whom were Russians) and reported directly to State Security in Moscow (Orr 1998:156). When the civil war ended and the Tajikistani state began to implement its desire to militarily control its own territory, conflict between decommissioned guerilla forces now serving in the new Tajikistani Army and the Russian military forces was unavoidable and actual on-the-ground stability was not guaranteed by anyone except the afore-mentioned Russian forces until after 2001 (Jonson 2006:46-7). As far as has become evident in interviews in Khorog and Murghab with local residents of these towns, by 1998 local militias in GBAO that had been set up during the war were cooperating with the Russian troops in ensuring a minimum of social order and assuming the administraive duties of the Tajikistani state such as the checking of *propuski* – Tajikistani military forces did not penetrate GBAO until after the road linking Khorog with Dushanbe (that had been destroyed in the war) was restored in 2004, and the Tajikistani KGB and Ministry of the Interior with its OVIR (Division of Visas and Registration) department did not begin wielding control over the means of movement within its borderlands until 2005. Thus, internal control over the borderland was exclusively enacted by non-local forces until just before the period of my field research. In other words, cognitively, the Tajikistani state had been invisible in deep borderland control with locals experiencing what control there was as a direct structural continuation of Soviet discourses of control.

Borderlander Power in GBAO and Murghab

With the Tajikistani state weak (its institutions riddled with localised factions and their particularistic individual interests) and distant (the infrastructural avenues to its eastern periphery increasingly physically impassable and controlled by outside forces), discourses of control over GBAO have evinced a considerable disparity between constitutional power and local implementation. With the direct nomination of the GBAO

[356] The 201st MRD was part of the 40th Army in the Afghanistan invasion in 1979 and has developed a name for itself as both an elite force as well as a form of Russian 'Foreign Legion'. See Orr (1998) for an excellent overview.

gubernator and the individual *hokkims* in the eight *raions* of GBAO, the president of the Tajikistani state wields direct and centralised control over executive power at the supra-*qishloq* level. Similarly, the KGB in GBAO as well as local branches of OVIR belonging to the MVD, all of which are directly subordinated to the state-wide respective ministries, tie the *oblast* directly to Tajikistani state institutions[357]. However, on the ground, the rise of the new class of *rais qishloq* (village chiefs) empowered by the Aga Khan Foundation has, I believe, led to a new form of political interaction in the everyday lives of GBAO's population that, until very recently, was notable for the glaring absence of the Tajikistani state and its representatives (the *gubernator* of the *oblast* and the *hokkims* of the *raions*) in decision-making processes that produce the framework for economic survival throughout GBAO (see below). It is these village organisations who in effect have been the driving force behind implementing new infrastructural connectivity – the formal administrative structure of government in GBAO with its departments of construction and irrigation, while technically subject to the respective state-wide departments in Dushanbe, is financed almost exclusively through the Aga Khan Foundation and therefore in reality dependent on this supra-state organisation's demands for local involvement.

Such demands have had their effect in terms of borderlander involvement in acting out as much autonomy as possible within the given framework, most evident in their political representation at the *oblast* level. The tensions brought to light in interviews between the Kyrgyz population of Murghab and the Pamiri majority of the *oblast* are exacerbated by Kyrgyz under-representation in local government: most officials today are Pamiri with a few Tajiks in important departments, but the only visible Kyrgyz in the political life of Murghab *raion* is the *hokkim* there – and he thanks his position exclusively to the central government in Dushanbe. While this *hokkim* wields a great deal of effective power (for example through his channeling of state subsidies and priorisation of projects, or in decisions such as the afore-mentioned tax exemption for pasture-users), he is widely seen by people as "feudal, non-representative, and non-democratic"; furthermore, many Pamiri locals fear this member of the local Kyrgyz elite's power to contest the Aga Khan's project implementation by supporting projects primarily benefiting the Kyrgyz rather than Pamiri population[358]. However, the forces of the KGB in the *oblast* (i.e., the local KGB) are almost exclusively Pamiri alongside a number of Tajik personnel; while precise numbers are unobtainable, it seems as if many of the SSR-level KGB cadre in the late Soviet period were indeed Pamiri due to the perception of central authorities of their more trustworthy nature than their Tajik counterparts in regard to the Afghanistan conflict (Roy 1998:146), although most of these

[357] See *Constitutional Law of the Republic Tadzhikistan On The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region* (adopted November 4th 1995), reprinted and translated in Butler (1999). Other departments subjected to central rather than *oblast* control are the Financial Department, Customs, the military Commissariat, the Construction Department, and water and power departments; education, significantly, is not subject to such central control.

[358] Again, the new land law is a good example and often mentioned by Pamiri to underscore this point because it primarily affects pastoralist individuals (traditionally the Kyrgyz) rather than the subsistence agriculture practised by most Pamiri. Incidentally, it has also been this *hokkim*'s efforts that have enforced a quota regulation on locals' employment by NGOs: today, such organisations (including the Aga Khan Foundation) are obliged to hire more Kyrgyz than Pamiri in Murghab *raion*.

officers did not actually serve in GBAO. After their forced removal during the civil war, and in the process of reconciliation thereafter, it was such personnel who came to constitute the local GBAO KGB – Kyrgyz were never represented in the Tajik SSR's security forces and have similarly never been visible in independent Tajikistan. Thus, an institutional conflict is evident between Kyrgyz borderlanders and their Pamiri counterparts: Kyrgyz have been granted local level power by the centre whilst being shut out from regional level power. Seen by non-Kyrgyz locals as a potential threat to Pamiri regional negotiations of autonomy with the central government through their potentially subversive access to Kyrgyzstan[359], the Kyrgyz local elite embody a trans-frontier elite. The new Pamiri elites, many of them Soviet cadre and members of the ancien regime's *apparat* outside of the then Tajik SSR, were never a nationalised borderland elite in respect to the Tajikistani political entity but very much were in respect to the Soviet state – now they are poised to become a trans-frontier borderland elite in an evolving wider Pamiri/Badakhshani Borderland that is being reconnected to the Ismaili areas of Afghanistan (but not Xinjiang; see below).

Borderlander power in terms of their engagement with discourses of control within GBAO is most significant in Tajikistani Kyrgyz and Pamiri borderlanders' ability to co-opt members of the security forces. Such co-optation takes place not at a political level but in the crucial economic domain: the local inhabitants of GBAO provide non-KGB forces[360] with the basics of survival – meat, clothes, medical aid, and sometimes accommodation. Conditions in barracks housing borderguards and the military conscripts 'patrolling' the *pogranichnaya zona* are abysmal with most of the installations one would expect to encounter therein (such as stoves, radio equipment, bedding, and even ammunition) having, in the words of one teenage Tajik conscript at Karakul, "disappeared along with the Russians who used to be here". An involuntary visit to one such barracks near Murghab directly confronted me with the misery in which the rank-and-file of the agents of border control and the state's military have to live nowadays[361]:

> The temperature inside the decrepit building was around zero degrees and the three recruits off duty were lying on an uncovered bedspread in the only clothes they possessed – a mixture of new Russian and threadbare Soviet uniforms complete with hammer and sickle and red star. One of them was coughing blood while the other two played cards. The place where the stove for heating and cooking had been was marked by soot and the larder contained a crate of rotting potatoes and rice. The officer who had brought me here marched me to his 'desk', that is, his bed, and we sat there while he told me about life in the Pamirs: "three years I'll be stuck here for if I don't come down with tuberculosis like that guy there – he's only still here because we haven't found the transport yet to get him down to Khorog. But the worst thing here is the walking: we are supposed to patrol many miles of the *zona* on foot but look at my boots! They're full of holes. Shit, if I had money I'd buy yours off you; actually, if I were

[359] See the discussion of new trans-frontier trajectories in the next sub-chapter.

[360] Members of the KGB are better paid than individuals belonging to the MVD or military forces. Even more importantly, the KGB has not had significant periods in which members were left unpaid due to the state's bankruptcy whereas other state employees (including the military) have at times received no salaries for several years.

[361] Visited November 2005. I quote my field diary entry here instead of the photograph I was asked to take and then show to 'somebody important in Dushanbe' because I prefer to keep the individuals involved anonymous.

> Kyrgyz I'd probably just take them off you. But I don't and I'm not – we Tajiks aren't like that. Maybe you have a spare pair? A friend lost three toes to frostbite last year…". Lice-infested and sickened by the squalor, I gave him my left-over rations and left as soon as he had checked my passport.

Talking about this experience with locals in Murghab and Karakul I realised that many people shared my sympathy with these men despite their role as representatives of an unpopular and 'corrupt' Tajikistani state. Locals, at least in these two settlements, see it as being in their own interest to supply these barracks as far as possible with their own meagre means to ensure "good neighbourly relations", in effect a type of reciprocity that makes life bearable for state personnel whilst simultaneously enabling local borderlanders to go about their own lives with a minimum of interference[362]:

> Actually, we are just doing what we always used to do. In Soviet times the *sovkhoz* had to provide free food to the *pogranichniki*; during the [civil] war, the Russians then became important purchasers of our produce, actually the only buyers at the market; after the war they then started to hire locals for menial jobs in the barracks and for surveillance; and today, after the Russians, we now provide for them again! [*grinning*] A cycle, I suppose. Thus, while before we just had to give, now we give again but for that they don't check our papers quite as stringently and our daughters and wives don't have to worry like they used to when the unaccountable Soviet forces were here because they so depend on us. Of course it would be best if they weren't here in the first place, but then we might have Taliban or the Chinese instead – and that would be far worse!

In other words, in post-war Tajikistan and since the cessation of direct outside control of its boundaries, the power of officially licensed gatekeepers within GBAO has been severely curtailed through their dependency on borderlanders for their survival – the state has become unable to pursue effective control over its borderlanders' movement except at a handful of checkpoints staffed by KGB personnel and centred around Khorog, the seat of the GBAO government and the locale of the remaining Russian 'advisers' to Tajikistani border control. Borderlanders have attained a *modus vivendi* with the agents of border control in GBAO, and this leads me to conclude that discourses of control over this borderland as enacted in everyday lives are merely symbolic in nature and do not translate into actual control over either territory or local loyalties[363]. These loyalties are evolving in two different directions for the two groups of borderlanders involved in GBAO: Murghab Kyrgyz increasingly find their livelihoods connected to the wider Kyrgyz Borderland (as extending into Kyrgyzstan) whilst Pamiri find themselves in a renewed environment of lifeworlds being influenced by supra-state and (in regard to new trajectories to Afghanistan) trans-frontier processes.

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[362] Interview with an elderly local man, November 2005, in Karakul.

[363] To return to a theme briefly sketched in Chapter 5 in regard to the mythological imagery surrounding the Soviet *pogranichniki*, local tales of the endemic corruption to be found amongst post-Soviet agents of border control throughout former Soviet territories could not more succinctly reveal a fundamental disjuncture or inversion of the symbolism of guarding boundaries.

"Kyrgyzstan – Whose State is That?"

The state of Kyrgyzstan has experienced its own sequence of post-independence internal political realignments, contestations of legitimacy, and fragmentation whilst simultaneously pursuing a narrative of nationalisation that largely operates within the Soviet-era framework of nation and state. A central element figuring in Kyrgyzstan's transition, and possibly the most dominant discourse in the interaction between the *oblasts* and the new government in Bishkek, has been the pervasion of the new *apparat* by clans seeking to consolidate their Soviet-era horizontal bonds (Collins 2006:225) and preserve their bargaining power with central authorities. It is readily observable that effective power in the *oblasts* is wielded by members of elites empowered during the Soviet era who over that time had established a vibrant network tying inhabitants to the fate of the regional and local elites. In effect, the central government in Bishkek relies on clan networks both to maintain its own position at the centre as well as to retain nominal control over Kyrgyzstani territory. At the same time, institutional weakness of state authorities is also reflected in newly arising processes of inclusion and exclusion within Kyrgyzstan, thereby supporting a new narrative of 'true belonging' within a state that has sought to legitimate itself by employing symbols of Kyrgyz-ness over symbols of 'fraternal cooperation' between the different ethnic groups living on what is increasingly seen as *Kyrgyz* territory rather than *Kyrgyzstani* territory. A Dungani friend, the teenage daughter of a Dungani family that has been resident in Bishkek since the late 19th century, had this to say about how her immediate family members experience present-day feelings of exclusion within Kyrgyzstani society[364]:

> I always thought that Kyrgyzstan was a country for Kyrgyzstani citizens. But not all Kyrgyzstani are alike! Sometimes I think the Kyrgyz want us out because they think we're Chinese and don't belong on this side of the border. I have a Kyrgyz name because my father wanted it thus so that authorities wouldn't take advantage or I'd have problems getting into Kyrgyz school. He always says that before independence we had autonomy rights, you know like schools and the like, but now our freedom resides only in being able to decide to leave this country and go maybe to Russia. We're not rich like some Dungani so nobody is jealous of my family as they are with other families – no, they just don't like us because we claim a different history, you know, without Manas and all that. So do the Russians who are still here, but they at least are seen as sophisticated and strong.

This sentiment is shared by many non-Kyrgyz Kyrgyzstani citizens today, in particular since the Tulip Revolution of March 2005 that vividly showed how easily non-Kyrgyz could become the target of physical violence and political criticism. Elections since then have further sidelined the political representation of minorities, and debates over 'the designs' of groups such as the Dungani and Uighurs have focused on the perceived lack of their loyalty to the Kyrgyzstani state and their potentially subversive connections to the PRC[365].

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[364] Interview with Nazgul, October 2005, in Bishkek.

[365] Rumours abound relating to Dungani acting as middlemen for Chinese businesses buying prime real estate in the capital (which can only be done by Kyrgyzstani citizens), or Uighur 'mafias' intent on 'bleeding' the state dry so that the PRC could wield more economic control over Kyrgyzstan. See, for example, *The Times of Central Asia* article "The Chinese Expansionist Threat in Kyrgyzstan" (September 30th 2005) that compares Dungani and Uighurs in Kyrgyzstan to Overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*) on the eve of the Vietnamese – Chinese war of 1979.

State-building and 'Nationalisation'

To create unified and distinctive states and impart a sense of common destiny to their members, processes of national identity formation must build on the symbolic resources at the state's disposal. All ruling elites in the Central Asian Republics accord great meaning to the ideology of unity of the titular nation (as retained in all cases from the Soviet-era definition of the term) and the strengthening of this group identity vis-à-vis other identities within the state (Smith et al. 1998). Thus, the political representation of the Kyrgyz takes precedence over that of the minority Uighurs, Dungani, and others in Kyrgyzstan. The emphasis in much state discourse is on the 'glorious history' of the respective titular group and the historiographic continuities from the days of yore that are presented as rooting the homeland in history, with Kyrgyzstan adopting the mythical hero Manas as a state symbol and promoting the orally transmitted epic to the level of a text said to represent and incorporate the 'mentality of all Kyrgyz' (Lowe 2003:116-7).

Picture 30: Statue of Manas in Bishkek

The tacit belief, and in the case of Kyrgyzstan this has been cemented in the Constitution, is that the titular nation has exclusive ownership rights to 'the land' and that its members especially should benefit from new-found freedoms. It follows that a key component of the nationalisation process in post-Soviet Central Asia has been the steady indigenisation of those who wield institutional power, thereby, I suggest, completing a process begun under Soviet *korenizatsiya*. However, while the Soviet version thereof employed quotas to represent the distribution of different groups in the SSRs' populations, today's indigenisation looks suspiciously like what Soviet authorities would have described as 'local chauvinism': qualified non-titular doctors or teachers, for example, are replaced by less qualified colleagues of the 'correct' titular category, language laws are passed that marginalize the non-

titular languages[366], and employment in administration is generally reserved for Kyrgyz rather than Kyrgyzstani.

In the 1993 Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, a distinction is made between the 'Kyrgyz *natsiya'* and 'the people of Kyrgyzstan', i.e., between nationality (in the Soviet sense) and citizenship (Preamble of the 1993 Constitution, emphases added):

> We, the people of Kyrgyzstan, striving to provide *national revival of the Kyrgyz*, the protection and development of all nationalities, forming *along with the Kyrgyz* the people of Kyrgyzstan, based on the commandment of the ancestors to live in unity, peace and concordance, [...] wishing to confirm ourselves as a free and democratic civil society among the peoples of the world, in the face of our authorized representatives, hereby adopt this Constitution.

Kyrgyzstan does not administratively recognise any AOs (as opposed to Tajikistan's GBAO or Uzbekistan's Karakalpakstan) for any of the diverse *narodnost* or *natsionalnost* on its territory and does not pursue a system of quota representation for these groups; thus, in 1995, ethnic Kyrgyz represented some 60 percent of the electorate but held over 80 percent of the state parliament's seats (Smith et al. 1998:152). Such over-representation of the titular nation has sparked fears amongst other groups of discriminatory policies and unofficial discrimination in everyday life (Allès 2005:132-3). When Feliks Kulov, the newly installed vice-president following the Tulip Revolution with a very chequered political past, mentioned at a rally personally attended by myself[367] that 'Dungani farmers are only better farmers than Kyrgyz because they have squeezed Kyrgyz families off the better land in the Chui Valley [around Bishkek]' and that this would be resolved 'through land redistribution in favour of the Kyrgyz', cheers were raised amongst spectators whilst Nazgul, the Dungani friend with whom I attended the rally, shuddered and muttered darkly about 'Kyrgyz chauvinism' and 'ethnic cleansing' akin to "what happened with Dungani families in Bishkek when they were evicted from their apartments by authorities saying they didn't possess the proper lease contracts – and then all those apartments were given to Kyrgyz who had supported Bakiev [the new President] in the Revolution".

In Kyrgyzstan much emphasis has been placed on over-coming what is commonly perceived as the divide between the heavily Russified northern part and the more traditionally-minded southern part of the state (Lowe 2003). Sub-national allegiances in this 'weakest' of states in regard to top-down state-building policies[368] remain strong and an 'in-gathering' of diasporic Kyrgyz communities has not taken place to the degree that it has in

[366] Kyrgyzstan, however, has implemented such language laws in a more pragmatic way than, for example, Kazakhstan has done (Dave 2004) by guaranteeing "the preservation, equality and free development and functioning of the Russian language" (1993 Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, Article 5). In Kazakhstan one often encounters the joke that President Nazarbaev, who could not speak a word of Kazakh when he passed the law that made Kazakh the sole language of state, clandestinely started visiting Kazakh language courses.

[367] October 2005 on Ala-Too Square, central Bishkek. This was during the on-going power struggle between himself and President Bakiev that had ensued following the Revolution that spring. I paraphrase from memory.

[368] Weak in the sense of not having developed a narrative of authoritarian central control such as has been the case in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and to a certain degree in Kazakhstan; see Jones-Luong 2004b.

Kazakhstan since independence. The debate over the abolishment of the infamous Soviet-era 'fifth column' in Kyrgyzstani passports was, after attempts by the government to abandon it in favour of the ethnically neutral line 'citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic', hijacked by more nationalistically-minded pressure groups and re-instituted, thereby leading Kyrgyzstan to retain the potentially discriminatory line denoting ethnic affiliation by descent[369] (Smith et al. 1998:155). While until 1997 the government more or less freely issued Kyrgyzstani passports to migrants arriving from war-torn Tajikistan, who frequently described themselves as 'ethnic Kyrgyz' from Murghab or Jirgital (in the southern Pamir Alay mountains just south of the Kyrgyzstan boundary), tensions have risen over the perceived influx of rural Southerners (described locally as *myrk*, see the last part of this chapter) into the suburbs of Bishkek in the north, especially since they are seen by educated Bishkekis as supporting the so-called Tulip Revolution of March 2005 that ended decades of northern control over political power within Kyrgyzstan. Prior to independence, and for most of the Soviet era, political power had rested with powerful elites from Naryn *oblast*, an area felt to belong to northern Kyrgyzstan. Akin to GBAO, Naryn's population generally benefited from high education and preferential treatment in terms of lucrative and prestigious employment with the security and border forces, a situation which was to come to an end with the withdrawal of Russian/CIS border troops.

Regional Faultlines and Local Loyalties

As discussed in Chapter 4, the Soviet system of *korenizatsiya* with its concomitant territorialisation of national identities and state loyalties had been subverted in Socialist Central Asia, and in Kyrgyzstan had resulted in a regionalisation of these along internal administrative lines. With Kyrgyzstani independence, such regionalised networks that had been institutionalised during the Soviet era became mandatory for survival during the economic woes that have wracked the state ever since (Jones-Luong 2004b:272): the post-Soviet local *raion* and regional *oblast* elites maintain their power through their abilities to provide employment opportunities or access to resources just as in the past except that, as opposed to the times of the Soviet state when that supra-regional actor had the capacity to use coercion or invest resources, now the weakness of the state in preventing subversion and direct contestation of central authority by regional elites is evident (Dave 2004:151-2). This conflict between the growing effective autonomy of *oblasts* and the increasing inability of central authorities to maintain state control over the economic and social domains of citizens' lives is exacerbated by the fact that the state is centrally dependent on support by regional leaders in maintaining a functioning system of institutions such as schools, police forces, and infrastructure maintenance: if regional leaders withdraw their support from the president,

[369] The fifth column distinguishes between an individual's citizenship and nationality (in the Marxist-Leninist sense of 'nation'); thus, minorities (i.e., non-Kyrgyz citizens of Kyrgyzstan) are, on the one hand, more frequently asked for bribes upon leaving the country or at traffic police checkpoints and, on the other hand, can find it more difficult to find employment.

the government falls, as was the case in the ignominious end to the Akaev regime that had governed Kyrgyzstan from 1991 until 2005[370].

With the undermining of central state authority by regional political elites in the crucial domains of the constitutional separation of powers, the independence of the judiciary, and government accountability, a monopolisation of state power in the *oblasts* has taken place, with *gubernators* acting there in a largely autonomous way. Thus, while *raion akims* are supposedly elected by the people of the *raion*, the choice of *akim* is in all instances I am aware of a matter for the *gubernator*. These *akims* tend to be individuals who under the Soviet system were *kolkhoz* 'notables' and have profited from the conversion of the state farms into 'private' shareholder farms[371], to name just one example that frequently figures in local discussions of the lack of state control over local livelihoods. Importantly in the context here of a characterisation of local and regional power structures in the weak Kyrgyzstani state, it is regional authorities (as represented in the *oblustuk kengesh*, provincial government) who wield control over individuals' access to resources.

Borderlander Power in Kyrgyzstan

Taking a closer look at the type of resources that the regional elites in Naryn and Osh *oblasts* control, we become immediately aware of these two borderlands' exposure to trans-frontier economic processes that have arisen since 1991. Here, the boundary represents one of these borderlands' primary resources: with increased traffic passing through settlements like Kochkor, Naryn, and At Bashy in the former *oblast*, and Gülchö and Sary Tash in the latter, a whole range of local borderlanders stand to gain from such transit. Thus, local police (either in form of traffic police or OVIR offices) levy fines or collect 'transit fees', local bazaars have a wider range of products on offer, and locals can 'service' boundary crossers by offering accommodation, local transport, catering options, menial services such as repairs, or by operating in the domain of the 'second' economy (in particular illegal currency exchange and prostitution). While it is important to bear in mind that all Kyrgyzstan's *oblasts* except the City of Bishkek are administrative borderlands, it is Naryn and Osh *oblasts* that present us with the greatest economic differential in relation to adjacent non-Kyrgyzstani territories due to their proximity to Xinjiang. In the next sub-chapter below I shall be closely analysing actual borderlander involvement in trans-frontier trajectories and their economic interaction with neighbouring segments of the Borderland, but here it remains for me to observe that at a structural level these borderland *oblasts* present us with a number of domains in which regional structures have provided a framework enabling greater penetration of Kyrgyzstani territory by trans-frontier actors regardless of what official policy has to say on this matter. Thus, banks in the settlements of Naryn and At Bashy (but not farther afield) have reduced

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[370] See Collins (2006:224-6 and 345-7) for a detailed overview of the interaction between clan leaders and President Akaev and how the removal of local support affected the regime.

[371] A topic that greatly exceeds the scope of this thesis, land reform in Kyrgyzstan, while theoretically performed through the institutions of the state (such as Gosregister, the State Registration Office) has increased the power of *raion* and *oblast* officials through their control of the local registration offices that arbitrate on land allocation to individuals. See Dekker (2003:62-3) for a discussion of Kyrgyzstani property regime transition and local power.

opening hours on days when the Torugart Pass is closed; in the summer months, the traditional Friday bazaar in Naryn is extended to last from Thursday morning until Friday evening and there is a smaller Tuesday market – this coincides with the busiest months of the Kashgar Sunday market in Xinjiang and enables truckers to offload goods with a minimum of storage delay; and, since early 2005, the Chinese broadcasting channel XJTV8 (a Kazakh-language station) has 'rented' relay stations in both Naryn and Sary Tash and started to broadcast a daily one-hour Kyrgyz-language programme with advertising content, Manas recitals (by PRC Kyrgyz), and market information – the only such trans-frontier media penetration along the entire length of the former Sino-Soviet frontier so far (including the Russian Far East) and a likely precursor to the first ever mobile telecommunication network to overcome the electronic silence boundary-crossers until today encounter when attempting to use mobile roaming services[372]. Further south, in southern Osh *oblast*, a political anomaly points to hidden subversive processes involving regional governments rather than the Kyrgyzstani state: the rental of the territory surrounding the village of Sary Mogol (to the west of Sary Tash near the Tajikistani boundary) by GBAO. Not mentioned in official Kyrgyzstani statistics I am aware of as a 'Tajikistani enclave' (as opposed to the 'island' of Vorukh in the Kyrgyzstani segment of the Ferghana Valley which is officially regarded as Tajikistani territory), the annual payments that accrue are made to Osh and not to Bishkek, a blatant case of an *oblast* engaging in what has in effect become territorial negotiations involving two states' territorial sovereignty.

