

## GENDER AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL  
STUDIES OF  
THE MIDDLE EAST AND ASIA  
(S.E.P.S.M.E.A.)

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# GENDER AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

*Women of Central Asia, the Caucasus and Turkey*

EDITED BY

FERIDE ACAR & AYŞE GÜNES-AYATA



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This book is dedicated to

*the memory of*

SIRRIYE AYBAR and NERMIN GÜNEŞ  
our mothers,

whose generation paved the way  
for Turkish women to public life.



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The Middle East Technical University, *Alma Mater* and academic 'home' to both of us, has provided the resources and support for founding these two units and organizing the conference. This conference and the present volume were also greatly aided by generous financial support from UNESCO, UNDP, the Directorate General on the Status and Problems of Women, the Turkish International Cooperation Agency and Turkish Airlines. Without their commitment to scientific research and international exchange, neither the conference nor the book would have materialized.

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Feride Acar and Ayşe Güneş-Ayata  
Ankara, July 1999

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Following the breakdown of the socialist regimes of Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, there has been an enormous increase in the interest in ex-socialist countries among social scientists. This interest is evident in the flourishing of literature on the region as well as the increasing prominence of post-Soviet studies programs at many universities. The dissolution of the Soviet Union not only required social scientists to review and reformulate their assumptions and theories but also provided a fresh field for the new generation of political scientists, economists, sociologists, anthropologists, and historians.

However, research on the region has been largely restricted to state or institution-centric studies that focused on structural adjustment and macro-economic issues or political and religious movements and institutions. Unfortunately, not much has been said on the impacts of economic and political changes upon social transformation in general, and upon social stratification and culture in particular. While the changing roles, statuses, and position of women did not constitute a main area of concern in this increasing body of literature, the living conditions and situation of Eastern European and Russian women have, nevertheless, received relatively more interest than those of their sisters in the other ex-Soviet republics, namely of Central Asia and the Caucasus.<sup>1</sup>

This volume has attempted to bring together scholars from different countries to share their insights on the experiences and position of women in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Turkey in order to provide a comparative map of a region, where states have taken major initiatives in shaping women's roles and status, particularly in public life. The pace and extent of economic change, state intervention, and cultural changes within the private sphere are some of the fundamental dimensions of comparison used here. Issues and problems of identity, particularly national and gender identity, are common to most of the cultures dealt with

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<sup>1</sup> A short bibliography of some of the prominent studies on women's conditions and issues in Eastern Europe and Russia has been provided.

in this volume, and thus provide a basis for the discussion of similarities as well as differences.

The comparison of Central Asian and Caucasian countries with Turkey is a very relevant, but so far neglected, endeavor in the literature. It is well known that many of the former Soviet countries have significant historical ties and share cultural roots as well as a common religion, Islam, with Turkey. Despite this however, these countries had a quite different historico-political experience from Turkey and for three quarters of a century any socio-cultural exchange amongst them was virtually halted. This fact renders the comparison of similar cultures that had taken thoroughly different routes highly interesting and relevant for the future of the region. The presence of remnants of socio-cultural ties that extended beyond contemporary national borders and could nonetheless be revived in the aftermath of the Soviet disintegration to form potential bases of political and economic linkages makes such comparison meaningful and interesting.

With the disintegration of the USSR, the question of whether Turkey would set a model for the Central Asian Republics in the process of democratization and the transition to market economy started to be discussed among political scientists and international relations experts. In terms of economic relations, numerous Turkish firms began to invest in the region, which became a promising trade partner. Social and cultural exchange also flourished with student exchange programs and visiting scholars. Migration is yet another dimension of the relationship since Turkey has been receiving immigrants continuously from the region.

In comparing the socio-political and economic circumstances of the former Soviet Republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus with Turkey, state intervention, its timing and extent as well as style, is of the essence. Similarly, such comparison needs to take into account the role played by the market economy in all these countries. Turkey experienced the development of market economy much earlier when compared to Central Asia and the Caucasus, regions that are only currently undergoing such a transition. In all cases, the state has been the main instigator of social change and modernization processes that have been launched in the name of Westernization in Turkey and for the sake of communism in the USSR. Furthermore, both of these processes incorporated a significant gender dimension in their ideologies and mobilized women, in

unprecedented forms and scales, as both actors and symbols of the socio-cultural transformation they aimed at.

In this sense, the present volume attempts to review the social, economic and political conditions of these societies through a lens that has not been used much in the region, that of the women's point of view, with the unique methods and conceptualizations of feminist scholarship. It is hoped that a cross-cultural analysis of women's position in these societies, where gender relations have neither been very extensively studied nor adequately presented to the English-speaking world, will contribute first and foremost to the wealth of literature in international women's studies field. Furthermore, it is hoped that such analysis will ensure a deeper understanding of some of the most relevant aspects, such as identity issues, of contemporary politics in the region.

The articles in this volume can be categorized, on the one hand, in terms of the two salient dimensions of change in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Turkey. The first is the economic circumstances shaped by structural adjustment policies, globalization, and transnational developments. The second is the cultural dimension of change where the focus is on institutions such as family, education, and religion. While the contributions by Beneria, Moghadam and Dayioğlu fall into the first category, the remaining articles focus on the latter aspect of change. Needless to say, in the real life conditions of the communities reviewed in this volume, these two aspects of change intermingle and influence each other. However, an analytical division seems helpful in the examination of globalization and fragmentation as apparently opposite trends.

Besides the analytical separation between economic and cultural dimensions, another line of differentiation characterizing the contributions to this volume is with respect to the work of area specialists as opposed to the studies by women's studies experts and scholars from various disciplines. Whereas authors such as Rorlich and Tohidî are area specialists whose analyses reflect interdisciplinary perspectives, others, like İmamoğlu, Hortaçsu and Baştuğ, Heyat, and Dayioğlu approach their topics from the perspective of and with the analytical tools of their respective disciplines.

In this volume, the first set of articles, under the heading of "*Patterns of Female Participation in Competitive Markets*", highlights the gender-specific impacts of market transition and the formation of global markets. Lourdes Beneria's "*Gender and the Construction of*

*Global Markets: Engendering Polanyi's 'The Great Transformation'*” discusses the gender dimensions of the growth of global markets with specific emphasis on the tension between the assumptions of economic rationality associated with market behavior and the real life experiences of many women. She suggests that as international capital increases production in the economies of post-Soviet Central Asian countries and the Caucasus, the employment of women at relatively low wages is likely to follow. Her argument that the question of placing the economic activity and the market at the service of human development needs to be gendered sets the basic tone of this part of the volume.

Valentine Moghadam, in her article “*Gender and Economic Reforms: A Framework for Analysis and Evidence from Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Turkey*”, develops a framework for understanding and explaining gender-differentiated outcomes of market reforms. She analyzes the relationship between gender ideology and political economy and argues that the persistence of traditional gender ideology explains the vulnerability of women against economic restructuring.

The section ends with Meltem Dayıođlu’s article entitled “*Labor Market Participation of Women in Turkey*”. Dayıođlu discusses the inequality in education between women and men in Turkey and its impacts on the functioning of the labor market. Her argument is that in Turkey, the inequitable allocation of resources for the female child’s schooling reflects itself in the labor market through the lower labor market participation of women.

The next set of articles comprise the section “*Changing Home Domain*” where the transformation of the private sphere as a result of socio-cultural change is discussed. Nuran Hortaçsu and Sharon Baştuđ’s “*Women in Marriage in Ashkabad, Baku, and Ankara*” is based on research conducted on families in three Turkic capitals focusing on the position of women within the family. While these three societies (Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Turkey) share historical origins, religion (Islam) and traditional patriarchal family systems, they differ significantly in population size, level of industrialization, dominant political influences and dominant sects of Islam. Perhaps rather unexpectedly, Hortaçsu and Baştuđ conclude that in all three societies historical trends and predominant cultural values, rather than the level of industrialization, explain variations in family functioning and women’s status and role within the family.

They thus underline the relative salience of the cultural dimension in the social transformation of the private realm in particular.

In her essay *“Changing Gender Roles and Marital Satisfaction in Turkey”*, Olcay İmamoğlu sets the focus on Turkey as she explores different types of marriages in Turkey and their influence on the spouses’ marital satisfaction. She argues that there has been a trend from traditional to more modern marriages as a result of the rapid social change following the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Her findings indicate that in Turkey, women’s marital satisfaction is positively related to their education, their freedom to choose their own spouse and to marry at a later age, as well as the extent to which they contribute as wage earners, participate in family decisions and develop egalitarian relationships.

Sharon Baştuğ and Nurah Hortaçsu in their ethnographic work, *“The Price of Value: Kinship, Marriage and Meta-Narratives of Gender in Turkmenistan”*, elaborate on the constitution and maintenance of the Turkmen kinship system and household structure. Baştuğ distinguishes patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence as the most important factors that shape the family structure and inherently disadvantage women. The Turkmen kinship system, according to the authors, devalues women as daughters and sisters while attributing great value to them as wives, daughters-in-law and mothers, which is represented by a prolonged and demanding rite of passage for women beginning with the wedding celebration.

The section *“Experiences of Change in the Past”* opens with Azade-Ayşe Rorlich’s *“Intersecting Discourses in the Press of Muslims of Crimea, Middle Volga and the Caucasus: The Woman Question and the Nation”*, where she traces the meanings of these discourses as the Muslims of the Russian Empire enter the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Rorlich, the entry and inclusion of the Muslim women of the Russian Empire into the public debate signaled the systematic problems confronting the Muslim communities of the Empire. Despite its specificities, the Russian colonial project was similar to that of the French and the British in the sense that it linked the advancement of the Muslims to the change in the status of Muslim women, i.e. Russia’s exotic ‘other’ that legitimated the “mission civilisatrice” of the Russians. Rorlich argues that the voice of the colonizer can be challenged by bringing the voices of the Muslims themselves into the picture. Thus, by examining three Tatar and Azeri women’s journals, she points out that Muslim women hardly fit into the sub-

missive and downtrodden image imposed on them by the dominant discourse.

Similarly, Nükhet Sirman considers the relationship between nationalist discourses and gender roles in her *“Gender Construction and Nationalist Discourse: Dethroning the Father in the Early Turkish Novel”*. Sirman criticizes the emphasis on the symbolic aspects of the nationalist discourse for, she argues, this has diverted attention from concern with social relations. She views the creation of new models of femininity and masculinity articulated in nationalist discourses as part of the effort to restructure family practices. It is argued that the discourse of love and compassionate marriage made it possible for the pre-modern extended family ideal to be replaced by that of the modern Turkish nuclear family. The author suggests that while the role of the state in this transition has been much emphasized it was the men and women of the middle classes in Turkey who redefined the family and created the family norms during the process of nation-building.

In her case study *“Azeri Women’s Life Strategies in the Soviet Context”*, Farideh Heyat reviews the changes brought about in women’s lives by the Bolshevik Revolution and analyzes the varying notions of femininity in Azeri society, before and after the revolution. She discusses Azeri women’s particular coping strategies to reconcile the varied and sometimes conflicting expectations of their community with those of the Soviet state. According to Heyat, these women resorted to different mechanisms to cope with the double burden of careers and heavy domestic duties. Chief among them was the system of reliance on the family and intergenerational support. Heyat’s analysis also reveals clues for understanding the gender-based dynamics of adaptation to social change.

The last section of the volume consists of the articles grouped under the title of *“Gender and National Identity Construction”*. Colette Harris, in her *“The Changing Identity of Women in Tajikistan in the Post-Soviet Period”* evaluates the impact of the socio-economic and political changes in post-Soviet Tajikistan on the identities of Tajik women. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Tajiks have encountered economic collapse, the revival of Islam, and a civil war which resulted in extremely difficult living conditions, particularly for women. Harris maintains that there is a difference between women’s ‘ideal’ identities and their real identities in Tajik society

and women claim the 'ideal' traditional identities as part of their strategy for self-protection and high self-esteem.

Ayşe Saktanber and Aslı Özataş-Baykal shift the focus to a neighboring country, Uzbekistan, in their article entitled "*Homeland within Homeland: Women and the Formation of Uzbek National Identity*", where they analyze the making of national identity in post-Soviet Uzbekistan by focusing on a specific local institution, the mahalla, i.e. the neighborhood community. The authors examine the parameters of the formation of Uzbek national identity from the point of view of everyday social practices and thus point out how women operate as a linkage between micro and macro practices of power that are exercised to maintain the new national order.

In the second essay on Uzbekistan, "*Women's Position In Uzbekistan Before And After Independence*", Dilarom Alimova and Nodira Azimova evaluate Soviet policies to emancipate women and discuss the problems that emerged due to this process. They analyze women's organizations in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. The authors argue that women are the guardians of tradition, particularly in the rural areas. In the ethnographic section of their study, they examine the living conditions of women in villages and mahallas of the Fergana Valley with respect to their roles and functions in the organization of rites.

The final article is another ethnography from the North Caucasus. Seteney Shami, in her article "*Engendering Social Memory: Domestic Rituals, Resistance and Identity in the North Caucasus*", examines power and dominance relations within the domestic sphere among Circassian women. She points out the changing nature of these relations parallel to women's new forms of participation in the market place and trading and analyzes the complex relationship that emerges between women's new role as chief breadwinner and their age-old one as custodian of tradition.

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PATTERNS OF FEMALE PARTICIPATION  
IN COMPETITIVE MARKETS



# THE CONSTRUCTION OF GLOBAL MARKETS ENGENDERING POLANYI'S THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION

LOURDES BENERIA

## *1. Introduction*

The process of accelerated globalization that we have witnessed since the late 1960s or early 1970s has been a most powerful source of change—driving national economies and their international dimensions, and affecting many aspects of social, political and cultural life. Researchers, academics, activists and policy makers have found it imperative to focus on these processes so as to best understand the world we live in and its present and future directions. Given the multidimensional aspects of globalization, most academic disciplines have engaged in its analysis. From an economic perspective, a basic feature of globalization is that it has taken place within the context of an ever-expanding market transcending national boundaries. Although the so-called neoliberal model of development has returned to the laissez-faire discourse and practices that characterized nineteenth century capitalism, its global framework raises a different set of issues, thus creating similarities and differences when compared with the earlier expansion of markets. This is so also for countries in transition to market economies from the centralized planning of the former Soviet Union. For them, the formation of domestic markets has been running parallel to their integration in the global economy and to its capitalist framework.

Within this context, much has also been said about gender dimensions in the global economy. Due to the impact of the international women's movement during the past quarter century, gender has become an increasingly important category of analysis, not just in academic work but also in policy and action, and in the dynamics of daily life. As a result, different aspects of the global economy have been analyzed from a gender perspective. They range from topics dealing with women's employment and the

feminization of the labor force to others focusing on gender and technology, structural adjustment policies, poverty, urban development, industrialization and trade liberalization.

One of the conclusions that can be derived from this literature has to do with the important role that women have played in production for global markets. Globalization has taken place at a time when most countries have experienced an increase in women's participation in the paid labor force. Thus, as markets have expanded to new global dimensions, a large proportion of women across countries have been incorporated in paid work without leaving their traditional concentration in unpaid activities, particularly in the domestic sphere (Anker and Hein, 1986; Joeques, 1987; Blumberg et al, 1995). For the economies of the former Soviet Union (SU), the post-1989 period has created contradictory tendencies. Women in these countries had a very high participation in paid labor but, as several papers in this volume show, they have suffered disproportionately from the social costs of the transition, including unemployment, gender discrimination and reinforcement of patriarchal forms. At the same time, the new market forces will probably generate jobs for women as a source of cheap labor, particularly in labor intensive production for global markets; as Moghadam argues in this volume, gender ideology and political economy interact in this direction. Even though the trajectory will probably be different across countries, in the long run the market's impact on women's participation in paid work is likely to resemble some of the trends observed globally. What are the consequences of women's participation in paid market work? If market behavior is associated with the economic rationality of "economic man", is women's behavior becoming more "male"? To the extent that it is possible to talk about women's values and ways of doing—traditionally associated with caring, nurturing and selflessness—are they changing as women's participation in the paid labor market becomes more prevalent?

This paper deals with these questions from a very specific perspective. Starting with Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*, it will discuss, first, the extent to which his analysis of the growth of the market as a social construction during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe can be applied to the more recent formation of global markets. Second, it will "engender" Polanyi's analysis by arguing that this transformation has gender dimensions

and by pointing out that there is a tension between the assumptions of economic rationality associated with market behavior and the real life experiences of many women (and men). Finally, the paper will argue that these assumptions, predominant in orthodox neoclassical economic models, need to be either complemented or replaced by alternative “transformative models” of human behavior.

## 2. *The construction of markets*

In his book *The Great Transformation*, first published in 1944, Polanyi analyzed the birth and growth of the self-regulated market and of laissez-faire capitalism during the Industrial Revolution and up to the early part of the 20th century. The “transformation” referred to the “taming” of the market represented by the social movements that led to the leftist movements and social planning of the 20th century. His emphasis was on the profound change in human behavior represented by market oriented decisions in which gain replaced subsistence as the center of economic activity. Gain and profit, Polanyi argues, never played such an important role in human activity. Critical of Adam Smith’s suggestion that the division of labor in society depended upon the existence of markets and “upon man’s propensity to barter, truck and exchange one thing for another” (p. 43), Polanyi argued instead that the division of labor in earlier societies had depended on “differences inherent in the facts of sex, geography, and individual endowment” (p. 44). For Polanyi, production and distribution were ensured in many societies through two principles not currently associated with economics: reciprocity and redistribution.

These processes were part of an economic system that was “a mere function of social organization,” instead of an economic system that determined social organization (as in a capitalist market economy). However, commenting on Smith, Polanyi argues that “...no misreading of the past ever proved to be more prophetic of the future...” (p. 43) in the sense that, one hundred years after Adam Smith wrote about man’s propensity to barter, truck and exchange, this propensity had become the norm—theoretically and practically—of industrial capitalist/market society. Although Polanyi is not always persuasive in terms of whether the pursuit of

economic gain is a result of market society, its fundamental role is beyond doubt.

For Polanyi, a crucial point in the history of this economic transformation was the step “which makes isolated markets into a [self-regulated] market economy.” One of his basic points is that, contrary to conventional wisdom, this step was not “the natural outcome of the spreading of markets” (p.57). On the contrary, Polanyi argues, the market economy was socially constructed and accompanied by a profound change in the organization of society. Thus, the construction of a laissez-faire market economy required “an enormous increase in continuous, centrally organized and controlled interventionism,” such as in the form of legislative initiatives, including the “complexity of the provisions in the innumerable enclosures laws” (p. 140). Polanyi mentions also the enormous increase in the administrative functions of the state newly endowed with a central bureaucracy, the enforcement of private property and of contracts in market exchange and other transactions:

“The gearing of markets into a self-regulating system of tremendous power was not the result of any inherent tendency of markets towards excrescence, but rather the effect of highly artificial stimulants administered to the body social in order to meet a situation which was created by the no less artificial phenomenon of the machine.” (p. 57)

In this sense, Polanyi’s analysis raises the seemingly contradictory notion of laissez-faire liberalism as “the product of deliberate state action,” including “a conscious and often violent intervention on the part of the government...” (p. 250). Likewise, he describes the formation of a competitive national labor market in 18th and 19th century England as the result of a series of policies that dislocated labor and forced the new laboring classes to work for low wages. In contrast, he points out that what he calls the “collectivist counter-movement” or “great transformation”—the subsequent great variety of actions taken against some of the negative consequences of the expanding market during the 19th and 20th centuries—started in a spontaneous way, as a variety of citizens’ actions resulting from criticisms of capitalist market societies and as a defensive action on the part of different social groups. In fact, Polanyi argues, economic liberals themselves often advocated restrictions on laissez-faire in “well-defined cases of theoretical and practical importance,” such as with the principle of association of

labor and the formation of trade unions, trade protection, and others. Thus, if the great variety of interventions to counteract the market—including those advocated by the different socialist movements—are called “planning,” Polanyi’s argument emphasizes that while “laissez-faire was planned, planning was not” (p. 141).

The profound change represented by the gradual construction of a market society is represented by the shift in human behavior towards the prevalence of rational economic man. As Polanyi put it, “a market economy can only exist in a market society,” that is, it can only exist if it is accompanied with the appropriate changes in norms and behavior that allow the market to function. Economic rationality is based on the expectation that human beings behave in such a way as to achieve maximum money gains; while the entrepreneur seeks to maximize profit, the employee seeks to attain the highest earnings possible, and the consumer the maximization of his/her utility. At the theoretical level, Adam Smith linked the selfish pursuit of individual gain to the maximization of the wealth of nations through the invisible hand of the market and, in doing so, he saw no contradiction between the two.

In that tradition, the assumption of rational economic man has been a basic tenet behind neoclassical economic theory—assumed to be the norm in human behavior and the way to ensure the well-functioning of the market. Rational economic man is assumed to pursue his maximizing goals through competitive behaviour, which is expected to result in the most efficient allocation of resources, including maximization of production at the lowest possible costs. This excludes behavior based on other types of motivation such as altruism, empathy for others, love, the pursuit of art and beauty for its own sake, reciprocity and care; self-less behavior is viewed as belonging to the non-market sector, such as within the family.

### *3. National and global markets*

Many parallels can be traced between the social construction of national markets analyzed by Polanyi and the more recent construction of markets, either at the domestic level—such as in countries from the former Soviet Union (SU) or in cases of privatization of national industries in many countries—or with the expansion and deepening of transnational markets beyond the

nation state. The transition from central planning to market economies during the post-1989 period has been carried out with a great deal of state intervention, often guided by outside forces and teams of advisers from the capitalist world (Kotz, 199; Sachs, 1991). Although the process has been far from smooth, the social construction of markets has taken place at a pace far outweighing the more gradual transition to market economies described by Polanyi. At the same time, and unlike his description of market formations in earlier Europe, the transition has developed within the context of a globalized international capitalist economy. In this sense, some of the transitional processes in the countries of the former SU resemble those observed in many Third World countries, particularly in responding to global forces.

The intensification of globalizing processes during the past thirty years has been unprecedented; in particular, financial markets have become truly global in the sense of transcending national boundaries, followed by the internationalization of production and the liberalization of trade in goods and services. At the national level, these processes have been facilitated by numerous efforts on the part of governments, which have taken an active part in the globalization of domestic economies and their countries' social, political and cultural life. This time, however, the construction of global markets has taken place through the interventions of international forces beyond national boundaries, such as the formation of free trade areas and common markets, the impact of global capital, the intervention of international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the influence of foreign governments and other actors in determining policy. The following provides some examples of such dynamics.

First, the role of the state in enacting deregulation schemes in financial, goods and labor markets has been instrumental in the gradual erosion of economic borders across countries. Although the degree of deregulation varies by economic sector, markets, and countries, the tendency to "free" the market from intervention has become part of economic policy throughout. This has created tensions and opposition on the part of social groups that have lost relative power through deregulation, such as labor unions and labor in general—which has lost previously won benefits in many countries. For this and other reasons, interventions have required a strong hand—à la Polanyi—on the part of the state. The dismant-

ling of the welfare state in high income countries and of the social privileges provided by the former centrally planned economies are other examples of how state actions along these lines have eroded a variety of previously won rights and privileges for large sectors of the population (Standing, 1989; Tilly et al, 1995; Moghadam, 1993). These interventions have often been challenged and opposed by those negatively affected, including large numbers of people across countries.

Second, the formation of transnational entities such as the European Community, ANSEAN, NAFTA, and Mercosur has contributed to the globalization of markets, responding to the initiatives and interests of social actors likely to benefit from such schemes. Likewise, globalization has been channeled through the action of governments as agents in international negotiation; for example, the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations that led to the replacement of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) by WTO (World Trade Organization) in 1995. The latter represented a substantial acceleration in trade liberalization across the globe and the integration of new sectors into liberalization schemes, such as intellectual property rights and services not previously included in GATT. As is well known, such negotiations have often responded to the initiatives of high income countries and global interests expecting to benefit from trade liberalization and freer markets (Epstein et al, eds., 1990; Arrighi, 1994). In the case of countries in transition from centrally planned economies, even if they have not formally become part of regional trade liberalization schemes, they are gradually integrating into the global economy and becoming members of international organizations such as the World Bank and WTO.

Third, policies made at the national level and leading to a higher degree of globalization of domestic economies have often been inspired, and at times dictated, from the outside. A typical example is provided by structural adjustment policies (SAPs) adopted by a large number of countries since the early 1980s. While affecting, in particular, countries dealing with debt repayment problems, SAPs have represented a profound shift with respect to the expansion and deepening of the market. The process has been the result of a multiplicity of efforts which have resulted in a much higher degree of globalization of each country's economy. As is well known given the abundant literature on the subject, SAPs have amounted to

programs of deep economic restructuring and belt tightening for a large proportion of the population. They have been unpopular programs, agreed to between national governments, creditor countries, commercial banks, and international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, who have imposed conditionalities for negotiating new loans and terms of payment (Beneria, 1996).

These conditions have included efforts to set up the right environment for the expansion of markets, including government budget cuts, privatization programs, deregulation of markets, trade liberalization, the ease of controls on foreign investment, and the shift from import substitution to export promotion development models; they have also fostered the liberalization of the financial sector, the opening of doors to foreign investment, and the enforcement of rules and regulations for the smooth functioning of the market—such as in the case of property rights, enterprise reform, and decentralization policies aimed at decreasing government intervention in the economy (World Bank, 1996).

These measures have represented the use of a strong hand on the part of national governments and international institutions to build the neoliberal model of the late twentieth century, a great leap forward in the construction of national and global markets. As in Polanyi's argument, it has been the product of deliberate state intervention—often representing the interests benefiting from it—imposed from the top down without a truly democratic process of discussion among all affected parties. As the *Wall Street Journal* put it for the case of Argentina, “[T]he reforms were largely accomplished by the political will of a presidential strongman who invoked executive decrees over 1,000 times” (O’Grady, 1997). Many of these measures have also been applied in most of the countries of the former SU. In this case, the shock therapy of structural adjustment has taken place simultaneously with the profound changes in economic/social relations and institutions represented by the transition from central planning to market economies.

At the same time, the expansion of markets and the intensification of “modernization” across the globe has been accompanied with re-statements and affirmation of the discourse around the norms and behavior associated with economic rationality. We have witnessed this process in different forms, ranging from the growing

emphasis on productivity and efficiency according to the standards set by global markets, to shifts in norms and attitudes, such as a new emphasis on individualism and competitive behavior, together with an apparent acceptance of social inequalities and even greed. In many ways we have witnessed, in Polanyi's terms, the tendency for society to become "an accessory to the economic system" rather than the other way around. In particular, these changes have been evident in transitional countries, as manifested for example by the behaviour of those searching quick accumulation of wealth in the newly created markets (Soros, 1997). As many of the papers in this volume indicate, these changes do not necessarily affect men and women in the same way, a topic discussed in the following section.

#### *4. Engendering Polanyi's analysis*

Although Polanyi pointed out that in a market society all production is for sale, he did not discuss the fact that, parallel to the deepening of market relations, a large proportion of the population engages in unpaid production, only indirectly linked with the market. Women are disproportionately concentrated in this type of work, which includes family labor—particularly but not solely in subsistence economies—domestic work and volunteer work. Thus, to a large extent at least, men and women have been positioned differently with respect to both market transformations and the connections between gender and nature (Merchant, 1989). Thus, while the market has been associated with public life and "maleness," women have been viewed as closer to nature—often in essentialist ways instead of as a result of historical constructions. This in turn has had an impact on the meaning of gender, a subject analyzed, for example, in the feminist literature dealing with the construction of femininity and masculinity (Gilligan, 1982; Bem, 1993) and with the market itself (McCloskey, 1993; Strassmann, 1993). In this sense, Polanyi's analysis needs to be expanded in order to incorporate gender dimensions.

The norms and behavior associated with the market do not apply to the sphere of unpaid work which produces goods and services for use rather than for exchange. As such, unpaid work is not equally subject to the competitive pressures of the market and therefore it can respond to motivations other than gain, such as

nurturing, love and altruism. Without falling into essentialist arguments about men's and women's behavior and keeping in mind the multiple differences across countries and cultures, we can conclude from the literature that there is often a variation in norms, values and behavior along gender lines (England, 1993; Nelson, 1993). Thus, the literature has discussed extensively women's concentration in caring/nurturing/selfless work, either unpaid or (relatively badly) paid (Folbre, 1994; Folbre and Weiskopf, 1996).

In contemporary societies, women perform by far the largest proportion of unpaid activities. According to UNDP's "rough estimates" at the global level, if unpaid activities were valued at prevailing wages, they would amount to \$16 trillion or about 70 % of total world output (\$23 trillion). Of this \$16 trillion, \$11 trillion represent women's work (UNDP, 1995). To be sure, it is difficult to compare paid and unpaid activities because, without the competitive pressures of the market, productivity levels might be very different. However, this type of estimate does provide a rough indication of the contribution of unremunerated activities to human welfare (Barrig, 1996; Friedmann, 1996). Likewise, paid caregiving work is performed predominantly by women in many countries. To be sure, engaging in non-gainful activities and non-selfish behavior is not the exclusive domain of women, nor is market work and selfish behavior the exclusive domain of men. However, the UNDP-type of data show that the current predominance of women in unpaid work and that of men in paid activities is beyond dispute.

The principles of reciprocity and distribution described by Polanyi for earlier societies did not function according to the rules of market rationality. Instead, tradition, religion and norms of behavior played an important role in shaping these principles, often not in accordance with maximizing behavior. Yet, non-maximizing behavior can also be found in contemporary societies. In subsistence economies, production is not geared to the market and family labor is motivated primarily by needs rather than gain. In modern capitalist countries, behavior following norms of solidarity and work/leisure choices not necessarily pursuing the principles of efficiency, competition and productivity associated with economic rationality has by far not disappeared. This is symbolized by the large numbers of volunteer workers performing countless activities, or by those engaged in creative and/or in badly

remunerated work. In the case of volunteer work, such as that carried out at the community level, the motives might be associated with a sense of collective wellbeing, empathy for others, or political commitments; in the case of artistic work, they might be associated with the pursuit of beauty and creativity, irrespective of the market value generated.

Feminist economists have written quite extensively about the extent to which economic rationality in market behavior may not be as prevalent as assumed in mainstream economics. As a result, they have emphasized the need to develop alternative models based on assumptions of human cooperation, empathy and collective well-being (Strober, 1994). In so doing, they join other authors who have also questioned neoclassical assumptions, pointing out that they are predicated upon the Hobbesian view of self-interested individuals. These authors argue that the numerous exceptions to this rule suggest that human behavior responds to a complex set of often contradictory tendencies (Marwell and Ames, 1981; Frank et al, 1993). Thus, neoclassical assumptions seem to contradict “real-life experiments in which collective action and empathetic, connected economic decision-making are observed” (Seguino et al, 1996). From a gender perspective, some authors have pointed out that this type of behavior is most often found among women (Guyer, 1980; Gilligan, 1982; Beneria and Roldan, 1987).

In a study comparing the behavior of economists and non-economists, Seguino, Stevens and Lutz (1996) have suggested that “social structures that shape our preferences may differ along gender lines, with women more likely to exhibit constitutive desires and empathetic or connected behavior in contributing to public goods than do males” (p. 15). In addition, other authors have emphasized the extent to which social codes and identities are constructed “at the deepest cognitive levels through social interaction”—therefore questioning the validity of static assumptions about tastes and preferences behind conventional economic models which take tastes and preferences as given (Cornwall, 1997). This implies that social codes and inner individual change are subject to social constructions and a continuous process of change.

The claim on the part of feminist economists that models of free individual choice are not adequate to analyze issues of depen-

dence/interdependence, tradition and power (Ferber and Nelson, 1992) is particular relevant for cultures in which individualistic, market-oriented behavior is more the exception than the norm. Feminists have pointed out that neoclassical analysis is based on a "separate self model" in which utility is viewed as subjective and unrelated to that of other people. As Paula England has argued, this is linked to the assumption that individual behavior is selfish since "emotional connection often creates empathy, altruism, and a subjective sense of social solidarity" (England, 1993). Thus, to the extent that women are more emotionally connected than men, particularly as a result of their role in child rearing and family care and as part of the prevalent gender ideology, the separate self model has an androcentric bias. Similarly, to the extent that the separate self model typifies Western individualism, it also has a Western bias and is foreign to societies with more collective forms of behavior. Economic analysis has little to say about these alternative modes of behavior and their significance for alternative forms of social organization.

These observations are significant for an inquiry about changing connections between gender and markets. In many countries, globalization has taken place at a time of an unprecedented and gradual increase in women's participation in the paid labor force. The literature has documented the feminization of the international work force and women's participation in production for global markets. During the past quarter century, we have witnessed the rapid formation of a female labor force in many countries, often tied to the service sector and to production for export, even in countries where women's participation in paid work was traditionally low and socially not acceptable (Pyle, 1990; Hein, 1986; Ong, 1987; Feldman, 1992). In addition, the women's movement, in its quest for gender equality, has contributed to this trend by emphasizing the need for women to increase their financial autonomy, bargaining power, and control over their lives. Within this general trend, the transitional economies of the former Soviet Union represent a special case with seemingly contradictory tendencies. As several papers in this volume indicate, the transition to more privatized market economies has reduced women's employment opportunities. Yet, to the extent possible, women are participating in paid activities and adapting to the new realities created by the market. As Shami's paper argues for the North

Caucasus, engagement in markets is not new for women since they played a part in the “second economy” during the Soviet period. However, as international capital increases production in these economies, the employment of women at relatively low wages is likely to increase.

What is the effect of participating in market-related activities on individual behavior? More specifically, what effects does it have on women’s behavior as their concentration in household work diminishes? Does it imply that they are increasingly adopting the norms of economic rationality à la “economic man”? Are women becoming more individualistic, selfish and less nurturing? Is market behavior undermining what has been called “women’s ways of seeing and doing”? The answer to these questions is not clear-cut. To begin with, a non-essentialist view of gender differences implies that social change influences gender constructions; as women become continuous participants in the market, it is likely that this will have an influence on their motives and aspirations, adopting patterns of behavior so far observed more frequently among men. In addition, there is an area of ambiguity, tensions, and contradictions in the answer to these questions, as discussed below. This ambiguity is rooted in different factors, some of which are historical. Thus, the market can have positive effects such as the breaking up of patriarchal traditions like arranged marriages that might limit individual autonomy. It can also have negative consequences for those who suffer from the insecurities created by the market. This has been the case with the transitional societies of the former SU, as the following quote indicates:

Transition affects women much differently in some ways than it does men. In considering whether transition has increased welfare for women, the real test is whether it has left them freer than before, or more constrained. So far, at least, the answer in many transition countries appears to be the latter (The World Bank, 1996: 72).

Several of the papers in this volume point out how gender ideology is changing in these countries, pointing out that the transition has exacerbated, in Moghadam’s terms, “latent and manifest patriarchal attitudes,” increasing women’s vulnerability both culturally and economically. Tohidi discusses women’s “massive presence in social and economic arenas” in Azerbaijan during the Soviet period, despite traditional family structures protecting women from the dominant “other”—leading to a situation of “assertive

professional women in public, but showing docility and submission in private.” The patriarchal pressures of the new transition can therefore be viewed as a resurgence or intensification of traditional gender-related norms and practices. Tohidi gives specific examples of current restrictions on women’s lives, such as appearing in public without a male or an elder woman, wearing pants and driving cars. A key question will be the extent to which market forces will transform these norms and how the process of “modernization” spread across countries through the market might break patriarchal forms.

Ambiguity can also be found in feminist discourses. For example, feminists have emphasized gender equality as a key goal, including the importance for women to have access to the public sphere in the same way as men. In this sense, it is often assumed that women can behave as men do. On the other hand, feminist research has emphasized women’s “difference.” Carol Gilligan (1982), for example, documented the “different modes of thinking about relationships and the association of these modes with male and female voices.” These different modes arise, she argued, “in a social context where factors of social status and power combine with reproductive biology to shape the experience of males and females and the relationship between the sexes” (p.2). Although Gilligan’s work has been criticized for its essentialist overtones, a key issue for feminism is how to combine an emphasis on difference with the pursuit of equality, and how to preserve gender traits that contribute to individual, family and human welfare without generating or perpetuating gender inequalities based on unequal power relations. One danger, for example, is to perceive a difference in essentialist ways, a problem that has often surfaced among those who tend to view gender differences dualistically, by idealizing women’s goodness and female superiority while viewing men as the opposite. A different issue is the need to understand the extent to which it is important to maintain and propagate, among men and women, whatever is identified as women’s ways of knowing and doing and the extent to which they can contribute to transforming knowledge and social change. The next section will deal with these questions.

*5. Beyond self-interest?*

“I don’t need money, I want the river’s color back”  
(Silas Natkime, son of the Waa Valley Chief, Irian Jaya,  
Indonesia)

This quote, a clear affirmation of the value placed on a clean river over that of money, in many ways symbolizes one of the dilemmas of development, expressing an individual’s choice to give priority to ecological over economic outcomes. It could also be interpreted as a reaction against the water polluting outcome of the market. To return to Polanyi, his criticism of market society was that it is based on self-interest—leading to “disruptive strains” and “varied symptoms of disequilibrium” such as unemployment, class inequalities, “pressure on exchanges” and “imperialist rivalries.” Environmental degradation can be added to such a list. Ultimately, Polanyi saw fascism as the outcome of these market-related strains, resulting from “the impasse reached by liberal capitalism.” A different outcome was represented by socialism, defined by Polanyi as “the tendency inherent in an industrial civilization to transcend the self-regulating market by consciously subordinating it to a democratic society” (p. 234).

For Polanyi, this tendency led towards the need for planning or towards forms of market intervention that would counteract not only disruptive strains but also the domination of economic self-interest over all aspects of political and social life. These are not only historical issues. As we observe the unfolding of the new expansion of global markets in late twentieth century, these strains can be observed—alongside, to be sure, the market’s unprecedented ability to generate new forms of wealth and a supply of goods and services. The new accumulation at the global level has been feeding increasing inequalities and maldistribution of resources while generating unemployment for many and disruptions in the social fabric of communities and regions, phenomena that can be observed across countries (ECLAC, 1995; UNDP, 1996; several papers in this volume). Fifty years after he wrote *The Great Transformation*, Polanyi’s call for subordinating the market to the priorities set by a democratic society resonates as an urgent need,

even though the ways to achieve this goal have to accommodate the new realities of late twentieth century societies.

These processes can have a variety of gender dimensions. For the purpose of this paper, we can consider the ways in which women and feminism can make a contribution to the quest for new directions towards human rather than strictly economic development. Feminism could in fact be viewed as one of Polanyi's countermovements, representing an emphasis on gender equality but linked to wider social issues. Can the alternative models discussed by feminists be used as guidelines for how to construct alternative societies? Can women provide different voices as they become more integrated in the market and public life? Can "difference" be maintained and can it be a source of inspiration for all those who search for progressive social change? The following example illustrates the variety of answers to these questions as well as some of the tensions involved.

In a New York Times article (9/17/96) about the gender gap in the 1996 election in the United States, author Carol Tavis discussed the nature of women's and men's motivations while analyzing the reasons why more women than men tended to support President Clinton, the Democratic party candidate, in preference to the more conservative Republican candidate, Senator Dole. Conservative explanations, she wrote, argue that women tend to be more sentimental, more risk-averse and less competitive than men; as a result, they are less inclined to be appreciative of free-market economics, claiming that the Democratic Party itself has become "feminized"—"just about the nastiest charge you can make". A Democratic explanation of the gender gap, she added, argued that women vote for that party "not because they are emotional and muddleheaded but because they are more compassionate and less aggressive than men, and thus attracted to the party that will help the weakest members of society". The interesting thing about the article was that the author wanted to demonstrate that women are neither sentimental nor irrational: they vote Democratic because "it's in their interest" the article emphasized. That is, Tavis wanted women to be more like men—as equal agents in a market system based also on "rational economic woman," equating self-interest with a more "rational" form of behavior. Thus, the Republican/conservative explanation of the women's vote was based on an emphasis on difference—

women's vote was based on an emphasis on difference—viewed as a backward trait rooted in pre-market relations—while the Democratic version emphasized equality in market-oriented behavior. For the conservatives as well as for Tavis, the economic rationality associated with the market was superior to non-market perceptions of human welfare.

An alternative explanation is that women's vote is indeed based on a different mode of evaluating society's needs, human welfare, and politics. But, far from being viewed as "backward" or "irrational", it can be a source of inspiration leading to alternative ways of organizing society based on non-hegemonic conceptual/theoretical tools and models. This implies not taking rational economic man's objectives as the desired norm, which does not necessarily imply a rejection of markets as a way to organize the production and distribution of goods and services; as Polanyi put it, "the end of market society in no way means the absence of markets" (p. 252). However, it calls for subordinating them to the objectives of truly democratic communities and countries. The objective is to place economic activity at the service of human development and not the other way around; or to reach an era in which productivity/efficiency is achieved not for its own sake but as a way to increase collective well-being. This implies, for example, placing issues of distribution, inequality, ethics, the environment, and the nature of individual happiness, human development, and social change at the center of our agendas. The project also calls for transforming knowledge so as to rethink conventional approaches to theory and decision-making. As Elizabeth Minnich (1990) has argued, this requires an effort to recognize and disagree with the definitions and boundaries established by accepted knowledge. But this may imply being "shut out even from debate" (p. 151); and transgressing these boundaries may imply marking oneself "as mad, heretical, dangerous".

Definitions, boundaries and power have a historical specificity. In societies of the former SU, the transition has created a very fluid process of change in which the old "accepted knowledge" has been replaced by the new hegemonic thinking linked to the market. The negative effects of the transition on women will raise many questions regarding the market's inability to generate gender equality. Will this situation lead to a new search for alternatives?

Will women play an important role in this process? Will women's agency within true democratic processes prevail? Polanyi predicted that "[T]he passing of market-economy can become the beginning of an era of unprecedented freedom ...generated by the leisure and security that industrial society offers to all" (p. 256). Written in the 1940s, at a time when it was difficult to predict the problems that state interventions would create, his challenge is still with us, namely, how to place economic activity—and the market—at the service of human development. In Polanyi's words, "such endeavor cannot be successful unless it is disciplined by a total view of man and society very different from that which we inherited from market-economy" (Polanyi, 1949). The main message of this paper is that this is an endeavor that needs to be gendered.

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# GENDER AND ECONOMIC REFORMS: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE FROM CENTRAL ASIA, THE CAUCASUS, AND TURKEY

VALENTINE M. MOGHADAM

## *Introduction and overview*

Since 1990, a now prodigious body of literature has examined and often debated various aspects of the market reforms implemented in the former centrally-planned economies. Questions have centered around the nature of the crisis that precipitated the collapse of the communist system and launched the market transition; the timing, pace, and scope of the reforms; the effect of initial conditions; and the social impacts of the restructuring process. What was the relation between the decline in economic performance in the former communist countries and the global economic crisis? Was the gradual approach to market reforms that was taken by some countries preferable to the “shock therapy” applied in others?<sup>1</sup> How can privatization and the emerging private sector be evaluated? Have the reforms been poverty-inducing? Have social indicators deteriorated? What explains differences in levels and rates of unemployment across the transition economies?<sup>2</sup> Economists have been deeply divided over these issues.<sup>3</sup>

A parallel body of literature has focused on the gender aspects of the transition from centrally-planned to market economies,

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<sup>1</sup> “Shock therapy” involves a sharp cut of budget deficits, liberalization of prices and imports, devaluation of exchange rates, interest rate increases, and tight control of money supply growth.

<sup>2</sup> Economies in transition include the countries of East Central Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia of the former Yugoslavia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia), the republics of the former Soviet Union now cooperating within the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. China and Vietnam are the two main Asian transition economies, although geographically speaking the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, including Uzbekistan, belong to the category of Asian transition economies.

<sup>3</sup> For a pro-“big bang” perspective, see Sachs 1992. For the gradualist view, see Rana 1993. See also Economic Commission for Europe 1993.

examining in detail the impact of the reforms on women's labor-market positions, their social entitlements, and their place in the emerging political structures. Here there is more consensus among the feminist scholars and the gender-and-development specialists who have contributed to this scholarship (Moghadam 1994; Einhorn 1994; Rai, Pilkington, and Phizacklea 1992; Rueschemeyer 1994; Tokhtakhodzhava 1995b). The transition to a market economy has proved to be costly in terms of real income and output decline, loss of employment and security, a rapid deterioration in social conditions, and deepening gender inequalities. Although privatization of state-owned enterprises and encouragement of private-sector growth hypothetically offers women (and men) opportunities for higher incomes and for entrepreneurship, in fact it has tended to increase women's chances of being laid off, worsened their conditions of employment, and minimized their social entitlements. Whatever comparative advantage women had at the start of the reforms—in particular, the feminized nature of occupations such as trade, banking, insurance, financial services, and accounting—it was quickly overcome by a pervasive gender bias in favor of male recruitment in these now lucrative fields of employment. Women's position in the new labor markets has been further complicated by a resurgence of the stereotyping of gender roles, the growth (and export) of prostitution, a decline in the availability of social services (particularly in childcare), and the political powerlessness of women's organizations. It should be noted that these changes occurred in regions previously characterized by high rates of female employment, diversified occupational distribution, very high levels of educational attainment, and strong representation in political structures.

