

# Central Asian Cultural Intelligence for Military Operations

## The Kyrgyz of Afghanistan

### Summary of Key Issues

- There are only approximately 1,000 Kyrgyz remaining in Afghanistan.
- The Kyrgyz are nomadic herders who live in the upper elevations of the Afghan Pamir Mountains.
- The Afghan Kyrgyz are concentrated in the Wakhan Corridor of Badakhshan province in northeastern Afghanistan. The Wakhan corridor was created by agreement between Tsarist Russia and the British Empire to place a buffer between their respective territories.
- The Kyrgyz are organized into four *oruq*, roughly equivalent to tribes. The entirety of the Teyet *oruq* fled to Pakistan in 1978, and relocated to Turkey in 1983. The Kesak *oruq* remains in Afghanistan.
- The Kyrgyz are nomadic and live in yurts called *oey* (pronounced oowee). *Oey* is also the term used for a Kyrgyz family unit.
- The Kyrgyz are Hanafi Sunni Muslims, like the majority of Afghans.
- The Kyrgyz are geographically isolated from the rest of Afghan society. This isolation has a significant impact on the Kyrgyz culture and lifestyle.

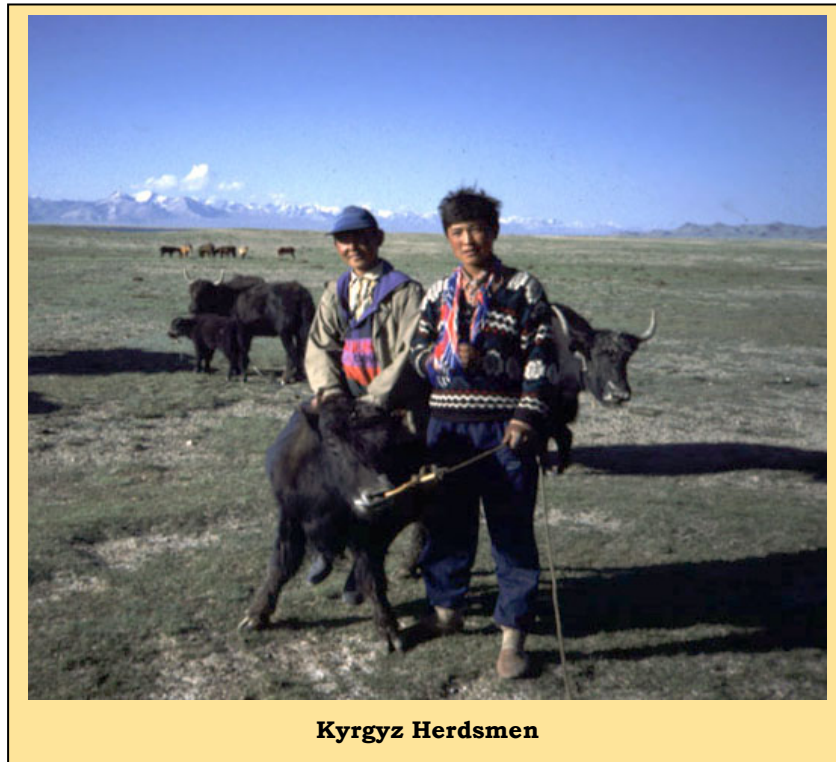
## **Kyrgyz Ethnic Group**

The Kyrgyz are an extremely small part of the Afghan population who live in near isolation in the Wakhan Corridor in the Pamir Mountains. They are divided into *oruq*, equivalent to tribes. Fewer than one thousand Kyrgyz remain in Afghanistan after the Teyet *oruq* left Afghanistan and resettled in Turkey. Interaction with other Afghans is limited to the local area in the Wakhan corridor. While they are ethnically related to the Kyrgyz of Kyrgyzstan, the two groups have developed different cultural histories. The Kyrgyz have very little role in, or impact on, politics in Afghanistan.

## Ethnic Description

### *Physical Appearance*

The Kyrgyz have Mongoloid (Asian) features. These features include broad faces, high and prominent cheekbones, slanted eyes and sparse beards. The Kyrgyz physically resemble the Uighurs in Xinjiang province in China.