In reference to Naryn *oblast*, one interviewee, himself a member of the local elite in the Kochkor *raion* within that *oblast*, described the framework of the borderland elites' negotiation with the central state by invoking images of his home's geographic peripherality and the weakness of the central state in structuring discourses of control in Kyrgyzstan's regions[373]:

> The freedom of the *oblast* from the authorities' meddling and the wealth we can generate and keep here locally all depends on the personage of the *gubernator* – if he astutely selects his *akims* and can rely on the people to elect his candidates then he can wield much power in Bishkek and the presidential *apparat* will have to leave us alone. Actually, they [the state] should be thankful if the Sarybagysh [clan] resolutely governs Naryn – I mean, they can't even ensure peace and stability in the capital [a reference to the Tulip Revolution and the subsequent lootings (S.P.)] so how would they want to do that out in the Tian Shan? Naryn is a frontier land [*granicheskaya zemlya*] and thus more independent, but don't you worry – we'll keep the Chinese out.

Border control, or rather local beliefs of whether the borderland is best situated to take care of protecting local interests, becomes an indicator of borderlander power in terms of their engagement with discourses of control within their respective *oblasts*, most significantly

[372] Neither China Unicom (the largest Chinese provider) nor the Central Asian network providers are permitted to offer roaming services on the respective other side of the boundary; at present, the only roaming opportunities are through Russian mobile network providers. According to the main office of Kyrgyz Bitel (Kyrgyzstan's main provider), such a service was planned in Naryn *oblast* for 2007 "pending permission by the *gubernator*" (June 2006).

[373] Interview with Kanai, September 2005, in Bishkek.

expressed in local institutions' ability to exclude directives pertaining to deep borderland control as enacted by the forces of border control. As opposed to the situation in Tajikistan's GBAO, where local co-optation takes place in the economic domain, in Kyrgyzstan's borderlands local power rests at a political level. In theory, and according to a high-ranking official at the Military Border Patrol Service office in Bishkek, access to the *zapretnaya zona* beyond At Bashy (for Torugart) and Sary Tash (for either Irkeshtam or Qyzyl Art) must be applied for in all cases regardless of the identity of the individual in question at this office in conjunction with application to the state KGB in Bishkek – basically the Soviet gatekeeping scenario[374]. In reality, and as confirmed by the MVD office in Naryn or Osh (thus, the local branches of the state Ministry), this is only necessary for 'casual visitors to the zone', in other words foreign tourists on trekking tours, and only for stays of longer than 24 hours. This discrepancy reveals a fundamental dysfunctionality in Kyrgyzstani border control: the zone is patrolled (infrequently) by MVD personnel who should be enforcing individuals' possession of official *propuski* issued by the KGB but who in reality are accountable to *oblast* branches of the MVD. Locals who desire to enter the *zapretnaya zona*, for example in order to pursue pastoralist activities in the fertile lands surrounding the long off-limits boundary, do so unhindered if they have "good connections to somebody in office in one of the settlements in the *oblast* – in exchange for permission they usually offer produce or a slice of profit from the sale thereof. Certainly nobody bothers to ask Bishkek – neither the herder nor the official processing the request, and why should they? It would just take longer and cost money!"[375].

Picture 31: Herders in the *zapretnaya zona* near At Bashy (*Naryn* oblast)

The impotence of central state control over borderlander livelihoods is expressed locally in anecdotes revolving around how representatives of the state are outwitted by local

[374] Interview in June 2006, in Bishkek.
[375] Interview with Marat, July 2006, in Naryn.

officials. I have selected two for inclusion here due to both anecdotes' reference to situations directly related to the borderland nature of, in the first case, Sary Tash and, in the second, Naryn[376]. When discussing the visible presence of prostitutes near the checkpoint on the Irkeshtam road outside Sary Tash, the owner of a café there answered my question as to whether this was a recent local phenomenon with:

> No, they used to work the Russian *pogranichniki* and now they work the Chinese truckers. Once, not too long ago, a foreign health official working for the Public Health Department came from Bishkek who tried to warn these women about the dangers of AIDS but the *militia* [local police (S.P.)] got her out of town very quickly – they said she didn't have the right documents. Fancy that: a foreign woman comes here to tell women here not to fuck foreigners and our police tell her to *fuck off* [in English]!

Inquiring in Naryn as to the origin of the hundreds of Kyrgyzstani trucks loaded to the brim with all manner of scrap metal that thunder through the town week by week on their way towards the Chinese boundary, a mechanic at the bazaar stated:

> Have you ever noticed that the farther away you get from the boundary the fewer holes there are in the road? I mean, how many gaping holes in the pavement did you see in Talas or Karakol, for example? Ten years ago, you only found such holes here in Naryn; then they appeared in Kochkor, then Bishkek and Osh. The same holds true for lampposts, roofs, and drain pipes. All made of the metal that people strip from public places at night to sell to a trader who sells the stuff to China. It's our major export! Once, an official from Bishkek came to inspect the quality of roads here – he was shocked and threatened to sack the cadre of the *oblast* Department of Construction because nothing was being done. The next morning his car had been dismantled – sent back to China in parts as scrap metal!

While both of these statements indicate a degree of pride by locals in their borderland institutions being able to successfully contest central institutional power, naturally not all borderland developments enabled by local and regional elites and their agents are received benevolently by locals. A significant example frequently encountered in the context of locals openly disaffected by a lack of supervision of regional governments' power to challenge state laws is the construction of hotels for Chinese citizens by Chinese construction firms on prime real estate 'bought by Chinese' in both *oblast* centres. This relates to lax implementation of the law against non-Kyrgyzstani citizens buying property in Kyrgyzstan; whether or not it truly is Chinese citizens buying property or whether they do so through a Kyrgyzstani intermediary is irrelevant to those commenting on this violation[377]. The presence of such establishments is not seen as a potential benefit to local economies due to the fact that "it's Chinese who are imported to build the things and the taxes they have to pay go straight to the *akim* or *gubernator* – or both, along with a cut for the police. And the people staying there don't usually buy at our bazaars or hire locals. They're only permitted to be here because the [regional] officials earn money off them"[378].

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[376] Respectively, interview in November 2005 in Sary Tash, and in July 2006 in Naryn.

[377] Local authorities are, in my experience, exceedingly loath to disclose the exact identities of the purchasers and operators for fear of local resentment. Inquiries in Xinjiang all pointed to the fact that it truly is Chinese citizens who are involved in this, and in both cases I am aware of the *bingtuan* has been the institution behind the operation of these establishments.

[378] Interview with a bazaar salesman, December 2005, in Osh.

'Opening' and 'Remaking' Xinjiang

An article in the *China Daily* newspaper boldly claimed that, between 1990 and 2001, over 200 'terrorist' incidents occurred in the PRC's Xinjiang province that resulted in the deaths of 162 people and over 400 'individuals of different *minzu'* (January 21st 2002). The largest of these incidents started out in a town in Qyzyl Suu AP in April 1990 and spread quickly to engender similar violent unrest in Artush and Urumqi, allegedly killing up to 120 people on both the Kyrgyz and Chinese Army personnel sides (Clarke 2003:212). Immediate official reaction focused on the conclusion that "for a long time our Autonomous Region [of Xinjiang] did not have a unified vision that national separatism is the main danger [...]. The task of fighting ethnic separatism has not been carried out in a top-to-bottom fashion" (Yang et al. 1994, as quoted in Becquelin 2000:69). The result of this has been the *nei wan zhanlüe* (internal and external strategy): the weakening of trans-frontier subversion of the PRC through networks capable of providing logistical and ideological support to 'splittists' within Xinjiang, and the strengthening of trans-state agreements with the new states in Central Asia to ensure their cooperation in tackling the 'internal problem' of Chinese citizens based in Central Asia militating against Chinese discourses of control within Xinjiang. In regard to discourses between the borderlands and the various institutional levels of the Chinese state, outside authorities have been quick to subsume all elements structuring control over the borderland into the master narrative of economic development: an increase in the prosperity of lowest level communities is seen to be a panacea to locally held feelings of discrimination or marginalisation. In other words, it is hoped that increasing economic opportunity will decrease the likelihood of political instability at the periphery.

The major challenges to the PRC's form of central government has been to convince ethnic minorities that they will benefit more from cooperation with the state than from resistance to it – in other words, in the borderlands state loyalty would be promoted over the forging of close trans-frontier ties. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, policies towards the non-Han *minzu* in Xinjiang have undergone a remarkable transformation with one of the most visible changes being the resurgence of public observance of religious belief and the reappearance of traditional dress amongst Uighurs and other minorities as well as a dramatic rise in the number of mosques in Xinjiang's settlements[379]. Starting in the 1990s, minority policy has come under the increasing influence of economic policy because the government felt it had realised that poverty was the continuing burden of the minorities at the frontier with the best strategy for developing the regions economically being "a strengthening of the state through recentralisation [after the decentralised impetus of the 1980s] to ensure both economic growth and survival as a [state]" (Iredale et al. 2001:63). The fear that the enormous economic differential between the coastal regions and the hinterland would lead to centrifugal forces endangering the PRC's survival was widely distributed among CCP cadres throughout the country and, thus, the emphasis has come to be placed on unity based on a

[379] According to the Information Office of the State Council of the PRC, the number of mosques increased ten-fold (to 23,000) between 1980 and 2000.

new form of nationalism: "pride in the economic achievements of the past 20 years [since the Cultural Revolution] and pride in the great tradition of China which has enabled its economic successes" (*ibid.*:64), especially in the light of the obvious failures of the Soviet system, and by extension traditional Communist ideology in general, to survive the rigours of economic and political strain in a globalising world. In other words, the new form of nationalism to be promoted is meant to be one of loyalty to a state that is able to provide a better life for its citizens. The strategy in this kind of new discourse of control is to present economic development as a 'cure' to the nationalisation of *minzu* loyalties that had, I believe, been the result of the internal bordering of the preceding decades. In reality, however, the mobilisation of processes of frontier economics has served the state greatly in achieving a more direct kind of control over borderlands now increasingly being integrated into province and state-wide structures of dependency, as I will now discuss with an eye to how borderlanders have positioned themselves in this new kind of control mechanism.

Structural Change

Xinjiang's situation in the early 1990s was that of the province with the poorest and least developed infrastructure in China. In a study conducted by a Beijing institute which had the aim of comparing infrastructural accomplishments between Kazakhstan and Xinjiang, the province was found to contain only a fraction of the roads and railway lines that Kazakhstan possessed (Chen 1993, as quoted in Wacker 1995:17). The construction of a railway line linking Urumqi to Almaty through the port of Dostyk/Druzhba[380], a project which had been planned for decades but never realised due to Sino-Soviet tensions, was completed in 1990 and since then the volume of trade has increased dramatically. Xinjiang's wealth of natural resources are now slowly being tapped and shipped to the east coast and with the discovery of vast potential resources in Kazakhstan and the agreement on the construction of an oil pipeline from Central Asia through Kazakhstan and Xinjiang, the PRC's government has found new incentives to greatly improve the infrastructural network in the province. Because of the realisation that the Central Asian countries and China were highly complementary in regard to their respective industries and, economically speaking, Xinjiang could assist the Central Asian republics more than the other way around (Mackerras 1994:272), "late in the 1990s the Chinese government elaborated a strategy of 'Opening up China's Western Regions' to mine resources and add life to the western markets" (Yi 1999:100).

'Adding life' to the economy in Xinjiang means an influx of workers from other parts of China in order to create the infrastructural preconditions necessary to economically interact across state boundaries that in the past had been untraversable. Trans-frontier trade is hampered at a structural level by Central Asia's main rail, road and pipeline links leading north to Russia, and on a technical level by the dearth of useful and sophisticated communication links to the east. The situation at the time of my field research, just over a

[380] Dostyk (Kazakh name) was formerly known as Druzhba (Russian name) with both versions meaning 'Friendship'.

decade after Chen's (1993) observation about the undeveloped nature of Xinjiang's infrastructure, starkly shows the contrast between central policies directed towards this form of trade: in Xinjiang the sheer number of new roads being built right up to the boundaries with the Central Asian Republics is incongruous with the absence of their continuation in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and while these new transport routes are of good quality and considerable potential capacity in the former they wither away to a trickle of unmetalled and poorly maintained one-lane roads beyond the boundary. This notwithstanding, there has been a veritable boom in trans-frontier trade according to official numbers[381]. The nature of this new trade has revolved around the import of raw materials from Central Asia and the export of manufactured goods; however, much trade has been conducted as barter trade with little economic benefit for Xinjiang, and most trade goes unreported and remains statistically invisible. While official trade with Kazakhstan seems to be mainly large-scale in nature (in form of natural resources and machinery), trade with Kyrgyzstan comes at less noticeable levels in form of considerable purchases of real estate, especially in Bishkek and in Naryn *oblast*. The effects of such new trajectories will be discussed in the next sub-chapter.

One important element of the *neiwan zhanlüe* strategy mentioned above has been the import of the notion of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to Xinjiang in the late 1990s, a concept developed by the CCP in the 1980s to invigorate the local eastern coastal economies through free-trade areas that allow the purchase of products free of tax by local residents. The strategy behind this is to encourage peripheral areas to engage in legal economic transactions rather than resorting to subversive transactions (i.e., from the centre's perspective injurious to the 'national economy') or smuggle. In the Central Asian borderlands this introduction followed the signing of trans-state agreements between the PRC and the neighbouring Republics following their independence[382]. Their establishment originally represented the regional government's initiative to introduce a 'spread effect' benefiting locales farther away from the places of major investment such as Urumqi and simultaneously promote trade and economic ties with the newly independent Central Asian Republics (Pannell&Ma 1997:223).

[381] For the most recent overview of trade volume between the PRC and the Central Asian Republics see Zhao (2007:147-8 and 176-7). In 2006 the PRC officially exported sixteen times more to Kyrgyzstan (worth 1.5 bnUS$, double the figure for 2005) than it imported from there, and eighteen times more to Tajikistan (218 mnUS$) than it imported.

[382] Such as the Joint Declaration Between Kazakhstan and the PRC of 1995 (see Parham 2004:112).

Picture 32: Designs for a new SEZ in Xinjiang

However, wary of the provincial government's thrust for an autonomously led economic integration into a larger Central Asian emerging market space, the central government quickly moved to install controlling restrictions on such trans-frontier dynamics arising within Xinjiang. This was done by increasing provincial dependency on the rest of the PRC by way of fiscal reorganisation[383] and internal infrastructural development oriented towards other PRC provinces and production sites rather than Central Asia. Thus, at a closer look, columns labelled as 'Xinjiang's exports' in official statistics reveal that most products dealt in within the SEZs of, for example, Yining/Gulja, Tacheng, and the most recently opened zone in Tashkurgan are not Xinjiang-produced goods but rather 'imports' from much farther east; these products, according to personal observations of price differentials between the SEZs I have visited and, for example, central markets in Kashgar and Urumqi, tend to be between ten and thirty percent cheaper when purchased within SEZs and, therefore, represent goods in high demand by the domestic Chinese market[384] – statistics of the internal consumption of goods for sale at Xinjiang's SEZs strung along the boundaries to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are unavailable but observations irrefutably point to the fact that the vast majority of these products for sale in Tashkurgan or Yining end up in

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[383] As Becquelin (2000:71-2) points out, this fiscal reorganisation has been carried out through keeping Xinjiang's industries in the state's hands (unlike the fate of many state-owned enterprises in the rest of the PRC) and increasing taxes on raw materials (Xinjiang's main type of product) whilst decreasing them on manufactured goods, thereby putting the provincial government in a situation of incurring heavy debt with the central government through subsidies. The effect has been that the "economic boom [in Xinjiang] has paradoxically translated into increased extraction and tightened control from the centre" (Becquelin 2000:74).

[384] Comparative observations at the SEZs of Yining (2003 and 2006), Tacheng (2003), Bole (2003), and Tashkurgan (2006), and the bazaars in Urumqi (2003, 2005, 2006) and Kashgar (2005, 2006). Goods selected for comparison were consumer electronics (in particular DVD/VCD players, television sets, and computers) and cars (specifically the Chinese-made Volkswagen and the Toyota pick-up). Incidentally, gasoline prices are also lower within the SEZs.

Kashgar or Urumqi. This fact will be crucial in understanding the nature of new trans-boundary interaction as it exists today in the borderlands because it belies the official, politically motivated claim that the SEZs are "markets for trade between countries [...] for the inhabitants of the frontier" (*sic.*, slogan stated on Picture 33 below):

Picture 33: Entrance to an SEZ in Xinjiang's borderlands

State Proximity in the Borderlands

I argue that the establishment of SEZs in the gateway cities and towns of the borderlands in Xinjiang economically have served internal purposes whilst simultaneously projecting a message of 'openness' across the boundary. Furthermore, quite in line with processes of projection and subversion discussed in relation to the times of Sino-Soviet tensions, the SEZs can be understood as show-cases projecting the 'successes' of the Chinese type of socialist reinvention as opposed to the narrative of decline so much in evidence across the boundary in the former Soviet Republics: the prestige of a system that can construct and maintain smooth roads and erect glittering trade centres equipped with air-conditioning and luxury outlets cannot but be in stark contrast to the inability of post-Soviet regimes to project anything but the decay and the loss of Soviet-era glory so ubiquitously intoned in interviews. In effect, the dynamic surrounding these zones has been one of bringing other parts of the state directly to the borderlands through regularised economic exchange *within* the PRC. It has, moreover, not just been goods that have thus come to the frontier; road construction and market connectivity, both central elements in the new 'strategy' of opening Xinjiang and remaking its economy, have brought a large number of non-locals into the borderlands, most of whom are attracted by work opportunities and the prospect of 'making it' in a newly modernising region. In-migration from other Chinese regions, as discussed in Chapter 5, has been a process taking place over a long time and discourses surrounding it have usually been cast in the form of Han Chinese penetrating the Muslim periphery to the detriment of local

minzu. This, certainly, is still an on-going process today, with the Han population of Xinjiang amounting to just over 40 percent in 2001; it has, however, been focused mainly on Xinjiang's north, i.e., the Zhungar Basin that includes Urumqi. South of the Tian Shan divide, in the areas around the Taklamkan Desert that include Kashgar, the Han population was roughly ten percent in 2001. In Qyzyl Suu and Tashkurgan, Han penetration has been far lower than in the Kazakh and Mongol autonomous territorial-administrative units to the north and is most probably represented mainly by the presence of the *bingtuan* in land reclamation projects and road construction. According to interviews in Tashkurgan, since around 2001 there has been a large increase in both Han Chinese and Uighurs in settlements where either group were virtually invisible prior to the 'Remake the West' campaign. Significantly, for locals here, structural change in the province is being translated at the local level of the AC into a greater proximity between members of the various titular *minzu*.

Local *minzu* elites, as the mobilisers of political loyalties that they represent, have been finding themselves in an awkward position in relation to the structural changes taking place within Xinjiang. Presenting themselves, on the one hand, as the legitimate defenders of *minzu* interests vis-à-vis both other *minzu* as well as the state whilst, on the other hand, having to mediate the state's demand for local loyalty and local demands for autonomy and prosperity, borderland elites have come under increasing pressure to explain to locals[385]

> Why is it that despite all this talk about increasing our economic and cultural level you read in *xinjiang ribao* [the local newspaper] our children are finding it more and more difficult to find a good job after graduating from school? Why is it that most shops around here are run by Han or Uighurs instead of Kyrgyz? And why don't the construction companies hire *us* to seal the roads? Sometimes I think it's because they think we're just backward. Or maybe it's because our leaders are more interested in talking with other politicians rather than passing down some of the profits they must be making.

The blame for such perceived marginalisation, however, is in my experience placed on *minzu* cadre rather than on lowest level leaders: the relationship between the *xiangzhang*, or township leaders, and the elite CCP *apparat* of Qyzyl Suu AP or Tashkurgan AC is not easy, further complicated as it is by the political realities of power sharing between the *minzu* within these territorial-administrative units. The AP and AC elites of the borderland, always members of the titular group, generally receive further education at the Central Institute of Nationalities (established in 1951 in Beijing and reopened after the hiatus of the Cultural Revolution) alongside other representatives of China's *minzu*. The purpose of this institute is to train suitable persons to be revolutionary cadre who are then to return to their localities and provide appropriate leadership (Pye 1975:504). The selection of suitable persons, however, has increasingly laid an emphasis on worker backgrounds rather than locally accepted cultural elites; thus, one does not witness Kyrgyz *aksaqal* undergoing such training but rather young individuals unencumbered by 'feudal baggage'. Their role as defined by the state – to be local leaders – has necessitated their training in their own folkways and customs for them to be accepted locally through excelling at portraying local culture and exhibiting

[385] Interview with Kinara, May 2006, in Artush.

seemingly even more knowledge about localness than the traditional elders. The *xiangzhang*, always members of the administrative titular group of the township or county (and thus not necessarily of the titular group of the AP or AC), are still, however, generally from locally respected cultural elites and not necessarily versed in the language of allegiance to the socialist state as expressed in a higher awareness of the importance accorded to 'cooperation between the *minzu* at the most local level'.

It follows that conflict in the implementation of policies such as language education is readily observed on the ground. For example, in Tashkurgan AC (headed by a 'Tajik' *hokkim* born in Tashkurgan town and educated in Beijing), ten townships are headed by 'Tajik' *xiangzhang* (nine of whom speak Sarykuli and one, in the township of Tabdar, who speaks the local Wakhani dialect) and one by a Kyrgyz *xiangzhang* (reputedly an *aksaqal* of some influence even amongst local 'Tajiks'). Schools in these sub-divisions of the AC all employ the Uighur language for classroom communication except in the Kyrgyz *xian* where the primary school teaches in Kyrgyz; the schools in Tashkurgan offer a mix of Uighur-language and *putonghua* education. With the imminent scripting of the 'Tajik' language in Tashkurgan, an on-going project developed at Xinjiang Normal University from 2004 onwards[386], primary schools will, in keeping with legislation on the right for small *minzu* to be educated in their own language, begin to teach 'Tajik' to children; such language promotion will be at the expense of Uighur proficiency and will most certainly lead to calls for a further splintering of autonomous units at the lowest level, akin to the situation in Qyzyl Suu with its complex mix of Uighur and Dungani/Hui autonomous nationality townships. Such splintering is, as shown in Chapter 4, not to the political advantage of the respective titular *minzu* as it invariably leads to the contestation of local power at the regional level and a strengthening of avenues of control by the centre through the institutionalisation of fracturing political hierarchies between the various *minzu*. Furthermore, such a process can only result in increased requests by parents to have their children learn that language that enables greater employment opportunities, namely *putonghua*. I suspect that, with the scripting of 'Tajik' and its use in schools, the desire for Chinese-language education will rise because proficiency in Uighur will drop due to its perception as a language of limited usefulness. This is what has taken place in Qyzyl Suu AP, where a job in local administration was formerly connected to fluency in Uighur and *putonghua* (in that order of importance) only to have shifted over the last years to fluency in Kyrgyz and *putonghua*, as one interviewee pointed out to me[387]:

> My husband had to learn Uighur very quickly back then [in the early 1980s] when he applied for a job with the postal service in Artush, and he also picked up Chinese characters in order to read the addresses. My son just got accepted to work at the *haiguan* [port, here: customs checkpoint] here in town as a junior aide. I am so glad we decided to send him to *putonghua* classes some years ago even though it was difficult for him. At the entrance examination nobody was interested in his Uighur skills – thankfully, because he never really learnt it anyway! You know, Uighur is great

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[386] I thank Liu Ming of the Department of Social Anthropology there for his insight on this topic (interview in May 2006, in Urumqi).

[387] Interview with Kinara, a 50-year-old ethnic Kyrgyz from near Artush who nowadays works as a successful bazaar saleswoman in Artush; May 2006, in Artush.

> for work here at the bazaar but if you want a real job it'll have to be *putonghua* these days – and that's good because good jobs might lead you out of this backwater.

Under the guise of the implementation of the Constitution's call for *minzu* autonomy in the linguistic domain, the titular *minzu* of the AR will be confronted with an increase of Chinese state institutions such as schools in the no longer quite so remote borderlands, and Uighur sentiments regarding the injustice of having to share power will grow at a local level in Tashkurgan just as it has done in Qyzyl Suu.

Borderlander Power in Qyzyl Suu and Tashkurgan

Invigorating local economies, opening up regions, and promoting economic interaction are all slogans that, in the context of borderlands' political economy of interstitiality and ambiguity, beg the questions of 'who is opening up' and 'whose economy is being invigorated'? The AR of Xinjiang has most certainly witnessed a substantial improvement in the conditions of living for a majority of Xinjiang residents over the last decade and, in accordance with policies on *minzu* autonomy, there does exist a certain leeway for Xinjiang's borderland *minzu* to influence the economic development of their own areas; however, as in other domains such as education and religious freedom, there exist severe restrictions: economic policy must be carried out in accordance with state plans made by the distant centre, and priority must be given to the interests of the state as a whole rather than to *minzu* interests. Nevertheless, the initial opening of Xinjiang's boundaries to the west was bound to benefit local intermediaries in the borderlands and, as Sean Roberts has discussed, a new Uighur and Kazakh middleclass arose in the early 1990s that, thanks to their easier linguistic access to newly opening markets in the wider region, was ideally able to fulfil the role of middlemen between Pakistani, Chinese, and Turkic-speaking traders from as far afield as Istanbul whom they supplied with goods manufactured in China's eastern provinces (2004:222). This intermediary niche became obsolete by the end of the decade with the increasing production of cheap goods in Xinjiang itself and the increasing desire in Central Asia for better quality products than those Xinjiang had to offer, and these were now imported directly from wholesalers at the more developed factories far beyond Xinjiang. The province had become a transit point for trading trips to the PRC's interior and Xinjiang's economy began to focus on raw materials and natural resources, two branches of industry excluding local traders.

