

Socialist Modernization and Landscape Change in the Middle Reach of the Ili River, Republic of Kazakhstan

Mitsuko Watanabe¹⁾, Yuki Konagaya²⁾, Tomohiro Akiyama³⁾, Jumpei Kubota¹⁾

- 1) Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, Japan
2) National Museum of Ethnology, Japan
3) University of Tokyo, Japan

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1. Introduction

During the 20th century, Central Asian people experienced drastic change in their surroundings. Agricultural and industrial development in the Soviet Union had a particularly great influence on Central Asian life. Following the trend of that time, environmental issues were seen due to the increase in human activity. For example, agricultural developments in the Amu River and Syr River basin that aimed to increase cotton production resulted in a decline in water levels of the Aral Sea.

When faced with environmental issues, the accurate and reliable establishment of cause and effect is crucial. However, we must also remain mindful of the complex systems behind environmental issues, and it is important to also recognize political, economical and social factors. It is within the context of these factors that we examine issues surrounding changes to the human society of Central Asia.

Human activity encompasses many social categories such as personal, group, settlement, states

In addition to these tangible landscape factors such as settlements (buildings), infrastructure, and agricultural land, intangible factors such as agricultural techniques and immigration were also important factors in constructing the landscape in this region.

As mentioned above, orchards for vintage started when sovkhoz ‘Kazakhstan’ was established. It is important to note that cultivation techniques for vineyards were unconventional, and were transplanted into this region from outside at the same time. Not unlike the other areas of Kazakhstan (Oka, 1999), many Ukraine or Tatar agricultural immigrants came to the Kaipov village to alleviate the shortage of workers there. Indeed, agricultural immigrants played an important role in the agricultural growth of this region. However, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, most immigrants returned to their mother country. As a result, the ethnic composition of the village drastically changed twice. Furthermore, during socialist modernization, new agricultural techniques as well as immigrants influenced the landscape dynamism significantly. It is suggested that the high mobility of the ‘intangible landscape,’ rather than the tangible that remains after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Typically, landscape forms voluntarily. However in this region, ‘socialistic landscape’ was formed by the Soviet Union in a top-down manner. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the power to maintain the production system, i.e. people and the techniques they possessed, departed. From the point of view of the landscape formation process, disorganization of the productive system (sovkhоз ‘Ka-zakhstan’) following the collapse of the Soviet Union were lead by the detachment of the formation process between ‘tangible landscape’ and ‘intangible landscape’.

