# LIMITS TO KINSHIP POLITICS
# IN KYRGYZSTAN

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# Abstract

In recent years, an important intellectual debate has emerged between social scientists on the issue of "clans" or informal political entities allegedly governing Central Asian states. While political scientists contend that "clans" signify existant kinship units exercising political power, anthropologists maintain that "clan" is an inaccurate term with no empirical basis. Aside from the theoretical importance of the research, the issue is important for practical purposes too: many international organizations and governments of foreign states base their assessments of the current situation and future prospects of the Central Asian countries on the discourse of "clans." In my research, I examine the discursive reality of modern-day Kyrgyzstan in order to understand how the term is employed in the mass media. After surveying an abundance of Kyrgyzstani newspapers, TV programs, a sample network of Kyrgyzstan's political and business leaders, and extensively investigating a number of theoretical models, it appears that the term "clan" is indeed ill-suited for analytical purposes as well as misleading when used to identify significant political actors. Instead, a much better analytical perspective – that of social networks – is suggested as a way to trace the origins of social and political power in modern Kyrgyzstani society.

i

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# Table of Contents

*The handful of us…are prepared to wade through the sort of kinship algebra…which has gradually developed, memorize long lists of native terms, follow up complicated diagrams,…endure long deductive arguments,…[and] the piling of hypothesis upon hypothesis. The average anthropologist, however, [is] somewhat mystified and perhaps a little hostile…and has his doubts whether the effort needed to master the bastard algebra of kinship is really worthwhile. He feels that, after all, kinship is a matter of flesh and blood, the result of sexual passion and maternal affection, of…a host of personal intimate interests. Can all this really be reduced to formulae, symbols, perhaps equations?*

Bronislaw Malinowski

# Introduction

While Scottish highlanders of the eighteenth century, Native American tribes described by Lewis H. Morgan in the nineteenth century, and contemporary Kyrgyzstani society suggest nothing remotely similar, one should not rush to conclusions. In fact, one concept so commonly thrown around and so dangerously universal, is a common denominator to social groups mentioned above. This concept has evolved – linguistically, historically and anthropologically – throughout centuries, its popularity has waxed and waned, but its use is gaining currency once again.

The concept that will be the focus of present work is seemingly as simple as the way to pronounce it: "clan."

According to the "New Encyclopedic Dictionary," "clan" comes from the Gaelic word *cland* or *clan* meaning family, also "children, offspring, and [it] serves to identify that group which lies at the foundation of patrimonial organization of Ireland and southern Scotland" ("Clan" 1914). The Collins English dictionary gives an exhaustive treatment of the word stating that "clan" might refer to either "a group of people interrelated by ancestry or marriage" or "a group of families with a common surname and a common ancestor" or "a group of people united by common characteristics, aims, or interests" ("Clan" 2000a). The Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology defines our concept as an "often larger descent-group with a vaguer tradition of common ancestry" (Lewis 2002:231).

The concept of "clan" has been recently invoked many times and for many separate occasions. For example, Kryshtanovskaya has stated that a "clan" (the shorthand to denote a group of friends and classmates) has helped Anatoly Chubais to quickly rise to power in Russia in the early 1990s (2005:83-5). Applying the concept of "clan" to the studies of post-Soviet transformation, Dinello believes that two different types of "clans" are an explanation for why Hungary became such a success in converting from state economy to market

1

economy, while Russia is considered to be a relative "failure" in this respect (2001:589). Finally, Gullette argues that the concept of "clans" and generally the discourse of "tribalism" are used by the Kyrgyzstani state to forge its legitimacy and durability (2006:193).

In fact, the "clan" concept together with its underlying theoretical foundation has become an academic battleground between political scientists and anthropologists. According to political scientists, the concept is a prime example of kinship-based organizations predating the modern state (Collins 2006:43) whose "normative content, informal structure, and rational elements" successfully inflate this concept to vie for political power at the present time. Anthropologists take a different stance: Ernest Gellner would be skeptical of the analytical (or any other) power of this concept in the contemporary societies since "social kinship systems are not identical with the reality of physical kinship, but, on the contrary, systematically add to it, omit from it, and distort it" (Gellner 1987:167-70).

The debate between social scientists on the nature and modern-day relevance of "clans" has much broader implications. Many authors at the present consider clans to be actually existing organizations which have "captured" or penetrated state apparatuses of the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) and which exploit resources of the respective countries to accumulate wealth and further power (Collins 2003; Collins 2004; Collins 2006; Omuralieva 2008; Berdikeeva 2006; Biryukov 2008; Schatz 2004; Schatz 2005). According to them, clans appear to be dominant social units which have their roots in pre-modernity and pre-nationalism, but which have managed to persevere through social cataclysms and colonization of the past two centuries, have emerged

2

as hidden actors behind the official Soviet façade of "*Vsya vlast'- Sovetam*" principle[1], and which have ridden to power with declarations of post-communist independence.

Obviously, such a strong position cannot be ignored, especially considering that, if proven, this deployment of the term "clan" might greatly simplify the understanding of the lives of citizens of the Central Asian countries and the political processes under way there.

Consequently, in this thesis I embark on a reflective and rigorous analysis of the "clan" concept as it is used in the context of Central Asia. In order to narrow down the geographic scope of this research, I will examine one particular country in the region. Among the five Central Asian republics, I have decided to focus on the Kyrgyz Republic or Kyrgyzstan. Why Kyrgyzstan? The answer is two-fold. First, the Kyrgyz Republic was periodically mentioned as being "the Switzerland of Central Asia" and "the island of democracy" in the region (Anderson 1999; Anderson and Beck 2000). Such flattering connotations derived their strength from observations made by foreign visitors and international organizations which have favorably evaluated the first few years of Kyrgyzstani independence (gained in 1991). They noticed that multiple freedoms (of speech, press, assemblies) have been implemented and elections were run fairly (Dukenbaev and Hansen 2003:27).

Also, Kyrgyzstan has been the only republic in Central Asia which has already witnessed two revolutions, one on March 24, 2005 and one on April 7, 2010. While the surrounding countries have a tight grip on the opposition and dissenting citizens, Kyrgyzstan has already been shocked twice by mass protests and corresponding cardinal changes of government. Consequently, Kyrgyzstan stands out among its geographical neighbors in terms of early (albeit short-lived) reforms and in terms of the strength of popular dissent. These

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[1] "All Power – to the Soviets!" – that is a Soviet principle that instead of being ruled by monarchs, presidents, or some other rulers, in the Soviet Union power really belongs to the people themselves, who have convened assemblies or *sovety*.

3

unique features of Kyrgyzstan will serve as a distinctive litmus test through which the notion of "clans" will be examined.

The present research is envisioned as a theoretically-driven rebuttal of the claim that "clans" are the kinship-based informal social actors ruling Kyrgyzstan. This thesis is structured in such a way as to give a complete exposure to various facets of the word and concept of "clan." I begin by introducing the key authors who have contributed recently to the debate about informal politics in Central Asia in general and in Kyrgyzstan in particular. The debates between these authors constitute the meta-discursive umbrella of my research. In the second part of the literature review, I turn to additional theoretical perspectives which provide important linkages to underlying concepts and broader theoretical issues.

The historical background chapter will familiarize the reader with the major milestones of the Kyrgyz history and trace the contours of traditional Kyrgyz clans. The methodology section will elaborate on types of data I have gathered in Kyrgyzstan.

The following three chapters will break down the "clan" concept into three "dimensions": linguistic, historical, and anthropological. While these distinctions are somewhat arbitrary, they will help the reader to understand why "clan" is such an awkward and ill-suited concept for the analysis of informal politics in the Kyrgyz Republic. Each chapter will begin with a number of dictionary definitions. I believe they serve as informative "snapshots" of a particular aspect of the "clan" notion and quickly orient the reader in the overall theme of the chapter. The penultimate chapter on an alternative conceptual perspective follows where I will outline a possible theoretical model appropriate to deal with informal politics. The conclusion will summarize the main arguments of this paper and will state why there are limits to kinship politics in Kyrgyzstan.

# Chapter I. Clandestine Clans

## *Three perspectives on clans*

### Clans as crucial social actors

> *"The strong and persistent role of clan networks – including kinship, fictive kinship, and residence networks – throughout the Soviet period and into the first decade of the post-Soviet decade is remarkable"* (Collins 2006:224).

The above statement reflects well the position taken by a number of social scientists who find that "clans" do, in fact, exist in Central Asia and that they occupy important positions of power. Such scholars as Edward Schatz, Saltanat Berdikeeva, and Anvarjon Rahmetov maintain that "clans" are critical factors in determining respective countries' internal and foreign agenda, in filling "empty" political carcasses (e.g., parliament, presidential administration, and various ministries) with the content of nepotism and corruption, and in exploiting all economic resources they can lay hands on. Kathleen Collins notes that her "interview data strongly support the argument that clan identity remains powerful in Central Asia" since "[c]lan identity is firmly rooted in both the informal (village) and formalized (kolkhoz) socioeconomic structures; it was neither destroyed nor subsumed by the Soviet campaign to create republic-based ethnonational identities" (2003:187).

Edward Schatz would concur with Collins in his demonstration of how such aspects of "clan politics" as *clan clientelism* and *clan balancing* (together with the larger discursive "battle") determine identity politics in Kazakhstan (2005:231). Answering the question "Why do clans matter in Kyrgyzstan?", Saltanat Berdikeeva finds that they matter a lot since they both have political and economic implications: politically, clannism "became a root of corruption, nepotism and a weak rule of law", while clan members deplete the country's economic resources through excessive bribes and extorting takeovers of major Kyrgyzstani businesses (2006:8-11). Finally, Vadim Biryukov believes that "clan *systems*" are the crucial

5

political and economic actors in the context of modern Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (2008:58, original emphasis).

Needless to say, in order to point the finger at clans as the main culprits of post-Soviet modernity in Central Asia, it is imperative to give them a "face," that is, a definition and a set of properties. Biryukov gives the following pompous (and slightly awkward) definition of clans which are "unique rationally calculated redistributional coalitions with primordial features" (2008:58). Clan members:

> engage in rational and mutually beneficial exchange. Leaders of the clan provide members with needed resources and patronage, and care for their basic needs and lifetime promotion, since the leaders' prestige and power is a product of the standing of their clans. Conversely, members of clans owe their primary loyalty to the clan leaders and support them by human resources when called upon to do so. (Rahmetov 2008:23)

Schatz further delineates: "[a] definition of clan that emphasizes kinship may help us to recover its dynamic: clan divisions are those that exist within an ethnic group and in which demonstrable common kinship is understood to underlie membership" (2004:192). Collins unravels the definition further:

> A clan is an informal organization comprising a network of individuals linked by kin-based bonds. Affective ties of kinship are its essence, constituting the identity and bonds of its organization. These bonds are both vertical and horizontal, linking elites and nonelites, and they reflect both actual blood ties and fictive kinship, that is, constructed or metaphorical kinship based on close friendships or marriage bonds that redefine the boundaries of the genealogical unit. (2004:231)

Emphasizing numerous problems caused by clannism in the Kyrgyzstani society, Berdikeeva pessimistically concludes that

> although the comprehensive reforms in the political system, governance and the economy may decrease the spectrum of clan and regional influences, it appears that these phenomena will continue to exist in one form or another in Kyrgyzstan for a long time because of their entrenchment in much of the Kyrgyz society. (2006:17)

Munara Omuralieva hypothesizes that after the "Tulip Revolution"[2] in Kyrgyzstan, significant shifts in the political and social spheres have happened. She argues that while the clan-based elites that came to power did not change the system and character of the government or the ruling style, inter-ethnic relations in the country have worsened, the official policies began to appeal more to nationalistic arguments in their practices, and ethnic organizations in the country became more active and more politicized. All of these changes will affect Kyrgyzstan negatively in the years to come (2008).

Now, let's pause for a couple of minutes and take stock of what we have so far. The first group of social scientists that deal one way or another with "clans" can be said to fully embrace the idea of "clans" as actually existant social units. The authors believe that so-called "clan politics" has the power to work on a macro-level – namely, to determine which clans have the largest share of resources at the state level (Schatz 2005); to shape political and economic trajectories of countries (trajectories spiraling downward, generally) (Berdikeeva 2006; Biryukov 2008); and even ruin a fragile inter-ethnic balance (Omuralieva 2008). "Clans" also have a "remarkable" role in that they work on the meso- and micro-levels too: by providing a shortcut to exchange of goods and services, by providing a possibility of lifetime promotion in the absence of alternative social mobility mechanisms, and by endowing interpersonal relations with a sense of identity and belonging (Collins 2004; Rahmetov 2008).

While defining "clans" (a notorious task as confessed by the researchers since "clans" are informal identity organizations), several key aspects emerge. First, "clans" serve as the conduit to power: if one can successfully mobilize his/her clansmen in the bid for positions in the government, one is almost assured a winning ticket. However, this leads to an inevitable conundrum when several competing clans which simultaneously rose to prominence want the

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[2] An overthrow of the Kyrgyzstani government on March 24, 2005.

same pieces of the pie. Thus, the second key aspect of "clan politics" is *clan balancing* which creates a series of intersecting pacts of influence whose duration is highly unstable and whose dynamics is volatile. Such balancing can occur either exogenously or endogenously (Schatz 2005:236), where the exogenous scenario implies an authority (a person or a set of institutions) which stands above the bickering of clans and has the affirmed legitimacy to ensure that no single group usurps government. Endogenous balancing happens when there is no authority widely believed to be an uninterested party. In this case, the clans themselves have to work out a strategy of keeping at least a minimal appearance of all clans somehow entitled to their share of resources. Clans embrace the endogenous strategy when an impartial authority is missing in order to ensure that permanent confrontation between clans does not spiral out of control and does not unleash *bellum omnium contra omnes*.