Borderlanders in both Qyzyl Suu and Tashkurgan have instead moved into economic niches that have opened up through the introduction of new rules governing private ownership of herds (Kreutzmann 1995:174). The possibility to privately administer and sell heads of sheep and cattle at markets has led local herders to make a living from a semi-pastoralist way of life once again, and, since 1993 and the liberalisation of private enterprises, competition has arisen in settlements between *ayil* catering to the trickle of tourists travelling between Xinjiang and Pakistan. Producers of the traditional Kyrgyz *shyrdak* (felt rug) have been moderately successful at selling these to Uighur retailers at the Kashgar Sunday market, from where these high-quality products are then sold as far afield as Islamabad and Beijing,

thereby generating income for local families in Qyzyl Suu. More importantly in the context of an inquiry into domains in which borderlanders negotiate state-driven discourses of control, local Kyrgyz entrepreneurs in Qyzyl Suu have been adept at subverting the regulations stating that products at SEZs are destined for local markets rather than 're-import' to the PRC. Thus, full advantage is taken of the afore-mentioned price differentials of up to thirty percent on a range of products for sale in Artush and Tashkurgan. The door to this kind of transaction was opened with the expulsion of Pakistani traders from markets as soon as they were designated as SEZs; the departure of shuttle-traders from Pakistan's northern areas was greeted by locals due to their domination in the early 1990s of such Xinjiang-internal trade and their image as 'immoral' and 'less-than-devout' individuals taking full advantage of the lack of Islamic strictures in public life in the PRC. When Tashkurgan was designated an SEZ in 2004, Pakistani traders quickly disappeared from the local bazaar there to be replaced with locally resident Uighurs – the AC's closer administrative connection to Kashgar has aided Uighurs rather than Tajiks here (as opposed to Qyzyl Suu's AP status that offers higher administrative autonomy and has created this niche for Kyrgyz there).

Borderlander power (in the sense of tactical power allowing a group to structure others' actions within the borderland) is most bounded by the doings of that locally present other group that has probably benefited most from recent structural changes in Xinjiang: the *bingtuan*[388]. Given a largely free hand over its economic development by the central government in far-away Beijing, it has been in constant conflict with provincial and regional governments over, in particular, its land reclamation projects. Of the land reclaimed between 1991 and 2000, a vast majority can be credited to the *bingtuan*'s efforts, and much of this land was not even arid but rather grasslands or even forest and, thus, its 'reclamation' has been detrimental to Kyrgyz herders and Tajik or Uighur famers. Theoretically, land can be reclaimed by any organisation authorised by local government, and small groups of Kyrgyz in Qyzyl Suu have indeed pursued such a strategy to increase herding space; however, the financial burden involved in larger projects requires the aid of (state-run) banks such as the China Agricultural Bank (which seems to concentrate on this kind of operation in Xinjiang and other arid areas such as Inner Mongolia), and these banks are, according to reactions from my local interviewees, loth to lend to such groups. The *bingtuan* receives its financial power directly from the central government and can afford to surge ahead in reclamation even without authorisation by local officials – a considerable structural disadvantage for locals. In addition, lands reclaimed by the *bingtuan* pass from local jurisdiction over the allocation of resources on to the internal management of the *bingtuan* and, hence, "bypasses the proxy of the Xinjiang regional government and the PRC standard territorial-administrative structures" (Becquelin 2004:367) of the AC and AP. Taking Becquelin's analysis a step further, this means that the regulations stipulating that Qyzyl Suu AP is closed to non-local settlement and penetration can be ignored by *bingtuan* members once they are

[388] The fieldwork and analysis of largely oblique references in the Chinese media conducted by Nicolas Becquelin (2000, 2004) remains the best source for discussing the internal structures of the secretive *bingtuan* and my comments here are based on these two texts rounded off with my own experiences with *bingtuan* institutions (as presented in Chapters 2 and 5).

in control of land within that territorial unit's boundaries, thereby undermining an important element of Xinjiang AR's autonomy in regulating *minzu* affairs[389]. Locals are well aware of the way in which local autonomy is curtailed by this organisation: fear over the *bingtuan*'s ability to implement its own control over its farms through the para-military nature of the organisation is great. One interviewee, when asked what she thought of the PRC's growing willingness to test new forms of property and possibly land privatisation in the future reacted angrily[390]:

> Yes, I heard of the private ownership experiment in Shanghai and I'm sure it's great for people in those overcrowded cities. But I intensely hope nobody thinks of extending that experiment to Xinjiang like they did with the special economic zones. If they do, those Han production workers [the *bingtuan* (S.P.)] will suddenly own lots of land here. Overnight we will return to feudal times where landowners could exploit the people working on the land, just like before the Revolution. We would be lost because they control the water nowadays and their uniforms protect them from the police. I place my hope in the Party protecting us from such a thing!

Here is expressed the lack of borderlanders' ability to negotiate with the organisation responsible for the two factors figuring most visibly in changing realities in this local environment: the intrusion of non-locals, expressed in the increased presence of other PRC *minzu* (mainly Han but also Uighurs taking advantage of new accessibility), and a perceived shift in the primary duty of para-military border control by the *bingtuan* from one of populating the immediate borderzone (as during Sino-Soviet tensions) to one of increased power in internal control over resources (land management and water), infrastructure (the construction of roads), and local unrest (as in the putting down of riots caused by economic tensions but expressed in terms of tensions between the *minzu*).

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[389] See my discussion of the 1982 constitution and its 1984 amendments affecting ARs' right to territorial self-governance in Chapter 4.

[390] Interview with Nasiba, a local Tajik 70-year-old, May 2006, in Tashkurgan (conducted with the aid of a translator).

6.2 Shifts in Borderland Interaction

The end of the common socialist period in the Chinese – Central Asian Borderland segments saw the abrupt end of alienated borderlands facing off across the boundary. Before the 1990s, mutual state animosity and, especially on the Chinese side, distrust of the borderlander population had led to heavy militarisation and the eradication of trans-boundary traffic, and deep borderland control had prevented any form of regularisable ties across the boundary – borderland 'interaction' had basically been limited to their serving as platforms of projection and borderlanders' were symbolic avatars of propaganda fulfilling a trans-frontier agenda of state subversion across the boundary, as discussed in Chapter 5. Before I turn to the fate of such narratives at the end of this chapter and show how they are enacted through a process of inversion today, a discussion of post-Soviet connectivity becomes necessary here. Above, I have traced the structural-political shifts that have taken place and uncovered the 'cracks' in which borderlanders have sought to pursue local power in the implementation of control. However, if borderlands are ideal vantage points from which we can pinpoint the way in which states choose to represent themselves and simultaneously are lenses where we uncover hidden and contested discourses of national identities and political loyalties in the spaces 'between' these states in their borderlands, then they can be expected to appear in individually chosen trajectories of interaction.

In this sub-chapter I discuss the findings of my field research in the tri-partite borderlands in relation to physical boundary-crossing trajectories. The physical avenues available to crossers today are subject to a number of factors that will influence the trajectory adopted by the individual crosser. Fieldwork has shown that the nationality status and citizenship of boundary crossers (both those of non-local origin as well as borderlanders themselves) are vital components in negotiating trajectories – choice of port, the documentation involved (that is, the strategy underlying choice of category to effect successful egress/access), and mobilisation of gatekeeper type will all be seen to influence such trajectories. An analysis of trajectories actually adopted by crossers (as opposed to officially structured modes of interaction) will aid us in an inquiry into lifeworlds at the margins of these states today and, thus, in the sections that follow on the respective segments I seek answers to three crucial questions:

> *First*, whose boundaries are these state boundaries today, i.e., which symbols of the state mark these boundaries and how is crossing these interfaces regulated?
>
> *Second*, whose trajectories are tying the wider Borderland together, that is, who crosses for what reason?
>
> *Third*, whose borderlands have these administrative borderlands become today and what form of deep borderland control is enacted through which avenues in the respective state segments?

I duplicate the structure in the sections that follow on, on the one hand, the formerly internal Soviet boundaries that have become external state boundaries and, on the other, between the former Soviet Central Asia and the PRC in order to present comparative conclusions on the

evolving status of these borderlands and their discourses with the states of the PRC, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

Discussion of Formerly Internal Post-Soviet Trajectories

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the administrative boundary between the Kyrgyz and Tajik SSRs became a state boundary between the territories of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. If before trajectories crossing the administrative line that delimited Osh *oblast* to the north from GBAO to the south were basically internal (Soviet) movements and therefore involved the possession of internal documents permitting departure from one's immediate workplace or domicile usually irrespective of where the (internal) destination was, now individuals found themselves dealing with the agents and institutions of two different states that attempt to monopolise their citizens' means of movement – a post-Soviet, formerly internal but now trans-state trajectory has come to be inscribed by the successor states' desire to "limit their [new citizens'] opportunities to come and go across jurisdictional spaces" (Torpey 2000:166). The disjuncture, however, between claiming the authority to restrict movement and actually possessing the ability to do so is striking in the inability by many of these states to effectively control movement, and this authority has in these two cases been devolved to other actors, as I now discuss. In effect, Soviet hegemony over movement represented a higher degree of connectivity in this Borderland than exists today because the Soviet system of 'embracing' its citizens (*ibid.*) must be seen as having been pragmatically supra-regional in the case of localities along the Pamir Highway.

Whose Boundary: Keeping the Gates and Controlling the Line

We have seen in Chapter 2 that crossing the boundary between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan requires a visa for citizens of either state and a passport but that the convoluted system of visa regulations is rarely implemented for local boundary crossers. Exceptions in the visa requirement are made for citizens of either state with family members resident on the respective other state's territory; in effect, this applies in the vast majority of cases to ethnic Kyrgyz, who today have come to represent a trans-frontier ethnic group with strong local networks spanning the region from the city of Osh in Kyrgyzstan to Murghab *raion* in GBAO. The possession of passports, and in quite a few cases the possession of both a Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani passport, is wide-spread due to the fact that obtaining a passport in post-Soviet states has become a financial matter rather than a political one (as it was in the Soviet Union and still is in the PRC). Importantly, as far as I can tell, most citizens of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan do indeed possess a passport as this has become a document serving as general identification within these states following the collapse of the Soviet Union[391] and seems to be the least onerous way of identifying oneself to the numerous police forces in these states (it being the one document apparently accepted by all these forces). During the civil war in Tajikistan and until 1997, Kyrgyzstan readily (but unofficially) granted

[391] In Kyrgyzstan the passport seems to have been issued by government authorities as a replacement to Soviet-era identification cards and has served the nationalisation process alluded to above; according to Kyrgyzstani friends, they were originally obtained very easily in the 1990s. The price of renewal of expired passports has, however, spiralled. In Tajikistan a similar process has been underway since the end of the civil war.

citizenship (which is exclusive in both states and does not permit dual citizenships) and a passport to individuals fleeing from the unfolding catastrophe across the boundary who described themselves as 'Kyrgyz'[392]; this first wave of newcomers usually did not possess a Tajikistani passport due to that state's inability to issue such documents at the time. Tajikistani citizens arriving after 1997 usually possessed a Tajikistani passport and were not granted Kyrgyzstani citizenship – when their Tajikistani passports came to expire (being only valid for five years) these individuals were made *de facto* stateless but the Bishkek government's policy of non-refoulement has meant that such individuals are tolerated on Kyrgyzstani territory and not deported to Tajikistan barring cases of criminal activity.

The infrastructure encountered at the actual new state boundary between Tajikistan's GBAO and Kyrgyzstan stands as a testament to the financial inability of either state to even approach a successful upkeep of the former Soviet infrastructure in this important frontier region with the PRC[393] let alone systematically implement border control at this new external boundary. If the short fictitious excursion portrayed at the beginning of Chapter 5 showed us a frontier heavily patrolled and under intense surveillance by the agents of Soviet border control, today the numerous buildings that once were used to store ammunition, machinery, and personnel are derelict, the watchtowers unmanned, and the lines of communication and infrastructural avenues frequently unusable. Borderguards stamp passports if there is ink available and they frequently work in candlelight; patrols are on foot, radios do not work.

[392] I thank Ken Nakanishi of Tokyo University for this insight (personal interview, September 2005, in Bishkek). I have been unable to discover official documents underlining this policy but such individuals who benefited from this policy are readily found in the suburbs of Bishkek.

[393] I call to mind here that the Pamir Highway in GBAO at times runs parallel to the formerly electrified fence marking the no-man's-land to Xinjiang – at its closest a mere 50-odd metres away.

Picture 34: Negotiating the Pamir Highway (near Khorog, GBAO)

Whose Trajectory: Beyond the Boundary

For decades, this boundary was a state-internal boundary between two administrative units of the same state. While movement within the Soviet Union was never a simple matter, the presence of this administrative boundary was not marked, as I have argued in Chapter 4, by border control but rather through institutions and the mechanisms of resource distribution tied to the respective national unit. The checkpoints on the Pamir Highway between Khorog in southern GBAO and Osh in the Kyrgyzstani Ferghana Valley were designed to monitor the frontier to the PRC and cement Soviet control over its mountainous south-eastern periphery seen to lie in a political neighbourhood of seeming instability and importance to the Soviet regime. Thus, individuals, provided they possessed the appropriate internal travel documents (see Figure 10 in Chapter 5), could negotiate the future boundary between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan just like any other such boundary between other administrative entities of the Union. Both trajectories crossing this new boundary at Qyzyl Art as well as the types of individuals doing so have changed fundamentally over the last decade, and this has led to a new form of wider Borderland and borderlander interaction beyond the strictures imposed in theory by both states that derive from a rhetoric of territorial integrity.

In the following I look at the mode of crossing that seems most important in understanding the nature of today's trans-boundary trajectories: that of crossing as entrepreneur. Individuals crossing the boundary at Qyzyl Art almost without exception do so with goods destined for sale at one of the locales along the Pamir Highway. Coming from Kyrgyzstan, such goods are generally consumer articles, many of which are Chinese products that had entered the region through the Irkeshtam port; the vast majority of goods for sale or exchange at the bazaar in Murghab originated in the PRC and are vital to local livelihoods in

Murghab *raion* consisting as they do of foodstuffs such as grain and rice but also clothes and simple appliances as well as cigarettes and alcohol. It is here that we witness a significant recent development in the constitution of entrepreneurs supplying local markets in GBAO: a shift has taken place that now excludes borderland entrepreneurs from the major markets in Osh and Khorog and instead sees these small-time traders from Murghab *raion* and other locales along the Kyrgyzstani section of the Pamir Highway supplying smaller bazaars in Sary Tash, Murghab, and other small settlements. The major Osh and Khorog bazaars have increasingly come to be dominated by 'Chinese' traders[394], who trade there with an eye to wider regional markets across the boundaries to, respectively, Uzbekistan and the all-important Tashkent market and Afghanistan's slowly accessible northern areas of Faizabad and Mazar al-Sharif. With the gradual improvement of the quality of Chinese products there is a concomitant differential in the availability of the higher standard products in the borderlands: the major markets are witnessing a trend towards higher quality while small borderland markets contain mainly poorer quality goods from Xinjiang (as discussed in the last section on structural changes in the PRC), having a significant effect on local images of peripherality expressed in statements such as "if you want a mobile phone that works don't buy it in Murghab even if one is available – go to Khorog: there they hoard them. It's amazing: they're transported through our town [Murghab] but do you think anybody would bother to offer one up for sale here? Instead we get the crap they can't sell anywhere else"[395]. In effect it is readily observable that the closer the market lies to the boundary the worse the quality of products. If for a moment we extend our focus on the Kyrgyzstani – Tajikistani borderland to include the two ports to the PRC in the immediate vicinity (that is, Irkeshtam just to the north and Qolma immediately to the south) a crucial factor influencing local entrepreneurship comes to light: the port at Qyzyl Art is not accessible for Chinese vehicles under any circumstances. The trajectories to be discussed in the section below on Chinese – Central Asian borderland interaction are directed from Xinjiang over the Irkeshtam port *or* over the Qolma port; all transverse movement between these two ports is by local Kyrgyzstani or Tajikistani citizens only in respect to economic exchange. The two borderland local centres of, respectively, Sary Tash and Murghab are generally supplied not directly from Xinjiang but rather from Osh and Khorog by borderland entrepreneurs.

A particularly striking type of entrepreneur using the Qyzyl Art as a port to move goods, in this case, from GBAO to the north is the 'trafficker' – individuals transporting narcotics out of Afghanistan. An ever-present theme in the entire region (although less so than the international attention given to this in these borderlands would suggest), the Khorog-to-Osh magistrale is one of several alternate routes serving as the major supply artery for opium and its heroin derivative[396]. Truly a global trade, the networks in our

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[394] Such traders are referred to as 'Chinese' by locals but usually can be Han, Uighur, or especially Dungani. See further below on such ascriptions of national affiliation.

[395] Interview with Ergash, November 2005, in Murghab.

[396] All evidence I have encountered in the region points to the fact that most of these substances are transported into Kyrgyzstan and on to Osh not along the Pamir Highway but rather through Kulyab and on to Khatlon and from there on to Osh. This Tajikistani – Kyrgyzstani borderland in the largely impenetrable mountains to the west of GBAO has remained inaccessible to researchers and surpasses the scope of this thesis.

borderlands are made up mainly of 'businesspeople' in the centres of Khorog and Osh who coordinate the enrichment of the raw opium (increasingly done in Afghanistan itself but still also at mobile laboratories to be found in GBAO) and its subsequent distribution locally and further transport along this early stage of its long journey. The presence of what locals term 'the Osh mafia' is by no means invisible anymore: if before the withdrawal of the Russian/CIS bordertroops such operations were conducted in a more clandestine way, their replacement with Tajikistani forces of border control, themselves widely rumoured to be centrally involved in this business, has emboldened the actors. Today, Kyrgyzstani vehicles with number plates registered in Osh as well as Russian-registered vehicles most frequently from southern and western Siberia transport both such goods as well as the entrepreneurs themselves, involved as they are in a business that requires constant surveillance of the changing parameters of state (i.e., border control) and outsider (i.e., NGO agencies or foreign military advisors to these states) involvement that could influence this most crucial stage of supply. Borderlander involvement in the opium/heroin business here is minimal[397]: GBAO does not contain significant opium plantations due to climatic conditions and middlemen buying these narcotics for onward sale are individuals with excellent connections both to local borderguards/customs officials as well as state institutions. Nevertheless, the vibrant narcotics trade that passes through local centres in the Tajikistani – Kyrgyzstani borderland has a significant effect on discourses of border control and the parameters of deep borderland control that, in turn, affect borderlanders' negotiation of the boundary at Qyzyl Art. This effect is best represented by customs officials at Bor-Döbö on the Kyrgyzstani side of the borderzone: all boundary-crossers on the Pamir Highway trajectory must pass these gatekeepers, who are financed not by the Kyrgyzstani state but rather by a committee under control of the MVD of the Russian Federation. Charged with preventing the influx of narcotics into the territory of the geographically distant Russian state, these officials are under obligation to fulfil a quota of confiscated heroin; neither the planting of such contraband on innocent boundary-crossers nor the occasional fictitious 'heroic' intervention in a pre-arranged and staged coup against the *narkomani* (drug addicts and traffickers) is unheard of, especially at times when reports on on-the-ground progress are due in Moscow, thereby creating moments that, as candidly stated by one customs official, "are not the most ideal of times to encounter us, I guess "[398].

Whose Borderland: Access and Egress

The single most important element figuring in borderlanders' lifeworlds in this borderland is the presence of the Pamir Highway, an infrastructural avenue tying together the two regional centres of Osh and Khorog and passing through every settlement in between. This magistrale is the region's economic lifeline that structures all interaction between

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[397] Consumption of these narcotics by locals has, however, risen dramatically and visibly over the last years. See Madi (2004).

[398] According to one such official I was able to unofficially query regarding these reports to Moscow, customs officials' salaries are proportional to their 'success' in confiscating narcotics; also, these reports are made at the end of every quarter, making March, June, September, and December such 'not ideal months' for encounters (personal interview, December 2005, in Sary Tash). Both such planting and this kind of coup are frequently heard elements of locals' characterisation of their personal trajectories.

borderlanders and their respective states as well as between the two segments of the Borderland. Its construction in Soviet times brought GBAO's economy closer to Osh than to Dushanbe, the nominal state centre. Its existence made the population of the Pamirs dependent on transversal connection rather than subject to effective collateral control (as would have been expressed in the promotion of infrastructural avenues directed towards Dushanbe). Since the collapse of the state that enacted deep borderland control in this mountainous and peripheral region, the transversality of the Highway has become a boon for borderlanders and their survival whilst becoming a bane to, in particular, the Tajikistani state because of the cost of maintenance, the avenues of interaction it offers that are difficult to control by the weak government in Dushanbe, and the tensions it generates between the state and supra-state actors as discussed earlier. With the withdrawal of the Russian/CIS border troops from this region in 2002/2003 it has now become a fact that "entering GBAO from Kyrgyzstan is considerably easier than entering GBAO from the rest of Tajikistan"[399], a fact that clearly underlines, on the one hand, the existence of strong trans-boundary processes and, on the other, points to the wariness with which this borderland is regarded by the Tajikistani state. In its campaign for borderlander loyalty, the Soviet system had introduced various positive measures to combat the borderlander options of 'exit' and 'voice', thereby improving local livelihoods and guaranteeing the effective deep borderland control discussed in Chapter 5; the result was local support of the state's border control. This has changed fundamentally in the post-Soviet era and the 'thickening' of the non-state point of reference for borderlanders represented by the Pamir Highway. Hence, today's interaction between residents of GBAO and *pogranichniki* is primarily characterised by economic co-optation and the concomitant impossibility of deep borderland control in the Pamirs.

The accessibility of the Pamir Highway is, quite apart from the severe weather conditions that can shut the road down for weeks at a time, centrally dependent on processes in two different states today: whether Tajikistan is embroiled in a bloody civil war or whether Kyrgyzstan is going through the woes of internal political realignment during a 'Revolution' – the Highway is directly affected in an equal way and is shut down by the respective authorities of the neighbouring state. Thus, borderlanders in Osh *oblast* and in GBAO are exposed in an immediate way to events taking place at either anchoring node of this infrastructural artery. It is in this context of political events seemingly beyond the power of borderlanders to influence to their own advantage that a new evolving image of the role that the Kyrgyz of Murghab play in conjunction with their position as a trans-frontier state group, i.e., a group with a titular state just across the boundary that is now an independent state that can influence the lifeworlds of all along this avenue of trans-frontier exchange. As I will discuss in the final part of this chapter, their role in the immediate GBAO borderland as the largest group of boundary-crossers casts doubts amongst the Pamiri majority of GBAO regarding that group's political loyalties.

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399 Interview with Thomas Breu of the Centre of Environment and Development CDE (Bern, Switzerland), himself a long-term resident of Murghab and Osh in the past; April 2005, in Bern.

Discussion of Chinese – Central Asian Trajectories

Prior to the opening of the Torugart Pass in 1986 not a single official boundary crossing existed between (then still Soviet) Central Asia and Xinjiang. While the pass itself had been used for centuries by pastoralists, invaders, traders on this branch of the Silk Route, pilgrims, and, most recently, refugees, it had remained a hazardous pass only to be traversed by locals who knew the vagaries of the weather and difficult terrain. From the 1950s on it had remained strictly off-limits to all individuals until the construction of a rough road connecting the outermost boundary checkpoints (which thus only became connecting checkpoints instead of terminating checkpoints) with one another just before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since then, the Central Asian – Xinjiang boundary has seen the inauguration of a host of boundary crossings: most of them between Kazakhstan and Xinjiang (four)[400], two between Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang (Torugart and Irkeshtam), and one between GBAO and Xinjiang (at Qolma). New interconnectivity has developed between Xinjiang and Central Asia with the opening of these infrastructural avenues, and citizens of these three states now have the possibility of traversing the formerly closed frontier and enter into a new era of economic and inter-personal exchange[401]. That is the style of the new ideological discourse centring on this boundary – a picture is painted of new cooperation in the economic and political domains, of new bridges being spanned across what some have termed 'the Central Asian Divide' (Raczka 1998:374). But reality differs quite considerably from this on the ground and we are led to the question as to whether such narratives merely represent a new encumbering of the boundary with state-driven discourses: the boundary may well be becoming more negotiable and starting to fulfil a bridge function, but to whose benefit? Does such 'bridging' apply only to the boundary as a line or also to the borderlands adjoining it? Are we witnessing a re-emergent wider Borderland spanning the Sino-Central Asian boundaries, a Borderland whose local populations are taking advantage of new interconnectivity to serve their own ends? These are the questions that this section aims at answering with observations deriving from field research in the various segments of the Borderland – observations that will serve us well in uncovering the gap between the rhetoric of a state's might and the reality of borderlander involvement at the official fringes thereof.

Whose Boundary: Keeping the Gates and Controlling the Line

As discussed in Chapter 2, physically crossing the boundary from Xinjiang to either Kyrgyzstan or GBAO is more heavily regulated on the Chinese side than on the Central Asian side; it also takes place *exclusively* through officially endorsed channels. Thus, Chinese citizens basically require an array of documents to secure exit from their state, while entry into Kyrgyzstan is fairly straightforward, requiring only a passport and a visa; entry into

[400] From north to south, at Jeminay/Maykapchigay, Tacheng/Bakhty, Alatau/Dostyk (train crossing), and Khorgos in the Ili Valley. Some authors such as Raczka (1998:391) list additional crossings but these do not reflect ports that allow individuals to enter and/or exit; see Parham (2004) for a discussion of Kazakhstani crossings to Xinjiang and their negotiability.

[401] Cynically one might observe that this 'era' had come to an abrupt end again by the late 1990s with the abolishment of the visa exemption regulations initially introduced by all sides immediately after Central Asian independence. Visa regulations have successively become more rigid again since then.