### *Cultural History*

The Kyrgyz were originally from Siberia and arrived in Afghanistan in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first Kyrgyz traveled with the Mongol armies of Genghis Khan. The remainder were pushed south by the Russians and west by the Mongols into the area of the Pamir Mountains. The Afghan Kyrgyz are related to the Kyrgyz of the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan, but the two groups have been geographically separated for centuries, and have developed distinct lifestyles and cultural attributes.

Since their arrival, the Kyrgyz have been nomadic herders traveling throughout the Pamir Mountains, which are currently divided between Afghanistan, China, and Tajikistan. When Afghanistan was created as a state by Ahmad Shah in 1747, the Kyrgyz inhabited adjacent lands in both the Russian and British Empires (the latter included Afghanistan at the time). The territory of the Pamir Mountains was divided between Russia, China and Afghanistan during Abdur Rahman's rule (1880-1901). In 1891, the British and the Russians insisted that Abdur Rahman take control of the Wakhan corridor, a strip of land that would be a buffer

to physically separate the territories of British India and Tsarist Russia. Although the decision settled the boundary and averted a war between Russia and Great Britain, international boundaries were established that prevented the free movement of the nomadic Kyrgyz, negatively influencing their traditional way of life.

Throughout his rule, Abdur Rahman sought to establish central government control throughout the territory of the Afghan state. While Britain and Russia negotiated the borders between them, Abdur Rahman was conducting a campaign of state consolidation. Abdur Rahman successfully established government control over Badakhshan province in 1880. When the borders between Afghanistan and the British and Russian empires were settled, the Kyrgyz of Afghanistan found themselves in Badakhshan province.

In 1916 a revolt broke out in the territories of Russian Tsarist-ruled Central Asia located directly north of the Wakhan corridor and the Afghan Pamirs. The people of the area resented the repressive wartime policies of the Tsarist government. Anti-government action against the Tsarist, and then the communist governments, continued in the area through 1930. From 1916 to 1930, over 300,000 Kazakh and Kyrgyz fled from Soviet Tajikistan to the Afghan Pamirs and Chinese Turkestan (presently Xinjiang province). Two hundred and fifty Kyrgyz households arrived in the Little Pamir in 1916. Approximately 500 Kyrgyz were already living in the Great Pamir area.

In the early 1930's the Soviet government closed the border with Afghanistan, cutting off the Kyrgyz' access to their previous winter pasturelands. According to the Kyrgyz, the Soviet government launched a number of raids against the Kyrgyz in Afghanistan. Soviet soldiers took the *Khan* of the Afghan Kyrgyz, the *Khan's* brother and a third leader as prisoners. The *Khan* was released six months later, the other two were held for a year. The apparent goal of the raid was to capture the *Khan's* father, who was staunchly anti-communist and actively encouraged the Kyrgyz in the Soviet and Afghan Pamirs to oppose the Soviet regime. Several Soviet raids against the Kyrgyz occurred between 1930 until 1946. The Kyrgyz resisted these Soviet attacks and reported them to the Afghan authorities, who offered no assistance. Fearing for their safety, the Kyrgyz of the Little Pamir left Afghanistan for Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang province).

The Kyrgyz who had fled the Little Pamir for China, returned to Afghanistan after the rise of communism in China and the Revolution in 1949. Upon their return, an envoy of the Afghan prime minister welcomed them and promised protection against outside harassment. The closure of the Chinese border in 1950 held the Kyrgyz within the borders of Afghanistan. The Kyrgyz subsequently became more integrated in the Afghan state and the Wakhan administrative district of Badakhshan province. State control over the area was strengthened, but the Kyrgyz themselves traveled down the Wakhan corridor only as far as necessary to obtain needed products such as tea and grain. Relations between the Kyrgyz and the central government were good, and improved further when the Kyrgyz *Khan* traveled to Kabul for the first time in the late 1950s and was received by the king.