There is some analogy with the experience of gender and structural adjustment in developing countries. Economic reforms in both the transition economies and developing countries are motivated by the same neoliberal economic philosophy, and their adverse social and gender effects have been very similar. Most of the evidence on structural adjustment and women comes from Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia (Afshar and Dennis 1992; Bakker 1994; Beneria and Feldman 1992; Elson 1991; Sparr 1994; Tanski 1994). Countries in West Asia, including Turkey, have had a more recent experience with structural adjustment, although in Turkey economic liberalization has been proceeding

since the early 1980s (Moghadam 1998). We may ask, however, whether the socio-economic changes in Turkey—liberalization, privatization, and integration into the global economy—have had or will have the same negative effects that women have been experiencing in the transition economies, or whether given different initial conditions, the outcomes could also be different. We will return to this question later in the paper.

*Gender and market reforms in Central Asia and the Caucasus*

Until recently, international attention was focused on the transition in East Central Europe, Russia, and the Baltic states, but now the former Soviet republics of Central Asia—especially Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan—are receiving attention, in terms of both research and policy. These and other countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus are not only experiencing the difficulties of a transition from central planning to a market economy but, as newly independent states, they are also engaging in state-building. Moreover, some of them have seen the revival of Islamist movements. As such, the implications of the transition for women go beyond the labor market and into the realm of culture and national identity (Moghadam 1994, 1995; Tokhtakhodzhayeva 1995a).

A quick glance at some statistical facts is instructive of the severity of the problems in the transition economies of Central Asia and the Caucasus. These problems include unemployment, poverty, deteriorating wages, rising prices, and a resurgence of patriarchal attitudes. In particular, we notice a trend toward a feminization of unemployment. Post-communist Uzbekistan has experienced declining output, falling incomes, high unemployment, and deteriorating social indicators. As reported by Marfua Tokhtakhodzhayeva, the majority of unemployed in the capital city of Tashkent are female (Tokhtakhodzhayeva 1995c). Most are women of secondary education or less, suggesting the impact on working-class women. Furthermore, as a predominantly Muslim country, Uzbekistan has experienced a post-Soviet resurgence of Islamist politics with distinctly gender-specific effects. Interest in Islamic culture and politics has emerged, with its accompanying pressures on educational institutions, the media, and women's

comportment. But as one enlightened, Soviet-educated Uzbek professor notes: "I support revival of spiritual values, but am against conservative traditions and customs, which hinder active creative life" (Tokhtakhodzhaeva 1995c).

Anyone who has read Gregory Massell's classic book, *The Surrogate Proletariat*, has some idea of the enormous advances made by the women of Central Asia since the early Soviet days (Massell 1974). One of the greatest achievements was the feminization of education and of science. As one author has noted, "in Soviet Central Asia industrialization, collectivization and cultural revolution resulted in new professions. One can say that socialism was built by women. Some occupations, such as health care, education, parts of the service sector, etc. were completely feminized. In schools male teachers are an exception" (Tabyshalieva 1995). This makes their current difficulties all the more poignant. At the same time, available evidence suggests that patriarchal gender ideologies were never eliminated, and these have merged with the new political economy to create an environment very unfavorable to women's equality and empowerment.

In Uzbekistan, a former Soviet republic, there is no *de jure* discrimination against women, who continue to enjoy the same legal rights as men. As seen in Table 1, they have high life expectancy (71 years), relatively low maternal mortality (55 per 100,000 live births), very high adult literacy rates (97 percent), good educational attainment, and considerable labor force participation in agriculture, industry, and services. Unlike many developing countries, including Turkey, gender gaps in literacy and educational attainment are not wide. (See Table 1.) Women's access to the professions and occupations was such that they were even a respectable 31 percent of the labor force in the mining, energy, and chemicals sector—sectors that are non-traditional, as far as women's employment is concerned. Some 40-45 percent of scientists in Uzbekistan were women. On average, women earned about 40 percent of all income and were about 46 percent of the total labor force (see Table 2). Uzbekistan inherited an extensive system of social protection characterized by child allowances, old age pensions, disability benefits, and subsidies on consumer goods and services. Given the generous benefits and the relatively easy access women had to employment, it is no wonder that Uzbek

women are reluctant to leave the shrinking state sector and work in the growing private sector.

However, the collapse of trade and enterprise restructuring have resulted in the deterioration of wages and the real value of cash benefits, worsening working conditions, and rising unemployment. According to the ILO, wages in Uzbekistan fell by 31 percent in 1991, increased by 6 percent in 1993, and fell again by 42 percent in 1994.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, due to the persistence of tradition, women still marry young and family size tends to be relatively large. As seen in Table 1, the fertility rate in Uzbekistan was as high as 3.7 in 1994. This has serious implications for the future expansion of the labor force, especially in a low-growth market context. A World Bank country study speculates that many women may opt for domestic responsibility or part-time work (World Bank 1993, 98). On the other hand, the departure of non-Uzbek women (mainly Russians and Armenians) from factories, offices, educational institutions, and hospitals may open up more employment opportunities for Uzbek women. In any event, the transition and its difficulties seem to have reinvigorated patriarchal views of women and gender relations and exacerbated the cultural constraints on women's equality.<sup>5</sup> How the Uzbek government will address the issues of unemployment, growing poverty, the needs of children, Islamic revival, and pressures on women, is not yet known. It is clear that women's organizations in Uzbekistan, whether they be the successors to the Soviet-era women's organizations or the new independent women's groups, will be required to play a leading role in monitoring the situation and in bringing problems and solutions to the attention of the government and international organizations.

In a number of the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, the problems of gender and the market transition have been exacerbated by civil strife and conflict. These countries include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Tajikistan, where the increase not only in the number of refugees but also in the number of prostitutes is said to be related to both the conflicts and the economic difficulties of the transition. Tajikistan was long among the most rural and least developed of the republics within

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<sup>4</sup> ILO 1996, Table 4.3, p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> See Tokhtakhodzhaeva's (1995c) interviews with Uzbek women professionals.

Table 1. Women and Capabilities: Health and Education

	Life expectancy at birth (years)		Total Fertility Index (1970=100)	Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)	Adult literacy rate (%)		Tertiary students (per 100,000 people)	Female tertiary students (per 100,000 women)	Combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrollment ratio (%) 1994	
	1994	1994			1994	1994				
	Female	Male	Rate	1990	Female	Male	1992	1992	Female	Male
Armenia	74.5	67.1	2.0	63	50	98.8	3,711	..	83.0	74.0
Azerbaijan	74.9	66.8	2.5	55	22	96.3	2,323	2,453	71.0	74.0
Georgia	77.2	68.8	2.0	79	33	94.9	2,710	..	69.0	68.0
Kazakhstan	72.3	63.6	2.3	66	80	97.5	3,433	..	75.0	71.0
Kyrgyzstan	72.1	63.3	3.4	71	110	97.0	1,837	..	74.0	71.0
Tajikistan	70.0	63.7	4.0	59	130	96.7	2,298	..	67.0	70.0
Turkey	70.6	63.9	1.9*	36	180	71.1	..	1,111	55.0	70.0
Turkmenistan	68.1	61.3	3.8	60	55	97.7	2,078	..	90.0	90.0
Uzbekistan	70.7	64.2	3.7	60	55	97.2	3,054	..	71.0	75.0

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 1997*.

\* 2.7 World Bank, 1997

the former Soviet Union, and its social indicators did not compare well to those of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, or Armenia (see Tables 1 and 2). It then became a low-income country with internal conflicts tied to Islamism and a growing refugee population. The civil war ruined the social and physical infrastructure, with especially adverse effects on women, pensioners, and children. It remains to be seen whether the Economic Reform program for 1996-2000, which aims to create a "socially-oriented market economy for growth of the economy and welfare" will succeed in achieving its goals.<sup>6</sup>

Armenia and Azerbaijan are neighboring republics that progressed considerably during the socialist era. Women's capabilities were well developed. Life expectancy was high, fertility rates were relatively low in 1990 (having declined considerably since 1970), maternal mortality rates were low, and the literacy rate of adult women was very high. Indeed, Armenian women surpassed men in educational enrollments (see Table 1). In Azerbaijan, women's political participation has been quite respectable (see Table 3). However, the two countries have been at war with each other, and this has exacerbated the problems emanating from the collapse of the socialist economy and system of trade. Both economies have experienced considerable negative growth, and unemployment has grown.<sup>7</sup> An official report from Azerbaijan states that two-thirds of the unemployed are women.<sup>8</sup> In Armenia, although women were 47 percent of the labor force in 1995, they were 64 percent of the total persons unemployed. According to an official report, the duration of unemployment is longer for a woman than for a man, and her situation has been made more difficult by the shutting down of many pre-school and after-school facilities and programs.

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<sup>6</sup> See "Republic of Tajikistan National Report" (by B. Dodkhudieva), background paper submitted to the Subregional Conference of Senior Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the Platform for Action Adopted by the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, in Central and Eastern Europe, Bucharest, 12-14 September 1996, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> The unemployment rates in Table 2 are the official rates of the registered unemployed only. The figures do not reflect the extent of job loss. See ILO 1996 for a discussion.

<sup>8</sup> "Report on Azerbaijan", background paper submitted to the Subregional Conference, Bucharest, 12-14 September 1996.

Table 2. Income, Employment, and Unemployment

	Real GDP per capita (PPPS) 1994	GDP Growth rate (%) 1990-95	Labor force (as % of total population) 1990	Percentage of labor force in				Women's share of adult labor force aged 15 and above		Female economic activity rate (as % of male) 1995		Earned income share (%) 1994		Un- employed people (thousands) 1993	Total unemploy- ment rate* (%) 1995
				Agriculture		Industry		Services		1970	1990	Female	Male		
				1990	1990	1990	1990								
Armenia	1,737	-21.2	48	18	45	39	46	47	87	40.3	59.7	..	8.1		
Azerbaijan	1,670	-20.2	42	31	29	40	45	43	75	36.8	63.2	19	1.1		
Georgia	1,585		49	26	31	43	48	46	79	39.3	60.7	..	3.4		
Kazakhstan	3,284	-11.9	47	22	32	46	47	46	82	39.2	60.8	78	2.1		
Kyrgyzstan	1,930	-14.7	41	32	27	41	49	46	84	39.5	60.5	3	3		
Tajikistan	1,117		36	41	23	36	45	42	76	36.4	63.6	..	1.8		
Turkey	5,193	3.2	44	53	18	29	38	33	57	33.2	66.8	..	..		
Turkmenistan	3,469	3.2	41	37	23	40	46	45	81	38.2	61.8	..	..		
Uzbekistan	2,438	-4.4	39	35	25	40	48	46	84	39.0	61.0	..	0.3		

Sources: UNDP, *Human Development Report 1997*.  
World Bank, *World Development Report 1997*

Women's wages are about one-third less than men's earnings; in the highly feminized sector of education (77.2 percent female), teachers' salaries are "a nominal \$4.50 per month." As in other former Soviet countries, the high rate of abortion is considered a social problem and a reproductive health issue, reflecting lack of information about, and access to, family planning and contraception.<sup>9</sup>

As in other transition economies in the Caucasian and Central Asian republics, the transition from communism in Armenia seems to have exacerbated latent and manifest patriarchal attitudes, especially within households, to result in growing disadvantages experienced by women and girls. An interesting commentary on the "mixed signals" that girls received during the Soviet era comes from an official Armenian report:

"Having been a former Soviet Republic for seventy years our society has been educated by communist principles which stressed equal opportunities of education for all men and women. For over seventy years now Armenian girls have attended public schools and have enjoyed the best educational opportunities that that system had to offer without being discriminated against. Most women have received higher education and have been employed. Gender inequalities in Armenia stem mainly from culture. As a result, practices at home and in society in general are more favorable to men than women. Armenians do give equal opportunity of education to both girls and boys, but very early in life girls learn that women's main function in life is to become a loyal wife and a devoted mother. Everything else is secondary . . . Armenian culture shares most of the attitudes of patriarchal cultures toward gender . . . As a result, women became educated, many of them reached higher level positions in their professional fields especially in education and health care but at home they continued to perform all of the household chores and childrearing was mainly their responsibility . . . Girls in our society grow up with conflicting and confusing messages."<sup>10</sup>

Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan exhibit patterns and trends similar to those of their neighbors. Except for Turkmenistan, GDP growth has fallen in all of the countries, although Kazakhstan has seen growth in industry and services, according to the World Bank (see Table 2). Wages have fluctuated

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<sup>9</sup> "Armenia National Plan of Action (Background and Summary)", background paper submitted to *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

wildly, according to the ILO. In Kazakhstan, they declined by nearly 11 percent in 1991, increased by the same amount in 1992, and then fell again, by 11.6 percent in 1993 and 31.3 percent in 1994. In Kirgizistan, wages rose in 1991 but then fell by 30 percent in 1992, 51.5 percent in 1993, and 25.8 percent in 1994. At the same time, the rate of inflation has been exceedingly high (e.g., 1,880 percent in Kazakhstan and 280 percent in Kyrgyzstan in 1994).<sup>11</sup> What is more, in the Kyrgyz Republic, 69 percent of people with higher education are women, and yet women made up 59.3 percent of the unemployed in early 1996. Women's average wages were 25 percent less than men's.<sup>12</sup> According to one study, more and more women are becoming poor, and infant mortality and maternal mortality are increasing. Violence against women is becoming more apparent. Although women's participation in government is higher than in neighboring countries (see Table 3), there has been a reduction in the percentage of women in the parliament. Finally, there is "the weakness of women's non-state social organizations" (Kenenbaeva, Tabyshalieva, and Karasaeva 1995).

What this brief survey has shown is that from a gender perspective, the market reforms that have been adopted in Central Asia and the Caucasus, prescribed and underwritten by the international financial institutions, and endorsed by neoliberal thinkers and policy-makers in Western countries, have been deeply flawed. The social costs of the transition have been far higher than expected, and the burden borne by women has been especially onerous. Seven years after market reforms began, not only are the majority of women not better off than they were before, but the adverse effects of economic restructuring have hit women harder than men.

Why is this the case? Why should the effects of market reforms be differentiated by gender? Why should women be more vulnerable than men? There are many reasons for this, but they may be distilled into two major causes, one "cultural" (that is, the

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<sup>11</sup> Data from ILO 1996, Table 4.3, p. 114 and Table 4.4, p. 118.

<sup>12</sup> "National Report of the Representative of the Kirgiz Republic", background paper submitted to the Subregional Conference, Bucharest, 12-14 September 1996.

Table 3. Women's Political Participation

	Parliamentary seats held by women (as % of total) 1996	Women in Government		
		Total (%) 1995	At	At sub-
			ministerial	ministerial
			level (%) 1995	level (%) 1995
Armenia	6	2.0	0	3.1
Azerbaijan	12	5.3	4.0	6.0
Georgia	7	3.3	0	4.7
Kazakstan	11	1.1	2.7	0
Kyrgyzstan	5	8.0	4.3	11.1
Tajikistan	3	4.0	6.9	2.9
Turkey	3	3.9	4.3	3.6
Turkmenistan	18	3.9	4.3	3.6
Uzbekistan	6	2.9	2.8	2.9

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 1997*.

persistence of traditional gender ideology regarding men's and women's roles), and the other "economic" (that is, the nature of the reforms themselves and the assumptions in neoliberal economic thinking that inform the policies). In the section below, we consider a framework for understanding and explaining gender-differentiated outcomes.

*A framework for analysis: Gender ideology and political economy*

The position of women—their legal status and their access to economic resources and political power—has varied across historical eras and types of social formations. Scholars have variously identified political, economic, ideological, or cultural factors as the major determinants, or they have emphasized the class system, the mode of production, or "patriarchy" as the most critical factor in explaining stability and change in the position of women. In the

framework suggested here, the structural factors which seem to consistently shape women's specific positions across history and different societies are the following: (a) class (which determines women's life-options, as well as access to economic and political power); (b) the nature of the state and the orientation of the leadership (which shapes the opportunity structure for women, including the legal framework); (c) the system of production (which determines the resources and kinds of work available to women); and (d) cultural understandings of men's and women's roles (which may be widely shared in the society or differentiated along class and ethnic lines). For the sake of analytic clarity and for ease of exposition, we may consider class, state, and production as three dimensions of political economy, while cultural understandings of men's and women's roles may be understood as gender ideology.

The concept of gender, now widely used by feminists and social scientists, has material and symbolic dimensions. It refers to a fairly universal pattern of relations between men and women, in which women are subordinated to men within the household, in the economy, and in the polity—relationships that are often codified in law. The asymmetrical relations between men and women often have been justified in terms of both divine law and natural law (Moghadam 1994a).

Understanding why gender matters and how it operates is facilitated by analogy to social class. The concept of class refers to asymmetrical relations between groups of people based on differential access to and ownership of the means of production, and is reflected in the labor-capital contention. Gender refers to asymmetrical relations between women and men based on reproduction, specifically, on women's childbearing and child-rearing capacities, and is expressed in the sexual division of labor. Just as class shapes opportunities and options, so does gender. And in the same way that societies everywhere have developed ideologies concerning the roles and prerogatives of certain categories of people, so too have gender ideologies emerged to explain, justify, and perpetuate the positions of men and women. Traditional gender ideology has rendered women's reproductive capacity into a subordinated social position for women and a privileged position for men in productive spheres. This ideology ties women to family roles and considers them secondary breadwinners at best. The

persistence of traditional gender ideology explains why women have lower-paid and lower-status jobs compared with men, why women are most vulnerable to restructuring and workplace retrenchment, and why there is so much resistance to measures that allow women to combine work and family responsibilities. During times of crisis or austerity which necessitate cutbacks in social spending or public services, gender ideology holds that women will extend their care-giving inclinations to compensate for the losses. Where economic restructuring entails job losses, hiring freezes, new jobs that are precarious and low-paid, and other measures to cut costs and increase efficiency, gender ideology renders women an expendable or cheap supply of labor.

Is gender ideology stable, or is it subject to change? Let us now turn to political economy. The various dimensions of political economy—the class structure, the nature of the state, and the system of production, as well as specific economic policies and economic conditions—have powerful effects on women's access to economic resources, to political representation, and to social entitlements. Political economy also plays a part in shaping aspects of the prevailing gender ideology—hence the different kinds of gender arrangements that have existed historically in kinship-ordered, agrarian, developing, and advanced industrialized settings. In the twentieth century, women's rights to education, employment, and social policies enabling them to combine productive and reproductive activities have developed in quite distinct ways, reflecting the different forms of state and economic systems. States that are guided by central planning (for example, Cuba or the former German Democratic Republic), states that are theocratic and rich in oil (Saudi Arabia), states that are liberal-capitalist (the United States), and states that are social democratic (the Nordic countries) have had quite different laws concerning women, policies on the family, and concepts of women's rights and entitlements. A country's wealth and income does not guarantee a more advantaged position for women, as any comparative analysis of high-income Saudi Arabia and low-income Vietnam will reveal.

Thus far in our discussion of political economy, we have referred to structural factors that explain the position of women. Proximate causes that affect their economic status include economic policies and economic conditions. Economic policies may hinder or facilitate the well-being and advancement of women, and economic

conditions may be detrimental or conducive to improvements in the position of women. But the impact of proximate factors, such as an abrupt change in economic policies or an economic recession, are largely shaped by the structural factors mentioned above. That is, how well women (or children or working-class men) are cushioned in a period of economic crisis or restructuring will depend to a great extent on the nature of the state. But it will also depend on another, crucial factor—the ability of women to organize on behalf of their own interests, whether in their own organizations or within existing political parties.

*The nature of the market reforms*

Like structural adjustments in developing countries, the economic reforms implemented in the former socialist countries have been guided by the neoliberal economic philosophy which privileges the operation of a free market unencumbered by state interventions, and which tends to favor the accumulation of capital over and above the well-being of labor.<sup>13</sup> Individuals and institutions associated with neoliberal policies generally concede that the burden of adjustment falls on those on the lower rungs of the occupational ladder who are dependent on wages and who receive benefits that supplement those (usually low) wages. However, they are of the opinion that the pains of adjustment are both transitory and necessary to achieve macroeconomic stabilization and respectable rates of growth (World Bank 1990, 1995b). The elimination of subsidies—not only for food, utilities, transportation, housing, and vacations, but also social services such as health care, schooling, and childcare—is invariably part of the neoliberal prescription package. Here the gender bias reveals itself in the presumption that social and public services are monetized extensions of women’s “natural” care-giving functions, and that during periods of crisis and contraction women can be relied upon to utilize their available time to compensate for the loss. In the transition economies the elimination of subsidized childcare has hit women

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<sup>13</sup> This does not mean that social safety nets or policies targeted at poor households are not considered. Indeed, what distinguishes the neoliberal approach to welfare is precisely its preference for means-tested and targeted programs rather than universal programs based on notions of solidarity and equality.

especially hard, as they have depended on this service, subsidized by the state or the enterprise, to facilitate their employment.

The neoliberal philosophy does not recognize structural forms of disadvantage which circumscribe people's positions in the labor market. Stratification and the occupational hierarchy are presumed to be based on different skill levels and educational attainments, as well as varying forms of demand for and supply of labor, rather than more profound forms of disadvantage which may necessitate interventions. Feminist economists have pointed out that with respect to women, the neoliberal policy regime does not recognize legal, cultural, institutional, and reproductive constraints on women's mobility across sectors, jobs, and employers.<sup>14</sup> It assumes that men and women compete fairly in the labor market, that women's labor-market disadvantages are explained entirely in human capital terms, and that compensatory measures are not necessary. As argued earlier, however, gender is itself a powerful predictor of labor-market positionality. How else is it possible to explain the fact that among the pool of unemployed in Russia, women are more likely than men to be highly skilled? (Bodrova 1995; World Bank 1995a, 32).<sup>15</sup>

Economic policies may serve to attenuate or intensify gender ideology and may lessen or increase asymmetrical relations between men and women. For example, a human resource-driven strategy for economic and social development may recognize the significance of women and lead to investments in women's education and training, along with various forms of childcare and family support. Such a strategy is associated with the Nordic countries and the former centrally-planned economies, and this strategy led to high female labor force participation, a rise in the age of marriage, lower fertility rates, important economic and social contributions by women, and a lessening of gender inequality. Conversely, a strategy for economic growth that calls for

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<sup>14</sup> For detailed information on "feminist economics," the feminist critique of neoclassical economics, and an argument for integrating the gender dimension in economic analysis and macroeconomic policy formulation, see the symposium in *World Development* 23(11) (1995), especially articles by Diane Elson, Nilufer Çağatay and Sule Özler, Lourdes Beneria, Ingrid Palmer, and Maria Sagrario Floro.

<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that this calls into question the widespread view that women's greater vulnerability to economic restructuring and their higher unemployment rates is a function of their lower skills levels and educational attainment.

cutbacks in the areas of health, education, and welfare could constrain the availability of women for work, limit their productive capacity, or over-extend their labor time. It could also revive traditional gender ideology and increase rather than decrease gender asymmetry. Because of household-based gender biases in many developing countries, public education and health services are key resources for women's advancement. Any negative impact of public expenditure cutbacks on these sectors will have a stronger negative impact on female than on male human-resource development. Recent evidence from Vietnam and China, among other countries, suggests that the introduction of user fees in health-care and schooling has forced a resurgence of son-preference among poor rural families. This could occur in poorer regions in Central Asia and the Caucasus as well.

*Changing identities and roles: The case of Turkey*

If market reforms have led to economic and labor-market losses on the part of women in the former centrally-planned economies, and if structural adjustment has similarly led to increased burdens on women in their productive and reproductive activities, can we expect to see similar losses in Turkey, as neoliberal policies proceed and liberalization and integration into the global market are deepened? Or, conversely, can we expect different outcomes in Turkey, given that the initial conditions are different?

It should be noted that Turkey lags behind the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus on nearly all social indicators, including the pattern of female labor force participation. Not only is the literacy rate of adult Turkish women far lower, but the gap between men and women is much wider than in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The same pertains to combined school enrollments (see Table 1). Moreover, the female share of earned income and the female share of the adult labor force are lower in Turkey than in the other countries we have been considering. And this is despite the respectable economic growth rates Turkey has experienced.

The vast majority of the Turkish female labor force is in agriculture, and this sector is indeed feminized, as men are distributed more evenly across the occupations. Female labor force partici-

pation rates are very low, especially in urban areas, and women represent under 20 percent of the salaried workforce. Most employed women are found in professional jobs; a smaller percentage are found in manufacturing and lower-skilled service jobs. Gender ideology has not been entirely supportive of female employment, despite the legacy of Kemalism. The high wages obtained for men during the era of import-substitution industrialization were perhaps a disincentive for increased female participation in the formal sector. Thus, in contrast to many of the centrally planned economies, including some Central Asian and Caucasian countries, the non-agricultural labor force in Turkey was predominantly male, and a patriarchal gender contract assumed—and reinforced—the male breadwinner/female homemaker roles, in which men had control over the means of production and direct access to wage employment, and in which women were economically dependent.<sup>16</sup>

In such a context, how might the changing political economy affect women's educational and economic prospects? Could economic liberalization affect the gender composition of the labor force in Turkey? Might it even weaken the patriarchal gender contract? Women's employment could increase for the following reasons:

- Policies of export-oriented manufacturing are known to raise the demand for women in such industries as textiles, garments, and electronics;
- In the current era of globalization, countries are forced to make their industries—and their labor forces—more competitive, partly by raising skill levels. This could favor increased attention to more education, vocational training, skills-upgrading, and entrepreneurship for women;
- Structural reforms often call for fiscal changes and the mobilization of domestic resources, through such measures as expanding the tax base and making taxation more efficient. Governments may reason that in order to increase the income tax-paying population, policies would be needed to increase the size of the female labor force;

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<sup>16</sup> The “patriarchal gender contract” is discussed in Moghadam 1998.

- The number of women could rise in such expanding occupations as banking, insurance, accounting, computing, and so on, which are indeed becoming feminized internationally;
- The expansion of tourism could break down cultural proscriptions against women's employment in sales and service occupations;
- As governments relinquish control over economic enterprises to focus on expanding and upgrading health, education, and social services, this could enhance the participation of women in the social sectors;
- The emphasis on private-sector development could encourage women-owned or managed businesses.

Available data suggest that aspects of the above scenario are being realized. The numbers of self-employed women in manufacturing, sales, and service occupations doubled between 1980 and 1990. The mean age at first marriage for all married women rose to 22 in 1990, up from 17.6 in 1983. Women are also responding to demand in the manufacturing sector (mainly in privately-owned enterprises in the textiles, garments, and leather industry) and in public and private services. In every type of economic activity and occupation, the number of women workers increased between 1980 and 1990, as employee and as self-employed. Women are seeking work because of personal aspiration, educational attainment, and economic need. A study of female migrants to a dam site in Elazig, eastern Turkey, found that 48 percent of the sample of young women and their mothers who joined the urban labor market cited economic factors as the main reason, including the unemployment of male family members and the family's poverty (Moghadam 1998, chapter 4).

If economic liberalization continues to bring about such labor-market changes, we can expect to see a change in the identity and roles of women: as their integration deepens in the formal labor force, they could be seen not only as wives and mothers but as workers, citizens, colleagues, and contributors to economic growth and social development. This process, and women's own activism, could bring serious pressure to bear on the patriarchal gender contract.

Of course, there could be quite negative results as well. The contraction of the public sector and the expansion of a private

sector that is “unfriendly” to women and that otherwise offers undesirable working conditions could dissuade educated women from entering the labor force and increase “housewife-ization” among middle-class women. For women from working-class and lower middle class families, economic need and household survival could propel them towards the labor market, but the job opportunities could be mainly in the informal or unregulated sectors, including home-based activity through subcontracting arrangements, and without the security provided by work in the formal sector. Recent data show that although the female share of the labor force has been increasing, women’s unemployment has also been increasing, a sign that there continue to be barriers to women’s integration into the paid labor force despite the growing supply of job-seeking women and the growth of the economy. The employment costs to women are still great, while the poor nature of the social and physical infrastructure and of social policies may act as a disincentive for women to enter the labor force. The reluctance or inability of many private-sector employees to provide women workers with maternity leave benefits or childcare facilities creates a labor-market constraint for women workers with family responsibilities. It should be further noted that the changing political economy in Turkey is occurring against the backdrop of growing religious conservatism. In this respect, Turkey shares at least one of the problems of its Central Asian and Caucasian neighbors.

#### *Summary and conclusions*

In this paper I have endeavored to show the relationship between women’s positions and the changing political economy, particularly in the context of socio-economic transition, with a focus on Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Turkey. Using data from official reports and international yearbooks, I have drawn attention to the gender-specific outcomes of the market transition in Central Asia and the Caucasus up to the mid-1990s. I have also compared and contrasted the situation of Turkey to that of its neighbors. I have suggested that whereas women in Central Asia and the Caucasus seem to have lost ground, women in Turkey may benefit from the economic reform process. This proposition, however, remains to be tested.

Gender relations and political economy are interactive and inextricably linked, and they affect the formation or transformation of identities and roles. Exactly how economic imperatives will interact with and attenuate the effects of gender ideology in the current context of liberalization and globalization in Turkey remains to be seen. Much will depend upon the mixture of policies and the role of collective action—on the vision of Turkey’s policy-makers and the activities of the women’s organizations.

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# LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN TURKEY

MELTEM DAYIOĞ LU

## *1. Introduction*

The single most important indicator of the degree of women's labor market integration is their labor force participation rates (LFPR) and the corresponding changes observed in them over time. Since the 1950s, a general fall in the labor force participation of Turkish women has been observed. According to census results, while the LFPR of women was 72% in 1955, this rate declined by 40.6%, becoming 42.8% in 1990 (SIS, 1993). Over the same period, a similar fall, although on a smaller scale (from 95.3% to 78.2%), was observed in the male labor force participation rates. The overall reduction in the LFPRs indicates that the fall must be in part due to the changing structure of the Turkish economy. Especially starting from the early 1970s, the conscious efforts of the government to achieve industrialization and modernization have brought about rapid urbanization and a shift in the relative importance of sectors primarily from agriculture where traditionally women are employed toward industry and more recently toward the service sector.<sup>1</sup>

Urbanization in Turkey is taking place at a rather rapid rate. Over the 20 year period after 1970, while the population of cities increased by almost two and a half times, only a 5% increase in the village population is observed (SIS, 1993). The rapid population

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\* I would like to extend my thanks to Prof. Dr. Z. Kasnaoğlu for her valuable comments in the preparation of this work.

<sup>1</sup> It should be mentioned that a part of the fall in the LFPR of women is due to the statistical definitions employed. In the rural areas, where market and domestic work are intertwined, it is relatively easier for a woman to qualify (for statistical purposes) as a labor market participant, compared to a woman residing in urban areas, where domestic production is generally separated from market work. Rapid urbanization has pushed a large number of women into a category where statistical inclusion in the labor force is relatively more difficult, causing a fall in the LFPR of women.

growth in favor of cities has tilted the population balance between cities and villages toward the former. While in 1970, 38.4% of the population lived in cities, this ratio became 59% in 1990. These figures help show the magnitude of the internal migration that is taking place in Turkey. The on-going influx of workers from rural to urban areas in search of jobs and in the hope of attaining a higher standard of living illustrates that the urban labor market will play an even bigger role in the lives of more and more men and women in the near future.

The fact that women are traditionally found in agriculture puts them at a higher risk in the face of rapid urbanization where the available jobs are mostly in industry and services. Being equipped with less human capital in the form of less schooling and being relatively less experienced in a formal job setting<sup>2</sup>, they become the main subjects of structural and spatial change. The low female participation rates in urban areas is an indication of this situation. In 1994, only 16.2% of women participated in the labor force in urban areas compared to 68.6% of men (SIS, 1996). The low rates of female labor market participation and the big discrepancy observed between the genders are quite alarming. Although participation in the labor market does not guarantee the financial or social emancipation of women, if nothing else, LFPRs indicate the proportion of women whose work efforts are appreciated and valued socially, alleviating their position in the society. Of course, this is not to say that the work efforts of the home-makers are valueless. On the contrary, time-use surveys (for Turkey see Kasnakoğlu, Dayioğlu, and Erdil, 1996) indicate that the value of women's labor invested in household chores is immense. Yet, until the time comes when the value of home labor is recognized rather than being taken for granted, participation in the labor market will be the only way through which women can become visible in the society.

The aim of this study is to understand the underlying factors that determine the labor force participation of genders and particularly of women. The issue is many faceted and, therefore, quite difficult to tackle. Turkey, still a developing country, is governed by traditional values where the proper role of women in

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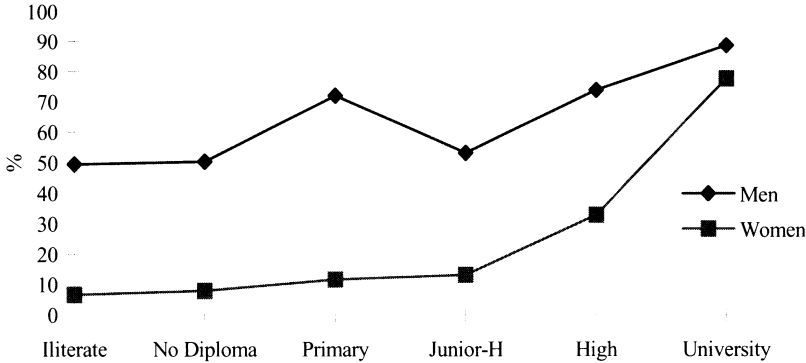
<sup>2</sup> In 1994, 81% of the working women in rural areas were unpaid family workers.

society is seen as home-making. The labor force participation of women who are looked upon as a reserved labor force is only approved in the face of financial difficulty. Therefore, the appropriateness of the argument that women take independent decisions based on their individual interest in deciding whether or not to enter the labor market becomes questionable. However limited it might be, the labor market model we employ in this paper will provide a guiding light in understanding and quantifying the relevant factors that play a role in women's decision-making process. The results derived from this study will help formulate policy tools to integrate women more fully into the labor market.

With these objectives in mind, the paper is organized as follows: After this brief introduction, Section 2 will provide an overview of the labor market status of Turkish women in urban areas. Section 3 will describe the data set employed and Section 4 will outline the model used and provide the results derived from this model. Section 5 will summarize the findings of the study and provide a discussion as to what can be done to increase the labor market involvement of women in urban areas.

## *2. Overview of the position of women in the urban labor market*

As mentioned earlier, the LFPR of urban women is quite low, recorded at 16.2% in 1994. Similar rates have been observed since 1988, the year in which the Household Labor Force Surveys (HLFS) began to be carried out on a regular basis. It is important to note that the reported figures probably underestimate the true market involvement of women due to the large informal sector activity in urban areas. As the name implies, the HLFS are household based and therefore, attempt to cover both the formal and informal sector activity. However, not being specifically targeted toward the latter, under-representation of the informal sector activity is probably the case. Nevertheless, even if the HLFS figures are taken to primarily represent the formal sector activity, the low participation of women in this sector with all that it has to offer still provides invaluable information regarding the position of women in the labor market.



Source: 1994 HLFS, SIS

Note: Labor force includes those who are 12 years of age and over.

Figure 1. LFPR of Genders by Schooling

Women who do enter the labor market face quite high unemployment rates. In 1994, the unemployment rate among women was 19.8% compared to 9.1% for men (SIS, 1996). Considering the fact that there are no unemployment benefits in Turkey, many job seekers probably fail to report themselves as unemployed, understating the true rate of unemployment. This is most likely to be the case for women who would be more inclined to think of themselves as “house-wives” rather than job-seekers.

An interesting point to consider, which will be of relevance to our discussion later in the paper, is the relationship between women’s schooling and their labor market participation. Figure 1 shows that with higher levels of schooling the labor market participation of the genders increases. The rise in the participation rates is especially dramatic beyond junior-high school.<sup>3</sup> Another important point to note is the fact that the discrepancy in the participation rates between the genders tends to diminish with higher levels of schooling. While the gap is largest at the primary school level, it is at its minimum for those who have attained a

<sup>3</sup> Junior-high and high schools include those that provide general as well as vocational and technical training.

university<sup>4</sup> level education. The apparent positive relationship between education and the LFPR, especially for women, hints that an important reason for the low rates of female labor force participation probably lies in women's relatively lower schooling.

Indeed, a relatively larger number of women compared to men are illiterate. According to the 1990 Census, while 11% of males above 6 years of age are illiterate, this figure stands at 28% for females. The educational gap between the genders becomes more apparent when the school attainment of the adult population (aged 20 and above) is considered. Table 1 shows that in fact over one third of the adult female population is illiterate. This figure is over three times the rate recorded for men. Naturally, with such a large illiterate population, relatively fewer women are found at each schooling level. While only 14.7% of the adult female population has a junior-high school or higher education level, the corresponding rate for the male population is 28.5%. The distribution of the literate population among the different schooling levels further illustrates the low human capital stock of the country. The overwhelming majority of literate men (73.7%) and women (81.6%) have a primary school or lower level of education. Again, the proportion of women receiving junior-high school or a higher level of education is relatively lower compared to their male counterparts.

The disadvantaged position of women regarding their educational attainment is not likely to change in the near future, the reason being the existing discrepancy observed in the net school enrollment ratios<sup>5</sup> of male and female children. Despite the rigorous efforts of the government, universal basic education is yet to be achieved. In the 1992-1993 school year only 87.4% of female children compared to 93.1% of male children in the 7-11 year age group were enrolled at school (Table 2).

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<sup>4</sup> University education includes two-year higher education and graduate work.

<sup>5</sup> Net enrollment ratios disregard grade repeaters.

Table 1. Educational Attainment of Adult Population

	General Population		Literate Population		
	(%)	Men	Women	Men	Women
Illiterate	11.6		35.8		
No Diploma	5.0		5.1	18.4	21.6
Primary School	54.8		44.3	55.3	60.0
Junior-High School	8.7		4.2	10.8	7.6
High School	13.0		7.6	10.7	8.3
University	6.8		2.9	4.8	2.5

Source: 1990 Census, SIS

Table 2. Net School Enrollment Ratios of Male and Female Children

	(%)	Male	Female
Primary School		93.1	87.4
Junior-High School		60.0	39.6
Basic Education		80.8	69.6
High School		38.2	25.7

Note: Author's computations based on 1992-1993 National Education Statistics, SIS

A big drop in the enrollment rates occurs at the junior-high school level where only 39.6% of female children aged 12-14 are enrolled at school. The corresponding rate for male children is 60%. These figures indicate that enrollment in basic education (primary school plus junior-high school) is quite low. Only 80.8% of male children and 69.6% of female children in the 7-14 year age category are found to be enrolled in basic education. The enrollment rates deteriorate even further, although at a relatively slower rate, at the high school level where only 25.7% of female children aged 15-17 are found at school. At the university level, even lower figures are reported. Excluding open-university programs, the rate of enrollment in higher education is found to be 15% for men and only 9.3% for women (YÖK, 1994).

The conjecture that women's low level of schooling hinders their labor market entry is further supported by the fact that women who enter the labor force have on the average a higher

level of schooling compared to their male counterparts and of the general female population (Table 3). Of the women who do choose to participate in the labor market, almost half (46.2%) have a high school or higher level of education. This rate is higher than the rate recorded for men (28.7%) and considerably higher than the 11.4% recorded for women who are out of the labor force. The majority of illiterate women choose to stay out of the labor force (or at best do not enter the formal sector), which is indicated by the fact that while 17.5% of the women not in the labor force are illiterate, this figure is only 6.4% for those who choose to be in the labor force.

Table 3. Educational Attainment of Women in the Labor Force

	In Labor Force		Out of Labor Force
	(%) Men	Women	Women
Illiterate	2.8	6.4	17.5
No Diploma	3.9	4.1	9.1
Primary School	52.0	34.4	50.5
Junior-High School	12.6	8.9	11.4
High School	18.3	26.2	10.3
University	10.4	20.0	1.1

Source: 1994 HLFS, SIS

Note: Labor force includes those who are 12 years of age and over.

Another important aspect of women's labor market participation is the determination of who is participating. Table 4 shows that in 1994, the highest LFPR among women is recorded for divorced women (35.5%), who probably constitute the group in greatest financial need. The lowest LFPR among women is recorded for widowed women (6.5%), followed by those who are married (13.8%). In contrast, the highest LFPR among men is recorded for those who are married at 81.1% followed by divorced (69.4%) and single (47.8%) men. Despite their relatively lower levels of participation, over half (52.3%) of the female labor force

is made up of married women<sup>6</sup> (SIS, 1996). Therefore, understanding the factors that determine the labor market participation of married women will be of special importance in formulating policy tools to increase the overall participation of women.

Table 4. Labor Market Participation by Marital Status

(%)	Men	Women
Single	47.8	22.7
Married	81.1	13.8
Divorced	69.4	35.5
Widowed	18.4	6.5

Source: 1994 HLFS, SIS

Note: Includes those 12 years of age and above.

When the distribution of male and female workers across the sectors is considered, the majority of female workers are found in the service sector (56.6%), followed by industry (30.7%) and agriculture (12.7%). The corresponding figures for the male workforce are as follows: 58% in services, 38.2% in industry and 3.8% in agriculture (SIS, 1996).

The distribution of male and female workers across the major occupational groups also shows variations (Table 5). The majority of female workers are employed in production related activities (23.8%) and in scientific, technical and professional occupations (22.2%). Only a small proportion (3.1%) of women are employed in administrative, executive and managerial positions. Even in urban areas, a sizable proportion (12.8%) of women is found to be engaged in agricultural activities. In contrast, very few men, only 3.7%, are employed in agricultural activities. Men are mostly concentrated in production related activities (44.3%) and in sales (18.8%). A smaller but slightly higher proportion (4.6%) of men are found to be engaged in administrative, executive and managerial positions.

<sup>6</sup> The rest of the female workforce is composed of single, divorced and widowed women in the following proportions: 42%, 2.8% and 2.9% respectively.

Table 5. Distribution of Men and Women by Occupational Groups

	(%)	Men	Women
Scientific		8.8	22.2
Administrative		4.6	3.1
Clerical		6.5	18.5
Sales		18.8	7.8
Services		13.4	11.8
Agriculture		3.7	12.8
Production Related		44.3	23.8

Source: 1994 HLFS, SIS

Note: Includes those 12 years of age and above.

The overwhelming majority of women work as employees (76.4%). The proportion working as self-employed (8.4%) and employers (1.6%) is quite small. An even larger proportion of women work as unpaid family workers (13.6%). The majority of the male workforce is also made up of employees (65.4%), but a relatively larger proportion of men work as self-employed (18.7%) and employers (11.5%). Only 4.4% of men work as unpaid family workers (SIS, 1996).

The total hours of work also show variations between the genders. While female workers tend to put in on the average 41.3 hours per week, for male workers this figure stands at 51.4 hours (HLFS, 1996). Although the total number of hours put in by women looks low compared to that of men, in fact, it is probably on the high side. Considering that household chores are primarily women's responsibility, the total "real" work hours probably surpass that of men. The double workload at home and the workplace discourage women from joining the labor market. Part-time jobs are still not very common in the urban labor market. (In 1994, 16.8% of the work force are found to be employed part-time.) Of the total number of workers who work less than 40 hours per week, only 35% are women. More importantly, only 2% of such women have declared that it was their desire to work less than 40 hours (SIS, 1996). The rest have put forward various reasons (illness, lack of jobs, work, labor disputes, not finding a full-time job, nature of work, etc.) for having to work less than 40 hours a week.

The last point to be considered is the earnings that women accrue as a result of their work efforts. As mentioned earlier, one of the most important reasons compelling women to enter the labor force is financial need. Therefore, the earning prospects of women will play a role in their decision making process. The 1987 Household Income and Consumption Expenditures Survey results revealed that, on the average, male workers earned 163,617 TL<sup>7</sup> per month compared to the 79,813 TL of women. Adjusting for hours of work, the Dayioğlu (1995) and Kasnakoğlu and Dayioğlu (1996) studies reveal that, in fact, 63.8% of the earnings differential between the genders could be attributed to the effects of labor market discrimination against women.<sup>8</sup>

The picture painted above looks rather grim. Not only do women face problems getting into the labor market due to social pressures and their disadvantaged educational status, but once they are in the labor market, they face a higher risk of being unemployed and probably the additional risk of being pushed into the informal sector. Those who do find employment still face discrimination in the labor market where their work efforts are undervalued. All these factors work toward reducing the labor market participation of women even further. Therefore, policy action is needed immediately to reverse this process and alleviate the position of women in the labor market.

### 3. Data

The data used in this study come from two data sources; the 1987 and the 1994 Household Income and Consumption Expenditures Surveys (HICES) conducted by the State Institute of Statistics (SIS). The novelty of the data sets is that they include information regarding the income and consumption expenditures of individuals as well as detailed information about personal and household characteristics. Included among the personal characteristics are

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<sup>7</sup> In 1987 the exchange rate was \$1 US for 1,018 TL.