GBAO is officially more complicated but also more easily negotiable on the ground, as we shall see. A significant element of the document chase for Chinese citizens wishing to cross a state boundary is the distinction of the political status of the applicant. This refers to his or her residence in a 'special minority area' (at the lowest administrative level, i.e., county or even township level) and dictates which administrative avenues this individual must go through to obtain a letter of support needed for passport application. Individuals with a *hukou* stating residency within a minority administration area must seek permission from authorities of that body; thus, residents of a Kyrgyz township within Qyzyl Suu AP require permission from the Kyrgyz *minzu* people's congress in Artush (the seat of the AP's administration) no matter whether the applicant is Kyrgyz or, for example, Uighur.

The infrastructure encountered at the actual boundaries between Xinjiang and the Central Asian Republics underlines the conclusion that border control at the post-Soviet Central Asian frontier is a narrative physically implemented by the PRC rather than its Central Asian neighbours. If the short fictitious excursion portrayed at the beginning of Chapter 5 showed us a boundary bristling with the forces of border control on either side with both states chewing at the bit, seemingly ready to pounce at each others' throats, 2005 presents us with a fundamentally different narrative celebrating Chinese institutional presence at the boundary: roads are being built for heavy trucks, sparkling new customs buildings have been constructed, surveillance equipment and brand-new military vehicles are on display at the boundary checkpoint exhibiting state investments in controlling the boundary, grand banners greet the crosser in *putonghua*, English, and Russian just as do introductory plaques and customs regulations on checkpoint buildings. Borderguards wield a combination of firearms and cellular phones and not infrequently express a rudimentary understanding of the Russian language.

Picture 35: Chinese customs building at Tashkurgan

In comparison, the Kyrgyzstani side at both Torugart and Irkeshtam sports decrepit barb wire that is missing in places, unlit customs buildings, old Soviet-era plaques, and borderguards equipped with little but old Kalashnikovs and non-functioning portable military phone boxes. Not wanting to exaggerate such discrepancies, the fundamental impression of this researcher (especially in light of the trajectory-thickening methods employed during research as discussed in Chapter 2) is one of embattlement and, to a certain degree, of resignation on the former Soviet side[402]:

> Our customs officials at Torugart and especially at Irkeshtam, praise their honesty – do you think anybody in Bishkek ever sees any of the confiscated material and goods? Shit, it all goes right into their pockets and from there to god knows what vodka shop or brothel. Actually no, a certain part will go to the MVD [Ministry of Internal Affairs] – and those [...] don't hand it over to the state. If they did we'd actually get some investment in our infrastructure and show it to the Chinese. Now that would stop them laughing in our faces!

The scene on the Tajikistani side of the Qolma port does not differ much, with the same poor infrastructure and equipment glaringly at odds with the Chinese side. Here, in addition, conflict between the Aga Khan Foundation's support for infrastructural projects and the distant state's prioritisation for projects not supported locally continuously leads to difficult implementation of projects funded by the state. Thus, when the horrendous floods of spring 2004 washed away both a large section of the Pamir Highway north of Murghab and obliterated a section of the new road to Qolma, the state for political reasons directed its attention at the latter to the disgruntlement of Murghab locals (who argued rightly that the Pamir Highway to Osh was critical to their survival). The result was slip-shod reconstruction of the Qolma road and a drastic deterioration of the road to Osh. In the words of one resident of Murghab, "now Dushanbe managed to get both things wrong: we suffered because the road to the bazaar in Osh was impassable for ages and our border traffic suffered because the Chinese had to first come and repair the road here in GBAO and we lost out on jobs. If they'd just let the Aga Khan finance the Osh road we could have then done something about the other one."

Whose Trajectory: Beyond the Boundary

The boundary between the PRC and Central Asia was sealed for decades and has now come to symbolise a narrowly controlled 'bridge between China and its Central Asian neighbours' (Golunov 2001). Leaving the jargon aside, and in the light of the preceding characterisation of actual boundary access, we must inquire into the nature of who is crossing the newly traversable boundary, what reasons they cross for, and where they do this. Such trajectories will point us to answers as to local borderlander involvement in new boundary processes and whether they are participating in new trans-frontier discourses and networks. As argued elsewhere, people will cross boundaries whenever this suits them for reasons not always consistent with those given to boundary gatekeepers or, for that matter, to researchers.

[402] Interview with Sergei, June 2006, in Bishkek. Sergei was a Russian *pogranichnik* in the Soviet era stationed first at Murghab and later at Torugart. He now lives in Bishkek and is a Kyrgyzstani citizen; he is an intense critic of post-Soviet border control and possesses good contacts with the judiciary organs of the Kyrgyzstani state.

The official categories of visas granted to boundary crossers at these boundaries can be roughly described as 'business', 'tourist', 'student', and 'visiting' visas. These categories obviously exclude a range of motives for moving from one state to another: are small-time traders transporting a handful of boxes on a public bus on their way back from a family visit to be seen as businesspeople, visitors, or tourists? Are road construction workers improving a trans-frontier road to be regarded as day-labourers on business abroad? And do students really go to study? Choosing a category for one's crossing will depend on certain factors such as 'family' members[403], business partners, or the desire for onward travel (in which case a tourist or short-term transit visa will suggest itself). Those without a reliable acquaintance, family member, or state-accredited institution such as a firm or university across the boundary will resort to either applying for a short-term tourist visa or a business visa through the support of an agency with a partner in the other state that then 'invites' the applicant. Extending visas while abroad is extraordinarily difficult and seems to only be possible through massive bribes or marriage to a local citizen; however, Kyrgyzstan for example grants citizenship to migrants who have resided legally in the country for over five years[404].

In the following I look at the three modes of crossing that seem most important in understanding the nature of today's trans-boundary trajectories: students, visitors, and entrepreneurs. The two types of motives for trans-boundary trajectories not discussed in-depth here are those of the 'migrant' and the 'labourer'. According to Zlatko Zigic, head of the International Organisation for Migration IOM in Bishkek, migration in terms of individuals crossing the boundary from Xinjiang without the necessary papers and seeking either onward travel to the West (Turkey or Russia) is negligible in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – such migrants (and their networks of support or those of traffickers) generally steer clear of the Central Asian Republics whenever possible, preferring routes through Russia or by sea[405]. Labourers, in this case Chinese citizens (and almost exclusively Han affiliated with the *bingtuan*), usually cross in the company of an individual belonging to the entrepreneur type (specifically, the 'professional' discussed below) and do not figure in individual boundary-crossing trajectories, i.e., do not cross the boundary to search for employment independently.

First, institutional exchange, what I loosely term 'students', has risen considerably since its beginnings in the 1990s in Kyrgyzstan; in Tajikistan I was not able to identify a single Chinese citizen in Dushanbe at the local state university. The two largest institutions in

[403] I place 'family' in quotation marks because states will differ in their ascription of family ties making an individual eligible for such a visa. In these states here, such a visa application must be supported in the state of destination by individuals legally swearing they are directly related by descent to the applicant.
[404] Interview September 2005, in Bishkek with one PRC Kyrgyz student from Yining/Gulja who had gone to Bishkek to study and had successfully negotiated a bribe to extend his one-year student's visa four consecutive times (costing roughly 150$ each time) and was, at the time of the interview, involved in this citizenship application process; if successful, he would lose his PRC citizenship due to the lack of dual citizenship regulations in Kyrgyzstan.
[405] Interview September 2005, in Bishkek. A similar interview with Michael Tschanz (head of IOM in Kazakhstan) produced the same conclusion (interview March 2003, in Almaty).

Bishkek (the National State University NSU and the Bishkek Humanities University BGU[406]) attract a fairly large number of individuals from the PRC, who come here to absolve Russian language courses in order to subsequently matriculate for regular study programmes (in 2005 there were around 25 such students from the PRC at NSU). Interviews with a number of these students quickly made it clear that the vast majority of Chinese citizens coming to Kyrgyzstan to study have been Han and Uighurs, nearly of all whom are from Xinjiang – at the time of my visit there were but two PRC Kyrgyz at NSU[407]; BGU, with its large Faculty for Chinese Studies, seems to attract fewer Chinese citizens (usually students who have graduated from NSU and enter into further programmes) and seems to be geared more to enabling Kyrgyzstani citizens (predominantly local Dungani) to obtain work with Chinese firms in Kyrgyzstan rather than preparing for a work-related trip to the PRC; furthermore, BGU actively promotes scholarly exchange between the states[408]. These students' trajectories in crossing the boundary from Xinjiang were very similar and are representative of this trans-frontier exchange:

> My family is from a village north of Artush in Qyzyl Suu but I spent my school years in Yining/Gulja. My father wanted me to study in Kyrgyzstan and learn Russian because I could then work abroad later. I was the best in my class so my application to come here was easy but expensive; after acquiring all the necessary documents (made easier by my father's good relationship to important people) I travelled to Urumqi to pick up the student visa and then took the bus to Kashgar and from there I got on the bus to Torugart and Naryn, and then came here.

A member of the local elite in Qyzyl Suu AP, his family had paid for this trajectory[409]. Strikingly, and quite consistent with all other Chinese citizens coming to Bishkek by land, this student had chosen a physical route of nearly 3000km instead of the direct route through Almaty in Kazakhstan which would have amounted to just under 700km because "Kazakhstani transit is not for us non-Kazakhs – the Chinese authorities make it very difficult to obtain an exit permission there for Kyrgyz *minzu* and everybody knows that the Kazakhstani borderguards are the worst in the world, especially to us Kyrgyz. Torugart is a 'smile' in comparison". In other words, the choice of exit port at this frontier revolves around official *minzu* ascription, a pattern that we see replicated in the other modes of crossing. The reverse trajectory, that is, Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani students going to institutions in the PRC, is considerably less traceable mainly for two reasons: on the one hand, applications by non-Chinese citizens to Chinese universities cannot be made with a specific university in

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[406] The George Soros-funded American University of Central Asia in Bishkek to the best of my knowledge does not attract Chinese citizens due to its focus on supporting students from the post-Soviet regions.

[407] The number of Chinese citizens at Kyrgyzstani universities was particularly low in 2005 due to the image of threat arising from the 'Tulip Revolution' in the spring of that year and the negative media coverage it was given in the PRC. I was not able to obtain official numbers but reportedly the preceding years had seen roughly double that number of PRC Kyrgyz and other Chinese citizens.

[408] In 2003 Dastan Sargulov organised a symposium at BGU that invited several PRC Kyrgyz scholars from Xinjiang, including the afore-mentioned Professor Mambet Turdu (an expert on the Manas epic). At that time Mr. Sargulov was a functionary for the university; today, he is one of the highest ranking officials of the post-Tulip Revolution Kyrgyzstani government.

[409] 1500RMB for the passport, 700RMB for the student visa (valid for one year), roughly 300RMB in other paperwork, and 50$ for the trans-frontier bus; together with the confiscation at Torugart of the Chinese currency in his pocket when he crossed, the total trip amounted to roughly 400$.

mind – generally, a central education committee in Beijing allocates an applicant to a particular university. Judging by the fact that Urumqi universities at the time of research seemed not to have any Kyrgyzstani or Tajikistani students enrolled means that such individuals are placed well outside of Xinjiang[410]. On the other hand, judging by sources in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan[411], comparatively few Central Asians decide to go to the PRC to study – most seeking education outside of the region are attracted, in this order, to Russia, Turkey, or the West.

Second, 'visitors', that is, individuals crossing the boundary for reasons of meeting with people for private reasons. As opposed to boundary-crossers of the category just discussed, members of which can be supposed here to come from relatively well-off and well-connected segments of society, visitors exhibit a broader background and a larger number of this group actually are borderlanders: parents visiting migrated children, descendants of families visiting ancestral homes, kin invited to life-cycle festivities such as weddings and funerals. Against the background of the migratory avenues of exchange discussed in Chapter 5 we can assume that newly traversable boundaries can lead to such relationship trajectories and, indeed, this has happened to a certain degree[412]:

> My mother had wanted to visit her family's burial site in Wuqia in Xinjiang [170km west of Artush, within Qyzyl Suu, about 200km east of the Tajik boundary] for many years. She applied for a Chinese visitor's visa in 1992 and was granted the documents, valid for two months, in early 1994. She borrowed much money from friends and relatives to finance these papers and applications and I was able to take money from my business and pay for her flight – there was no bus service to Torugart then, you see. So she took an aeroplane from Bishkek to Beijing and boarded a bus there that took her through China and to Kashgar where she had friends who organised transportation to Artush. There she was lucky and travelled to Wuqia on a donkey cart. There was no one who remembered her from the time when she had fled, but she remembered where the graves were and paid her respects. Many people asked her about life in Kirgizia as a Chinese woman. She told them about the fertile fields of Alexandrovka and the Chui valley and about the friendly Kyrgyz people and somebody offered to take her back to Kashgar for the next Sunday market. And from there she took a bus back to Beijing and flew home. She was very lucky that no one stole her Soviet passport and that her visa did not expire. She did not like China but wishes she could be buried in Wuqia. I will try to do this when she passes away.

While this represents an early example of such a trajectory it points to two important elements: on the one hand, and similarly to the anecdote quoted in the last paragraph, a boundary-crossing trajectory cannot simply choose its beginning and end points and connect these directly but is centrally dependent on non-local nodes of transit. Thus, a straight line to a location within a borderland remains to this day impossible (even if the detour has shrunk with the introduction of public buses) and such a trajectory is routed through sometimes

[410] During a study year at Harbin Institute of Technology in the PRC's North-east (2000-2001) I encountered a couple of students from the Central Asian Republics, all of whom were from rich and powerful families (and mostly from Kazakhstan). They had come to the PRC to learn Chinese and later work for trans-state business enterprises (especially in the energy sector).
[411] Interviews with Ken Nakanishi in Bishkek and Mullo-Abdol Shagarf in Khorog.
[412] Interview with a Dungani café owner, October 2005, in Alexandrovka (a predominantly Dungani village near Bishkek).

distant centres – a point I will return to below in connection with methods of deep borderland control. On the other hand, such renewed contact introduced into the borderlands precisely that which had been impossible since the 1950s: an image of the trans-frontier Other based on personal experience and subjective encounter with juxtaposed state and national identity. The afore-mentioned student, taking this trajectory a decade later and enjoying the advantage of a more direct connection across the boundary, had based his choice of studying in Kyrgyzstan not least upon the presence in Karakol (on Lake Issyk-kul) of kin who had escaped from Qyzyl Suu prior to the Cultural Revolution; his first meeting with them had been characterised by linguistic incomprehension and prejudice, leading him to "feel embarrassed" about his decision to visit.

In regard to the Tajikistani – Xinjiang boundary, individuals with visitor visas have appeared sporadically in Tashkurgan over the last couple of years since the opening of the Qolma road. One interviewee, himself a member of the local 'Tajik' elite in Tashkurgan[413], remembered a visit from some distant kin of his mother's side from the settlement of Vrang in GBAO (on the Pyanj river south-east of Khorog): they had received their documents through a travel agent in Khorog and taken the bus from there to Kashgar where they were picked up by my interviewee's father and driven back past Qolma to Tashkurgan. Communication had been difficult and the visitors had been shocked at the lack of Ismaili ritual knowledge expressed in my interviewee's family; after their ten-day visit (which had "cost us and them together maybe 1500RMB during their stay", around 200$) the visitors presented the family with books on religious topics and, in turn, took away several television sets as gifts. My interviewee's ironic answer to my question as to whether they would come again or whether there would be a reciprocal visit was put off with "Why? So they can give us more books [written in Cyrillic script] we cannot read and we can give them more TVs they cannot switch on without power?". Furthermore, he confirmed what I had already heard from several other sources in Tashkurgan by saying that he knew of not a single PRC 'Tajik' who had visited GBAO – there had, however, been an exchange of local officials from Tashkurgan AC (along with other provincial officials and members of the CCP as well as the autonomous unit's *hokkim*) to Dushanbe upon the occasion of the official opening of the Qolma port. Significantly, it seems easier for Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani citizens to apply for visitor documents to go to the PRC than vice versa. This is by no means due to either of the Central Asian states restricting such access but rather to what seems an unwritten policy by both states to issue such visas free of charge and with little hassle to Chinese citizens seeking them who have close kin in Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan – the PRC thus seems to restrict its granting of exit permits to such individuals in order to prevent such people from being tempted to permanently migrate[414].

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[413] Interview with NimTuLa, May 2006, in Urumqi.

[414] I have been unable to corroborate either side's official policy in this matter despite inquiries at the Kyrgyz consulate in Urumqi and several official government representatives in Kyrgyzstan. However, enough examples abound in interviews of precisely this having happened. Possibly this was also the reason for the abolishment of the initial visa exemption rule between these states and the PRC in the second half of the 1990s.

Third, entrepreneurs, that is, individuals crossing the boundary for economic reasons, taking advantage of price and supply differentials through their ability to negotiate trans-frontier trajectories in an economically profitable manner. In other words, I focus here on "those who use the [boundary] as one way to add value to their products, or who market themselves as masters of the [boundary] in order to entice people to use their services" (Donnan&Wilson 2001:122). The strategies employed at this frontier to make use of the boundary for economic gain can be summarised as follows:

> **trader-tourists**: individuals crossing on short-term permits or tourist visas in the company of others, either on public buses or in shared private transport, and selling small amounts of goods for a small profit. Included here are currency dealers, usually to be found on public buses, who act as exchange bureaux (in these cases the only such service at the frontier) making a small profit, as well as 'tour leaders', i.e., people holding other fellow travellers' documents and taking care of interaction with boundary personnel;
>
> **driver-transporters**: individuals licensed (officially or unofficially) to secure boundary-crossing transport, that is, driving trucks or public buses. Other modes of non-public transport here require a 'switch' at the boundary, thus involving two such individuals, one on either side of the boundary;
>
> **professionals**: individuals usually not transporting goods across the boundary but rather involved in wider trans-frontier economic exchange, usually as officially licensed people holding 'business' visas. Their official status enables them to possess a wide network of 'partners' beyond the boundary, usually extending to (or even focused on) regional or state centres;
>
> **traffickers**: individuals involved in transporting criminalized goods (here, arms and narcotics and, into the PRC, ideological contraband) or large amounts of permissible goods (state currency or, most frequently, electronics), usually under cover of other goods. Lack of strict import regulations (or, rather, their enforcement at customs) into the Central Asian Republics makes many trader-tourists into 'trafficker-tourists'.

Here, finally, we might expect to discover the highest proportion of actual borderlanders crossing these boundaries and taking advantage of geographical proximity and a certain degree of wider Borderland connectivity. As argued in Chapter 1, it is borderlanders who could be seen as standing to profit from newly permeable state boundaries, especially in light of their economic peripherality within their respective states. This is not so: all personal observations and all interviews conducted in the region regarding the agents of trans-boundary economic interaction reveal a striking process: local borderlanders on either side of the boundaries between Xinjiang and Kyrgyzstan/GBAO rarely actually cross the boundary as trader-tourists, driver-transporters, or traffickers (but somewhat more frequently as what I have termed 'professionals'). The vast majority of boundary-crossers in this domain are Han Chinese and Uighurs (all residents of Xinjiang, however) from the PRC side and Kyrgyzstani Russians, Dungani, and Uzbeks from the Kyrgyzstani side (the first two mainly at Torugart and the latter only at Irkeshtam); and, in GBAO, practically all trans-boundary traffic is conducted by Chinese citizens rather than Tajikistani citizens. PRC Kyrgyz from Qyzyl Suu are not visible in economic exchange that physically crosses the boundary, just as PRC 'Tajiks' from Tashkurgan are not visible; local Dungani from Qyzyl Suu as well as Uighurs resident in the AP are the only borderlanders who take this trajectory, and even these groups are numerically inferior to the Uighurs from Kashgar or other more distant Xinjiang cities.

Kyrgyzstani residents of Naryn, At Bashy, and Sary Tash, those gateway towns in Kyrgyzstan that the two boundary-crossing roads must pass through, are likewise not involved in such trajectories – driver-transporters and trader-tourists are generally from more distant locales such as around Bishkek and Lake Issyk-kul (in regard to the Torugart port) or Osh and the Ferghana Valley (for the Irkeshtam port). Both at the Kashgar Sunday market and at the large 'Russian bazaar' in Urumqi, the two markets in Xinjiang that attract citizens of the Central Asian Republics in larger numbers, Kyrgyzstani individuals were predominantly from Kyrgyzstan's two major centres: from Osh in the case of the former (having taken the Irkeshtam trajectory) and from Bishkek in the case of the latter (having taken the Torugart trajectory or, increasingly in recent times, having flown from Bishkek). In effect, such boundary-crossing trajectories are, thus, pursued predominantly by non-locals and hence only rarely by the population of what I have termed the wider Borderland.

Whose Borderland: Access and Egress

We have seen how the boundary between Xinjiang and both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan has become traversable for goods and traders, visitors, and public transport, and that this new connectivity has seemed to mainly be taken advantage of by citizens of these three states. However, I have argued that here borderlanders themselves are not the ones centrally involved in actual physical boundary-crossing trajectories except for in exceptional cases. How then do Kyrgyz and 'Tajik' borderlanders in Xinjiang situate themselves in regard to the boundary's new negotiability? Centrally, how accessible is the boundary to borderlanders from within the borderland? This is important to our inquiry into the existence of processes tying the wider Borderland together and demands an analysis of what I have termed deep borderland control. In terms of such control, the collaterality of the Xinjiang borderlands of Qyzyl Suu AP and Tashkurgan AC, institutionalised as discussed in the last chapter during the time of Sino-Soviet tensions, has grown visibly through the introduction of those physical inscriptions of state border control serving a now-traversable boundary such as customs buildings and borderzone checkpoints, both of which now fulfil the objective of controlling not just internal traffic but also trans-frontier exchange. In practice, this means that all trajectories that ultimately aim at crossing the boundary to Xinjiang or GBAO must, without exception, pass through either Artush (for Qyzyl Suu's Torugart port) or Kashgar (for Tashkurgan's Qolma port)[415]. Borderlanders living between these gateway cities and the boundary must first travel back to this node to then be able to return and cross the boundary; in other words, residence within the border heartland requires a trajectory that first traces a route back inwards to the state in order to make contact with gatekeepers that permit exit from the state. This is not all: as boundary-crossing transport for private individuals is by public bus at Torugart and Qolma, borderlanders must travel in both cases to the central bus station in Kashgar to board this bus, thus extending the detour that needs to be made by up to several hundred kilometres as well as significantly increasing the costs involved. It is theoretically possible to board this bus at Artush (beyond the customs checkpoint on the road to Kashgar), but this is risky and depends on negotiation with the bus driver and the

[415] Here, I call to mind Figure 6 in Chapter 2 for an overview of borderland and borderzone checkpoints and nodes.

availability of seats. In the case of borderlanders wanting to cross at Irkeshtam by private transport (usually by minibus), the personal exit documents of these individuals must similarly be countersigned by officials at Artush, thus necessitating either prior organisation by an acquaintance, who then personally picks this individual up at a pre-arranged spot, or a personal trip to Artush.

The territories of Qyzyl Suu AP and Tashkurgan AC are closed in terms of non-resident locals' penetration thereof as well as these residents' options in direct trans-boundary trajectories. That is, boundary-crossers coming from Kyrgyzstan or GBAO and intending to travel to a locale within the border heartland of Qyzyl Suu AP or Tashkurgan AC can only do so by first traversing the entire borderland to, in the former case, Urumqi to there apply for permission (in form of a *tongxingzheng*) from the (provincial) PSB to enter Qyzyl Suu or, in the latter, Kashgar to apply for permission from the (local) PSB Kashgar Border Office[416]. All vehicles crossing the Torugart or Qolma are accompanied by a PAPF (Armed Police) officer between the boundary and the checkpoints at Artush (for the former) or Ghez on the road to Kashgar (for the latter), just as they are when on a trajectory leaving Xinjiang; crossing at Irkeshtam, this is generally not the case but numerous checkpoints on the road to Artush control vehicle passengers and their identities. Faced with such all-encompassing control over the means of movement within the border heartlands, questions as to borderlanders' possibilities in evading such control necessarily arise.

All interviewees, both borderlanders here as well as individuals knowledgeable about structures in the borderland that would lend themselves to subversion of such control (see Chapter 2) point to the fact that the networks required to evade the multifaceted forces of border control are accessible only to non-borderlanders, in particular only to Han Chinese and possibly Uighur business associates. With the borderguards and personnel at the vital checkpoints being non-local members of a state-wide system of rotating postings sent to these prestigious ports for services successfully rendered elsewhere, and with the forces of border control in Xinjiang consisting of several layers of civilian, military, and para-military control organs (see Figure 12 in Chapter 5), there is little space to negotiate freedom of movement. Corruption certainly exists at the level of those unofficial gatekeepers possessing the appropriate 'bureaucratic capital' (Torpey 2000), but such gatekeepers seem to be inaccessible to borderlanders. The establishment of a new SEZ in Tashkurgan following the official opening of the Qolma Pass in 2004, as well as in Artush, have underlined processes of the state's control over the framework of interaction between borderlanders and non-locals: the disappearance of non-Chinese citizens such as Pakistanis in these zones has gone hand-in-hand with the influx, noted with much ire locally, of prostitutes (exclusively Han) and businesses run by 'outsiders': Uighurs generally in control of bazaars and Han entrepreneurs running shops and services as well as heading local branches of state-owned enterprises such as banks and construction firms. In the crucial domain of deep borderland control, the

[416] In both cases it is theoretically possible to employ the services of a 'travel agent' with the right connections. This is an expensive and time-consuming process and can only be done in Bishkek, Osh, or Dushanbe, not in the borderland gateway cities of Naryn or Khorog.

institution of the SEZ can be seen as augmenting a vital component in guaranteeing borderlands' inward (i.e., state-ward) orientation.