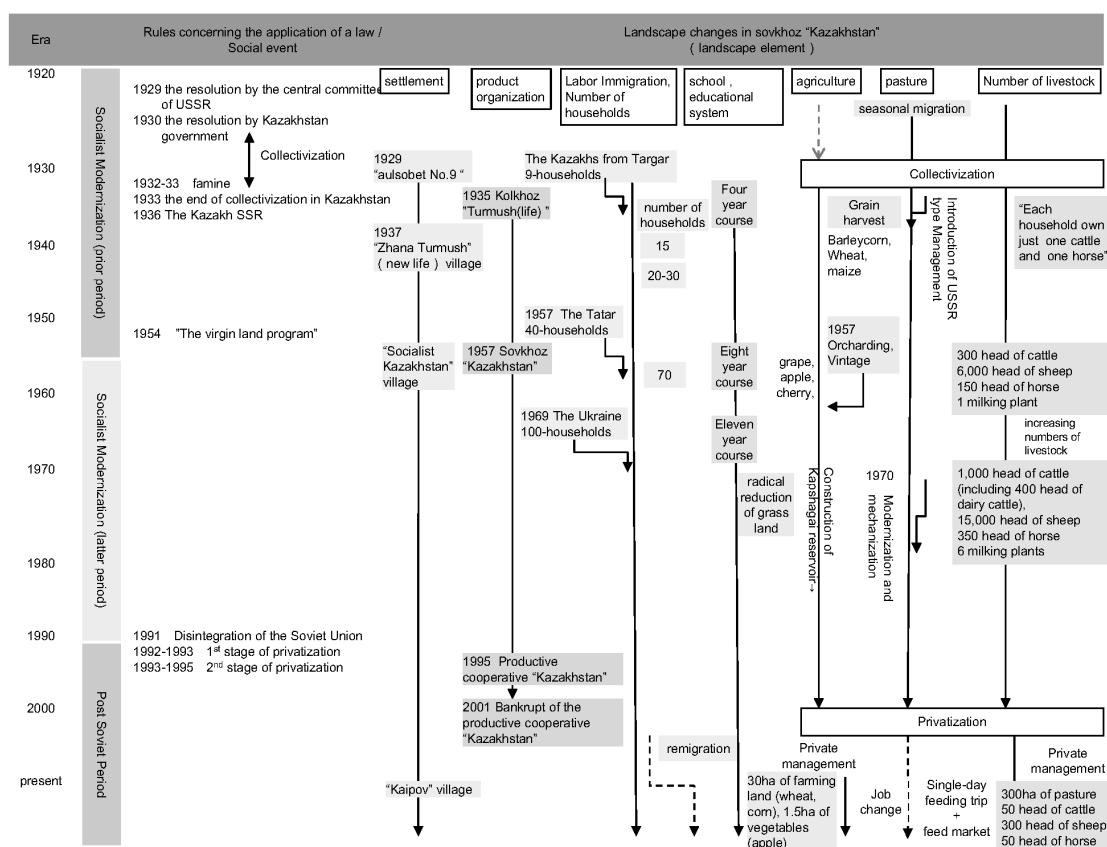


Fig.6 Landscape change around the Kaipov Village.

and nation, and relationships among societal domains and the natural environment is highly variable. The purpose of this paper is to clarify the changes in the landscape of the rural region in the Almaty oblast, Republic of Kazakhstan, during the Soviet era. To this end, we focused on the individuals living in the local society. Based on interviews of people within the survey area, the landscape changes surrounding individual lives and settlements were reconstructed. The actual situations of historical changes to the rural region during the Soviet Era and the socialist modernization's impacts on the Kazakhs people's life and way natural resource use are discussed.

2. Survey area

2.1. Historical background

Nomads occupied Kazakhstan before the 19th century. The 19th century saw an increase in agricultural immigrants due to the agricultural (colonial) policies of the Russian Empire. An increase in agricultural land led to a corresponding decrease in pasture land. Consequently, nomadic people at the time were forced to adapt to a semi-nomadic style (Okuda, 1982). According to the population census in 1926, about 67% of total economic units were a product of semi-nomadic culture (Okuda, 1982).

Agricultural developments in Kazakhstan had two primary developmental periods. First was the collectivization period (1929-1933). During this period, nomads were forced to settle and entered the kolkhoz (collective farm) as labour. The second period was centered around the 'Virgin Land Program' in the 1950's, and vast agricultural lands were mainly developed in the northern steppe of Kazakhstan (Nobe, 2003). The collectivization and 'Virgin Land Program' drastically changed the Kazakh's traditional lifestyle, regional community, economy and use of natural resources (Okuda, 1982; Olcott, 1995). Agricultural production was ultimately increased during the Soviet era. The eventual collapse of the Soviet Union damaged the agricultural economy in Kazakhstan (Nobe, 2003).

There was a remarkable decrease in the Kazakhstan population between 1910-30's (the collectivization period) and 1990's (the collapse of the Soviet Union period) as well as drastic changes in ethnic composition (Oka, 1999). Before the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Kazakhs represented a majority



Fig.1 Survey Area

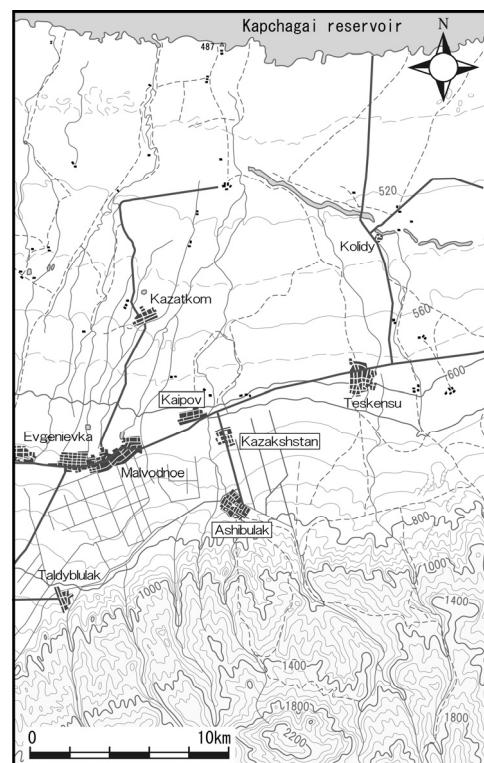


Fig.2 Topographical Map around former sovkhoz 'Kazakhstan'