Finally, the third aspect of clans is their make-up: they are composed of people united through blood relations (by descent), affinal ties (by marriage) and fictive kinship. The relations are assumed to be equal between representatives of elites and nonelites, and a sense of loyalty as well as identity is widespread.

Naturally, this has just been a rough summary of the main ideas distilled from the writings of the political scientists. Their concepts will be reviewed and looked at through a magnifying glass later in the thesis, when they will be compared with insights gained from the disciplines of linguistics, history and anthropology, and from the empirical reality. For now, let's move on to the second group of scholars writing about "clans."

## Clans as one important factor among others

The second group of scholars state that while "clans" are important, there are also other important informal undercurrents that guide the political machines of Central Asian states. These informal factors include regional elites, divisions between ethnic groups, and owners of

8

the large parcels of property. These social actors and groups influence election results, redistribute the most lucrative pieces of property, and, if needed, mobilize broad support to fight for their interests.

The author of the only comprehensive book on the Kyrgyz past and present, John Anderson states that patronage networks based on kinship connections and regional allegiances as well as extended family groups and tribes played and continue to play an important role in Kyrgyz politics (1999). Yet, it seems that according to the author, it is the patronage networks that really determine the country's political situation by encouraging regionalism and "tribalism" in Kyrgyzstan.

The conflict between the southern and northern elites of Kyrgyzstan is what is driving mismanagement and corruption inside the country. While there has been much rhetoric of regionalism, this discourse hides the real conflict of interests. The elite-based conflicts also have a clan aspect to them. This is, in a nutshell, the main argument of two other authors who try to explain politics in Kyrgyzstan. They see the current politics of Kyrgyzstan as animated by "a symbiotic interrelationship between clan, region, elite and class," where the clan system is a complex of "…vast patronage networks that are related to ethnic and geographic factors" (Dukenbaev and Hansen 2003:25). As we can clearly see, these writers have mixed together a lot of factors in order to account for the current state of political affairs in the Kyrgyz Republic. Yet, they remain adamant about the main source of hostility which is encapsulated in political divisions between regional elites. Thus, clans play some role, but the emphasis is on the elites.

Identifying the axes of potential conflict and instability in Kyrgyzstan is the task of the next two authors, who identify dangerous regional, ethnic, clan and religious cleavages threatening the country's existence:

9

The Kyrgyz people long ago settled on either side of the mountains dividing the country into north and south. Tribal or clan loyalties dominated everyday life on both sides of this divide, and Soviet rule had less effect in Kyrgyzstan than elsewhere because these traditional tribes were not broken down. Overt tensions emerged between the clans of the two regions back at least as far as the 18th century, with the north playing the more dominant role in political life, and southerners generally having less influence. (Fletcher and Sergeyev 2002:253)

Furthermore, ethnic divisions exacerbated the political situation in Kyrgyzstan as Russians who generally settled in the northern part of the country felt alienated by the nationalist governments of the country after independence, while Uzbek majority in the south felt cheated as they were underrepresented in the administration and their language has received even less recognition than Russian. Additionally, while the Kyrgyz are very moderate Muslims, the residents of the southern provinces (Batken, Osh and Jalal-Abad) are more religious. Besides, there have been cases when rebels tried to penetrate the borders of the country in order to establish Islamic rule across the Fergana Valley, shared by Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan (Fletcher and Sergeyev 2002:253-4). Consequently, a combination of factors influences the political and social processes in Kyrgyzstan.

Can it even be that Central Asia has a dual political system? It is an interesting question which gets asked by Frederick Starr in his analysis of the impact of informal politics on formal politics. He claims that in Central Asia (comprising, according to him, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) dual politics is at play. "Politics A" refers to the relationship between branches of government (only superficially important in the Central Asian context), while "Politics B" is the real decision-making arena as it represents the battleground of interests between regional power brokers and their networks (2006). Starr makes a useful distinction between varieties of power brokers too often subsumed by one category of "clans." Instead, he argues, there are three distinctive groups that dominate "invisible politics" of Central Asia which are described below.

10

The first group comprises large kinship systems which can be called proper clans and can be found among formerly nomadic peoples of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. The second group consists of regional networks based on close economic, political and sometimes also linguistic ties. Power brokers of this group can be found throughout the region. Finally, the third group is made up of people who possess control over important resources or even whole sectors of economy, such as cotton, power, mineral extraction, construction, or transport. Macro-actors of such caliber can be found in all Central Asian states. Hence, the author draws an important distinction between various power groups whose features tend to be glossed over in the West by using an all-encompassing term "clans." He states that clans are indeed important in Kyrgyzstan, but that there are other strong contenders for power. Similarly to previous authors, Starr maintains that such power networks represent a formidable roadblock to developing democratic norms.

Thus, the writers in the second group make sure to emphasize clans' importance in Central Asia, yet they also maintain that in addition to clans there are other strong groups vying for power and influence in the region. These groups are different types of informal organizations which inhibit democratic development of the countries in the region. Starr's notion of "dual politics" is a valuable one, since it serves as a conceptual umbrella covering a variety of factors which determine political and economic pathways taken by Central Asian republics. "Dual politics" implies that there are two sets of institutions and practices that govern a state: there is an official one, which is outlined in the constitution and subsequent legislative acts, and then there is an unofficial, informal one, determined by a kin affiliation, a respective ethnic group, or belonging to a certain religion.

Even though all the authors in this group acknowledge that clans play some role in the lives of citizens of Central Asian countries, they often assign prominence to other factors. For Anderson, clans are not as important as patronage networks (1999). For others, it is the

11

regional elites that are the crux of informal politics (Dukenbaev and Hansen 2003). Yet, for others it is the combination of divisive factors which meddle negatively with economic and political potential of the region (Fletcher and Sergeyev 2002; Starr 2006).

## Clans as genealogical knowledge

Apart from ardent believers and moderate supporters of the notion of "clan" and its role in social and political processes in Central Asia, there are also several skeptical social scientists rejecting the notion. In this section, I will review four authors (Aksartova, Gullette, Sneath and Rigi) who reject the notion and take various approaches on why they believe the notion misrepresents the empirical reality. While all four are very skeptical of the "clan" concept, they choose different analytical weapons in order to prove its theoretical ineffectuality.

For example, in response to Kathleen Collins's work regarding "clan politics" in Central Asia, Sada Aksartova feels that the author has not gone far enough in exploring this phenomenon and its implications. Aksartova questions whether it is really the clans that structure Central Asian societies or, instead, "a more general variety of local and class-based informal networks of patronage and trust" (2006:312).

Aksartova's other major criticism is leveled at Collins's statement early in her book that "[c]lans typically cross class lines"(2006:18) which is supported with little evidence. Aksartova argues that "[o]ne of the clan's defining features is that the bonds of kinship transcend class; otherwise it is not a clan but an elite patronage network or a poor folks' self-help association" (Aksartova 2006:313). Thus, according to Aksartova, Collins does not provide much information on how elite and non-elite members of the same clan interact. It seems from Collins's discussion that while elite members enjoy privileged access to state political and economic resources, non-elite members share few, if any, such luxuries. If this is indeed the case across Central Asia, then "clan" framework has to be rejected.

Taking a cue from Andrew Shryock (1997), another scholar maintains that there is a sharp distinction between the notion of "tribalism" (tribal or clan-based favoritism) and empirical reality in Kyrgyzstan (Gullette 2006). According to Gullette, when people talk about prevalent "tribalism" in the Kyrgyz society, they really express their disapproval of political factionalism, not of actually existing forms of relatedness. The author advocates the use of the concept of "genealogical imagination" which is "relatedness created through the dialectic between memories and representations of history" (Gullette 2006:8). He argues strongly against using the term "clans" the way political scientists do, that is groups acting as corporate units. Instead, the author aims "to demonstrate that 'clans' and 'tribes' are not groups in the sense of cohesive bodies of people, but categories of relatedness determined through narratives of genealogy" (Gullette 2006:5).

Embarking on the quest to challenge a dangerous misconception among social scientists and the lay public alike about clans and tribes as the governing principles of Inner Asian prestate kinship societies, David Sneath offers an analytical alternative. According to him, even in the premodern times "it was not 'kinship society' but aristocratic power and statelike processes of administration that emerged as the more significant features of the wider organization of life on the steppe" (Sneath 2007:1). Segueing into a broader agenda, Sneath declares the second aim of his research: "to rethink the traditional dichotomy between state and nonstate society and to approach the state in a different way – in terms of the decentralized and distributed power found in aristocratic orders" (2007:1). The scholar states that Western and Soviet researchers of the twentieth century have been all too eager to designate nonstate societies as societies with a high level of kinship organization which have been able to create steppe states only because of the contact with the neighboring urban and agricultural polities.

13

"Clans" can be a misnomer and it is perhaps more fruitful to talk about people having "clan affiliations" in the present-day Central Asian society (Rigi 2009). That is, we might speak of people having "clan affiliations" meaning knowledge of belonging to a certain clan, but these affiliations do not serve to activate underlying obligations and rights hardwired into a typical clan structure. Rigi tells us that in order for ordinary people to survive toil and troubles of the post-socialist present, they rely on "networks of survival" which are based to a large degree on kinship relations (nuclear and extended families), but they also depend on patron-client, friendship, and work relationships (Rigi aka Nazpary 2002). During his fieldwork in Kazakhstan, Rigi casts off the importance of clans and chooses to rely exclusively on the idea of networks. He refuses to recognize clans as actually existent and active social institutions; he, nevertheless, agrees that social networks are very important in contemporary Kazakh society.

The four scholars cited above take a stern stance towards "clans." They believe that neither class analysis, nor deep and systematic cross-comparison of nomadic societies of the past, nor do network studies produce evidence eloquent enough to transform "clans," a concept that has to be put in-between quotation marks, into a model referring simultaneously to solid empirical evidence and to theoretical extrapolations built on top of such evidence. Thus, all authors agree that "clans" is a misnomer, but each of them offers a different explanation of why this model fails so miserably.

According to Aksartova, instead of "clans," it would be better to refer to local networks of patronage and trust which could also be based on class distinctions. In fact, her advice to me before I began my fieldwork, was to adopt a "social network" perspective, that is to look at existing social networks in Central Asia, find out economic relations behind them, and explore reasons driving these networks to appear and endure (Aksartova 2009).

14

Rigi is quite solidaristic with Aksartova in the way how his own research puts emphasis on existing social networks uniting relatives, friends, coworkers, and classmates in a maze of exchange and mutual obligations (aka Nazpary 2002).

These two scholars present a bottom-up approach of analytically unraveling the term "clans," that is, they approach it through an entry point of social networks of ordinary citizens and of origins of social power. The next two scholars – Gullette and Sneath – can be roughly classified as exercising a top-down approach, since they analyze statal and statelike conditions of producing authority in a society. In this way, they focus more on the origins and processes of political power.

Gullette argues that "genealogical imagination" ("relatedness underpinned by genealogical and historical knowledge" (2006:199)) encompasses multiple imagined communities that keep alive a sense of social identity and pride of ancestors' actions and morals. However, this genealogical imagination has also sworn allegiance to state-building projects and has been employed to legitimize the development of Kyrgyz national identity in the post-Soviet period. "Clans" do not manifest themselves as politically divisive corporate groups; instead, the use of the word in Kyrgyzstan embodies political factionalism and is also manipulated to reap political and economic benefits. According to Sneath, "clans" in Inner Asia probably have never existed, but instead there have been "aristocratic orders." Aristocratic orders have not signified states in the most common understanding of that term, but through statelike processes and functions, they effectively demonstrated characteristics worthy of a state.

Before we proceed to the next section, it is important to be reminded that the broader debate between political scientists and anthropologists on the issue of "clans" is also influenced by their respective fields of study. As Julia Paley cogently observed, political scientists tend to focus on "political institutions, formal regime shifts, and comparative

15

country studies," while anthropologists typically concentrate on "local meanings, circulating discourses, multiple contestations, and changing forms of power accompanying the installation of new political regimes" (2002:469-70). Consequently, disciplinary affiliations also play a significant role in the way how certain social and political phenomena are viewed and argued about by academics.

## *Additional sources*

I chose to separate the literature review chapter into two sections. The first section elaborates on three major social science perspectives regarding the issue of "clans." The sources discussed in the first section form the theoretical backbone of my research and I will come back to them throughout my paper. However, in order to bridge the gap between these three streams of literature and my empirical data, and to trace linkages to meta-theoretical issues, I made use of additional relevant theories. Here I will briefly locate and define them, but the more detailed discussion will follow in the subsequent chapters.