The Kyrgyzstani borderlands, once again, offer a fundamentally different narrative of accessibility and negotiability. If Qyzyl Suu AP and Tashkurgan AP can be characterised as embodying a high degree of deep borderland control as marked by the routing of trans-boundary trajectories through specific borderland gateways, strong collaterality, and heavy restrictions on the penetration of the immediate border heartland, the borderlands in Kyrgyzstan's Naryn and Osh *oblasts* are remarkable for the lack of such deep borderland control. Even more importantly, while in Xinjiang control has increased over the last years (as evidenced by the abolishment of the visa exemption rule, for example, or the establishment of SEZs) in Kyrgyzstan it has in practice weakened considerably. In terms of borderland movement for non-locals, prior to 2002 all non-Kyrgyzstani citizens were obliged to register at the OVIR office in the respective *oblast* centre within three days of having crossed the boundary; since then, this requirement has been upheld only for non-Western citizens entering on a visitor or tourist visa (but not a business visa). Thus, Chinese citizens entering Kyrgyzstan via Torugart or Irkeshtam not holding a business visa are required to travel hastily to either Osh or Naryn or risk deportation. In practice, boundary crossers can pay a small 'service fee' at the first internal checkpoint on Kyrgyzstani territory (i.e., the borderzone checkpoint at Ak Beyit in the north or Sary Tash in the south) to personnel of the MVD (which controls OVIR) and comfortably receive a registration stamp from the seat of their bus or minibus.

A further symbol of the weakening of internal control within Kyrgyzstan is the recent appearance of Chinese trucks deep within the Kyrgyzstani hinterland. Unlike at the Kazakhstani or Russian boundaries with the PRC, where all trans-boundary goods traffic must switch vehicle to a locally registered form of transport and where all container contents are sealed by customs not to be opened until the final destination (Almaty or Vladivostok/Khabarovsk/Chita, respectively), here trucks continue through the borderlands unsealed and relatively unimpeded, selling off goods en route to the final destination as decided by the driver – most, however, do this at the bazaars of Naryn or Sary Tash, respectively, or most profitably outside Bishkek or Osh, respectively, depending on the driver-transporter's abilities in negotiating such penetration. A visit to the 'Kashgar Representative Office of Xinjiang China in the Bishkek of Kyrgyzstan' (unscrambled, the representative organisation for small-scale traders from the PRC in Kyrgyzstan[417]), situated in a building in the centre of town that also serves as a hotel for Chinese truck drivers, uncovered that there exists in Bishkek (as well as in Osh) a network of Chinese 'businesspeople' with connections to most smaller local markets in Kyrgyzstan's borderlands that coordinates distribution to the regional and central markets and interaction with local

[417] September 2005. Interestingly, I followed up on the Kashgar main office and I strongly suspect this organisation of being a *bingtuan*-operated export-cum-investment operation, a suspicion I believe corroborated through its connection to Mr. Wu's boundary-crossing business (as personally participated in by myself; see the vignette in Chapter 2).

KGB and administrative bodies. Along with the disappearance of the Soviet-era internal checkpoints that enforced collaterality in Kyrgyzstan's *oblasts*, it is not an exaggeration to conclude that borderland access and internal accessibility is now part of a Chinese narrative of penetration, structurally a situation reminiscent of trans-frontier borderland penetration by the Soviet Union prior to the Sino-Soviet Split.

In GBAO, Tajikistan's borderland at the frontier to the PRC, borderland accessibility still retains a strong element of Soviet-era discourses of control: internal checkpoints are staffed by members of the Tajikistani KGB, personnel belonging to the MVD and its OVIR division, and soldiers and officers of the Tajikistani military forces that have recently taken over from the Russian and CIS forces. Due to the *propusk* requirement for non-locals, negotiating access to the borderland is difficult not just for outsiders such as foreign researchers (see Chapter 2) but also for boundary crossers from Xinjiang. In theory there is no official possibility of obtaining the *propusk* from outside of Tajikistan's territory, thus effectively routing all access to GBAO through the state capital, the only locale in which the *propusk* is officially available to non-Tajikistani citizens. However, as has become evident, there is a fair amount of traffic crossing the Qolma Pass into GBAO and these individuals are faced with either procuring documentation or evading this requirement. For the passengers and trader-tourists on the bus from Kashgar to Khorog, obtaining the *propusk* is taken care of by 'travel agents' in Kashgar who have a functioning network of contacts to individuals in Dushanbe[418] – in my experience these are networks always involving people affiliated with the Chinese embassy there who have direct access to individuals at the Tajikistani MVD. Driver-transporters generally do not bother to obtain a *propusk* because their (Chinese) employers find it easier to let these individuals negotiate their passage through GBAO with the agents of the Tajikistani state as they are encountered: "we don't bother [with the *propusk*] because it's so much cheaper and easier like this"[419].

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[418] Sayoh, the state travel agency in Tajikistan and the successor to the local Soviet Intourist, works closely with the Foreign Ministry (which is in political competition to the MVD) and one senior member of this company stated to me (October 31st 2005, in Dushanbe) that the company was "able to organise the *propusk* so that one can pick it up at the boundary" with enough prior notice and an appropriate 'financial incentive'. However, all payment had to be cash in advance, meaning that a reliable agent in Dushanbe is unavoidable for those seeking such services. Foreign tourist companies as well as NGOs employ the same type of agent (but will accept payment by internet).

[419] Interview with a Han truck driver, November 2005, in Khorog in GBAO; see Chapter 2 for the full interview that includes references to his trajectory's connection with the 'Remake the West' campaign in Xinjiang.

Picture 36: Chinese truck approaching Murghab (GBAO)

According to interviews with such truck drivers, this entails bribing one's way to Murghab and obtaining papers there that make further travel on to Khorog possible. One member of the local KGB in Murghab hinted at the personal relationship that had sprung up between himself and two such Chinese drivers when he realised that they had learned some Russian from a family of Murghab Kyrgyz he himself knew well on the road to Qolma where they usually spent the night when coming from the boundary[420]: "we regularly, maybe every other month, see each other at the checkpoint. We joke and drink together, they pay a fine and I sign a temporary transit *propusk* that gets them to the *avtobaza* [truck and bus station] outside Khorog where they unload their trucks". When pushed for the exact nature of the access this KGB officer could grant the drivers, he added that "I cannot grant a *propusk* that will get them past OVIR checkpoints – they can get to Khorog like this but no farther. But in Khorog they can deal with the *oblast* KGB there. It's all very risky because regulations can change, but that's *their* business".

Thus, GBAO is an accessible and traversable borderland for Chinese 'businesspeople'; the document restrictions are avoidable (and are indeed avoided) in collusion with gatekeepers within the region on a case-by-case basis for this type of boundary-crosser. The requirement of possessing a *propusk* to enter GBAO reveals a significant aspect of the borderland nature of this region by pointing to a very specific discourse of control: that of illusory state control easily subverted by those with the personal power to co-opt the forces supposedly implementing access. Depending on the connections a driver-transporter and/or his employer in the PRC possesses within Tajikistan, the depth such boundary-crossers can achieve within the territory of this state can be considerable: Chinese trucks can be seen outside of Dushanbe today just as can Chinese road construction workers, who arrive here

[420] Interview November 2005, outside Murghab.

frequently driving the heavy machinery to be employed on Tajikistani roads far from the boundary. However, one of the major reasons for local borderlanders' resentment of the ease with which Chinese citizens are seen to "flaunt our laws and make fools of our police" is the fact that their presence is seen as "supporting Dushanbe's claim of control over GBAO: by paying bribes they accept Dushanbe's political conditions and the money does not come here, and the central government's rules then make it difficult for those Chinese to deal directly with us. I bet Rakhmonov [the Tajikistani president (S.P.)] sits at a table in Dushanbe with Chinese businessmen laughing his arse off at our impotence"[421]. From the perspective of borderlanders here, Chinese presence is not subversive but rather a symbol of the lack of local political power to regulate (and thereby benefit from) trans-frontier traffic.

Comparative Analysis of Interaction

The discussion of dynamics in the Kyrgyzstani – Tajikistani borderlands has shown that the emergence of the two new states from the ashes of the Soviet Union has not led to the imposition of effective border control between these two states as enacted by these sovereign political entities themselves. I argue that, in light of the evidence presented here, we truly must regard the two segments of the new borderlands to the north and south of the Qyzyl Art boundary as a single, trans-state Borderland under the primary 'control' of ethnic Kyrgyz – the group constituting a trans-frontier nation here, and we shall see this reflected in the locally held cognitive representations of belonging to be discussed below. The social networks characterising this spatial zone are trans-frontier in nature, boundary crossers are predominantly Kyrgyz borderlanders (either Kyrgyzstani citizens or members of the Tajikistani Kyrgyz minority in Murghab) forced to deal with the imposition of border control in a way that guarantees their economic survival. From the point of view of the two states involved, the status of the Borderland today can be characterised as 'interdependent' in Martinez' borderlands typology discussed in Chapter 1, although it seems as if the trend in terms of what border control *should* be accomplishing (i.e., a far higher degree of control over trans-boundary interaction than either state is capable of today) would point to a desire for mere 'co-existence'. This wider Kyrgyz Borderland exhibits elements of 'transnationalism' (to use Martinez' term), conflict and accommodation, otherness, and separateness. Interdependency is a reality of borderlander lifeworlds due to the Tajikistani state's inability to campaign for local loyalties or constructively involve borderlanders in wider state-building processes. The state agents of border control at the boundary are unable and largely unwilling to enforce a rhetoric of channelling movement through permissible avenues along certain parameters for select individuals. The internal presence of the states in form of the KGB and MVD institutions in the borderlands becomes meaningless in negotiating effective, deep borderland control through their subversion by (Kyrgyz) borderlanders, who thereby successfully contest state control over the wider Borderland.

[421] Interview with an anonymous official (a local member of the *oblast* government in Khorog), November 2005, in Khorog.

In light of the evidence presented in the discussion of the respective state segments of the borderlands between the PRC's Xinjiang and the two post-Soviet states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, I conclude that the alienation of the borderlands over the decades of the common socialist period has shifted to come to represent a status of 'co-existence' in Martinez' typology discussed in Chapter 1. However, trans-frontier networks established over the last years of renewed trans-boundary accessibility have largely excluded local borderlanders – such networks are not structures of trans-frontier social relations tying together a boundary-transcending Kyrgyz or 'Tajik'/Pamiri Borderland. This discussion of observable physical trajectories across the Xinjiang – Central Asian boundaries as they exist today has pointed to a surprising fact: exchange within the wider Borderland is generally not driven by borderlanders themselves, be they Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz, Tashkurgan 'Tajiks', Pamiri from GBAO, or local Kyrgyzstani from local and regional centres such as At Bashy, Naryn, or Sary Tash. Far more, physical trajectories are pursued primarily by non-borderlanders followed by, at a distant second place on the Xinjiang side, borderlanders not belonging to the majority *minzu*/*natsiya* of the borderlands; in other words, most boundary-crossers are Uighurs and Han resident in Xinjiang or Russians, Dungani, Uighurs, and even Uzbeks resident in Kyrgyzstan (and practically no Tajikistani citizens whatsoever), followed by Dungani and Uighurs from Qyzyl Suu. Borderlanders belonging to the Kyrgyz and Tajik *minzu* or the local populations of Naryn/Osh *oblasts* and Murghab *raion* are certainly involved in what Ratti (1993) has termed the 'support space' of frontier economics in the borderlands, and their local economies do profit to a degree from accessibility, but they are neither the instigators nor the brokers that borderlanders have been shown to be in other borderlands.

Figure 14 below, thus, visualises the interaction taking place across our borderlands' boundaries today by juxtaposing groups within the administrative-territorial borderlands (Qyzyl Suu AP and Tashkurgan AC in Xinjiang, Naryn and Osh *oblasts* in Kyrgyzstan, and Murghab *raion* and the 'rest' of GBAO in Tajikistan) with groups in the respective states' non-borderland regions:

Kyrgyzstan
Xinjiang
Kyrgyzstani Kyrgyz
Russians
Uzbeks
Dungani
Uighurs
Kyrgyz
Han
Uighurs
Hui
Naryn oblast
Osh oblast
PRC
Kyrgyz
Kyrgyz
Hui
Uighurs
Kyrgyz
Qyzyl Suu AP
Tashkurgan AC
Tajikistani
Tajiks
Pamiri
Uighurs
Kyrgyz
Murghab raion
GBAO (rest)
PRC
Tajik
Pamiri
Han
Uighurs
Tajikistan

Figure 14: Comparison of contemporary trans-frontier trajectories

It immediately becomes evident that borderlander interaction (represented with grey arrows) in all Chinese cases is directed inwards to the state with the sole, and relatively marginal, exception of Hui and Uighurs resident in Qyzyl Suu – two groups that have been successful in connecting with boundary-transcending networks originating in Kashgar and Urumqi. Across the boundary, Kyrgyzstani borderlanders interact predominantly with their own state rather than with Chinese trajectories, just as the Pamiri do; Kyrgyz borderlanders in the post-Soviet

Pamir/Alay Borderland interact with one another while local Murghab *raion* Pamiri interact with other Pamiri in the wider GBAO region. Before now proceeding to discover cognitive elements that can help us understand how these structures of interaction correlate or are in conflict with local notions of the extent of the borderlands, I conclude that the former external boundary of the Soviet Union to the PRC has not been bridged locally while the former internal boundary between the territorial-administrative, national Kyrgyz and Tajik units is in the process of undergoing local renegotiation. In other words, the Chinese boundaries have (in terms of interaction) been appropriated by what locals in the borderlands regard as representatives of the wider state; the Kyrgyzstani – Tajikistani boundary has (in terms of interaction) been appropriated by local borderlanders.

6.3 Cognitive Borderlander Maps

As a final element in my discussion of uncovering whose boundaries and borderlands we are dealing with from a borderland perspective I now turn to cognitive shifts that have taken place in locally and regionally held maps of the boundaries at this frontier. Such maps of meaning are intricately connected to the socio-political constructs and processes that are state boundaries (Paasi 2005), as argued in Chapter 1. In keeping with an anthropological inquiry into the practices and discourses that are the vehicles by which borderlanders identify with or contest the boundedness of the state, I now discuss how borderlanders themselves deal with bordering discourses within and across the states' margins. How are the tendencies to essentialise and totalise the Other enacted today in regard to these encumbered boundaries, i.e., to differentiate the state's titular Us from the trans-frontier or non-titular Them and to emphasise difference over proximity? Have the post-Soviet states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan remained what they were initially intended to be, namely homelands for titular groups, but also been able to assume the new role of commanding its new citizens' loyalties? And, importantly, have traditional notions of inclusion, exclusion, and bordering (as expressed in the Kyrgyz differentiation between *chek-ara* and *granitsa* discussed in Chapter 3) been renegotiated in light of shifting political control and new borderland discourses in the region, i.e., is local re-bordering taking place?

I begin such an approach by shedding light on how the respective members of the putative trans-frontier Kyrgyz and Tajik nations regard one another in terms of national inclusion or exclusion, and this will be compared to outside representations of trans-frontier proximity or distance of these groups. Following this, trans-frontier discourses of hybridity, linguistic purity, and cultural corruption as mapped by state affiliation will be discussed and we shall see how belonging to this or that state has cognitively influenced images of such groups by citizens of the respective other states. Finally, as a conclusion, I approach local notions of homelands, both of the 'rightful' type as well as the 'real' type, and how these relate to discourses of political power within the state and local loyalties. It will become evident that the external, former Sino – Soviet boundaries are cognitively reproduced in other ways than the former internal Soviet administrative boundaries.

Ascribing National Affiliation and Bordering Belonging

All groups in the wider area of this thesis' inquiry have clearly formulated notions of their own belonging within the system of national classification discussed in Chapter 4. Self-ascription of an ethnonym in no cases encountered contests today's official state categorisation; even the Tajikistani state's (just as its predecessor, the Tajik SSR's) predilection for labelling Pamiri as 'Mountain Tajiks' has disappeared from legislation in the Tajikistani Constitution, with all citizens of the Tajikistani state labelled solely as such (in contrast to the situation in Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan) but with reference in the Preamble to the Constitutional Law to their individual "unique cultures and languages of peoples populating the region (Butler 1999:85). A further anomaly is represented by the case of

Dungani, labelled as such in Central Asia but as the Hui *minzu* in the PRC; however, Dungani in Central Asia always name themselves Dungani rather than Hui, just as Dungani as an ethnonym is not used in the PRC by members of that *minzu*. A particularly striking case of congruency between state classification and local use of an ethnonym is that of the 'Tajiks' in Tashkurgan AC: locally, individuals describe themselves as a 'Tajik of Tashkurgan town, a 'Tajik of Tabdar', or any other local settlement, and farther abroad as a 'Tajik of Tashkurgan' (when within Xinjiang) or a 'Tajik of Xinjiang' (anywhere else in the PRC).

Situational Self-representation

In regard to the often-observed hierarchy of successive units serving self-ascription, individuals will employ reference points aiding others' comprehension; thus, in a local context local reference points will be used while in non-local contexts territorial-administrative units or national affiliation are emphasised. Not suprisingly, identities as chosen by individuals to represent themselves to others will depend on the contact situation and socio-cultural environment: Kyrgyz from Artush in Qyzyl Suu tend to represent themselves as members of a not-further defined Kyrgyz *minzu* when interacting with Han or Uighurs in Urumqi but as Artush residents when in contact with Uighurs at the bazaar there; talking to other Kyrgyz from Yining/Gulja farther north in Xinjiang, for example, Qyzyl Suu will be mentioned first, usually to be followed by a clan affiliation. Outside of a co-citizenship context, in my experience according to interviewees' responses, all individuals except for Murghab Kyrgyz characterise themselves as citizens of their respective states: Kyrgyz and Tajik *minzu* are *zhongguo ren* (Chinese citizens)[422] and Pamiri are Tajikistani. Kyrgyz individuals from Murghab *raion* do not fit this regional pattern due to their self-labelling not as Tajikistani but as Kyrgyz when interacting with former Soviet citizens. Here, Dru Gladney's model of 'dialogic relational alterities' can help us understand such situational self-representations (2004:189-192). In the context of his discussion of Hui identities and their relationship to their status as a *minzu* in the PRC, he finds that (*ibid.*:192):

> the hierarchy of segmentation is not fixed; it is determined by the local context of difference, as defined by a specific constellation of stereotypical relations, of hierarchy, power, class, and opposition, that are often shifting and multifaceted, but never arbitrary. Thus, [...] there have been times where Hui have united with Han Chinese against other Hui, when it was in their interest to do so, often downplaying their Muslim identity in favor of cultural, ethnic, or linguistic similarities to the Han Chinese with whom they sought to share practical interests.

While emphasising the non-deterministic nature of such mobilisations, Gladney shows that mapping out the faultlines of relation and opposition help to uncover the parameters of momentary strategic alliances and oppositions. However, of importance in bordering discourses here, some of these self-ascribed and locally accepted ethnonyms or territorially defined designations strongly contrast with the ascription of national affiliation encountered further afield, and the discrepancy between such labelling points us towards locally held

[422] Infrequently, when confronted with foreigners in particular, the expression *xinjiang ren* (Xinjiang citizen) will be used. See further below in the discussion on homelands.

notions of national but also ethnic proximity/distance across group and, crucially, political state or administrative-territorial boundaries.

As an overview, Figure 15 places such bordering discourses in the wider Borderland context for the sake of comparativity and, thus, reveals a number of initially surprising categories and terms that are mobilised to mark such proximity or distance. The 'practical interests' mentioned by Gladney in the above citation seem to be circumscribed by state boundaries in a local borderland context – the central finding here is that Borderland Kyrgyz at the Central Asian – Xinjiang frontier do not generally choose to mobilise a wider Kyrgyz identity that would cognitively connect Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz with Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan while Kyrgyz in Murghab *do* choose such a borderland-connecting narrative of belonging. In fact, it will be shown that trans-frontier proximity is ascribed to the Kyrgyz in the former Soviet – PRC Borderland solely by outside groups and not by members of this *natsiya/minzu*. A similar finding lies in the fact that Borderland Pamiri do not at this time mobilise such trans-frontier identities either, although cognitive differences will be shown to lie between the Pamiri of GBAO and the 'Tajiks' of Xinjiang.

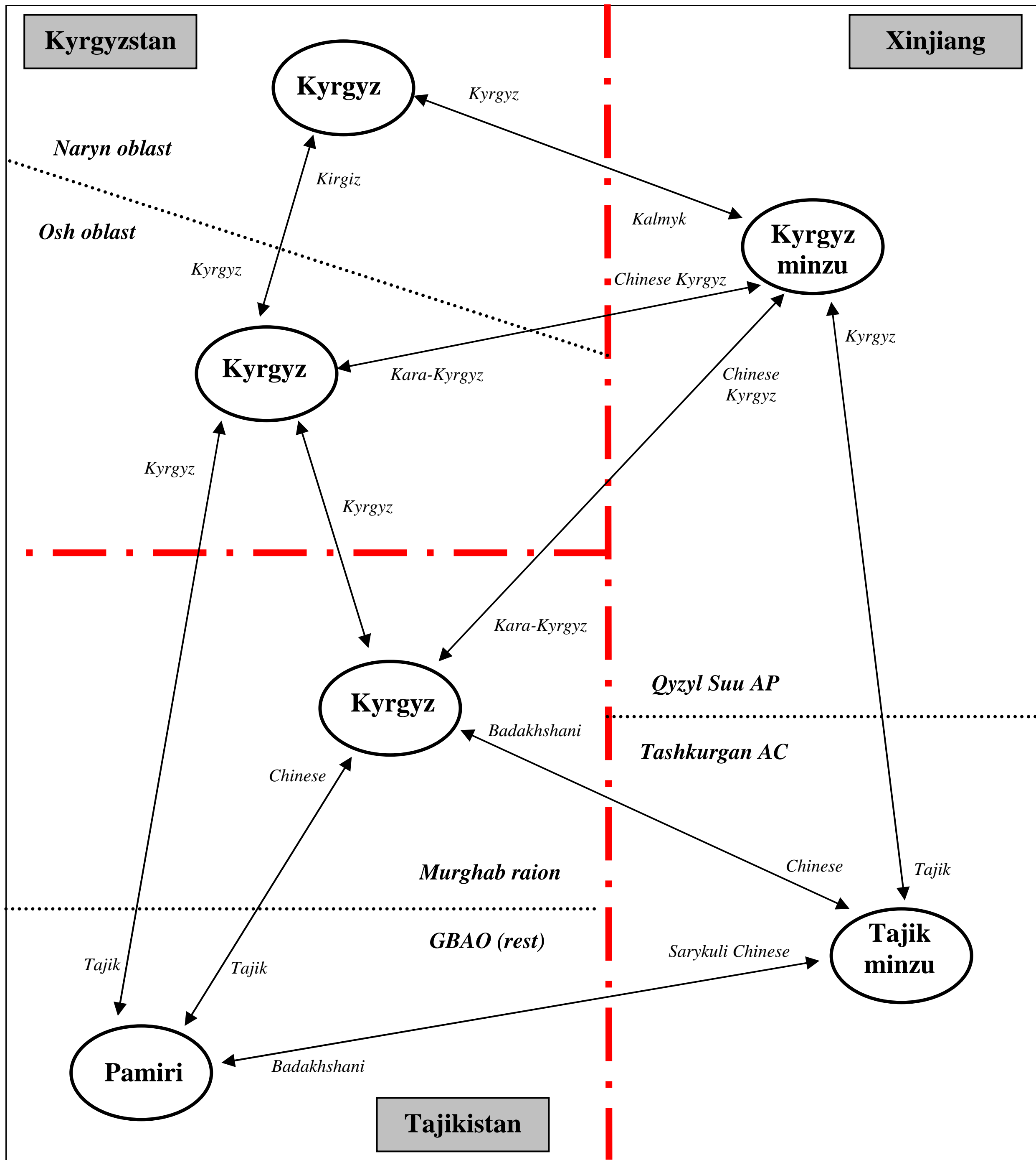

Figure 15: Self (circles) and Other (arrows) national ascription amongst borderlanders

This figure shows the empirically observed stereotypical designations for the various *natsiya/minzu* and *narodnost* in the wider trans-frontier Borderland as recorded by myself during field research. I do not claim that these designations can be employed in a predictive way or that the terms should be understood to outline precisely bounded groups; however, the registers employed by those asked to characterise their interaction or images of their neighbours do point to the parameters of the 'relational alterities' referred to above. These registers contain a mix of official terminologies, geographical designations, derogatory

connotations, and political assumptions on the part of those using them, and I shall now discuss such parameters more closely in order to approach a cognitive map of the borderlands. Whilst being aware that such a clear-cut presentation of terminologies risks over-essentialising such representations as used on the ground, I do also believe that the individuals interviewed employ such terms in an essentialising manner rather in the tradition of the socialist classification performed and institutionalised in both the Soviet Union and the PRC. As will be seen here, groups have adopted some terms and have come to employ certain labels in unexpected ways.

Pamiri and PRC 'Tajik' Ascription

The Pamiri in GBAO, variously labelled as Tajiks (by Kyrgyz groups) or Badakhshani (by members of the Tajik *minzu* across the boundary to Xinjiang), regard the 'Tajik' inhabitants of Tashkurgan AC as "belonging to the lost sixth group of Pamiri – the Sarykuli", a designation stemming from the local name for the Eastern Pamir mountains. Frequently the Sarykuli are characterised by Pamiri in GBAO as "Pamiri who cannot speak any Pamiri language very well and are actually more Chinese than Pamiri". Vice versa, the Sarykuli in Tashkurgan AC, who never refer to themselves as Sarykuli but rather as "Tajiks who speak Tajik", regard the Pamiri of GBAO as Badakhshani without a differentiation between the expressions Pamiri and Tajik, which are therefore used as synonyms for what is seen in Tashkurgan as "the people of the Tajik state across the boundary". Thus, Badakhshani is employed to describe the people residing in GBAO irrespective of national affiliation – it is a geographical term, and not a single Tashkurgan Tajik encountered regards himself or herself as Badakhshani "because that territory is in Tajikistan and we are not *tajikesitan ren* [Tajikistani]". In other words, the territory of GBAO is cognitively larger from the perspective of GBAO's Pamiri than from that of the Tajiks in Tashkurgan: the former regard the Sarykuli Range as belonging to a wider Badakhshan whereas the latter see Badakhshan as being bounded by the Tajikistani state[423].

