



# The Force of Custom in Kyrgyzstan: Allegra's Judith Beyer discusses her new book

Allegra  
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<https://soundcloud.com/sean-guillory-3/srb083>

Sean Guillory of [Sean's Russia Blog](#) spoke with our Publications and Reviews Editor [Judith Beyer](#) about her book [The force of custom. Law and the ordering of everyday life in Kyrgyzstan.](#)



Sean asked Judith what inspired her to do a study on “custom” (Kyrgyz *salt*) and how we can understand the concept anthropologically, how it is communicated, what metaphors are associated with it and in what contexts we can observe it in action.

Sean was also interested in hearing Judith’s reasons for not anonymizing her main informants, how people in her fieldsite conceive of their history, what the historical trajectories of the local courts of elders (*aksakal* courts) are, how Soviet life has been unmade after Kyrgyzstan gained independence, how we should understand the role of the state in the countryside and what the roles of elders and their relationship with villagers, politicians and state administrators are.

Finally, they discuss her decision to end the book with a criticism of the concept of postsocialism which, Judith argues, is not central for understanding everyday life in Kyrgyzstan.

[This podcast was first released on Sean’s Russia Blog.](#)

**Music:**

Joy Division, “She’s Lost Control,” *Unknown Pleasures*, 1979.