The chapter on the linguistic aspects of "clans" utilizes the concept of "frame" elaborated upon George Lakoff (2002; 2004). He maintains that certain concepts become so ingrained in people's minds that they represent a coherent set of ideas which can be triggered by a "frame" - a consistent conceptual metaphor.

The chapter on the historical aspects of "clans" builds on the extended analysis of Irish clans. It follows with an empirical vignette by a Kyrgyz journalist which helps to explain the interplay between traditions and modernity in the current-day Kyrgyz Republic. Additionally, the chapter historicizes two distinctive theories of kinship and order developed by Henry L. Morgan (1877) and Max Weber (1964). The theory developed by Morgan focused on the exclusively kinship character of ancient societies, while Weber's perspective emphasized various forms of "traditional authority."

16

The third chapter discusses the key property of "clans," namely the "corporate group" aspect (Bell 1998; Holy 1996; Keesing 1975; Weber 1964). The chapter continues by assembling a network portrait of the so-called "Bakiev clan" using materials from Kyrgyzstani mass media. Then, the analysis proceeds by looking at "Orientalism" – a body of knowledge accumulated to dominate the Orient (Said 1979). Afterwards, the discussion advances by looking at the segmentary lineage theory developed by Evans-Pritchard (1947) and by outlining inherent discrepancies between physical kinship and social kinship (Bourdieu 1990; Gellner 1987).

I believe that the nexus of theories introduced in this chapter and the empirical data obtained in the field will demonstrate that the concept of "clan" simultaneously fails to explain informal politics of Kyrgyzstan and to capture emic meanings attached to kinship. I will continue this paper by considering methodology of my research, after which the main analytical chapters begin.

## Chapter II. Methodology

The purpose of my investigation is to trace how the term "clan" is used in discursive reality in Kyrgyzstan as well as to find people's reactions to the usage of the term. To this end I conducted one-month long fieldwork in the capital of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek. Throughout my stay in Bishkek I gathered two types of data. First of all, I was interested in how the term "clan" is used in mass media, whether by politicians, journalists, or local analysts. Consequently, I examined 22 newspapers and 58 various television programs (news and analytic programs).

Apart from surveying discursive fields, I also wanted to see what people in everyday life say about Kyrgyz "clans" and about whether "clans" have any influence on politics. Hence, I organized a focus group study in one of the schools of Bishkek, where I interacted

with 10 high-school students discussing themes of the recent radical governmental change, causes of Bakiev's downfall, and the relationship between Kyrgyz clans and what's called a "clan" in mass media discourse. Additionally, I've had four informal unstructured interviews with teachers of the same school who shared their insights on the current political, economic, and social situation in the country.

Right at the beginning of my field research in Bishkek, a tragedy has occurred in the capital. Crowds of Kyrgyzstanis coming from villages surrounding the city have attempted to storm the "White House" – the main administrative building of the Kyrgyz Republic housing presidential administration and various governmental offices. Even though the Kyrgyzstani president has immediately fled his office, the head of the State Protection Service (the agency charged with protecting presidents) ordered snipers on the roofs of nearby buildings. Consequently, when the protesters did manage to chase away militia squads and attempted to break into the inner perimeter of the "White House," they have been shot by the snipers. The deadly toll of April 7, 2010 eventually climbed to 85 people. Around 1500 people have been inflicted injuries: gunshot wounds, bone fractures, and multiple bruises. The effect of the uprising was that the president Bakiev was removed from his office, the government and the parliament dismissed, and the People's Provisional Government formed of the opposition leaders was installed.

The events of April 7 had at least two immediate effects on my fieldwork. The first effect was that public access to information about the so-called "Bakiev clan" became much more open. Many articles that I've used for this research could not have been printed had Bakiev and his entourage still been in power. Naturally, that on the wave of public anger against the deposed president many newspapers could be hypothesized to print simply diatribes and accusations, rather than facts. However, in order to deal with this problem and to develop an approximate network map of Bakiev's family and associates (see Appendix A) I

18

made sure to cross-check basic facts using a variety of newspapers. The findings seem to be consistent.

The second and more detrimental effect on my fieldwork caused by the recent protests in Kyrgyzstan manifested itself in people's unwillingness to engage in long discussions or be interviewed for my research. Originally, I planned to conduct at least three focus group studies and about 20 interviews. However, the atmosphere in the capital after the overthrow of the government was very tense; inhabitants looked anxious and were uncertain about what's going to happen next. Clearly, they did not feel like talking to a stranger, instead they rushed to work and then rushed home right away only stopping to buy groceries in a supermarket. Even though I have managed to procure valuable empirical data from the interactions with Bishkek residents, a more detailed picture could have emerged only from spending several months in the capital coupled with the country returning to the normal state of affairs.

## Chapter III. Nomads and settlers

The present chapter constitutes a brief overview of the Kyrgyz history. The purpose here is two-fold. First, the overview will outline major historical milestones of the Kyrgyz people, their interactions with each other and with broader social forces. Second, the section will sketch out the history of Kyrgyz tribes and clans, their properties and interconnections.

I proceed here by first citing Sir Olaf Caroe who has once said:

The investigator of Turkish and Mongol history in this part of the world [Central Asia] is like a man standing on an upper floor, watching the unpredictable and disordered movement of a crowd gathered on some great occasion. Groups meet and coalesce, groups melt and dissolve; a sudden interest draws a mass in one direction, only to split up again; a bidder or leader may for some moments gather a knot of adherents; political or personal causes lead to rioting;…there is slaughter and destruction, or even for a time a sense of purpose and direction of effort. (in Wheeler 1964:19)

The words quoted above reflect well not just the history of the region, but also comment appropriately on the turbulent present of Central Asian countries. When former Kyrgyz

president, Askar Akaev was deposed on March 24, 2005, nobody among the jubilant protesters could predict that just five years later the new Kyrgyzstani Prime Minister Daniyar Usenov would have to convene an emergency press-conference defying crowds of people who have just captured the regional government of Talas oblast. Nobody could have predicted that in 24 hours from then another Kyrgyz president would have to flee for life. However, even a brief acquaintance with the Kyrgyz history might convince us that unpredictable series of unfortunate events are nothing alien to Kyrgyzstan.

Naturally, the process of writing history is itself highly contentious and often injected with a severe dose of propaganda and desired ideological content (Tchoroev 2002), consequently we have to keep in mind that many of the political events described and interpreted in historical sources and commenting on the past of the Kyrgyz might be highly inaccurate at best and simply false at worst. To illustrate, "[t]he Soviet school of historical science demonstrated an unfortunate propensity for the politicization, and sometimes even falsification, of history to please both communist ideologues and the Russians, the main nation in the former USSR" (Tchoroev 2002:351). With this caveat in mind, let's proceed cautiously into the dark hallways of the Kyrgyz history.

While the area that now constitutes Kyrgyzstan has been inhabited since the Paleolithic period and has been an amphitheatre of struggle between many societal groups, including the Scythian tribes and Turkic incomers, the references to the Kyrgyz people are few (Anderson 1999:1). According to some sources, the Kyrgyz began moving from the banks of the Upper Yenisei river in Siberia into lands they occupy now in the tenth century A.D. (Anderson 1999), while others claim that this happened earlier, in the ninth century A.D. (Abazov 2004:xx). Barthold mentions that the period from the middle of the ninth century through the first decades of the tenth century was the time of the first Kyrgyz statehood when

the Kyrgyz dominated large regions of southern Siberia, Altai, Mongolia and eastern Turkistan (Barthold in Tchoroev 2002:358).

In terms of early economy, the Kyrgyz were traditionally "engaged in a form of subsistence semi-pastoral nomadic animal husbandry, raising horses, sheep, goats, cattle, and yaks in the ecologically fragile mountain valleys of Tian-Shan and Pamiro-Altai" (Abazov 2004:11). This mode of subsistence provided the Kyrgyz with their unique economic niche *vis-à-vis* their neighbors: the Uzbek and Tajik settlers who controlled oases in the west, and the Kazakh tribes who maintained a tight grip on the grasslands in the north. The Kyrgyz also cultivated some crops (e.g., wheat, barley, and oats) and practiced hunting in the mountain forests (Abazov 2004:12).

Anderson reports that the Kyrgyz society has developed a distinct political-administrative structure, "based upon independent family and tribal associations, and rooted in the nomadic lifestyles of the people" (Anderson 1999:2). Every Kyrgyz was assumed to be able to trace his ancestors at least seven generations back. Each family was part of a broader clan group, which in turn, was a component in a wider tribal confederacy. Anderson notes a certain degree of flexibility in the selection of leaders shown by the fact that even though there have been numerous traditionally dominant families, communities had the right to seek leaders from other families, if there was a need for this (Anderson 1999:2).

Khazanov reports that in the seventeenth century the Kyrgyz tribes and large subdivisions of the tribe had hereditary leaders called *biis* (1994). According to the author, in the nineteenth century the Kyrgyz belonging to the Manap subdivision of the Sary Bagysh tribe (clan) occupied leading positions in their own tribe and in several other tribes. Khazanov notes that already at the beginning of the eighteenth century Kyrgyz *biis* "began to rule agricultural areas and towns," the factor which furthered social stratification already present within the Kyrgyz tribes (1994:176).

Geiss cites Krader who argued that the Kyrgyz clans have been exogamous, with a law prohibiting marriage between consanguineal relatives up to seven generations removed (2003:28). Discussing tribal units of the nineteenth century Kyrgyz, Geiss confirms Khazanov's evidence by stressing that clans have been headed by *manaps* or *biis* "whose decisions were binding on all tribal members" (42). The military discipline has been impressive considering that if a *manap* declared a war on somebody, "all men capable of military service had to take up arms immediately, either to defend themselves or to fall upon others" (42). Forty-two Kyrgyz clans belonged to three tribal confederacies: *Ong Kanat* ("right wing," based in northern and central Kyrgyzstan), *Sol Kanat* ("left wing," based in the northern part of the Fergana Valley and in the Talas district) and *Ichkilik* ("center," based in the western Altai mountains and in the eastern Pamir) (Geiss 2003:108; Gullette 2006:204).

Abramzon highlights the fact that the Kyrgyz clans practiced slavery, where slaves would be mostly prisoners captured during wars and also criminals whose families refused to bail them out. The slaves would work as bond servants in individual households and in animal husbandry. While the slaves would not constitute a part of clan, their offspring would be eligible for membership, albeit with reduced privileges (1990:171).

Even though the authors cited above would concur on the leading organizational role of kinship among the Kyrgyz, there is also one author who doubts such theoretical stance. Sneath maintains that the Kyrgyz society in reality was governed by the Kyrgyz nobility mobilizing "the statelike administrative prerogatives." To put it differently, the nobles exercised all the power in the society and the "commoners" bore the brunt of fiscal responsibilities:

> Commoners were subject to a series of taxes and levies, including a tax for the use of pasture (*otmai*), a levy for the *manap*'s table (*soyush*), a charge for driving a herd through the land of the *manap* (*tuyakat*), and a levy covering the expenses of a *manap* for hosting guests (*chygym*). (Sneath 2007:87)

22

Consequently, Sneath argues that instead of a kin-organized society, the Kyrgyz have been a feudal society with strong hierarchical structures.

Naturally, that the Kyrgyz clans – regardless their actual organizational underpinning – have been profoundly impacted by larger structural forces and entities. The Khanate of Kokand was an oasis-based state which has governed the Kyrgyz in the period of 1710-1876 (Soucek 2000:177). Due to permanent internal squabbles, the Khanate was easily absorbed by the Russian Empire which in the nineteenth century already swallowed the neighboring khanates of Bukhara and Khiva (Soucek 2000:193). This expansion opens a Russian page in the history of the Kyrgyz people.[3]

In terms of cultural politics, the first Governor-General of Turkestan (1867-1882) Kaufman has pursued a policy of non-interfering in customs and beliefs of local inhabitants. The policy allowed local Muslim schools to exist without any administrative control on the behalf of the Empire, but at the same time it commanded local authorities to establish numerous schools where *tuzemtsy*[4] would be taught the basics of mathematics and Russian language in order to "win them over" and Russify the indigenous populations (d'Encausse 1962:378-85). In terms of administration, there have emerged parallel power structures – Russian and local authorities. The Russian authorities have had the upper hand and implemented strategic decisions, leaving tactics and smaller decisions to local leaders (Anderson 1999:5).

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[3] Perhaps, it would be better to say that it opens "a page of direct colonization by the Russians," since the first contacts between Russians and the Kyrgyz date way back. Anderson writes: "Kyrgyz contacts with Russia date back to the beginning of the 17th [*sic*] century when Peter the Great's ambassador to the Jungar khanate, artillery captain Ivan Unkovsky, visited the region" (Anderson 1999). Further visits by adventurers, scholars, and travelers followed; explorers included I. G Andreev (1743-1801) (who wrote about the significance of tribal composition of the Kyrgyz), P.P.Semenov (1827-1914) (researcher of Kyrgyz geography, history and social order), and the first Kazakh ethnographer, Chokan Valikhanov (1835-1865). Also, in 1775 the Kyrgyz from the Chui valley (northernmost part of Kyrgyzstan) had sent their embassy to the royal court of Catherine the Great.

[4] "Aliens," from Russian.

