Bliss K. Thorne, *The Hump: The Great Military Airlift of World War II* (Philadelphia and New York: Lippincott, 1965).

Chinese characters

Chakesi	茶课司
Chamadao	茶马道
Chamasi	茶马司
Hang Zang shi ji	汉藏史集
Man shu	蛮书
Xifanchatijusi	西番茶提举司

Anitpina Archive: KA 3900

Fig. 1. Family portrait. Klavdiia Antipina is standing in the white dress to the left of center. Morshansk c. 1910-11.

Klavdiia Antipina — a Tribute to the Ethnographer of the Kyrgyz

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Born into nobility near Moscow, Russia, Klavdiia Ivanovna Antipina died at the age of 92 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. In those decades, she had seen the beginning and the end of the Soviet Union. Initially she had shared the exhilaration of the Marxist and the Leninist doctrines of Communism with fellow students in the finest and most selective of Soviet universities, Moscow State University. A happy marriage and promising career in the 1930s were soon destroyed by Stalinist repressions. Her husband was arrested and disappeared; she and her young son were exiled to Central Asia. "The stone must lie where it has fallen" is a Kyrgyz saying, an explanation for the acceptance of fate. Klavdiia Ivanovna lived in Kyrgyzstan for the remainder of her life, becoming a much-respected ethnographer of The Kyrgyz.

Anitpina Archive: KA 2950

Fig. 2. Klavdiia Antipina at about the time of her move to Moscow. c. 1922.

Klavdiia Ivanovna Antipina was born 5 May 1904, the fourth child in a large family which lived in Morshansk near Moscow (Fig. 1). Her grandfather had been a "person of the church." Her father, who preceded every meal with a prayer, carried a title of nobility which he lost at the time of the communist revolution. The family lived in a two-story house with a piano on the second floor. We may conclude that the family was prosperous, aristocratic, religious, and disciplined. Klavdiia Ivanovna was a "blue blood," a member of the gentry.

In 1922, at age eighteen (Fig. 2) she moved to Moscow where she entered a Forestry Institute and became fascinated with dendrology. Her interests widened and she was accepted by Moscow State University, where she studied ethnography and became, along with several of her classmates, a respected scholar. She married a fellow student, Mikhail ("Misha") Rabinovich, who edited the University's student newspaper (Fig. 3). They lived full and happy lives. She

Anitpina Archive: KA 3901

Fig. 3. Klavdiia Antipina and "Misha." Moscow, c. 1930.

Anitpina Archive: KA 2940

Fig. 4. Klavdiia Antipina and Lev at time of exile. Moscow, c. 1937.

worked as a proofreader for a publishing house; in 1932 their son Lev was born.

At that point their happy existence was shattered by the repressions of Josef Stalin's regime. While she was away caring for her young son, who had been hospitalized for scarlet fever, without warning "Misha" was arrested as "an enemy of the people." Klavdiia Ivanovna never saw him again. Not until nearly two decades later, following Stalin's death, did she learn the truth — that, in fact, for decades she had been a widow. She, too, was labelled "an enemy of the people." Shortly thereafter in 1937, and with only twenty-four hours' notice, she was deported into exile with her then four-year-old son (Fig. 4). After ten days on a train, they found themselves in Frunze (now Bishkek), capital of the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic, a small provincial town in a remote part of the Soviet Union. She knew no one, she did not speak the language, she had no place to live, and her reception was hostile. Some of the locals threw stones at her for they knew her to be "an enemy of the people." We can only speculate about the degree of anxiety and personal terror she experienced. As an exile, she was required to report to the local secret police.

When she and her son had first arrived, they had found shelter in the railway station, in a barn, in haystacks. She eventually made the acquaintance of a Russian-speaking family of simple means, who understood her situation and offered a room. The room was "like a storage room." The floor was earthen; Klavdiia Ivanovna polished it. There was an open interior doorway which she covered with a curtain to provide some privacy. She found a job washing laboratory equipment. As her abilities became recognized, eventually she was instructing teachers — in their homes — in pedagogical techniques, in curriculum development and in the writing of syllabi. Later she taught the Russian language and Russian literature.