From 1950 to 1978, the Kyrgyz lived a self-sufficient existence in the remote areas of the Wakhan corridor. They had to adapt to the closed borders, which forced them to alter their seasonal herding patterns, and adjust to living at relatively higher altitudes year-round.

Immediately following the Saur (April) Revolution of 1978, in which the Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan seized power, the Kyrgyz of the Little Pamir decided to leave Afghanistan for Pakistan. The Kyrgyz of the Little Pamir, the Teyet *oruq*, were historically strongly anti-communist. Their successive moves from the Soviet Union to China, and from China to Afghanistan, were to escape from the communist governments they opposed. There are different explanations for the Teyet Kyrgyz decision to leave Afghanistan. One account states that the Teyet Kyrgyz *Khan* decided to take his people out of the country when he heard a communist government had been established in Kabul. Alternately, the Teyet Kyrgyz were reported to have been forcibly removed by Soviet forces when they annexed the Wakhan corridor in order to establish air bases and stop the transfer of Chinese armaments through the area. Irrespective of the version of events, the Teyet Kyrgyz *oruq* now live near Erzurum Turkey, leaving very few Kyrgyz in Afghanistan.

The Kesak *oruq* currently remains in Afghanistan. It is estimated that there are 500 Kesak Kyrgyz still living in the Pamirs, but due to the remoteness of the area where they live and the difficulty of collecting accurate information on population during several decades of civil war, the exact size of the Kyrgyz population is unknown.

## Centers of Authority

### *Description*

Kyrgyz society is organized along patrilineal lines (ancestry determined by the father's heritage). Each Kyrgyz of Afghanistan is a member of one of four *zor oruq*, which is roughly equivalent to a tribe. Each *zor oruq* traces its descent to one of four ancestors-- Teyet, Kesak, Qepchak (Kipchak) and Naiman – who were supposedly brothers. Each *zor oruq* is divided into a varying number of *kechek oruq*. The Teyet *oruq* is the largest of the four *zor oruq*, with about 1,000 members. The Kesak *oruq* is the next largest, with about 500 hundred persons, followed by the Maiman and Qepchak. The Teyet *oruq* lived in the Little Pamir area, but left Afghanistan in 1978. The Kesak *oruq* remains in the Great Pamir. A few Qepchak and Naiman Kyrgyz inhabit the Afghan Pamirs, but most live in the ranges of the Pamir Mountains in China and the former Soviet republic of Tajikistan.

There are four levels of Kyrgyz social organization. The *oey* (pronounced “oowee”) is the most basic social and economic unit of Kyrgyz society. The unit of the *oey* is named for the type of yurt that the Kyrgyz inhabit. The unit of the *oey* is composed of a nuclear or an extended family that shares in the duties of herding and raising livestock with other *oey* units. Each *oey* has a leader called an *oey bashi* or “head of the household.” The *oey bashi* may be a man or a woman, but is generally the senior male. This figure represents the *oey* to the other units in the community, but they do not have absolute authority over the other members of the *oey*.

Several *oey* encamped together compose an *aiel* or *qorow*. The terms are used interchangeably to refer to encampments; literally an *aiel* refers to a group of people that reside within a specific space, and a *qorow* is a pen or enclosure for keeping herds at night. The terms are used to designate groups that live in the same camp and herd their animals together. Each camp is represented by a camp elder, called a *be*. The *be* is a male who is customarily the head of the most influential and wealthy *oey*. He mediates disputes within the camp and is consulted by the *khan* on matters concerning the camp. A camp is primarily a social and economic unit. A camp may also act as a unified political unit if all of the camp members are relatives.

The *kechek oruq* is roughly equivalent to a sub-tribe; it is the level of social organization directly below the four *zor oruq* that compose the Kyrgyz ethnic group. It is at the level of the *kechek oruq* that both the political social and economic ties are the strongest. The *kechek oruq* acts as a political unit and is led by an *aqsaqal*. The position of *aqsaqal* is neither elected nor hereditary. A man is tacitly accepted into the position as people turn to him for assistance, advice or to request the mediation of conflicts. He retains his status as long as he continues to receive public consent for his decisions. The *aqsaqal* operates within his *kechek oruq* as well as represents the *kechek oruq* to the *khan*.