of the population, but population rate decrease along with an increase of agricultural immigrants rendered the Kazakhs as a minority (Oka, 1999). However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many agricultural immigrants returned to their own countries, and the ethnic composition in Kazakhstan thus changed again (Oka, 1999). In this study, the local changes will be calcified in response to these large-scale (national level) changes.

2.2. Survey area

In this study, the Kaipov village in the Enbekshi Kazakh Raion of the Almaty Oblast, Kazakhstan Republic, is investigated (Fig.1, Fig.2). The survey area is located in the southern part of Kazakhstan, neighbouring the border of China and Kyrgyzstan. Geographically, it is located in the middle reaches of the Ili River that rises in the Tian Shan Mounts. In this region, little branches flowing to the Ili Basin form alluvial fan complexes.

Kazakhstan agriculture possesses a regional peculiarity along the latitude. It has grain fields in the north, stockbreeding in the middle and intensive irrigation farming in the south (Nobe, 2003). The survey area belongs within the “intensive farming area”. Orchard and tobacco fields characterize the landscape of the alluvial fan, at present.

Kaipov village was one of the production bases of the vintage sovkhoz ‘Kazakhstan’. Sovkhoz ‘Kazakhstan’ consists of 3 villages altogether, the Kaipov (old Socialist Kazakhstan), Kazakhstan and Ashibulak (old Anatolievka) (Fig.2). Sovkhoz ‘Kazakhstan’ is located on one of the alluvial fan complexes, Ashiblak village is located on top of the fan and the other two villages are located in the lower part portion.

3. Method

To examine and discuss the historical changes of the individual lives, settlements and productive organizations, we focused on landscape changes. The landscape is defined as ‘reflection of the accumulated human lives and behaviours’ (Ashikaga, 1982). That is, the landscape reveals the complex system of human activity, the interaction between humans and nature. Therefore, it comprises a significant view for this research. The methods employed in this study included document analysis and interviews. At first, through document analysis, the outline of the formation process and historical changes of the kolkhoz and sovkhoz organization are described. Second, that outline is given body and substances though the landscape analysis based on the interview.

3.1. Analysis of the documents and statistics

Documents, such as the annual report of each kolkhoz and sovkhoz and statistical data that is archived in the *National Archives at Almaty Oblast* (*Государственный архив Алматинской области: ГААО*) were analyzed. In addition, online data from the *Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan* were also analyzed.

3.2. Clarifying the landscape changes in ordinary life through Interview

In order to examine landscape change, semi-structured interviews with elderly people were carried out. Some of the landscape features were extracted from their narrative. Total number of the

people who interviewed with is 53 at Oct.2009. This paper centres around an interview of an old man who was born and grew up in the Kaipov village and worked in sovkhoz ‘Kazakhstan’ as a leader of the stockbreeding brigade and agricultural farm until he retired. Landscape factors were extracted from his story and the historical landscape change dynamics of the Kaipov village were reconstructed. In this region, population have high mobility, interviewee who spent a lot of part of his or her life within the village is very novelty. His story, including almost all history of the village, is very important for this study.

The landscape features that we focused on are as follows;

- Agricultural landscapes: farm land, irrigation channel, crops
- Pastoral landscapes: pasture, livestock, feeds
- Ordinary life landscapes: people, foods, houses, educational/cultural institution and lifeline.
- Natural landscapes: rivers, grassland, mountains

The contents of their stories, in a matter of course, include some conflicts with the official documents or annual reports of the sovkhoz or kolkhoz. Because conception of the landscape includes subjectivity in a broad sense, we deferred to his memory when we reconstructed the landscape changes surrounding his life.