23

Once the Bolsheviks came to power in October of 1917, they embarked on a project of totally restructuring the state since the communist "experiment" was based on the idea of the most radical reshaping of all aspects of life and even individuals themselves in what used to be the Russian Empire (Scott 1998). On the other hand, even though the Bolsheviks tried to be extremely modernist in their approaches, they have inherited the same developmentalist scale of cultural backwardness that was prevalent in the mind of imperial administrators: "[w]hereas Russia was at the top, the Muslim Central Asian borderlands were very near the bottom since their inhabitants lacked, and needed to be given, even such basic attributes of modernity as national and ethno-territorial identity." Subsequently, "[c]ultural revolution in the Soviet east was more extensive than it was in Russia involving the creation of nations, national languages, and national elites where none of these things had previously existed" (Aksartova 2005:49-50).

Two more significant challenges were faced by the Kyrgyz during the early Soviet years: the first one was the administrative reshuffling of their territory and the second one was the adoption of new alphabets. At first, Kyrgyzstan became a part of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within the Russian Federation (RSFSR) in April 1918. Then, this region became the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast (within Russia) and in 1924 the Oblast was transformed into the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous Region (again, within the Russian Federation). In 1927 the country has been renamed the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and finally, in 1936 the republic obtained a new name of "the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic" by being attached administratively to the USSR and becoming legalistically equal to other fourteen republics of the Soviet Union (Anderson 1999:9; Aksartova 2005:52-53).

The second transformation had to do with the radical changes in alphabets. In just two decades, the Kyrgyz have changed **three** alphabets. The first alphabet used was Arabic and its

spread in pre-revolutionary Kyrgyzstan was severely limited as mostly the representatives of higher social strata (e.g., Muslim clergymen) were literate (Chotaeva 2005:137). However, with the arrival of the Bolshevik revolution and the official policy of eradicating illiteracy, more and more books were printed in the new Arabic script and after some modifications, the script officially adopted in 1924.

However, only three years later, the pendulum has swung towards adopting Latin script as the basis of Kyrgyz written language. In 1927 Latin alphabet became the official alphabet of the Kyrgyz Autonomous Republic and since 1930 Arabic script was banned everywhere in the country. Some reasons for the change included Arabic script still being too cumbersome for extensive use; difficulties with publishing books in Arabic; and potential isolation of Soviet Muslims from nations using other scripts. The transition to Latin was meant to create a radical break between old Arabic-based literature and new literary languages of Central Asian republics as well as to facilitate tighter control over the publications in the region.

Nevertheless, the politicians have brewed new plans and the transition to the final, third script was introduced in January 1941. Now the language had to be put on totally new rails once again. The idea behind another change was to speed up the process of the acquisition of the Russian language by the Kyrgyz and to remove linguistic discrepancies caused by two different scripts (Latin and Cyrillic) functioning simultaneously (Chotaeva 2005:138-40).[5]

The most radical changes in the country, ultimately leading to the fall of the regime, began in March 1989 with the elections for the USSR Congress of People's Deputies. New

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5 Abazov adds:

> Despite government support in the early 1990s to convert the alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin script, as in Turkmenistan or neighboring Uzbekistan, there are no indications that it will happen in the near future. Currently there are 36 letters in the Kyrgyz alphabet, 33 Russian plus three additional Cyrillic-based characters used for characteristic Turkic sounds not found in Russian (2004:x).

parliament structure of Kyrgyzstan was subsequently approved and in the elections of 1990 about twenty percent of non-party deputies were elected. Following the instability and riots in the Fergana valley in the summer 1990, the deputies demanded establishment of the presidential rule in the country. Surprisingly, the deputies have not approved Masaliev's candidature for the presidency[6], but opted instead for Askar Akaev, then the president of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences (Gleason 1997:60).[7]

Kyrgyzstan proclaimed its independence on 31 August 1991 and initially president has garnered numerous accolades for facilitating the blossom of political parties, total privatization of the economy and of real estate (Roy 2000:130-6). This is when such terms as "an island of democracy" and "the Switzerland of Central Asia" have begun to be applied to the Kyrgyz Republic. In fact, the image of a democratic country where diverse freedoms are practiced, parties are fairly active, and economic restructuring is underway have become a conscious strategy of the president and the "shopping window" of the country, a circumstance which have helped to attract very significant economic and political benefits from international organizations and unilateral donors (Aksartova 2005; Dukenbaev and Hansen 2003:28).

Yet, by the middle of the decade, it appeared that the changes have been in many aspects reversed and the situation began to deteriorate. Some analysts attribute such unfortunate reversal to a multitude of factors, including unstable neighboring polities of

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[6] Absamat Masaliev ruled the Kyrgyz SSR since November 1985.

[7] According to Gleason:

> Given that the political machine was dominated by party officials, the choice of Akaev as the first president of Kyrgyzstan was indeed exceptional. Akaev was born in 1944 in the village of Kyzyl-Bairak. He graduated from Leningrad Institute of Mechanics and Optics and worked in Leningrad before returning to the capital of Bishkek (then named Frunze to honor the Red Army military commander who captured the town). Akaev entered party work very late, becoming a member only in 1981. He was elected vice president of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences in 1987 and, two years later, became its president (1997:61).

Tajikistan and Afghanistan; conservative forces regaining strength within the country; and inconsistent stance of Western countries regarding democracy in Central Asia (Dukenbaev and Hansen 2003:28-9).

Following general political, social, and economic decline in Kyrgyzstan, the president and his policies have become increasingly attacked by the opposition and despised by people. This discontent resulted in a "Tulip Revolution," when on March 24 2005 the people stormed the main governmental building in the capital and forced Akaev to resign from his position. Kurmanbek Bakiev, former Prime Minister during the late period of the Akaev's administration, has become the new President. However, his fate was similarly sealed by the kiss of death coming from enormous privileges and powers concentrated in the presidential office. Consequently, another wave of popular discontent forced him to flee Bishkek and the country in April 2010.

As follows from this chapter, the Kyrgyz history is both turbulent and tentative. Beginning from the Middle Ages and up until now various societal forces have shaped the Kyrgyz society. Arrival of the Russian Empire, drastic changes brought about by the Soviet government, and the post-socialist metamorphoses all played a huge role in transforming the Kyrgyz identity and their lived reality. The Kyrgyz history appears tentative as well, since there is a certain dearth of accurate records reflective of the nature of the pre-modern Kyrgyz clans. What does follow from the historical sources is that the Kyrgyz clans have been fairly durable social units and that they have constituted a very important locus of identity. However, to believe that this locus still generates modes of action in the contemporary Kyrgyz Republic is to dangerously misunderstand the sheer scale of transformations it has undergone.

27

We will come back to the issue of the Kyrgyz history and how it is interpreted in the present, but let's proceed first by looking at the current-day linguistic connotations of the term "clan" as it will shed some light on what people in Kyrgyzstan mean when they use this word.

## Chapter IV. Clans: Linguistic Dimension

One of the prominent researchers of the modern Kyrgyzstani society, David Gullette has argued that the prevalent discourses on "clans" in the Kyrgyz Republic do not represent actual divisions between kinship groups, but instead are people's language to express dissatisfaction with elite factions wielding power through different forms of favoritism (2006:199). This stance provides an excellent entry point into the linguistic dimension of the "clan" concept.

In this section, I zero in on several dictionary definitions which deal with the "clan" concept. The definitions given here do not address the historical aspects of this term (summarized in the next section) nor do they engage the anthropological readings of the term (elaborated upon later in the paper). Instead, this section refers to definitions which have entered popular usage.

To provide an example, "clan" is "a group of people, as a clique, set, society, or party, esp. as united by some common trait, characteristic, or interest: *a clan of actors and directors*" ("Clan" 1996:379). "Clan" can also be "[a] group of people having shared attributes; a party, a coterie, a set. Usu. *derog.*" ("Clan" 1993c:410) where the last part of the definition highlights the fact that the term is generally used in a derogatory sense. Finally, a "clan" stands for "[a] large group of relatives, friends or associates" ("Clan" 2000b:341). Judging from the three definitions provided, a "clan" simply refers to any group of people (whether they are colleagues, friends, associates, or relatives) which are united by a common goal. One definition says that the term is usually a negative one, but it does not offer any examples of its possible derogatory connotations.

However, if we are to look at the mass media of Kyrgyzstan, the "clan" will appear often – and always with a negative connotation. On April 7, 2010 when the crowds of people have forced Kurmanbek Bakiev, the Kyrgyzstani President into exile, an opposition person talking with a journalist on the national television channel named the main reason for Bakiev's downfall: *semejnaya klanstvennost'* ("family clannism"), and argued that the real government should work instead like *komanda* ("a team"). The Russian analyst Leonid Gusev argued that Bakiev gave away state property to his sons and thus favored "his" southern "clan," which led northern "clans" to rebel (2010:8). Edil' Baisalov, Head of the Administration of the Chairperson of the Provisional Government of Kyrgyzstan when asked about who is interested in stirring up nationalistic feelings in the country, replied that it is the Bakiev's "clan" which pumps in "millions" in order to destabilize the situation in the country and overthrow the Provisional Government (2010:5). In his turn, Alymbek Biyalinov tries to summarize the main reason behind the last two revolutions in the Kyrgyz Republic (March 2005 and April 2010) and sees it in "family-clan regimes" (2010:13). Finally, the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has also contributed to the "clan" discourse by naming "clannism" as one of the causes of the recent revolution (2010).

It appears that the term "clan" is used fairly often in the public discourse. Moreover, the negative connotations are always attached to the term. Yet, the term itself suggests to be just a label mostly directed by people in power and analysts in order to explain the causes of the recent change of government and, principally, to implicate Bakiev's family in the mismanagement of the country. Consequently, this "label" has no content, no conceptual or empirical foundation. People use it as a shortcut to explain why former president was wrong, but if somebody begins to really think what this term entails, she might be confused. Hence, Gullette is right in saying that the discourse about "clans" is ultimately the linguistic vehicle

29

through which people express their profound unhappiness with factions which rule or ruled the country.

Yet, there is more to the term than meets the eye. It appears that since the term "clan" became so laden with negative connotations, it transforms itself not just into a label, but into a "frame." The prominent cognitive scientist George Lakoff defines "frames" as "mental structures that shape the way we see the world" (2004:xv). Essentially, the frames are the long-term concepts that have become ingrained in people's minds and can be triggered by relevant words (Lakoff 2002:419). In his works, the scientist argues that the Republican party of the United States has been often able to win over electorate by using "framing," that is appealing to citizens' worldviews ("frames" or "conceptual metaphors") through a set of messages which work together with the "frames" and thus convince the voters to support the party.

While much more research is needed to fully investigate this topic, it appears that politicians, analysts, and journalists in Kyrgyzstan use the term "clan" as the "right" word to automatically trigger in people's minds a conceptual metaphor of a corrupt, nepotistic, exclusivist, elite, and exploitative group of people. Naturally, this does not mean that the people do not talk about their genealogical linkages at all. They do, but they use the term *rod*, which is a Russian word that is usually translated as "clan." Consequently, the Kyrgyz would much prefer to use this term or the similar Kyrgyz word *uruk*, rather than the negatively-charged notion of *klan*, "clan" (Gullette 2006:3).

In his book, Lakoff specifically insists on the fact that certain interest groups can purposefully use the "right" words and through "framing" to sway people's opinion to their side. Thus, it can be hypothesized that when politicians use the "clan" "frame" in Kyrgyzstan they might deploy it strategically as a linguistic weapon against their opponents. While the present paper does not concern itself with the detailed linguistic analysis of the term and its

implications, it is already evident from the present discussion that the word "clan" serves as a sign of blame and a marker of malfeasance. Consequently, to take this term at face-value and designate it as a tool for political analysis means to lead oneself astray and eventually get lost in the thick woods of normative judgments.

# Chapter V. Clans: Historical Dimension

*"'So, Miss Summerson,'she would say to me with stately triumph, 'this, you see, is the fortune inherited by my son. Wherever my son goes, he can claim kindred with Ap Kerrig[8]. He may not have money, but he always has what is much better – family, my dear'"(Dickens 2001:353)*

After the analysis of the present-day linguistic connotations of the term "clan," it proves prudent to investigate the historical origins of clans, namely, what originally was referred to as "clan," how it was structured and how it operated. Furthermore, the following discussion bears significant pertinence to the anthropological discourses of the nineteenth century which have hammered out theories of order in ancient societies and ultimately paved the way for theoretical models political scientists employ now.

## *Irish clans and what they tell us about Kyrgyz clans*

One of the most prominent symbols of Scotland and Ireland has been and still remains their ancient kinship formation – the clan. "New Encyclopedic Dictionary" gives an impressively exhaustive treatment of this historical phenomenon, focusing on Irish clans. Particularly, it notes that Irish clans have consisted of two "classes" where "first class" primarily (although not exclusively) consisted of people united through blood (patrilineal descent) and "second class" consisted of a much more diverse group of people, such as

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[8] "Morgan ap-Kerrig," a fictional Scottish clan made up by Charles Dickens. The broader quote cleverly conveys a sense of a disintegrating ancient clan in the nineteenth century Britain.

31

"slaves, criminals, foreigners and their offspring" ("Clan" 1914:798). The dictionary also outlines the hierarchy between clans, smaller settlements and families or separate households.