The highest level of social organization in Kyrgyz society is the *zor oruq*. The *zor oruq* is led by a *khan*. Because the Kyrgyz are located in several different states and do not have a single unifying leader, the *khan* represents the highest level of leadership among the Kyrgyz ethnic

group. The *Khan* assists in the resolution of disputes, either through his own efforts of mediation and persuasion, or in coordination with the *aqsaqal*.

### *History*

The social organization and associated centers of authority of the Afghan Kyrgyz population have remained largely unchanged since their arrival in Afghanistan. An exception is the addition of the position of *qaryadar* or *arbab* (village headman) that was created by the government of the Republic of Afghanistan. The *qaryadar* serves at the village level and represents the village to the local government administration. The *qaryadar* serves to connect the traditional Kyrgyz centers of authority with the state authorities.

This position of *qaryadar* was instituted in the early 1900s. By the 1970s, it became harder to find someone to fill the position. Initially the *qaryadar* benefited from the leftover cash or goods the *qaryadar* collected from the village to offer hospitality to visiting officials. The benefits of this system declined and by the 1970s, a *qaryadar* had to be hired with an annual salary. The decline in the prestige of the job has weakened the state's connection with, and its ability to administer, the village.

### *Rule of Law*

The Kyrgyz, as Sunni Muslims, follow the same version of Shariah Islamic law as the majority of the Afghan population. Disputes are dealt with at the *kechek oruq* or *oruq* level, either by the *aqsaqal* or *khan*. The Kyrgyz respect the principles of honor and legality in their relationships.

### *Role of State vs. Role of Ethnic Group*

The many relocations of the Teyet Kyrgyz demonstrate their greater loyalty to their ethnic groups, especially their *oruq*, than to the state. The Kyrgyz as a whole, by virtue of their self-sufficient and nomadic lifestyle, feel more attached to their ethnic group and *oruq* than to the state. The Kyrgyz acknowledge the state and have periodically enjoyed good relations with the Afghan government. Ultimately, their allegiance remains with their ethnic group, and the role of the state in the lives of the Kyrgyz is minimal.

## Cultural Attitudes

### *Self*

Kyrgyz culture is community oriented. A concept of the self as an individual whose wishes and needs may be elevated above those of the collective does not exist in Kyrgyz society. Each member of the community has an individual role and responsibility to complete certain tasks, but it is for the benefit of the community and not the individual that such responsibilities are fulfilled.

### *Group/Tribe/Clan*

Kyrgyz identify with the *oey*, the primary social and economic unit of Kyrgyz society, first and foremost. Lineage is of particular importance among the Kyrgyz, who trace ancestry back seven generations as proof of identity and membership in a particular *oruq* (subgroup of the four Kyrgyz tribes).

### *Modern Nation State*

The attitude of the Kyrgyz currently living in Afghanistan towards the state is difficult to determine. The Teyet Kyrgyz of the Little Pamir left for Pakistan in 1978 and currently resides in Turkey. This group of Kyrgyz fled from the Soviet Union to Afghanistan in 1930, went to China and returned to Afghanistan in 1950, and fled Afghanistan after the installation of the Soviet-backed government. This demonstrates that they identify much more strongly with their ethnic group and *oruq* than with any particular state. The Teyet Kyrgyz were very clearly opposed to the form of the modern state that they believed would emerge in Afghanistan under the governance of a Soviet-backed government. The attitude of the Kesak Kyrgyz is not as clear. Their continued presence in the area of the Great Pamir signifies at least a minimal tolerance of the modern Afghan state, but because they number only about 500 and occupy the higher elevations of the mountains, their interaction with the state is limited.