4. The history of the sovkhoz ‘Kazakhstan’ based on the documents

This section briefly reviews the history of the sovkhoz ‘Kazakhstan’ that is mainly based on documents archived in GAAO (Fig.3). In this area, many kolkhozes had been established in the 1930’s, after collectivization. Around Ashibulak, Kazakhstan and Kaipov village, some kolkhozes were newly established.

At first, kolkhoz ‘Buddenniy’ was established in 1930 at the Ashiblulak (old Anatrievka) village. Second, kolkhoz ‘Turmush’ was established in 1935. Kolkhoz ‘Turmush’ was placed in Kazakhstan village. The name of kolkhoz ‘Turmush’ was changed to ‘Socialist Kazakhstan’ in 1935. In 1950, kolkhoz ‘Buddenniy’ and ‘Socialist Kazakhstan’ were unified. Finally, kolkhoz ‘Buddenniy’ was later re-established as sovkhoz ‘Kazakhstan’ that specialized in vintage, in 1958. In 1995, after collapse of SSSR, sovkhoz ‘Kazakhstan’ was re-organized into a ‘cooperative Kazakhstan’ based on privatization policies.

Documents concerning the end of ‘cooperative Kazakhstan’ were not found. According to the interview, the cooperative ended in 2002.

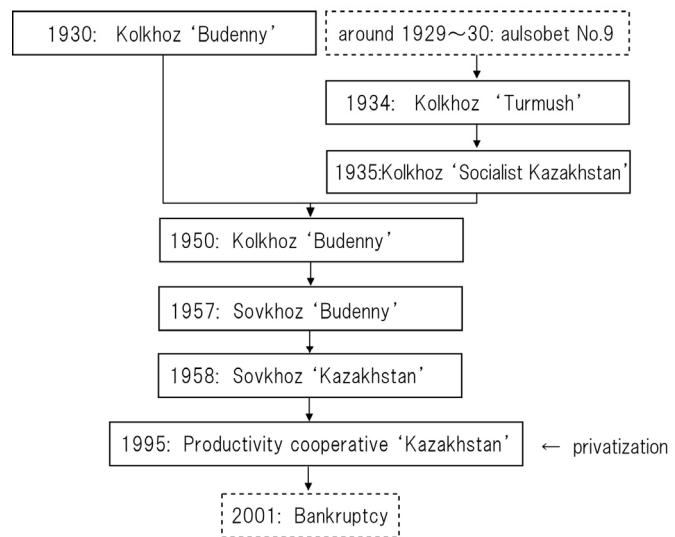


Fig.3 History of the sovkhoz ‘Kazakhstan’

5. Landscape changes in the Kaipov village

This chapter reviews the landscape changes around the Kaipov village through the analysis of the interview. In the text that follows, excerpts from the interview narrative portions are shown in ‘*italics*’. Furthermore, the sentence without an explanatory note is a story of an old man who was born at Kaipov village (old 9th village, aul sobet No.9) in 1936, and worked in sovkhoz ‘Kazakhstan’ as a leader of the stockbreeding brigade and agricultural farms.

5.1. Ordinary life landscapes

5.1.1. Foundation of the settlement

‘In 1929, my parents moved here from Talgar. They were employed by a rich Russian in Talgar at that time. However, they had to move here after the formation of the Soviet Union (USSR). They came to here with nine families including their relation’s...they owned only one cattle and a horse per household. They gathered their cattle and established a commune because it was a convenient way to breed their livestock. The commune was established at ‘Kossial’ near here. The settlement was named <<9th aul sobet>> from this event...’

In the late 1920’s, his parents were employed by a Russian kulak (rich farmer) as cottagers in Talgar. However, Russian kulak had to relinquish their private property during collectivization. People who worked at the Russian kulak had lost their employment and had to move to new fields. They settled down at the new site and formed a commune, a form of collective farm, at the same time. According to his expression, ‘there were no trees, no houses’. This ‘9th aul sobet (9th village)’ was the new settlement that formed in 1929. Confusion caused by collectivization and forced settlement impacted the establishment of new settlements. The formation of new settlements and the collective farms foundation occurred simultaneously.