<sup>8</sup> Labor market discrimination adversely affects the labor market participation of women by directly causing the undervaluation of their work efforts. However, indirectly, it might also discourage/deter women from investing in their human capital, further reducing their earning prospects and therefore, their participation. In this sense, its indirect effects on women might be quite far-reaching.

the type of job held, job status, earnings from primary and secondary jobs and non-wage income, the latter three points which the HLFS miss.

Despite the richness of the data sets they have a number of drawbacks which are of relevance to this study. First, the methods employed in the two surveys are somewhat different. In 1987, the income distribution and the consumption expenditures surveys were combined under a single survey and the questionnaire was applied on a monthly basis for a period of 12 months. In 1994, the consumption expenditures and the income distribution surveys were carried out separately. While the former followed the 1987 method and was applied on a monthly basis, the income distribution survey was applied in January 1995, inquiring about the income generated in the previous year. Since one of the objectives is to assess the relative changes in the importance of the factors that determine the LFPR of genders, the study employs the 1994 consumption expenditure survey results along with those of the 1987 HICES. Its primary objective not being income distribution, the latter probably does not fully capture the earnings and the total income of the individuals. These two variables are employed (though in a slightly different format) in the labor force participation model developed in the paper. An attempt was made to partially overcome this drawback through the introduction of a year dummy.

Second, instead of the same households being surveyed each month in 1987 and 1994, different households were interviewed. Under these circumstances, the comparison between the two years could only be valid under the assumption that the two samples do not differ significantly from each other. Indeed, the examination of the two data sets reveals that the divergence between the individual observations is not large enough to hinder the application of the envisaged model.

Third, women's marital status and fertility are expected to play important roles in determining their labor force participation rates. The 1987 and 1994 HICES do not provide direct information regarding these two personal characteristics. Therefore, mothers and fathers are matched with children within households through the use of household composition identifiers. Likewise, the marital status of the individuals are determined on that basis. Households with multiple families are deleted from the data sets.

The 1987 and 1994 HICES consisted of 64,000 and 81,000 individual observations from 14,424 and 18,264 urban households respectively. From these, 32,829 and 41,956 individual cases between the ages of 21-65<sup>9</sup> were drawn. The data sets were further reduced to 30,684 and 38,915 due to the deletion of multiple family households. First, separate analyses were carried out on the two data sets to identify the factors that determine the labor force participation of genders. Next, to test whether the observed changes across the years significantly differed from each other, the two data sets were combined by making the necessary adjustments and the analyses were repeated for the combined data.<sup>10</sup> The most important adjustment made to the 1994 data set involved individual incomes. Due to the high levels of inflation across the years, the 1994 incomes needed to be deflated to the 1987 figures through the use of regional and city CPI's where available.

Tables 1A and 2A in the appendix show the means and standard errors of the key variables used in the study. As expected, the LFPR of men is much higher than that of women in both years and a slight decline in both the male and female LFPRs is observed between 1987 and 1994.<sup>11</sup> Men tend to be older than women, the age gap being larger among the working population. As discussed earlier, men tend to be more educated compared to women but this observation is reversed for the working population. In both 1987 and 1994, working women tend to be better educated compared to their male counterparts.

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<sup>9</sup> Restricting the sample to age 21 and above does not generate a highly selected sample since those below the age of 21 constitute less than 5% of the married individuals and of the total children, only 3% belongs to them. Since it is more likely for younger couples to co-habitate with their parents/relatives, their exclusion from the sample avoids the question of their representability in the sample (since the multiple families are deleted from the data).

<sup>10</sup> To economize on the computing time, the combined data sets are reduced to 25,484 female and 24,223 male observations through random sampling.

<sup>11</sup> The 1994 LFPRs reported in Tables 1A and 2A differ from the rates reported in Section 2, which are based on HLFS results. The discrepancy lies in the difference between the methods used in the two surveys. Since the study does not attempt to measure the true LFPR but rather aims toward understanding the factors that determine the LFPR of women, the discrepancy between the figures does not pose a problem.

#### *4. Labor force participation by gender*

##### *4.1 Model*

The labor market participation of women depends on their evaluation of the market wage against their reservation wages. In other words, women value their leisure time and household work and compare this value to the going market wage. When the reservation wage is less than the market wage women participate in the labor market.<sup>12</sup> A probit model is utilized to identify the factors affecting the labor market participation of women and their relative importance in women's decision making process. The model includes both working and non-working<sup>13</sup> women where the reservation wage of the latter is assumed to surpass the market wage.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, the data do not differentiate between unemployed individuals and those who are out of the labor force. Therefore, labor force participation becomes analogous to employment.

The labor force participation of women is affected by their personal and family characteristics and by their socio-economic background. Personal characteristics include age, years of schooling, marital status and whether the woman is a household head or not. Family characteristics take into account the number of children below the age of 7, children between the ages of 7 and 11, and the size of the household. The socio-economic background includes family income (excluding that of women's) and other non-wage income accruing to women. Recognizing the possibility that the regional labor markets might exert differing effects on the labor market participation of women, regional dummies are included within the analysis.

Age and education variables are expected to positively affect the labor force participation of women. In order to be able to observe the movement of an average women in and out of the labor force

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<sup>12</sup> The model employed in the paper in analyzing the labor force participation decision of women relies essentially on the neo-classical theory. Alternative theoretical approaches also exist which attempt to look at the problem from a different angle. Despite their potential merits, the econometric limitations of the alternative theories make them less adaptable to empirical work.

<sup>13</sup> Unpaid family workers are considered to be inactive.

<sup>14</sup> See Dayioğlu (1995) for the formal specification of the probit model.

during her working life, the age variable is divided into five year periods (with the exception of the first category which includes women between the ages 20-25). The schooling variable is also defined as a series of dummies representing different levels of schooling: Primary, Junior-High, High School and University.<sup>15</sup> A separate dummy is also included to take into account those who are literate but without a diploma (functional literates). With higher levels of schooling, the likelihood of women joining the labor market is expected to increase due to the increasing opportunity cost of not working.

Being married and having children will tend to reduce the labor force participation of women with younger children exerting a bigger pressure on women's non-participation. On the other hand, being a household head which would entail a relatively bigger financial responsibility is expected to affect her participation decision positively. Household size can either have a positive or a negative effect. A large household might mean heavier house chores and therefore, a higher reservation wage or it might mean an increase in the financial constraint of the family requiring her involvement in the labor market. Therefore, a priori it is not possible to determine the effect of the household size on women's labor force participation decision. Family income excluding that of women's and non-wage income accruing to women are expected to decrease the labor force participation for the reason that one of the prime motives of women's participation in the labor market is financial need.

A similar analysis can be carried out to examine the labor force participation decision of men as well. The same factors which determine the labor force participation of women are expected to also play a role in determining men's participation. However, the relative importance and the magnitudes of the explanatory variables are expected to vary between the genders. Age and education are expected to affect the participation decision of men in the same direction and for the same reasons as outlined for women. Being married, on the other hand, is expected to positively affect the participation decision of men. Since men are

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<sup>15</sup> Again, junior-high and high schools include those that provide general as well as vocational and technical training and university education includes two-year higher education and graduate work.

still seen as the primary bread-winners of the family, marriage would entail a bigger financial responsibility requiring their participation in the labor market. Being a household head is expected to have the same effect as on women but its impact should be felt at a lesser degree. As revealed by the data sets, relatively fewer women are household heads which probably indicate the absence of a male bread-winner in the household putting heavier financial pressures on women and hence, compelling them to participate in the labor market.

The size of the household would probably positively affect men's participation decision as more household members would translate into more mouths to feed. The number of children, especially those below the age of 7, is also expected to affect the participation decision of men but in a positive way. Since the up-bringing of children is seen mainly as women's responsibility, there is no competition between children and work for men's time. Therefore, if children were a factor in men's participation decision, securing their financial well-being would be a relatively more important factor. Family income (excluding that of the man) and non-wage income accruing to men are expected to negatively affect men's participation decision in the same way as it does women's but probably with a smaller magnitude as the participation of men in the labor force is the 'rule' rather than the 'exception'.

#### *4.2 Probit estimation results of labor force participation of genders*

Table 8 presents the predicted probabilities of women's and men's labor force participation based on the results of the probit analysis. The probit model predicts a participation rate of 10.6% and 9.5% for women and 92.8% and 87.7% for men for 1987 and 1994, respectively.

As expected, all personal characteristics are significant and have the predicted signs. The probability of women's participation increases with age reaching a peak between 31-35 years and declines gradually from there on for both years studied (Figure 2). The same pattern is observed for men as well with the exception that the peak for both years occurs somewhat earlier at the 26-30 year age category and the profile is relatively flat at the top, i.e., the

labor force participation of men between the ages of 21 and 40 does not show much of a change but is rather stable around 95-98% for 1987 and around 90-95% for 1994. The lowest probability of participation for both groups occurs at the 61-65 year age category where women's probability of participation drops to around 2% and that of men to 50% and 39.4% for the years 1987 and 1994 respectively.

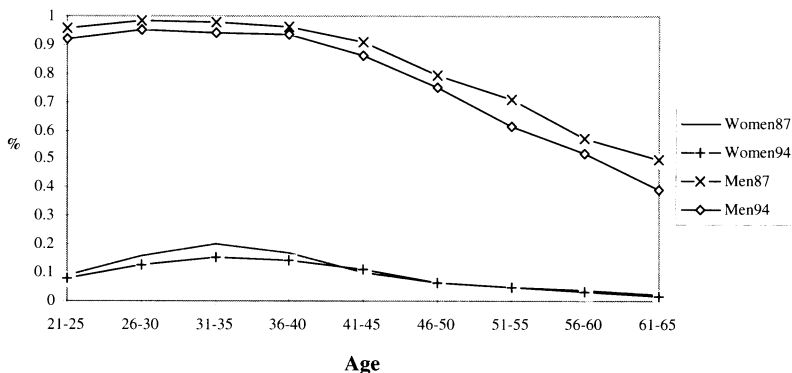


Figure 2. Age-participation profiles of men and women

There is a very significant relationship between schooling and the labor force participation of women (Figure 3). Except for the lower educational categories, the labor force participation of women increases continually with education. Being a functional literate (or a primary school graduate in 1994) does not seem to significantly contribute toward increasing women's labor market participation but rather, the effect of schooling is felt strongly beyond primary school. While the predicted participation rates for high school graduates in 1987 and 1994 are 32.3% and 26.8%, those of university graduates are 2.1 and 2.8 times higher (68.4% and 74.2%).

Table 8. Predicted Male and Female Labor Force Participation Rates (%)

Characteristics	Predicted Probabilities			
	1987		1994	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Overall Mean Participation Rate	0.9279	0.1056	0.8770	0.0951
Marital Status				
Married	0.9345	0.1003	0.8830	0.0901
Not Married	0.8869	0.1292	0.8264	0.1170
Household Head				
Yes	0.9664	0.3557	0.9236	0.2810
No	0.4880	0.0934	0.4522	0.0869
Children Aged 0-6				
None	0.9251	0.1251	0.8708	0.1131
1 Child	*	0.0918	*	0.0778
2 Children	*	0.0668	*	0.0516
3 Children	*	0.0475	*	0.0329
Children Aged 7-11				
None	0.9251	0.1112	0.8749	0.1020
1 Child	*	0.1003	*	0.0869
2 Children	*	0.0901	*	0.0735
3 Children	*	0.0808	*	0.0606
Schooling				
Illiterate	0.9082	0.0571	0.8461	0.0681
Functional Literate/ Primary School	*	*	*	*
Junior-High School	*	0.0749	0.8708	0.0594
High School	*	0.1685	0.8869	0.1292
University	*	0.3228	*	0.2676
	0.9846	0.6844	0.9332	0.7422
Age Groups				
20-25	0.9582	0.0885	0.9207	0.0808
26-30	0.9842	0.1611	0.9535	0.1292
31-35	0.9772	0.2033	0.9441	0.1539
36-40	0.9656	0.1685	0.9370	0.1423
41-45	0.9099	0.1003	0.8643	0.1093
46-50	0.7939	0.0665	0.7517	0.0655
51-55	0.7088	0.0455	0.6141	0.0495
56-60	0.5714	0.0351	0.5160	0.0307
61-65	0.5000	0.0188	0.3936	0.0174

Notes: The table shows the probability of participation holding all other variables constant at their sample mean.

Regions are left out to keep the presentation simple.

\* Statistically insignificant at 10%

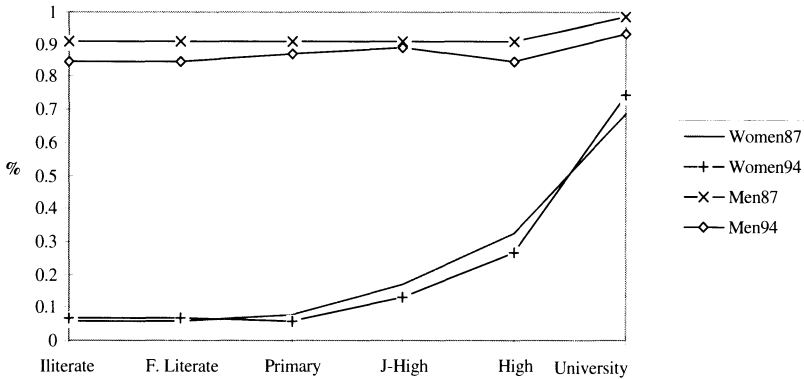


Figure 3. LFPR of men and women by schooling

With men’s participation a less clear picture emerges regarding the relationship between schooling and participation. While in 1987 only university level education seems to significantly affect men's labor force participation, a general trend of increasing labor force participation with schooling (except for high school graduates) is observed in 1994. However, as in 1987, university level education in 1994 stands out distinctly as the most important schooling variable to play a role in the labor force participation of men. An interesting observation to note is that the high school graduates in 1994 tend to have a lower rate of participation than junior-high or primary school graduates. A plausible explanation for the relatively lower participation for high school graduates might be their tendency to further their schooling and hence, their postponement of labor market entry. Open university programs have significantly increased the number of students enrolled at higher education institutions.

The likelihood of married women joining the labor market is lower than for those who are not married. In both 1987 and 1994, the likelihood that married women would enter the labor market is found to be 1.3 times less than that of unmarried women. As conjectured before, marriage seems to increase men's likelihood of labor market entry. The likelihood of married men's labor market participation is found to be 1.05 and 1.07 times that of unmarried men in 1987 and 1994, respectively.

These findings are in line with the 'bread-winner' role of men and the 'homemaker' role of women in the Turkish society. While a married man without the means (which is very often the return to his work efforts) to look after his family is unthinkable and unacceptable, married women's employment outside the household is often considered inappropriate.

Being a household head increases the probability of participation for both groups but more so for women than men. While in 1987 and 1994 the likelihood of participation for female household heads is determined to be 3.8 and 3.2 times that of women who are not household heads, the corresponding figure for men in both years is determined to be roughly 2.

Having children below the age of 7 and between ages 7 and 11 affect women's probability of participation negatively with the former exerting a greater effect. While the predicted probability of participation for a woman with three under-6-year olds is determined to be 4.8% and 3.3% in 1987 and 1994 respectively, that of another woman with an equal number of 7-11 year olds is determined to be 8.1% and 6.1% for the respective two years. However, as the number of children in either category increases, the probability of women's participation falls. For instance, while the labor force participation of a woman with just one 6-year old child is estimated to be 7.8% in 1994, this figure drops to 3.3% for another woman with three under-6-year old children. Thus, it is not only the mere presence of children that negatively affects women's participation decision but their number as well. Having to care for more children increases the reservation wage of women. That is, it reduces their probability of finding a job that would pay a wage higher than the reservation wage.<sup>16</sup>

Children aged 0-6 and 7-11 are not found to have any significant effect on the labor force participation of men. Although the marginal effects of the children variables are found to be positive for both years, they are insignificant determinants of men's labor market entry. The child care-taking role is assumed strictly by women in the Turkish society and the above results are indicative of this general observation.

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<sup>16</sup> Labor market discrimination against women with children might also reduce their participation.

Variables representing the socio-economic background are also significant and their effects are in the expected direction. As conjectured before, in 1987, women's participation is found to be more sensitive to the level of family income compared to that of men's. However, the opposite observation is true for 1994. Therefore, the question of the relative importance of family income on men's and women's participation is left unresolved. For both groups, however, non-wage income tends to play a more important role compared to family income in determining the labor force participation of the genders. This is quite plausible since having non-wage income will put the individual in a stronger position for bargaining within a household setting, allowing him/her to take more of an independent decision regarding labor market participation.

When family characteristics are considered, household size seems to positively affect the labor force participation of genders in both years, indicating the financial constraint that large household size imposes on the family. As conjectured before, household size tends to have a lesser effect on women's labor market participation decision because of the opposing effects that household chores and financial responsibility exert on this variable, whereas for men the latter effect is what the size variable reflects.

#### *4.3 Changes in the relative importance of factors determining the LFPR of genders*

In the previous section, we identified the factors and their relative importance in determining the LFPR of genders at two points in time. The aim of this section is to analyze the way in which the effects of the identified factors changed over time i.e., from 1987 to 1994. For this purpose, the probit analysis is repeated using the combined data set where, in addition to the original set of explanatory variables, the so-called interaction variables are employed. The latter are obtained by multiplying the explanatory variables with a year dummy (1994=1, 0 otherwise). The marginal effects of the interaction variables indicate the way in which the relative importance of the factors have changed over time. (See Table 3A and 4A for the results of the probit analysis on the combined data sets.)

As mentioned earlier, from 1987 to 1994 a general fall in the labor force participation of men and women was observed. Parallel to the observed changes in the LFPRs, the relative importance of the factors determining the market involvement of the genders has also changed. The most significant change occurred in the marginal effects of the schooling variables. The results of the previous analyses indicate that one of the most important factors determining the labor force participation, especially of women, is their level of schooling. Therefore, the analysis of the way in which the relative importance of the schooling variables have changed over time carries great importance.

In the case of women, all schooling variables, except for university education, are found to have lost their old importance. In other words, they exerted a relatively greater effect on women's participation in 1987 than they did in 1994. While the marginal effect of being a university graduate did not change significantly over these years, the biggest drop took place in high school education followed by junior-high school and finally by primary school education. For men, the marginal effects of the schooling variables did not record a significant change, except for university level education. Over the seven year period from 1987 to 1994, the marginal effect of university education is found to decrease, exerting a lesser effect on the participation decision of men.

One of the reasons for the observed changes might be the economic downturn of recent years. 1994 was a year in which the effects of recession were most particularly felt. The falling demand for labor as a result of the economic downturn must have affected women more so than men. The preference for male labor for the limited number of jobs and the increasing number of female university graduates might have discouraged women with less schooling from joining the labor market. Or, it might simply be that fewer from each schooling level were hired. However, the finding that the biggest drop in the marginal effects of schooling is observed for higher (high school level) rather than lower levels (primary/junior-high school levels) is rather puzzling. Equally puzzling is the fall in the relative importance of university level education for men. Had the shift in demand been toward relatively more educated individuals, there should have been an increase in the demand for more educated individuals at the expense of less educated ones. And, in the case of men, this would have been

reflected by university education assuming a higher marginal effect. However, this was not observed. On the contrary, there was a fall in the relative importance of university education, with the marginal effects of the other schooling levels remaining roughly constant. These rather puzzling effects need to be studied further by taking into consideration the relative decline in various sectors of the economy and by examining the corresponding changes in labor demand. Despite its potential merits, such an endeavor is beyond the scope of this study.

The effect of marital status on the labor market participation of women did not seem to change over time. However, being a household head tended to be a less important factor in 1994 than in 1987. The same observations made for women regarding the effects of marital and household head status are also made for men. The influence of the age variables in affecting the participation of genders has remained roughly the same over the years. The only exception is observed in the 46-50 year age category for men. However, as is apparent from Figure 2, the magnitude of the change is not large enough to distort the 1987 age-participation profile from the 1994 one.

The effects of family characteristics are not found to have changed over time. The only exception is observed where children in the 7-11 age category appear to further reduce the participation of women in 1994. However, it should be mentioned that this variable is only significant at the 10% level.

Among the determinants of socio-economic status, family income and non-wage income accruing to individuals tended to play less of a role in reducing women's labor market participation in 1994. Likewise, each additional TL in the form of non-wage income tended to affect men's non-participation at a lesser degree in 1994 than in 1987, which must have been in part due to the economic downturn of 1994. These findings seem to also support the generally made conjecture that women are looked upon as a reserve labor force. The 1994 downturn seems to have reduced the adverse affects of family and non-wage income on women's participation, making it more likely for them to enter the labor market, primarily to augment family income. At this point, it is important to emphasize the unchanging role children play on the participation decision of women, which goes to show that under no circumstance does the care-taker role of women change.

### *5. Conclusion*

Low levels of labor market participation have been an important characteristic of urban women in Turkey. In most cases, this translates into the economic dependence of women on their fathers first and later on their husbands. The end result is the invisibility of women not only in the economic sphere but in social and political arenas as well. In our belief, the empowerment of women lies in their economic independence, which can only be achieved through their participation in and firmer attachment to the labor market. The aim of this study has been the identification of factors that determine the labor force participation of women and the changes in their relative importance over time.

The results of this study indicate that schooling is one of the most important determinants of the labor force participation rate for women, but is less so for men. With higher levels of schooling, especially beyond the primary school level, the LFPR of women increases dramatically. The relatively lower educational attainment of women, coupled with the lower probability of participation at these levels, helps explain what must be one of the underlying reasons for the low levels of female LFPR in urban regions in Turkey. Despite the slight fall in the marginal effects of schooling over the studied period, promoting women's schooling can still be an important policy tool in increasing the LFPR of women. This is due to the fact that the magnitude of decline in the marginal effects of schooling has not been large enough to eliminate its relative importance. Schooling as a means of promoting women's labor market participation must be looked upon as a long term policy tool. However, action is needed now to alter the unfavorable conditions working against women in the labor market and to bring about a rapid change in their labor market involvement.

An important short-term policy tool of the government can be centered around providing child-care facilities for working women. The results of this study indicate that the presence of especially young children negatively affects the participation decision of women. To reduce the negative effect of this variable, affordable child care facilities must be made available. Under the present Labor Law, establishments employing more than 300 female employees are required to provide child care facilities. However, this law has failed to facilitate the life of a substantial number of

women. The main reason for this is that the law is not strictly enforced, so many employers have gone without being penalized for failing to provide child-care facilities. Secondly, as a cost cutting measure, employers tend to restrict the employment of female workers to just below 300 simply to avoid providing the required services. In the latter case, rather than working towards easing the life of working women, the law in fact negatively affects the employment of women by indirectly reducing their numbers in large enterprises. To remedy this situation and make the law applicable to a larger number of women, establishments (regardless of their size) could be made subject to this provision of the Labor Law (with possible public subsidies for smaller establishments). The issue of child-care promises to be of greater importance in the future due to the changing social structure. Extended family support is becoming a less common practice, requiring women to seek child-care support from outside. However, in the face of expensive private child-care facilities, and often the lack of such services in the workplace, makes woman shy away from employment. Therefore, government policy on child-care carries great importance for the market involvement of women.

Of course, it would be wrong to put the blame for women's non-entry into the labor market entirely on the absence of child-care facilities, their insufficient educational attainment or the discrimination against them in the labor market. The underlying reason for women's low involvement in the labor market is related to the role society wants them to play, which is restricted to home-making. Therefore, unless the way society views women changes, policy instruments are bound to have a limited impact on the labor market participation of women. In fact, women's disadvantaged position in many facets of life is related to the social values held. For instance, although female children's schooling proves to be a more rewarding investment from personal (See Dayioğlu, 1995 and Kasnakoğlu and Dayioğlu, 1996 for Turkey) and social points of view (Haveman and Wolfe, 1984), due to the undervaluation of female children's schooling, male children's education is favored at the expense of their female counterparts. To give yet another example, employers often hold unfounded beliefs about characteristics such as female workers' productivity and labor turnover, which cause them to discriminate against women in terms of pay, promotion and responsibility sharing. However difficult, breaking

the centuries-old traditions will solve innumerable problems and contribute to the better functioning of the labor market. In this respect, there is a significant role for international organizations and especially for the NGOs. As organizations sensitive to women's problems flourish, the archaic values held against women will change, resulting in government policies which are designed to alleviate the position of women and enable them to have a greater impact on society. Hence, apart from designing specific policy tools, the government should support and promote the activities of the NGOs.

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## APPENDIX

Table 1A. Means and (Standard Errors) of Key Variables —1987

Variable	Working Women	All Women	Working Men	All Men
Age	33.31 (9.35)	37.00 (12.35)	38.59 (10.64)	39.34 (12.03)
Education	8.16 (4.80)	4.81 (4.13)	7.08 (4.06)	7.01 (4.05)
Non-Wage Income/month*	18,759 (47,094)	13,553 (58,134)	45,532 (79,786)	52,384 (99,041)
Family Income/month*	315,790 (291,020)	280,550 (353,720)	288,130 (359,520)	288,930 (360,090)
Household Head Status (Household Head =1)	0.13 (0.34)	0.07 (0.25)	0.87 (0.33)	0.81 (0.40)
No. of Children (0-6 yrs)	0.45 (0.70)	0.57 (0.86)	0.71 (0.90)	0.61 (0.87)
No. of Children (7-11 yrs)	0.44 (0.70)	0.49 (0.78)	0.58 (0.82)	0.50 (0.78)
Household Size	4.21 (1.64)	4.78 (2.09)	4.85 (1.99)	4.86 (2.04)
Marital Status (Married =1)	0.69 (0.46)	0.81 (0.39)	0.89 (0.31)	0.85 (0.36)
LFPR		0.15 (0.36)		0.82 (0.38)
N	2,428	15,919	12,166	14,765

Notes: \* In 1987 Turkish Liras (in 1987, the exchange rate was \$1 US for 1,018 TL).  
Sample includes aged 21 to 65.  
Unpaid family workers are considered to be inactive.

Table 2A. Means and (Standard Errors) of Key Variables —1994

Variable	Working Women	All Women	Working Men	All Men
Age	34.29 (9.50)	36.86 (12.00)	37.50 (10.17)	38.45 (11.85)
Education	8.08 (5.05)	4.75 (4.00)	7.14 (3.80)	7.04 (3.85)
Non-Wage Income/month*	14,707 (62,211)	9,937 (46,593)	22,782 (79,669)	32,280 (89,607)
Family Income/month*	249,370 (375,980)	268,200 (377,920)	95,656 (157,600)	137,860 (704,630)
Household Head Status (Household Head =1)	0.12 (0.33)	0.06 (0.24)	0.90 (0.31)	0.82 (0.38)
No. of Children (0-6 yrs)	0.33 (0.59)	0.50 (0.78)	0.63 (0.83)	0.53 (0.79)
No. of Children (7-11 yrs)	0.39 (0.66)	0.46 (0.74)	0.55 (0.77)	0.47 (0.74)
Household Size	4.26 (1.68)	4.66 (1.93)	4.71 (1.83)	4.71 (1.88)
Marital Status (Married =1)	0.68 (0.47)	0.81 (0.39)	0.90 (0.30)	0.85 (0.36)
LFPR		0.13 (0.34)		0.79 (0.40)
N	2,699	20,036	14,997	18,879

Notes: \* In 1987 Turkish Liras (in 1987, the exchange rate was \$1 US for 1,018 TL).  
Sample includes aged 21 to 65.

Unpaid family workers are considered to be inactive.

Table 3A. Probit Estimates of Male Labor Force Participation 1987-1994

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	Partial Derivative
Constant	-1.9817	0.1245	
Year94	*	*	*
Married	0.3112	0.0622	0.0634
Household Head	1.7975	0.0681	0.3660
Children Age 0-6	*	*	*
Children Age 7-11	*	*	*
Size	0.0329	0.0098	0.0067
Family Income	-7.2E-07	8.9E-08	-1.4E-07
Non-Wage Income	-3.3E-06	1.8E-07	-6.7E-07
Functional Literate	*	*	*
Primary School	*	*	*
Junior-High School	*	*	*
High School	*	*	*
University	0.8335	0.0944	0.1697
Age 21-24	1.7300	0.0951	0.3522
Age 25-30	2.1306	0.0981	0.4338
Age 31-35	2.0066	0.1059	0.4085
Age 36-40	1.7992	0.1024	0.3663
Age 41-45	1.3548	0.0880	0.2758
Age 46-50	0.8321	0.0756	0.1694
Age 51-55	0.5601	0.0730	0.1140
Age 56-60	0.1682	0.0724	0.0342
Married*Year94	*	*	*
Household Head*Year94	-0.3171	0.0928	-0.0646
Children Age 0-6*Year94	*	*	*
Children Age 7-11*Year94	*	*	*
Size*Year94	*	*	*
Family Income*Year94	*	*	*
Non-Wage Income*Year94	1.04E-06	2.2E-07	2.12E-07
Functional Literate*Year94	*	*	*
Primary School*Year94	*	*	*
Junior-High School*Year94	*	*	*
High School*Year94	*	*	*
University*Year94	-0.3200	0.1295	-0.0652

Table 3A. Cont.

Age 21-24*Year94	*	*	*
Age 25-30*Year94	*	*	*
Age 31-35*Year94	*	*	*
Age 36-40*Year94	*	*	*
Age 41-45*Year94	*	*	*
Age 46-50*Year94	0.1975	0.1055	0.0402
Age 51-55*Year94	*	*	*
Age 56-60*Year94	*	*	*

Notes: Sample includes men aged 21-65  
 Omitted Categories: Age 61-65, Education: Illiterate  
 Sample Size: 24803  
 Log-Likelihood: -7811.9  
 Right Predictions: 0.8508  
 \* Statistically insignificant  
 \*\* Statistically significant at 10%  
 Regions are left out to keep the presentation simple.

Table 4A. Probit Estimates of Female Labor Force Participation 1987-1994

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	Partial Derivative
Constant	-2.3194	0.1374	
Year94	*	*	*
Married	-0.1593	0.0498	-0.0280
Household Head	0.9379	0.0794	0.1649
Children Age 0-6	-0.1686	0.0247	-0.0296
Children Age 7-11	-0.0511	0.0245	-0.0090
Size	0.0215	0.0100	0.0038
Family Income	-1.1E-06	7.9E-08	-1.9E-07
Non-Wage Income	-3.4E-06	3.9E-07	-5.9E-07
Functional Literate	*	*	*
Primary School	0.1365	0.0460	0.0240
Junior-High School	0.6249	0.0658	0.1099
High School	1.0991	0.0565	0.1932
University	2.0514	0.0755	0.3606
Age 21-24	0.7235	0.1204	0.1272
Age 25-30	1.0839	0.1212	0.1906
Age 31-35	1.2610	0.1209	0.2217
Age 36-40	1.1125	0.1199	0.1958
Age 41-45	0.8256	0.1230	0.1451
Age 46-50	0.5724	0.1243	0.1006
Age 51-55	0.4243	0.1304	0.0746
Age 56-60	0.2616	0.1332	0.0460

Table 4A. Cont.

Married*Year94	*	*	*
Household Head*Year94	-0.2383	0.1135	-0.0419
Children Age 0-6*Year94	*	*	*
Children Age 7-11*Year94 **	-0.0691**	0.0366	-0.0122
Size*Year94	*	*	*
Family Income*Year94	4.1E-07	1.02E-07	7.2E-08
Non-Wage Income*Year94	1.9E-06	5.1E-07	3.3E-07
Functional Literate*Year94	*	*	*
Primary School*Year94	-0.1846	0.0660	-0.0325
Junior-High School*Year94	-0.2033	0.0951	-0.0357
High School*Year94	-0.2348	0.0807	-0.0413
University*Year94	*	*	*
Age 21-24*Year94	*	*	*
Age 25-30*Year94	*	*	*
Age 31-35*Year94	*	*	*
Age 36-40*Year94	*	*	*
Age 41-45*Year94	*	*	*
Age 46-50*Year94	*	*	*
Age 51-55*Year94	*	*	*
Age 56-60*Year94	*	*	*

Notes: Sample includes men aged 21-65  
 Omitted Categories: Age 61-65, Education: Illiterate  
 Sample Size: 26516  
 Log-Likelihood: -8504.5  
 Right Predictions: 0.8776  
 \* Statistically insignificant  
 \*\* Statistically significant at 10%  
 Regions are left out to keep the presentation simple.



## CHANGING HOME DOMAIN



## WOMEN IN MARRIAGE IN ASHKABAD, BAKU, AND ANKARA<sup>1</sup>

NURAN HORTAÇSU  
SHARON BAŞTUĞ

The present study aims to investigate women's position within the urban family in three Turkic societies, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Turkey. These societies were chosen because they share the same origins, the Oğuz Turks of Central Asia, but have undergone different historical developments. The traditional Turkish family in Central Asia was characterized as patrilineal and patrilocal. Oğuz families were part of patrilineages which had well defined authority structures and responsibilities for mutual aid and defense (Güler 1992; Saray 1989). Thus it may be argued that collectivist values were dominant in the traditional Turkish culture. In this culture, monogamy was the rule rather than the exception, bride-price was an established custom, and marriages were mostly arranged and served the function of forming alliances between clans. Women, by marriage, became part of their husband's family and their status within this family depended on the number of male children they contributed to the lineage, their personal dexterity in handicraft and household tasks, their adjustment to the new family, and how they performed their role within the family, whether as new bride, mother, or mother-in-law. Infertility was a justified cause for a man to take a second wife. Since women did not inherit from their own fathers, their future depended on having sons and someday becoming the mother-in-law in a household; thus bearing sons was a necessity for women in this society.

Family researchers have posited a relationship between the level of industrialization, cultural values, and family functioning. It has

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been argued that industrialism and the associated value of individualism has led to the satisfaction of individual needs within the conjugal as opposed to the extended family. Consequently, family control over the conjugal unit decreased and the "modern family," with its emphasis on mutuality, spousal intimacy, equality and romantic love emerged (Goode 1971; Lee and Stone 1980; Levinger 1990). Free from the domination of their in-laws and protected by the emotional bond with their husbands, women in modern marriages may enjoy a relatively advantaged position and make claims for equality with respect to the division of labor and decision making. Sexual double standards may also be relaxed in "modern" marriages. However, it is also argued that the cultural value system may play an important role in determining family functioning (Levinger 1990). The relationship between family functioning and industrialization may be modified by the predominant value system of any culture. Communist ideology typically stresses similar ideology rather than conjugal love as the basis for marriage (Salaff 1973). Thus, industrialization and marriage based on conjugal love might not have been parallel developments in the former USSR. In addition, there is evidence that traditional practices may have been fostered as ways of defending and constructing national identities (Heyat 1996; Muhammetberdiev 1990).

Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Turkey are at different stages of industrialization and have been influenced by different powers in the recent past. Due to its geography, settlement and urbanization began in Azerbaijan at a relatively early date. In addition, Azerbaijan enjoyed a petroleum boom at the beginning of the twentieth century and was under the influence of Western nationalistic and Marxist movements at that time before submitting to Soviet domination (Altstadt 1992). Urbanization and industrialization began later and nomadism continued for a longer period in Turkey than in Azerbaijan. Turkmenistan is considered the least industrialized country among the former Soviet Republics and more than half of the population was still nomadic at the time of the Russian conquest (Twining 1993; Saray 1989). Thus, it may be stated that Azerbaijan has been industrialized for nearly a century, that industrialization started later but has progressed at a faster pace in Turkey in the recent past, and that it has been minimal in Turkmenistan. Other differences exist between the three cultures. Present-day Turkey is the continuation of the Ottoman Empire, a great power

for six centuries, and has been under the influence of Europe and the United States for the past century. On the other hand, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have enjoyed independence for only very short periods in their history and have existed under the communist regime for nearly a century.

Attempts at educating women and fostering a family based on spousal equality and conjugal affection have been made in Turkey by both the state and the mass media for over a century (Doğan 1992; Işın 1992). These attempts have resulted in more “modern” families among the young, the educated and those residing in the western cities (Atalay, Konaş, Beyazıt, Madençolu 1992). However, it has been posited that interdependence rather than individualism is the dominant norm for present-day Turkey due to the scarcity of institutionalized social services (Kağıtçıbaşı and Sunar 1992).

The present study compares the position of women in regard to division of labor within the family, satisfaction with division of labor, and decision-making within the family in Ashkabad, Baku, and Ankara, the capitals of the three countries. Division of labor and decision-making in traditional families is based on traditional gender roles, such that husbands and wives are responsible for different tasks and decisions, whereas mutuality with respect to decisions and tasks is more characteristic of “modern” families (Blumel 1991). Another characteristic of the traditional, male-dominated family is that husbands make most of the decisions and wives perform most of the tasks related to housework and childcare. A person’s satisfaction with the division of labor may be influenced by both the relative amount of work performed and by normative expectations (Major 1994). Thus, women in traditional families may perform the majority of household tasks but may still be satisfied with their lot because of normative expectations.

A second aim of the present study is the investigation of the extent and nature of sexual double standards with respect to views related to marriage and family. Thus, desirable qualities for prospective brides and grooms, the acceptable age range for marriage for men and women, importance of different reasons for divorcing husbands and wives, and approval of marriage for widows and widowers were investigated. Practices and views regarding bride-price in the three capitals were also investigated as indicators of traditional views of marriage. Lastly, the study also aims to provide some comparative information about marriages in the three

capitals, such as percentages of nuclear families, type of marriage, and number of children.

The samples of the present study were limited to inhabitants of the capitals of the three countries due to budgetary limitations. No claims are made concerning the representativeness of our findings for the whole of the three countries because capitals, especially Baku, are more cosmopolitan and receive more migration than other cities and rural areas. However, due to migration, trends in capitals may be more indicative of future conditions in developing countries.

### *Methods*

#### *Samples*

The Ashkabad sample consisted of 228 women and 176 men selected in proportion to the percentage of Turkmens living in different districts of the city. Only one person was interviewed in each house. In the case of dwellings populated by extended families, one member of only one conjugal pair was selected. Sex and age group of participants chosen from extended family households were selected in alternation. The Baku sample included individuals of Turkic origin selected from a sample representative of different occupational categories provided by the Azerbaijan Statistical Institute. In addition to this sample, home visits were made in different districts of the city in order to include non-working individuals within the sample and also to increase sample size. The resulting Baku sample consisted of 355 women and 240 men. The Ankara sample consisted of 276 women and 232 men from different municipalities of the city selected in proportion to the population of different districts. Some addresses were obtained from schools and other participants were selected randomly from different streets in each district.

#### *Questionnaires*

Questionnaires encompassing different topics related to marriage were utilized. The majority of the questions were taken or adapted from earlier family studies with Turkish samples (Hortaçsu 1997;

Hortaçsu and Oral, 1994; Hortaçsu and Oral 1996; Kağıtçıbaşı 1990) and were almost all close-ended. The different topics included in the questionnaire were: a) demographic information (age, marriage duration, education, number and sex of children, perceived monetary condition, work status, occupation, whether or not the spouse was a relative, clan membership, duration of residence in the capital); b) information related to respondent's marriage (type of marriage—"modern"/traditional, type of marriage ceremony, type of family—nuclear/extended, place of residence, decision-making about marriage, bride-price, involvement of extended family in marital ceremonies); c) views concerning marriage (marriage between cousins, appropriate age for marriage, desired qualities in prospective brides and grooms, importance ratings of various reasons for marriage and for divorce, remarriage in the case of spouse's death); d) division of labor and decision-making; e) relationships with social network (giving and receiving help, residential proximity); f) views related to children (desired number, perceived importance of children and perceived instrumentality of children for achieving certain valued ends. Only results pertaining to issues named in the introduction will be reported in this paper. The questionnaires were written in Turkish and translated to Turkmen and Azeri by Turkmen and Azeri students who were studying at Middle East Technical University in collaboration with the authors. Some questions were reworded, added, or dropped during this process.

### *Procedure*

The questionnaires were written in the local languages using Latin script and administered orally by experienced interviewers who could read the Latin script. The researchers, together with local experts, conducted a training session in Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan and answered interviewers' questions. The answers to the few open-ended questions included in the questionnaires were translated by two university students fluent in both Turkish and the local language. Ankara interviews were conducted by interviewers experienced in conducting similar interviews.

## *Results*

### *Background information about respondents*

Background information about respondents and their families is presented in Table 1. The three samples were compared with respect to age of husbands and wives, duration of marriage, duration of residence in the capital, number of children, and perceived monetary condition by conducting ANOVAs where the above measures served as dependent measures and Country and Sex of Respondent served as independent measures. The results revealed that, on the average, respondents in the Ankara sample were older, had been married for a longer time and that they had lived in the capital for a longer period than respondents in the other two samples,  $F(2, 1467) = 5.27, p < .01$ ;  $F(2, 1475) = 16.69, p < .001$ ;  $F(2, 1210) = 9.36, p < .001$  for age, duration of marriage, and residence in capital, respectively. It was also found that the three samples differed significantly with respect to average number of children and perceived monetary condition,  $F(2, 1457) = 140.63, p < .001$  and  $F(1, 1443) = 56.60, p < .001$ , respectively. The average number of children per family was highest for Ashkabad and lowest for Baku and perceived monetary condition was highest for Baku and lowest for Ashkabad. An ANOVA where educational level served as the dependent measure and Country, Sex of Respondent and Spouse (husband/wife) served as independent variables revealed that the three samples also differed with respect to educational level and discrepancy of spousal education,  $F(2, 1434) = 269.07, p < .001$  and  $F(2, 1434) = 17.54, p < .001$  for Country and Country x Spouse effects, respectively. The average educational level of the Baku sample was significantly higher than that of the Ashkabad sample, which, in turn, was higher than that of the Ankara sample. In addition, discrepancy in spousal education favoring husbands was higher for the Ankara sample than for the Ashkabad sample. The Baku sample revealed spousal equality with respect to educational level. As may be seen in Table 1, the three samples also differed with respect to the proportions of nuclear families. The proportion of nuclear families was highest for the Ankara sample, followed by the Baku and Ashkabad samples. It may also be seen in Table 1 that the proportion of working wives was lower in the Ankara samples than in those of either Ashkabad or Baku. To sum-

Table 1. Demographic Information Concerning Male and Female Respondents and Their Families in Ashkabad, Baku and Ankara Samples

	Ashkabad	Baku	Ankara
Age			
Mean	38.83 <sub>b</sub> (10.60)*	39.44 <sub>b</sub> (10.26)	40.97 <sub>a</sub> (8.55)
Range	22-67	19-75	19-76
Spousal Age Difference			
Mean	1.54 <sub>a</sub> ** (2.90)	4.12 <sub>c</sub> (4.36)	3.41 <sub>b</sub> (4.39)
Marriage Duration			
Mean	16.67 <sub>b</sub> (11.08)	14.92 <sub>c</sub> (9.79)	18.22 <sub>a</sub> (7.95)
Range	1-47	1-54	1-55
Number of Children			
Mean	3.53 <sub>c</sub> (2.07)	2.25 <sub>a</sub> (1.02)	2.54 <sub>b</sub> (1.47)
Range	0-10	0-7	0-9
Timing of First Child			
Mean	1.64 <sub>a</sub> (2.99)	1.28 <sub>a</sub> (2.99)	1.71 <sub>a</sub> (3.08)
Average Age Difference Between Children			
Mean	2.66 <sub>a</sub> (1.13)	2.86 <sub>a</sub> (1.60)	3.71 <sub>b</sub> (2.01)
Education ***			
Mean	4.54 <sub>b</sub> (.80)	4.98 <sub>c</sub> (.75)	3.30 <sub>a</sub> (1.36)
Range	2-7	2-7	
Spousal Educational Difference			
Mean	.34 <sub>b</sub> (.82)	.00 <sub>a</sub> (.93)	.42 <sub>c</sub> (1.01)
Perceived Monetary Condition			
Mean (1 = poor, 4 = reach)	2.25 <sub>a</sub> (.54)	2.84 <sub>c</sub> (1.20)	2.50 <sub>a</sub> (.62)
Range	1-4	1-5	1-4
% First Marriage	97.8 <sub>a</sub>	96.3 <sub>a</sub>	97.5 <sub>a</sub>
Residence in the Capital			
Mean	16.92 (11.84)	16.4 (11.87)	20.97 (11.91)
Range	1-55	1-99	1-70
% Working Wife	58.7 <sub>a</sub>	64.3 <sub>a</sub>	34.1 <sub>b</sub>
% Nuclear Family	67.2 <sub>b</sub>	73.7 <sub>c</sub>	78.9 <sub>a</sub>

\* SD's in parentheses.

\*\* Means or percentages on the same line not sharing the same subscript are significantly different from each other at  $p < .05$  by Scheffe or by proportion test.