At the beginning, land property was communal, but later parts of land became private property *de facto* and thus facilitated development of local aristocracy where the head of family – *aire* – obtained a title of *flaith* (lord) and was the chief organizer of building fortresses, gathering harvest, overseeing road conditions and eradicating wolves. Each head of a clan or a local community was elected among the *geilfine* (relatives of the previous head) where the eldest and "the most able" relative (usually one of the elder brothers or sons of the previous head) was elected. Regardless of the actual number of suitable relatives, *geilfine* status was typically bestowed upon four family members, hence, other relatives had to choose one leader among four candidatures ("Clan" 1914:798-800).

At this stage, one might wonder: what does this discussion have to do with the Kyrgyz and their clans? The answer is four-fold. First, in order to be able to understand current debates about whether clans still exist in Central Asia, it is imperative to have a clear understanding of an "ideal-typical" clan – that is, the Scottish and Irish clan.

Second, the present inquiry into the history of clans in Scotland and Ireland clearly demonstrates that these clans have *always* included extremely different categories of people. "Second class" in Irish clans, if we recall, consisted of slaves, foreigners and criminals. However, even the allegedly "purest" "first class" (meaning, primarily composed of people united through patrilineal descent) included people who have been cared for by the clan, as well as people who have rendered service to the families, and the offspring from the "second class" ("Clan" 1914:798). Thus, political scientists' unceasing insistence on kinship ties as the mainstay of clans and, hence, their radical difference from other types of social networks turns out to be more of a myth, than a fact. The archetypical clans of Ireland and Scotland engraved on the pages of history and projected on the various media of popular culture have

32

always drawn their strength from a multitude of connections, be they blood-related or otherwise.

Third, as transpires from the brief analysis above, the economic basis for Irish clans was grounded in working the land, not in nomadic pastoral practices as is generally the case with the Kyrgyz. This, of course, opens a way of questioning claims stressing clans as being monolithic and uniform social units across history and geography. In fact, such political scientists as Collins and Starr tend to produce generalizations saying that all "clans" in Central Asia are similar. Clearly, had the "clans" still existed in Central Asian countries, they would have varied profoundly one country from another. However, my criticism goes further. Even just one country's kinship units cannot be forced to fit into the procrustean bed of arbitrary terminology. If we turn to the history of the Kyrgyz, we will quickly recall that the Kyrgyz clans have varied significantly. While clans in the north have been dominantly nomadic, the clans in the south have been deeply influenced by settled Uzbeks and Tajiks and subsequently adopted a mixture of economic practices – animal husbandry and tending the land. Consequently, even in the earlier times the Kyrgyz clans have differed a lot and thus there are no reasons for social scientists to maintain that today's hypothetical "clans" in Central Asia are uniformly constituted, structured, and enacted.

If the "original" clans have been diverse even within the same country, how can we generalize and use this term injudiciously to refer to a variety of present-day practices, institutions, and agents?

The previous rhetorical question brings me to the final point. Clans, whether they operated in Scotland or Central Asia have *always* responded to other societal phenomena. To put in another way, clans have never acted in isolation, but always against a background of a multitude of external factors. In the case of Irish clans, British colonial government expropriated all lands belonging to the clans and in 1605 officially announced the end of

"clan system" ("Clan" 1973:263). In the case of Scottish clans, their rebellion of 1745 caused much ire of the British parliament which decreed to eliminate hereditary privileges of clan chieftains and to disarm all clan members ("Clan" 1914:800). Clearly, the British laws did not immediately terminate clan ties, but what they did was to strike a series of blows which eventually led to the breaking-up of clans.

Kyrgyz clans had perhaps even more tumultuous history. Having established basic diplomatic ties with the Imperial Russian government back in the eighteenth century, they were absorbed by the empire in the mid-nineteenth century. The accession has been followed up by educational reforms, Christian missionary work, and forced sedentarization. The October Revolution of 1917 brought even more colossal changes: new alphabets, drastic immigration of mostly Slavic settlers, and the years of repressions. Once the Soviet Union was no more, another cascade of dramatic forces descended upon Kyrgyzstan: globalization, expansion of capital, restructuring of the economy and government, and the biggest inflow of foreign aid per capita as compared with other post-Soviet countries (Aksartova 2005).

Keeping all these momentous transformations in mind, I argue here that the radical historical metamorphoses of the last two centuries have disintegrated the traditional locus of clan identity which consisted of a unity of family, economic, and political arrangements. The onslaught of the modernization paradigm of the Soviet regime and the arrival of global capitalist forces of the post-Soviet regime unraveled the unity of the clan identity and replaced it with a variety of contesting ties and belongings.

## *History in the present*

Does the history of the tribal Kyrgyz past remain buried in school textbooks or, instead, it in any way spills over to broader audiences? It appears that the history still plays an important role in shaping the discursive reality of Kyrgyzstan. Manabaev in his insightful

article discusses how a certain politician proposes a radical answer to the host of problems facing Kyrgyzstan which include general disorder, prostitution and widespread drug addiction. The answer, according to the politician, lies in the renaissance of *uruuchuluck* (the traditional tribal division of the Kyrgyz clans). *Uruuchuluck* is supposed to be the new idea simultaneously uniting Kyrgyz and presenting a panacea against the social ills (Manabaev 2010:16). Moreover, there already was a congress at the end of March where allegedly "official representatives" of 27 out of approximately 40 original Kyrgyz clans convened and drafted a declaration of common interest. The author of the article is extremely skeptical of this endeavor however. For one thing, he argues that this congress was convened in a clandestine manner as the so-called "representatives" have not been officially entrusted by their clansmen to speak on their behalf. Furthermore, Manabaev maintains that the call to reinvigorate *uruuchuluck* is but a new "fad" on the "market of ideologies." The new ideology of "*rodoplemennoj* neotraibalizm" ("kin-tribal neotribalism") was created for one single purpose: to forge additional levers by which the balance of power in the state can be tilted towards advocates of the new ideology. Ultimately, Manabaev insists, new ideology can only be an ideology and never - a newly recreated societal blueprint. The author stresses that the traditional tribal structure represented an all-encompassing, total institution which regulated all facets of human activity, from work to family relations to spending leisure time. The old tribal relations are gone forever and the new ideology can pretend to be one of many identity markers, but never the main one.

Undeniably, the Kyrgyz know many of their traditions and often choose to practice them, but traditions having lost their original context become significantly altered. Ryslay Isakov (one of the few remaining *manaschi* – traditional Kyrgyz bards) complained in his interview to a news program that he and his colleagues would be invited to weddings and other celebrations, but they were like "jesters," nobody would really listen to them and even

35

adults didn't know how to listen to "Manas" (legendary Kyrgyz epic poem). Thus, Isakov was very unhappy about how the epic was generally received, but then he highlighted the fact that he couldn't do much about it and had to perform it time and again, since he needed to get paid. This short vignette exemplifies well the tension between traditions and modernity in present-day Kyrgyzstan. The traditions have not disappeared, but the way how they're practiced represents a radical break from the past. I argue that this happens with the local genealogical knowledge too: people typically know their clan affiliations, but these affiliations stand for symbolic pathways to the past, not for sequences of action guiding the present and unlocking the future. In other words, the Kyrgyz are aware of their ancestors' membership in certain clans, but in the everyday interactions the modern Kyrgyz rely on support from their extended families, classmates, and friends, and not on hypothetical assistance from "imagined communities" of clanship (Anderson 1991).

### Kinship, history and two theories of order

History also plays an important role in establishing theoretical foundations on which decades and even centuries later social scientists base their conceptual systems. Some of the foundations could be quite sound, while others not.

When the scholars attempt to equal kinship to establishing order and maintaining power in any given society (anchoring their discussions in historical antecedents), they inevitably pay intellectual homage to the work of Lewis H. Morgan and his book "Ancient Society" (1877). He has once remarked: "[t]he first and most ancient [a form of government] was a *social organization*, founded upon gentes, phratries and tribes" (Morgan 1877:61, original emphasis). After having completed a vertigo-inducing survey of Native American tribes, ancient Greek, Roman, Scottish, Irish societies and African tribes among others, Morgan concluded that the overall basis of "ancient societies" was rooted in kinship. The problem with this line of reasoning was that Morgan tied his findings to a much wider argument,

namely the absolute hierarchy of societies where each and every society progressed from the stage of savagery to barbarism to civilization. From this perspective, kinship was the marker, the sign and the defining feature of the most primitive societies (Kuper 1988:6). Consequently, Morganian stance on kinship as the mode of social organization was essentially a *normative* statement, as it has created a basis for judging certain societies "savage," "barbaric," "backward," and ultimately, inferior to contemporary to him American and European societies. What this means is that for modern scholars to insist on kinship as the ruling principle of the present-day countries in Central Asia is in a way to affirm evolutionist schemas of the nineteenth century.

In order to give justice to political scientists doing research on Central Asia, it proves fair to conclude this section by referring to one more conceptual system. When Starr refers to "dual politics," he refers to a major distinction between formal, institutionalized politics and informal, hidden, but nevertheless active politics centered on powerful figures. The distinction can be represented in the shape of a theoretical dichotomy of "legal authority" vs. "traditional authority" (particularly "patrimonialism"). This dichotomy was famously elaborated by Max Weber and is much less contentious than the "kinship-as-the-basis-of-primitive-societies" framework. "Legal authority" refers to a mode of administration where everyone abides by the same norms, where everyone is held accountable to impersonal order, rather than to an individual, and where ownership of means of production or administration is separated from the members of the administrative staff (Weber 1964:329-31).

On the contrary, "traditional authority" refers to a mode of administration where there is usually one person in charge who holds a disproportionate amount of power and who makes decisions based on traditions passed down from previous generations as well as based on his personal preferences. Relations of personal loyalty connect other people exercising authority in the group to the leader of the group (Weber 1964:341).

It seems that this theory provides an overarching framework guiding political scientists in their quest for finding power-exercising political actors of Central Asia. The concept of "traditional authority" appears to be a good choice if one is to investigate the impact of informal politics on formal institutions and societies in general. Furthermore, Weber was prudent in his analysis of the organizational basis of "traditional authority" institutions: he maintained that such institutions are underpinned by both economic and kinship principles (1964:346).

Yet, this theory has to be modified: while Max Weber maintained a strict analytical separation between "legal authority" (i.e., formal political institutions) and "traditional authority" (i.e., informal political actors), the current research on politics in Central Asia lucidly demonstrates that this division is far from clear-cut. I will come back later in this paper to a conceptual alternative that to my mind is much more capable of investigating informal politics than the concept of "clans." First, however, let's turn to the anthropological dimension of the notion of "clan."

## Chapter VI. Clans: Anthropological Dimension

The anthropological analysis of the concept of clan completes the triad of linguistic, historical, and anthropological ways of understanding this notion. In order to provide an introduction to our present discussion and also by way of illuminating some of the key properties traditionally associated with clans, I will use a quote-commentary by Nanu Semenov, an ethnographer who conducted fieldwork among the Chechens in the nineteenth century. Even though the quotation is somewhat lengthy, it supplies a vivid illustration of what a clan might look like. Semenov says:

> In order to explain a familial instinct, I will talk about what is a family in a tribe [Chechens] which we are dealing with here. Family or kin union [*rodovoj sojuz*] represents an order where each member (without any oaths or contracts) devoutly serves the interests of the whole, and is absolutely ready to sacrifice all his needs and personal

interests. A Chechen without a family considers himself complete failure [*nichtozhestvo*]; a Chechen with a family, when outside of his family, feels weak and helpless; but the same Chechen while inside the family, sees himself to be in a fortress, protected by a numerous and unanimous garrison. Awareness of such strength makes him cocky, proud, headstrong, and insolent as almost to be impudent….All members of the same family are for one and each is for all, own family members are always right and people from other families are always guilty; nothing is criminal to use against the outsiders and if a deed against an outsider is useful and beneficial to the family, then it is always praised. A member of the same family, no matter where he is and which personal characteristics he has, is always a brother and always has the right to ask for assistance and for sacrifices (in Zhirnov 2009:57-8).

The preceding quote presents a flamboyant image of a Chechen clan as it was two centuries ago. It also captures certain key aspects of clans to which we shall return shortly. Before we proceed, it is imperative to look at how anthropology usually defined a "clan," in other words we should erect here theoretical pillars which would support the edifice of the description so eloquently provided to us by Nanu Semenov.

## *Anthropology of clan*

According to Britannica, a clan is a "kinship group of fundamental importance in the structure of many societies" where "membership of a clan is socially defined in terms of actual or purported descent from a common ancestor." Furthermore,

> This descent is unilineal – *i.e.*, derived only through the male (patriclan) or the female (matriclan). Normally, but not always, the clans are exogamous, marriage within the clan being forbidden and regarded as incest. Clans may segment into subclans or lineages, and genealogical records or myths may be altered to incorporate new members who have no demonstrable kinship ties with the clan. ("Clan" 1993a:343)

Another dictionary informs that a clan represents "a division of a tribe tracing descent from a common ancestor" ("Clan" 2000b:341). While "the term is rather a general one, and can refer to groups organized around different forms of lineage," it is known that "[i]n some societies, the ancestor from whom members claim descent may be a mythical figure or, as in forms of totemism, an animal or other non-human figure." Finally, "[m]embers of a clan have obligations towards each other, and their marriages are usually exogamous: that is, members must marry outside the clan" ("Clan" 1992:52).