### *Conflict Resolution*

Conflicts are resolved through mediation and persuasion on the part of Kyrgyz community leaders, primarily the *aqsaqal* and the *khan*. The *aqsaqal* resolves disputes amongst members of his own *oruq*; in disputes with members of other groups, the *aqsaqal* negotiates with the individual and the *aqsaqal* of the other group. The *khan* also helps to resolve disputes on his own, or in coordination with the *aqsaqal* of the group or groups involved. Most conflict areas resolved at lower levels by the *aqsaqal* or even the *be*. Those disputes that are brought to the *khan* are usually not able to be resolved at the lower level.

### *United States*

Little information about Kyrgyz attitudes about foreign states is available. When the Teyet Kyrgyz left Afghanistan and were living as refugees in Pakistan from 1978-1983, the *khan* sought to relocate the group to Alaska. The Teyet Kyrgyz sought a climate similar to what



they were accustomed to in the Pamir Mountains. The *khan* believed that they would benefit from American political freedoms, which would allow them to live as a self-sufficient group able to practice their Muslim faith without persecution.

*Other Ethnic Groups: Pashtuns*

The Kyrgyz do not have strong feelings against the Pashtuns as some ethnic Afghan ethnic groups do, such as the Hazara. This is due, in part, to the Kyrgyz' physical isolation in the high Pamirs which restricts their contact with other ethnic groups. There is a feeling among the Kyrgyz that Badakhshan province has been willfully neglected by the central government, and as a result is severely underdeveloped. By extension, the poor state of the province is blamed on the Pashtuns, because the central government has been Pashtun-dominated.

*Other Ethnic Groups: Pamiris*

The Kyrgyz and Pamiris (also called Wakhis) have alternating good and poor relations. The Kyrgyz call the Pamiris "*sar*" a derogatory term and consider them to be non-believers. The Kyrgyz resent the Pamiri monopoly over the lower altitude pasturelands, while the Kyrgyz are restricted to higher altitude areas with harsher weather and less food for their herds. However, the two groups are economically interdependent. The Kyrgyz cannot grow grain and must buy it from the Pamiris or traveling traders. The Pamiris buy livestock and animal products from the Kyrgyz. These economic relations exist in an environment of social tension.

## **Language**

The Kyrgyz of Afghanistan speak Kyrgyz, a Turkic language written in Arabic script. The Kyrgyz also speak Dari (Afghan Persian) for communication with other Afghan ethnic groups and the government. The Kyrgyz language distinguishes the Kyrgyz from speakers of Dari and Pashto, the two most common languages spoken in Afghanistan. The Kyrgyz can communicate, to differing degrees, with other speakers of Turkic languages in Afghanistan, but must learn Dari for communication with non-Turkic language speakers.

The remaining Kyrgyz population in Afghanistan is concentrated in the Great Pamir in Badakhshan province, so there are no geographical variations in their language.

## Religion

The Kyrgyz are adherents to Hanafi Sunni Islam like the majority of Afghanistan's population. The Kyrgyz were converted to Islam in the sixteenth century.

### *Major Tenets*

The Khirgiz are adherents of the Hanafi Sunni sect as is the majority of Afghanistan. Sunnis believe in the Five Pillars of Islam: the recitation of the creed, "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his messenger," daily prayer, almsgiving, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, and pilgrimage. The Sunni sect does not have a clerical hierarchy. Men who lead prayers, preach or interpret the law do so because of their education and knowledge, and are not ordained into such positions.

### *Geographic Differences*

The Kyrgyz of Afghanistan are situated in a localized area; therefore there are no significant geographic differences in their religion or the practice of it.

## Customs

### *Greetings*

A handshake is the common greeting among men; close male friends or relatives may embrace when meeting.

People are frequently referred to by their status titles, even if they no longer hold the position described by the title. An example is the pilgrims who have completed the Haj to Mecca who may be called 'Haji' to signify that they have fulfilled this pillar of Islam. Completing the Haj is also a symbol of socio-economic status because of the expense of traveling. An example of this among the Afghan Kyrgyz is Haji Rahman Qul, the Kyrgyz leader who led the Kyrgyz of the Little Pamir out of Afghanistan to Pakistan, ultimately resettling in Turkey.