\*\*\* 1 = less than primary school; 7 = more than master's degree

marize, when educational level, spousal discrepancy of educational level, perceived monetary condition and number of children are used as criteria of social development, the Baku sample appears to be the most developed and the Ankara sample appears to be the least developed. Differences with respect to educational level, number of children, and proportions of nuclear families and work-

Table 2. Practices and Views Concerning Marriage in Ashkabad, Baku and Ankara Samples

	Ashkabad	Baku	Ankara
Type of Marriage			
% traditional	26 <sup>a</sup> *	36 <sup>b</sup>	41 <sup>c</sup>
% 'modern traditional'	32 <sup>a</sup>	30 <sup>a</sup>	30 <sup>a</sup>
% 'modern'	40 <sup>a</sup>	32 <sup>b</sup>	22 <sup>c</sup>
Classification of Marriage			
% love	37 <sup>a</sup>	20 <sup>b</sup>	8 <sup>c</sup>
% love and logic, logic	3 <sup>a</sup>	14 <sup>b</sup>	17 <sup>b</sup>
% tradition	39 <sup>a</sup>	16 <sup>c</sup>	22 <sup>b</sup>
% love and respect	22 <sup>a</sup>	46 <sup>b</sup>	53 <sup>c</sup>
Decision for Marriage			
% extended family	1 <sup>a</sup>	10 <sup>c</sup>	5 <sup>b</sup>
% parents	27 <sup>a</sup>	24 <sup>a</sup>	8 <sup>b</sup>
% self with parental approval	68 <sup>a</sup>	49 <sup>c</sup>	57 <sup>b</sup>
% Marriage Among Relatives	32 <sup>a</sup>	19 <sup>c</sup>	24 <sup>b</sup>
% of Marriages With Bride Price	69	19	23
Views Concerning Age For Marriage			
Most appropriate for men	23.03 <sup>a</sup> (2.01)**	26.05 <sup>c</sup> (2.65)	25.16 <sup>b</sup> (2.65)
Acceptable range for men	7.68 <sup>a</sup> (6.70)	16.40 <sup>c</sup> (7.56)	13.56 <sup>b</sup> (6.37)
Most appropriate for women	20.92 <sup>a</sup> (1.79)	21.03 <sup>a</sup> (2.39)	21.77 <sup>b</sup> (2.12)
Acceptable range for women	6.16 <sup>a</sup> (3.90)	13.00 <sup>c</sup> (5.40)	11.99 <sup>b</sup> (5.55)
Most Appropriate Time For First Child (year after marriage)	1.53 <sup>a</sup> (.89)	1.46 <sup>a</sup> (.72)	2.37 <sup>b</sup> (1.32)

\* Means or percentages on the same line not sharing the same subscript are significantly different from each other at  $p < .05$  by Scheffe or by proportion test.

\*\* SD's in parentheses.

ing wives reflect the dominant ideologies, practices and history of the three countries.

### *Practices concerning marriage*

Table 2 shows that the percentage of marriages which were initiated by families was highest for the Ankara sample and lowest for that of Ashkabad. Thus, a higher percentage of marriages in the Ashkabad sample were based on personal choice than in the Baku and Ankara samples. Table 2 also presents respondents' categorizations of their marriages in the three capitals in terms of love, tradition, etc. Consistent with these results, the category "love" was

selected most frequently by respondents in the Ashkabad sample and least frequently by those in the Ankara sample. However, “tradition” was also selected more frequently in Ashkabad than in Ankara, which, in turn, selected this category more frequently than respondents in the Baku sample. Thus, both “modern” and traditional classifications of marriage were utilized more frequently in the Ashkabad sample than in the other two. The majority of marriages in the Ashkabad sample involved the practice of bride-price, indicating that bride-price was exchanged in “modern” as well as in traditional marriages. Approximately one-fifth of marriages in the other two capitals involved bride-price. Thus, by the above criteria, Ashkabad marriages appeared to be both the most “modern” and the most “traditional” in comparison with marriages in the other two samples.

*Division of family labor and satisfaction with division of labor*

Three scales were constructed as a result of factor analysis of items related to division of labor. The three factors resulting from the factor analysis were labeled Housework, Outside Work, and Childcare, explained 19, 16, and 9 percentages of the variance and had eigenvalues of 3.77, 3.13, and 1.69, respectively. Cooking, ironing, cleaning, washing, and dish washing were loaded on the first factor; shopping, relations with families and friends, health, repairs, paying bills, and earning money were loaded on the second factor and childcare, children’s schooling, homework, recreational activities, and upbringing were loaded on the third factor. The alpha reliability values of the three scales consisting of items loading on the three factors were .81, .75, and .75 for Housework, Outside Work and Childcare, respectively. An ANOVA where the degree of wife contribution to each task served as the dependent measure and Country, Sex of Respondent, Generation (between variables) and Type of Task (within variables) served as independent measures revealed a significant Country x Type of Task effect.<sup>2</sup> As may be seen in Table 3, division of labor within the family was generally consistent with traditional gender stereotypes and wives generally contributed more to family chores than their

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<sup>2</sup> Effects related to generation will be discussed in this report.

husbands. Thus, in all three samples women performed most of the housework, whereas men performed most of the chores outside the home, and childcare was performed mostly by wives with considerable help from husbands. However, there were some differences between the three samples with respect to division of labor. Husbands in the Baku sample contributed more to outside work than husbands in the other two samples; Ankara husbands helped more with housework than husbands in the other two capitals; and Ashkabad husbands participated less in childcare than did Baku husbands.

Answers to the question about the level of own and perceived spousal satisfaction with division of labor in the family were analyzed by an ANOVA where level of satisfaction served as the dependent measure and Country, Sex of Respondent, Generation (between variables) and Spouse (husband/wife, within variable) served as the independent measures. Significant Spouse and Country x Spouse effects emerged from this analysis,  $F(1, 1422) = 91.38, p < .001$ ;  $F(2, 1422) = 16.02, p < .001$ . As may be seen in Table 4, overall, husbands were more satisfied with the division of labor within the family than were wives, wives in Baku were less satisfied than wives in the other two capitals, and husbands in Ankara were more satisfied than husbands in the other two capitals. Table 4 also reveals that spousal discrepancy with respect to satisfaction with division of labor was greater for the Ankara sample than it was for the other two samples.

*Relationship between contribution to family labor and satisfaction with division of labor in the family*

Correlations between the amount of wife contribution to various tasks and the male and female respondents' own and perceived spousal satisfaction with division of labor are presented in Table 5. It may be seen in this table that the correlation between wife contribution to various tasks and women's satisfaction with division of labor was greater for the Ankara and Baku samples than it was for the Ashkabad sample. In fact, the relationship between women's reported contribution to housework and reported satisfaction with division of labor was not significant for the Ashkabad sample. Another interesting finding shown in this table is the fact that significant correlations between wife contribution and

perceived wife satisfaction were evidenced only for men in the Ankara sample. Perceived wife satisfaction of men in the Baku and Ashkabad samples were not related significantly to the amount of reported wife contribution to household labor. One explanation of this finding may be the sensitivity of men in the Ankara sample to their wives' plight; another explanation may lie in the possibility that a greater number of complaints were voiced by wives in Ankara. Either explanation is consistent with the existence of norms endorsing some degree of sharing of household tasks in Ankara families.

*Decision making*

The relative decision power of wives and husbands with respect to various issues concerning the family was calculated by subtracting ratings for husband's decision power from that of wife's (scale 1 = makes the decision by himself/herself, 5 = his/her opinion is not asked). The resulting relative decision power measure served as the dependent measure on twenty ANOVAs, one for each decision topic, where Country, Sex of Respondent, and Generation served as independent variables. As may be seen in Table 6, Country effect was significant for eleven of these analyses. Some similarities among the three samples with respect to decision power within the family may also be seen in Table 6. Some degree of autonomy with respect to personal issues, such as clothing, jobs, and friends, for both wives and husbands, was evidenced in all three capitals. Results also implied that husbands enjoyed greater autonomy than

Table 3. Division of Labor at Home in Ashkabad, Baku and Ankara\*

	Ashkabad	Baku	Ankara
Housework	1.19 <sup>a</sup> ** (.40)	1.20 <sup>a</sup> (.46)	1.33 <sup>b</sup> (.50)
Outside Work	3.25 <sup>a</sup> (.49)	3.55 <sup>b</sup> (.68)	3.33 <sup>a</sup> (.65)
Childcare	2.48 <sup>a</sup> (.69)	2.65 <sup>b</sup> (.67)	2.52 <sup>a b</sup> (.68)
Average	2.30 <sup>a</sup> (.37)	2.47 <sup>b</sup> (.40)	2.37 <sup>a</sup> (.43)

\*1 = performed entirely by wife, 3 = jointly or take turns, 5 = performed entirely by husband.  
 \*\* Means on the same line not sharing the same subscript are significantly different from each other at  $p < .05$  by Scheffe.

Table 4. Satisfaction With Division of Labor in Ashkabad, Baku and Ankara\*

	Ashkabad	Baku	Ankara
Wife Satisfaction	1.95 <sup>a**</sup> (.39)	2.09 <sup>b</sup> (.54)	2.01 <sup>a</sup> (.77)
Husband Satisfaction	1.88 <sup>b</sup> (.34)	1.94 <sup>b</sup> (.42)	1.65 <sup>a</sup> (.55)
Spousal Difference	.07 <sup>a</sup> (.30)	.15 <sup>a</sup> (.56)	.33 <sup>b</sup> (.79)

\*1 = very satisfied, 4 = very dissatisfied.

\*\* Means on the same line not sharing the same subscript are significantly different from each other at  $p < .05$  by Scheffe.

Table 5. Correlation Between Amount of Wife Contribution to Various Tasks and Own and Perceived Spousal Satisfaction With Division of Labor

	WOMEN			MEN		
	Ashkabad	Baku	Ankara	Ashkabad	Baku	Ankara
Housework						
Self	.03 <sup>a***</sup>	-.25 <sup>b**</sup>	-.27 <sup>b**</sup>	-.09	-.04	-.11
Spouse	.00	-.08	.11	-.10 <sup>a</sup>	-.10 <sup>a</sup>	-.18 <sup>a*</sup>
Outside Work						
Self	-.27 <sup>a**</sup>	-.35 <sup>a b**</sup>	-.46 <sup>b**</sup>	-.10	-.05	.00
Spouse	-.06	-.01	.01	-.11 <sup>a</sup>	-.12 <sup>a</sup>	-.25 <sup>a*</sup>
Childcare						
Self	-.19 <sup>a*</sup>	-.33 <sup>a b**</sup>	-.41 <sup>b**</sup>	-.12	.08	-.04
Spouse	-.02	-.05	.02	-.14 <sup>a b</sup>	-.02 <sup>a</sup>	-.27 <sup>b**</sup>

\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .001$ .

\*\*\* Values on the same line not sharing the same subscript are significantly different from each other.

did wives. In other words, husbands seemed to have more say in wives' affairs than vice versa. Another point to note is that control over decision-making was consistent with gender roles in all three samples, wives taking responsibility for housework and child-rearing and husbands dealing with money matters and relationships with the social network.

Table 6 also reveals that husbands in the Baku sample seemed to enjoy greater autonomy with respect to their own affairs than husbands in the other two samples and greater mutuality was evidenced in decision-making for the Ankara sample (figures are closer to 0). In addition, childbearing seemed to be an issue on which men in Ankara and women in Ashkabad had greater say than

their spouses. To summarize, some degree of specialization along gender lines was evidenced for all three samples with respect to both division of family labor and decision-making. This gender-based specialization seemed to be greatest for the Baku sample and least for the Ankara sample.

*Views concerning marriage*

Views concerning the participation of nuclear and extended families in decisions about the marriage of young people and views concerning appropriate ages for marriage are presented in Table 2. The percentage of respondents voicing the view that the marriage decision should be taken by the person concerned with the approval of parents was higher in the Ashkabad sample than in the other two samples, whereas the percentage of respondents approving involvement of the extended family in such decisions was higher for the Baku sample than for the other two. These results are consistent with the earlier findings concerning higher proportions of self initiated "modern" and love based marriages among Ashkabad respondents.

A MANOVA where the most appropriate, youngest, and oldest ages for marriage for men and women served as dependent measures and Country, Generation, and Sex of Respondent served as independent measures revealed a significant multivariate effect of Country,  $F(12, 1918) = 64.91, p < .001$ . The country effect was significant for each of the six dependent measures in the analysis,  $F_s(2, 963) = 9.76, 142.11, 93.76, 138, 14, 134.65, p_s < .001$  for most appropriate age for women, most appropriate age for men, youngest age for women and oldest age for men, respectively. As may be seen in Table 2, the average most appropriate age for marriage was lower in Ashkabad than in the other two samples. The Ashkabad sample also differed from the other two samples in that the oldest acceptable age for marriage for this sample was younger and the youngest acceptable age for marriage for this sample was older than the respective averages reported by the other two samples. An ANOVA where the acceptable age range for marriage (oldest-youngest) served as the dependent measure and Country, Sex of Respondent, Generation (between) and Sex of Child (within) served as independent measures revealed significant effects of Country and Sex of Child,  $F_s(2, 1350) = 191.29, p < .001$ ;  $F(2, 1359) = 18.90, p < .001$ . As may be seen in Table 2, the acceptable age range for marriage was widest for Baku and narrowest for

the Ashkabad sample. It was also wider for males than for females, the difference between the two genders being largest for the Baku sample.

An ANOVA where the views concerning the appropriate timing of the first child served as the dependent measure and Country, Sex of Respondent, and Generation served as dependent measures revealed a significant effect of Country,  $F(2, 1352) = 118.94$ ,  $p < .001$ . As may be seen in Table 2, according to the views of the Ashkabad and Baku samples, new brides are expected to get pregnant within the first year of marriage while the Ankara sample extends this period to the second year. Lastly, although the practice of bride-price was extinct in Baku and Ankara, it was still endorsed by a majority of women and a large minority of men in the Ashkabad sample. Bride-price was endorsed by higher proportions of women than men in the Ashkabad sample for both daughters and brides (women: bride = 70 %, daughter = 64 %; men: bride = 49 %, daughter = 34 %). To summarize, the Ashkabad sample demonstrated both the most modern and the most traditional views with respect to views concerning marriage when compared with the other two samples. This finding was consistent with sample differences concerning practices related to marriage.

*Views concerning desirable qualities in prospective brides and grooms*

Answers to open-ended questions about desirable qualities in brides and grooms were coded into one of nine categories. These categories were constructed after a perusal of answers and may be seen in Table 7. The interjudge reliability for these categories was .97 (Cohen's Kappa). The number of responses in each category was used as the dependent measure in an ANOVA where Country, Sex of Respondent, Generation, Bride/Groom and Category served as dependent measures. The first three variables were between subject variables and the last two were within subject variables in this ANOVA. The means involved in the significant Category x Bride/Groom x Country interaction are presented in Table 7,  $F(16, 11656) = 3.95$ ,  $p < .001$ . It may be seen in Table 7 that, after good character, compatibility with the family was the second most often named quality in all three samples. It may also be seen that while ability and achievement were named more often by the Ashkabad sample than by the Baku and Ankara samples, spousal harmony was named more often by the Ankara than by the Ashkabad and Baku.

Table 6. Relative Decision Power of Wife and Husband on Various Issues in the Home in Ashkabad, Baku and Ankara

	Ashkabad	Baku	Ankara	F	
Husband's dress	1.42 <sub>a</sub> * (1.42)**	1.44 <sub>a</sub> (1.90)	.85 <sub>b</sub> (1.65)	(2,1167)	11.09
Wife's dress	-1.25 <sub>a</sub> (1.77)	-1.14 <sub>a</sub> (1.99)	-.83 <sub>b</sub> (1.68)	n.s.	
Special days	.20 <sub>a</sub> (1.02)	.17 (1.33)	-.02 (1.09)	n.s.	
Housekeeping	-1.41 <sub>a</sub> (1.70)	-1.80 <sub>b</sub> (2.19)	-1.85 <sub>b</sub> (2.10)	(2,1206)	5.64
Recreation	.39 <sub>a</sub> (1.26)	.35 <sub>a</sub> <sub>b</sub> (.35)	.15 <sub>b</sub> (1.02)	n.s.	
Finances	.10 <sub>a</sub> (.21)	.56 <sub>b</sub> (.54)	.36 <sub>b</sub> (1.30)	(2,1213)	12.52
Husband's social contacts	1.65 <sub>b</sub> (1.48)	2.23 <sub>c</sub> (1.73)	.98 <sub>a</sub> (1.79)	(2,1167)	41.07
Wife's social contacts	-.47 <sub>a</sub> (1.79)	-.62 <sub>a</sub> (2.04)	-.44 <sub>a</sub> (1.73)	(2,1167)	28.36
Family visits	.22 <sub>a</sub> <sub>b</sub> (1.05)	.34 <sub>b</sub> (1.15)	.13 <sub>a</sub> (1.11)	n.s.	
Guests, home entertaining	.37 <sub>b</sub> (1.13)	.36 <sub>b</sub> (1.25)	.02 <sub>a</sub> (1.08)	(2,1213)	9.72
Furniture purchases	-.04 <sub>a</sub> (1.35)	.15 <sub>a</sub> (1.36)	.08 <sub>a</sub> (1.17)	n.s.	
Furniture arrangement	-1.22 <sub>c</sub> (1.49)	-.20 <sub>a</sub> (1.74)	-.82 <sub>b</sub> (1.69)	(2,1213)	47.65
Husband's job	2.03 <sub>b</sub> (1.42)	2.26 <sub>b</sub> (1.65)	1.25 <sub>a</sub> (1.72)	(2,1223)	28.73
Wife's job	-.79 <sub>a</sub> (1.86)	-.85 <sub>a</sub> (2.14)	-.36 <sub>b</sub> (1.82)	(2,1223)	6.44
Childbearing	-.30 <sub>a</sub> (1.15)	-.07 <sub>b</sub> (1.22)	.14 <sub>c</sub> (1.08)	(2,1235)	15.33
Childrearing	-.24 <sub>a</sub> (.95)	-.13 <sub>a</sub> (1.17)	.05 <sub>b</sub> (.95)	n.s.	
Children's education	-.18 <sub>a</sub> (1.11)	-.46 <sub>b</sub> (1.47)	-.06 <sub>a</sub> (1.19)	(2,1235)	8.00
Child related purchases	-.36 <sub>a</sub> (1.19)	-.12 <sub>b</sub> (1.55)	-.16 <sub>a</sub> <sub>b</sub> (1.20)	n.s.	
Children's homework	-.24 <sub>a</sub> <sub>b</sub> (1.17)	-.44 <sub>b</sub> (1.52)	-.21 <sub>a</sub> (1.27)	n.s.	
Children's recreation	-.34 <sub>a</sub> (.98)	-.13 <sub>b</sub> (1.36)	-.23 <sub>a</sub> <sub>b</sub> (1.17)	(2,1167)	5.79

Notes: + husband greater say, - wife greater say, 0 equal power.

\* Means on the same line not sharing the same subscript are significantly different from each other at  $p < .05$  by Scheffe.

\*\* SD's in parentheses.

samples. The latter finding may be construed as an indication of emphasis on the conjugal pair by the Ankara sample. The bride's compatibility with the family and attributes indicative of her social position were named more often by the Ankara and Baku samples than by the Ashkabad sample.

One-way analyses comparing the number of nominations of each characteristic for brides and grooms were conducted for each Country x Bride/Groom combination in order to investigate evidence concerning sexual double standards for each country. The results of these comparisons may be summarized in three points. Firstly, respondents in all three samples made gender differentiation with respect to compatibility with the family and physical characteristics. These two qualities were named more often for brides than for grooms, a finding consistent with traditional gender roles. Secondly, respondents in the Ashkabad and Ankara samples differed from those in the Baku sample in that they named gender role appropriate characteristics more often for the groom than for the bride, named qualities indicative of social position more often for the bride than for the groom, and made no gender discrimination with respect to ability/achievement, good personality, spousal compatibility, and honesty/chastity. Thirdly, respondents in the Baku sample made no gender differentiation with respect to gender role appropriate characteristics and qualities indicative of social position but made a greater number of nominations for chastity/honesty for brides than for grooms and a greater number of nominations for good personality for brides than for grooms.

*Views concerning importance of different reasons for divorcing husbands and wives*

The rated importance of different reasons for divorcing husbands and wives served as the dependent measure for an ANOVA where Country, Sex of Respondent, Generation (between), Spouse (husband/wife), and Reason (within) served as independent measures. The means involved in the significant Country x Spouse x Reason interaction are presented in Table 8,  $F(22, 13618) = 61.94$ ,  $p < .001$ . Table 8 provides evidence for the existence of double standards with respect to men and women in all three samples. Almost all reasons were rated as more important reasons for divorcing wives than for divorcing husbands. However, the Ankara sample voiced double standards on fewer issues than the other two

samples. The three samples also differed with respect to the importance ascribed to different reasons. Infertility and not wanting children were judged as more important reasons for divorcing both husbands and wives by the Ashkabad sample than by the other two samples, a finding consistent with the high value placed on the continuation of lineage in patrilineal societies. Infidelity, conflict between spouses or with families, maltreatment, irresponsibility, slovenliness, and leaving home were judged as more important reasons by the Ankara sample than by the other two samples, a finding consistent with emphasis on the conjugal relationship.

Table 7. Mean Number of Nominations for Different Qualities For Brides and Grooms in Ashkabad, Baku and Ankara Samples

	BRIDES			GROOMS		
	Ashkabad	Baku	Ankara	Ashkabad	Baku	Ankara
Gender appropriate traits	.13 <sup>b</sup> * (.34)	.14 <sup>b**</sup> (.36)***	.02 <sup>a</sup> * (.13)	.23 <sup>b</sup> (.48)	.13 <sup>a</sup> (.34)	.17 <sup>a b</sup> (.38)
Opposite gender appropriate traits	.02 <sup>a</sup> (.13)	.01 <sup>a</sup> (.07)	.02 <sup>a</sup> (.14)	.03 <sup>a b</sup> (.17)	.03 <sup>b</sup> (.18)	.01 <sup>a</sup> (.09)
Adaptiveness to family	.39 <sup>b</sup> * (.55)	.29 <sup>a</sup> * (.47)	.44 <sup>b</sup> * (.50)	.18 <sup>a</sup> (.40)	.21 <sup>a</sup> (.43)	.38 <sup>b</sup> (.49)
Ability achievement	.38 <sup>b</sup> (.56)	.18 <sup>a</sup> * (.42)	.21 <sup>a</sup> (.40)	.39 <sup>b</sup> (.59)	.22 <sup>a</sup> (.45)	.21 <sup>a</sup> (.41)
Social position	.09 <sup>b</sup> * (.30)	.01 <sup>a</sup> (.08)	.07 <sup>b</sup> * (.25)	.04 <sup>b</sup> (.19)	.00 <sup>a</sup> (.04)	.04 <sup>b</sup> (.20)
Good personality	.73 <sup>b</sup> (.66)	.46 <sup>a</sup> * (.59)	.53 <sup>a</sup> (.50)	.68 <sup>c</sup> (.66)	.38 <sup>a</sup> (.52)	.57 <sup>b</sup> (.50)
Physical characteristics	.18 <sup>b</sup> * (.39)	.11 <sup>a</sup> * (.31)	.11 <sup>a</sup> * (.32)	.04 <sup>a b</sup> (.20)	.02 <sup>a</sup> (.15)	.06 <sup>b</sup> (.24)
Spousal harmony	.02 <sup>a</sup> (.12)	.05 <sup>a</sup> * (.21)	.25 <sup>b</sup> (.43)	.03 <sup>a</sup> (.18)	.12 <sup>b</sup> (.32)	.22 <sup>c</sup> (.42)
Honesty, chastity (namus)	.00 <sup>a</sup> (.00)	.10 <sup>b</sup> * (.30)	.10 <sup>b</sup> (.11)	.00 <sup>a</sup> (.05)	.06 <sup>b</sup> (.23)	.08 <sup>b</sup> (.28)

\* denotes significant differences between men and women.

\*\* Means on the same line not sharing the same subscript are significantly different from each other at  $p < .05$  by Scheffe.

\*\*\* SD's in parentheses.

*Views concerning remarriage of widows and widowers*

An ANOVA where the passage of time necessary before remarriage after a spouse's death served as the dependent measure and Country, Sex of Respondent, Generation, and Spouse (husband/wife, within variable) served as independent variables revealed a significant Spouse effect indicating that women were expected to wait longer than men before remarriage,  $F(1, 755) = 17.54, p < .001$ ; Ashkabad women:  $M = 3.02 (3.73)$  men:  $M = 2.38 (1.50)$ ; Baku women:  $M = 2.54 (2.70)$ , men:  $M = 2.18 (2.88)$ ; Ankara, women:  $M = 2.59 (2.78)$ , men  $M = 2.23 (3.03)$ . Consistent with this finding, higher percentages of respondents in all three samples disapproved more of the marriage of widows than of widowers (Table 9). In addition, higher percentages of respondents in all three samples rated financial need as a more acceptable justification for a widow to remarry than for a widower. Differences between the three samples were also evidenced with respect to double standards. Higher percentages of respondents viewed youth and children as more acceptable justifications for remarriage for men than for women in Ashkabad and Baku and higher percentages of respondents rated loneliness as a more acceptable justification for men than for women in Baku and Ankara. Gender discrimination with respect to justifications for marriage was made for the fewest reasons by the Ankara sample, followed by the Ashkabad and Baku samples.

*Discussion*

The results of the present study comparing three Turkic capitals revealed similarities as well as differences in family functioning and in endorsement of sexual double standards. Similarities between the three cultures emerged with respect to gender typed division of household labor and decision-making and with respect to endorsement of sexual double standards in relation to views concerning marriage. However, differences in classifications of marriage, views and practices with respect to involvement with extended family and variations in the extent of gender typed functioning of families indicated the existence of three similar but somewhat distinct types of family in the three cultures with differential implications for women and marital relationships within these families.

Table 8. Judged importance of different reasons for divorce in Ashkabad, Baku and Ankara

	Reason for Woman Divorcing Husband			Reason for Man Divorcing Wife		
	Ashkabad	Baku	Ankara	Ashkabad	Baku	Ankara
Infertility	2.33 <sup>a*</sup> (.88)	2.63 <sup>b*</sup> (.74)	2.85 <sup>c*</sup> (.95)	1.73 <sup>a**</sup> (.84) <sup>***</sup>	2.51 <sup>b</sup> (.81)	2.60 <sup>b</sup> (1.09)
Infidelity	2.20 <sup>c*</sup> (.93)	1.88 <sup>b*</sup> (.82)	1.35 <sup>a*</sup> (.59)	1.46 <sup>b</sup> (.70)	1.44 <sup>b</sup> (.61)	1.23 <sup>a</sup> (.45)
Not wanting children	1.99 <sup>a*</sup> (.78)	2.27 <sup>b*</sup> (.74)	2.43 <sup>c*</sup> (.83)	1.50 <sup>a</sup> (.66)	2.05 <sup>b</sup> (.73)	2.17 <sup>b</sup> (.90)
Conflict with spouse's family	3.03 <sup>c*</sup> (.72)	2.87 <sup>b*</sup> (.63)	1.94 <sup>a</sup> (.85)	2.66 <sup>b</sup> (.92)	2.76 <sup>b</sup> (.67)	1.90 <sup>a</sup> (.86)
Spousal conflict	2.20 <sup>b*</sup> (.91)	2.42 <sup>c</sup> (.69)	1.43 <sup>a</sup> (.61)	2.05 <sup>b</sup> (.84)	2.40 <sup>c</sup> (.70)	1.39 <sup>a</sup> (.57)
Physical or psychological abuse	1.54 <sup>b*</sup> (.76)	1.98 <sup>c</sup> (.79)	1.19 <sup>a</sup> (.41)	1.62 <sup>b</sup> (.83)	1.95 <sup>c</sup> (.73)	1.23 <sup>a</sup> (.48)
Irresponsibility	2.49 <sup>b</sup> (.87)	2.43 <sup>b</sup> (.73)	1.54 <sup>a</sup> (.60)	2.51 <sup>c</sup> (.84)	2.40 <sup>b</sup> (.64)	1.45 <sup>a</sup> (.57)
Crime	1.73 <sup>b*</sup> (.80)	2.05 <sup>c*</sup> (.71)	1.34 <sup>a</sup> (.53)	1.33 <sup>a</sup> (.55)	1.86 <sup>b</sup> (.68)	1.32 <sup>a</sup> (.52)
Gambling, drinking, drugs	1.63 <sup>b*</sup> (.83)	1.83 <sup>c*</sup> (.75)	1.28 <sup>a</sup> (.49)	1.18 <sup>a</sup> (.45)	1.64 <sup>b</sup> (.68)	1.25 <sup>a</sup> (.49)
Monetary reasons	2.56 <sup>a*</sup> (.87)	2.99 <sup>b*</sup> (.64)	2.47 <sup>a</sup> (.85)	3.10 <sup>b</sup> (.77)	3.08 <sup>b</sup> (.70)	2.42 <sup>c</sup> (.95)
Slovenliness	2.55 <sup>b*</sup> (.96)	2.95 <sup>c*</sup> (.67)	2.06 <sup>a*</sup> (.84)	2.27 <sup>b</sup> (.93)	2.63 <sup>c</sup> (.70)	1.76 <sup>a</sup> (.79)
Leaving home	1.53 <sup>b*</sup> (.84)	1.84 <sup>c*</sup> (.72)	1.35 <sup>a</sup> (.52)	1.22 <sup>a</sup> (.53)	1.61 <sup>b</sup> (.67)	1.32 <sup>a</sup> (.53)

\* denotes significant differences between men and women.  
 \*\* Means on the same line not sharing the same subscript are significantly different from each other at  $p < .05$  by Scheffe .  
 \*\*\* SD's in parentheses.

Table 9. Approval of Remarriage for Women and Men After Spouse's Death by Ashkabad, Baku and Ankara Samples

	Ashkabad	Baku	Ankara
Should not remarry	27.7* 7.8	31.4x ** 16.8y	30.7x 20.7y
May remarry if she/he is young	47.3x 62.3y	57.9x 62.1y	48.6 50.4
May remarry if she/he is in financial need	29.4x 16.2y	48.8x 23.8y	52.0x 18.5y
May remarry for the sake of children	18.6x 44.9y	46.6x 68.2y	31.1 37.2
Loneliness	50.7 48.8	42.9x 54.9y	34.1x 43.9y
May marry spouse's relative (convention)	.7 2.7	2.7 3.0	8.7 6.1

\* Percentages on the upper line belong to women and those on the lower line belong to men.

\*\* denotes significant differences between men and women.

With some exceptions, Ashkabad families were the most traditional with respect to structural criteria such as number of children and percentage of extended families. The practice and endorsement of bride-price, views concerning restricted age ranges for marriage, the endorsement of sexual double standards with respect to reasons for divorce, and the special emphasis on having children were consistent with traditional values of patrilineal societies. However, the incidence of "modern" marriages based on freedom of choice was highest and the incidence of traditional marriages was lowest for the Ashkabad sample. In addition, the number of marriages based on romantic love (*aşk*) was also higher for the Ashkabad sample than for the other two samples. The coexistence of traditional views and practices with an emphasis on love in a traditional culture which has a low level of industrialization is inconsistent with the generally accepted view concerning the positive relationship between industrialization, individualism, and the emphasis on love and freedom of choice as the basis of marriage (Goode 1971).

One explanation of the results of the present study lie in the traditions of the legendary Oğuz family where the bond between wife and husband is at times stronger than that between parent and son. There is a good illustration of the strong spousal bond in the story by Deli Dumrul in which the wife volunteers to die instead of

her husband after the husband's parents refuse to do so. Another, more inclusive, explanation may be that the relationship between industrialization, individualistic values, and romantic love and freedom of choice as the basis for marriage may not be true for non-Western samples. In fact, there is some evidence for the lack of a relationship between industrialization and romantic love as the basis for marriage in China and Morocco (Fox 1975; Salaff 1973). This explanation calls for further cross-cultural work on family, utilizing non-Western samples. A third related explanation may be that the relationship between the level of industrialization and the emphasis on love was true historically at least for the Western world but that it may not be true for the developing nations in the present period.

The results pertaining to families in the Baku sample were also inconsistent with expectations based on the assumed relationship between level of industrialization and family functioning. The proportion of marriages based on individual choice and romantic love was lower in this country than it was in the Ashkabad culture. Secondly, the proportion of respondents endorsing involvement of extended families in marital decisions was higher for the Baku sample than for the other two samples. Thirdly, division of household labor and decision-making in the Baku sample appeared to be based more on gender stereotypes than it was in the other two samples, a practice more typical of traditional cultures. These results were consistent with elaborate conventions and ceremonies related to marriage and family life in Azerbaijan that involve the extended family (Nebiyev 1993). They are also confirmed by reports of anthropologists and social scientists (Heyat 1996; Tohidi 1996).

The findings concerning families in Baku were also consistent with other data from this investigation related to residence arrangements and frequency of visits with relatives (Hortaçsu and Baştuğ 1996). Those data demonstrated that a higher proportion of Baku respondents than Ashkabad and Ankara respondents reported living in the same district as their relatives or in one nearby, and that Baku respondents visit their relatives more frequently than respondents from the other two capitals. In addition, although level of education was negatively related to frequency of visits with relatives for Ankara and Ashkabad such a relationship was not significant for the Baku sample. A related finding was that the Baku

sample did not discriminate with respect to frequency of visits with and proximity of residence to husband's or wife's families, as did the other two samples. Thus, the present investigation revealed that the Baku sample demonstrated a "communal" rather than a traditional or "modern" type of family functioning. This pattern was inconsistent with the earlier stated assumptions about the relationship between industrialization and family functioning but is consistent with Kağıtçıbaşı's argument concerning the prevalence of norms of interdependence rather than individualism in some industrialized non-Western cultures (1990).

In spite of the fact that spousal inequality with respect to education and the percentage of arranged marriages were highest, and the proportion of marriages based on romantic love were lowest for the Ankara sample, this sample showed the highest degree of mutuality with respect to division of labor and decision-making and revealed fewer topics on which sexual double standards were employed. Thus, comparatively speaking, the Ankara sample indicated the most "modern" views and practices with respect to family functioning. This finding was consistent with the century-long efforts concerning the modernization of the Turkish family along Western ideals of spousal equality and conjugal intimacy (Doğan 1992; Işın 1992).

In conclusion, it is argued that the results of the present comparative study provided evidence that historical trends and predominant cultural values rather than the level of industrialization may be the defining factor with respect to variations in family functioning in three cultures originating from the same ancestry. Although the differences between the three cultures were emphasized in this report, it should be remembered that they also shared many similarities. The present study had the advantage of investigating Baku and Ashkabad families not too long after the abolition of the Soviet Union and might provide a comparative basis for further studies investigating the consequences of increased relations with the West on the family functioning in Ashkabad and Baku.

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# CHANGING GENDER ROLES AND MARITAL SATISFACTION IN TURKEY

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Ahmet Haşim, a well-known Turkish poet, wrote: “In every language the topic of poetry is not the wife but the lover; what can be more tasteless than a story where the main character is a wife and the topic is marriage?” Thus, according to Haşim, the topic of this paper is a rather tasteless one, marriage; and the characters are not just wives but husbands as well. Specifically, my goal in this paper is to provide an overview of the factors associated with the marital satisfaction of Turkish women and men.

The literature on marital relationships has been generally limited to Western-style love marriages. This body of knowledge needs to be complemented by studies of love marriages from other types of cultures (e.g., more collectivistic rather than individualistic cultures), as well as by studies of other types of marriages (e.g., family arranged marriages) (İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997). In this regard, Turkey represents an ideal setting in which to explore different types of marriages and their associations with marital satisfaction.

## *1. The setting*

Turkish society has been going through a period of rapid social change in the recent past. During the Ottoman Empire period, which lasted for almost 600 years, marriages were arranged in accordance with the traditional religious law. Thus, they were mostly arranged by elder kinsmen and the prospective spouses were consulted only at the discretion of their kinsmen. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Swiss Civil Code was accepted in 1926 as the basis for Turkish family law. The civil marriage ceremony, compulsory since then, requires the presence and the freely expressed intention and consent to the marriage of the marrying couple. Parental consent is not required if the partici-

pants are at least eighteen years old. As such, the official civil ceremony is supportive of self-selected or love marriages and provides a means for resisting traditional arranged marriages (Magnarrella 1973). These changes pertaining to the initiation of marriages were supported by other laws and regulations of the republic aimed at securing the equality of the sexes in different domains of life. Although beliefs and traditions have often tended to lag behind these legal changes, particularly in rural areas, the urban settings have responded more quickly.

According to a recent report of the National Planning Organization, about half of the marriages in Turkey are arranged by families; however, the prevalence of arranged marriages decreases among the better educated, urban population, and particularly among the younger generation (Atalay, Kondaş, Beyazıt, and Madenoğlu, 1993). In this regard, large cities have been said to be the barometers of social change indicative of future trends (İmamoğlu and İmamoğlu 1992b). For instance, a study of mate selection (Fox 1975) based on a representative sample of married women from Ankara indicated that measures of women's extent of urban exposure (i.e., being born in a city and/or having urban experience) were strongly correlated with love match marriages, implying that exposure to the urban environment may serve as a facilitator for the development of individual modernity. However, as suggested by Fox (1975), what is needed is a deeper analysis of the more complex, underlying relationships among factors that are associated with adherence to, or deviation from, traditional marriage patterns. Such an analysis may provide us with a better understanding of the dynamics of change that lie behind the superficial relationships observed between urbanism and marriage type (İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997). That was the aim of the Turkish marriage study on which this paper is based, as explained below (İmamoğlu 1993; 1994; İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997).

## *2. An overview of the Turkish marriage study*

As has been explained in previous reports, the Turkish marriage study aimed to provide a multidimensional description of Turkish urban marriages as perceived by wives and husbands. Accordingly, both wives and husbands from 456 families representing three

socioeconomic status (SES) groups were involved in the study. The age of the spouses ranged from 19 to 65 for the wives and 19 to 68 for the husbands, with respective means of 34 and 38 years. The level of education ranged from illiteracy to completion of graduate school with means of eleven years of schooling for the wives and thirteen years for the husbands.

The length of marriages ranged between one and forty years with a mean of twelve years. In terms of SES, 14 percent of the couples belonged to the lower SES, 56 percent to the middle and 30 percent to the upper SES. In terms of type of marriage, about one-third of the couples (33 percent) had arranged marriages, whereas the rest were self-selected (67 percent). Seventy-nine percent of the families had one to seven children with a mean of two children. In terms of female employment, 43 percent of the wives were employed full-time.

All the couples filled in the Wife and Husband versions of the Turkish Marriage Questionnaire developed by Russell, Wells, and İmamoğlu (1989). The main aim of the survey was to explore the interrelationships between marital satisfaction and variables pertaining to demographic characteristics, type of marriages, marital attitudes, participation in family roles, perceptions of and feelings for spouses, and relationships with the extended families. The original survey was followed up by further studies involving interviews and observations (İmamoğlu 1995c).

### *3. Dimensions of Turkish marital relationships*

On the basis of factor analyses, nine dimensions of marital relationships were identified. These were grouped under the four superordinate factors of marital satisfaction, extent of socioeconomic development, desire for sexual possessiveness and harmonious relations with the extended family, as indicated in Table 1 (İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997). Husbands scored higher than wives on each of these factors. In other words, relative to their wives, Turkish husbands seem to be more satisfied with their marriages, to score higher in socioeconomic development, to have stronger desires for sexual possessiveness, and to have better relations with the extended families. The composition of these factors and gender-related differences are considered in more detail below.

Table 1. Factors Associated with Marital Satisfaction, Extent of Socio-Economic Development, Desire for Sexual Possessiveness and Harmonious Relations with the Extended Family.

**MARITAL SATISFACTION**

**^ Egalitarianism**

- ^ Egalitarian attitudes  
(toward employment of married women and sharing home-making tasks)
- ^ Trust in spouse  
(the degree to which the respondent trusts the spouse in general)

**^ Harmonious relations with spouse**

- ^ Partnership  
(viewing spouse as a contributor to the relationship)
- ^ Love for spouse  
(emotional attachment to spouse)
- v Problem: Partner  
(dissatisfaction with spouse's personal characteristics: perceiving as nasty, embarrassing, getting on one's nerves, having irritating habits)
- ^ Unison  
(perceiving relationship as involving common rather than conflicting interests, units, or worlds)
- v Problem: Relationship  
(respondent's degree of commitment to the relationship: perceiving the relationship as a dissatisfying tie, thinking about ending the relationship)
- ^ Communication  
(ease and frequency of communication with spouse in the areas of child-rearing, personal thoughts and feelings, health problems, sexual life, social relationships, financial issues and politics; the degree to which the respondent has knowledge about the spouse's world)
- ^ Spouse's love  
(perceiving spouse as loving)
- ^ Sexual satisfaction  
(obtaining sexual fulfillment in the marriage)
- v Problem: Circumstances  
(the degree to which external circumstances, such as the living environment, money and one's role in life are seen as sources of dissatisfaction)
- ^ Perceived attractiveness  
(respondent's perceptions of their physical attractiveness from their own and spouses' viewpoints)
- v Problem: Personal  
(feeling anxious, worrisome, lonely, in poor health, and unable to communicate one's feelings)
- v Spouse's physical violence  
(frequency of spouse's usage of physical violence)
- v Interference by others  
(the degree to which others interfere with one's relationship with spouse)
- ^ Importance of Sexuality**  
(the importance attributed to sexuality and the degree to which sexuality is believed not to lose its importance over the years)

Table 1. Cont.

***EXTENT OF SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT***

- ^ ***SES***
  - ^ Occupational status
  - ^ Education
- ^ ***Modernism***
  - v Number of children
  - v Length of marriage
  - ^ Modern marital attitudes  
(beliefs about marriage, divorce, and children's function in marriage)
  - ^ Self-selected marriage  
(whether the families played a role in selecting the spouse and whether the marriage was arranged or self-selected)
  - ^ Traditional marriage  
(the degree to which the respondents consider their marriage to be a traditional one)
- ^ ***Socio-economic power***
  - ^ Breadwinning role  
(involvement in the breadwinning role; i.e., being more likely to have a full-time job, earning more of the joint income and doing relatively less housework)
  - ^ Age at marriage
  - ^ Participation in decision making  
(the degree to which the respondent participates in decisions about important issues in the marriage)

***DESIRE FOR SEXUAL POSSESSIVENESS***

- ^ Sexual possessiveness  
(feeling possessive about the spouse and jealous of the spouse's past relationships)
- ^ Desire for more sexual responsiveness  
(the degree to which the respondent wishes the spouse to be more sexually responsive to him/her)

***HARMONIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE EXTENDED FAMILY***

- ^ ***Family background and ties***
  - ^ Similarity of own and parental marriages  
(respondent's estimation of the degree to which one's marriage resembles that of the parents)
  - ^ Parental happiness  
(whether the parents were divorced and the degree to which they had a happy marriage)
  - ^ Family ties  
(current and childhood relationships with one's parents and strong current links with them)
- ^ ***Conciliation and good relations with in-laws***
  - ^ Conciliation in conflict

Table 1. Cont.

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	(the frequency of being the first to make up after a row and giving in when there is a disagreement)
^	Relations with spouse's family (the degree to which the respondent has harmonious relations with the in-laws)

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### *3.1. The dimension of marital satisfaction*

A strong association was observed between the wives' level of marital satisfaction and that of their husbands. The dimension of marital satisfaction was composed of egalitarianism, having harmonious relations with spouse, and attributing importance to sexuality. Of these, egalitarianism was associated with possessing egalitarian attitudes toward the family roles of homemaking and breadwinning and trusting the spouse. This association between trust and sharing family roles may imply that an egalitarian relationship needs to rest on a feeling of security about the relationship. Without trust, the prospect of an egalitarian marital relationship might give rise to feelings of insecurity and threat (İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997). This argument is supported by the association observed between egalitarianism and harmonious relations with the spouse. In other words, harmonious marital relations, which seem to be a composite of being satisfied with one's self, spouse, relationship, and general living circumstances, seem to rest on a feeling of egalitarianism. Thus, it is implied that satisfactory marital relationships need to be based on cooperative interdependence, which can be best achieved under conditions of equality and trust (İmamoğlu 1994; 1995a; İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997). As such, the present findings seem to be consistent with conceptualizations of trust as reflecting couples' perceptions of the quality and intensity of the affective bond, and hence also a shared sense of security about the relationship (Holmes and Rempel 1989). Attributing importance to sexuality also seems to contribute to a positive assessment of the marital relationship.

Relative to the wives, the husbands seem to be more satisfied with their relationships with their spouse and to attribute more importance to sexuality (İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997). Compared to their husbands, the wives seem to perceive less unison with their spouses. They feel that their husbands understand them less; that

they are more supportive of their husbands; that they communicate and share their experiences more with their spouses, but that their husbands do not reciprocate as much as they would desire; that their husbands respect them less, tend to have more annoying habits and are more likely to resort to physical violence. Consequently, the wives seem to feel more lonely and report having more psychological complaints. Hence, the wives seem to assess their spouse-relationships less positively than the husbands (İmamoğlu 1993). Follow-up studies indicated that satisfaction with interspousal communication is particularly important in marital satisfaction and that the wives seem to have better communication skills than their husbands (İmamoğlu 1995c).

In terms of egalitarianism, the wives seem to have more egalitarian attitudes toward sharing homemaking and breadwinning roles but they appear to trust their husbands less than the husbands trust them (İmamoğlu 1993).