Ascription by non-Pamiri/non-Sarykuli in regard to these two groups reveals an image of projected trans-frontier proximity. Thus, in the PRC the Pamiri of GBAO, the 'Tajiks' of Tashkurgan, and the Tajiks of the rest of Tajikistan are all referred to as Tajiks. Similarly, in Kyrgyzstan no difference is made between the ethnonyms of these groups; however, the Kyrgyz of Murghab tend to refer to the people of Tashkurgan across the boundary as Chinese and no relationship is imputed between 'the Chinese there' and 'the Tajiks here', that is, the Pamiri of GBAO; thus, in both cases the titular ethnonym of the respective state is used. In effect, the Pamiri *narodnost* as defined in Soviet times has remained cognitively invisible to non-Tajikistani groups and the fact that GBAO's Pamiri do not share Tajik Sunni beliefs but rather are part of the Ismailiyya is not reflected in outsider ascription, including ascription by Tashkurgan's 'Tajiks' (themselves Ismaili) – the general

[423] Incidentally, this wider Badakhshan as seen by GBAO's Pamiri also includes a part of Afghanistan. See Chatterjee (2002:130-144) for a discussion of what she calls 'the Afghan Connection'.

representation of Pamiri as Tajiks today is a direct continuity of the Soviet classification of titular territoriality.

Kyrgyz Ascription (1): Group-internal Terms

The various representatives of what in the official classificatory systems of the states involved are known as the Kyrgyz *natsiya* or Kyrgyz *minzu* employ a variety of designations amongst themselves that can be clearly divided into two categories: one emphasising regional difference as expressed in linguistic competence (Kyrgyz versus Kirgiz), and one emphasising state affiliation (Kalmyk and Chinese Kyrgyz). *First*, in regard to the terms implying linguistic competence, the differentiation between Kyrgyz and Kirgiz[424] points to the ability of a person to speak Russian fluently and is made in an exclusively derogatory manner: 'Kyrgyz' use Russian in a "colloquial, ungrammatical, and unsophisticated" way whereas 'Kirgiz' "have forgotten much of the Kyrgyz language because they are russified and speak Russian as a first language". Frequently, in addition to this differentiation, the former group is often labelled as *myrk* (a disparaging term meaning non-Russified sedentary) whereas the latter are sometimes labelled Kazakhs or, still more insultingly, Kazakh-Kyrgyz. To complete the complex picture, the Kyrgyz (as opposed to the Kirgiz) can be termed Kara-Kyrgyz, but here the term is felt to be far more positive as it excludes association with the Russian language and emphasises local dialects. While at first glance such a differentiation may seem irrelevant and to pale in comparison to other projections of proximity expressed in terms of state affiliation to be discussed immediately below, here we witness a direct connection between territory and language, and between language competency and notions of 'cultural level' (expressed in the adjective 'sedentary') – three domains very reminiscent of Stalin's criteria pertaining to the constitution of nations[425].

The terms 'Kyrgyz' and 'Kirgiz' are employed to describe, respectively, southern Kyrgyz and northern Kyrgyz and, hence, roughly reflect the regional divide between areas deemed to belong to the north (with its *küngei* variant of Kyrgyz that belies the heavy Russian linguistic influence and Kazakh pronunciation) and to the south (with its *teskei* variant that contains much Uzbek influence and a wider range of Arabic loanwords). I have argued in Chapter 5 that this regional differentiation must have originally applied across the boundary to groups in Xinjiang as well; today, this is no longer evident in Qyzyl Suu because these differences pale in comparison to the influence that Uighur and *putonghua* have had on the Kyrgyz speech in Xinjiang. However, the labelling of Kyrgyzstani Kyrgyz by the Kyrgyz of Xinjiang as either 'Kyrgyz' or 'Kara-Kyrgyz' harks back, I believe, to earlier distinctions made between the Kirgiz (the Kazakh *natsionalnost*) and Kara-Kirgiz (the Kyrgyz *narodnost*) prior to internal delimitation in Soviet Central Asia (see Chapter 4). These classificatory distinctions are no longer empirically observable within today's Kyrgyzstan but do seem to

[424] Kyrgyz is pronounced with 'uh' sounds whereas Kirgiz is pronounced using 'ee' sounds. I employ the spelling 'Kirgiz' exclusively to denote this difference in pronunciation and limit its use to this section to avoid confusion.
[425] Common language, common territory, common economic life, and common culture ('psychological make-up'), in Stalin's words. See Chapter 4.

figure in terminologies used by Kyrgyz outside the former Soviet Union[426]. Naturally, Kyrgyz in Xinjiang are aware that delimitation and titularity across the boundary has crystallised into a Kyrgyz national unit and a Kazakh national unit, but local designations do not reflect this.

Second, in regard to terms revolving around state affiliation, two striking facts appear: the revival of an ethnonym with a difficult and highly contested past (Kalmyk), and the *absence* of state affiliation in the labelling of the Kyrgyz of Murghab by other Kyrgyz groups. Briefly[427], the Kalmyk are a Mongol people who inhabited the Zhungar Basin and Altay Range until the 15th century and who were part of the Oirat (West Mongols) who gradually migrated westwards to their present-day area of settlement near Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea. In the following centuries two events brought the Kalmyk back into contact with the peoples at the Central Asian – Chinese frontier: first, their decision to re-occupy the Zhungar Basin after its conquest by the Qing dynasty (and the concomitant annihilation of the Jungars there) in the 18th century and, second, their large-scale deportation from the Kalmyk ASSR in 1943 due to their perceived collaboration with the invading German *wehrmacht*, only to be rescinded in the late 1950s. In the Manas epic the oppression of Kyrgyz by the Kalmyk figures as historical fact and played a role in the Kyrgyz decision to migrate towards today's Kyrgyzstan; Mongol groups present in Xinjiang are often characterised by Kyrgyz in Xinjiang as Kalmyk (but not by Mongols themselves), just as were groups present in today's Naryn *oblast* (evident in the local belief that a term such as 'naryn' is Kalmyk). Attempting to discover the fate of what locals in Naryn term "a fair presence of Kalmyk here in the past who all spoke Kyrgyz", the most consistently encountered account of their disappearance from Kyrgyzstan is[428]:

> The Soviet authorities moved them to an ASSR in Russia because they were too close to the Chinese boundary and their brothers over there. In the early 1920s those who hadn't fled from the Bolsheviks were moved far away to the Volga river and now there isn't a single Kalmyk here anymore. That is good because Naryn is not Chinese territory, it is Kyrgyz territory – now the Kalmyk are all back in China.

Here, a historiography is mobilised that depicts a Mongol group as Chinese due to their association with the Qing empire and *post facto* ascribes Kalmyk-ness to at least a part of the Kyrgyz who fled from Soviet rule in Central Asia and have remained there since.

Outside of Naryn *oblast*, Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz are generally referred to as Chinese Kyrgyz not as Kalmyk, a term the use of which is thus limited to the immediate Kyrgyzstani borderland. In the adding of the territorial adjective denoting citizenship, Kyrgyz in the former Soviet Union explicitly employ terminological Othering as influenced by the existence

[426] A conversation with a Kyrgyz student from Istanbul whose family had lived there since the 1920s corroborates this impression: he describes himself as Kara-Kyrgyz from Osh and draws a similar cognitive boundary to that encountered in Qyzyl Suu.
[427] I base this superficial overview on Atwood's detailed listing under 'Kalmyk' (2004:288-93). Kalmyk is the Turkic name for this Mongol group and became institutionalised by its adoption into Russian.
[428] Interview with Kanai (from Kochkor in Naryn *oblast*), September 2005, in Bishkek.

of the PRC's state boundary. To make this more graphic, I present here an excerpt from a conversation I held with a student from Qyzyl Suu (Almaz) and two Kyrgyz friends (one from Bishkek and one from near Lake Issyk-kul) in Bishkek whom I was in the process of introducing to one another[429]:

> [Steve] This is my friend Almaz from Qyzyl Suu. He's been here for a year.
> [Almaz] Asalaam aleikum [*there follows himself introducing his place of origin in Kyrgyz*]!
> [Friend1] Wow, you speak Kyrgyz! I thought you only spoke Chinese. [*in Russian to the other Kyrgyzstani*] He certainly looks Chinese...
> [A] [*in accented Russian*] Of course I speak Kyrgyz – I am Kyrgyz. And I'm learning your Russian so don't mock me.
> [F1] I'm sorry – I'm just so surprised. I hope you enjoy your visit to our *meken* [homeland]. Tell me, what is Beijing like?
> [A] Beijing is very far, much farther from my home than where Steve comes from. And my *meken* is Qyzyl Suu – it's Kyrgyz land!
> [F2] He didn't mean to insult you! So, let's get lunch – we'll go to a nice Chinese restaurant so you can feel at home, and maybe we'll toast your visit.
> [A] It would be my first such visit, but yes, why not? But no alcohol – it is forbidden!
> [F1] [*surprised*] You sound like a Dungani when you say that!

I shall return to the elements of Othering formulated in this and other similar situations below in the context of cultural orthodoxy, but it becomes evident that, cognitively, the association of Kyrgyz in Xinjiang with other Chinese citizens is stronger than with a putative wider, boundary-transcending Kyrgyz nation that would include 'Chinese Kyrgyz'.

The absence of the association of statehood in locally used designations amongst Kyrgyz regarding the Kyrgyz of Murghab in many ways represents the opposite of such terminological Othering just described. Very little is made of the labelling of Kyrgyz living beyond the boundaries of Kyrgyzstan but within the former Soviet Union: similar distinctions are made in interaction between Kyrgyz from Osh *oblast* and from Murghab *raion* as are between any two Kyrgyz individuals encountering one another in a non-local context. Hence, clan names play a role as does settlement of origin, but Tajikistani citizenship is not emphasised except in a negative way as for example when recounting a bad encounter with borderguards or traffic police in Kyrgyzstan. Easily recognisable as speakers of *teskei* Kyrgyz, i.e., southeners and, thus, as Kyrgyz (as opposed to Kirgiz), northern Kyrgyz from Bishkek or Naryn apply the same designations to Murghab Kyrgyz as they do to Kyrgyz from Osh *oblast*: they are, insultingly, "the same *myrk* as are the yokels and fundamentalists from everywhere else down there". Consistent with this, northern Kyrgyz are frequently designated as Kirgiz by the Kyrgyz of Murghab. Adjectives denoting citizenship are not observable in such a context, neither in self-representation nor in ascription by other Kyrgyz groups in Kyrgyzstan.

Significantly, the two categories discussed above are applied by Kyrgyz themselves in an exclusive way to designate Kyrgyz groups within rather clearly defined territories. Furthermore, the category of state affiliation is applied *only* across the boundary in relation to the Kyrgyz of Xinjiang. Thus, Kalmyk-ness is ascribed to them by Kyrgyz in Naryn *oblast*

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[429] Conversation July 2006, in Bishkek (at the National State University of Kyrgyzstan NSU).

to explain their presence on Chinese territory – calling Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz 'Kalmyk' does not imply that they are Mongols (who would not be seen as speaking Kyrgyz) but rather that they are associated closely with China[430]. In purely designatory terms, citizenship within any particular post-Soviet state is relegated to an insignificant position amongst these Kyrgyz groups whilst being emphasised across the boundary to Xinjiang, thereby betraying the weakness of internal bordering in this specific case when 'internal' groups come into contact with externally bordered groups.

Kyrgyz Ascription (2): Group-external Terms

Ascription of nationality by non-Kyrgyz groups reveals a different outside image of 'who belongs to the Kyrgyz *natsiya'*: now we witness a projection of administrative-territorial bordering onto the various groups of Kyrgyz in the region. Pamiri in GBAO, whilst aware of the Kyrgyz characteristics of the majority of Murghab *raion*, generally label the Kyrgyz of GBAO as 'Chinese'[431]:

> Those so-called Kyrgyz up there in the *prostor* [here:wastes] of Murghab are all representatives of Chinese *rody* [tribes]. They look like Chinese and not like the real Kyrgyz of Kyrgyzstan and they understand the Chinese language. When they come here to Khorog, which is rare these days, they are afraid of us Pamiri and only come in groups – they think we'll beat them up. This has happened in the past because some think they are part of the Chinese mafia. Of course that's rubbish but one does wonder why they haven't all gone to Kyrgyzstan if they think they're Kyrgyz. [...] I think they're not Kyrgyz because if they were they'd have left by now.

The ascription of vaguely defined Chinese-ness derives, I believe, from a juxtaposition of the logic of (internal) administrative-territorial bordering of nations within the Soviet Union ('they would have been included in Kyrgyzstan if they had felt Kyrgyz enough') and their traditional association with a region that in the Soviet period was heavily inscribed in Soviet consciousness as a 'territory claimed by the Chinese'. Furthermore, this image may well be re-inforced through a local awareness that the Kyrgyz clans of Tashkurgan and southern Qyzyl Suu are coterminous with those of Murghab (specifically, the Teyit and Kesek clans of the Ichilik; see Chapter 3). While this clan affiliation seems to have dwindled in importance to the Kyrgyz of Murghab (who call those Kyrgyz in Xinjiang 'Chinese Kyrgyz') it has come to be emphasised in the tensions between Pamiri and local Kyrgyz and figures as a crucial discourse in Pamiri disgruntlement over the perceived loyalties of that group of borderlanders.

The Kyrgyz of Murghab are the target of another ascription of territorial belonging, represented in their designation as Badakhshani by the Tajiks of Tashkurgan, who thus

[430] The disappearance off Kyrgyzstani cognitive maps of the Kyrgyz who moved to Xinjiang could be juxtaposed to the simultaneous expunging of a Kalmyk identity from Soviet public consciousness under Stalin (for which see Atwood 2004:292).

[431] Interview with a Pamiri school teacher, November 2005, in Khorog.

regard them as belonging to the same category of Tajikistani citizen as the Pamiri (also labelled 'Badakhshani, as discussed above)[432]:

> 'Excuse me, but there are no Kyrgyz in Badakhshan. Why would there be Kyrgyz people in Tajikistan? It's Tajik territory and not Kyrgyz territory. If Murghab were Kyrgyz would it not be part of Kyrgyzstan?'
> 'But there are Kyrgyz here in Xinjiang too, aren't there? And also in the Tajik AC?'
> 'Yes, but that's different because we are all *zhongguo ren* and part of China. They have their own states so why would they be in Tajikistan? It makes no sense.'
> 'Maybe it's because Murghab is their *zuguo* [homeland]?'
> 'But if it were they would then be Tajiks, no?'

This connection between citizenship in today's independent Central Asian Republics and national affiliation derives from the Soviet ideal of homogenising the administrative-territorial units as titular Republics. Importantly, no cognitive connection is made by the Tajiks of Tashkurgan between the Kyrgyz *minzu* in Xinjiang and other diasporic Kyrgyz groups.

'Outside' Groups

To complete a characterisation of national affiliation of borderland groups as held by individuals of such groups in order to cognitively map the Borderland's internal and external boundaries, we must briefly include the projections of belonging as practised by other groups involved in borderland discourses. On both sides of the Central Asian – Xinjiang boundary, this includes members of other *minzu/natsiya* that have figured sporadically throughout this thesis – Uighurs, Hui/Dungani, and Han, as well as, for GBAO, Tajiks[433]. In Xinjiang, members of other *minzu* generally uphold the official system of classification inculcated from an early age on and omnipresent in all official discourse regarding 'the fraternal cooperation of the *minzu* to unite the Chinese motherland'. Perceptions of *minzu* affiliation are not uncontested, with common examples being the labelling of Hui as Han by Uighurs, or designating Kyrgyz as Kazakhs (common amongst Han and non-local Uighurs); neither are discourses dealing with the right of Kyrgyz or Tajik groups to even be included as official *minzu* and, therefore, given autonomy rights within a putative 'Uighur homeland'. On the ground, however, in everyday dealings the Kyrgyz and 'Tajiks' of Xinjiang are labelled as such *just as are* the people residing across the boundaries in the states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In all cases here, an image of trans-frontier proximity is painted by the other *minzu* of Xinjiang; in other words, the Kyrgyz of Qyzyl Suu and the Tajiks of Tashkurgan are seen as ethnic representatives of 'their' respective titular states across the boundary in post-Soviet Central Asia. Along with similar images of the Kazakhs of Xinjiang, these groups are seen as true trans-frontier nations: cognitively, these groups are seen as inhabiting territories not belonging to their respective 'national homelands' – the state boundaries of the PRC do

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[432] Excerpt from a conversation with NimTuLa, May 2006, in Urumqi, himself a 'Tajik' from Tashkurgan studying at a university in Urumqi.
[433] I choose to exclude Kazakhs from this discussion because of their general absence (in terms of interview partners) from the immediate area of my field research.

not conform to national boundaries as these are perceived to exist by non-Kyrgyz or non-Tajiks in Xinjiang.

In Kyrgyzstan there is a large presence of Dungani and Uighurs, often indiscriminately referred to by Kyrgyzstani as *kitai*, 'Chinese'. Little distinction is made in regular conversation between Dungani, Uighurs, or even Han – the popular label given to these groups assumes congruency between citizenship and nationality. Thus, politically they pursue 'Chinese' interests in Kyrgyzstan; the presence of new arrivals in Bishkek and Osh is seen as 'an influx of Chinese from the east preparing the way for a silent invasion' (a difference is, however, sometimes made between new arrivals and individuals already present during Soviet times, for example in the villages in the Chui Valley or around Karakol on Lake Issyk-kul); and, if they were to marry Kyrgyz, 'their children would be Chinese citizens' (and, thus, not Kyrgyzstani). It is in this light that statements such as the following published in an important Kazakhstani newspaper must be understood (*Atamekan* [Fatherland], March 13th 1993, as quoted in Dillon 2004:152-3; emphases added):

> [N]ow *the Chinese* settlers in our country have become an even greater problem than ecological disaster. The number of *the Chinese* [...] is growing day by day. They come with a lot of money. They seek out attractive Kazakh women and offer money to marry them. Then they buy houses and settle here. [...] We should not forget that *the Chinese* have always had territorial demands of us.

Employing the term *kitai* obscures differences between nationality and territorial residency – the 'settlers', almost certainly predominantly non-Han, are cognitively connected to the majority *minzu* of the PRC, and the interests of that state are projected onto the citizens of that state regardless of their national affiliation. Such blurring is, unfortunately, replicated by observers such as Michael Dillon and Olivier Roy (2000) in their failure to critically approach such projections of national ascription and state affiliation[434]. In Central Asia such representations most certainly bear out what Smith *et al.* (1998:14) term the 'mistrust of the Other' in a state such as Kyrgyzstan that is undergoing de-Sovietisation and concomitant nationalisation or indigenisation. The fact that most Uighurs and Dungani who have resided in Kyrgyzstan for sometimes several generations maintain strong discourses of differentiation to Uighurs and Dungani in Xinjiang, and the PRC as a state in general[435], does not seem to matter in such representations: trans-frontier proximity is suggested automatically and suspicions over their loyalties are translated into what these groups experience as their derogatory labelling as 'Chinese'.

In Tajikistan, with its recognition of the unique status of a non-titular group within its territory for as long as the state has existed, ascriptions between the Tajik *natsiya* and what is still regarded by the titular Tajiks as the Pamiri *narod* (at a 'lower level of national

[434] Thus, Dillon's parroting of the Central Asian governments' claims that "75,000 Chinese immigrants have come to Kyrgyzstan" (*ibid.*) is as confusing as is Roy's similarly obscure reference to the recent influx of 300,000 'Chinese businessmen' into Kazakhstan (2000:189).

[435] See Allès (2005) for such Dungani discourses and Kamalov (2005) for Uighurs, as well as the discussion in Chapter 5 on migration and subversion.

consciousness'), ascription of national belonging has been subsumed into discourses of differentiation that became mobilised during the Civil War, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. The faultlines between Tajiks and Pamiri have become regionalised: GBAO is represented as a kind of 'Pamiristan' by the Tajiks interviewed, and this regionalisation of ascription has had the effect of obscuring general Tajik awareness of the presence of a Kyrgyz group at its interface to Kyrgyzstan. Generally, all non-Tajiks in GBAO are ascribed with a Pamiri (an expression used synonymously with Badakhshani to characterise the *narod*) identity. Educated Tajiks are aware of the fact that Pamiri differentiate a number of groups amongst themselves that bear regional names such as Ishkashimi and Rushani; to this list is added a fictitious Murghabi to denote what Tajiks think is a sub-group of Pamiri, a wide-spread error not corrected due to the extreme remoteness of the region. In effect, this process is akin to linguistic backformation[436]: here, territorial-administrative sub-units are seen to be the name-givers of local Pamiri groups and, hence, the inhabitants of Murghab *raion* are Murghabi and, because Pamiri groups each have their own *raion*, this is the *raion* of this local group. In addition to such regionalisation, the ascription of Pamiri-ness to the inhabitants of GBAO contains a critical element of religious boundary-making: Pamiri are seen as universally Ismaili and, thus, different from the Sunni Tajik. As Aziza stated in her plea for the recognition of a Pamiri *natsiya* by mobilising the Stalinist criteria for nationhood with the extension of religion[437]: "we are [un]like the Tajiks: we have different languages, a different religion, we live in mountains rather than the lowlands and practice a different way of life, our dress is different just as our traditions are different [...] – we are in truth neighbours but not brothers".

Images of Cultural Orthodoxy and Corruption

A boundary-transcending narrative of Kyrgyz or 'Tajik' national solidarity or cohesion in the face of outside pressures or adversity is, as I have discussed, not evident in group-internal discourses of trans-frontier belonging or exclusion of national Others. Thus, neither economic pressure that has arisen during the post-Soviet transition in Central Asia nor political pressure in form of local disgruntlement with, for example, deep borderland control in Xinjiang are leading to the mobilisation in the borderlands of a wider and, from a state perspective, possibly subversive trans-state Borderland identity. One might have assumed that the construction of new narratives of 'Kyrgyz-ness' mobilised in the context of a national-become-state Kyrgyz homeland could have resorted to an inclusion of the Kyrgyz *minzu* in Xinjiang. Not so: external bordering of the Kyrgyz *natsiya* has resulted in the exclusion of Chinese Kyrgyz, now primarily seen by Kyrgyzstani as 'Chinese'. State affiliation has very much come to supersede national ascription in the case of the Xinjiang – Central Asian borderlands, thereby corroborating Paasi's finding that "questions of identity, culture and memory become complicated, fragmented and diversified in daily life, depending crucially on where people live – space makes a difference" (1999:676), especially in those spaces at state

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[436] 'Backformation' is the process of using a word formation rule to analyse a morphologically simple word as if it were a complex word in order to arrive at a new, simpler form (for example, 'television' thus engenders 'to televise').
[437] Interview November 2005, in Dushanbe. See Chapter 4 for the full interview.

boundaries. The bifurcation of the Kyrgyz *minzu* and Kyrgyz *natsiya*, marked locally in the ascription of ethnonyms betraying a fundamental state bias, is expressed in local notions of cultural orthodoxy and, inversely, cultural corruption that together form a narrative of difference projected across the boundary between Xinjiang and Kyrgyzstan. Central elements in such a narrative that cognitively confirms the existence of the state boundary are accusations of religiousness or the lack thereof, and linguistic competence and the perceived 'pollution' of the Kyrgyz language by agents of the wider state (i.e., *putonghua* or Uighur in Xinjiang and Russian in Central Asia). The state of such narratives in the Pamiri borderlands is more difficult to easily characterise due to the afore-mentioned renegotiation taking place within Tajikistan as well as, in Xinjiang, the more hidden nature of explicit formulations of *minzu*-hood inherent in the lack of official endorsement of a national language. In this Borderland, weak internal bordering but strong borderland control in Xinjiang and exceptionally 'thin' state-driven discourses of control in GBAO expose two different types of cognitive boundaries: GBAO Pamiri grant the 'Tajiks' of Tashkurgan inclusion into a wider Borderland that is in the process of being rediscovered today whilst the Tajik *minzu* of Xinjiang do not reciprocate such sentiments.

Being a 'Real' Kyrgyz

Broadly speaking, such national narratives contain bordering discourses that can be subsumed under the image of claiming the right to present oneself as 'real Kyrgyz'; specifically, the domains that are contested are those of adherence to religious strictures, what are seen as traditional customs, linguistic 'purity', and the perceived transgression of group boundaries in terms of eligible marriage partners. In characterising the upholding of 'Kyrgyz values' by the respective other Kyrgyz group, these domains are usually connected to one another and used *in toto* to prove the cultural unorthodoxy of either Kyrgyzstani Kyrgyz or Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz, to underline their pollution in socio-cultural terms deriving from the corresponding group's association with the corrupting influence of state-internal interaction, and rare was the interview that exhibited even only a neutral attitude towards such perceived influences on 'Kyrgyz orthodoxy'. There are, however, qualitative differences in the idiosyncratic style of these narratives that reveal, I believe, an underlying differential between Kyrgyz in the PRC and those in Kyrgyzstan in terms of self-confidence in their 'national Kyrgyz-ness': while the latter confidently claim congruency between ethnonationalist and patriotic loyalties as expressed in the existence of and their membership in a 'Kyrgyz Republic', the former struggle to differentiate between national belonging and state loyalty and to combine this ambiguity in a hybrid form reaffirming the desire to "be both Chinese and Kyrgyz", both part of boundary-transcending nation as well as a rootedness in bordered state citizenship.