39

According to dictionaries, groups of people known as clans demonstrate formidable loyalty to each other and to the entire family: "[a]lthough they may live far apart, members of a clan feel a close relationship to each other and usually have a strong spirit of unity" which is manifested through sharing property or special privileges. Once again, "[m]ost clans are *exogamous*" (original emphasis) where clansmen are obliged to marry outside of their kin group (Keith 1990:637-8). Delving further into kinship terminologies and hierarchies, we find that:

> A clan is distinguished from a lineage in that a clan merely claims common ancestry; a lineage can be traced to a common progenitor. A clan may have several lineages. Several clans may be combined into a larger social group called a phratry. If a tribe includes two clans or phratries, each clan or phratry is called a moiety ("Clan" 1993b:568).

Another definition of the concept is presented succinctly by Roger Keesing who states that a clan is "a unilineal descent group or category whose members trace patrilineal descent (patriclan) or matrilineal descent (matriclan) from an apical ancestor/ancestress, but who do not know the genealogical links that connect them to this apical ancestor" (Keesing 1975:148). This definition points out two core features of a clan, namely tracing back descent to the founding ancestor or ancestress and also absence of a clearly established genealogical linkage connecting all contemporaries to the long-gone ancestor/ancestress. Clans studied by anthropologists also display certain other features. For example, they function as "corporate groups with respect to land tenure, war, ceremonial exchange and exogamy" (Holy 1996:90). Consequently, a clan stands for "a social group whose members act as a legal individual in terms of collective rights to property, a common group name, collective responsibility, and so on" (Keesing 1975:148).

40

### *Properties of clans*

What are, then, the main characteristics of a clan? For the purpose of the present study, I will provide here four major clan characteristics. First, clan members usually trace their descent to a founding ancestor or ancestress who often had legendary or mythical qualities. It is important to keep in mind, that such descent (whether it is counted through the male – patrilineal – line or through the female – matrilineal – line) is assumed by clan members, but they can't trace their genealogical ties all the way back to their ancestor. Second, clan members usually exercise exogamy, that is, they must marry outside of the kin group. Third, clansmen have reciprocal obligations towards each other, the emphasis is placed on exchange and mutual assistance in the times of crises. Finally, a clan is a "corporate group" meaning it is a very tight-knit, typically egalitarian organization whose members choose to protect each other at all costs. It is important to point out that clans are constituted through a variety of ties, including clan members by blood, people who are adopted into a clan and people who join a clan for other reasons (e.g., for combining resources or for considerations of protection).

Naturally, it is imperative here to consider several other definitions of "corporate groups" which would shed light on how clans typically function. A "corporate group" is "[a] social relationship which is either closed or limits the admission of outsiders by rules,…so far as its order is enforced by the action of specific individuals whose regular function this is, of a chief or 'head' (*Leiter*) and usually also an administrative staff" (Weber 1964:145-6, original style preserved). Duran Bell reports:

> A corporate group is a set of individuals who have socially recognized claims – *rights* – to consume or use a specific resource of set of resources. By implication the resource(s) in question must be scarce, so that the rightful claim of an individual must be limited to a *share* of that resource. And the set of rights is viable so long as the demand for the set of rightful shares does not overwhelm the available supply. A corporate group, therefore, is a domain of sharing in relation to some set of scarce resources (1998:188).

41

Furthermore, Bell observes that in "traditional" societies such characteristics as age, sex and parentage become markers defining how much of a resource one is entitled to. What's crucial here is the fact that such shares "are determined by their socially ascribed characteristics and cannot be transferred among individuals. This inalienability separates these shares fundamentally from those held by stockholders of the modern corporation" (Bell 1998:188-90).

How does this aspect of clans get reflected in current writings about Central Asia? Here, I will pick two of the most convincing authors who have argued impressively about still existant "clans" in the region and juxtapose them alongside anthropological interpretations of the notion in order to see if there is a clear correlation between them.

Both Schatz and Collins have maintained that "clans" still exist in Central Asia: Collins proposed an all-encompassing definition of "clans" as active participants – movers and shapers – of politics in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, while Schatz decided to focus exclusively on "clans" in Kazakhstan.

According to Collins, "[c]lan politics creates an informal regime, an arrangement of power and rules in which clans are the dominant social actors and political players; they transform the political system" where it is the clan networks (instead of formal institutions and elected officials) that determine the political course of the country and wield authoritarian power (2006:3). In Schatz's words, kinship ties in Central Asia "are a silent reality that pervades everyday life" (2004:xv).

What are the definitions of "clans" demonstrated by Collins and Schatz? Schatz narrates:

> I understand clans in the narrow sense of kinship-based social units. They are kinship-based, since members understand themselves to be linked together through demonstrable genealogical ties. Most clan members demonstrate their blood ties, even if kinship is often fictive and many members, if pressed, would be unable to produce the entire corpus of obligatory genealogical knowledge. Nonetheless, members assume that

42

kinship might be demonstrated, if need be. … Typically, clans are subethnic; they represent segments of a larger, identifiable cultural community. Also distinguishing them from ethnic groups is that they are not usually established through visible markers of identity and difference. With kinship, the exchange and transmission of genealogical information establishes blood connections; with ethnicity, visible markers distinguish the members of the in-group from that of the out-group. (2005:233-4)

Furthermore, the author states that "clan divisions are those that exist within an ethnic group and in which demonstrable common kinship is understood to underlie membership." In order to understand clans, it is important to know segmentary lineage theory:

In segmentary societies, groups divide into smaller units and coalesce into larger ones, depending on the vagaries of climate and external military threat. Fissure and fusion occur along genealogical lines, with the smallest referent groups based most clearly upon common descent and larger ones based on assumptions of common descent. The members of such societies understand kinship as definitive, even if lineages can be fictitious. (Schatz 2004:26)

Collins asserts that:

Clan members share an organizational identity and network. Norms of loyalty, inclusion of members, and exclusion of outsiders continually reinforce the kin-based identity. Norms demand reciprocity of exchange. This includes support for clan elites by nonelites. Repetition of these norms over time leads to their embedding stronger ties within the clan and demarcating harder boundaries between those within the network and those without. The clan is the basis of a strong, but narrow and exclusivist social organization. (2004:232)

The author further bolsters her argument by pointing out that:

Clans are informal social organizations in which kinship or "fictive" kinship is the core, unifying bond among group members. Clans are identity networks consisting of an extensive web of horizontal and vertical kin-based relations. Clans are rooted in a culture of kin-based norms and trust but also serve rational purposes. As a transaction cost analysis suggests, informal ties and networks reduce the high transaction costs of making deals in a low or weakly institutionalized and highly uncertain environment (Collins 2003:173-4).

Collins augments her conceptual efforts through the extensive use of interview data which constituted the empirical part of her research. While discussing Kyrgyzstan, she first argues that during the first years after gaining independence, the country exhibited some of the main characteristics attributed to a democracy, namely free and fair elections, autonomous mass media and freedom of speech, and civilian control over the military among others

43

(Collins 2006:176).[9] Yet, very soon "clan politics" began to subvert the reforms and undermine democratic foundations of the state. Clans became conductors of corruption and patronage relations permeated the societal fabric at all levers as state power has drastically diminished. Furthermore, mafias based on clans have also emerged (255). State assets were dismantled and often sold at extremely low prices.

While interviewing in Kyrgyzstan, Collins proves existence of Kyrgyz clans empirically in the following way:

> Respondents frequently answered about neighboring villages, "We marry each other. We are all related." When distinguishing themselves from others, at the national level or in the capital city, Kyrgyz often simply say, "I am from Talas" or "I'm from Osh." Within their own region, however, they specifically refer to their village and clan or tribal lineage. One respondent said, "I'm from Chui, but I'm not Sarybagysh, like the president. I'm Solto." Kyrgyz respondents typically take pride in their tribal and clan ancestry, which they relate to their nomadic way of life. Although the Russian colloquialism "*klan,*" with its implication of corruption, has increasingly replaced the use of the more traditional Russian word for clan (*rod*), Kyrgyz respondents in the villages do not dismiss clan as corruption. Most exhibit pride in their clan and tribal lineages. (2006:216).

At the end, the author reports that "[c]lan and tribal ties were typically strongly and positively associated with the Kyrgyz nationality" (216). Collins aims to point out dialectics inherent in "clans". On the micro-level "clans" became social safety nets which prevented total breakdown of the society, however, on the state level "clans" engaged in pillaging country's economic resources (Collins 2003:186; 2006:224).

Finally,

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[9] Collins makes use of Huntington's notion of "electoral democracy" whose properties include:

1) free and fair elections (presidential, parliamentary, and local); 2) a democratic constitution with a separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; 3) full and equal citizenship; 4) autonomous political parties; 5) autonomous civil society and media; 6) economic liberalization; and 7) civilian control of the military (2006:176).

At the aggregate level, clan interests and preferences are self-maximizing; they seek economic gains for the clan. Clan elites must nonetheless attract sufficient resources from the external environment so as to maintain their own status as notables/leaders and to preserve the internal hierarchy of the network. They must provide the goods necessary to sustain at least a minimum level of subsistence. Beyond that, they seek power in order to ensure their access to resources, vis-à-vis other clans. (2006:35)

Where does all this theoretical elaboration leave us? At first, let's see how definitions of clans proposed by Schatz and Collins fit our earlier anthropological definitions. First, it seems that the authors do pay homage to the notion that clansmen are supposed to know the founding ancestor of ancestress of their clan, albeit they usually can't trace exact genealogical linkages. However, Schatz and Collins avoid such terms as "patrilineal" or "matrilineal" in their analysis and gloss over the notion of "descent" which is quite fundamental to the idea of clans.[10] The authors are also silent about whether the clans they allegedly observed in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan practice exogamy, which in many societies serves as one of the key markers of a clan. The third clan characteristic is the presence of relations of mutual assistance and help among clan members. Both Schatz and Collins seem to take this notion seriously in their discussions and they do highlight its importance (e.g., a safety net or the notion of endogenous "clan balancing"). Both authors also appear to put special emphasis on the analysis of "clan elites": the ways they capture, organize, and distribute power. Such "clan elites" might appear to be a type of "corporate group" (the fourth characteristic of a clan).

However, by focusing too much on elites, the political scientists forget that corporate groups assume more or less egalitarian distribution of both power and resources in a clan. That is, major decisions are usually made collegially and *all* members of the clan have access to certain resources. Clearly, as Bell pointed out, often access to resources is dependent on

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[10] In fact, in the note 21, Collins says the following: "[r]ather than make complex but not analytically useful distinctions among tribe, clan, quasi-clan, lineage, and family, I adopt the term "clan," acknowledging its semifictive nature" (2003:189). Unfortunately, neither in her article in 2004, nor in her book in 2006 does she make any attempt to disentangle the kinship notions cited above.

socially ascribed characteristics, e.g. parentage, sex or age. Yet, a certain person *always* has access to a set of resources depending on her status within a clan and these resources are generally *unalienable*.

However, judging by Schatz's and Collins's analyses, quite different vistas emerge. During the 1990s-2000s, the clan elites stripped various state assets and appropriated them the way they wished. Traditionally, in clans the resources trickle down to every member of a group. In Collins's estimate, Kyrgyz "clans" have about 1,000 to 3,000 members (2006:216)[11] meaning that if, let's say there are five "clans" in power, then the benefits from the captured pieces of former state property should potentially trickle down to at least 5,000 people. However, from the analyses offered by Collins it is in no way apparent that so many people actually benefited from valuable ex-state assets.

### *"The Bakiev clan"*

Make no mistake: the Kyrgyz do in fact talk about clans. Former Kyrgyzstani president Askar Akaev, for example, named one of the main reasons of recent revolution in Kyrgyzstan the "seizure of power by a family clan" (2010:6). Another author fully agrees with him by citing A. Beknazarov (a current member of the provisional Kyrgyzstani government) who said that "the Bakiev clan" is guilty of "plundering the country" (Kadyrbekov 2010:8). The current deputy chairperson of the provisional government, Omurbek Tekebaev (in charge of the constitutional reform) has emphasized that that the old Constitutional Court of the Kyrgyz Republic is to blame for "seizure of power and family-inherited rule of the country by the Bakiev clan" (in Dyshebaev 2010:6).

While conducting a focus group study with ten high school students in one of the elite schools of Bishkek, I asked them if they think that the kinship divisions that were present in

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[11] Earlier in the book, the range given for the entire region is much wider: "[c]entral Asian journalists estimate that Central Asian clans range from 2,000 to 20,000 individuals" (Collins 2006:18).

the Kyrgyz society in the nineteenth century still play a role in Kyrgyzstan today. Unequivocally, the students answered "Yes, they do." However, when I began to press them to elicit any properties or "signs" of the existence of such "clans," one girl was forced to say that "clans" are probably only relevant in the political sphere of life in Kyrgyzstan. None of the respondents were able to give me any convincing proof of the fact that "clans" still persist in Kyrgyzstani society.