### *Gestures*

Afghans typically sit on the ground with legs crossed, but it is considered impolite to point the sole of the shoe at someone. Using the left hand to pass items is seen as impolite and unclean. To ask for divine assistance, both hands are held at chest level with the palms up and open.

### *Visiting*

The Kyrgyz, like Afghans in general, show great hospitality to their guests. Kyrgyz always offer tea, despite the cost and difficulties of obtaining it; biscuits, hard candy, or other food is usually offered with the tea. The tea is salty rather than sweet because sugar is too expensive.

Visitors are seen as the guests of, and therefore the responsibility of, the entire camp. Guests are usually taken to the *oey* of the *be* (camp elder), but food is provided by the other *oey* units and consumed together in the *be's oey*.

### *Negotiations*

Kyrgyz follow the Afghan customs of negotiating prices for goods they wish to buy. Negotiating is an accepted, and even expected, practice when purchasing an item from a private seller.

## **Lifestyle**

### *Role of Family*

The family is the basic unit of Kyrgyz society. Families, both nuclear and extended, live together in a yurt (*oey*), and share the many day-to-day activities of caring for the herds that are the primary source of food and income for the Kyrgyz. Kinship relations organize and hold Kyrgyz society together.

### *Role of Women*

Women tend to have assertive roles in matters of importance to the family and the *oey* unit. In poorer households, the equality between men and women is substantial, but in wealthier *oey*, there is a greater differentiation between male and female roles. Women alone perform certain activities: milking, making milk products, cooking, spinning, sewing and weaving, and carrying water for household use.

### *Role of Men*

Men are the traditional heads of the *oey* unit. They fulfill certain tasks that require physical exertion and/or travel away from the camp. Men are the traditional community leaders in Kyrgyz society.

### *Dating and Marriage*

Dating is not a part of Kyrgyz or Afghan culture as a whole. Parents arrange marriages. As with many Afghans of various ethnic groups, the Kyrgyz prefer to marry first cousins. The Kyrgyz marry within their ethnic group because of the emphasis on lineage and the necessity of tracing ancestry to show Kyrgyz identity, as well as to preserve their way of life.

### *Role of Elders*

Elders are the community leaders among the Kyrgyz. They hold the authority over the *oruq* and are charged with looking out for the best interests of the group. Elders resolve local disputes.

## Clothing

### *Headwear/Clothing/Footwear*

Afghan Kyrgyz women wear waistcoats over long dresses made of brightly colored fabric with leggings underneath. The women wear a round cap under long scarves called *jholoks* that cover their long braided hair.

Afghan Kyrgyz men wear strait legged pants and shirts. Cloaks are worn over the shirt with a belt at the waist. Winter coats are made of wool lined with sheepskin with sleeves long enough to cover the hands in cold weather. Yak skin boots are the usual footwear. Kyrgyz men wear turbans; fur hats with flaps to cover the ears and back of the neck are worn in the colder months.

### *Urban vs. Rural*

The Kyrgyz population is geographically concentrated in the Great Pamir area at altitudes of 10,000 to 15,000 ft. Because of the nomadic way of life at the high altitudes, there is no difference between urban and rural clothing styles.

### *Clothing as Ethnic Descriptor*

The clothing of the Kyrgyz serves to distinguish them from other ethnic groups that do not live in similarly cold, high altitude environments. The clothing of the Kyrgyz is designed for utility, and its design and style reflect their lifestyle as nomadic herders of the high mountains.

## **Diet**

### *Type*

The Kyrgyz rely on their herds for most of the food they consume. They obtain meat and milk, and produce dairy products, from their herds. Nan bread, common throughout Afghanistan as a staple of the diet, is also made by the Kyrgyz. The wheat to make the flour for the bread is purchased from the Pamiri, who farm in the lower altitudes of the Pamir Mountains, or from traveling traders. Tea is also consumed regularly but it is expensive, and must also be obtained from traders.