Such a clash of legitimacy becomes evident in the following two citations: the first stems from an interview with a member of the Naryn *oblast* borderland elite, the second from an interview with a Kyrgyz student from Artush living in Urumqi; both interviewees are in

their twenties and members of the cultural elite, and both were to claim during the respective interview to be 'proud Kyrgyz with through-and-through Kyrgyz families':

> [*In Naryn*] Qyzyl Suu? Yes, there are Kyrgyz living there on Kyrgyz land who should be allowed by their government to come back to Kyrgyzstan and rejoin the Kyrgyz *narod*.

> [*In Qyzyl Suu*] Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstani are not very close brothers anymore because Kyrgyzstan belonged to the Soviet Union. Before the Soviet Union we were one whole, one family, but after it was divided there was no communication at all before 1987, and since then there has only been a little because they call us Chinese or even Kalmyk despite our protests. I am Kyrgyz and I don't care what they say.

The first interviewee's assumption of congruency between national affiliation and state membership is uncontestably expressed in his metaphor of 'returning to the fold' – the political entity that is Kyrgyzstan, a 'container' for all that is Kyrgyz. Confronted with such an assumption, the second interviewee evinces incomprehension in regard to the legitimacy of that state's right to act as a gravitational centre of loyalty to the nation: "'rejoin' what exactly? I have a Kazakh friend from Gulja[/Yining] – he 'rejoined' Kazakhstan. For a year. Then he came home again. He says he was treated badly by everyone there!"

This is consistent with initial reactions by Kyrgyz in Xinjiang to the independence of Kyrgyzstan, sentiments described by interviewees as containing a "large degree of pride over this 'national success'" and a "hope for a potent political advocate for us borderland Kyrgyz"; all interviewees then added that these hopes were dashed as soon as the realisation set in that Kyrgyzstan "would not stand up to the Chinese government" (in terms of more political freedom, for example) and that the "Kyrgyz there looked down on us as traitors". I have discussed that the initial beneficiaries of the visa exemption rules in the mid-1990s were predominantly non-locals and non-Kyrgyz; however, a fair amount of contact in those days did take place – interpersonal exchange was achieved. Recounting such initial contacts, Kyrgyz individuals from Xinjiang were "shocked by the arrogant attitude in Kyrgyzstan that we are second-class Kyrgyz"; Kyrgyzstani Kyrgyz were "amazed by the fundamentalist attitudes they have over there". Again, a direct comparison between two citations illuminates the trans-frontier clash in an understanding of what constitutes Kyrgyz-ness[438]:

> [*In Qyzyl Suu*] Our *manashi* [chanters of the Manas epic] are today the only *manashi* anywhere who can chant the entire Manas epic the way it should be told, without a book; our *shyrdak* [felt carpets with traditional designs] and yurts are older and simpler than theirs and more beautiful; our Kyrgyz is without Russian words; our children and men go to herd and not to drink *baijiu* [Chinese vodka] all day; and yet *we* are not supposed to be Kyrgyz. *They* are not Kyrgyz, because they cannot read the holy Qu'ran, because they are corrupt and care only about money, because they let their daughters marry Russians.

> [*In Naryn*] But they all speak Chinese and they are fundamentalists and *myrk*, with mosques everywhere. There have been some who came here but they sometimes mix their blood with Chinese here [i.e., with Dungani or Uighurs (S.P.)] and help them to

[438] Both citations are from the same two Kyrgyz interviewees as the last two excerpts.

> control our politics and bazaars. Why should I go there? Their economy is better than ours but it is much easier to go to Russia and work there. Some people here learn the Chinese language but this is to make money here and not to make friends there.

Powerful accusations are made here pertaining to the betrayal of core values that should serve as the basic elements in an essentialised understanding of Kyrgyz identity. Two central elements serve here as key foils in such narratives: Islam, and language and language use.

Bordered Interpretations of Islam

Representations of misconduct are connected to the presence or absence of Islam in everyday life as perceived by the respective other group. On the one hand, Islam amongst the 'Chinese Kyrgyz' is seen by Kyrgyzstani as deriving from their exposure to Uighurs, frequently characterised in Kyrgyzstan as 'fundamentalist': "of course Islam is strong in Uighuristan – the Uighurs are in control, aren't they? If they ever become independent they will install an Islamic Republic, you know, like in Iran"; on the other hand, Islam in Kyrgyzstan is seen by Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz as weak and irrelevant to their cultural identity: "they have replaced the Qu'ran with a passport, and the Prophet with a bottle of vodka" is a commonly heard exclamation in Kashgar. The association of Islam with *mestnichestvo* (localism) during the Soviet period (Chapter 4) had certainly strengthened local interpretations of Islamic virtues and the isolation of Islamic institutions there resulted in the development of the local attitude that "Muslims from other parts of the world who did not share Central Asian customs were not included within the boundaries of Muslimness" (Khalid 2007:107). In Xinjiang, where Islam had come to be considered a national characteristic of specific *minzu* (as opposed to the situation in the Soviet Union), institutional Islam was co-opted but visible, and has become more so over the last decade. With the resurgence of visible Islam in the daily lives of Chinese citizens despite the heavy-handed control most Muslims in the PRC feel is being enacted over the religion, incomprehension has risen amongst Kyrgyz (and Kazakhs) over the perceived irrelevance of Islam in newly independent Central Asia: "they could easily pursue a virtuous life these days – they have a democracy, don't they?", an elderly Kyrgyz man near Artush exclaimed after recounting that he had never been able to perform the *hajj* "because the authorities wouldn't allow it". Whilst it is important to emphasise such trans-frontier contestations of religious observance, we must not forget that there exists a differential within Kyrgyzstan itself, too: northerners and southerners differ in their attitudes to what Islam is understood to be – in this context, the 'fault' for the lack of visibly orthodox observance by northeners is given to the 'Russian influence' there, whereas the south is 'more fundamentalist' because of the Uzbeks in the Ferghana Valley. However, this intra-Kyrgyzstani divide is weaker than the trans-boundary divide when Kyrgyzstani discuss 'who is Kyrgyz and who is not': cognitive inclusion into the political, territorial Kyrgyz state (including, as I have discussed, the trans-frontier Kyrgyz of GBAO) is uncontested between north and south yet heavily contested between Chinese Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstani Kyrgyz. Islam merely serves as a further foil of exclusion in this narrative of national cleavage.

The case of the 'Tajik' Borderland farther south exhibits a similar narrative of trans-frontier contestation regarding bordered interpretations of, here, the Ismaili creed but for

very different reasons. Local awareness of the existence of the Ismailiyya on both sides of the boundary is wide-spread in GBAO but not in Tashkurgan[439]:

> [*In Tashkurgan*] The Aga Khan has schools in Badakhshan and builds roads there? Why would that be? I thought he only worked in places with many Ismaili, you know, like in northern Pakistan [the Hunza Valley]. How strange – but then he is a great man with a great heart! I am delighted that he is helping the Tajiks out of their misery.
>
> [*In GBAO*] The Sarykuli have been oppressed by the Chinese state for so long that they have forgotten that the Aga Khan is also their father. I think it is high time that the Foundation opens an office in China so that they can find their way back to our religious community.

The "adoration, respect, and love for His Excellency [the Aga Khan]" unites Sarykuli Pamiri and GBAO Pamiri alike from the perspective of this researcher. However, again, the 'negative' influence of Uighurs is noted by the Pamiri of GBAO in their representations of the 'lamentable state of ritual observance' across the boundary[440]: "Uighurs bring fundamentalist ideologies to the Sarykuli and try to turn them into *wahhabi* against their better wisdom. But thankfully it is not too late yet, and I've heard that most Sarykuli prefer to deal with Chinese [here: Han, i.e., non-Muslim Chinese citizens (S.P.)] than with Uighurs". The Pamiri of GBAO, well aware of the existence of a trans-frontier community of Ismaili, seem to be poised to regard Tashkurgan as part of a wider Borderland in which religious affiliation (that, as discussed, in GBAO has become an important new element in bordering the Pamiri nation) could serve to cognitively re-border discourses of inclusion. Such cognitive realignment is not observable in Xinjiang (yet?): a boundary-transcending awareness of religious inclusion has not figured in local discourses arising from new interaction (interaction that albeit has remained very minimal).

Linguistic Competence and 'Purity'

Script changes and state-driven processes of what I have discussed as 'language engineering' has enabled a trans-frontier narrative of 'polluted linguistic influence' to arise in the cases of both Kyrgyz and local Pamiri dialects; furthermore, within Kyrgyzstan, a trend towards the standardisation of the *küngei* (northern) variant and its concomitant strengthening vis-à-vis the *teskei* (southern) variant has become more pronounced in attitudes towards 'correct Kyrgyz', a dynamic readily observable in the binary opposition of Kirgiz/Kyrgyz discussed above. Smith *et al.* (1998:16) have observed that language and language use are important elements in discourses of nation-building and state-building – the promotion of a standardised titular language within a shared spatial frame (the new state) is vital for new elites (or, in our cases here, old elites mobilising a new legitimacy) in regard to their legitimate control over the state's institutions. How does this affect cognitive maps of inclusion of Kyrgyz-speakers and speakers of Pamiri dialects beyond the boundaries of the nationalising state? What are the local perceptions of what at first glance seems a trans-

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[439] Both citations are taken from interviews with representatives of local political elites, the first from a Tajik member of the local AC government in Tashkurgan (May 2006), the second from a Pamiri official of the *oblast* government in Khorog (November 2005).
[440] Interview with Mullo-Abdol Shagarf, November 2005, in Khorog.

frontier linguistic community? We have seen over the course of this thesis that outside actors such as central governments have invested much effort to achieve cleavage in what has been perceived as boundary-spanning linguistic groups; today, speakers of non-local languages such as Uighurs, Dungani, and Han but also Tajiks (using the titular language of Tajikistan, that is, but not Pamiri speakers in GBAO) regard the Kyrgyz of Qyzyl Suu as linguistically congruent with the Kyrgyz spoken in Kyrgyzstan, and the 'Tajik' (i.e., Sarykuli Pamiri) of Tashkurgan as at the very least linguistically congruent with the speech of Badakhshan.

Such beliefs are not held by either groups affected locally. Lexical admixture, code-switching, and script competence suggest trans-frontier cleavage in the everyday use of the Kyrgyz language. While this thesis cannot do justice to the socio-linguistic processes that inform what I interpret as a drifting apart of Kyrgyz-language communities dependent on state-internal discourses, the crucial factor here is that such drift is cognitively experienced by representatives of these communities *themselves*: there is no boundary-transcending, wider Borderland in which '*the* Kyrgyz language' would serve as a locally accepted, shared characteristic of belonging, and this conclusion is repeatedly confirmed in all domains touching on notions of linguistic 'purity'. Most frequently encountered examples employed by the respective Kyrgyz language communities are 'the language of Manas' and script competence[441]:

> [*In Qyzyl Suu*] Our Kyrgyz is the Kyrgyz of our forefathers – it is the language of Manas. I've heard that the Kyrgyz [northern Kyrgyz (S.P)] use so many Russian words that they have forgotten what real Kyrgyz is. The Kara-Kyrgyz sound like Uighurs or even Uzbeks to me. I know somebody whose son went to Kyrgyzstan to study – everything was in Russian! Maybe they're more Russian than anything else? But then why would they believe they're real Kyrgyz and call *us* Chinese? At least we understand the Manas songs and don't need a translation.

> [*In Naryn*] The Kyrgyz language is the language of Manas. Maybe we cannot read Arabic but for that we live on the land where Manas lived and died. I heard that there is now a version of the epic in hieroglyphs [Chinese characters (S.P)] – this should not be because it is not honourable to his memory because he fought against Chinese. The Chinese Kyrgyz all read and paint such hieroglyphs because they live in Uighuristan where only Chinese live. I don't see why they're even allowed to call themselves 'Kyrgyz'.

It certainly appears as if we are observing the culmination of what I have discussed in Chapter 4 as the principal Marxist-Leninist strategy of nationalising languages to achieve indigenisation serving the legitimacy of the respective socialist state. From a state perspective, that was designed to promote internal bordering as well as the state's hegemony over nationality identities; here, with the renewed contact and cognitive remapping of national boundaries taking place today, state influences such as the promotion of a particular script and lingua franca can be seen to have succeeded in thickening local discourses of state inclusion whilst acting as markers impeding the renegotiation of trans-frontier national inclusion. Concretely, the mobilisation in the above citations of the Manas Epic as the

[441] Again, both citations are taken from interviews with the same two Kyrgyz individuals as above.

unifying element of an imagined Kyrgyz ethnonational community, a historiographic and nationalising symbol so heavily employed in the Kyrgyzstani state's iconography and self-representation as the legitimate heir of this 'Father of the Kyrgyz Nation', clashes with on-the-ground attitudes surrounding the question 'real Kyrgyz or only part Kyrgyz?' – the answer to which is reflected in what can only be described as the superimposition of the state boundary between Xinjiang and Kyrgyzstan to coincide with a narrative of national belonging: the former Soviet – Chinese political state boundary is reproduced in today's cognitive national boundaries.

Pamiri Borderland discourses are more ambiguous than in the Kyrgyz case. The 'polluting' of the Pamiri language used in the private domain in Tashkurgan is ascribed by GBAO's Pamiri as deriving from Uighur influence. Thus, the early 20th-century change of name from the local 'Varshidi' to today's official 'Tashkurgan', both meaning 'stone fortress', is seen as a concession to the Uighur Turkic influence in the region. Fundamentally, the 'Tajiks' of Tashkurgan characterise their language as 'Tajik' and the Tajik language of Tajikistan's titular Tajik *natsiya* as Farsi (but different from 'Iranian Farsi') and not as Tajik; in effect, the language of the Tajik *minzu* in southwest Xinjiang is Pamiri, characterised by GBAO's Pamiri as the 'Sarykuli Pamiri language'. It possesses no script and, hence[442]:

> Tajik [that is, Sarykuli Pamiri (S.P.)] is not really a language fit for a modern *minzu*; it is good for working in the fields and for saying romantic things to the girl or boy you want to marry, it is good for mothers telling stories to their children and for fathers remembering the old days – but it is not good for constructing your future.

All written communication in Tashkurgan AC is in either Uighur (in the Arabic script) or *putonghua*, at a ratio of about one-to-one[443]; the lexical similarity between GBAO's Shugni and Tashkurgan's Sarykuli has decreased dramatically over the decades of alienation, and the replacement of classical Persian that served as lingua franca between groups until the early 20th century went hand-in-hand with the incursion of Tajik and Russian on the one hand and *putonghua* and especially Uighur on the other. Cognitively, GBAO is part of Tajikistan from the perspective of Xinjiang's Tajiks – there is no trans-frontier linguistic community observable from Tashkurgan, thereby reflecting the cognitive lack of awareness of a potentially Ismaili Borderland. In other words, there is nothing suggesting that Tashkurgan is included in a locally renegotiated narrative of national inclusion. On the other side of the boundary such a narrative does exist, but it is one that seems to regard the Tajiks of the PRC as a wayward group of Pamiri, warped by their forced excision from the Pamiri nation and inclusion into a political entity seen universally in GBAO as dominated by Uighurs.

It is in this context that we may speculate about the trans-frontier effect of the imminent scripting of the Sarykuli 'Tajik' language in the PRC on notions of linguistic 'purity':

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[442] Interview with 70-year-old Nasiba, May 2006, in Tashkurgan.

[443] Although, according to all interviews in Tashkurgan, this distribution is rather new; traditionally it has been roughly three-to-one in favour of Uighur. Communication between local Kyrgyz and 'Tajiks' in Tashkurgan is almost exclusively in Uighur.

such a development will entail the publication of schoolbooks, political literature, and, for lack of a better term, socio-cultural artefacts reflecting a message of clearly delineated 'Tajik-ness' back into the borderland of Tashkurgan. To quote a brochure discovered at Xinjiang Normal University (the institution pursuing such a project), it will also result in the "development of a national corpus of authentic elements belonging to the Tajik *minzu*" that will most likely go officially uncontested within the PRC, just as similar projects in the past have become an accepted part of the 'showcase of Chinese nations' by the vast majority of those affected.

Picture 37: Tashkurgan Literature and Arts Centre of Tajiks (constructed 2004)

However, the trans-frontier effect may well be profound in its unleashing of a vehicle against which 'national authenticity' might be measured[444] and in its providing a tool for national communication beyond the direct control of neighbouring Tajikistan where, I call to mind, written communication between Pamiri individuals is in Tajik or Russian. Such a development, not at all unique in trans-state policies at this frontier as we have seen, could well result in the cognitive widening of the Borderland to include GBAO from a Tashkurgan perspective and/or might result in the rise of trans-frontier discourses of corruption and purity; it could also serve a subversive policy of contesting the Tajikistani state's already weak control over Pamiri loyalties. It is most likely but a question of time before media seepage from Xinjiang would penetrate the boundary once the XJTV station in 'Tajik' required by official AR policy starts broadcasting and thereby directly competes with the only other available television channel available in GBAO, a channel on Tajikistani state television (based regionally in Khorog) that covers Badakhshani topics – in titular Tajik only.

[444] Possibly mirroring a similar process between Mongols in Mongolia and the Mongols of the Inner Mongolia AR in the PRC where, as Wurlig Borchigud (1996) has discussed, the re-introduction of the traditional vertical Mongolian script in the PRC has figured in the reappraisal of wider narratives of national identity.

Conclusions: Homelands, Loyalties, and States

The various state segments of the Kyrgyz and Tajik Borderlands I have been discussing over the course of this chapter have been shown to present us with a range of processes, discourses, forms of interaction, and bordering, all of which illuminate the parameters of borderlander lifeworlds as they are lived at the beginning of the 21st century. The passing of the common socialist period on both sides of the Xinjiang – Central Asian boundary has been accompanied by a weakening of the Soviet successor states' means of centrally influencing borderland control, and power has devolved to outside actors or burgeoning regionalised institutions. The opening of newly accessible trajectories has at a superficial level shrunk the distance between citizens of the states – not only have the no-man's-lands become physically less broad but also an exposure of borderlanders to the trans-frontier Other has taken place. If the common socialist period could have been characterised as the institutionalisation of the state in the everyday lives of the people at the interface of antagonistic states, then the post-Soviet period has shown the results of the thickening of state discourses of control in the Kyrgyz borderlands and the virulence of loyalties directed inwards to the state. The Borderland realities observable in on-the-ground fieldwork over a decade after the end of ideologically induced alienation shows that the new accessibility of trans-frontier networks today that could theoretically be used to subvert present-day political discourses in the borderlands are not promoting this. Rather, networks that may promote subversion of the respective borderlands' states were strictly co-opted in the common socialist period and redirected to subvert one state in the interest of the other (primarily in this period directed at contesting PRC control over its borderlands).

Kyrgyz borderlander interaction across the boundary is negligible, due in part to effective, deep borderland control in Xinjiang but also due to a cognitive rift between those spanning the boundary, a rift that essentialises state belonging and that is completely consistent with Marxist-Leninist creed on the bordering of national units. While common elements such as the importance of the Manas epic and a notion of common descent and difference to surrounding groups exist in the definition of Kyrgyz-ness on both sides of the boundary, fundamental disagreement on matters of religion (fundamentalist in the PRC versus loss of orthodoxy in Kyrgyzstan), language (archaic and incomprehensible in the PRC versus Russified and corrupted in Kyrgyzstan), and socio-economic organisation (traditional and potentially advantaged in the PRC versus corrupt and 'un-Kyrgyz' in Kyrgyzstan) point to two disparate cognitive borderland realities that have arisen over the decades of the 20th century. Any future ethnography of 'the Kyrgyz' will not be able to ignore such contestations of authenticity as displayed in the context of state belonging.

Pamiri borderlander interaction is even less pronounced, in this case structurally certainly due to the lack of physical avenues until most recently; however, here the desire for increased interaction is weak. It could be imagined that in the future a realisation of economic opportunity for locals might develop if structures of deep borderland control were to change in Tashkurgan AC, but there certainly is no basis for inter-Borderland wider

exchange or individualising avenues of contact, especially with Pamiri in GBAO increasingly looking south to Afghanistan and the Badakhshani/Ismaili communities there who have shared regular and personal ties with GBAO throughout the Soviet period rather than east to Xinjiang. When such exchange invariably comes about, for example through imagery projected by the dynamics unleashed with the scripting of the Sarykuli language, I suspect similar cognitive realignments to develop amongst GBAO's Pamiri as they have in Kyrgyzstan in respect to cognitive borderland realities.

Bordering the Kyrgyz Homelands

Particularities could be seen to differ and explained as merely differing types of state influence on local lifeworlds, a kind of 'accommodation with the political environment' of a heavy-handed state. At a more emotional level, a level described by all interviewed as fundamental in their personal associations with, to use John Agnew's term (1987; and see Chapter 4), their *sense of place*, a more important structure reveals itself in repeat, in-depth interviews. Not one Kyrgyz interviewee in either Xinjiang or in Kyrgyzstan's borderlands regards their *meken*, their homeland, as not being contiguous with that of administrative-territorial boundaries delimited in the 1930s/1950s; thus, *meken* is bounded by the respective state those individuals live in. Furthermore, the very expression itself, so important in Kyrgyzstan in representations of self-legitimacy in regard to abode and clan affiliation has undergone important semantic shifts in Qyzyl Suu. There it is used synonymously with the *putonghua* expression *jiaxiang* ('hometown') and, fascinatingly, has come to be differentiated in a similar way to the Han tradition of using the expression *laojia* to refer to a recent (one to five generations, usually) relocation of the family – *meken* will only refer to the locale prior to such ancestral relocation and a new abode is always termed *jiaxiang*. Crucially, however, the *meken* is bounded by the Chinese state both physically and temporally – even individuals recounting original migration by their family from Central Asia to escape the Bolsheviks in 1916 are precise in this: "yes, my fathers left Karakol [on Lake Issyk-kul in today's Kyrgyzstan (S.P.)] but my *meken* is Artush and not Karakol – and by the way, my *jiaxiang* is Gulja[/Yining]", one interviewee with such a family history told me. Taken one step further, the collectivity of *meken*, i.e., the cognitive totality of Qyzyl Suu Kyrgyz' homelands, is referred to there as the *zuguo* of the Kyrgyz, their '*zhende zuguo*' (true homeland). *Zuguo*, likewise translatable from *putonghua* as 'homeland', is used to refer to Qyzyl Suu AP but sometimes also includes the small Kyrgyz communities along Kara-kul in Tashkurgan AC and farther north in the Ili Kazakh AP (where Gulja/Yining lies). Therefore, it is a direct association with the administrative-territorial unit of the Kyrgyz *minzu*, albeit with a slightly larger area of cognitive inclusion than the PRC grants the *minzu* autonomy rights in. This, in turn, gives rise to Kyrgyz self-representation as *zhongguo ren*, people of China, and *xinjiang ren*, people of Xinjiang in broader contexts.

Here we see a realignment of notions of *chek-ara*, the Kyrgyz term for 'boundary' as informed by *ayil* membership, kinship, and a feeling of the immediate *meken*: *chek-ara* exist today within Kyrgyzstan, between *oblasts*, between northerners and southerners, and are

also present in notions of clan areas to a certain degree (not surprisingly when we remember that internal regional boundaries were delimited in the Soviet period with a high degree of local support); similarly, *chek-ara* are present within cognitive maps of the Kyrgyz in Xinjiang and used to differentiate between, for example, Kyrgyz in Gulja/Yining or in Tashkurgan as well as between groups of Kyrgyz within Qyzyl Suu. However, the boundary between Kyrgyzstan and Qyzyl Suu does not represent such a boundary but rather is referred to as *granitsa* or *bianjie*, respectively. This difference becomes clear in the following citation from an interview conducted with a student from Qyzyl Suu[445]:

> After 1933 all Turkic peoples started drawing apart because by then the Soviet Union had created *bianjie* between different *meken* now in different *'stans*, different *zuguo* and so divided everybody.

Asked to clarify his use of *bianjie*, the interviewee would not describe this term as synonymous with *chek-ara*, a term he reserved exclusively to the context of administrative-territorial boundaries but not state boundaries. In line with my argument that the Kyrgyz of Murghab regard themselves as part of a wider Kyrgyz nation, a clear contrast is evident in these two groups' usage of *chek-ara*: while Xinjiang's Kyrgyz see themselves (and are seen as) bounded by the state boundary to Kyrgyzstan, those in Murghab discriminate differently between the terms *chek-ara* and *granitsa*. The latter, Russian term is employed when referring to the *agents and institutions* of the boundary while the former, Kyrgyz term is used in explanations of local difference, similarly to its use in Kyrgyzstan. Thus, when I was told by the elderly Kyrgyz man from Karakul in GBAO who accompanied me across the boundary to Kyrgyzstan that "ten years ago there was no *granitsa* here"[446], he was directly referring to the *pogranichniki* at the Qyzyl Art checkpoints – the *chek-ara* between, for example, Kyrgyz from Sary Tash in Osh *oblast* and Kyrgyz from Karakul in GBAO is not fundamentally different from the *chek-ara* between Karakul and Murghab (both in GBAO) and had always existed.