### *3.2. The dimension of the extent of socioeconomic development and its association with marital satisfaction*

A strong association was observed between wives' and husbands' levels of socioeconomic development. As is shown in Table 1, the dimension of the extent of socioeconomic development was associated with increases in SES, modernism, and socioeconomic power. SES was defined in terms of occupational status and education. Modernism was defined in terms of type and length of marriage, number of children, and attitudes toward marriage. In other words, the more modern couples had fewer children, were married for a shorter length of time, had less traditional, self-selected marriages, and held more modern attitudes toward marriage (İmamoğlu 1993; İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997).

The results indicated a trend from traditional to more modern marriages in Turkey in that the shorter-term and the higher SES urban marriages seem more likely to be self-selected rather than arranged. For instance, of those couples married for 1-7 years, 77 percent had self-selected marriages, whereas for those married for 24-40 years, 51 percent did so. The prevalence of self-selected marriages also increased as a function of SES, the respective percentages for the lower, middle, and upper SES groups being 57, 66, and 74 (İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997).

As might be expected, couples higher in SES (and particularly the women) also seemed more likely to have a more modern outlook toward marriage. These results are consistent with other studies of Turkish marriages (e.g., Fox 1975), as well as marriages in other cultures such as China (Xiaohe and Whyte 1990). As noted by Fox (1975), "Western or modern patterns (i.e., love-match marriage) tend to be adopted by those segments of the population with greatest exposure to the 'modern world of modern ideas'" (192).

As indicated in Table 1, socioeconomic power was defined in terms of increased contributions to the breadwinning role, marrying at an older age, and increased participation in decision making. Not surprisingly, socioeconomic power was found to be strongly associated with being a male. However, some interesting gender differences were observed in terms of the relations between husbands' and wives' socioeconomic power and SES and modernism. Although SES and modernism were significantly correlated both for husbands and wives, only the wives' socioeconomic power seemed to increase with increases in SES and modernism. The husbands' power did not increase with SES and, in fact, showed a tendency to decrease with increases in modernism. In other words, husbands seem to have power regardless of SES, whereas wives seem to acquire more power with increases in their SES. For women, modernism and power appear to be positively associated, whereas for men there appears to be a trend in the opposite direction: the more modern husbands seem to wield less power (İmamoğlu and Yasak, 1997).

These conclusions seem to be at odds with those from studies conducted in the West, which have typically indicated that husbands with greater socioeconomic resources have more power than those with fewer resources (e.g., Blood and Wolfe 1960). Present findings seem more congruent with those from other cross-cultural studies, which have not always supported the predictions of resource theory; for example, in contrast to the United States and France, where the husband's power seems to be positively associated with his resources, in Greece and the former Yugoslavia, only the wife's power appears to increase with increases in socioeconomic resources, whereas the husband's power or authority in the family tends to be lower as his social position gets higher (Buric and Zacevic 1967; Safilios-Rothschild 1967).

Thus, it seems that the predictions of resource theory seem to hold only for the wives in the Mediterranean cultures of Turkey, Greece, and the former Yugoslavia. In trying to account for such cross-cultural differences, Rodman (1974) argued that when a culture has a clear norm for power allocation, then the norm determines the basis of power allocation, independent of resources. Accordingly, in the Mediterranean cultures, the prevailing patriarchal norms seem to declare the authority of the husbands regardless of their resources, whereas in the more modern families characterized more by emancipation from the patriarchal norms of gender inequality, husbands may be less likely to exercise authority in the family in spite of their greater resources.

In this process, the contribution of the wives' increasing power, with growing socioeconomic resources and modernism which may eventually tend to moderate the husbands' power, also needs to be considered. In this regard, the critical role played by education in determining women's socioeconomic power should be emphasized (İmamoğlu 1993). Accordingly, better educated women are more likely to marry husbands of their own choice, and at older ages, to contribute more as breadwinners and to participate more in family decisions. Thus, the present results are supportive of the notion that modern education tends to play a key role in the process of change from traditional to modern minds (Lerner 1958). Similarly, age at marriage has been regarded as playing a pivotal role in the emergence of modernism, especially for women (Fox 1973). Apart from its implications for stage of personal development, age at marriage has implications for the type of role the wife plays relative to her husband. In the traditional culture, early age at marriage functions as a form of social control whereby a child bride is placed in a dependent or subordinate role in marriage (Fox 1973).

Concerning associations with marital satisfaction, spouses' levels of socioeconomic development appear to be positively related to the wives' marital satisfaction, but unrelated to that of the husbands. However, the results of multiple regression analyses revealed that only the wives' level of socioeconomic development significantly predicted their own marital satisfaction; the husband's level did not. In other words, the wives' level of socioeconomic development appears to be directly associated with their own marital satisfaction but only indirectly associated with that of the husbands through the mediation of the wives' satisfaction (İmamoğlu 1994;

İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997). A previous report from China (Xiaohe and Whyte 1990) indicated that the wives' perception of marital quality appears to be influenced by their degree of freedom in mate choice and their own and husbands' status characteristics (i.e., her political status, his educational attainment and class origin label); although the general implications of these findings from Chinese culture are consistent with the present ones, unfortunately the Chinese study was limited to data collected from the wives, so further comparisons are not possible.

The findings suggest that the wives' socioeconomic development might influence the couples' marital satisfaction through its impact on the satisfaction of the wives, which in turn might influence that of the husbands. The wives' increased effectiveness in marital relations might be particularly important in this regard (İmamoğlu 1994). Accordingly, although the spouses' levels of development seem to be positively correlated with the wives' marital satisfaction, they appear to have stronger associations with the wives' effectiveness in power and sexual processes, which in turn appear to be associated with the wives' marital satisfaction. Increasing the wives' effectiveness within the family seems to serve as an important mediator which appears to be directly associated with the wives' marital satisfaction and indirectly with that of the husbands. Interestingly, spouses' levels of social development were negatively associated with the husbands' effectiveness, which was unrelated to marital satisfaction. Thus, a trend of impact was suggested whereby the spouses' increased levels of social development seemed to subdue the husband's domination in power and sexual processes and to increase the wife's effectiveness, thereby setting the stage for a more egalitarian marital relationship. Such a situation appears more conducive to directly increasing the wives' marital satisfaction and indirectly that of the husbands (İmamoğlu 1994).

### *3.3. The dimension of the desire for sexual possessiveness and its association with marital satisfaction*

As can be seen in Table 1, the dimension of the desire for sexual possessiveness was associated with increases in the sexual possessiveness of the spouse and the desire that the spouse be more responsive sexually. As is the case with socioeconomic power, the desire for sexual possessiveness seems to be associated with being a

male. However, unlike the wives, for whom modernism and possessiveness appear to be unrelated, the more modern husbands seem to show less desire for possessiveness. Thus, in contrast to the Western findings, which relate possessiveness to dependency on a relationship (e.g., Pinto and Hollandsworth 1984), the Turkish husbands' desire for sexual possessiveness seems to be related to the traditional male norms of having a "property-oriented desire for sexual exclusivity" rather than dependency on the relationship. Accordingly, husbands' desire for sexual possessiveness seems to decrease with increases in spouses' extent of socioeconomic development, implying more individualistically-based egalitarian relations between spouses. Unlike the husbands' desire for sexual possessiveness, which seems to be curtailed by social development and which appears unrelated to marital satisfaction, that of the wives appears unrelated to social development but positively associated with their marital satisfaction. These results may imply that the Turkish women's desire for sexual possessiveness might reflect a positive and active involvement in the sexual aspect of marital relationships and thereby relate positively to their marital satisfaction (İmamoğlu 1994; İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997).

#### *3.4. The dimension of harmonious relations with the extended family and its association with marital satisfaction*

As shown in Table 1, the dimension of harmonious relations with the extended family appears to be associated with having a happy family background and close ties, as well as having good relations with in-laws and showing conciliatory behavior during conflict. In general, husbands seem to have relatively more harmonious relations with the extended families; however, both spouses appear to have better relations with the wives' families.

In the Turkish context, couples' relations with their extended families were considered to be important because, although the majority of Turkish families are nuclear (İmamoğlu and İmamoğlu, 1992a), the functions of an extended family may be served by close family ties and kinship relations that provide material and psychological support when needed. Hence, norms of relatedness and interdependence are more prevalent in Turkish society than independence (İmamoğlu 1987).

However, in view of the rapid social changes taking place in Turkey, maintaining harmonious relations with extended families may not be easy. In fact, spouses' relations with their extended families were found to be negatively associated with their levels of socioeconomic development (İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997). In particular, the wives' extent of socioeconomic development appears to be negatively associated not only with their own, but also with their husbands' relations with the extended families. Thus, it is implied that although the correlation appears to be stronger for the husbands, the impact of the wives' extent of socioeconomic development seems wider than that of the husbands. This finding is in line with findings from the West which indicate that women are the "kin-keepers" in marriages (e.g., Di Leonardo 1987; Rosenthal 1985). In other words, maintaining and developing relations with the extended families depends more on the efforts of wives than on those of husbands. Within the close-knit Turkish culture, embodying strong cultural values of interpersonal relatedness and more frequent social contacts than, for instance, Sweden (İmamoğlu and İmamoğlu 1992b), kin-related expectations for women might be expected to be even stronger. Therefore, changes experienced by a woman in terms of socioeconomic development understandably might influence not only her own kin relations but also those of her husband. In other words, with changing lifestyles, she may be less willing and/or able to fulfill all of the demanding expectations of the extended families regarding her kin-keeper and other gender-related roles. In spite of the wider impact of the wives' extent of socioeconomic development on kin relations, however, the strength of the above-mentioned associations were found to be weaker for a wife's kin-relations than for her husband's. In other words, husbands' kin relations appear to be more negatively associated with both their own and their wives' levels of socioeconomic development. This difference might be due to women being relatively better equipped to maintain kin relations over time (Gerstel 1988) in spite of the greater demands imposed on them.

In spite of the problems associated with increases in socioeconomic development, having close harmonious relations with the extended families of both spouses was found to be positively associated with marital satisfaction (İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997). Both the husbands' and the wives' marital satisfaction was associated not only with their own but also with their spouses' harmo-

nious relations with the extended families. However, multiple regression analyses revealed husbands' relations with the extended families to be a significant predictor of their own marital satisfaction only. Similarly, the wives' relations appeared as a significant predictor only of their own satisfaction. As noted before, these results are consistent with other findings from Turkish culture, which indicate that emotional interdependence and relatedness are considered to be very important, even when material interdependencies of family members decrease as in the upper SES groups (İmamoğlu 1987). In a similar vein, the results of a cross-cultural study on aging indicated that, unlike the Swedish elderly, the Turkish elderly's interpersonal bonds were directly associated with how they felt about themselves, their lives, and aging (İmamoğlu and İmamoğlu 1992b). The present results seem to extend those findings to marital satisfaction. Similar trends were observed in Chinese culture where the wives' perceptions of the quality of her marriage appear to be influenced by the closeness of family bonds (i.e., good relations between her parents, close ties to her father and his approval of her husband, and closeness to her husband's relatives). The present findings not only apply these trends to Turkish culture, but also indicate their relevance for husbands.

#### *4. Significant predictors of Turkish women's and men's marital satisfaction*

The significant predictors of wives' marital satisfaction were found to be the husbands' marital satisfaction, the wives' desire for sexual possessiveness, the extent of socioeconomic development, and the relations with the extended family. Together these four variables explained 44 percent of the variance in wives' marital satisfaction, the contributions of each variable being significant. On the other hand, 39 percent of the variance in husbands' marital satisfaction was predicted by wives' marital satisfaction and husbands' relations with the extended family (İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997).

### 5. Conclusion

In Turkish society there appears to be a trend from traditional to more modern marriages: the shorter-term and the higher SES urban marriages seem more likely to be self-selected rather than arranged (İmamoğlu 1993; 1994; İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997). Thus, there appears to be a trend for a more modern outlook toward marriage with socioeconomic development. Age at marriage and education may be regarded as playing a pivotal role in the emergence of modernism, especially for women. Better educated women are more likely to marry husbands of their own choice and at older ages, to contribute more as breadwinners, and to participate more in family decisions (İmamoğlu 1993).

Couples seem more likely to be satisfied in modern rather than traditional marriages (İmamoğlu 1993). Women's increased level of socioeconomic development and particularly their increased participation in power and sexual processes seem to play a pivotal role in the change process. Spouses' increased levels of socioeconomic development seem to subdue the husband's domination in power and sexual processes and to increase the wife's effectiveness, thereby setting the stage for more egalitarian marital relationships. Such a situation appears conducive to directly increasing the wives' marital satisfaction, and indirectly that of the husbands (İmamoğlu 1994; İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997). These findings support the thesis that satisfactory marital relationships need to be based on cooperative interdependence, which can be best achieved under conditions of equality and trust (İmamoğlu 1995a). This feeling of trust appears to be associated with having more egalitarian attitudes toward sharing both breadwinning and homemaking roles. Without trust, the prospect of an egalitarian marriage might give rise to feelings of insecurity and threat (İmamoğlu and Yasak 1997).

In view of the change observed from traditional to modern marriages, it should be noted that modernism was found to be generally associated with more satisfying relationships based on more love, partnership, communication, sexual satisfaction and egalitarianism and less physical violence. However, modernism also appears to be related to the perception of more problems with the relationships, to the demonstration of less conciliation during conflict, and to weaker family ties. Thus, although the couples in more

modern marriages appear to have more satisfying relationships, they might also be more aware of relational problems and conflicts (İmamoğlu 1994). This may lead to less stable relationships if the problems are not handled properly. In spite of the existing difficulties, particularly concerning the slow change associated with the male role (İmamoğlu 1993; 1995b; 1995c), as well as possible problems associated with maintaining relationships with the extended families (İmamoğlu and Yasak, 1997), Turkish urban marriages on the whole seem to be changing in the direction of achieving a state of satisfactory cooperative interdependence based on egalitarianism, with increases in socioeconomic development.

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# THE PRICE OF VALUE: KINSHIP, MARRIAGE AND META-NARRATIVES OF GENDER IN TURKMENISTAN

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## *Introduction*

Kinship is, by definition, in all societies the institution through which the necessary functions of biological reproduction and early socialization, so crucial in cultural reproduction, are actualized. It is also frequently described as an “idiom” which defines and labels categories of persons and simultaneously encodes aspects of the relations which are expected to, and therefore generally do, exist between the categories. The categories defined through kinship systems include not only the obvious, that is the set of kin defined and labeled by a kinship terminology, but also others, most notably gender and age. Similarly, relations encoded between categories include not only explicitly kinship obligations, but also relations of power and dependency, dominance and subordination and the social value which is culturally assigned to the different categories. Focusing in particular on gender, our purpose in this article is to examine how the specific constellation of patrilineal descent, patrilocal residence, and marriage practices operates in Turkmen society to allocate differential social value among the various kinship roles occupied by individuals at various times in their life cycles.<sup>2</sup> We aim to demonstrate, on the one hand, how this par-

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ticular constellation sets up a system of constraints and options for social actors and, on the other, how the operations of the system are presented through meta-narratives in discourse, both verbal and ritual. The concept of meta-narrative is used here to refer to cultural self-explanations corresponding to Bourdieu's "official representations" or "officialization" which he defines as

...the process whereby the group...teaches itself and masks from itself its own truth, binds itself by a public profession which sanctions and imposes what it utters, tacitly defining the limits of the thinkable and the unthinkable and so contributing to the maintenance of the social order from which it derives its power" (1990:108).

The kinship, marriage and family structure of Turkmenistan cannot be understood apart from two structurally crucial aspects of the traditional kinship system of the Turkmen which continue in force today: patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the first section of the paper discusses general characteristics of patrilineal-patrilocal societies, the structural position of women which they entail, and the institutions of brideprice and indirect dowry with which they are closely correlated. The second part of the paper describes these patterns as they exist today in Turkmenistan and the final section discusses Turkmen rituals of marriage as meta-narratives of kinship and household.

### *Women and marriage in patrilineal-patrilocal societies*

#### *Patrilineal Descent*

Patrilineal descent, patrilocal residence and, in particular, the combination of the two, have a number of structurally inherent consequences which tend to disadvantage women in political and econ-

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went well beyond any requirements of their respective positions. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to Kakacan Komekov, whose assistance in all phases of this project was invaluable.

<sup>3</sup> This traditional system of kinship and descent is one which the Turkmen share with all Turkic peoples though current forms vary greatly. The description of the descent system here is necessarily brief. For a more detailed treatment of descent and tribal organization among historical Turkic peoples, see Baştuğ (1997, 1999). For a discussion of women's positions and their strategic options within the framework of the traditional descent and household structure of Turkic peoples, see Baştuğ 1996.

omic spheres and lead to their social devaluation relative to men (Baştuğ 1996; Ilcan 1994, 1996; Kandiyoti 1987). Patrilineal descent is a form of kinship in which a society is divided into socially significant groups (lineages and/or clans) whose membership is determined by the allocation of children at birth to the descent group of their father. In other words, children belong to the descent group of the father, not the mother. From the point of view of the children, the group from which they receive access to strategic economic resources, inheritance and essential social support is that of their father, their patrilineage. From the point of view of members of this group, sovereignty over the children belongs to them and the mother's claims are, at best, limited. Thus, for women marriage entails a relinquishing of rights over their future children and, overwhelmingly, marriage transactions in patrilineal societies are designed so as to leave no doubt concerning this transfer of rights. Patrilineal descent is closely correlated with bride-price, a transfer of wealth from the family of the groom to that of the bride, which is generally considered to involve the transfer of rights over the labor and reproductive capacity of women from their natal descent group to that of their husband and to act as a mechanism for establishing control over women (Bell and Song 1994; Bossen 1988; Comaroff 1980; Goody 1973). Both patrilineal descent and the payment of brideprice are also closely correlated with the exclusion of women from inheritance from their natal descent group (Schlegel and Eloul 1988).

Patrilineal descent groups are corporate groups with a vital interest in ensuring their continuity in time. The reproduction of the lineage is a fundamental value in itself and this mandates the production of male children as only they can reproduce the lineage. This structural characteristic has several consequences which undercut the position of women in patrilineal societies. It automatically creates a potential, indeed a high probability, for the assignment of differential value to male and female children. While children of both sexes may be greatly desired and loved, male children are essential and, therefore, prized. The concern to reproduce and increase the lineage often results in strong social pressure for women to produce as many children, especially sons, as is physically possible and is accompanied by harsh social sanctions for barrenness, which fall disproportionately on women.

*Patrilocal residence, household composition, and the in-marrying bride*

A normative rule of patrilocal residence results in households in which sons remain in the household after marriage bringing their wives to the household as in-marrying brides. In patrilocal households, a son's labor and economic productivity continue to benefit his natal household after marriage, his children will be members of the patrilineage and his sons will secure its continuation in time. Furthermore, the bride (or brides) he brings into the household will contribute her labor to its maintenance and the reproductive capability essential to its perpetuation. By contrast, a daughter will join her husband's household at marriage. Her domestic labor and economic productivity will benefit her husband's household and her reproductive power will serve to increase and perpetuate her husband's lineage. These aspects of patrilocal residence norms and the concomitant devaluation of daughters is concisely illustrated in an Indian proverb: "Raising a daughter is like watering the neighbor's garden" (Anderson and Moore 1993).

When combined with patrilineal descent, patrilocal residence results in households in which the men are patrilineal kinsmen who have been raised together since infancy. The women of the household consist of those who have married into the household at various periods and the young, as yet unmarried, daughters of the couples which constitute the extended household. The in-marrying brides thus enter a household in which they are "strangers", newcomers to an ongoing domestic unit in which male authority is vested in the husband's father or father's father and female authority is vested in the husband's mother or his father's mother. The bride must adapt to the household and must prove herself in her new environment.<sup>4</sup>

Cultural factors influencing the strength of a woman's position in the new household (such as the availability or ease of divorce, the possibility of a return to her natal household, whether or not she receives inheritance or has other sources of economic independence) vary greatly among patrilineal-patrilocal societies. Generally, however, the in-marrying bride has little recourse other than to

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the challenges of adaptation faced by in-marrying brides in patrilocal societies, see Baştuğ 1996 and Wolf 1972:32-35. For rural Turkey, see Kandioti (1987) and Ilcan (1994, 1996).

make the best of her position in her household of marriage. In most cases, she has little or no economic independence and divorce is, at best, difficult. Furthermore, given the premium placed on the production of children in patrilineal societies, she is generally expected to, and usually does, become pregnant soon after marriage.<sup>5</sup> The children she bears will belong to the lineage of her husband. If she wishes to leave, she will in most cases be required to leave her children behind as rights of the husband's kin group over children generally supersede those of the mother.

A woman's initial adaptation depends on establishing herself as a willing and obedient worker who is able to get along well with other household members, especially her mother-in-law. Her ultimate status depends on the bearing of children, especially a male child. Indeed, her best hope for a secure future lies in producing male children and eventually occupying the status of household matron supervising the labor of the in-married brides of her sons, the position occupied by her mother-in-law at the time of the bride's marriage and entry into the household. Because her daughters will leave the household when they marry, it is not to her daughters, but to her sons and their brides that she will look for future security. Thus, the production of male children is as important, if not even more important, for women as it is for men.

The patrilineal, patrilocal household, then, creates a structure in which women are socially devalued as daughters.<sup>6</sup> Women are accorded their highest social value not in their roles as daughters, but in their roles as wives and mothers. From the perspective of the patrilocal household this value is symbolized by and, where marriage payments are involved, literally vested in its in-marrying brides.

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<sup>5</sup> In Turkmenistan, as among other Turkic peoples of Oğuz Turkic origin, a child is expected within the first year or so of marriage. See Hortaçsu and Baştuğ (1996) and Delaney (1991).

<sup>6</sup> This should not be construed as meaning that daughters are not loved in many patrilineal-patrilocal societies, and specifically in Turkmenistan. They are; however, love and affection should not be confused with the differential assignment of social value to categories of persons, which is our subject here.

*Marriage transactions and the value of brides*

The brides of the patrilineal-patrilocal household are indeed valuable. The patrilocal household depends on them; in fact, it cannot survive without them. They are essential for the production of the next generation, in particular the sons required for the perpetuation of lineage, household and, ultimately, even the nation. The essential role of in-marrying wives in patrilocal households (and other corporate kin groups) is summarized by Bell and Song as follows:

Wives are essential to the growth of the corporate groups that receive their services, producing the male children who constitute the inheritors of the wealth and "blood" of the group and producing daughters whose value will be realized in an indirect exchange for wives...The acquisition of a wife by a corporate group is not at all the same as a contemporary dyadic bond of husband-wife. For the corporate group that acquires her, a wife is part of a steadily increasing foundation for maintaining and augmenting the group (1994:312).

In-marrying wives are also essential for their contribution to household labor, not only for the intrinsic value of their services in this respect, but also for the indirect contribution this labor makes to economic production by freeing male labor for application to explicitly economic pursuits. Furthermore, in the majority of patrilineal societies, the direct female contribution to subsistence is substantial.

In short, the value of in-marrying wives in patrilineal-patrilocal households cannot be overemphasized. It is thus not surprising that in the great majority of these societies this value is expressed by some form of marriage transaction involving a transfer of property from the groom's patrilineage to that of the bride (Goody 1973:50; Schlegel and Eloul 1988:298). The forms which these transactions may take and the variables with which they are correlated are highly complex. For the purpose of this paper, however, we will confine our attention to the three forms of property transfer which characterize Turkmen marriage transactions: bride-price, indirect dowry and dowry.

As defined earlier, brideprice is a transfer of wealth from the groom's kin group to that of the bride as a necessary component of marriage transactions. Dowry is a transfer of wealth from the bride's family directly to the bride on the occasion of her marriage. Indirect dowry was first recognized as a unique type of marriage

payment in 1973 by Goody in his seminal work on bridewealth and dowry. He defined it as wealth that is transmitted to a bride by her husband's family at the time of the marriage, either directly or indirectly through her father or guardian. As Goody and more recently Schlegel and Eloul (1988:294) have pointed out, the final destination and structural consequences of the marriage payments involved in brideprice and indirect dowry are quite different. Brideprice circulates property among households and between lineages in unilineal societies. However, the wealth expended as brideprice in the acquisition of a bride is irrevocably alienated from the household/lineage which acquires her and can only be recovered by the receipt of brideprice from the granting of a daughter. In contrast, indirect dowry is delivered to the bride and thus deposited with the newly established conjugal couple. Where residence is patrilocal, it actually returns with the bride to the household from which it originated. However, since it is "owned" by the bride, it remains earmarked, as it were, for her conjugal family. Schegel and Eloul suggest that indirect dowry is a mechanism for "establishing property rights of the component nuclear families in a polygynous or extended family household in anticipation of possible eventual fission" (1988:302). Indeed, the results of their cross-cultural study reveal a perfect correlation between indirect brideprice and systems of kinship and residence in which the conjugal nuclear family is socially prominent and, if extended families are present, household fissioning is expected as a normal part of the domestic cycle. Thus, in patrilineal-patrilocal societies indirect dowry functions as a mechanism for eventually establishing sons in independent households.

Indirect dowry has an additional outstanding characteristic. As Schlegel and Eloul (1988:300, 304) point out, it has the characteristics of both dowry (as it is given to the bride and destined for the new conjugal unit) and brideprice (as it originates with the groom's family). It can also be combined with either or both and, in meta-narratives, can masquerade as or mask either or both. This is particularly the case when the indirect dowry is given first to the bride's father who then passes it on to her. To the extent that he retains some of the wealth, indirect dowry elides into brideprice. To the extent that it exceeds the value given to him as brideprice, it elides into dowry. Such ambiguities also make it possible for varying patterns to co-exist within the same society and for societies to

move back and forth between the two poles of “pure” brideprice and “pure” dowry in response to changes in other variables over time.

In the following section, we turn to a discussion of kinship structure and marriage in contemporary Turkmenistan. As we shall demonstrate, Turkmenistan is characterized by complex marriage transactions which, for the most part, leads into indirect dowry. Normative residence patterns and sequential phases in the domestic cycle of households also conform with Schlegel and Eloul’s finding that indirect dowry is associated with societies in which household fissioning along the lines of conjugal nuclear families is expected. We will also examine how in the particular Turkmen articulation of patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence the ambiguities inherent in the combination of brideprice, dowry and indirect dowry are manipulated in the construction of meta-narratives regarding marriage, family and gender.

### *Descent and residence norms in Turkmenistan*

#### *Patrilineal descent*

The Turkmen are divided into a number of clans<sup>7</sup> (*taypa*, from Arabic *taife*) including Tekke, Yomut, Ersarı, Göklen, Salor, Sarı and others. Clans are further divided into named sub-clans called *tire* and these into unnamed minimal lineages of three to four generations.<sup>8</sup> Membership at all levels is acquired by both men and women at birth through one’s father—it is, in short, a patrilineal descent system.

*Taypa* membership has been an essential component of Turkmen identity for at least 1000 years. Writing about the Oğuz

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<sup>7</sup> The Turkmen word *taypa* is usually translated “tribe” in the English literature, following a precedent set by early authors such as Vambery (1970/1865). However, this term is both misleading and technically incorrect. For the current descent system the term “clan” is technically correct and also in accordance with the terminology employed to describe the similar descent groups of other Turkic peoples such as the Kazak. For that reason, the term “clan” will be employed in this paper. For a discussion of the technical terms, see Baştuğ (1999, 1997, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> For a description of the Turkmen clans and their genealogies, see Ataniyazov 1994.

(Turkmen) in approximately 1066, the Turkish linguist Mahmut Kashgari lists the *taypa* of his time and states, "When two men who do not know each other meet, they first greet each other and then ask 'What is your clan?' (Kashgari, III:141). Based on his travels among the Turkmen in the early 1860's, Vambéry reports:

Every Turkoman—nay even the child of four years—knows the *taiife* and *tire* to which he belongs, and points with a certain pride to the power or to the number of his particular branch, for that really is the shield that defends him from the capricious acts of others... (1865/1970:359).

The clan structure of Turkmenistan today is not markedly different from that described by Vambéry. In spite of the major social and economic changes experienced by the Turkmen people in the intervening period, especially during the Soviet period, the patrilineal clan divisions remain a fundamental element of their social organization and clan identity remains a major component of personal identity (Nissman 1993:384; Golden 1992). In fact, to be considered a Turkmen in an ethnic sense (as opposed to its sense of citizenship) requires that one's father have been born into one of the Turkmen clans (cf. Irons 1974). There were traditionally very strong tendencies toward spatial/territorial clan unity in the country, which have continued to the present in spite of Soviet efforts to achieve a population redistribution which would break up regional tribal concentrations (Durdiev and Kadyrov 1991). Orazov and Vasilyeva report self-segregation by *taypa* and *tire* in kholhoz settlements (1989:80). Nissman (1993) reports that in an Ashkabad university in which dormitory roommates had been randomly assigned the students rearranged roommates to align with regional (i.e. clan) affiliation. Interviews conducted by the senior author with Turkmen students in Ankara indicate that clan affiliation is of considerable importance in determining patterns of friendship and enmity. Violent clashes in dormitories between members of different clans are not unknown.

As the above examples illustrate, patriclan identity remains a major component of Turkmen identity today. It is significant in interactions between individuals who do not otherwise know each other and in determining friendship and marriage choices. However, the former subdivisions of the *taypa* into *tire* have become largely insignificant in ordering peoples lives and many Turkmen do not know their *tire*. In residence patterns and day-to-day kin

interactions it is shallow patrilineages—groups defined by descent from a common paternal grandfather or great-grandfather—which are important. As we will discuss in the following sections, it is also this group, the shallow patrilineage, which is intimately bound through the household structure generated by patrilocal descent and the reciprocal obligations created by marriage transactions.

*Patrilocal residence and household structure*

Patrilocal residence was the normative form of post-marriage residence for all Altaic peoples of the past for whom we have historical evidence (Baştuğ 1996) and remains so for many of them today. This is especially true of those in rural areas and is universal among those who have remained pastoral nomads. The Turkic word for in-marriage brides is *gelin* (or *kelin*). Found universally in the Turkic languages, the term derives from the verb *gelmek*, “to come”, and means literally “one who comes”.

In Turkmenistan, the norm of patrilocal residence remains strong in urban as well as in rural areas. It is generally expected that a newly married couple will reside at least for a few years with the husband's family (Kadyrov 1993). Both sons and daughters are married in order of age, eldest first.<sup>9</sup> The expectation is that after marriage sons and their wives will reside for a period of time, usually a few years, with the husband's parents and then, again in birth order, establish separate households. There is an expressed ideal that these households should be located near the husband's natal household although considerations of available housing and proximity to work may make this difficult to implement in practice. Following an ancient custom among Altaic peoples, the youngest son, with his wife and children, is expected to remain in his parent's household and this son inherits the house, furnishings and whatever else remains after the death of the parents.<sup>10</sup> Older sons are considered to have had their inheritance in advance as family

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<sup>9</sup> Tapper (1979) reports the same norm for the Shahsevan, a pastoral nomadic Turkic people of Iran who are of Oğuz Turkmen origin. As the Shahsevan have had no peaceful contact with other Turkmen for perhaps 1000 years this and other similarities may be regarded as an indication of the historical depth and resilience of the Turkmen culture.

<sup>10</sup> See Tapper (1979) for the same pattern among the Shahsevan and Krader (1963) for its occurrence among the Kazak and various Mongol peoples.

resources are used to establish them in independent households. Daughters receive no inheritance and no dowry apart from a few items of personal clothing and handcraft items. As will be discussed later, at marriage women receive an indirect dowry, which is largely or even totally purchased from the brideprice paid by the groom's family to the father of the bride.

*Differential value of sons and daughters*

As in the majority of patrilineal-patrilocal societies, Turkmen culture assigns a higher value to sons than to daughters. When asked their preference if they were to have only one child, 90% of male and 74% of female respondents in our Ashkabad sample stated that they would prefer a son (Hortaçsu and Baştuğ 1996:254-256). The differential value is reflected in the different rituals associated with the birth of sons as opposed to daughters. Upon the birth of a son, the family stages a large public celebration called *oğlan toyu* ("son ceremony"). The celebration is a major event to which neighbors and relatives are invited for food and festivities and is ranked in importance with wedding and circumcision celebrations. No public celebration marks the birth of a daughter. The differential expectations associated with sons and daughters inherent in patrilocal residence is given explicit recognition in the following Turkmen proverb:

"A son eats and goes to the stable [to care for the animals, i.e. to work]. A girl eats and goes to others" (Orazov and Vasilyeva 1989: 115).

The differential value accorded sons and daughters is also apparent in the following excerpt from a Turkmen version of the Dede Korkut epic of the Oğuz Turkmen. At the annual feast given by Bayindir Khan, men without children are seated under a black flag and served the meat of black sheep; men with only daughters sit under a red flag; and men with sons sit under a white flag. Bayindir Khan says, "God has cursed the childless; we also curse them" (Soyunova 1993:37).

While this passage makes clear the preference accorded to male children, it also communicates the strong value attached to the production of children in general (what might in fact be termed an "imperative to produce children") and the stigma attached to barrenness in traditional Turkmen culture. This value, embedded in

cultural prototypes concerning family structure, continues strongly in Turkmen culture today.<sup>11</sup> While the stigma of barrenness attaches to both men and women, the burden of blame and the negative consequences fall disproportionately on women. Women who are childless are referred to as *mivesiz ağaç* (a tree that bears no fruit) or *kuru ağaç* (dry tree). The metaphor is starkly elaborated in the proverb, “*Miveli ağaçı bakýarlar; mivesiz ağaçı yakýarlar*” (“A fruit-bearing tree is cared for; a fruitless tree is burned”) (Soyunova 1993:36). The harsh consequences of barrenness for both men and women are, however, somewhat relieved by a Turkmen norm according to which childless couples adopt a child (a son if possible) of the husband’s brother. At the same time, however, it should be noted that this practice also places upon women the additional burden of bearing and then relinquishing a child to a barren sister-in-law, the wife of one’s husband’s brother.

*Brideprice and indirect dowry in Turkmenistan*

The payment of brideprice (*gahn*) as a part of marriage arrangements was a characteristic of all Turkic peoples in the past for whom we have historical records concerning marriage transactions and remains so for many in the present, especially those living in rural areas (İlcan 1996, 1994; Kandiyoti 1987). It is universal among those who have remained pastoral nomadic (Baştuğ 1996). As is always the case among pastoral nomadic peoples, the brideprice was paid primarily or totally in animals.

In Turkmenistan today, the requirement of brideprice remains strongly in force in both rural and urban areas in spite of Russian discouragement of the practice (Kadyrov 1993). Furthermore, the practice has considerable support from the population, especially from women. In our Ashkabad sample, 69% of the respondents said that a brideprice had been paid at their marriage. 64% of the women respondents said they planned to ask for a brideprice for their daughters as opposed to 34% of the men; 70% of the women said they wished to pay a brideprice for the marriage of their sons

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<sup>11</sup> In our Ashkabad survey of 400 households respondents were asked to rate the importance of children on a scale from 1 to 4 (1 = “I did not want children”; 4 = “There can be no family without children”). Ashkabad women averaged 3.94 and men, 3.96 (Hortaçsu and Baştuğ 1996:261).

as opposed to 50% of the men (Hortaçsu and Baştuğ 1996:183). The continuation of the practice and the strength of its popular support indicate that brideprice plays a significant role in the vital institution of marriage and procreation and the reproduction of these systems within the culture. As we shall see, the role of brideprice is, indeed, pivotal in the reproduction of the Turkmen cultural system.

Contemporary property transactions at marriage consist of three major components. The first of these is the brideprice, the *galn̄n*, which consists primarily of animals, money and goods and is expected to be delivered by the groom's father to the bride's father shortly before the wedding. The second component consists of a set of gifts, called the *dokuz*, which is assembled by the groom's mother and the women of his household, often over a long period of time. The *dokuz* is given directly to the bride before the wedding and thus unambiguously constitutes indirect dowry. The *dokuz* is made up of a number of finished dresses<sup>12</sup> with matching headscarves, cloth for making additional dresses and headscarves, shoes, other items of personal clothing (for example, a coat, sweaters and undergarments), items of personal adornment and cosmetics such as perfumes and handcream. It may also include baby clothing and/or toys, a clear statement of the family's hopes.

The third component of the marriage transactions is the dowry (*atkulak*). This is assembled by the family of the bride and includes rugs and other woven and handcrafted items produced by the bride and other women of her household as well as purchased items of household goods and furnishings (Bayriyeva 1993:77). It is through this component that a certain degree of ambiguity is introduced into the Turkmen marriage transactions because, although they are linguistically classed as "dowry", the purchased items, that is the household goods and furnishings, are purchased in part or wholly with the proceeds of the brideprice paid to the bride's father. Thus, a variable portion of the brideprice is converted to goods which are given to the bride and constitutes, in fact, neither brideprice nor dowry, but a form of indirect dowry which masquerades as both.

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<sup>12</sup> Although this may be a folk etymology, informants state that the name (meaning "nine" in Turkic languages) derives from a time when it consisted of nine dresses.

In this way, a substantial portion of the total property transfers initiated by the household of the groom is, in fact, indirect dowry which is delivered to the bride and returns with her to her husband's natal household. The *dokuz*, consisting for the most part of personal items of clothing, is considered to belong to the bride. This, however, returns to the family with her and she does not need new clothing for several years. Likewise, the household furnishings and goods purchased with part, or even all, of the brideprice are considered the property of the bride, her "dowry". These also return with her to be used in her husband's natal household and, eventually, in the independent household he will establish.

Although it might appear that the bride is thus acquired at no cost to the patrilocal household, that is not at all the case. The brideprice and the *dokuz* represent a substantial outlay of resources for the groom's family and parents begin to save for both while sons are still quite young, even in their infancy. Wedding expenses, involving a very large outdoor celebration with musicians and ample food, are also considerable and are borne entirely by the groom's household. Thus households must invest a considerable portion of family resources for the marriages of their sons, or, put another way, for the acquisition of the *gelin*'s essential for the perpetuation of the household. Furthermore, that portion of the marriage cost which does return to the household is vested in the person of the *gelin*. Thus, with some truth, the brideprice and marriage expenses are represented in discourse as a great burden and a loss to the household of the marrying son.

The substantial financial outlay involved in brideprice and wedding expenses has additional consequences. In the first place, young men are made dependent on their fathers for the brideprice and other expenses necessary for marriage. Furthermore, the expense is such that, even though they begin to save for the event early on, households generally require assistance from the patrilineal kin of the head of household. Fathers bear the major responsibility for the marriages of their sons, but father's brothers are expected to provide help for the marriages of their paternal nephews and older brothers for the marriages of younger brothers. Sisters and father's sisters are expected to contribute to the *dokuz*. Brideprice and marriage costs thus set up ongoing and interlocking networks of reciprocal obligations between patrikin. The brideprice thus perpetuates the power of the senior members of both

patrilineage and household while concomitantly both necessitating and perpetuating their solidarity.

Although the majority of young people today choose their own spouses, parental consent, in particular that of the two fathers involved, is required and a fiction of "arranged marriage" is perpetuated. Informally, the son communicates his wishes to his mother, and she to his father. They then approach the bride's parents who, in turn, ask the girl if she is agreeable to the match. If all parties agree, the two fathers negotiate the brideprice and the sequence of steps leading to the marriage begins at once. The parental generation thus retains control over the marriages of their children. The girl's father has an acknowledged right to refuse the suitor regardless of his daughter's wishes. Primary control over the decision, however, rests with the groom's father. It is he who must formally initiate negotiations and, above all, it is he who must deliver the requisite brideprice. Marriage without the permission of the parents entails serious consequences for both the bride and the groom. A young man can marry against his parents' wishes only if he has the financial independence necessary to establish and maintain an independent household with no financial or other forms of support from his family. Informants state that a young woman who married against her parents' wishes would be cut off from the family completely. Only after a number of years and the birth of several children might a reconciliation be possible.

The brideprice continues in force quite apart from whether marriages are "arranged" or not. In fact, the brideprice is a keystone in the reproduction of the cultural system of marriage, procreation, patrilineal descent, patrilocal residence, patriarchy and gerontocracy. Brideprice mobilizes and perpetuates networks of reciprocal obligations within the lineage, affirms the power and control of the older generation and acquires the *gelin* essential for household and lineage alike. Transformed into indirect dowry and (in)vested in the *gelin*, it will ultimately serve the lineage which produced it. Symbolically, it also legitimizes the marriage and signals the transfer of sovereignty over the bride from her father and his patrilineal kinsmen to her husband and his patrilineal kinsmen.

These functions of brideprice are masked in meta-narratives in which brideprice is invariably represented as a loss of wealth and a great burden for households.<sup>13</sup> They are, however, affirmed in the rituals associated with marriage by potent representations of value, transfers of wealth and entailed obligations centered around the payment of brideprice. All are ultimately focused on the bride and signify the very high value which she embodies for the patrilocal household into which she marries. Both the significance of marriage and the great importance of the bride in Turkmen culture are symbolized and dramatized by the wedding ritual and, in particular, the striking rite of passage it comprises for women. In the following section, we focus on this aspect of the marriage ritual in Turkmen society. We will note at the outset that the description of the wedding ritual which we present here is a somewhat idealized composite which glosses over clan and regional differences. It may also be said to represent a prototype of the Turkmen marriage ritual, a cultural ideal which not all Turkmen will be able to actualize in full.

### *The rite of passage of the Turkmen bride*

#### *Rites of passage*

Turner (1969), building on the earlier work of Gennep (1960), suggests that rites of passage (transition) consist of three phases. In the first, which he calls “separation”, the ritual subject, the “passenger”, is symbolically detached from previous groups and activities, removed, as it were, from the previous status. Immediately following separation, the subject enters the “liminal” phase, a transitional stage in which the neophyte has been stripped of the former status, but is not yet installed in the new. The liminal stage may be lengthy and may also involve a period of seclusion and isolation. The final phase Turner calls “reincorporation”. As the term implies, in this stage of the ritual the neophyte is reintegrated into society in the new status.

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<sup>13</sup> Kadyrov (1993:399) states that in a 1988 study in Southwest Turkmenistan 85% of the respondents agreed with the statement, “Brideprice brings ruin on the groom’s family”.

Weddings are rituals of marriage and may be described as rites of passage marking the transition of both bride and groom to a new social status. However, the elaboration of the ritual, its length, the required investment in labor and wealth, the behavioral content, and obligatory deportment for the various parties involved vary greatly from society to society. Among the Turkmen, the wedding ritual as a rite of passage for men consists of the brief ceremony and the celebration which lasts through the evening of the wedding. For women, however, the wedding ritual initiates an arduous rite of passage which will last at least a month, often much longer.<sup>14</sup> In the following section, we examine the Turkmen wedding ritual as a rite of passage for the bride.

*The bride's rite of passage*

The wedding ceremony begins when a delegation from the groom's family arrives to escort the bride to the site of the wedding, usually an open area near her husband's family's residence. She will not see her parents again for some weeks. They do not attend the wedding. Traditionally, her brothers and sisters also did not attend the wedding, but in recent years it has become acceptable for her brothers and sisters to attend. However, her brothers may not dance although her sisters may. As it was expressed to us, "This is not a joyous day for the bride's family." It is, however, traditional and still customary for the bride to be accompanied by a "*gelin ece*" (literally "bride older sister"), a kin term which denotes a woman married to one of the bride's older male patrilineal kinsmen, usually an older brother's wife or a father's brother's wife.

The liminal stage of the bride's rite of passage may be said to begin with her departure from her natal household accompanied only by the designated sister-in-law or aunt-by-marriage. She wears a bridal outfit which would seem to have been traditional among the Turkmen for many centuries. Though beautiful, the costume is uncomfortable, especially in the heat of summer when the great majority of weddings occur. It consists of several layers of clothing,

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<sup>14</sup> Although she does not discuss details, Nancy Tapper also notes that the wedding ceremony among the Shahsevan constitutes a rite of passage for the bride (1978, 1980). As described in R. Tapper (1979), the matrimonial sequence among the Shahsevan bears clear resemblance to that of the Turkmen.

including a metal headdress and she will wear it for the duration of the wedding celebration. She is also heavily veiled (not for reasons related to Islamic modesty norms, but as a protection against the Evil Eye). Isolated behind her veils, she will not speak during the procession to the groom's household. In fact, at the moment of departure she enters a period of semi-isolation which will last at least several weeks and during which she will speak very little. During the wedding ceremony, which lasts until the early morning hours, the bride and groom, accompanied by a "best man" and "maid of honor", will remain seated apart from all others in semi-isolation. In some clans, the four may sit openly at a special table; in others, they sit enclosed in a special curtained hut. Periodically, they will leave the hut or table, walk in procession with other members of the husband's family, and then return. They may, at one point, dance briefly, but will not otherwise directly join in the festivities.