With Stalin's death in 1953, fifteen years after her arrival in Frunze, her life began to change. She was no longer required to report to the local NKVD (KGB) and was informed that she was now free to live wherever she wished in the Soviet Union and to do whatever she liked. At a point in life when most people have reached the peaks of their careers, Klavdiia Ivanovna at age forty-nine was about to begin hers. Now, for the first time in her life, it had become possible for her to do the kind of scholarly research for which she had been trained — ethnography (Fig. 5). Gradually, the hostility she had met on her arrival in Frunze gave way to genuine friendship and respect for her. She had acquainted herself with the people of Kyrgyzstan and their ways; she had "fallen in love" with them and with their material culture. She remained in Bishkek, did field work, taught and published. Her archive of photographs is an ethnographic treasure. She was given the title of "Honored Science Worker," was a "Laureate of the State Prize of Kyrgyzstan", and was a recipient of a Presidential Stipend. She had become a much-respected older woman, a *baibichia.*

In her last decades, Klavdiia Ivanovna had been working with artists on a book about Kyrgyz costume which would contribute substantially to a better appreciation by the Kyrgyz of their past and a recognition of Kyrgyz artistry and craftsmanship. With her death though, the still unpublished book manuscript, which would have served as a capstone to her illustrious career, disappeared.

Klavdiia Ivanovna never had a bad word about anyone. If she had nothing good to say, she said nothing; she never mentioned the

Klavdiia Anitpina Archive

Fig. 5. Klavdiia Antipina (center) in the field. Kyrgyzstan, c. 1955-60.

name of Josef Stalin. In talking about her earier years, she equated the "greatness of Moscow" and the "greatness of The Cathedral of Christ The Savior." She would name the streets along which she had walked daily on her way to the University, her route passing by the Cathedral, which was dynamited by Stalin's orders in 1931 and rebuilt only after the collapse of the Soviet Union. We speculate that by emphasizing the Cathedral, she obliquely was criticizing Stalin.

Stalin's regime spared neither her family nor the Kyrgyz. In his *Bishkek Handbook, Inside and Out* (Literary Kyrgyzstan 1994), Daniel Prior describes the time when many of the local Kyrgyz intelligentsia were eliminated by unpublicized executions. There is a major Kyrgyz national memorial southeast of Bishkek at Ata Beyit, a once secret mass grave where the remains of nearly 140 victims have been found. The remains of the father of the distinguished Kyrgyz writer, Chinghiz Atimatov, were found there. The museum at Ata Beyit displays a photograph of Aitmatov, who, together with Askar Akaev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, is holding a box containing the remains of the writer's father, Torekul Aitmatov. Chinghiz Aitmatov is quoted as having said at the time, "Father, I have looked for you for fifty-three years. Now I have found you…." The museum also juxtaposes a photograph of a rather pleased-looking Josef Stalin and a photograph of a skull with a holes, bullet holes. One is reminded of the words of Learned Hand, the respected American judge: "…Those who begin coercive elimination of dissent, soon find themselves eliminating dissenters. Compulsory unification of opinion achieves only the unanimity of the graveyard."[1]

Klavdiia Ivanovna's best friend in Bishkek had been Sofiia Petrovna Choi, who was Korean. Sofiia's husband, K. Shorukov, a local government official, is another of those whose remains have been identified in the mass grave at Ata Beyit. The two women had much in common. Each had lost a husband during the Stalin regime. Each had been labeled an "enemy of the people." They were about the same age; their sons were of the same age. Klavdiia Ivanovna would have known at the time that Sofiia Petrovna had lost her husband, even as she herself earlier had lost her own husband to arrest, imprisonment and eventual death.

Over the years, Klavdiia Ivanovna seriously considered, but ultimately rejected, living once again in Moscow. She loved the Kyrgyz people, she loved the things they made, and she had friends in Bishkek. Despite personal experiences which would have broken a weaker individual and the barrier of being an "outsider," she dedicated nearly the last half of her life to preserving unique ethnographic information about the Kyrgyz. Still largely unknown in the West, Klavdiia Ivanovna Antipina deserves to be recognized as one of the world's most prominent scholars of Central Asian culture, the highly respected "mother of Kyrgyz ethnography" (Fig. 6).

About the Author

John Sommer is a retired urological surgeon whose interest in Kyrgyzstan has grown over the past decade. During multiple visits there he made the acquaintance of Klavdiia Antipina and people who knew her. He is a trustee of the Textile Museum (Washington, D.C.) and a member of The Textile Society of America. He has previously been a member of The Board of Directors of the Textile Arts Council of The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, president of The San Francisco Bay Area Rug Society and chair of The Executive Committee of The International Conference on Oriental Carpets. He and his wife, Donna, have two sons who are teachers.

Note

1. Quoted by Theodore B. Schwartz, in *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 44/3 (2001): 434.

Photograph by John Sommer

Fig. 6. Klavdiia Antipina at home, seated at her desk. 3 September 1992.