5.1.2. Migration

There were some peaks of population inflow and outflow. As referenced above, the first inflow peak in 1929 was connected to the formation of settlements. This inflow was triggered by collectivization and occupied by the Kazakhs people.

‘... the settlement was called the <<9th aul sobet (9th village)>> until 1937. At the first time, there were no people except the 9 families. However, many people came to this village. When the number of households increased from 9 to 15, the village name had changed to <<Zhana Turmush>>...Because, it was affected by famine at that time, people were wandering and looking forward to moving to a better place. And some of them came into this village. Basically, the wandering people were the Kazakhs. ... In 1947, after the end of the war, the name of the village had changed from <<Zhana Turmush>> to <<Socialist Kazakhstan>>’.

The second peak was in the late 1930’s. As earlier research pointed out, this period was marked by serious social confusion caused by a natural disaster ‘Jut’ and radical forced settlement policy. People died or fled due to starvation during this period. It has been said that 40% of the population in Kazakhstan was lost (Oka, 1999).

'When fruit cultivation was started in 1957, various ethnic people immigrated. For example Tatar, there is Crimean Tatar, you know...40 households came to this village...In, 1969, 100 households came from Ukraine. However, only 5-6 households remain at present'.

'41 years ago, I came from Ukraine with my husband and many other Ukraine people. Many of them had gone back to our home country'. (an agricultural immigrant woman from Ukraine)

The third peek of population inflow and outflow occurred during the agricultural migration after reorganization of the sovkhoz 'Kazakhstan'. Approximately 40 Tatar households immigrated in 1957 and 100 Ukraine households immigrated in 1969. The fourth peek inflow/outflow was the returning of them to their original lands. Many of these immigrants went back to their own countries following the corruption of SSSR or sovkhoz.

5.1.3. Name of Settlement

There is no description on the documents when the 'aulsobet No.9' and 'Zhana Turmush village' was established. But, it is suggested by the narrative, 'aulsobet No.9' established in 1929, and the name of the settlement changed to 'Zhana Turmush' in 1937. The settlement was renamed 'Socialist Kazakhstan' after the Great Patriotic War (World War II). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the name 'Kaipov Village' had been established.

Historical change of the settlement name was told in associate with the social events such as increase of households or war.

5.1.4. Educational institution

'In 1936 or 1935, some villagers who were about the same age as my father build a school by using the materials from the house of 'Bai (wealthy people of the Kazakhs)'. The school was 4 year course school. All students were Kazakhs...I graduated from the 4 year school and went to the school in the Ashisai village that was 20km apart from this village to learn at a higher grade. The name of the village was 'May day' in old times. And there was a school to learn till the 7th grade'

'My sons learned for 8 years in this village, and graduated from the 10th grade at the Kazakhstan village. In present time, we have an 11 year course school. That village (Kazakhstan village) and Ashiblack village also have 11 year course school...that is to say that these 3 villages have 11 year school'.

Fig.4 shows a school in the Kaipov village (older Socialist Kazakhstan village). In the 1940's, there were 4-year schools in the Kaipov village. In fact, there were 4-year course schools in each village at the time. Children who wanted to go higher grades had to go to the Ashisai village (Fig.4b).

In the 1950's, there were 8-year course schools in the village. There was a 10-year course school in the Kazakhstan village, next to the Kaipov village. In 1960's, after the sovkhoz 'Kazakhstan' established, each village had 11-year course schools (Fig.4c). Presently, children living in the Kaipov village can finish their compulsory education in their own settlement (Fig.5)