It becomes apparent that discussions about "clans" have a very superficial character in the context of current-day Kyrgyzstan. Various authors (journalists, politicians, and analysts) like to call the Bakiev's family a "clan." However, they neither substantiate this notion historically (e.g., through showing how Bakiev and his relatives epitomize traditional Kyrgyz clans) nor conceptually (e.g., through breaking down the idea of a clan and looking at its properties).

In order to clear up the murky waters of what's called "the Bakiev clan," I have drawn a basic diagram included in Appendix A. This diagram uses data compiled from multiple newspaper articles and presents a snapshot of former president Bakiev's relatives who occupied important positions in power or business. The diagram depicts the connections and positions as of the end of March 2010. The uprising of April 7, 2010 has forced Kurmanbek Bakiev, his brothers and sons to quit their positions and flee the country.

By looking at the diagram, it would appear that some of Kurmanbek Bakiev's brothers enjoyed prestigious positions, but what follows even more from the picture is that his youngest son – Maksim – has reaped enormous fruits from his father's high standing. Maksim was involved in a lot of businesses and also dipped deeply into the state coffers via the Central Agency of Development, Investments and Innovations.

Just how well does the concept of "clan" get reflected in this diagram? Many members of the so-called "Bakiev clan" are Maksim's business partners or the Prime Minister with his

47

family. Among Maksim's business partners or friends there are several foreigners: citizens of the United States and Latvia. Thus, they in fact can not belong to traditional Kyrgyz clans by virtue of…well, not being Kyrgyz at all.

Furthermore, the diagram in no way substantiates the notion that President and his relatives do constitute a corporate group. First, the corporate groups are extremely tight-knit organizations which make decisions *uno animo* and they protect each other at all costs, going sometimes even as far as starting a blood feud. However, after the President and his family have been ousted after the revolution on April 7, 2010, it appears that the group is very fragmented: the President with his second (or third) wife and two children went to Belarus, while his son was seen in Latvia. It appears that Kurmanbek Bakiev's brothers did not actually follow in the ex-President's footsteps and chose other destinations for refuge. Needless to say, Maksim's friends and business partners did not raise a battle cry to defend the former president's son. Mikhail Nadel', one of Maksim's closest friends, when asked about the fate of his friend answered that he did not know where Maksim was at the moment (2010:10). While it is doubtful that he would reveal the location of his friend anyway, a member of a true corporate group would use whatever means necessary to defend his friend publicly and rally support for him. However, in case of Maksim, it appears that his friends at the moment are rather reticent to speculate about their relationship with the ousted president's son.

Traditional clans are also typically egalitarian in the way how they unite members who might have different wealth rankings and yet be bound to each other. Once again, looking at the diagram one will not see any members of the "Bakiev clan" occupying low-paid positions, much less any jobless associates. This is exactly what Aksartova was warning about in the beginning of this paper: clans usually assume a near egalitarian character where poor and richer relatives would share resources to ameliorate wealth gaps. The clans would work across

48

class fissures, not augment them. Yet, in the case of the "Bakiev clan," it is evident that it was an exclusivist group of rich people who wanted to continually accumulate their wealth.

Finally, it is crucial to remember that corporate groups such as clans are about accessing and using *scarce* or limited resources. In the Middle Ages, nomadic Kyrgyz would take very good care of their livestock, because they knew that their lives depended on it. Had there been a sudden outbreak of a disease killing herds, the owners would have been put in an extremely precarious state.

In fact, if we are to look from this perspective at the Bakiev's family, it emerges that it does satisfy this feature of a corporate group. In other words, Bakiev's family usurped access to a number of limited resources (namely state enterprises and agencies) and could hope to perpetuate the profits from those resources. However, after more deliberate thinking even this argument fades away. Once Bakiev and his family fled the country, the Provisional Government of Kyrgyzstan immediately took control over several important companies that used to belong to the state, but later have been privatized by Bakiev in order to reap lasting profits from them. The companies became nationalized again and thus the limited resources owned by Bakiev's family effectively evaporated.

To sum up: none of the properties of such corporate group as a clan apply in any way to Bakiev's family, hence, Bakiev and his associates cannot be called a clan.

## *Broader theoretical issues*

The question naturally arises: if the concept of clan has proved to be so inept at capturing the true dimensions of the social dynamics of Central Asian countries, why do social scientists repeatedly attempt to reinvigorate it? The answer to this question will take us slightly off the present course of inquiry, but the investigation is worth the walk.

One possible explanation for why political theorists insist on calling political elites "clans" comes from a seminal piece by Edward Said. In his ground-breaking book, he

cogently argued how the Orient (the area adjacent to Europe) beginning from the late eighteenth century was effectively subjugated by European colonial powers and was practically reinvented through the discourse of "Orientalism." This discourse has a dark lining, for Orientalism is "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 1979:3). According to the author, even the seemingly authoritative and academic studies of the Orient have been produced to further the "European-Atlantic" influence over the Orient, to ensure the European hegemony and to augment the Old World's "configurations of power" (Said 1979:5-6). Considering that the political scientists studying Central Asia make extensive use of colonial documents manufactured by Imperial Russian researchers or Soviet scholars, it is plausible that Orientalism encoded in old texts comes back to haunt the present-day societies of the region. The notion of tribal societies dominated by lazy, dim-witted and generally backward peoples fighting amongst themselves goes through a series of transformations and reinterpretations to become the notion of "clan"-run countries.

In addition to Orientalism, it is important to look at a kinship model called a "segmentary lineage system" or a "conical" clan which theoretically underpins studies by Collins and Schatz. The concept was developed by the anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1940) as a theoretical response to a practical question that has long puzzled British colonial officers: how do a Nilotic people of the Nuer govern themselves if they don't have a state apparatus?[12] According to Evans-Pritchard, the answer lay in local kinship principles. He argued that each clan of the Nuer divided itself into successively smaller descent groups, the lineages. Should a conflict arise between members of any of the branches, they could rally for

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[12] The anthropologist's amazement is apparent:

> The lack of governmental organs among the Nuer, the absence of legal institutions, of developed leadership, and, generally, of organized political life is remarkable. Their state is an acephalous kinship state and it is only by a study of the kinship system that it can be well understood how order is maintained and social relations over wide areas are established and kept up. (Evans-Pritchard 1947:181)

help members of the allied lineages. If a conflict took place between members of the upper branches (*maximal lineages*), they in fact involved many more people, for members of all the branches below respective maximal lineages would have to get involved (Evans-Pritchard 1947:192-249; Gullette 2006:76; Holy 1996:77-90).

Although the model was elegant and seemed to provide a shorthand explanation of how the Nuer governed themselves, it was ultimately judged flawed. One reason for that was that it was firmly anchored in the structural-functionalist theoretical framework which anthropologists rejected with time. Another reason was that a critical re-examination of the segmentary lineage theory as presented by Evans-Pritchard and additional historical research demonstrated that interactions between the Nuer clans were more complicated than the model assumed (Jedrej 2002:17-8). In fact, such recent concepts as "clan pacts" (Collins) or "clan balancing/clientelism" (Schatz) utilize the segmentary lineage theory and hence they have to be significantly revised too.

Continuing our investigation into the origins of "clan" discourse in academia, it proves useful to move one theoretical level up and look at why social scientists deal with kinship in general. For anthropologists, the study of kinship has been akin to the search for the "Holy Grail": the nascent discipline of the nineteenth century had to find an object of inquiry which would constitute at once anthropology's area of excellence and a beacon of further fruitful findings (Peletz 1995). Political scientists generally had not dealt with kinship, since they for the most part focus on formal state institutions which serve as conduits to power. However, with recent works by political theorists (discussed in the literature review chapter), it seems that kinship begins to entertain their interest. My hypothesis why this is the case stems from the fact that kinship models are used to serve as clear indicators of collective behaviors. Furthermore, they are seen as powerful social actors whose sum is more than their constituent

51

parts. Political scientists believe that kinship acts as the ultimate motivator by inducing kin members to act as one. Because of this, kin groups can wield formidable might.

Unfortunately for political theorists, such notions have been debunked by anthropologists of the past three decades. The anthropologists have consistently maintained that physical kinship and concomitant obligations assumed by it often diverge from action trajectories taken by individuals. Gellner recapitulates:

> To sum up the position: 'kinship structure' or 'descent systems' are, by definition, systems of social relationships such as are functions of (are regularly related to) physical kinship, bearing in mind that the function is not identity; the rule relating the physical kinship and the social relation being generally complex, involving additions, omissions and distortions. (1987:167-70)

Pierre Bourdieu concurs with Gellner by making an even stronger statement and a more elegant analogy:

> There are few areas in which the effect of the outsider's situation is so directly visible as in analysis of kinship. Having only cognitive uses for the kinship and the kin of others which he takes for his object, the anthropologist can treat the native terminology of kinship as a closed, coherent system of logically necessary relations, defined once and for all as if by construction in and by the implicit axiomatics of a cultural tradition. …The logical relations he constructs are to 'practical' relations – practical because continuously practiced, kept up and cultivated – as the geometrical space of a map, a representation of all possible routes for all possible subjects, is to the network of pathways that are really maintained and used, 'beaten tracks' that are really practicable for a particular agent. (Bourdieu 1990:34)

In this passage, Bourdieu compares genealogical maps or kinship diagrams meticulously drawn by anthropologists to "practical" relations, namely relations that are in fact maintained and actively engaged with by actors in their everyday lives. A map can give one a list of all possible directions, but only by looking at the paths individuals choose to follow can one begin to understand "practical" content of genealogical schemata.

As we ourselves near the destination of the present work, it is important to briefly ascend one more level of abstraction in order to see what other bigger debates are at play. It seems that the current focus on "clans" by some social scientists is indicative of a far larger

52

metadebate surrounding the issue of primordialist vs. constructivist approaches. This debate is very complex, with many theoretical ramifications, hence, I will present here a quick summary of the debate. According to primordialists, many types of collective identity humans possess are ascribed, that is inherited by birth and cannot be changed. Instances include ethnicity, race, and kinship. On the other hand, constructivists believe that such identity markers can be modified by individuals and also that the markers themselves are "constructed" as opposed to being in existence since the time immemorial. The emphasis of some social scientists on "clans" unavoidably raises a suspicion that they assume "clan" identities in Central Asia are in principle inherited and cannot be acquired by the outsiders.

Naturally, the theorists might contend that "clans" have changed a lot before, during and after the Soviet rule in Central Asia, and thus "clans" are not primordial, but if this is really their point of view, then perhaps it is really not clans they're talking about?

In any case, many anthropologists have challenged old notions of an unbreakable linkage between biology and kinship, therefore insisting on essentially "constructed" nature of kinship (Collier and Yanagisako 1987; Parkin and Stone 2004; Schneider 1968). The more detailed discussion of their stance is out of scope of this paper, but it suffices to say that the cited above authors provide rich empirical data and new theoretical interpretations to confirm what Gellner and Bourdieu told us earlier. Naturally, kinship is extremely important in any society, but the way how it is perceived, structured, and acted upon varies profoundly.

## Chapter VII. Alternative perspective

In order to investigate informal politics in Kyrgyzstan, there is a strong need to deploy better analytical lens. As this paper has established, the term "clans" is extremely ill-equipped to elicit properties of groups of people in power and to outline connections between them. Hence, I propose a conceptual alternative: a social networks' perspective. A network is "a set

of such relations which are linked to each other," characterized by multiplexity (variety of social bonds connecting individuals), intensity (the degree of commitment between members of a network), and reachability (open or closed networks) among other properties (Nazpary 2002:64). This approach proves advantageous when one wants to discover sources of social (as opposed to political) power. It provides an in-depth look at people in a society who might not occupy high official positions or own big pieces of property, but yet exercise social power through multiple connections to many individuals.

This approach helps significantly when one wants to examine political elites also. In fact, Rahmetov who has extensively relied on the "clan"-based model of the Kyrgyz society in his research stated that "network maps" of prominent individuals would help to disentangle multiple levels of interpersonal relations and clarify "a very problematic concept" of "clan" (Rahmetov 2008:49-50). While examining Louisiana's political families from statehood up to 1989, Kurtz also makes use of social networks' perspective by carefully tracing connections between individuals who have gained political power and their relatives. After scrutinizing genealogies of 785 state and parish officials, he concludes that family members who are already in power often influence their relatives who subsequently become involved in politics too (Kurtz 1989). What's unique about this study is that it clearly shows that kinship still plays a big role in countries with long traditions of democracy and statehood, not just in states which have gained independence recently and are seen as struggling with their past (e.g. Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries).

Padgett and Ansell supply one more vivid illustration of how a social networks' perspective enriches an analysis of political elites. The authors' profound knowledge of historical data coupled with meticulously documented network connections between families of the fifteenth century Florence provide an explanation of the surprising rise of the Medici family which came to dominate Florence for three centuries (Padgett and Ansell 1993).

54

According to them, it is due to embeddedness in multiple marriage, economic, and patronage elite networks that the Medici family became so powerful (Padgett and Ansell 1993:1262).

The examples provided above clearly demonstrate that the social networks' perspective presents a very promising conceptual alternative to the "clan" concept. On the one hand, tracing diverse networks of individuals who are not necessarily involved in politics leads us to see the sources and conduits of social power. On the other hand, using a network approach to identify a multitude of connections between political actors allows us to see through formal institutional arrangements and identify informal political alliances. Thus, the focus on social networks brings much desired precision to the research field of informal politics.