After the wedding ceremony, the bride will be dressed by the women of her new family in distinctive clothing which marks her status as a new bride. She will remain in semi-isolation, a condition imposed by a number of practices. For the first year or so, beginning immediately from the moment she is escorted from her natal home, the new bride cannot leave the house unless accompanied by her in-laws and/or her husband (a practice described as "very important"). Within the household also, her contact with the outside world and her former life is sharply restricted. The most important practice accomplishing her semi-isolation is a particular form of avoidance relation which governs the relations between the new bride and her in-laws.<sup>15</sup> A Turkmen woman must never, under any circumstances, speak in the presence of her father-in-law. Even in an emergency she may not address her father-in-law but must relay the message through a child, a neighbor or even an unknown passerby. In a vivid symbol of silence she is required to cover her mouth with the trailing end of her headscarf or hold it between her teeth in his presence. In principle, the same restrictions apply to her relations with her mother-in-law as well. However, the mother-

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<sup>15</sup> Avoidance relations, especially between in-marrying brides and fathers-in-law, have been described for a number of Turkic peoples as well as non-Turkic Siberian peoples. See Inan (1987/1934) on the Altay Turks and Shimkin (1939) on the Siberian Ket. For a fuller discussion, see Baştuğ 1996.

in-law, if she wishes, can grant her daughter-in-law permission to leave her mouth uncovered and even to speak in her presence. In Ashkabad, we were told that most mothers-in-law granted this permission after the first year or so, after the birth of a child, and especially after the birth of a son. "Bad mothers-in-law", however, are said to enforce the requirement of silence and partial veiling for their lifetimes.

Turkmen state that brides should not talk much at all to anyone during the first year. In fact, since she is living in the same household as her parents-in-law, her opportunities to speak are limited. In the first weeks of the marriage, the household receives many visitors who come to offer congratulations. During such visits the bride is expected to sit in silence, necessary in any case since one or both of her in-laws will certainly be present. Wearing the special clothing of the new bride, she sits with eyes downcast and face averted, partially covered by her headscarf. She is isolated to a large extent from her natal family. Her mother and father will not visit her nor can she visit them for the first several weeks. Her siblings may visit, but since her in-laws will be present and she cannot speak in front of her in-laws, she will have limited opportunity to speak to them. She is not expected to receive visits from her own friends. The stream of visitors to the home of the newlyweds consists of visitors to the groom's family, not to the bride. By contrast, this is a period in which the groom spends a great deal of time outside the home in the company of his friends celebrating his marriage.

The Turkmen bride is thus placed in a semi-isolated state during the first several weeks of the marriage. Cut off from her natal family and friends from her former life, she is also greatly restricted in her ability even to communicate with anyone but her husband and the children and younger women of his household. Even with them, communication can only occur when neither of her in-laws is present. This, while having the effect of isolating the bride from the outside world and her former life, also underscores her alienness within the new household (Baştuğ 1996). In Turner's terminology, her state is "liminal", transitional; she has left her former life behind, but she is not yet an integral part of her husband's household. Perhaps the most striking demonstration of this is the fact that she does not eat her meals with the family; she eats alone or separately with her husband.

A few days after the marriage the groom pays a ritual visit to his wife's parents, called *giyev cagahk* ("invitation to the groom"). He is accompanied on this visit by his parents, perhaps some of his sisters, his older brothers, and, most importantly (according to informants), their wives, that is, any resident *gelin*'s of the household. The bride, however, does not accompany them on this visit to her parents. The groom and his family are served a meal, but the high point of the visit is a ritual ceremony in which the groom serves tea to his wife's mother with his own hands.

Although the bride does not directly participate in this ritual visit, it nonetheless marks what might be termed the "beginning of the end" of the liminal phase of the bride's rite of passage. It is the first meeting of the two households after the wedding and in its structure it communicates significant aspects of the changed statuses and new relationships of all involved. The husband's family calls on the girl's family, but she is left behind still in partial isolation in her new home. Although she is physically absent at this meeting, she is, nonetheless, potently "present" as the link between the two households and the ultimate reason for the visit. The fact that she is not present is a testimony to the fact that wardship over the girl has passed to her husband and his family. This change is ritually marked by the husband's service of tea to his mother-in-law, a reversal of roles, as he is the guest and she the hostess in this household. It is a symbolic gesture of respect and perhaps also a symbol of an expected alliance between the two (cf. Tapper 1979).

Up to this point, the bride has neither seen nor spoken with her parents since they surrendered her to the delegation from her husband's family. In the next stage of the rite of passage, daughter and parents are reunited in a ritual called *gaytarma* (literally, "the departure"). After a variable period, usually several weeks, the bride returns to her natal home to spend, again, a variable length of time ranging from a week to a month. It is the first time since the wedding that daughter and parents have seen each other. It is also the first time that the bride leaves the confines of the home unaccompanied by members of her husband's household and experiences an environment in which she can freely speak and interact with others. The *gaytarma* thus marks the bride's emergence from the state of semi-isolation which began the day of her wedding. The period offers a relief from the constraints of her restricted life in her new home and, perhaps also a simulated

return to her childhood. However, the visit is temporary and, in fact, serves to remind all that there is no going back, no return to the past. She returns to her natal family no longer an integral member of the household, but a married woman with a separate residence, paying a visit to her parents.

The liminal stage of the bride's rite of passage culminates when she returns once again to take up residence with her husband in his household. At that time, she discards the clothing of a new bride and for the first time adopts the headdress of a married woman (Bayrieva 1993:17). This marks the end of the matrimonial rite of passage and corresponds with Turner's final stage of re-integration in which the initiate completes the transition and re-enters society confirmed in the new status. Now established as a *gelin* of the household, the young wife begins to take an active role in household operations and over time her labor becomes increasingly important. Also, she must now turn her attention toward the next status to be attained, that of mother. Her future status in both household and society is dependent on the production of children and uncertainties concerning her status truly end only with the birth of a male child or two or three female children.

### *Conclusion*

In this paper, we have sought to examine the configuration of key elements which both constitutes and secures the reproduction of the Turkmen kinship system and household structure. First in importance among these are patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence, which determine family structure and household composition and provide the basic framework of constraints and options which condition the construction of categories of persons. As we have seen, this combination is one which inherently disadvantages women in that it involves the surrender of rights over children and the property of the natal household. It is also one which leads to a devaluation of women in the role of daughter. The system is one in which women are accorded their greatest social value as in-marriage wives in patrilocal extended families. As daughters and sisters within their natal households they may be, and unquestionably in Turkmenistan generally are, greatly loved. However, the patrilineal-patrilocal household is dependent on its sons and the

brides they bring into the household for its continued existence and perpetuation in time. Hence, there is an inherent tendency for the system to devalue women as daughters and sisters while according them great value as wives, daughters-in-law and mothers.

Three institutions emerge as “lynchpins” in the system of marriage and family and in the meta-narratives through which categories of persons are assigned relative values and which at the same time promote the cultural reproduction of the system. These are brideprice, indirect dowry and the extended rite of passage for women which begins with the wedding celebration. Brideprice is a keystone in the retention of parental control over the marriages of their children and of elders over juniors. However important the role of women may be in arranging or facilitating the marriages of their children, ultimate control rests in the respective fathers or their male surrogates. It is thus an instrument which perpetuates both gerontocracy and patriarchy on the one hand while necessitating, and thereby perpetuating, the solidarity and mutual dependencies of minimal lineages on the other. It also, as in most other patrilineal-patrilocal societies, ritually symbolizes the transfer of control over women from the patrilineage and patrilocal household of their fathers to that of their husbands.

At the same time, the brideprice makes the value of brides socially explicit—not in the sense of “selling” or “buying” a bride, but as a measure of the commitment of the household to the bride. The brideprice, however, while offered as tangible evidence of the value of the bride for the household, is in fact partly or even wholly converted into indirect dowry, which will ultimately be invested in the household to be headed by the groom. Although the family has not “bought” the bride and a portion returns with the bride as indirect dowry, the brideprice creates the sense that they have nonetheless invested a substantial portion of family wealth in her. To the extent that it is converted into indirect dowry given to the bride, that sense reflects a reality, albeit a distorted reality. What the household has invested in is its own future and the bride is the prized capital asset requisite for that future.

Women symbolize this value by a prolonged and very demanding rite of passage, which begins with the wedding ceremony. The rite of passage marks a woman’s entry into the stage in life in which her value is greatest. The difficulty of the matrimonial rite of passage for women is explicitly recognized in Turkmenistan. Women are

judged by how well they perform in this difficult drama and take pride in performing the role well, thereby validating and accepting the high value attached to them as brides in a system which prizes their reproductive role above all others.

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## EXPERIENCES OF CHANGE IN THE PAST



# INTERSECTING DISCOURSES IN THE PRESS OF THE MUSLIMS OF CRIMEA, MIDDLE VOLGA & CAUCASUS: THE WOMAN QUESTION AND THE NATION

AZADE AYŞE RORLICH

“Feminists have for good reason called women ‘the canaries in the mine’”, seeing in them, “those whose condition signals systemic problems in a given community” (Valdiva,1995:222). The Muslim women of the Russian empire were no exception. Their entry and inclusion into the public debate that swept across the empire, from St. Petersburg to Ufa, Orenburg and Tashkent, from Bakhchesaray to Kazan, Baku, Omsk and Samarkand, to name only a few places, signalled the systemic problems which were confronting the Muslim communities of the Russian empire, overwhelmed as they were by the imperative to forge a modern understanding of ‘self’.

The search for ‘self’ in which the Muslims of Russia were engaged was shaped by the colonial context in which they lived and with increasing force, ethnicity emerged as a powerful marker of identity, which competed with the previously dominant religious marker-Islam. It is the emergence of national identity and nationalism that became an important, if not the main legitimizing discourse for the ‘woman question’ among the Muslims of the Russian empire. Given the relevance of cultural experiences embedded in the social label Muslim in general, it is important to note here that what lies beneath the unity of faith is a true social-cultural mosaic which interlocks the settled and the nomadic; the urban and the rural; the tribal, regional and ethnic; the class and gender identities of the Muslims, constructed as they were, and intersecting in the most complex equations.<sup>1</sup> Hence, it is impossible

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term Muslim (as both noun and adjective) as a broad social label that accounts for the diversity of the cultural practices and social institutions of those who adhere to Islam understood as the theology, “the basis of the Covenant not in historical time and addressable space but in the infinite time-space of consciousness, an attitude elicited by the absolute, beyond all influence of language, law, or tradition.” See M. Arkoun, (1994:15-16). I argue, therefore, that Muslim and Islamic are not interchangeable adjectives.

to acquire an overall understanding of the issues that defined the lives of the Muslims of the Russian empire the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century without forging an understanding of the relevance of the heteroglossia, multiple discourses, within each cultural context.

To paraphrase Eric Wolf, Muslim women were thrice a people without history in the Russian empire (Adas, 1993:4). First of all, they were non-Slavs living in an empire whose legislators had articulated since 1833 a racial conceptualization of identity; they belonged to the category of *inorodets*, i.e. a person of a racial background other than Slav.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, they were Muslims living in an empire where they enjoyed recognition as a corporate entity only since 1789, when Catherine II established the *Muftiat*. Thirdly, they were women whose voices, relegated to the confined domain of private space, had not yet breached its walls when the Muslims of the Russian empire entered the twentieth century. Even as women's voices were continuing to resonate only in the traditional surroundings of home and hearth, their place and role in the broader community was being debated by the Muslim male reformers, the *jadids*, who had already embarked on the effort to find practical solutions for engaging their communities on the road to modernity. It is in this context that at the beginning of the twentieth century, and particularly in the heady years following the revolution of 1905, that the Muslim *jadids* not only included the 'woman question' in their political and social agenda but transformed it into a "cause célèbre." In fact, it became the ideological terrain upon which concerns with national identity and nationhood were articulated and debated in the colonial context of the Russian empire, thus echoing its ambiguities and specific road in the search for 'self'—be it individual or national.

As important as the colonial context was, however, viewing the search for 'self' and the *jadid* movement of the Muslims of the Russian empire as simply a response to the perplexities of Russian colonial rule along the dichotomous pattern of action/reaction would be simplistic at best, misleading by all accounts (Donaldson,

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<sup>2</sup> I do not wish to oversimplify what is a very complex and still not sorted out picture of empire and identity with regard to Russia: the concepts of empire and nation did not collapse; they collided while also coming together in many discourses. For a succinct discussion of the Russian identity discourse and nationalism, see: Liah Greenfeld (1992:191-267).

1992:91; Greenfield, 1992:233,267). The search for 'self'—individual and national—echoed the challenges of *tajdid* (renewal) and it enriched the meaning of *islah* (reform) since *jadids* were increasingly mindful of the importance of the "tradition of revitalizing the Islamic Faith and practice from within, [as] an authentic part of working out the Islamic revelation in history".<sup>3</sup>

In the case of the Muslims of the Russian empire, one of the most interesting byproducts of the renewal from within articulated through the *jadid* reform movement was the fact that women who were at first objects of reform initiated by enlightened Muslim intellectuals and community leaders, very soon became their partners or, to be more correct, were successful in winning recognition as partners.

One of the richest texts that gives agency to women and makes it possible to identify individual voices of women in the heteroglossia of the search for 'self' of the *jadid* movement is the Muslim press. Hence, this chapter will focus on the texts of the three women's journals published by the Muslims of the Russian empire before the revolutions of 1917: *Alem-i-Nisvan*, *Suyumbike*, and *Ishigh*. It will also consider what was perhaps the most prestigious and long-lived journal of The Volga Tatars, *Shura* of Orenburg.

It is in the pages of these journals, in addition to those of the learned *ijtihad* treatises and also in poetry, prose, and drama that it is possible to see how *tajdid* and *ijtihad* were not simply intellectual exercises for the Muslims of the Russian empire, but rather a legitimizing basis for opposition to the existing conditions, practices, and institutions. The pages of the same journals, however, contain ample evidence illustrating the catalytic effect that the *tajdid/islah* discourse had on the hierarchy of the markers of identity for the Volga Tatars: the shift that occurred projected into prominence the ethnic marker and put on the agenda, with an element of urgency at that, the issue of nation and nationhood.

The first editor of the bimonthly journal *Shura* (1908-1918) was Rizaeddin Fahreddin, a leading scholar of *fiqh* and a *mujtahid*. He retained that position until the end of 1917, when the last of the 240 issues of the journal appeared. It was Fahreddin who chose the name of the journal, for *Shura* meant council, forum, and he

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of *tajdid* and *islah* see J.O. Vall (1993:32-48).

acknowledged his intention of opening its pages to “all those interested in bringing science and education to their people”.<sup>4</sup> Fahreddin’s own contribution amounted to some 700 pieces ranging from articles on famous Muslim and western thinkers such as: Al-Maa’rri, Al-Ghazali, Ibn-Rushd, Ibn-al-Arabi, Ibn Taymiya, J. Al-Afghani, M. Abduh, Aristotle, Plato, Spinoza, Descartes, Bacon, Rousseau to essays on the history of the Muslims, placing special emphasis on the history as well as the political, cultural and social life of the Volga Tatars.

The editor of *Shura*, who was also the author of more than a dozen books dedicated to women and women’s issues, opened the pages of his journal to all those who wanted to address the issue of women’s emancipation.<sup>5</sup> His concern with women’s enlightenment was in harmony with the thoughts of many Tatars—some famous intellectuals such as Musa Jarullah Bigi, Ismail Gasprali and Yusuf Akchura; others literate but not learned, such as the very wealthy merchant Gani Bay Huseinov. Yet, among all, perhaps nobody articulated better the linkage between the ‘woman question’ and the future of the nation better than Ismail Bey Gasprali, the Crimean Tatar intellectual who is undoubtedly the best known of the Muslim reformers of the Russian empire. Ismail Bey took the first step toward change when he launched the phonetic method, *usul-u-savtiye* or *usul-u-jadid* and transformed it into the spark that ignited the fire of reform. Ismail Bey appealed to his contemporaries:

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<sup>4</sup> R. Fakhraddin, “Maslak va Maqsad”, *Shura* #1, 1908, p.1. R. Fahreddin did not even study at one of the leading medreses in Kazan, Ufa, or Orenburg. Formed solely by the village medrese and assisted by knowledge he extracted from books in the holdings of individual Tatar libraries in the villages of the middle Volga area, he published in 1889 an acclaimed book on jurisprudence, one of some 60 books and 700 articles he published before his death in 1936, in addition to some 40 unpublished manuscripts. See: R. Kh. Khalikova, (1984); A.I. Kharisov, 1973).

Transliterations from the sources published in the Russian empire in various Turkic languages in the Arabic script are rendered according to E. Allworth (1971). Hence, variations of spellings such as: Fakhraddin, Fakhretdin, Fahreddin are the result of transliterations from different alphabets.

<sup>5</sup> Some of R. Fahreddin’s books on women’s issues: Ghailä (Orenburg: 1912); Ghaqida. Qizim Zaynab ochan yazdim (Orenburg: 1908); Ghıbadati-nisvan (Orenburg: 1912); Mashkhur Khatinnar (Orenburg: 1903); Salimä yaki ghıffat (Kazan: 1899); Tärbiälä ana (Kazan: 1898); Tärbiälä Khatin (Kazan: 1899); Asma (Orenburg: 1903); Ahal-ghıyal Qiz balalar va khatinnar ochän (Orenburg: 1908).

“Whoever loves his own people and wishes it a [bright] future must concern himself with the enlightenment and education of women, restore to them [their] freedom and independence and give wide scope to the development of their minds and capabilities.”<sup>6</sup>

Ismail Bey was particularly enthusiastic in welcoming the participation and contributions of women themselves in this effort. One such instance is the preface he wrote to a twenty three page textbook entitled *Mu'asarat-i-Adabi* (Foundations of Good Behavior) published in 1899 by Alimat-ul-Banat hanım [Biktimi-riya]. He applauded her initiative by pointing out at the same time that:

“it is known that one flower and one bird do not bring the Spring Season. If one woman’s mind is awakened, it does not mean that all women are awakening. If one flower does not bring the Spring [season] it does, however, announce its arrival...[the present] work testifies [to the fact] there are Springs and Summers ahead.”<sup>7</sup>

While it is not at all surprising that Alimat-ul-Banat hanım rested her case squarely on religious law when she announced her intention of sharing thoughts which “are in harmony with reason and *Shariat*”, what is remarkable is the unambiguous form in which she spelled out gender solidarity when she stated that the goal of her endeavor was “to make women who are our gender mates (jinsdash) owners of information and to spread among them, knowledge and education”. She proceeded then to tie her project to the national project, rationalising women’s worth still in the framework of traditional institutions such as motherhood, but linking the future of the nation to the contributions that enlightened mothers can make to raise the future generation.

The support and encouragement which Ismail Bey extended to Muslim women such as Alimat-ul-Banat hanım, who were beginning to inhabit the public spaces of their communities, was representative of the strong commitment to the emancipation of women, which both the publishers and the editor of *Shura* maintained throughout the existence of the journal. In fact, it can be argued that the twin concerns that defined the profile of *Shura* were the issues of national identity and the emancipation of women.

<sup>6</sup> See: *Molla Nasreddin*, #3, 1913.

<sup>7</sup> Alimat-ul-Banat Khanım, *Mu'asarat-i ädäbi*, (St. Petersburg: 1899) p.I.

Between 1908 and 1918, the pages of *Shura*, were filled with articles aimed at a community which in the eyes of the intellectuals addressing it, fit more the Herderian conception of *Volk*, rooted in the notion that each people had its own way of being, thinking, and feeling, and a language to which it ought to be true, rather than the Andersonian model of “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983:66). The Tatar “nation building project”, however, belonged to the post-Herderian wave and its dominant principle, backbone, became language as an expressivist statement of national character. To this end, the journal *Shura* sponsored a language contest entitled *Til Yarishi*, which aimed at encouraging young pens and promoting a Tatar national language. In addition, those who contributed articles on other issues seldom missed the opportunity to underline the important role language played in identity construction. For instance, in 1915, *Shura* carried an article written by the well known Tatar writer Fatih Karimi. Although Karimi made the emancipation of the Ottoman Turkish women the centerpiece of his article, he singled out the issue of language to portray women not only as mothers of the nation, but also as carriers of cultural authenticity. Discussing Turkish women’s involvement in public discourse through the medium of the press, Karimi remarked that: “their pens are sharp, thoughts brilliant; they do not [leave] either to chance or to men the [task of] defending their ideas and [in order to] do so, they use their pens and the press”.<sup>8</sup> Karimi applauded Turkish women for being involved in debates that transgressed the boundaries of the ‘woman question’ and was particularly supportive of their participation in the language debate.

Sharing with his readers the plea of a Turkish woman who wrote to *Yeni Gazete* (The New Gazette), Karimi in fact provided a role model for his audience. The plea stated the case of language purity and cultural authenticity in no ambiguous terms:

“In the name of the fatherland, in the name of general harmony, I beg of you! Let us eliminate foreign words from our Turkish [language]. And where there are no [Turkish words], let us create them. Let us put an end to this hodge-podge. Let us be Turks and speak Turkish.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Fatih Karimi, “Türk Khanımları”, *Shura* #15, 1909, p. 460.

<sup>9</sup> *Idem*, p. 461.

Thus, the voice of the Ottoman Turkish women extolling the virtues of national language for the development of national culture became the bridge on which Karimi led his reader to the milieu of Tatar culture. He deplored the inadequacy of Tatar girls' schools but while doing so, he also questioned the wisdom of sending Tatar girls who "have not received a national education and have not completed at least the elementary school in their mother tongue (*ana til*)" to Russian schools.

A series of articles which A. Battal published in the pages of *Shura* in 1909 offer a similarly intertwined discourse of cultural authenticity and women's emancipation. The articles in case represent a review of Zakir Qadiri's Tatar translations of Qasim Amin's *Tahrir-al-Mar'ah* (The Liberation of Woman, published in 1899) and *Al-mar'ah al Jadidah* (The New Woman, published in 1900.)<sup>10</sup> As important as Qasim Amin's arguments are in putting forth the *tajdid/islah* justifications for linking the liberation of women to national liberation, they did not occupy a central place in Battal's articles.<sup>11</sup> Battal focused instead, on the language of the translation. He thus noted with regret that although Qadiri claimed to have produced a Turco-Tatar translation of Qasim Amin's Arabic Text, the decision he made to retain the Arabic titles of Amin's book represented the best proof that the translation was not imbued with Turkic (*Turki*) spirit. While this comment might suggest that Battal was a supporter of Ismail Gasprali's concept of an all-Turkic (*Turki*) language, subsequent comments identify Battal as a strong advocate of the Tatar language as the embodiment of the Tatar national spirit. He faulted the translator for having given preference to pure Turkish (*halis Turk*) words instead of employing pure Tatar (*halis Tatar*) ones.<sup>12</sup> In his response to Battal, Qadiri defended his choices in the spirit of the responsibility a translator has to meaning and content first of all, and concluded by underlining the urgency of the task of elevating Muslim women to the level of European women in education and enlightenment as a

<sup>10</sup> On the role M. Abduh may have played in reshaping Q. Amin's perception and analysis of the 'woman question' see: M. Badran (1994:16-20).

<sup>11</sup> A Battal, "Tankid. Tahrir-al-Mar'ah vā Al-Mar'ah-al-jadidah' tārjumālarinā umumi bār nazar", *Shura*, 1909: #13, pp.393-396; #14, pp.434-438; #15, pp.463-467; #16, pp.492-494.

<sup>12</sup> *Shura* #13, 1909, p. 396.

precondition for the emancipation of the Muslim peoples from the yoke of colonial rule.<sup>13</sup>

The messages carried in the pages of *Shura* and other *jadid* Muslim journals and newspapers which targeted the general public were echoed and, at times, even surpassed by those published in the women's journals. To be sure, of the total of 161 Muslim periodicals published in Russia between 1905 and 1917, only three were dedicated to women. Not accidentally, these journals appeared in the three most important *jadid* centers of the Russian empire: *Alem-i-Nisvan* in Bakhchesarai in the Crimea, *Ishigh* in Baku, and *Suyumbike* in Kazan, the cultural capital of the Volga Tatars. Although differences in style and substance existed, it is possible to identify at least three themes which were present in the page of all three publications:

- 1] The importance of education for women.
- 2] The plight of Muslim women in Russia and elsewhere, as well as news about women in non-Muslim countries.
- 3] The need to educate Muslim men in general, and those in politics in particular, about the urgency of the tasks aimed at the emancipation of women.

*Alem-i-Nisvan* (Women's World) was the first women's journal published in Russia and its pioneering quality is no accident. The "father" of the journal was no other person than Ismail Bey Gasprali, who in 1883 had given the Muslims of Russia the newspaper *Terjuman* (the Interpreter), regarded by all Muslims as "our national treasure..., our literature...our academy".<sup>14</sup> In 1906, Ismail Bey's *Terjuman* was enriched by two bimonthly supplements, both distributed free of charge to its readers. *Alem-i-Nisvan*, an illustrated supplement for women which appeared until 1910, and *Alem-i-Sibyan* (Children's World), a literary educational journal for children which endured until 1915.<sup>15</sup>

The editor of the journal *Alem-i-Nisvan*, was Shefika hanım, Ismail Bey's daughter, whose journalistic activity had begun in 1903 as a contributor to *Terjuman*. On the average, the journal contained 14 pages, although some of the 1906 issues had as many as 18 pages, and others only 9.

<sup>13</sup> Z. Qadiri, "Tänkidqa qarshi, *Shura* p. 587.

<sup>14</sup> The historian O. Aqchoqraqli, as quoted by Cafer Seydahmet (1934:205).

<sup>15</sup> On *Alem-i-Nisvan* see S. Yakub, "Musulman Kadın va Qızlarıning himisi-Ismaıl Bey Gasprinski" *Yanga Milli Yul*, #4, Berlin, 1933.

The program of *Alem-i-Nisvan* was published only in the November 16, 1906 (#36) issue. The reader could thus expect to find in its pages:

- Information concerning the legal status of women as outlined in The Russian Civil Code and in the Muslim *Shariat* Law.
- Advice on matters concerning the education of children, family health care, and home economics.
- Information on sewing, embroidery, painting, and other artistic and technical skills useful for women.
- Articles concerning women in Russia and elsewhere.
- Poetry, travelogues, articles concerning science and moral values.<sup>16</sup>

And indeed, *Alem-i-Nisvan* did not shortchange its readers on any of these promises. What could be said is that the journal was most generous in the space it devoted to poetry, travelogues, moralistic stories, home economics and health care information, as well as news about women around the world. Discussions of the legal status of women under secular law were absent, even though the regular column on Prophetic Traditions entitled *Alem-i-Hadith* fulfilled the promise of legal information, reasserting the paradigms which guided the discourse of Muslim womanhood.<sup>17</sup>

The pages of *Alem-i-Nisvan* contained information on Muslim women in the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria, and Romania. There were articles discussing the situation of women in the United States, the privileged position of Finnish women who had obtained the right to vote, as well as the ongoing struggle of the British women aimed at winning the same right, thus making an important statement about women who had conquered the barriers of private space and had come to inhabit the public spaces of their communities. By far the most voluminous information provided by *Alem-i-Nisvan* was on the Muslim women of Russia. Here, the main focus was on the importance of education for women and the journal provided a wide coverage of the activities of Muslim girls'

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<sup>16</sup> *Alem-i-Nisvan* (hereafter cited as AN), Nov. 16, 1906, p.2. Two Turkish scholars have published a book on Şefika Gasprali using mainly information from her personal archives made available to them. See Hablemitoğlu and Hablemitoğlu, (1998).

<sup>17</sup> For the section *Alem-i-Hadith*, see AN, Nov. 1 and 16, 1906; Feb. 12 and 23, 1907.

schools, while also discussing opportunities for higher education available in the Russian capital.

The issue of June 15, 1906, for instance, contained two articles on higher education: one devoted to the St. Petersburg Medical Institute for Women, the other to the St. Petersburg Courses for Women.<sup>18</sup> The publication of these articles in the pages of *Alem-i-Nisvan* should be interpreted as an endorsement of these institutions and an encouragement of those who sought higher education even if, in order to acquire it, a Muslim woman had to bridge an immense cultural gap and adjust to the challenges of a non-Muslim milieu and the culture of the ‘other’.

There were many Russian bureaucrats and journalists whose colonizer “feminism” aimed at Muslims turned into social conservatism at home, where they labeled the courses for women offered by Russian universities “a veritable sewer of anarchist disease”, deeming the term *kursistki* (those who attended women’s courses) synonymous with *revoliutsionerki* (revolutionaries). In view of the fact that the Muslim conservatives were not alone in opposing women’s education, the publication of these articles could be viewed as an act of boldness on the part of the otherwise tame and non-political *Alem-i-Nisvan*.<sup>19</sup>

Equally interesting, even if isolated, are other instances of editorial boldness such as an article about the controversial and daring Azeri Satirical journal *Molla Nasreddin*. The article in case contained information concerning subscriptions as well as a “sample” of its approach to “women’s issues.” To encourage Muslim women to read journals aimed at the general audience, an editorial published in the #35, 1906 issue of *Alem-i-Nisvan* offered samples from *Molla Nasreddin*. Thus, one such sample featured questions from readers who asked why some horses were afraid of Muslim women. The answer provided by a Muslim woman read: “those must be Russian horses used to seeing Russian women go uncovered. Our men ask us to cover ourselves but they end up in the company of Russian women and even marry them.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> “Kadınlara mahsus buuk tıb mäktäbi” and “Pitirburg Nisa Mäktäb lisi,” AN, June 9, 1906, pp. 233-234; 234-236.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the “dilemma of education” for the Russian bureaucracy, see: R. Stites (1977:44).

<sup>20</sup> *Molla Nasreddin* #18, 1906, as quoted in AN of Nov. 1, 1906, pp. 553-556.

Another article featured an appeal of Muslim women addressed to the Muslim deputies to the Russian Parliament, the Duma, urging them to fight for women's rights.<sup>21</sup> In addition to the concerns already mentioned, during the first half of 1907, *Alem-i-Nisvan* devoted considerable attention to the famine which affected the Volga-Ural area and highlighted the activities of those benevolent societies of Muslim women (such as the one in Qarghali) directly involved in famine relief activities.<sup>22</sup>

A scrutiny of the topics covered in the pages of *Alem-i-Nisvan*, compared with the program of the journal, makes it possible to argue that the very "broad umbrella" of its program was the tactical device which ensured the continued publication of the journal until 1910 and shielded from criticism its isolated bursts of editorial boldness.

The journal with the symbolic name *Ishigh* (Light) was published in Baku between 1911 and 1913, by Mustafa Bey Alioglu and Hadija hanım Subhankulova-Alibeyova. Its life was cut short after only two years because of the combined effect of conservative pressures and financial difficulties. The negative and even violent reaction of the Muslim conservatives to the publication of a journal which advocated the emancipation of women through education is difficult to explain, in view of the fact that articles published in *Ishigh* never challenged the *Shariat* norms, nor did they take a position on the issue of the veil.<sup>23</sup> The only plausible explanation for the strong opposition which *Ishigh* encountered from the conservative Muslim clerics is that quite often *mullahs* were targeted for criticism and were held responsible for the backwardness of Muslim society.

While *Alem-i-Nisvan* was to a great extent the product of its editor, Shefika hanım, *Ishigh* benefited from the contributions of many enlightened Muslim women (mainly Azeri and Tatar) such as Nadzhabat Zeinalova, Sariya Gassanova, Sona Akhundova, Halima Akhundova. The symbolism of the name of the journal was reinforced by the message on the cover of the first issue of *Ishigh*, which depicted a woman wrapped in a veil, holding the hand of

<sup>21</sup> "Hatunlar tarafından Musulman Duma azalarıyle," AN, March 16, 1907, p.1-2.

<sup>22</sup> "Achları yane idiniz," AN, Jan. 30, 1907, pp.1-2.

<sup>23</sup> "Muhariri yazıyor," AN, Jan. 30, 1907, pp. 4-5.

her child and pointing to the sun as if saying: “our future is with *Ishigh*, with ‘light’!”

The joy with which women welcomed the publication of their journal (Sona Akhundova wrote a poem to mark the occasion) was matched only by the equally intense anger on the part of the conservative (*qadimist*) *mullahs*, who insisted that all those Muslims who allowed *Ishigh* to be brought into their homes be considered apostates. Indeed, the shock which *mullah* Muhammad Amin of the *Gaji Javad* mosque of Baku experienced at the publication of *Ishigh* was so great as to prompt him to predict that “the end was truly near since women not only read newspapers but contributed to them”.<sup>24</sup> To this, Halima Akhundova replied with an eloquent article entitled “Woman—the Mother of the Nation”, which legitimized the struggle for the redefinition of Muslim womanhood by linking its outcome to the future of the nation itself. She warned her sisters: “All nations are marching on the road of progress, [and] are working toward the achievement of science and enlightenment. Do not believe the words of the *mullahs* and of those women who are trapped in [daily] routines. They do not have an ideal...they are a hindrance to us.”<sup>25</sup>

The new ideal of Muslim womanhood which Halima Akhundova spelled out was no longer confined to the mold of ideal womanhood determined only by Qur’anic precedent (Maryam, Asiya, in surahs: 19; 28:19; 66:12) and by the examples of the historic personae: the Prophet’s first wife, Khadija bint Khuwaylid, his daughter, Fatima bint Muhammad, and his third and favorite wife, Aisha bint Abu Bakr. It was still an ideal that revered women who were devout, chaste and obedient to the will of Allah. However, women such as Halima hanım were now capable of differentiating between what represented the will of Allah and what, in fact, represented the will of men legitimized as the will of Allah. In addition, Halima Akhundova’s message contained a strong critique of womanhood affirmed through the challenges and achievements afforded by private space alone.

The articles of Hadija hanım Alibeyova and Hayat hanım Chayghirakhli published in the third issue of *Ishigh* emphasized the

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<sup>24</sup> See *Ishigh*, #1 and 3, 1911.

<sup>25</sup> *Ishigh*, #30, 1911.

importance of women's education for the welfare of the entire nation. Hayat hanım wrote: "Sisters, we need schools where we can get an education; we should be able to be useful to some extent to our Motherland if we can educate [properly] our children."<sup>26</sup> This is hardly a revolutionary message from the viewpoint of the challenge it represented to traditional values. After all, the measure of Muslim women's worthiness was still to be their ability to fulfill successfully the traditional role of the 'mother', whether as the mother of a nuclear family or the mother of a nation. Muslim women were not abandoning motherhood, they were merely asking for institutional and community support to improve their performance in this traditional role, legitimizing its importance for the fulfillment of nationhood.

Indeed, what should have alarmed the *mullahs* was the restlessness and gender awareness and solidarity which emanated from some of the pages of *Ishigh*, as many women believed that unity and common action were crucial if they wanted to overcome the obstacles standing between them and enlightenment. In her article entitled "The Rights of Muslim Women", Halima hanım Akhundova called on her sisters: "It is time already, it is time to show your determination!!! Those times when we made no headway are gone! We need knowledge!"<sup>27</sup> A year later, Minaver hanım Alikhanova's letter warned Muslim women: "We have to know that alone we cannot do anything; unity and common action have played an important role in everything."<sup>28</sup>

*Suyumbike* was the name of the Tatar bimonthly journal for women published in Kazan between 1913 and 1917 under the editorship of Yakub Halili.<sup>29</sup> Frequent contributors to this 20-page journal were prominent poets and writers such as Fatikh Saifi Qazanli, Mir Haydar, and Abdullah Haris. Among the most active women contributors, the names of Makhbupjamal Akchurina and M. Uralbaiova deserve special attention for the candor and boldness of their discussions. In an article entitled "Kemdan bu" (Who is this from?) Akchurina held the Muslim religious leaders

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<sup>26</sup> Idem

<sup>27</sup> *Ishigh*, #3, 1911: S. Mammadov (1975:31).

<sup>28</sup> *Ishigh*, #9, 1911. *Ishigh*, #11, 1912.

<sup>29</sup> This was the name of the last Queen of the Kazan Khanate before its conquest by Ivan IV in 1552.

responsible for the backwardness, almost enslavement of Muslim women.<sup>30</sup> Criticizing the *mullahs*, who hindered the development of the musical culture of the Muslims by arguing that singing was sinful, Akchurina pointed to the important role which national music could play in the reinforcement of the national feelings and consciousness of a people. In doing so, she not only revealed how receptive women had become to the nationhood discourse, but underlined the extent to which, in the Tatar context as well, national identity was providing an organizing principle applicable to a variety of domains which it endowed with meaning, thus transforming them into the elements of a specific identity such as national music.

*Suyumbike* paid particular attention to the need to use the existing political institutions in order to address the issue of Muslim women's rights. Hence, it provided ample coverage of the activities and positions of the deputies of the Muslim Faction of the Duma, on such issues. H. Ablai's article, for instance, focused on the fact that during the June 15-26, 1914 meeting of the Duma deputies discussed religious and economic matters and addressed issues of *medrese* organization and *waqf* (pious foundation) activity, but marginalized altogether the issue of women by giving space only to the discussion of prerequisites such as a health certificate and the consent of both parties in order to secure legal recognition for a marriage. The only Duma deputy who raised the issue of women during these debates was the deputy from the Belebeev district, Jamaletdin Khuramshin, who pointed to the blindness of the *ulama* in refusing to act in accordance with Qur'anic and *Shariat* prescriptions which sanctioned the equality of men and women. Furthermore, he proposed that women above the age of 21 be given the right to vote in the election of the religious leaders of their communities. Not surprisingly, his proposal fell on deaf ears, but even as this happened, *Suyumbike* shared the news of his proposal with its readers, thus sensitizing a new generation of Muslim women to the relationship between gender, culture and politics.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Suyumbike*, #9, March 1912 and *Kazan Utları* (hereafter cited as KU), #3, 1983, p. 165.

<sup>31</sup> *Suyumbike*, July 15, 1914.

In fact, a small group of women had already crossed the border of the private space into the realm of public space and action which previously had been reserved for men alone. These women, the focus of M. Uralbaiova's July 18, 1914 article, were all *kursistki* enrolled in the courses for women at various St. Petersburg Institutions of Higher Education, who attempted to engage in a direct dialog with the Muslim Duma deputies. Having learned that a meeting of these deputies was to take place at a private *dacha* (summer home) in one of the St. Petersburg suburbs, Mahfuza hanım and Salima hanım and their friends traveled there to meet with them and discuss issues of mutual interest concerning the advancement of their society. To their dismay, these women found out that some of the "enlightened" Duma deputies chose to leave the meeting upon learning of their arrival, while others refused to even shake hands with them. Uralbaiova's bitter conclusion was that not only were these enlightened men not ready to sit down with the educated women of their communities in order to forge a common plan for action which would benefit all, but they could not even agree to the presence of women in the same room.<sup>32</sup>

After courting militancy, *Suyumbike* moderated its tone and the balance shifted toward news on girls' schools, literature and home economics after 1915. The change may have been aimed at avoiding the destiny of *Ishigh*. Whatever the rationale, however, some of *Suyumbike*'s readers were not happy. An article published in the September 6, 1915 issue of *Vaqt* by Zahida Burnasheva (1895-1977) and entitled "10 Ellik Matbugatıbizda Khatin-Qız," ("Women and Girls in our Ten-Year Old Press) was critical of *Suyumbike* for filling its pages with graduation speeches, recipes, travel notes and articles recycled from old Turkish papers.<sup>33</sup>

Z. Burnasheva's article in *Vaqt* reveals yet another dimension of the relationship between the periodical press and the emancipation of Muslim women: the contributions which women made to Muslim periodicals aimed at a general audience. Such contributions represent an even better measure of the presence of Muslim women in the arena of public space in the years between 1906 and 1917. It speaks of the acceptance which women gained beyond the confines of "women ghettos" as represented by the

<sup>32</sup> *Suyumbike*, July 18, 1914.

<sup>33</sup> *Vaqt*, Sept. 6, 1915.

women's journals and of the support which they received from those male *jadid* intellectuals who saw a symbiotic linkage between the 'woman question' and the 'question of the nation'.

In addition to *Shura* and *Vaqt*, other periodical publications which opened their pages to women contributors were: *Kazan Mubiri* (1905-1910, Publishers and Editors: Seid Giray Alkin, Ismail Ramiev, Yusuf Akchura), *Maktap* (Baku, 1911-1920, Publishers and Editors: Gafur Reshad Mirzazade, Abdurrahman Efendizade, Nariman Narimanov); *Dabistan* (Baku, 1906-1908, Publishers and Editors: Muhammed Hasan Efendizade, Ali Iskander Jafarzade, Hasan Bey Melikov Zerdabi); *Fiker* (Uralsk, 1905-1906, Publishers and Editors: Hafiz Al-haj Al-Huremin, Kamil Matigiy Tuhfatullin); *Sibiria* (Tomsk, 1912-1914, Publishers and Editors: Ibadullah Usmanov and Mehmed Vaiz Navruzov). Most of these publications featured sections devoted to women's issues under headings such as *Khatinnar Gäläme* (Women's Pens); *Khatin-Qiz Tavishi* (The Voice of Girls and Women); *Khätin-Qızlar Donyasi* (The World of Girls and Women).

Of all the articles which women such as Z. Tahiriya, Zaynap Sayida, Z. Burnasheva, M. Akchurina, Rokiya Ibrahimiyi, Maftukha Validova, Hadija Shovgiya, Gumru Narimanova Karimova, Farhana Alusheva, Fatima Usmanova, and Kovhar hanım Gayubova contributed to various periodicals, several should be noted for the boldness these authors displayed whether in the style or in the substance of their remarks.

Makhbupjamal Akchurina began contributing to *Shura* in 1908 and she was a regular contributor until 1914. In addition to belles lettres (poems and short stories), she published essays dealing with issues as varied as folk poetry, where she identified untraditional images of women such as that of Shamsekamar Tutash (the woman soldier). She wrote about the importance of manuscripts as sources of information and regarded them as untapped treasures which could contribute to the discovery of the national cultures of the Muslim peoples. By doing so, she pointed to one of the powerful narrations of nationalism, in which identity construction rested on the bricks of ethnogenesis, richness of culture and antiquity of history. She also transcended the confines of purely gender issues and exhibited sensitivity to class issues, often raising her voice to address social issues such as poverty, the treatment of the poor and the callousness of the rich, which were relevant for all. In one article, she argued that the rich who treated their servants like

slaves even dared to define such treatment as just. Akchurina also made reference to Tolstoy's novel 'Resurrection' and pointed to the moral bankruptcy of men responsible for the suffering and downfall of women and argued that there were many Tatar Katiusha Maslovas who shared the plight of Tolstoy's heroine. They, however, remained anonymous because Tatar literature ignored their plight.<sup>34</sup>

Social injustice and the gap between the rich and the poor triggered agonizing questions for Zaynap Sagiya, who in the pages of the same journal *Shura* questioned the virtues of a society where "on one side there are shimmering lights and heaven; on the other, the unfortunate poor [who] are crying and begging for bread".<sup>35</sup>

The pages of the Tatar journal *Fiker* provided a forum for similar concerns voiced by women and even contained calls for action. *Fiker* was a journal published in Uralsk, on the fringes of the Kazakh steppe between 1905 and 1906. It benefited from the editorial leadership and contributions of Muslim intellectuals whose sympathies were directed towards the Left of the political spectrum and who also adhered to nationalist and Pan-Turkist platforms (Tukay, Bukeikhanov). Echoing the ideas of the poet Tukay, one of the frequent and famous contributors to *Fiker*, Farkhana Alusheva called for immediate action and warned women that they should count on their own resources for the accomplishment of their goal of emancipation. She pointed out: "If you want to be free, you have to act without delay. To expect support from the emperor, the Duma, the bourgeoisie is an illusion. Duma deputies do not want to do anything [on the issue] of women's freedom and they are not doing anything to improve the lives of the peasants [who work for the] boyars or of those [who work] for the bays [the Tatar rich]."<sup>36</sup>

This is hardly the voice of a submissive Muslim woman resigned to accepting the destiny that God had reserved and men were shaping for her. Farkhana hanım's is the voice that illustrates eloquently the light-year distance Tatar women had traveled in the short time between the turn of the nineteenth century and the

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<sup>34</sup> *Shura*, #20, 1911; #7, 1917.

<sup>35</sup> *Shura*, #12, 1915; KU, #3, 1983, p. 167.

<sup>36</sup> *Fiker*, #26, 1906; KU, #3, 1983, p. 162.

second decade of the twentieth century by making the leap from objects of change to its agents.

Women's voices, along with those of the enlightened *ulama* and *jadid* intellectuals which (between the years of 1906 and 1917), emerged from the pages of the Muslim periodical press in support of reform, renewal, and women's emancipation, were only a fragment of the heteroglossia of public discourse that mobilized the Muslims of the Russian empire at the turn of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Indeed, in addition to those who argued that for any Muslim community a definition of 'self' should be all inclusive and mindful of the contributions women *can* and *should* make beyond the confines of the private space, hearth, home, and family, there were those who chose cling to social conservatism and a dogmatic interpretation of Islam. In so doing, however, they were disregarding the imperatives of *ijtihad*—the exercise of which represents a fundamental obligation for all Muslims—even as they were claiming to defend cultural authenticity.

The heteroglossia of those who did engage in the exercise of *ijtihad*, preoccupied as they were with reform and renewal, contains ample evidence to make it possible to argue that the road on which the Muslims of the Russian empire in general, and the Azeris, Crimean and Volga Tatars in particular, traveled in their quest for renewal from within, was also the road which forced them to engage in a critical assessment of the markers of their identity. The result was that ethnicity and national identity came to share space with Islam in their identity construction. However, the process of national identity construction became intimately intertwined with the quest for a solution to the 'woman question' and women became active participants in this process even if most of them chose to subordinate gender issues to nationalist goals, constructing and perceiving their role as auxiliary to the primary nationalist task.