### *Influence on Culture*

The Kyrgyz diet allows them to be self-sufficient. The Kyrgyz come into contact with other ethnic groups primarily through trade. The Kyrgyz diet serves to isolate them from other groups, because they can produce most their needed food themselves, but also forces them to interact with others to obtain certain goods that they cannot otherwise make or find themselves.

### *Eating Style*

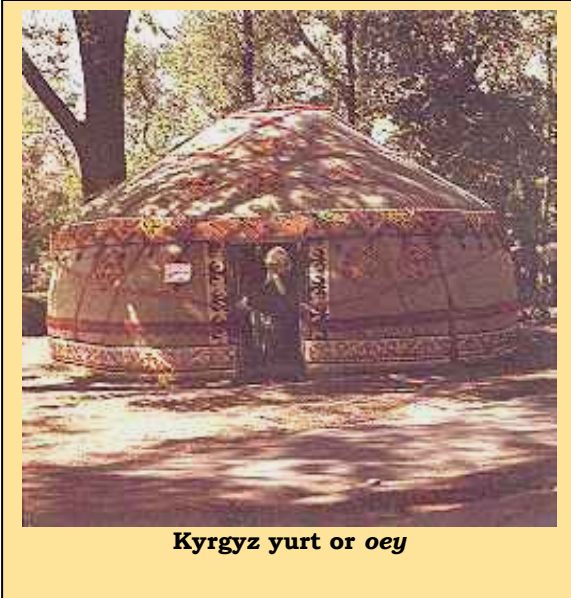
Food is eaten while sitting on the floor. Utensils are uncommon as most food is eaten by scooping it up with bread.

### *Role of Food*

Food is a source of nourishment, but also is a sign of prosperity. Food or drink must always be offered to guests. The more that one can offer, the wealthier one appears.

## Cultural Economy

The Afghan Kyrgyz are nomadic herders. Their physical and economic existence is based on their herds of sheep and goats. Yaks provide milk and transport the family's belongings during seasonal migrations. The Kyrgyz of the Pamirs may also own horses and use Bactrian (2 hump) camels to carry particularly heavy loads.



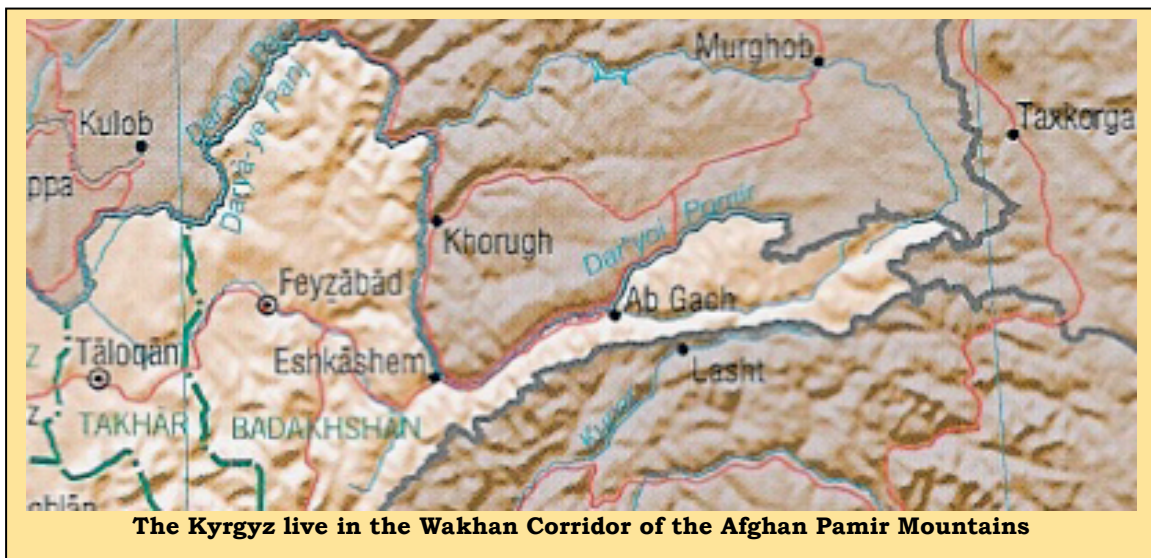
The *oey*—a nuclear or extended family living together in a yurt—is the basic unit of Kyrgyz economic production. An *oey* consists, on average, of 5 people with 120 sheep and goats, 10 yaks and a horse. The Kyrgyz live primarily on the meat and dairy products produced by these animals. The Kyrgyz sell livestock in order to raise cash to buy wheat, salt, tea and cloth from traders who travel through the Wakhan corridor. Kyrgyz women weave blankets and rugs from the wool of the livestock. The products of this work are either sold in order to buy necessary commodities or are used by the household.