## Conclusion

Throughout this paper, I have argued that the "clan" model used by political scientists to refer to informal social units wielding political power in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere in Central Asia is inherently flawed. Collins, Schatz, Berdikeeva and several other authors maintain that "clans" are informal groups of people united by kinship and operating with a high level of interpersonal trust (2006; 2006; 2005). Furthermore, the authors claim that these "clans" are not a novel phenomenon. Instead the "clans" are the kinship units which have withstood, albeit in a transmogrified way, the conquest by the Russian empire, the Soviet regime, and the post-Soviet transformations. Finally, the authors state that "clans" represent powerful cliques which mobilize support from their numerous relatives, engage in fierce struggles over the ownership of natural and economic resources, and inevitably drive peoples in the region to poverty and social unrest.

In order to confute these arguments, I have assembled a battery of linguistic, historical, and anthropological concepts which are presented in the paper. I began my three-pronged advance by analyzing how the term "clan" is used in popular discourse, first through looking

55

at typical dictionary definitions and second through reflecting on how the term is used in the Kyrgyzstani mass media by politicians and analysts. Borrowing a notion of "frame" from Lakoff (2002; 2004), I have concluded that the term "clan" is used as a "conceptual metaphor" signifying corruption, nepotism and factionalism. The term in itself is devoid of any analytical or explanatory faculty, instead it serves as a label of accusation, and can be deployed strategically in order to inflict damage on the reputation of a person or institution.

The historically-informed analysis of typical Irish clans of the Middle Ages aides us further in unraveling why "clans" is not a proper term in the context of Kyrgyzstan. First, the comparative analysis points to the fact that clans in different countries have different economic and social bases. Consequently, political scientists who use the term to refer to a variety of kinship units in all Central Asian countries stretch the notion to the point of breaking. Furthermore, even the Kyrgyz clans differed significantly depending on which part of what is now Kyrgyzstan they used to inhabit. Also, the political scientists who insist on using the term "clan" instead of other terms argue that it epitomizes groups of people made extremely cohesive because of their kin connections. Yet, my research clearly demonstrates that even in pre-modern times clans were composed of people connected by various types of relationships, where kinship was but one. Finally, the historical section addresses a meta-theoretical issue, namely the influence of the evolutionistic perspective on kinship which has unfortunately percolated into a variety of disciplines and which automatically equates kinship-rich societies with primitive societies.

The last main section of my thesis engages various anthropological definitions of clans and juxtaposes them alongside definitions propounded by Schatz (2004; 2005) and Collins (2003; 2004; 2006). Using the term "corporate group" (Bell 1998; Holy 1996; Keesing 1975; Weber 1964), I argue that "clans" as described by political scientists do not in any way correspond to the traditional Kyrgyz kinship units since for the Kyrgyz a clan constituted a
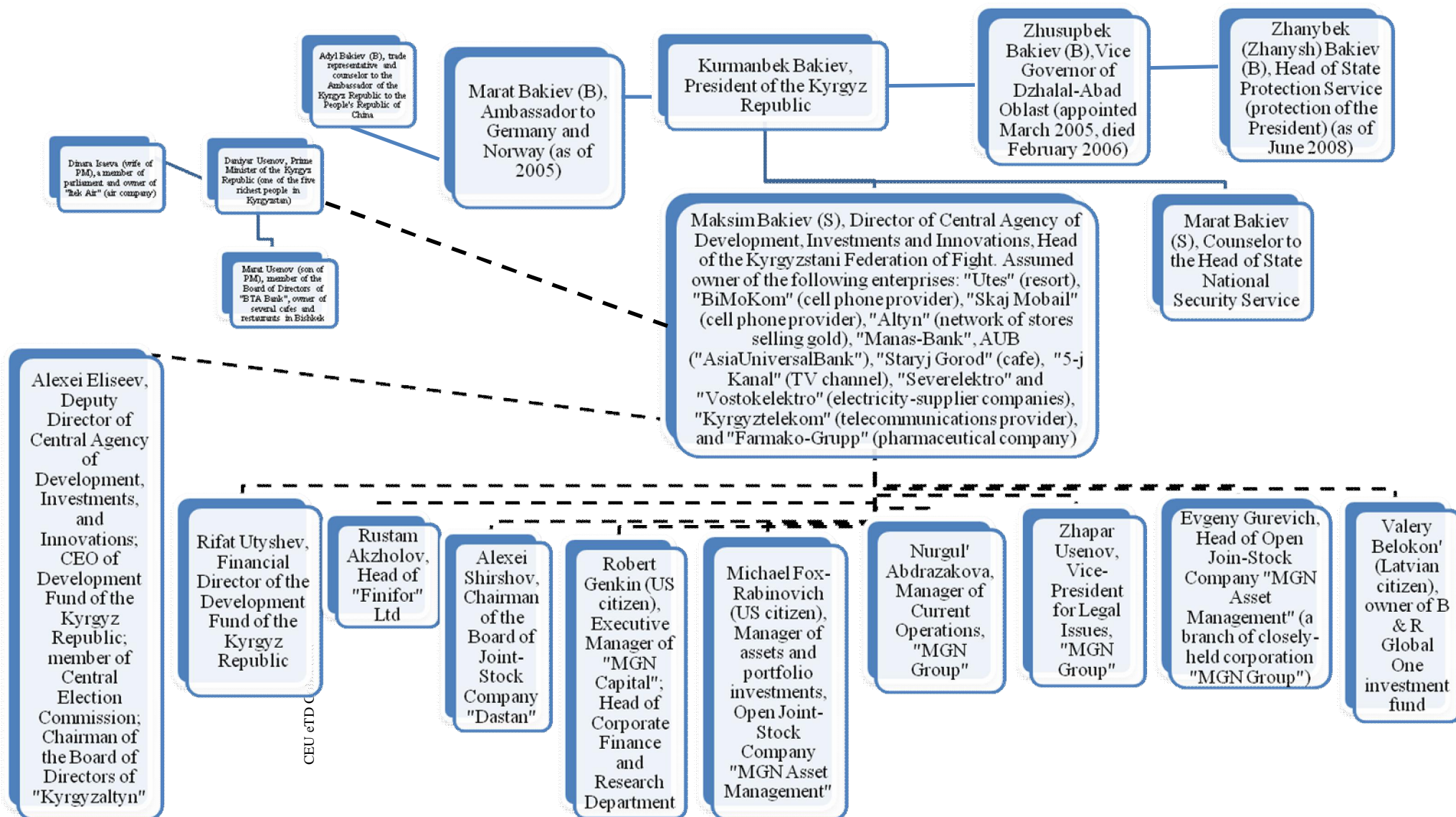
56

tight-knit egalitarian organization, exercising political, economic and military functions at once. From the empirical data gathered in the field, it clearly appears that when the Kyrgyz talk about the "clans," they express their disgust with factionalism between political interest groups and not a diatribe against any tribal-related kinship units (Gullette 2006). The section goes further and investigates the origins of the "clan" model utilized by social scientists. Finally, the paper concludes by linking up the two stances of Gellner (1987) and Bourdieu (1990), and then placing them against a larger canvas of a primordialist-constructivist debate.

The penultimate chapter of the thesis serves to outline a conceptual alternative of social networks that provides more solid grounding to inquiries into the nature of informal politics. Consequently, I use the works of Rigi (aka Nazpary 2002), Kurtz (1989), and Padgett and Ansel (1993) to illustrate examples of successful application of this model.

Ultimately, my paper aims to demonstrate that there are definite limits to kinship politics in Kyrgyzstan. Even though local politicians, journalists and observing foreign political scientists claim that power in the Kyrgyz Republic is controlled exclusively through the omnipotent "clans," this picture is far from the reality. Naturally, kinship plays an important role in Kyrgyzstan since families there tend to be large. Yet, the power relations there are constantly in a flux, as more and more people attempt to gain higher positions and profitable pieces of property through various types of interpersonal connections. Obliterating these important differences under the guise of "clans" conceals the hidden power dynamics and presents a monolithic, misleading picture. However, through recognizing the different kinds of influence at work and tracing their origins one is empowered to develop a deeper understanding of political processes and outcomes. It is this understanding that bolsters hopes for finally attaining peace and prosperity in Kyrgyzstan.

# Appendix A

The following page displays a network map of Kurmanbek Bakiev's relatives and associates. As the map clearly demonstrates, there is no "clan" there: instead, Bakiev's multiple brothers (denoted by B) and two of his sons (denoted by S) who managed access to numerous state positions and enterprises before the fall of their regime. It is important to note that the diagram drawn by me is compiled using data obtained from numerous and cross-checked mass media (newspapers and TV programs). The map shows the linkages between Bakiev's relatives and partners as of before the popular protests of April 7, 2010. The solid lines in the diagram depict consanguineal or affinal ties, while the dotted lines represent business partnerships.

Adyl Bakiev (B), trade representative and counselor to the Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the People's Republic of China

Marat Bakiev (B), Ambassador to Germany and Norway (as of 2005)

Kurmanbek Bakiev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic

Zhusupbek Bakiev (B), Vice Governor of Dzhalal-Abad Oblast (appointed March 2005, died February 2006)

Zhanybek (Zhanysh) Bakiev (B), Head of State Protection Service (protection of the President) (as of June 2008)

Dinara Isaeva (wife of PM), a member of parliament and owner of "Itek Air" (air company)

Daniyar Usenov, Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic (one of the five richest people in Kyrgyzstan)

Marat Usenov (son of PM), member of the Board of Directors of "BTA Bank", owner of several cafes and restaurants in Bishkek

Maksim Bakiev (S), Director of Central Agency of Development, Investments and Innovations, Head of the Kyrgyzstani Federation of Fight. Assumed owner of the following enterprises: "Utes" (resort), "BiMoKom" (cell phone provider), "Skaj Mobail" (cell phone provider), "Altyn" (network of stores selling gold), "Manas-Bank", AUB ("AsiaUniversalBank"), "Staryj Gorod" (cafe), "5-j Kanal" (TV channel), "Severelektro" and "Vostokelektro" (electricity-supplier companies), "Kyrgyztelekom" (telecommunications provider), and "Farmako-Grupp" (pharmaceutical company)

Marat Bakiev (S), Counselor to the Head of State National Security Service

Alexei Eliseev, Deputy Director of Central Agency of Development, Investments, and Innovations; CEO of Development Fund of the Kyrgyz Republic; member of Central Election Commission; Chairman of the Board of Directors of "Kyrgyzaltyn"

Rifat Utyshev, Financial Director of the Development Fund of the Kyrgyz Republic

Rustam Akzholov, Head of "Finifor" Ltd

Alexei Shirshov, Chairman of the Board of Joint-Stock Company "Dastan"

Robert Genkin (US citizen), Executive Manager of "MGN Capital"; Head of Corporate Finance and Research Department

Michael Fox-Rabinovich (US citizen), Manager of assets and portfolio investments, Open Joint-Stock Company "MGN Asset Management"

Nurgul' Abdrazakova, Manager of Current Operations, "MGN Group"

Zhapar Usenov, Vice-President for Legal Issues, "MGN Group"

Evgeny Gurevich, Head of Open Join-Stock Company "MGN Asset Management" (a branch of closely-held corporation "MGN Group")

Valery Belokon' (Latvian citizen), owner of B & R Global One investment fund

59

# Appendix B

What follows below are the questions that I've asked during the focus group study organized in the high school N10 (the name of the school is changed to preserve confidentiality). Before the session, I introduced myself, explained my area of research and lay down some ground rules and objectives, such as respect towards other participants, keeping privacy of respondents, and search for more or less accurate data, rather than an outright gossip. I rendered questions originally asked in Russian, into English for the reader's convenience.

<u>Questions/Вопросы.</u>

1) What have been your first impressions, emotions, and thoughts when you found out about the events of April 7, 2010? Какие у Вас были первые мысли, чувства и эмоции когда Вы узнали про то, что оппозиция штурмует "Белый Дом" правительства 7-го апреля 2010 года?

2) Have you expected that something like that could happen? Ожидали ли Вы, что что-нибудь подобное может случиться?

3) What was the main cause of Bakiev's downfall? Что, по Вашему мнению, послужило главной причиной падения правительства Бакиева?

4) What role did the young people play in the revolution of April 7? Какую роль сыграла молодёжь в событиях 7-го апреля?

5) Where have the main participants in the revolution of April 7 come from? Из каких мест (городов, сёл, областей и т.д.) приехало наибольшее количество участников восстания 7-го апреля? С чем это связано?

6) Would you say that traditional clan and tribe distinctions which characterized Kyrgyz society in the nineteenth century still play a role in modern Kyrgyzstan? Считаете ли Вы, что традиционные кыргызские родовые и племенные различия, которые были описаны в литературе 19-го столетия, всё ещё важны в современном Кыргызстане?

7) If you were a member of Kyrgyzstani Provisional People's Government right now, what would be some of your first steps as leaders of the country? Если бы Вы являлись лидерами кыргызстанского Временного Народного Правительства в настоящее время, что бы Вы сделали в первую очередь на своём посту?

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