Kyrgyzstani Kyrgyz claim a monopoly over notions of *meken*: "Kyrgyzstan is the *meken* of the Kyrgyz if only they [those in Xinjiang] were to realise this", a schoolteacher in Naryn told me. That this contradicts the trans-frontier narratives of difference discussed above seems to make no difference in relation to local concepts of 'where the Kyrgyz *should* belong'. That this notion of *meken* cannot be shared by Kyrgyz in Xinjiang is evident as it suggests congruency between state loyalty and the territory of the nation, and the Kyrgyz of Qyzyl Suu evince no desire to identify with the territorial unit of the Kyrgyz state – far from it, loyalty to the Chinese administrative unit of Qyzyl Suu is relatively uncontested and certainly seen as far preferable to inclusion into Kyrgyzstan in light of the feeling amongst the PRC's Kyrgyz that this would entail a rejection of key components of presently held identities, the loss of economic potential and political influence they feel they enjoy in the PRC, and a demotion to potential second-class citizens who are 'not really Kyrgyz'. The difference to the Kyrgyz borderlanders of Murghab in Tajikistan's GBAO is striking: with the Tajikistani state,

[445] May 2006, in Urumqi. For the full quote see the introduction to Chapter 4.
[446] See Chapter 2 for the full interview.

as the successor to the Tajik SSR, having been unable to uphold processes of internal bordering in regard to local loyalties through transition to independence, local Kyrgyz' notions of *meken* are less state-bound than in the Xinjiang case. "Our *meken* is Kyrgyzstan I suppose even if our *ayil* [village] lies in Badakhshan – that is political, but nationally we are all Kyrgyz", I was told by an elderly man from Karakul in GBAO.

Bordering Pamiri Homelands

If trans-frontier Kyrgyz cognitive bordering between Kyrgyzstani Kyrgyz and Xinjiang's Kyrgyz could be characterised as a realignment of local notions of boundaries to approach congruency with state boundaries, the case of Tashkurgan's 'Tajiks' represents an example in which a local group believes its territory to be surrounded by groups differing in religious creed (Sunni) and language (Turkic Kyrgyz and Uighur as well as *putonghua* und 'Tajik Farsi') – the territories beyond Tashkurgan are thus the territories of the non-'Tajik' Other, and this includes the territory of GBAO. Hence, while the state boundary to Tajikistan is certainly seen as a non-negotiable and impenetrable barrier – a political edge to local territory that is encumbered by agents of border control – it simultaneously does not figure as a fundamentally different cognitive boundary than do internal local boundaries. Instructed by the PRC's policy on the development of national particularities to "from [1949] on, [end] their poor and backward ways and [begin] to lead a new life, going on the way to make their own decisions and build their own homeland"[447], this is precisely what local cognitive maps reflect. This homeland-making (i.e., the solidifying of local cognitive boundaries to circumscribe Sarykuli Pamiris' sense of place) has crucially taken place without the aid of trans-frontier brokers or the 'interpreters of the Tajik nation' that Kyrgyz and other *minzu* farther north were exposed to in the early Soviet years (during the decades of trans-frontier subversion detailed in Chapter 5), mainly because such Tajik-ness projected from the Tajik SSR would have entailed an 'undesirable' strengthening of the Pamiri *narodnost* there. Across the boundary in GBAO, notions of a Pamiri homeland across the boundary today exhibit a degree of continuation of the feeling of cultural superiority cemented in the Soviet era, when the AO exhibited a far higher degree of educated elites making their way to prestigious centres such as Moscow or Leningrad. Such a continuity, I believe, is already evident in local feelings of pride deriving from the Aga Khan's educational institutions being set up – especially the founding of a Central Asian University in Khorog in 2004 (that has, as yet, to properly begin operating) will do much to bolster such sentiments of a 'special Badakhshani region' as set apart from the rest of Tajikistan.

Forced Power-sharing in Xinjiang

If local notions of the 'rightful homeland' are not precisely speaking contested between Kyrgyz groups but rather serve as bordering discourses in today's political constellation of states being home to this or that Kyrgyz group, then this certainly shrinks to an "insignificant brawl amongst brothers" from the point of view of another group present in

[447] Excerpt from the introductory text at the 'National Literature and Arts Centre of Tajiks' in Tashkurgan (erected 2004), visited May 2006; see Chapter 4 for the full text.

the borderlands – a group that explicitly claims Xinjiang as its own rightful homeland. The Uighur friend who thus characterised this intra-Kyrgyz conflict is by no means alone in accusing the smaller *minzu* of Xinjiang of subverting Uighur control over what is seen as Uighuristan. Conflict between Uighurs and Kyrgyz stems from the realities of the distribution of autonomous units in the AR and the concomitant splintering of Uighur administrative power in 'their' titular unit of Xinjiang discussed more closely in earlier chapters; however, such conflict has now acquired an additional cognitive dimension of 'national injustice' since the independence of the titular SSRs across the boundaries. Often portrayed as the inescapable logic of the Soviet system of indigenisation and national autonomy by Uighurs in the PRC, they generally dispute the right of the Kyrgyz *minzu* to wield any administrative power whatsoever anymore in Xinjiang: "[after all] those Kyrgyz and Tajiks are lucky enough to have their own independent states right across the border – [...] why don't they just go home?", was the exasperated interjection by an Uighur salesman at the Kashgar Sunday market. Independence has not led to any initially feared (or, here, hoped for) emigration of borderlanders across the boundary *precisely because* the state of Kyrgyzstan is not seen by the Kyrgyz of Xinjiang as 'their' state, just as Tajikistan cannot be a Sarykuli Pamiri destination for national aspirations – the sad irony of this interstitial situation cannot be lost on people in Artush or Tashkurgan and elsewhere in the borderlands: 'home' for borderlanders here is on a territory that is irrefutably part of Xinjiang, itself a part of the People's Republic of China, and not in some vaguely defined 'politically independent over there' they are seen by others as belonging to thanks to a shared ethnonym! Truly, internal bordering within the PRC has been successful when local borderlander loyalties are contested amongst the nations of a state but not by borderlanders themselves in regard to their own state inclusion.

Conclusion

Those In Between

Before 1992 everybody knew where they belonged! This was the Soviet Union, that was China. Today's problems derive from the fact that the state has forgotten its duty. We have Chinese here because the state no longer cares to uphold border control – they just come whenever they want to and we have to deal with them. The Chinese are taking advantage of this forgetfulness!

(Kyrgyzstani Kyrgyz trader at the bazaar in Osh personal interview December 2005; full quote below)

This study has discussed the ways in which state boundaries are and have been 'controlled' and how this has been connected to the various levels of negotiation taking place between trans-boundary groups and their respective states' representatives. The challenge here has most fundamentally lain in navigating a path through a cloud of domains all exhibiting a variety of perspectives adopted, registers employed, and discourses contested. Sifting through these narrative elements in order to uncover 'that which lies between' I conclude that borderland processes and bordering discourses do indeed reveal that, locally at the margins of the territorial state, normative categories of belonging and boundedness as structured by states carry more importance in local contexts than an anthropologist academically socialised in the post-modern developments of the discipline had been led to expect. While notions of diversity and fluidity, ambivalence and dialogic interaction all pertain to parts of narratives encountered in these borderlands, academically 'unfashionable' concepts of linear boundedness and cultural purity carry vast importance for borderlanders as a framework against which cognitive categories are mapped. However, an analysis of this framework must question this linearity and replace it with fuzziness and negotiability so as to be able to map its nodes – this I have done by suggesting the importance of deep borderland control, borderlander lifeworlds, and relative trans-frontier ethnic proximity/distance. The socialist state, by directly wedding ethnographic classification to an intricate ideological system of territorial titularity and administratively bounded political and socio-cultural power, has successfully insinuated itself into all aspects pertaining to borderlander loyalties and trans-frontier frames of reference and it has been shown that borderlanders in these borderlands have adopted the state's vocabulary of titularity and nationality because of the

realisation that this has been to their own advantage. In other words, local interests were seen as being furthered by accepting the framework of reference offered by the state. It follows that we should not be surprised at the lack of delegitimising subversion of the boundary by borderlanders, a claim made by other researchers studying other boundaries and borderlands – a claim that dominates the bulk of recent Borderland Studies. In contrast to this academic trend highlighting the (ethnic) *identities* of trans-frontier borderlanders, my research demonstrates the importance of political *loyalties*.

Hence, in effect, the boundaries and borderlands lying between the Xinjiang region of the PRC and the post-Soviet states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan present us with spaces that exhibit strong processes of state 'thickening'; that is, the external boundaries of the PRC and the former Soviet Union are reproduced in contemporary cognitive national boundaries in the borderlands: avenues of exchange and borderlander notions of belonging and political loyalty fundamentally revolve around the local acceptance of territorial inclusion within the respective states. This differs from the processes observable in the former internal Soviet borderlands of the Kyrgyz and Pamiri national units, a space in which today state power over avenues of exchange has successfully been contested by Kyrgyz borderlanders and local notions of belonging subvert official rhetoric. Here, these formerly internal Soviet administrative-territorial boundaries are cognitively reproduced by Tajikistani non-borderlanders (significantly in this context by Pamiri, the quasi-titular group of GBAO) but not by the trans-frontier group of Murghab Kyrgyz. In other words, from a boundary perspective, borderlands that became an alienated Borderland over the common socialist period have developed a congruency between state boundaries and national boundaries whilst borderlands that in the Soviet period were integrated have developed into an interdependent Borderland in which the state boundary does not approach congruency with borderlander notions of national boundaries. National bifurcation and state-induced cleavage inform the parameters of locally held perceptions of a putative 'trans-frontier national unity' of Kyrgyz and 'Tajiks' across the Chinese – Central Asian boundaries: the state is a stronger and more important frame of reference here than an imagined (and, I have argued, imaginary) trans-frontier community of borderlanders. This finding is emphasised by local differentiation between *rightful* and *real* homelands, that is, the existence of a narrative of projected belonging versus actually practised belonging.

The Significance of Border Control

Understanding and analysing border control (in its widest sense understood to refer to the agents keeping the state's gates and controlling the physical trajectories crossing territories delimited and demarcated by a line) is critical to characterising the interaction between a state and people moving (or desiring to move) beyond its limits. But, even more importantly, locating and inspecting deep borderland control reveals the way in which a state interacts with borderlanders and attempts to influence borderlanders' interaction both with the boundary and that which lies beyond it; it also makes visible the relationship of the state to its citizens and, by extension, non-citizens from beyond the line. Such interaction and

relationships are substantiated in formal and informal institutions pervading the borderlands that interlock in an intricate and hidden way. In regard to borderlander lifeworlds, the multi-faceted methods of control and projection are most certainly designed to limit local cognitive notions of trans-frontier points of reference whilst thickening state loyalties. In the common socialist periods of our borderlands here, this meant dilating bureaucratic and physical avenues to the state, thereby increasing state-ward proximity, whilst contracting trans-boundary communicational and physical trajectories, thereby increasing trans-frontier distance. It stands to reason that not all states either desire or are indeed even able to wield as high a degree of such control as the Soviet Union and the PRC have done, and although post-Soviet states certainly struggle to at least uphold a discourse of continuity in this domain many (but, significantly, not Russia itself) have found themselves forced to relinquish such power. Further comparative studies of this phenomenon would no doubt reveal a continuum of methods of deep control in which the PRC and the Soviet Union are likely to represent one extreme, thereby pointing towards an explanation as to why these socialist states present us with a case study of political bordering that differs fundamentally from the majority of boundary and borderland case studies that have dealt with interfaces between states that exhibit a strong degree of visibility, accountability, and discursive openness in their constitution at the boundary.

Border control matters because it matters to borderlanders – the agents of border control can be co-opted, cooperated with, or evaded but they cannot be ignored. In order to live their lives at the state's margins (and possibly beyond these), the intricate structures of hierarchical command, military control, effective gatekeeper power, and functioning bureaucratic channels and its language of interaction must be learned. A characterisation of these powerful agents (both those charged by the state with gatekeeping as well as those with the unofficial bureaucratic capital to function as navigators through fluid and opaque realities of implementation) is akin to more orthodox studies of economic brokers, cultural and societal gatekeepers, and local political actors in other fields dealt with in an anthropology that seeks to pinpoint hidden discourses of power inherent in individuals' actions. Apart from this, border control and deep borderland control fittingly show us that the modern territorial state is under no circumstances an outside actor in modern borderlands. In places such as contemporary GBAO survival especially in the economic domain depends on locals understanding who is being dealt with – only thus can the minefield of danger so imminently threatening to life and limb be navigated. While in an imperial environment it may have held true that empires were relatively content to leave local lifeworlds and trans-frontier loyalties untouched, especially where these would (usually unwittingly) aid the expansion of the limits of Empire, such indirect rule is anathema to states that command a narrative of territorial inviolability. Where before that 'which lay between' the imperial states of Russia and Qing China certainly was not one essentialised proto-Kyrgyz or one Pamiri Nation or even self-ascribed ethnic Whole, the internal group boundaries that had existed prior to Socialism lost their fluidity and, crucially, their members lost the political ability to maintain, extend, or alter narratives of inclusion or exclusion themselves – internal boundaries between 'Kyrgyz' or 'Pamiri' groups became the subject of state legitimacy, the object of border control, and the

concern of deep borderland control. All *natsii/ minzu* of these states regardless of their spatial location within these states were and have been required to profess their loyalty to these political entities and, at the very least, hide away non-state points of reference; borderlanders were additionally called upon to 'defend' the territorial margins of the state, hence becoming a type of symbolic group of border control charged with substantiating the legitimacy of territorial control. Their symbolic power lies in the threatening Janus-faced image they enjoy – for people at the state's core, that side that is turned towards the state is the propagandistic image the state here likes to present so as to reassure its claim to legitimate control. Borderlanders as 'defenders of the motherland' is a narrative that 'sponsors' the people at the boundary as a quasi-state bastion of reliability, an outpost of what the state represents to the outside world – just as 'solutions' to the National Question were felt to be 'sponsoring' the state as a legitimate framework in which minorities could live their lives as equals.

But border control did not just continue to be imposed after an initial phase of local contestation – far more it came to be accepted as part of the local social environment and seen as having certain advantages at the local level. In the Soviet and post-Soviet borderlands of Kyrgyzstan's Naryn and Osh *oblasts* and Tajikistan's GBAO, the 'threat from China' served then as now as a part of this narrative – the dismantlement of border control has, as discussed, led to an increase locally of this feeling of threat; in Xinjiang's Qyzyl Suu and Tashkurgan, where state proximity has come to revolve around especially Uighur penetration of borderland locales, the perception of an 'unjust fate' that has befallen 'small peoples' across the boundaries to post-Soviet Central Asia serves as a similar part of such a narrative. In both of these instances state border control serves as a substantiation of the protection of local particularities. The 'threat from China' sentiments so evident in numerous interviews cited throughout this thesis, as well as in the existence of what I have termed the 'map myth' pertaining to locally perceived 'hegemonic' Chinese claims on Central Asian territories, are firmly anchored in the everyday attitudes of the local population and in the behaviour of local officials, all of who exude distrust and suspicion in regard to the presence of Chinese citizens on their territories. Maybe this is not that surprising a development if we consider that, on the post-Soviet side of the boundary, the disappearance of the symbolically highly eulogised group of *pogranichniki* has locally and, indeed, in the wider region engendered a feeling of being directly exposed to The Beyond and the threat it offers – the agents of protection have evaporated and, hence, the boundary has become more immediate. The revision of laws in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan pertaining to more restrictive policies on permanent residency display a direct reaction to what is seen as the threat from indirect forms of ethnic expansion in the infiltration of individuals described as 'Chinese', a label today applied to groups resident on Chinese territory regardless of national affiliation. Citizenship, here, has become the defining characteristic ascribed to potential agents of trans-frontier subversion.

Across the boundary in the PRC, the Kyrgyz and Tajiks of Xinjiang hold very strong opinions regarding their own ultimate fate if Xinjiang were to become as independent from the PRC as the SSRs across the boundary did from the Soviet Union. Naturally coloured by the lens of Chinese state media representations, small *minzu* in Xinjiang nevertheless fear

Uighur resentment over having to share 'power in Uighuristan' – were Xinjiang an independent state it would not only be the large Han population that would be regarded as unwelcome guests in the new titular state: Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Kazakhs, and Mongols would most likely be regarded as threatening bridgehead groups with shaky loyalties arising from administrative-territorial contiguity with their 'own' states. This ascription of belonging is, as extensively discussed, not shared by those thus labelled; despite what the CCP in Beijing might fear and despite what many Uighurs in Xinjiang might quietly hope for, there is neither an impetus at the local level for nor will there actually be any 're-unification' with Kyrgyz or 'Tajik' territories. Xinjiang and its administrative-territorial autonomous units are home for those living therein regardless of what the outside world might impute, and the external boundaries of the state are not contested here.

Succinctly characterising what he felt about the way in which Kyrgyzstan nowadays controls its boundaries, a Kyrgyzstani Kyrgyz trader in Osh had this to say about border control and its local acceptance in December 2005:

> You know, you ask about boundaries, but do you know what one of the best things about the time before [i.e., before 1992 (S.P)] was? It was that *everybody knew where they belonged*! This was the Soviet Union, that was China; this was Kirgizia [the Kyrgyz SSR], that was the Uzbek SSR; here [in Osh], there were Kyrgyz officials implementing Soviet law, there [in Andijan] it was Uzbek officials implementing Soviet law; and here it was a Kyrgyz bazaar and there were no Chinese. Of course things would go wrong – mistakes were made, corruption existed, all that! But at least you knew the parameters of how things worked, especially after Stalin had died. After all that changed, suddenly nobody knew who was in charge: us, the Uzbeks, or the Chinese? Today's problems derive from the fact that the state has forgotten its duty. We have Chinese here because the state no longer cares to uphold border control – they just come whenever they want to and we have to deal with them. The Chinese are taking advantage of this forgetfulness!

Significantly, such a narrative of power is taking place not at the level of trans-state policies, where border control seems relatively unproblematic in the diplomatic formulations thereof, but instead at a level reflecting discourses of control – or, rather, the perceived *lack* of such control. With the disappearance of the most stringent and effective types of border control that had been implemented throughout the common socialist period we can now observe a striking fact: the dismantlement of one of the states wielding political control over one side of our Borderland, the Kyrgyz and Pamiri borderlanders, who now became potentially well-situated to regain discursive control over that which I have termed the process of state cleavage, did not do so. More open boundaries here just highlight other processes taking place today in the borderlands through the conspicuous absence of, respectively, Kyrgyz and Pamiri rapprochement: Pamiri in GBAO will increasingly reorientate themselves in a wider Ismaili region that encompasses northern Afghanistan but that will for the foreseeable future exclude Tashkurgan in Xinjiang; and post-Soviet Kyrgyz borderlanders outside of Kyrgyzstan will continue the tendency towards bolstering trans-frontier ties connecting Tajikistani Kyrgyz with the Kyrgyz of Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstani Kyrgyz and the Tajiks and Pamiri of Tajikistan going abroad will continue to seek their economic fortunes not in the PRC but

rather in Russia and possibly in Turkey, whilst the Kyrgyz and 'Tajiks' of Xinjiang pursue avenues to Urumqi and farther afield within the PRC.

It is such observations that to my mind irrefutably point to the importance of promoting an analysis of local notions of relative ethnic proximity and distance over what states represent as existing at their frontiers. Only by studying local acceptance or rejection of discourses of external and internal bordering as they have unfolded at the state's margins can we approach an answer to the fit between a state's boundaries and a nation's boundaries as they are produced and reproduced in practice by people whose immediate surroundings are at the centre of two states' rhetoric of territoriality and control. What is more, it is only like this that we can leave aside blanket statements that, when closely scrutinised, will be shown to fail to move beyond a trivialising meta-discourse of trans-state policies (manifest in diplomatic arrangements and trade volumes) telling us nothing about the ways in which frameworks of power actually function and rules are negotiated.

The Significance of a Boundary Perspective

It is also from this perspective at the boundary that we may re-adjust our concepts of the structuring power of states. In a world in which new states such as the former Serbian territory of Kosovo immediately, within minutes of the declaration of political independence in early 2008, rush to pass boundary legislation and 'nationalise' their border troops, or in which the erection of new walls (in Israel) and technologically superior fences (between the United States and Mexico) has once again become popular despite lingering memories of the *grenzregime* of the Cold War era, we cannot but wonder about the hypocritical attitude state governments express in their self-serving rhetoric on globalisation and interconnectivity. A striking example of this are the discourses surrounding the European Union's external boundaries – spaces in which Fortress Europe is, I suspect, being practised by the institutions, agents, and frameworks of deep borderland control replete with images and projections similar in kind to those I believe are manifest at the former Soviet boundaries. In line with most case studies conducted on political boundaries, the microcosms of states that borderlands represent and the way in which they magnify the political 'lives' of states in no way support generalising notions of the development of a 'borderless' world. Quite to the contrary, in Central Asia discourses of dilation and interconnectivity have shifted in terms of focus but, over the long-term and in hindsight, have shrunk from what they were a century ago – wider notions of belonging and inclusion have been inexorably down-sized through internal and external bordering processes.

It is here that the image of 'dwindling' may be better suited to terminologically describe a state such as contemporary Tajikistan and possibly also Kyrgyzstan (and other post-Soviet states) – such entities are not, as some would euro-centristically have it, 'failed' or 'failing' states once observed on the inside. 'Dwindling' encompasses that which 'failed' ignores because it takes into account a diachronic view of a state's power as a dominant process of negotiation as well as local borderlander perceptions of the state's presence in that

all-important class of spaces that serve to make a state a modern state in the first place rather than casting a state solely as a reservoir of institutions. In other words, this concept promotes a perspective of the framework of interaction between a state and its citizens on the ground and at the margins by inquiring into how the state's representatives in reality interact with those over whom they wield nominal power and how people here 'just deal with' this. From a post-Soviet boundary perspective, the dwindling of the state is intricately connected to memories of Soviet reality in the borderlands, a reality that engendered narratives of protection, empowered local elites to mobilise political loyalties in exchange for real benefits for local borderlanders, and introduced into this most peripheral of areas new avenues of exchange with new nodes and a local awareness of the borderlands' role in being sponsored to ideologically legitimise a powerful state. Across the boundary in Xinjiang, borderlanders directly exposed to processes and events in their immediate neighbourhood are reminded of the threat of dwindling already once experienced during the warlord era – theirs is today a state that weds material opportunity to political loyalty, a fact of life often encountered in borderlanders' discussion of their position within Xinjiang. To reformulate this in the words of one Kyrgyz bazaar salesman in Artush whom I met in May 2006:

> Kyrgyzstan is now independent and the Kyrgyz there believe themselves to be masters of their own fates. This is not so because lack of money subjugates them to non-Kyrgyz. Many here [in Xinjiang and China in general (S.P)] believe the Han hold us captive, only serving Beijing's interests. This is also not so because we gain more than we lose: we gain freedom through seeing our lives improve year by year and our children's prospects have grown immeasurably. So what if we share government with others? The Kyrgyz [in Kyrgyzstan] were thrown out of their state [i.e., the Soviet Union (S.P)] because they were a liability to the Russians – and now look at them! We're no liability to anybody because we want to become more educated and wealthier and thereby make our homeland a more sophisticated place day by day.

Adopting a boundary perspective, I suggest, is the only way in which boundary-transcending processes can be analysed in their appropriate social and political environment. Borderlander lifeworlds only become visible once we take a trans-frontier context into consideration despite (and possibly because of) the concomitant methodological, structural, and technical difficulties inherent in such a boundary-violating field. Thus, by taking the boundary and its adjacent borderlands as the centrepiece of its attention, a political anthropology of borderlands and boundaries itself becomes a boundary-violating discipline that inserts itself in between the fringes of studies claimed by other sections of academia and gives lie to the myth of discretely bounded, institutionalised systems of scientific knowledge that are oddly so often congruent with state-imposed boundaries. Concretely, in the area of this study, such frontiers of expertise that are bridged are marked by dichotomies such as Soviet/post-Soviet studies versus Chinese studies, Sunni versus Ismaili religious studies, Turkic or Persian versus Russian or Mandarin studies, respective minority-majority studies (actually better termed titular versus sub-titular studies), or political and economic studies dealing with post-Socialist transformations on a strictly case-by-case basis, with studies all too often choosing to remain oblivious to the intricate bonds that today connect these fields on the ground in this wider region. Learning several languages spoken on both sides of these

external boundaries along with the widely varying bureaucratic speech employed in three states (as well as dealing with the bodies of literature written in different academic traditions) has, I believe, greatly aided the depth of this study and allowed us to recast seemingly static political boundaries as social constructs that figure as processes that limit and constrain local frameworks but also enable local participation in other frameworks.

To shed light on what lies between states, and on those in between two states' heartlands, is to show the intricacies of the discourses entertained by both the representatives of the state and the inhabitants at its frontiers, by both the effect official policies have on the implementation of control over boundaries and borderlands and how this implementation is received and influenced by those it affects, and by the inhabitants of the frontier on both sides of the boundary in regard to the respective states involved and the channels of communication and exchange, be they economic, political, and/or socio-cultural, which exist between them. Regardless of official rhetoric on border control, reality takes on a different form when observed in the borderlands or at the actual boundary itself, where the unofficial and the official are closely entwined. Furthermore, it has shown itself to be necessary to consider local attitudes and borderlander lifeworlds in order to approach a qualitative analysis of the relationship of power between the respective gatekeepers, the local borderland elites, and the people on both sides of the boundary, and so be able to examine the nature of a state's interface with another's. This is precisely the strength of an anthropological inquiry even into the materiality of the state, a monumental presence so reified at the boundary by explicit and implicit artefacts and discourses. From the empirical point of view promoted by our discipline, it is striking to note that in a global system in which state boundaries all adhere to a common set of mutually accepted structures and representations, the constitution of the state at its most physically and possibly politically vulnerable interface is manifest in the diversity of ways in which it is cognitively recognised and practiced by those at its margins. With the overwhelming amount of published material on political boundaries and administrative borderlands discussing these spaces at the margin solely through the lens of the state itself, those 'between' the fuzzy margins of states can all too easily be forced into invisibility despite the importance that their 'own' states accord them domestically – an invisibility only heightened by academically focusing on identities rather than on loyalties. I think it is most certainly in the interest of the wider field of social anthropology to correct this grave imbalance and, thus, give us the opportunity to reappraise the role which these spaces so heavily encumbered and inscribed with symbolic importance play in respect to the state – that entity that continues to play such a crucial role in the lives of every individual.

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