## Cultural Geography

The Kyrgyz of Afghanistan live in Badakhshan province. Badakhshan includes the easternmost strip of land called the Wakhan corridor in extreme eastern Afghanistan. The Wakhan corridor was carved out of territories of the Russian Tsarist and British Empires in 1880 to form a buffer territory. The Wakhan corridor is 10 miles wide and 50 miles in length and presently separates Tajikistan and Pakistan, and borders China on the easternmost end. On the northern border of the Wakhan corridor where Afghanistan abuts Tajikistan are the Little and Great Pamirs, parts of the Pamir Mountain Range that stretches across Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and China. The Kyrgyz herd sheep, yaks and goats in valleys at altitudes between 10,000 and 15,000 feet.

The Teyet Kyrgyz lived in the Little Pamir, the farthest northeastern portion of the province. The Teyet Kyrgyz left Afghanistan en masse for Pakistan in 1978, and currently live in Turkey. The Kesak Kyrgyz inhabit the Great Pamir, in the north central area bordering Tajikistan.



## **Culture's Effect on Warfare**

The Kyrgyz have not played an active role in the series of armed conflicts that have occurred in Afghanistan since 1980. By virtue of their remote location in the Pamir Mountains, they have been physically distanced from the fighting.

The Teyet *oruq* of the Kyrgyz demonstrated its aversion to armed conflict by leaving Afghanistan at the time of the April 1978 coup. The Kesak *oruq*, which remains in the Great Pamir, has not been reported to be active in the Northern Alliance. On the whole, the Afghan Kyrgyz seem to prefer to avoid armed conflict either by maintaining a low profile or relocating.

## **Urban vs. Rural Culture**

The Kyrgyz nomadic lifestyle, and the very small number of Kyrgyz presently residing in Afghanistan, precludes the development of distinct urban and rural cultures. The Kyrgyz live in isolated areas at high elevations throughout the year. There are no urban centers of any significant size in Badakhshan province.

## **Influence of Diaspora**

Although a substantial portion of the Afghan Kyrgyz population is now living outside Afghanistan (in Turkey), the contact between the Afghan Kyrgyz diaspora and those remaining in Afghanistan is minimal to non-existent. This is due to a variety of factors. First, the Afghan Kyrgyz diaspora consists of a single tribal group, the Teyet *oruq*, one of the four Kyrgyz “tribes.” Because the highest level of identification among the Afghan Kyrgyz is the tribe, the Teyet Kyrgyz in Turkey are distinct from the Kesak *oruq* still in Afghanistan. Consequently, the diaspora is less likely to try to influence, or even contact, other Kyrgyz back in Afghanistan. Second, the number of Afghan Kyrgyz abroad is small and therefore not very influential either in their new homes or in Afghan politics. Third, communication networks in Afghanistan are in extremely poor condition, and the remote location of the remaining Kyrgyz compounds the difficulty of maintaining contact.

## **Holidays**

The celebration of Noruz is fixed on 21 March; the day is a Persian festival for the New Year. The exact date of Islamic holidays shift by the lunar calendar. Islamic holidays include the Islamic New Year, the beginning of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr--the conclusion of Ramadan, and Eid al-Adha—the end of the annual Haj pilgrimage to Mecca.

Holidays are a time for visiting and feasting. Social and family relationships are renewed on holidays. The ability to provide food for the feasting days is a sign of prosperity and wealth. Holidays are also a time for acts of charity.