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# GENDER CONSTRUCTION AND NATIONALIST DISCOURSE: DETHRONING THE FATHER IN THE EARLY TURKISH NOVEL<sup>1</sup>

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Ever since the publication of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, nationalism has been the object of renewed interest in the social sciences. Anderson's insistence that nationalism should be considered a cultural rather than a political phenomenon inaugurated a series of studies that attempted to decipher how a national community was "invented, imagined, reconstructed".<sup>2</sup> Anderson argued that nationalism was imagined as "a community" and "a fraternity" and proceeded to show some of the ways in which equality between men as comrades became a social and cultural ideal in the emerging nation-states. Feminists, by contrast, drew attention to the other side of the coin of the said fraternity, that is, to the ways in which imagining a community necessarily involved the production of discourses of gender difference (Pateman 1992; Jayawardena 1986; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Kandiyoti 1991). As aptly summarized by Kandiyoti, the integration of women into nationalist projects as icons of modernity in the guise of "mothers of the nation" and/or bearers of tradition and authentic culture, seems to have set the stage for the ambiguous position of women in nation-states, an ambiguity that feminists have had to grapple with ever since.

The aim of this paper is to look at the early novels written in the Ottoman Empire in order to search for the terms under which new models of femininity and masculinity were constructed. I shall argue that the concerns raised in the early novels expressed a desire to transform the family and especially relations between men, rather than between men and women. The critical relation under scrutiny was the position of power held by men as heads of

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Halide Velioglu for helping me think through some of the points made in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase is taken from Smith 1991.

extended households over men of lower status who were tied to them through multiple ties of dependency. The oppositional discourse developed by educated men of modest means and traditional background, by drawing on accepted models of sovereignty and governance, provided the cultural terms through which issues of equality among men could be raised.

The first examples of what is usually called the Tanzimat novel were written in the 1860s and 1870s, in the wake of the modernizing reforms (Tanzimat) that led to a deep restructuring of the governing institutions of the Ottoman Empire (cf. Mardin 1996). The novelistic discourse provided authors with the opportunity to critically examine the way personal relations and the category of the person were structured in their society. Love figures quite prominently in these novels and, as I shall try to show, is used as a means of criticizing the governing elite. I shall argue that in these oppositional discourses love did not function as a way of constituting companionate marriage, but served to delegitimize the structure of hierarchy among men in the household and in society at large.

The appearance of love and the motherland in modern Turkish fiction took place in a play performed in Istanbul in 1873. The play, *Vatan yahut Silistre*<sup>3</sup>, is the story of a young woman who falls desperately in love with an ardent patriot, follows him to the front disguised in men's clothes, and after demonstrating her courage and sacrifice, is rewarded by not only marrying her hero, but also by finding her long lost father. The constitution of harmonious unified totalities is the main theme of the play. Lovers, agents free to follow their desires, equate love of the nation with the love of the other, and out of their own free will readily accept the curtailment of this freedom by the legitimate authority represented by the father, also an ardent patriot.

The play, written by Namık Kemal, is significant in Turkish nationalist history for being the first depiction of the sentiments fostered by nationalism. One of the early Turkish feminists, Nezihe Muhittin, describes how the clandestine student meetings in her childhood home always ended with a recital of the poems and

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<sup>3</sup> The English rendering of the title would read "Motherland or Silistre", the latter being a fortress defended by Ottoman troops during the Serbo-Ottoman war of 1872.

martial songs of the play. It is the emotion expressed by those songs which makes the child forgive her elders for not letting her in on the secrets of freedom and liberty discussed in the general atmosphere of the repressive rule of Sultan Abdülhamit II at the turn of the century (1931, 25-6).

As has been pointed out by Moran, the first novels in Turkish literature were strongly influenced by the form of the traditional love story similar to the courtly romances of medieval Europe (1983). The heroes and heroines of these romances are idealized characters set in what Bakhtin has called the “absolute past” of the epic and as such are not yet the true heroes of the novel as a genre (1981). Patriotism is the new element introduced by Namık Kemal, thereby turning love of the nation into something as unquestionable and absolute as the epic love of the traditional romance.

Love for the nation also seems to free women to search for their own voice as authors. The first novel written by a woman in Turkey called *Aşk-ı Vatan* (Love of Motherland) was published in 1877, at a time when the Ottoman Empire was involved in a devastating war with Russia. In her introduction to the novel, the author, Zafer Hanım, explicitly states that it is only love for her country that pushes her to be so bold as to compare herself with men and put pen to paper. She then pledges to donate the proceeds that the sale of the novel will bring to the war effort. The novel itself tells the story of a young Spanish woman enslaved to a high-ranking Ottoman official. The slave is slowly dying as a result of her separation from her motherland, the source of life and happiness. Her final union with her motherland brings a happy ending to the slave’s story, but not to the other story-tellers in the book, Refia, the ex-slave who recounts the story as an eye-witness account to the narrator Zafer Hanım, nor to Zafer Hanım herself. Their desires to be united to the motherland and perhaps other unarticulated longings remain unfulfilled.

In spite of Zafer Hanım’s example, most of the early novels were written by men. Critical analyses of the Tanzimat novel show that they emerged as part of the process through which Western influences took a stronger hold on the life of the Ottoman Empire. There were a number of aspects in which the Ottoman novels differed from their Western counterparts. Parla, in her insightful analysis of the Tanzimat novel, argues that an allegorical logic deriving from the absolutist text of Islamic tradition dominated the

early novels, producing narratives that were disconnected, moralistic, and distanced from the texture of everyday life (1990). Most of these novels depicted the tragedies befalling upper class families as a result of loss of cultural values and orientation. Parla's analysis to the effect that the novel consists of national allegories decrying the fall of the house of Osman, the ruling dynasty of the Ottoman Empire, a fall symbolized in the novels by the absence of the father of the hero, usually an orphaned young man, is also endorsed by Kandiyoti in her study of the depiction of women in Tanzimat novels (1988).

Indeed, as has been argued by Mardin (1996), the role of the legitimate ruler as the main source of social order is a theme that runs through much Islamic political theory. Furthermore as Mardin himself has shown (1974), the Tanzimat novelists also took great pleasure in ridiculing the young upper class men who affected Western manners and morals. And yet I do not believe that the only function of the novels was to bemoan allegorically a defunct social order that was seen as legitimate and decry the superficiality of the ensuing chaos. The preoccupation with family life evident in Tanzimat novels addressed much more concrete and immediate concerns that loomed large in the social life of their authors. These concerns had to do with setting out the parameters with which a moral and therefore legitimate order could be established.

In this respect, Chatterjee's analysis of what he calls the nationalist resolution of the woman question in Bengal is instructive in that he draws attention to the power nexus within which discourses pertaining to the nature of women and their role in the family were produced (1990). He argues that the colonial context, in which the state was dominated by the colonial power, made the family the only area where sovereignty could be realistically conceived. The home was defined as the domain of spirituality, the domain where the East was superior to the West, which could claim power only in material aspects. Only the modern, educated woman was fit to be the keeper as well as the marker of this Eastern spirituality. Rather than being "modular" as claimed by Anderson, nationalism in colonial societies had to constitute itself as different, and if the nation was imagined as a community, then who was doing the imagining could go a long way towards explaining how it was imagined (Chatterjee 1991).

According to Chatterjee, the singling out of the family as the privileged site of nationhood had its material basis in the realities of colonial domination.

The Turkish case seems to provide interesting comparisons. At a superficial level, there exist many similarities between Bengali nationalists' targeting of the family as a prime site of reform and the emphasis put on the family by their Turkish counterparts. Many of the Tanzimat reformers were the first champions of women's education, and strongly criticized practices such as slavery and arranged marriage. Critical appraisal of the early Turkish novel, as well as the authors themselves, links this preoccupation with the evils of slavery and arranged marriage to the ideas of liberty that dominated the political discourse articulated by the first nationalists (Finn 1984) and finds in these novels reactions to the growing influence of Western modes of life (Kandiyoti 1988).

A closer look at the way in which arranged marriage is denounced in the novels will serve to show that the concern with family arrangements expressed in these novels was aimed at criticizing a bureaucratic elite rather than reacting to Western ideas. This critique was mounted by drawing on the authority of an idealized epic past that was itself invented containing much that was introduced in the guise of European superiority.

Şemsettin Sami's *Taaşuk-u Talat ve Fitnat* (The Falling in Love of Talat and Fitnat) (1872), ostensibly written as a morality tale against arranged marriages, tells the story of two young people who fall in love at first sight. The designs of the young Fitnat's stepfather to marry her to an older rich man lead the young lovers to commit suicide. Fitnat, like Namık Kemal's heroine Zekiye in *Vatan yahut Silistre*, has all the positive qualities of Ottoman womanhood applauded by the authors. She is innocent, submissive, and industrious, spending most of her time embroidering in seclusion in her stepfather's house. That is why Talat, the young man who sees her at her window, falls in love with her in the first place. He manages to meet her by dressing up as a woman and coming to Fitnat's house to learn embroidery, whereupon she also falls in love with him.

In both of these narratives, love seems to entail the transgression of social norms. While Zekiye follows her beloved to war, Fitnat is led to clandestine meetings with Talat. But the emotion encountered as love in these narratives is not the romantic love that frees

the individual and propels him/her on a path of self-realization, nor is it the *amour passioné* which is, according to Giddens, “liberating in the sense of generating a break with routine and duty” (1992, 40). The freedom that love entails in these novels is the freedom to accept and submit to the absolute authority of love as a sign of divine action in the guise of human desire. Here love at first sight does not signal the presence of irrationality in a world increasingly regulated by reason, as argued by Weber (Jackson 1993, 207). Love, like fate, to which it is usually equated, can only be explained with reference to the unquestionable hand of divine power. When love strikes, the person can do nothing but submit to it, without any consideration of what it eventually might lead to. Zekiye’s love leads her to personal as well as national salvation, while that of Talat and Fitnat ends with not only their own destruction, but also that of her father.

The freedom that love stands for in these narratives mirrors the understanding of freedom that, according to Şerif Mardin, nationalist thinkers such as Namık Kemal were propounding in the 1860s. Mardin, in his classic study of the first nationalist movement in Turkey, that of the Young Ottomans (1996), has argued that the notions of freedom of the individual and of natural law, the source of such freedom as espoused by Namık Kemal, can be understood as the product of his efforts to search for the existence of the basic tenets of Western liberalism in the Qur’an and in Islamic law. According to Islamic tradition, individual freedom was a divine gift and nothing pertaining to the social order could justify the usurpation of this freedom (1996, 330-1). Mardin points out that, in effect, this freedom can not be equated to liberal notions of the right of the individual since the latter ultimately derive from propositions about the existence of a natural order that unfolds without the direct intervention of God (1996, 103). In Islamic tradition by contrast, it is only through human beings’ submission to God that they can enjoy the fruits of the earth as well as absolute freedom in their relations with others (Mardin 1996, 107).

Thus, love in these texts can be read as both an inviolable human right and a sign of God’s omnipresence in this world. Humans cannot but submit to it, and love takes on the quality of absolute authority, which Parla sees as defining the epistemological basis of the Tanzimat novel (1990). As such, it acts as a metonym for the boundedness and sacredness of an epic past to which a

return is sought in times of social and cultural upheaval. Parla, who also draws attention to the fact that love in the Tanzimat novel does not have the individualizing function it has in the Western romantic novel, argues that these novels depict the chaos and ultimate destruction that come in the wake of the absence of the father, guarantor of the absolute order. In Islamic political theory it is the ruler who is entrusted by God with the keeping of this divinely ordained order (Mardin 1996). Parla demonstrates that the novels she analyses decry the absence of an absolute legitimate ruler, an absence symbolized by the desperate and aimless fumbling of the fatherless heroes of the novels in what amounts to a moral and normative vacuum.

But, as the two morality tales examined in this paper show, not all the heroes are fatherless. On the contrary, they depict fathers who are tyrannical and not deserving of filial love and respect. These are men such as Fitnat's stepfather who marries her off like a chattel to an older man, who in the end turns out to be her real father. The real father finds out that his young wife, with whom he has not consummated the marriage, is his daughter and he dies, a just ending for a man who had turned his pregnant wife, Fitnat's mother, out of his house. These fathers are not fit to be fathers. Their children, however do not rebel in the face of such injustice, but submit to their fate, only to obtain freedom through death. In other words, it is not because the stepfather represents an old and cruel order which curtails individual freedoms that he prevents the union of Talat and Zekiye, as argued by modernist readings of these novels (Finn 1984; Kandiyoti 1988). Rather, the stepfather represents the new order of the fathers of the post-Tanzimat era who, by putting material interest above love and divine law, in effect distorted the traditional ideal order. Thus, the lovers of these novels are not really transgressors of social and cultural values, it is the fathers who transgress divine order in their attempt to rule over love.

It is this order that is invoked by the Tanzimat novelists to create a venue for an opposition that can speak with the authority of the legitimate. The creation of this imagined past, the past of the epic—perfect and wholesome and therefore valorized (cf. Bakhtin 1981, 14-5), confers upon the authors the authority they need to speak. And it is here also that a discourse of romantic nationalism,

one which is described by Mardin as introducing “the cult of national values” (1996, 134), can begin to imagine the nation as distinct and different, as argued by Chatterjee.

To understand the distance that separates the two fathers in these morality tales, it is necessary to look more closely at the social context within which the Tanzimat authors were writing. Mardin situates the emergence of a nationalist discourse in the opposition mounted by the traditional elites of the Ottoman Empire, whose eventual rise to power was truncated by the modernizing reforms of a bureaucratic elite. These reforms, which had the consequence of freezing the circulation of power among different sections of the ruling class, were undertaken by a bureaucracy intent on stemming irredentist movements which, backed by European powers, threatened the integrity of the Empire during the nineteenth century. Like their counterparts in other eastern European empires, the bureaucracy had embarked on a process of centralizing administration and strengthening the state apparatus. This process had allowed the bureaucracy the opportunity to shore up its own position vis-à-vis the other ruling sections of the Empire; i.e. the learned men of the religious establishment, the army, and even the sultan. The equilibrium on which good government was based had thus been upset in favor of a small group of highly placed bureaucrats who seemed to increase their own power and autonomy at every step they took in the name of defending the realm.

The theory of proper governance espoused by Namik Kemal was, according to Mardin, one which attempted to reconstitute the authority of the ruler and to re-establish the ideal equilibrium with its checks and balances curtailing the power of men of the pen. At the time Namik Kemal was writing, the power that the men of the pen, traditionally the learned men of Islam (ulama), exercised in Ottoman society had been displaced by an administrative bureaucracy, wielding a new and different kind of pen. Many of the polemical articles Kemal wrote denounced the limitless power the new class of bureaucrats seemed to enjoy. This critique invoked Islamic ideas of the freedom of the individual, which, although new and reformulated, were nevertheless grounded in divine law, and

could not be superseded by any interdiction of human origin, reasons of state included.<sup>4</sup>

The family was an apt location to popularize and explain the ideas regarding just rule, as espoused by the Young Ottomans. In a dynastic realm (cf. Anderson 1991) such as the Ottoman Empire, government was located in the house of the ruling dynasty and, as such, the family could not be (and was not by the Ottomans themselves) seen as being outside of the political realm. In fact, rather than the family as such, most of the novels written before the establishment of the Republic in 1923 concern themselves with houses rather than families.<sup>5</sup> It was these large and complex associations and the ties of dependency that bound them to one another which formed the basic structure that defined the place of the individual and the nature of personal relations in Ottoman society.

In her brilliant study of the Ottoman household as a ruling institution, Peirce demonstrates the political hierarchy structuring the imperial household, a hierarchy which had the legitimate sovereign at its apex and arranged all its other members according to their distance from the center, which was considered sacred (1993). Peirce's study is an exploration of the forms of power held by women in the ruling household and argues that this power had its source and legitimacy in the political traditions of pre-Islamic Turco-Mongol statecraft combined in the Ottoman case, through myth and legend, with Islamic principles of divinely ordained rule.<sup>6</sup> This carefully structured hierarchy was replicated on a smaller scale in the houses of the highest military and administrative officials of the state—men who, until the end of the eighteenth century, had

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<sup>4</sup> Mardin argues that Namık Kemal's theory of government is based on a repudiation of the common good as a principle that can override individual liberties to legitimate state law. For him, divine law was absolute and nothing could supersede it (1996, 322-41).

<sup>5</sup> Anthropological studies have shown that the modern Turkish word for family, *aille*, refers more to women and children, and not to the unit constituted by marriage (Duben 1985). My own research in rural Turkey has shown that the term *ev*, house, is used much more widely in referring to the space occupied by the conjugal unit. The word commonly used for marriage in Turkish is *evlenme*, to be en-housed.

<sup>6</sup> Ayşe Saktanber argues for another and equally convincing Islamic train of thought to explain the sacredness of the house as well as the women within it (1995, 50-3).

been socialized into the art of Ottoman governance within the inner courtyard of the palace until they reached adulthood and were ready to take office and set up their own dependent households. Often, this included marriage to a woman from the palace, another sign of closeness to the sovereign bestowed at the sultan's prerogative. The process of dependency would be repeated once more in the houses of the officials who would, in turn, become the protectors and later the fathers-in-law of those bright young men who, through misfortune or lowly family origins, sought such personal attachments to men who could provide them with a better future in the status-based society.

Thus, the families depicted in the Tanzimat novel were these large and complex households that were structured according to conceptions of power that had nothing to do with the private/public dichotomy associated with Western modernism (cf. Peirce 1993). Marriage and the family were political institutions that regulated the circulation of power described by Mardin. Lower class families, by contrast, were based on a completely different system of marriage and household organization. Compared to the large complex households of the ruling elite, where men would often move into the household of the bride, lower class households were mostly nuclear, neolocal, small in size, and marriages were contracted between individuals of equal status (Duben and Behar 1990). Thus, marriage among the higher classes was mostly linked to political concerns, young women being married off as the second wife of rich and powerful older men and young men having to choose brides whose status within the household was superior to their own. Hence, the Ottoman house described by Tanzimat novelists was not just an allegorical depiction of the state of the polity, but also a link in the system of power and dependency that constituted that order in what Mardin has called a personalistic society (1989).

The invocation of love in the two narratives summarized above can now be placed in their proper context. Şemsettin Sami's novel is a critique of the tyranny brought upon a house by the ruler/father who is a usurper (the stepfather), while Namık Kemal's play is a morality tale depicting the conduct of the rightful father/ruler even in the new and difficult conditions caused by the unjust rule of the Tanzimat usurpers. Zekiye's father, Sıtkı Bey, displays the qualities that define the just ruler/father. Sıtkı Bey is an army

officer ready to sacrifice everything for his nation and cognizant of his fatherly duties. Sıtkı is himself a victim of an unjust order that falsely accuses him of insubordination when he refuses to obey orders to execute his friend who has murdered a provincial state official to revenge the raping of his wife. The injustice inherent in the present order is demonstrated by the bureaucrats' disregard for the individual's right to be loyal to his comrade and to protect his family. The play thus represents the exact location where its author places the tyranny of the new order; that is, in the attempt of the usurper to subvert an (imagined) Ottoman order where human and divine law could exist harmoniously as a result of the checks and balances inherent in it. The tyranny of the new order lies in its instrumental approach to persons, be they slaves, daughters, or other subordinates.

But, as Mardin has argued, the opposition mounted by Namık Kemal and his colleagues did not proffer an opinion as to the kind of order that would ensure these rights. What Namık Kemal provides in his plays is the contours of a form of subjectivity in which desire for the nation is imbued with the same sacredness attached to the love for another in traditional romances, a love that serves as a way of approaching God. This creates an interchangeability between nation and religion and presents the subject as having to choose between moral and social perdition and a just and absolute order.

The dethroning of the false ruler described in this paper also took a second, rather different, form in the early Tanzimat novel. This direction has been studied quite carefully in Turkish literary criticism, especially in the work of Moran (1983) and Parla (1990) and is most apparent in the novels that describe the cultural confusion of the young upper class male, a confusion that often leads to the destruction of his house. Both Moran and Parla indicate the popular origins of this tradition of writing, an oral tradition which the Tanzimat novelists draw upon in order to subvert the cultural legitimacy of upper class manners and morals. As argued by Bakhtin, laughter and the flesh serve to parody authority and the lofty, two themes that are constantly present in the novels. And it is also with the incorporation of what Bakhtin calls different authorial positions, the authoritative tone of the morality play and the romance in contrast to the parody of the

street and the everyday, that Moran and Parla associate the true beginning of the novel in Turkish literary history.

In novels such as Ahmet Mithat's *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* (1875)<sup>7</sup> and Rezaizade Ekrem's *Araba Sevdası* (1896)<sup>8</sup> in the hands of the confused and superficial heirs of the bureaucratic elite, love reveals itself to be pure lust, and Westernization turns out to be just an imitation and a veneer. By contrast, men of more modest origins provide the model for the proper conduct for men, putting hard work and duty above fleeting images of love and romance. Men like Rakım Efendi in Ahmet Mithat's novel understand Western values much more deeply and correctly than the inconsequential Felatun. When they marry it is not for love, but to set up a reasonable, modest and hard working life where duty to others is placed above all else. In these novels, the would-be aristocracy of the big mansion is culturally delegitimized, while the serious and ambitious men of the traditional quarter are valorized by placing them in the tradition of the popular genre and attributing to them the (constructed) morality of the imagined organic society of the past.

The dethroning of the impostor and his son thus allows the creation of a space in which new values can be invented to regulate relations among men. It is in this space that notions of equality, *musavat*, can be put into practice and the nepotism among the bureaucratic elite denounced as immoral as well as alien. And it is also here that marriages with women of lower status can be contracted with the husband established as head of the house. Accordingly, Rakım Efendi, the model against which Felatun Bey is ridiculed in Ahmet Mithat's novel, marries his slave, Canan, after his English mistress shows him that this is the only reasonable and proper way for a good future. The values of the imagined organic society, reason, thrift, equality, and concern for the future, are re-established as the guidelines for proper conduct. Thus, it is only in the novels that combine the two genres of representation, the oral and the written, the popular and the elite, that it becomes possible to see the cultural values with which an emergent middle class constructs and delimits the boundaries of the new house that is worthy of ruling. In other words, it is here that the cultural con-

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<sup>7</sup> "Felatun Bey and Mr. Rakım"

<sup>8</sup> "Love of an automobile"

struction begins, of the family and of all men, as equal representatives of households which they can now head (Sirman 1990).

And yet in this discourse in which men are the subject as well as the object, love and companionate marriage do not figure. Romantic love as a way of fusing opposites, creating a union of souls as well as of lives is a problem that Halide Edip attempts to grapple with in novels written after 1910. She, in a sense, attempts to define and work through the longing and the sorrow felt by Zafer Hanım's heroines, which could not be fully satisfied through unification with the motherland. But by then the political context had changed: middle ranking army officers had declared constitutional rule, enthusiastically hailed as the advent of freedom and equality. Women, quick to point out that the freedom and equality of the constitution seemed only to concern men, proceeded to demand legal rights for women that included above all their right to work outside the house.<sup>9</sup> It is at this point that the dream for equality becomes mainly a woman's issue. It is postponed until the declaration of the Republic—described rather wistfully by Nezihe Muhiddin, founder of The Union of Women in 1923, as putting an end to all class privileges (1931, 59).

In the meantime, however, it is the passive and obedient women like Zekiye, Fitnat, and Canan who are approved of in the Tanzimat novels, women who fit Kandiyoti's depiction of the slave girl (1988). By 1925, the search is on in earnest for "suitable" women to marry, women whose education will ensure their dependence on their husbands, rather than on their fathers, as figures of authority as well as sustenance (Talay 1994).<sup>10</sup> In the end, it was the men and women of an emergent middle class in Turkey who constructed the social category of the family that to a large extent still prevails today. According to this view, women are defined as the helper and adviser of the husband as head of the family. This, of course, is how marital roles are specified in the Turkish Civil Code adopted in 1926. But it was also this discourse that introduced and laid the grounds for measures taken to shore up the legal position of the man as husband long before the establishment of the Republic.

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<sup>9</sup> See Çakır 1993 for a selection of texts printed in one of the weeklies produced by women during this period, the *World of Women*.

<sup>10</sup> Talay provides the texts of articles that appeared in critical journals during the first years of the Republic before the passing of the Civil Code in 1926.

The Tanzimat was also the period when the state began to extend its control over marriage, by requiring registration and other measures (Alkan 1990). Thus, a legal decree in 1844 declared bride-price illegal and urged women to marry without the interference of their parents; in 1862, another decree limited the amount of the Islamic *mehr*, or dowry to be paid to women upon marriage (Ortaylı 1985).

In her analysis of the gender discourse articulated by Republican modernizers, Saktanber points out that the success of the Republic can be traced to its ability to secure agreement among men by constructing a discourse articulated by men and for men (forthcoming: 157-162). In this paper, I have argued that the analysis of the cultural process through which these men could set themselves as equals and as heads of households should begin by tracing the emergence of the family as a cultural category. Discourses delegitimizing the big house and the relations of dependency within it, are only the beginning of this process. These discourses provided an opening for the redefinition of marriage and conjugal relations, as well as the new view of the nation as a unity composed of nuclear families. The incorporation of women into this project as subjects is an area that is still in need of research.

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# AZERI PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S LIFE STRATEGIES IN THE SOVIET CONTEXT<sup>1</sup>

FARIDEH HEYAT

## *Introduction*

Little is known about the situation of Muslim Soviet women beyond the official pronouncements on Soviet modernization. Studies of Soviet women by Western scholars have often focused on Russian and other Slavic women, largely ignoring the fundamental differences that set them apart from the Muslim women of the periphery. This is particularly the case in the arena of personal and family life where religion and local cultures have been most instrumental. For the Muslim women, their emancipation under the particular form of Soviet modernization and in the context of its political and economic structure evolved in paradoxical ways distinct from the West and the post-colonial societies influenced by the West. In Azerbaijan, as in the Muslim societies of Central Asia, contradictions emerging from this particular model of development are observed most clearly in the position of women and the customs and conventions regulating their lives, at once emancipatory and restrictive. This is especially the case with the highly educated professional women who were made the showcases of Soviet emancipation and liberalization and were at the same time

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<sup>1</sup> The data for this paper are based on the lives of professional middle and upper class Azeri women in Baku, whom I researched during one year of fieldwork in 1994-95. My methods included the use of life stories, recorded inter-generationally, beginning with those born before the Soviet revolution of 1920. The names and personal details of individuals have been altered to ensure the anonymity of my informants. I owe special thanks to the many women from the Azerbaijan Women's Committee and other women informants who generously shared their opinions and life stories with me, and thanks to Emil Karimov from the Etnografiya Department at the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences, whose help with archival and library searches in Baku were most valuable. I would also like to thank Dr. Deniz Kandiyoti at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, for her helpful comments on the first draft of this paper.

regarded by their community as the custodians of ethnic identity and preservers of ethnic custom (Tohidi, 1995). As such, while being highly educated and career oriented, these women were expected to observe strict sexual mores and carry out onerous domestic duties. Studying such a group of women, therefore, provides a good entry point to an analytical understanding of the role of local cultures and Islamic beliefs and practices in a project of modernization along the Soviet model. More specifically, this paper reviews the reconstruction of Azeri "femininity" under the Soviet system and its strategic manipulation by women. The various mechanisms that empowered professional women to hold careers and lead active public lives while being mainly responsible for domestic labor are then explored to reveal the key role of the institution of family and women's leading position within it.

Family life in Soviet Azerbaijan, as in many other parts of the Soviet Union, was governed by parallel codes of conduct, morality, and aspirations that were based on local forms as well as state policies and the doctrine of communism. For Azeri women, one consequence of the Soviet-style development of their society was the massive advances in education, job opportunities, and in gaining a public presence. By the early 1980s, women constituted 43 percent of the total workers, 44 percent of specialists with higher education, 38 percent of scientific workers, and 23 percent of those with degrees of doctorate and candidate of sciences (Aliyev 1984, 177). Even as early as the 1930s, schooling and acquiring careers for girls had become a major trend amongst urban Azeris. The implementation of a policy of universal and compulsory schooling and the formal equality enshrined in Soviet laws entailed a very different life course for Azerbaijani girls born after the Soviet revolution than that of their mothers and grandmothers. However, despite the strides made by Soviet Azeri women in public life, many aspects of their personal lives continued to be governed by cultural mores and practices based on the Muslim Azeri traditions.

This paper discusses the particular coping strategies that Azeri women adopted to reconcile the varied, at times conflicting, expectations of their Muslim, Azeri community with those of the Soviet state with its official dogma of communism and gender equality. First, it reviews the changes brought about by the Soviet revolution and examines its impact on constructions of Azeri femininity. Management of different femininities focuses on the manipulation of codes of femininity governing the public and private displays of

physical appearance and the way this could be linked to the system of prestige for women, and utilized as a manipulable resource. The strong gender divisions of domestic labor are discussed in the context of women's career involvements and shown to have led to their adoption of different attitudes to outside work and their choice of specific career niches better suited to their domestic responsibilities. It is revealed that female education is viewed as a family resource and great emphasis is placed on the formal education of girls that will equip them for white-collar jobs. More generally, family and inter-generational support is discussed and identified as a crucial factor in enabling Azeri women to cope with the demands of both fronts: home and the workplace.

*The Soviet revolution and Azeri women*

Before the Soviet revolution, Azeris in the cities, particularly in Baku with its large Armenian and Russian population, had predominated in the service and trade sectors (Altstadt 1992). Their women, the great majority of them illiterate, were confined to the home environment. Public baths, holy shrines (*pir*), and the mosque were the only public venues for most Azeri women. As such, domestic responsibilities including housework and childcare were considered solely in the female domain. However, for the early Azerbaijani modernizers, the *jadidists*, and later the social democratic and nationalist movements, the emancipation of women, in particular the issues of education and unveiling, had become part of the reforms they called for. This was reflected in the lifestyle of the elite families (the industrial bourgeoisie and the intellectuals), most of whom had already adopted Western-style education and dress by the time of the Soviet revolution.

During the Russian revolution, the Bolsheviks had argued for the emancipation of women through economic independence. For the housebound women to join the workforce, their domestic burdens had to be reduced. They thus advocated a policy of socialization of domestic labor which would lead to institutionalizing childcare through the provision of creches and nurseries and communalizing the chores of cooking and washing by providing public canteens and wash-houses. In Azerbaijan, the Soviet government that took over in 1920 soon began enacting these policies, initially in Baku and the surrounding working class districts. From

1922 *yemakhanas* (public canteens), ready cooked food distribution centers, and food-processing factories were being established. The industrial sector was expanded by increasing the shifts in existing factories and building new ones. Women's employment in all fields of industry was encouraged. The new housing development for the workers often provided communal kitchens and washrooms, shared by two, three, or four families, encouraging the sharing of domestic labor (Karimov 1996).

In the area of legislation, new matrimonial laws were introduced starting in 1923 to raise the marriage age to sixteen for girls and eighteen for boys and ban polygamy and temporary marriage, *sighe*. The Islamic laws, *shari'a*, were denounced and new family courts were established to rule over divorces and custody of children (Gheybullayev 1994). Women's clubs, beginning with the Ali Bayramov Club in Baku in 1922, were set up with the task of offering literacy and vocational training to women and staging cultural programs to politicize and enlighten them (Rorlich 1986). This was part of the public campaign for the emancipation of women which at the grass roots level was led by militant and enlightened Azeri women, including female Azeri Bolsheviks, though at the top it was co-ordinated by Russian Bolsheviks. The campaign also included the publication of the influential women's journal *Sharg Gadini* and a variety of agit prop literature and posters, staging of plays, and organizing local and national meetings and conferences. The Party's women's department, *zhenotdel*, and women's clubs were put in charge of dealing with cases of violence against women in the home. The mass campaign for the unveiling of women and for their social and political activities had in fact aroused a strong opposition from men, reflected in the newspaper reports of violence against such women, which ranged from arbitrary divorce to beatings, and even murder (Gheibullayev 1994, 327).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The turning point in the campaign against veiling came in 1930 with the murder of a Baku resident, Soraya Khalilova, by her father. The funeral turned into a day of national mourning and there was wide-scale fury at the violence against unveiled women. That year the Soviet authorities in Azerbaijan passed a decree banning the veil and new laws were brought in to deal with such violence against women. For reprisals against women in Central Asia around this time see Massell 1974.

The Soviet propaganda machine that worked through various media portrayed a new image of the Soviet Azeri woman: one who had cast aside her chador, the *charshaf*, endeavored to gain literacy and new skills, and taken up outside employment to participate in the building of the new Soviet Azerbaijan. The new societal role for Azeri women entailed a change in mental outlook that would lead to changes in gender and family relations. It also called for reconstructing images of femininity that had been based on Islamic, Iranian, and Turkic traditions. In the pre-revolutionary Muslim Azeri tradition, notions of *namus* (male honor related to women's sexual conduct) and *haya* (female shame) had been very much the desired female attributes that sanctioned their veiling and seclusion. The Soviet challenge was most forcefully articulated in the play *Sevil*, which was written by Jafar Jabbarli in 1928 and has been staged repeatedly since (including a number of movie versions) and was on the school curriculum until recently. In the 1930s, the play became a great agitational piece encouraging female audiences to cast off their chadors (Sultanova 1964). Remarkably the heroine, Sevil, who had freed herself both from an oppressive marriage and her ignorance, by gaining literacy and then higher education in Moscow, returns to her former friends and family declaring: "The burden of *namus* is one of the greatest enemies of Azerbaijani women." Dressed in European fashion in place of her chador, she states, however, that throwing off the chador is not enough; economic independence is the most important factor for the real liberation of women (Jabbarli 1957).

It is clear that with women entering not only paid employment but also the political arena, through their involvement in the local soviets and the Party (as they increasingly did), occasions arose of contact and confrontation with unrelated men (those outside the kin group). With such societal development, attributes such as *namusli* (chaste), *hayali* (demure), and *injelik* (delicateness) could no longer remain the predominant defining features of femininity. *Gochag* (brave, outgoing), and *aghilli* (wise/intelligent), qualities previously associated with manhood, as well as *chalışgan* (diligent, hardworking) were the new Soviet womanhood traits that were required of the women who were to fill the factories and the professions in the coming decades. For such women, domesticity as the sole preoccupation for the woman in society was also under question and review. Nevertheless, women's physical appearance

remained a major defining arena of their femininity, both through the decades of austerity, and later, after the 1960s, during the era of relative affluence and modernization in the Azerbaijani society.

### *Management of femininities*

In the pre-Soviet culture of Azerbaijan, physical beauty, enhanced by jewellery, clothing made of elaborately stitched fine materials, and embroidered accessories was a feminine ideal. As in Iranian and Arab cultures, the notion of *zinat* (physical ornaments/facial and bodily decoration) applied to the feminine person. To wear *zinat*, to be made up, was a female prerogative, one of the fundamentals of femininity. Richly stitched, varied styles of regional ethnic dress were worn by women in the life-cycle ceremonies and other festivities. The abundance of cotton, silk, and wool in the region and the rich variety of plants and vegetation used for dyeing, as well as for medicinal and cosmetic purposes, ensured a tradition of weaving and stitching that was many centuries old. It also facilitated attention to physical health and adornments and a heightened sense of aesthetics that called for rich colors and elaborate designs. City women were particularly keen on facial make-up; young girls were taught this as an art by their mothers who utilized henna, *surma* (for the eyes), a whitening plant essence for the face, and a reddening dye for the cheeks (Zakharov 1894, 113). In the first two decades of the twentieth century, with the oil boom of Baku, Azeri women of elite families had begun to adopt a European style of dress. Women's clothes, shoes, and hats were either imported directly (often from Paris) by the very wealthy or were made less expensively by local tailors familiar with European fashions. Baku became a major trade center where the best of French perfumes, cosmetics, and clothing could be purchased along with goods imported from far corners of Europe and Asia (Suleymanov 1987). Tastes in jewellery also changed with early Westernization. While women of the merchant class (as in much of the Middle East) still favored pure gold, women of the industrial bourgeoisie wore jewellery made of precious stones and pearls imported from Russia and Europe. This in fact became a major point of status for women of this class, who competed in possessing the largest and most stunning collections. These could be displayed to the mixed company of multi-ethnic and multi-national men and

women who attended the frequent banquets at the homes of Baku's rich society (Alekperov 1960).

In the 1920s, mass campaigns to unveil the Muslim women in Azerbaijan and bring them into the expanding industrial sector also encouraged a process of Europeanization of clothing for women. Shorter and tighter dresses and skirts (in place of the long, flowing traditional garments deemed impractical in a modern work environment) increasingly became the norm for the urban Azeri women. In the 1930s, fitted suits and the beret became a popular fashion for young educated women. In popular parlance, women dressed in this fashion were referred to as *matishka* (a Russian woman). *Ilarlamak* (progress) and *muasirlik* (modernity), the common slogans of the new regime, were associated with the Russians and their cultural tastes. As one informant recalled from her childhood in the 1940s in Baku, most people associated the practice of covering up women with being *madaniyyatsiz* (uncultured/uncivilized): "If someone didn't let their daughter wear short sleeves we would call them *gerida galan* (backward) and most people didn't want to be known as such." The Soviet socialist ideals that called for equality and autonomy for women also denounced the use of *zinat* and *bazak* (make-up) and the resources spent by the bourgeois women on their physical appearance. "*Zinat lazim deyir*," declared *Sharg Gadini*.<sup>3</sup> "Women workers denounce the wearing of gold and precious jewellery. *Zinat* and *bazak* are the vestiges of the era of *khans* and *bey*s; they should be fought against everywhere." In the same article, a woman textile worker announced: "Our diamonds are books, and our gold is the pen." Simplicity, plainness, and functionality were the officially approved attributes of the new Soviet woman. For the great majority of women (including the former elite) what reinforced these feminine ideals was the economic austerity of the post-revolutionary years, further compounded by the devastations of the Second World War.

One of my informants, Gulnar, a lecturer at the Azerbaijan Institute of Foreign Languages, recalled the postwar climate of austerity that continued into the 1950s:

"We used to wear a uniform to school. But in those days we had to be *ganaatchi* (economizing). They wouldn't sew us new clothes,

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<sup>3</sup> *Sharg Gadini* 8 (August 1929). This was the official Muslim women's journal published in Azerbaijan by Bolshevik women, 1923-37.

they altered my mother's clothes and with this I would go every week to the opera or the theater."

Both of Gulnar's grandmothers had worn the chador throughout their lives. But her mother, born in 1913, had joined the Ali Bayramov Women's Club in Baku in the mid 1920s and participated in the unveiling campaigns. She had received full secondary education but remained a housewife. The family lived with Gulnar's paternal grandmother, as was the custom, and her paternal aunt who never married. For Gulnar and her two sisters, the generational conflict surfaced not so much with her mother but with her grandmother who disapproved of the girls dressing in sleeveless short dresses and associating with boys in school and socially. Whilst atheism was discussed and promoted in the school and observing religion (visiting mosques, fasting, performing prayers: *namaz*) was frowned upon, at home Muslim Azeri values and conventions would be reinforced by the older generations to varying degrees. Mother did not fast or perform the *namaz*, as grandmother did regularly, but she did participate in the secret *marsiye* ceremonies commemorating the death of the Shi'i imams. She did not wear clothes as revealing as those of her daughters, but the more modest Western fashions. Certain Azeri values, such as great respect for the elders, generous hospitality to guests, and loyalty to the kingroup and close neighbors, were maintained by all three generations.

Gulnar and her siblings all went to a Russian language school, in line with the aspiring middle and upper classes who saw social and career advancement contingent upon fluency in Russian. As such, they acquired friends of mixed ethnic origin, chiefly Russians and Armenians. But at home, they conversed in the Azeri language with the older generations and learnt all about Islamic custom and morality from their grandmother. She was the person in the household most highly respected by virtue of seniority, even if in practice sometimes contradicted. When Gulnar graduated from secondary school, it had already been decided years ago, by her parents as well as herself, that she would continue studying at university and enter a profession. This however did not imply a delay in marriage. At the age of nineteen, in her second year of a degree course, she married a family friend and moved in with her husband's family. She had her first child a year later and continued with her education. In 1963, after a second child, she graduated

and took a teaching job. Later she enrolled as a candidate for a science degree, which she completed in 1969.

The 1960s in fact was the time when Azerbaijani women of Gulnar's generation entered public life and paid employment *en masse*. For them, taking a job was no longer an option, a privilege, or alternatively, demeaning of their husband, as may have been the case for previous generations. It was a social and cultural norm considered a necessity. This was also the decade when the postwar reconstruction and post-Stalin liberalization had led to the economic development of Azerbaijan and a growing degree of affluence along with women's increased purchasing power. From the turn of the century, the city of Baku had been a highly cosmopolitan centre developing a rich artistic tradition. During the Soviet period, art schools, museums, opera, ballet, and theatres were increasingly built in the city and a major artistic community, heavily subsidized by the state, flourished there. In addition to the formal arts, the sense of aesthetics was reflected in neat and fashionable dress by both men and women, who would now invest more substantially in their physical appearance as well as the interiors of their homes. Certain streets such as Targova and the Boulevard (a seaside promenade) were becoming the venues for showing off fashionable, smart appearance. Modernity, *muasirlik*, associated with the younger generation of the intelligentsia, *ziyalilar*, who espoused more liberal family and inter-generational relations, was also reflected in a person's pattern of consumption. In this way, for the professional middle and upper class women of means, the acquisition of clothes, footwear, and accessories made in the West became a major point of pride and prestige. These could not be obtained easily since travel to the West and access to foreign currency was highly restricted and the hard currency shops that offered imported goods were only open to the Party elite. The procurement of Western-made goods by the elite and its association with power and prestige was in fact common in Soviet society. Hence, a vibrant black market had developed in Baku, as in many other parts of the Soviet Union.

Officially, dealings in the black market were banned, which made the effort to buy such goods time-consuming and sometimes hazardous. This was especially the case if one went searching in the

district called Kubinka<sup>4</sup> which was the center for imported goods sold clandestinely. Here a whole range of items imported from Russia and Europe, from foreign cigarettes to personal items and household furnishings, could be purchased behind closed doors and in private homes. Dealers, normally boys and men, would cruise the streets looking for customers whom they would then direct to an appropriate address where the desired goods might be sold, usually by their wives or mothers. The story of Gulnar's American boots (made in Europe) is one typical episode in the efforts and strategies involved in maintaining feminine attractions under the Soviet system.<sup>5</sup>

In 1968, Gulnar had decided to purchase a pair of boots made in Italy or France; this was at the time considered the height of fashion. The quickest way to do this was to go to the Kubinka area and look for a pair. Her father, a high ranking official of the Baku municipality, was well informed about the area and could advise her which streets to go to. The security forces occasionally raided the homes of the traders but mostly turned a blind eye on the dealings, content with their own take on the profits. Gulnar was lucky that on her first trip (accompanied by her husband for added protection) she found what she wanted. She began to wear her new Italian boots to parties and outings to the theatre and other social functions with some pleasure. After a while, she also began to wear them to work at the institute, and this is where trouble started. A colleague who held a grudge against her soon found out about her illegal transaction and wrote an anonymous letter about it to the institute's Party Committee in charge of staff discipline. The letter was read out in a departmental meeting; this left Gulnar very embarrassed and in a panic. Her denial was not very convincing,

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<sup>4</sup> Kubinka was the area surrounding a square, Kuba Meidani, in the north of Baku, on the way to the city of Kuba. Due to the shortages created by the Second World War, a second-hand goods market had flourished in this square in the 1940s and 1950s. Gradually people began to sell new goods, including alcohol and narcotics. The authorities then closed the market down, driving all private transactions underground.

<sup>5</sup> There is anecdotal evidence that among elite women in other parts of the Soviet Union display of femininity through physical adornments and fashionable foreign-made clothes and footwear was similarly popular. However, the extent of this and its link with local traditions are yet to be studied. What has been noted more generally for women in Soviet Russia is that there was great demand for consumer goods including cosmetics, accessories, and fashionable clothes (McAndrew 1985).

and she had to find an appropriate explanation before attending a formal questioning session. She immediately approached her father for help. He began to call up all his friends and acquaintances. Soon it transpired that a close friend of his had some months earlier returned from a scientific trip to America and brought back two pairs of women's boots with him. One pair was a gift for his wife, the other one he had sold to a contact. Now with this man's consent, Gulnar could claim that she was the recipient of this second pair; it was a gift from America given to her by her fictive uncle.

The association between modernity and Western dress and the pattern of consumption in Azerbaijan had its parallels in the Muslim Middle Eastern societies, where it played an important role in the modernizing processes (Graham-Brown 1988, Kandiyoti 1997). However, for the Azeri and other Soviet women, the way of dress was also a response to the authoritarian, prescriptive nature of the state, a phenomenon similarly observed in the Islamic Republic of Iran, where middle-class and professional women's resistance to the state is gauged by the degree of infringement of the strict Islamic dress code, *hijab*, in public places. Women who wear headscarves loosely, so as to reveal hair, or red lipstick, are considered to be *badhijab* (inappropriately veiled), which in turn leads to sporadic campaigns of harassment in the streets and arrest by the authorities.