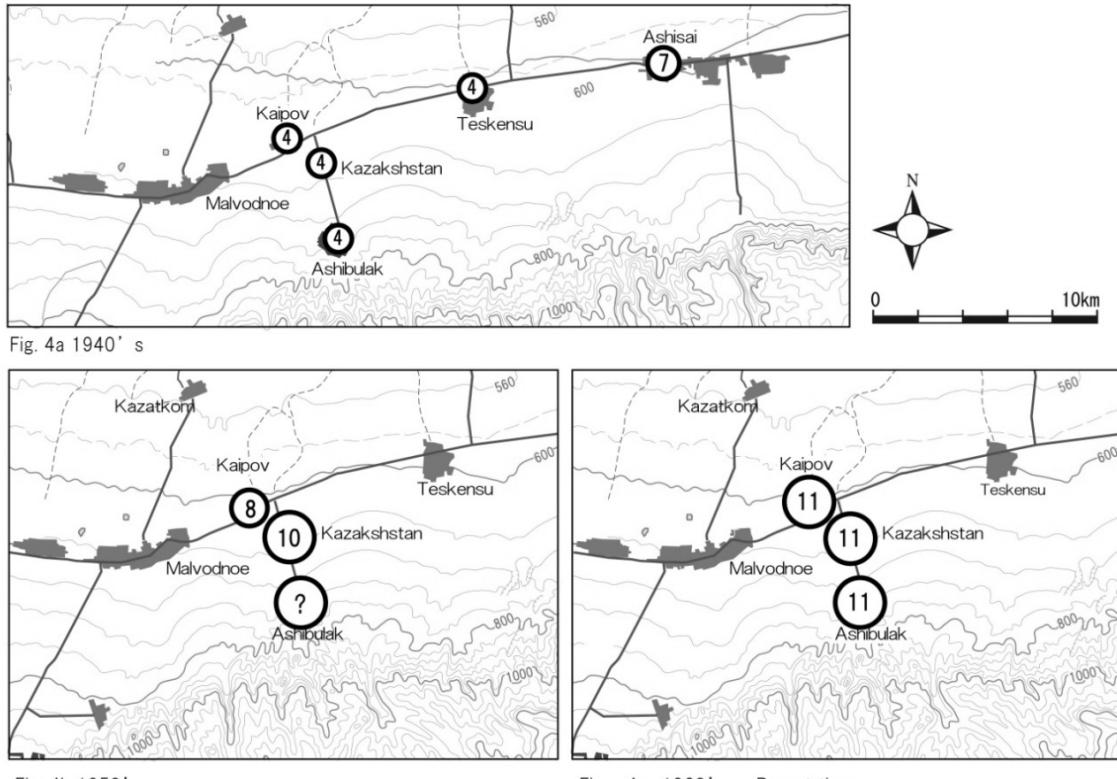


Fig.4 Historical changes of the school system based on the interview

5.1.5. Infrastructure

Concerning the well

'The well in front of my former house was 2 m deep. And well water was salty. The well that we are using now was drilled about 35 years ago'. (Female from Ukraine.)

Concerning the well for villagers' potable water;

'That well was drilled in the 1970's, I think. The same age to the coop near to the well... and the depth of that well is about 70-80m deep, hence the quality of water is good. Deeper water is better'

Concerning water used for irrigation:

'We used the water flowing from the mountain in olden days. There were irrigation channels at the orchard farm. Those channels were built in 1980'.

We were able to obtain only fragmentary information concerning the village infrastructure, as there was inconsistent information across interviews. Nevertheless, the well (artesian well), drilled



Fig. 5 11 years course school in Kaipov village.

in the 1970's was 70-80m deep, and suitable for villagers' potable water.

5.2. Agricultural landscapes

5.2.1. Crop

'At the kolkhoz <<Turmush>> period, we cultivated only grain such as wheat and barley. Fruit was rarely cultivated at that time. In 1957, seeds and seedlings of the fruit were brought into this sovkhoz and we began to cultivate fruits'.

The sovkhos 'Kazakhstan' is located on the alluvial fan formed by the Dishiblak River flowing from *Tau-Turgen* (Turgen Mts.). Orchards are commonly found along this landscape. However, the narrative from the interview suggests that the harvesting of fruits goes back less than 60 years. From the 1930's to 1950's, the kolkhoz period, only grains such as wheat and barley were cultivated on the lower part of the alluvial fan. There were little fruit orchards at the time. In 1957, *kolkhoz Buddeny* reorganized to *sovkhos Buddeny* (later *sovkhos 'Kazakhstan'*). In February of this year, seeds and seedlings were brought into this area, and fruits farming began in the region.

5.2.2. Cultivation techniques

'When the kolkhoz changed to the sovkhoz, there held a course to study how we should cultivate orchards. The people who had good records at the course proceed to the collage in the urban areas and continued their studies. People who underachieved worked here. Besides, the teacher came to the village to teach skills'.

It is suggested that the cultivation techniques for vineyards were not conventional or ordinary skills, but were transplanted into this alluvial fan from outside in the late 1950's with seedless and wine-plants.

5.3. Livestock farming

5.3.1. Livestock

'When sovkoze was stabled in 1957, the number of the cattle was 300 heads. There were 600 heads of sheep, 150 heads of horse and 1 milk plant. As the population increased, kindergarten and school were constructed. Because people needed a lot of milk, we increased the number of cattle. Then number of cattle increased gradually, and the milk plant also increased by 6. During 1957 to 1970, the numbers of sheep increased from 6,000 to 15,000 heads'.

Livestock farming in the sovkhoz was expanded concurrently with agricultural development. As mentioned above, there was only one cattle and one horse per household in 1930's. However, sovkhoz 'Kazakhstan' owned 300 heads of cattle, 6000 sheep, 150 horses and 1 milk-plant. In 1970, the number of livestock increased to 1000 heads of cattle including 400 heads of milk cow, 15000 sheep, 350 horses, and 6 milk-plants. The sovkhoz 'Kazakhstan' provided meats and milk for themselves. Milk was mainly provided to the kindergarten and the surplus was added to the compulsory delivery to the government.

5.3.2. Pasture land

In the Soviet Era, daily cattle and poultry owned by the kolkhoz and sovkhoz around the middle reaches of Ili River were breed in the shed throughout the year. In addition, sheep, horse and beef caw were brought to the pastureland in the mountains and put to grazing during summer season by shepherders. These livestock went back to the individual winter camps for each group.

'Former winter camp was located in the bank of the Ili River, but the recent camp is located in this village. Before the Kapshagi reservoir had been built, there was pasture land. Due to the building of the Kapshagai reservoir, pasture land was lost. Due to less snow covering the Kapshagai reservoir, it served as a good place for a winter camp. Now, we breed our livestock in this village during winter' .

In the case of the sovkhoz 'Kazakhstan', the grassland in the Tau-Turugen (Turugen Mts.), approximately 2000 m elevations high, was allocated as a summer pasture. The winter camp was located in the bank of the Ili River until 1970. The Ili River bank was an effective winter camp because of the decreased snow cover there. However, reed land around the bank of Ili River was submerged by the Kapshagi reservoir, created for the purposes of generating hydroelectric power in 1970.

6. Discussion

Individual landscape factors, social events and policies are unified and shown in Fig.6. The figure shows landscape changes around Kaipov (old Socialist Kazakhstan) village. The territory of the Kaipov village included the middle-to-lower part of the Dshiblak alluvial fan, representative of the landscape change along the alluvial fan.

Fig.6 additionally shows the landscape changes around Kaipov village after the 1920's. There were historical transition periods of landscape change. First was the collectivization period (1929-1933), second was the period of re-organization of the productive system from kolkhoz to sovkhoz (1950-60's) and third was the disorganization of the productive system (sovkhоз 'Kazakhstan') following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

During the first period, new settlements such as *9th aul sobet* were established in 1929 amidst the social upheaval that accompanied collectivization and enforced settlement. According to the interview, no people lived on the alluvial fan at that time. The settlement on the Dishibulak alluvial fan was likely a new landscape that formed after the 1930's.

The second period, the reorganization period from kolkhoz to sovkhoz, can be considered as the time during which the artificial landscape expanded. After the sovkhoz 'Kazakhstan' established, the agricultural land and number of livestock increased. According to the interview, fruit trees were transplanted from the other region. In parallel with the agricultural growth, residential infrastructure and cultural facilities were equipped. Likewise, new machines (drilling machines for well construction and milking machines) or other new techniques were introduced. Similar to that, other regions of the Soviet Union introduced by Takakura (2000), construction processes of the social community, cultural basement and economical basement of the kolkhoz or sovkhoz were carried out simultaneously in this region. Therefore, landscape changes from the 1930's to 1960's had characteristics of socialist modernization.

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