It is well known that in the Soviet Union beginning in the 1960s widespread corruption, linked to shortages of goods and uninvestible surplus income was a common phenomenon. As Humphrey (1983) has pointed out for the Buryats in Siberia, accumulation of "manipulable resources" in the form of goods and money which it was illegal to accumulate or invest could be transformed through a network of private exchange into rights over people who are placed in relations of reciprocity by the giving of gifts. In Azerbaijan, access to goods and services in short supply, as well as to high ranking jobs was increasingly facilitated through kinship and personal networks. In addition, financial rewards—euphemistically called *hormat* (respect)—were increasingly offered for obtaining favors in most areas of life. This included gaining university admission, higher exam grades, a lucrative job, or medical attention by doctors. By the 1980s, getting things done through *hormat* was in most cases considered inevitable, leading to a very

sizable alternative economy. Lack of investment opportunities and the command nature of the economy meant that precious stones and jewellery had become a major medium for acquisition and transfer of wealth, particularly by the elite.<sup>6</sup> Significantly for women, whether they were offered jewellery directly or it was passed through their husbands and fathers, a major part of a family's investment and transaction of wealth was mediated through women's feminine possessions. Thus, under Soviet rule, jewels as gifts for exchange in marriage took novel forms.

Traditionally, gold and jewellery would be offered to brides by the groom's family. This could be part of *bashlik* (bride price), paid to the bride's family. In the Soviet era although payment of *bashlik* was disbanded in urban areas, major gift giving to the bride and her family continued. In the later Soviet Azeri culture, marriage for the wealthy became a time when daughters and granddaughters, as well as daughters-in-law, would inherit substantial portions of the family wealth in the form of jewellery. The demand for jewellery was such that the supplies in Azerbaijan did not suffice and Azeri families traveling to Moscow and Leningrad often sought such items in those markets. For Azeri women the emphasis on the possession and wearing of gold and jewellery was considered a major element of their culture that distinguished them from Russian women. The oil-rich Azerbaijani society's legacy of lavish jewellery as essential feminine adornment was perhaps not entirely eroded by the Soviet revolution.

Elmira, a Communist Party member and high ranking executive in charge of a government department in the 1970s and 1980s, was given early retirement in 1992 due to a change of regime. Today she wears her very impressive collection of jewellery openly, along with heavy make up and expensive stylish clothes all purchased abroad. Due to the nature of her job, she was one of a very few individuals who had the opportunity to travel to non-Communist countries and subsequently build up an impressive wardrobe, much to the envy of her female associates. A naturally beautiful woman, she has maintained a look much younger than her sixty years

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<sup>6</sup> Cut diamonds, usually extracted in Siberia, were particularly favored as large bribes. More generally, keeping a piece of jewellery in a home safe was far more practical than keeping stacks of cash or placing savings in a bank where the origin of the money would come under scrutiny.

through daily applications of face masks for many years,<sup>7</sup> and a facelift she had in Europe in 1993. Elmira is of the opinion that "the difference between man and woman is precisely in their attitudes to their appearance. Women are more delicate, concerned with beauty and adornment." Though she may not be typical of female Communist officials in the extent of her investment in her physical appearance, her opinion seemed to be shared by most of my respondents, including those who were formerly strong Communists. Elmira's success at social climbing, and the admiration and attention she always received from men and women around her point to the way feminine charm and beauty could be managed and utilized as a resource by Azeri women in the late Soviet period. This trend however was in conflict with the official dogma and attempts were made to curb the display of wealth and ostentatiousness in the 1970s. When I asked Elmira where she could wear her beautiful jewellery in those days, her account was the following:

"I would wear them to weddings, birthdays, or the theatre, of course not to work, Party meetings, or other public functions. Aliiev,<sup>8</sup> in his first years of rule as the head of Azerbaijan Communist Party (1969-1981), made a decree that no woman should wear jewellery; it was unnecessary. Plainness, looking natural, was considered the best way, the nicest way, for women to present themselves. We even advised all our staff, and students at the universities, that they should strive for simplicity and avoid decorative accessories. This was not a law, it was a directive from Aliyev who was promoting these ideas and campaigning against corruption. As Party workers and as government employees, we were servants of the people and we would observe this principle. But outside the work situation, we wore our best clothes and our jewellery."

This operation of parallel codes for the display of femininity, however, was not so clear cut and free from tension as may be assumed from Elmira's account. It added to the insecurities under the Soviet system which arose from having to exercise care daily not to infringe conflicting rules and custom. Elmira herself was offi-

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<sup>7</sup> Face masks are prepared at home by women from readily available plants and vegetables whose therapeutic qualities seemed to be well-known to most of my female informants.

<sup>8</sup> Heidar Aliiev, a former member of the Soviet Politburo (1981-86) returned to the leadership of Azerbaijani politics in 1993 when he was elected the president of the republic.

cially reprimanded on at least one occasion for wearing diamond earrings to a Party conference. Gold earrings, wedding rings, or inexpensive jewellery, were tolerated officially as part of the ethnic culture and a feminine requisite. In the Soviet Azeri culture, a feminine dress code for women was strongly observed in that, for example, they could not wear trousers without being seen as very undignified and vulgar. Such mixing of dress codes created confusion in gender divisions that were operative in many areas of everyday life, and nowhere more so than in the domestic division of labor. Men who took an interest in housework and were seen to do washing or cleaning were labeled *aghabaji*, a derogatory term meaning an effeminate master. Despite the state's official ideology of gender equality enacted in legislation and promoted in public life, gender divisions in personal arenas of life remained firmly rooted, and especially in the domestic division of labor. Consequently, for most Azerbaijani women, having the main burden of housework and childcare (including the supervision of children's education) led to a major tension in accommodating the requirements of their jobs with domestic responsibilities. Having additional public involvements such as membership in the Party, a trade union or voluntary association meant even greater conflict and compromises. However, within the Soviet ideological and economic context, the professional middle-class women could not have ready access to hired domestic labor as their counterparts did in the neighboring societies of Iran and Turkey. Hence, alternative means of coping with the "double shift" had to be sought by women in Soviet Azerbaijan.

*Women on both fronts: Home and the workplace*

Soviet literature used to depict the lives of the pre-revolutionary Azeri women as that of downtrodden, illiterate humans in the grip of superstition (*mövhumat*), living in a condition of bondage (*esarat*). The Soviet regime, by bringing women out into public life and paid employment, had granted them independence and dignity, making them the equals of men. Now, following the break-up of the Soviet system, new clichés have evolved around the hard-done-by Soviet woman whose femininity was undermined by the uncompromising demands of the state requiring women to work in all areas of production whilst still carrying the burden of house-

work and childcare. The nostalgia element was particularly noticeable with the older generation of women (in their fifties and sixties) whose own mothers had often been housewives. Gulnar, for example, described with hindsight the life of the Soviet woman as one of a harassed, overburdened existence:

“The Soviet woman was always running around, not much at home. She would come back from work, pick up the kids from the nursery or the school, rush for the bus, drop them off, then rush to the bazaar, always carrying shopping bags. The Soviet women lost that fine quality, their female grace (*gratsia*). They became free but those qualities were lost. We later realised this ourselves, which is why we used to think we would like to marry a man who earned enough money so we didn't have to go to work.”

This “later,” in many cases, refers to the era of perestroika and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when nostalgia for a “traditional” pre-Communist past was accompanied by revisions of feministic ideals; a trend which also continues in Russia and other post-Soviet republics. Furthermore, there are indications that in these countries and in Eastern Europe, as indeed in Azerbaijan, religion and nationalism have become markers of authenticity (Molyneux 1994). In the words of some of my middle-aged Azeri women informants (though not subscribed to by the younger generation of my informants), “real” women, *asil gadinlar*, were those who stayed home, free of outside responsibilities. This had been the case for most Azerbaijani women up until the Second World War. In the following decades, Gulnar attributes some of the social and cultural changes that ensued from women's altered public role to this “mother not at home” phenomenon:

“Since the 1960s, big changes have occurred. You see, my mother did not go out to work. We children went to school, then returned home with great enthusiasm because we had our mother, grandmother, and aunt at home. They would give us tea as we arrived and food would be ready. We would do our homework, then rest or go to our friends to play. The home was a warm and friendly place. We would also go to the neighbourhood social club where we could learn crafts, do our homework, or play board games. But in my time I would return from work, then go out to give private lessons. When my children were adolescents they would come home and there would be no one there. They would go to their grandmother to get fed. Then they would go out again, my

son to play football, my daughter to visit her friends. Later in the evening, we would all return home. This was how our customs, rules, and regulations broke down. My children got a lot of freedom. We did not have the same. Our grandmother would not let us stay out or play in the communal yard once it was dark. My generation of women all had to go to work and were not involved in bringing up their kids the way my mother's generation had been."

From my observations and collection of life stories, it becomes evident that the support given by the extended family was crucial in enabling women to carry on with the "double shift" that became a feature of women's lives in the Soviet system. In particular, grandmothers seem to have been crucial—and still are to an extent—in enabling Azeri mothers to advance socially and in their careers by offering them the support with childcare that would afford them the extra free time. Responsibility for offspring seemed to extend to the children's children as well. Most of my informants when away on study courses, or work related trips, even for as long as a year, had left their young children with their mothers. If their mothers were in full-time employment, alternatives would be arranged with a neighbor, a relative, or a hired nanny. In any case, the overall responsibility seemed to be assumed by the grandmother even when the husband had stayed behind with the children. It should be noted that this degree of involvement by the women in running the household also gave them a leading role in the conduct of family relationships. As in the Russian culture, and that portrayed by the Soviet media, motherhood was held in the highest esteem. The influence and informal authority of Soviet Azeri mothers over their sons and daughters often outweighed that of fathers since they were breadwinners as well as being largely in charge of domestic affairs and supervising children's education. The system of strong reciprocal support within the close-knit extended family also reinforced the mother's position.

Given the relatively low levels of geographical and social mobility (at least compared to Western industrialized societies) and shortages of accommodation, marriage very often led to setting up a new household either jointly with one set of in-laws or in their neighborhood. The Soviet system encouraged the cohesion and permanence of the family both as a social unit and as the source of emotional and practical support for the individual. The Muslim Azeri culture with its tradition of strong extended families was

suitied for such a development. Entertainment and leisure facilities, especially those organized by factories and other workplaces, were very often family oriented. The Party disapproved strongly of cases of adultery and divorce. If a man was a Party member and he left his wife for another woman, his wife could make an official complaint to his Party branch which could easily lead to dismissal from the Party, hence ruining his career. This did not, however, imply the absence of extra-marital relations in Azerbaijani society, which was basically a male dominated society with an old tradition of polygamy. There was a considerable degree of role play and concealment to accommodate mistresses (and in rarer cases women taking lovers). Nevertheless, the checks on errant husbands and the centrality of grandmothers in the family support system did strengthen women's position in running the affairs of the family. This was such that despite the patrilocal traditions of Azerbaijani society it was not unusual to see a couple living with the woman's family or having closer relations with them. The following case demonstrates this.

Zeinab, a sixty-three-year-old professor at Baku University, originated from a working class family in a provincial town. Her father died in her childhood and her mother was barely literate. In 1956, after moving to Baku with her husband and following the birth of her daughter, she asked her widowed mother to come and live with them. During the 1960s, initially employed as a school teacher, Zeinab's career took off. She was elected as a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (a position of social influence as well as some financial rewards). After her four-year term she began studying for a degree of the candidate of science at Baku university which enabled her to begin university teaching, and she continued to study for a doctorate which she completed in 1976. Meanwhile, in the late 1960s her marriage broke up and sometime after her divorce she met and fell in love with a man with whom she had a second child. This man, however, was married with two children and his wife would not grant him a divorce. Moreover, she pressurized him through his Party branch and employer to break off with Zeinab and return to her. Zeinab was thus left with the care of her illegitimate baby son and her teenage daughter. (Moving away for the later stages of her pregnancy and the birth, she had initially told colleagues and neighbors she had adopted the baby.) Leaving much of the housework and childcare to her mother, Zeinab

continued with her busy career as an academic, for some years head of a department, and as a Party member. Her home was often visited by provincial relatives, and others in Baku, who considered her a socially influential member of the extended family.

In 1980, Zeinab's daughter, following graduation from university, got married and moved out into a small two-room apartment with her husband. But in her second year of marriage, she decided to move back into her family home, along with her husband and their six-month-old baby. She could not cope with the demands of her job and the baby while living in a district far from her mother and grandmother. During the 1980s, for six years, the extended family of four generations lived in Zeinab's old but spacious apartment. In this period, Zeinab's daughter had a second child and completed her candidate of science degree, also becoming a university lecturer, before the family moved out to their own newly built four-room apartment. Now in semi-retirement, most of Zeinab's time is taken up with domestic chores, and dealing with family matters. Looking back wistfully she says: "All those years before my mother died, I was the man of the house, she was the housewife. I only learned to cook the last year of my mother's life."

A variation on this theme of family support for women's higher education and career advancement is seen in the case of Faiza. Both her parents and in-laws had to pool resources to enable her to complete her higher education and training courses abroad, a process which, coupled with her great talent and strength of character, enabled her to achieve a very high status and accumulate considerable wealth as the rector of a prestigious institute in Baku. Her exceptional social skills and her shrewdness were reflected in her success at delegating work and making deals, which was a requisite of social and political ascent in Soviet Azerbaijani society. She began by employing these within the family.

Faiza was born in 1935 to parents who were descended from the pre-revolutionary elite families. Her mother was one of the first generation of female university graduates in Azerbaijan, but she did not go out to work until her three children finished school. Faiza graduated with her first degree in 1957 and began work as a teacher. A year later, she married a neighbor's son whom she had known since school days. In the following four years, she had two children and in 1961 she enrolled as a candidate of science degree

student in French literature at Moscow University. This was a subject which was not offered at the post-graduate level in Azerbaijan. When interviewed by her prospective supervisor, a Russian Jewish professor, she told him she was single and would be residing in Moscow for the three-year duration of her course.

They told me if he found out I had two young children he would never agree to supervise me. He believed that a woman could not combine family responsibilities with scholarly work. He did not want his three years of effort as a supervisor to go to waste with a woman who might not satisfactorily defend her thesis. It would not have looked good for him as a professor.

So for three years, Faiza alternated between Baku and Moscow and upon graduation although he was shocked to find out about her deception, her supervisor was so impressed with her work that he suggested she continue with a doctoral research program. This she could do while teaching at university in Baku. It also offered her the chance for a three-month study trip to France, sponsored by the government. No one in her extended family had been to Europe before. During these years, a whole array of helpers had to be mobilized to take care of her young family and her husband. Her mother was in full-time employment and lived separately, but she helped as much as she could, taking charge whenever her daughter was away. Faiza hired a nanny under the guise of a relative from the country coming to live with them.<sup>9</sup> A neighbor in need of supplementary income would come and do regular cleaning. Faiza in fact disliked housework and planned her work schedule and her resources carefully so as to avoid it as much as possible. When I asked her how all those years her husband had faced her outside interests and involvements she replied:

“My husband’s family were very educated and enlightened people. They realised that my development would be good for the

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<sup>9</sup> Officially, hiring servants was not approved of in the soviet system. However, nannies, cleaners, and even cooks would be employed by elite families where women with busy social lives and careers needed help in the home. For example, Faiza’s daughter, Chaman, would employ female students of her mother who came from a small town or village to study in Baku. The girls would work rather like au pairs. When Chaman’s son was at the pre-kindergarten age she also employed a daytime nanny. It was not considered desirable by the relatively wealthy families to send young children to a crèche or nursery.

whole family. Even when my husband complained to me about my going away or doing my studies, I would go to my in-laws for support. My father-in-law, in fact, financed my trips to Moscow. These were costly with plane fares and living expenses there. My parents also helped out financially. But in the end, it was due to my determination to complete my studies. I told him I would do this with or without him, and if he tried to stop me it could lead to a divorce.”

As can be seen from the preceding cases, the education of women in Azerbaijan under the Soviet system acquired an importance not just for the career or social advancement of the individual women but also in the context of utilizing resources of the extended family. Part of this is related to the system of prestige in the Soviet era, particularly in later decades, that laid much emphasis on the cultural development of the individual. Consequently, well-educated mothers were valued as being capable of bringing up cultured (*madani*) children. In Azerbaijan, even a factory worker or a taxi driver with only secondary education would ideally seek a girl with higher education as a desirable marriage partner, though in combination with accomplished domestic skills, physical beauty, and a demure personality. Since men in blue-collar jobs had a higher earning potential than those in white-collar professions, marrying women with a higher level of formal education did not undermine male power and prestige. Families generally considered it essential to encourage their daughters to embark on higher education where possible, even if only to enhance their chances of marriage. It would also enable them to get a white-collar job in a profession that allowed for greater amount of time and energy to be spent at home and with the family.

The relatively underdeveloped technology of labor-saving devices and the food processing industry was such that even as late as the 1980s women had to do a whole range of chores, from making jams and pickles to general laundry, by hand and at home. The water shortages, particularly in Baku with its long, daily water cuts, was another factor in the time-consuming, arduous nature of housework. It is clear then why teaching, with its long holidays and flexible hours, was a particular favorite for women. Doctors also enjoyed relatively short working hours (six hours per day) but a high social status that made the profession ideal for women of the

upper-middle classes. Generally the health care system was seen as very much a feminine domain. The range of female dominated sectors becomes clear from the following statistics for 1989-90 on women's employment in Azerbaijan: women constituted over 72.6 percent of health care workers (58 percent of physicians), 59.3 percent of public education employees (65.3 percent of school teachers), 58.2 percent of cultural workers, and 56 percent of employees in banking and insurance (Tohidi 1994). However, even in the fields where they dominated, women remained mainly on the lower end of the scale. In teaching, for example, in the same year women constituted less than 15 percent of school principals. In medicine, surgery, with its long training period and unpredictable longer working hours, was predominantly a male domain.

Rena, a former college lecturer with a keen interest in women's issues, gave the reason for their difficulties in getting promotion at work as being related to job evasion brought on by their burden of "double shift." This was despite the official dogma of gender equality and pressures from the Communist Party central planners to maintain quotas for female participation in various fields and at different levels. She explained:

"The Soviet Union's constitution guaranteed work for both men and women. But most employers were reluctant to hire women for high ranking positions or work with a high degree of responsibility because they assumed these women would do anything within their power to actually reduce their working hours. Most women, in fact, used their lunch break to do their shopping, and with the Soviet system of trade there were often queues and you never knew where and when something was available. Another reason why they were more absent from work was because the law enabled women to take off substantial leaves of absence if their children were sick. Some women abused this right in order to get on with their housework."

A generally more casual attitude to paid employment in the Soviet Union than in the West, for example, has been noted by many observers of that society. For Azeri women, however, aspects of local culture such as the great emphasis on hospitality, food, and feasting, much of it reliant on female labor, may have been an added factor. The Azeri community's expectation of a more casual female commitment to work is also manifested in the way the wake ceremonies, *yas*, were, and still are, organized. In line with the Shi'i tradition, these are held on the first, third, seventh, and fortieth

day after the death of a person in a totally gender segregated setting. Usually a large number of people who knew the deceased attend on each day and are offered tea, ritual food, and even a full meal. The male and female *yas* are very often organized at different times of the day to cope with shortage of space and utensils: women's at mid-day, and men's after work (usually 4 p.m. onwards). It is assumed that it is easier for women to take time off work in the middle of the day than for men.

### *Conclusion*

The Soviet revolution in Azerbaijan led to fundamental and thorough changes in the lives of Azeri women as they were offered universal education and large-scale employment. For most women, entry into public life and the imperative of taking up outside employment meant that their femininity could no longer be defined solely in the context of their domesticity and attributes related to notions of physical beauty and chastity. This entailed a reconstruction of femininity and its defining features that would accommodate women's participation in the world of outside work and social and political activity. And yet, paradoxically, many of the Muslim Azeri cultural notions regarding the conduct and demeanor of women (chastity, female shame, centrality of feminine physical appearance, primacy of domesticity) remained operative. This has parallels in Central Asia where, according to some observers (Poliakov 1992), rather than effecting modernity as a progressive transformation, the Soviet system actually gave a longer lease on life to certain cultural practices and forms of social organization. However, as Kandiyoti (1996) has pointed out, it was the nature of Soviet-style modernization rather than "tradition" per se that influenced the paradoxical norms and practices in these societies. For Azeri women, the pattern of modernization in Azerbaijan and the complex Soviet Azeri culture that evolved over many decades affected empowerment as well as curtailments in their personal and family life.

It was shown that despite the ideologically driven official emphasis on femininity manifested as plain unadorned appearance, in the later Soviet period women's outfits and physical adornment played a major role in their prestige system. Under Soviet rule, jewels as

gifts for exchange in marriage took a novel form and jewellery, a primarily feminine possession, constituted an important manipulable resource in Azerbaijan's second economy. Moreover, women responded to the highly prescriptive nature of the state by adopting ways of dress and adornment that counteracted the official ideology, thus displaying political intention through the female body.

With the state's emphasis on eroding gender divisions in the context of employment and legislation, male-female divisions in other, more personal, areas of life took root and became a long enduring feature of the relatively closed and rigidly structured Soviet Azeri society. This was most visibly manifested in the conduct of the wake ceremonies, *yas*, the observance of dress code, and most crucially in the domestic division of labor. In the face of their double load of careers and heavy domestic duties, women resorted to different coping mechanisms. Chief among these was the system of reliance on the family and inter-generational support that were part of the institution of extended family, its strength preserved under the Soviet system. This was the main facilitator on the home front. The choice of particular career niches and a casual commitment to paid employment, at times work evasion, lightened the load at the work front. What is significant here in terms of the empowerment of women is the strength of the institution of family and the kinship network and the centrality of mothers and grandmothers in regulating the affairs of the family. Given that the Soviet system in general granted low levels of autonomy and mobility to the individual, within the system this was a positive factor for many women, giving them much power in their personal lives.

While in an economy of scarcity and favors the role of the family was a crucial one, following the break-up of the Soviet regime and the introduction of a market economy this is no longer the case. Indeed, many of the factors sustaining the cohesion and strength of the institution of the extended family have now been undermined. Furthermore, in the past few years, with the massive drop in the value of salaries (except for those working for foreign organizations), the level of income of most professionals has greatly decreased. Given that the new state is no longer committed to maintaining formal equality for women and most men have far greater earning power, Azeri women will need to devise new strate-

gies to safeguard their gains under the Soviet system in the currently Western-oriented free market Azerbaijan.

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## GENDER AND NATIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION



# THE CHANGING IDENTITY OF WOMEN IN TAJIKISTAN IN THE POST-SOVIET PERIOD<sup>1</sup>

COLETTE HARRIS

## *1. Introduction*

The multifarious ways in which human identity is formed have been the subject of much study in recent years, especially among feminists. For the purposes of the present chapter, I concentrate on one aspect of identity, that which can be referred to as encompassing “subject positions . . . selectively mobilised in response to economic, social, political, and cultural processes” (Chhachhi and Pittin 1996, 101, 126, note 11). As this quotation suggests, such an approach considers identities to be socially constructed in response to surrounding influences rather than biologically determined, neither static nor monolithic, but multifaceted and continually evolving. Ethnicity, nationality, class, religion, age, and sex play major roles in identity formation<sup>2</sup>. Such characteristics are not merely marks of difference but imply power differentials. While the power imbalances implicit within the other characteristics may change over time and space, that between the sexes does not.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it could be said that the most significant power differences in any society are those obscured within the constructs of femininity and masculinity, or in other words the salient factor in

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is the result of various trips to Tajikistan, where I have so far spent a total of fourteen months since December 1994. I wish to thank all the Tajik women who shared their lives with me and from whom much of the information in this paper comes. I also wish to thank Joke Schrijvers for her comments on the first draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> See also Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis 1995, Yuval-Davis 1989, Enloe 1993, Moghadam 1993, Attwood 1985, O’Hanlon 1997.

<sup>3</sup> That is to say that a child’s lack of power is transformed when s/he becomes an adult. A Muslim may be less powerful than a Christian in the West but more powerful in Egypt or Syria. Women as such are less powerful than men wherever they are, even if as bearers of other characteristics (such as, for instance, class) specific women may be more powerful than some men.

the formation of gender identities is precisely the structurally unequal balance of power between the sexes (cf. Scott 1988).

Identity changes take place on various levels. One is the progressive change that may be a result of personal development and/or changes in society; as might be expected, this is especially marked and rapid in societies in transition, such as Tajikistan today. Another consists of the rapid, and to a certain extent conscious, shifts between identities which occur as a response to particular situations and/or relationships.<sup>4</sup> In Tajikistan, this could include switching between native identities at home and Soviet identities at work.

In reality, human identity is considerably more complex than the way I portray it here (cf. Chhachhi and Pittin 1996). However, for the sake of clarity and brevity, I concentrate only on those aspects of Tajik identities directly relevant to post-Soviet changes, deliberately depicting them as somewhat more clear-cut and straightforward than is actually the case.

The current paper is an attempt to assess the influence on the identities of Tajik women of the cultural, socio-economic, and political changes occurring in post-Soviet Tajikistan. In order to set these in context, I start by summarizing the salient points of gender identities prior to independence.

## *2. Tajik women's identities at the end of the Soviet period*

The Republic of Tajikistan was artificially constructed in the 1920s, along lines laid down by Stalin, out of a number of Central Asian regions whose main bond was supposedly that they all spoke a variant of Farsi, or Tajik. Thus, the concept of a Tajik language was used for political ends to construct a national identity in order to fuse together what were in reality disparate groups of people, while artificially separating them from people culturally very much the same who happened to be labeled as speaking another language, such as the Turkic-based Uzbek.<sup>5</sup> Subsequent state policies tried to

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<sup>4</sup> For example, the identity a man may assume in the army compared with his identity at home with his family.

<sup>5</sup> In reality, both Uzbeks and Tajiks were often bilingual.

Sovietize this national Tajik identity as part of a policy of melding all the peoples of the union together into one cultural mass.<sup>6</sup>

In Tajikistan at least, the Soviet regime permitted little change in the rural way of life<sup>7</sup> in order to keep sufficient labor on the land for cotton production, while simultaneously pressurizing the population to modernize lifestyles and thought patterns in keeping with Soviet ideology. The combination of static socio-economic development with strong intellectual repression actually made significant cultural change impossible and was a major factor in the preservation of traditional gender identities.<sup>8</sup>

Traditionally, Tajik women are supposed to be submissive and domesticated. Prior to Soviet intervention, they were also characterized by an almost total lack of access to public space. The salient aspects of masculine identities, on the other hand, were precisely this access to public space coupled with a visible control over women and economic resources in general. In other words, the contrast in identity characteristics corresponded to an imbalance of power that was highly weighted towards the masculine side.

I argue elsewhere that the attempts at social engineering in the early days of the Soviet regime in Tajikistan were deliberate attempts to emasculate men and defeminize women in order to penetrate Tajik society and make it subservient to the Russo-Soviet system, as well as to liberate women from their relegation to purely private space in order to make use of them in economic development and to force through the modernization of Tajik culture (Harris n.d.).<sup>9</sup>

Such gender manipulation and attempts at cultural penetration only hardened passive resistance on the part of the Tajiks, who continued at the level of conscious discourse to construct "ideal" feminine and masculine identities for themselves not only in sharp

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<sup>6</sup> The subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union shows how little success they had. Even today, Tajiks do not really have a national identity. However, for the purposes of the present paper, the cultural differences between the different groups are small enough to justify subsuming them all under the one term Tajik.

<sup>7</sup> Collective farms were essentially just a continuation of the earlier way of life, and the collectivization process appears to have been less disruptive here than in many other parts of the Soviet Union.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion of this see Harris n.d.

<sup>9</sup> See also Massell 1974.

contrast to one another<sup>10</sup> but also to those the state was pushing for Soviet men and women. The result was the erection of strong cultural barriers, behind which Tajik traditions were frozen, to guard against Soviet encroachments. Women's "ideal" identities were consciously defined in order for everyone to be quite sure what they must not deviate from. As has been noted for other communities (cf. Kandiyoti 1992), women became cultural markers in strategies to prevent erosion of the culture through the loss of its salient characteristics.

Today women are still encouraged to show their acceptance of Tajik norms by open acquiescence to gender roles of submission to male domination, as well as to their parents.<sup>11</sup> Thus they outwardly assume an "ideal" feminine identity which marks them as "good" women and allows them to keep high social status, while their overt support of the discourse of female submission conceals a much less rigid state of affairs.

From what I have seen, women's real identities are actually somewhat different. In their relations with their husbands, particularly in the privacy of their own homes, women display considerably less submission than the "ideal" identities would suggest, often much less than in their relationships with their parents. It is true that if their husbands categorically order them to do something, they generally obey. However, this may often be only after long resistance, during which they may talk back to and at times even yell at their husbands. This should not be taken to mean that there is no power imbalance; simply that, contrary to both Western and Soviet

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<sup>10</sup> This is obviously not to say that men and women have no common characteristics, but rather that the salient traits that are used in discourse to demarcate the feminine and the masculine are constructed in contrast to one another. These traits are not fixed and immutable either within time or place, although discourses of ideal gender identities, tend to change more slowly than the actual lived identities. By ideal gender identities, I mean those feminine and masculine traits that a given society at a specific time associates with its idealized images of women and men, the outward assumption of which allows people of both sexes to be positively accepted within that society.

<sup>11</sup> Since kinship networks continued to be of prime importance in Tajik strategies for survival in the Soviet state (cf. Kandiyoti 1992), the submission of young people of both sexes to parents and elders was in fact every bit as important as that of wives to husbands. High fertility rates are also among the strategies for maintaining the power of kinship groups and the bearing of many children played a large part in high status as well, for all but those most educated and Sovietized (Harris forthcoming a).

ideas of Muslim cultures, the gendered imbalance of power is not that much different from either Russia or the West.<sup>12</sup>

It seems as if Tajik women claim the “ideal” traditional identities partly in order to maintain their own self-image and partly as camouflage, to protect themselves from attack for not conforming and, therefore, not being “good” Tajik women. That is, they accommodate themselves to their situation of lesser power, appearing to acquiesce to it, while quietly using myriads of tiny maneuvers for resistance, as much as is possible in their relatively circumscribed situation.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, it is not really possible to say that these “ideal” identities are simply imposed by society or by men. They are part of women’s own strategies, both for self-protection and for maintaining high self-esteem. Nevertheless, such identities are not simply voluntarily assumed since they have been impressed on them from infancy.

The changes brought about by the Soviet state gave women access to public space, in the shape of education, jobs, and health services. As a result, another identity role, adopted mainly by the urban Tajik woman, was that of the educated working woman. This additional identity could be said to be a public (or Soviet) one as opposed to the formerly discussed “real” and “ideal” private (or Tajik) ones.<sup>14</sup>

Since gender identities are complementary, any change in feminine identities cannot help but impinge on masculine ones. Under the Soviet regime, men did not make corresponding gains to those of women; instead, major facets of their identity were weakened, owing to the forced lessening of their control over both their

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<sup>12</sup> In fact, it persists in both these places, and particularly the former, much more strongly than is generally acknowledged.

<sup>13</sup> As Foucault shows, power is not monolithic nor does it operate in only one direction (1980). Women’s maneuvers may not be noticed; in fact, they are often deliberately practiced in such a way as to keep them invisible both to men and often to other women who might judge them. Men also have to maneuver in order to keep their power position, which does not just accrue to them effortlessly. In so far as their position is supported by the general culture of the society in which they live, male strategies are usually practiced more directly and openly—including, for instance, physical violence.

<sup>14</sup> See Tohidi’s description of the same phenomenon of public and private identities in Azerbaijan (1996).

womenfolk and economic resources.<sup>15</sup> Outward conformity on the part of women to the “ideal” identity of submission, can be seen in one sense as a strategy to permit men to retain a certain measure of the former masculine identities, or in other words to allow them to feel like “real men.” It is no doubt for this reason that those wives who do not assume the submissive posture are often subject to considerable domestic violence as their husbands seek other ways to prove their masculinity.<sup>16</sup>

Inevitably, both women and men experience tensions between their different personae. Such tensions amount almost to conflicts—between “correct” ways of dressing, of behavior in relation to members of the opposite sex, and so on, and these conflicts are increasing in the post-Soviet period.

### *3. Post-Soviet change*

In September 1991, upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan became independent. Its already low standard of living was further worsened by the loss of most of the former economic support from Moscow, which was not compensated for by a rise in the prices for its main exports—cotton and aluminum (Islamov 1994). The liberalization of consumer prices in early 1992 (Kaser 1997, 10), accompanied by various elite groups jostling for power as a result of the vacuum left by Moscow’s withdrawal, and a line-up of political parties in opposition to the ruling communists contributed to the subsequent civil war (Atkin 1997). Although the fighting war was mainly over by spring 1993, sporadic outbursts continued up to the signing of a peace agreement in June 1997 and beyond.

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<sup>15</sup> The concept of the emasculation and feminization of colonized males is not limited to Soviet colonial populations. It has been a noted feature of the colonial scene the world over, and one explicitly discussed by Western colonizers (cf. Sinha 1995,35; O’Hanlon 1991). In the Tajik case, perhaps the main gain of the men could be said to be the possibility of abandoning many of the family responsibilities that used to be exclusively theirs—in particular doing all the shopping and being the sole, or at least the major, breadwinner. This applied largely to urban men.

<sup>16</sup> They are not the only women who suffer from this.

Such observations, as indeed much of the rest of this paper, are not directly relevant to the lives of the most highly educated and Sovietized Tajiks.

The communists on the winning side were ultimately supported by Moscow while the members of the opposition democratic-Islamic alliance ended up in exile, largely in Afghanistan and Iran. During the last few years, Tajikistan has been slowly trying to reconstruct and to work out how to go forward in a post-socialist world most of its citizens do not really want (Harris forthcoming b). Since the signing of the peace agreement and the return of the Islamic opposition there has been considerable anxiety on the part of the population about a potential return of the war situation, possibly fought round pressures towards a more Afghan Mujahadeen-style Islamization.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, the end of direct pressures towards Russification has not immediately resulted in the relaxation of the strategies of resistance to cultural penetration. Such barriers do not collapse overnight. However, new material situations are forcing increasing compromises with “ideal” identities as people make adjustments, often as part of desperate strategies to survive the new, and generally adverse, circumstances.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, change has been proceeding faster at all levels. Important factors in this include the economic collapse and the civil war, together with the penetration of foreign influences, including television, new market ideologies, and exposure to other Muslim societies.

### *3.1 Islam*

During most of the Soviet era, attitudes towards Islam were relatively clear-cut. “We” (Tajiks) were Muslims, while “they” (Russians) were not. Now, “they” have largely gone and “we” have experienced a civil war that was in part fought over the question of how far Tajiks wish to assume political Islamic identities in the immediate post-Soviet period. Such identities definitely include pressures on women to conform to Muslim Tajik identity, at the very least in their rejection of a European style of dress.

During the coalition Government of National Reconciliation (May-November 1992), pressure was put on urban girls and women

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<sup>17</sup> During the civil war, the Islamic parties did not follow the path of what is popularly known as fundamentalism; nor could they be considered to be Islamic militants. Their new post-war complexion has yet to be seen.

to abandon their European clothes in favor of native costume, or in other words to “desovietize” themselves. This was experienced by many as incipient Islamization and even as a first step towards the re-establishment of pre-Soviet gender identities. So it became a major factor producing support for the communists.

Since the opposition’s recent return from exile, it is now seen as entirely possible that there may be a serious attempt in the near future to establish strongly Islamized gender identities, with male dominance and female submission considerably more strongly contrasted and women’s ideal identities concomitantly more constrained than they are at present. This is seen as undesirable by women at all levels of society and influences attitudes towards Islam, which, after the suppression of the Soviet years, has once more come into the open.

Tajiks have always considered themselves to be Muslims and this identity remained important to them throughout the Soviet regime. However, since the civil war, the banning of the opposition parties and the exile of their leaders, Islam has also become a problematic construction in Tajikistan. On the one hand, with the help of other Muslim countries, mosques and *medressas* are being rebuilt and social pressures encourage increasing numbers of the long-time urban population to fast during Ramadan.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, until the recent signing of the formal peace agreement, the assumption of an Islamic identity was politically suspect, being associated with the outlawed opposition movement. Since then, there has been even more tension over Islam as it is rumored that the newly returned opposition supporters are beginning to try to impose their Mujahedeen-learned concepts of women’s rightful place by making them wear Islamic-style headscarves<sup>19</sup> and possibly also partially or totally cover their faces. In some areas, women are

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<sup>18</sup> The rural population generally continued to fast during the Soviet period while strong pressure was brought to bear on the urban population *not* to do so. Partly because of women’s relatively low involvement in the workforce, other than as agricultural laborers, there was much less pressure on them to conform to atheistic principles (cf. Tett 1994).

<sup>19</sup> In urban areas, many women do not wear headscarves at all, although almost all rural women do so. But the traditional headscarf is worn tied behind the head, covering neither the shoulders nor even all the hair. The covering required by Islamic form is often called a veil in other Muslim countries and covers the hair completely, together with neck and shoulders but not necessarily the face.

even being encouraged to stay away from the streets and other public places, or in other words to acquiesce in returning to seclusion.

In post-civil war Tajikistan, a need to restore order to lives badly disrupted by recent events and under strong economic and social pressures (including considerable levels of, often violent, crime) has so far not been associated with a return to the traditional values of Islam. On the contrary, Islam is seen as a major contributory factor to the violence.

Although men seem little opposed to women's wearing a more Islamic-style headscarf than most do at present, they are rarely in favor of their being secluded nor of themselves being coerced into taking on a more Islamic way of life. Women's seclusion would after all oblige men to reassume many responsibilities that they had abandoned during the Soviet period. Furthermore, it is clear to everyone that there are few families nowadays that can afford to do without the economic contribution of their womenfolk.

### *3.2 Foreign cultural influence*

Central Asia's historical isolation did not substantially decrease under Soviet rule, despite some exposure to Russia and the other Soviet republics. The world outside the Union boundaries made little impression, except for some contact with other Muslim countries, most notably through the war with Afghanistan. Other than for this last, few Tajiks traveled outside the Union and fewer foreigners visited Tajikistan. The Soviet state kept strict control over the media and all foreign imports. Since perestroika and independence, this has been relaxed and Tajikistan has been increasingly opened up to the outside world, both to the South and to the West. Television and films have become important conduits to this world and are beginning to exert an influence, especially on young people.

Tajik girls now watch many foreign films and soap operas. From these, they learn about new ways of life far outside their own experiences. At the top of the list come Indian musical romances and Latin-American soaps. The favorite on my first trip to Tajikistan was the Mexican soap opera "Wild Rosa." The images of luxury and romance it portrayed were very seductive to these girls, yearning over the unobtainable. Mexico became a fairy-tale land to

them, where everyone lived in the same affluent circumstances as Rosa and had handsome and charming men in love with them.

The girls talk wistfully about Rosa and her life and how wonderful it all is. At the same time, it is too far removed from their own lives to have much real impact. So far the main result for them has been the mere knowledge that women in other places live in such totally different ways from anything they themselves have ever seen or experienced.

A major question raised by these TV programs is what sort of influence they may have on young women in Tajikistan in the long run. The decades of practice in evading and/or rejecting Soviet identities while deliberately preserving their own traditions, may make it hard even for the younger girls to react positively towards external influences, particularly as expressed by these non-Muslim cultures. After all, even the Indian heroines express values as alien to the Tajik culture as the Russo-Soviet ones, if not indeed more so considering the seventy-odd years of intimate contact with the latter. Will the fact that Westerners and other foreigners are not perceived at present as attempting to secure cultural hegemony over Tajikistan make it easier for these girls to accept such new images of women?

This seems unlikely, for many reasons. In the first place, the cultural gap is too large. For Tajiks, their Muslim identity and traditional customs are vitally important. A culture that still expects its girls to be virgins on their wedding night will find Western, and even much Southern, influence alienating and threatening. Since Islam, as symbolized by enforced veiling, is also threatening, this leaves hardly any place for new influences and identities to come from, except for Central Asia itself. Exceptions to this are the women's movements, but these will be unlikely to influence directly more than a very small segment of the population.

### *3.3 Socio-economic changes*

In fact, it may well be that the greatest catalyst for change will not be cultural but rather the transformation in socio-economic circumstances. Economic collapse has occasioned galloping inflation that has made it impossible for the government to fund social services, and much of the time even to pay wages, student grants, or pensions. Since the Soviets had previously brought much of the

food supply in from Russia, severe food shortages also occurred after independence. The amount of food available fell even more significantly after the civil war, resulting in considerable hunger and even, in some areas, serious malnutrition.

By late 1996, there were significant imports both of foodstuffs and general consumer goods, but at prices completely out of the reach of the pockets of the vast majority of the population. By the middle of 1997, even the local markets were full of food that the majority were finding very hard to afford. The worst off are becoming dependent on foreign aid. All this is having a disastrous effect on health and general well-being.

A direct consequence of the war, as well as of the new levels of poverty, has been an overall increase in violence, particularly of robbery and murder. The fear of abduction and rape, particularly of girls and young women, is strong enough to affect their freedom of movement.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the war has resulted in a significant demographic imbalance between young men and women, which is likely to lead to increased polygyny.

Public life has been subjected to enormous changes that have strongly affected women in such basic matters as their access to health care, education, and paid work. The new proto-capitalist labor market is substantially different from the previous one and, as in other parts of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) (cf. Pilkington 1996), has had a different impact on women than on men, affecting both gender relations and identities.

Far fewer women than men have been able to set up their own businesses and a far smaller proportion of women's businesses has been able to survive the vicissitudes of the market system, partly because of women's very limited access to credit. As has been noted elsewhere (Pilkington 1996), employment patterns have substantially changed in post-Soviet times. Even in the current very rudimentary state of Tajikistan's transition to a market economy, a large number of small private firms have been formed and some state enterprises have been privatized. But women are not benefiting from employment opportunities in the new private sector at the same rate as men. As in Russia, the advent of the market has

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<sup>20</sup> Young males, at least in the capital, have also had their freedom of movement curtailed as they hide at home to avoid being press-ganged into the army.

brought with it increased compulsion for women to sell their bodies in order to survive.

I discuss in more detail in the following sections how the new socio-economic circumstances have brought about changes in girls' age at first marriage, their chances for education, fertility rates, women's independence, and sex work—all factors that influence the formation of female identities.

### *3.3.1 Marriage age*

In the capital, Dushanbe, at least, there is great pressure towards a younger marriage age for girls. The reasons for this are varied. The poorest parents may marry their daughters off because they can no longer afford to feed them. Others do so either because they are frightened that their daughters may be “spoiled” (i.e. lose their virginity) through rape or consensual sex,<sup>21</sup> therefore becoming unmarriageable, or because they fear that if they do not marry them off young, they may not be able to find them a husband at all or else be forced into accepting a polygynous marriage for them. Many girls are now married off at the age of 15 or occasionally even younger. The average age at first marriage in the capital now seems to be around 17, whereas ten years ago it was nearer 20.

Interestingly enough in some rural areas, particularly those hardest hit by the civil war, girls now seem to be married off later than before, largely because there are so few males available. Those that survived the war, and are not in permanent exile, work in Russia for the greater part of the year. In the villages I know well, there are surprisingly large numbers of unmarried girls between the ages of 20 and 22, with almost no young men in evidence at all. Here the danger of such girls losing their virginity is also much less than in the towns; most people have enough land to provide basic food for all the family, and older daughters are valued for the help they give their mothers on the collective farm.

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<sup>21</sup> The response met with during sex education sessions in a few of the most prestigious of the capital's schools demonstrates that many girls there now have some sort of sexual/romantic relationship with a member of the opposite sex while still at school. Although this may not always, or even often, entail penetrative sex, several schoolgirls admitted to having had abortions. These particular schools are attended by the children of more educated Tajiks. It is unclear how much this situation differs from that of adolescents from less educated families in the capital and the general run of teenagers in the rest of the country.

### *3.3.2 Education*

The numbers of young women going into higher education has fallen considerably, since it is now necessary to pay large college entrance fees and also because many parents marry their daughters off immediately upon their leaving secondary school, so that the responsibility for providing tertiary education rests on the shoulders of the marital family. In many cases, especially in the extended families common in rural and semi-rural areas, a new daughter-in-law can contribute considerably to family welfare through her domestic work, and her future economic contribution is not seen as worth enough for her in-laws to be willing either to forgo her labor or to pay out significant sums of money towards her studies.

Most urban girls desperately want to obtain sufficient training to equip them for skilled work and are extremely upset when this is denied them. They see studying as the only means of finding a legitimate way to lead an interesting and enjoyable life outside the home, both during their study time and later, by way of a rewarding job, together with the concomitant social life. Almost all the urban women I interviewed who had not had the chance of obtaining some form of professional or technical education regretted it since without this they have no hope of obtaining any other than the most boring, difficult, and in every way unrewarding work. However, even if their own parents are willing to pay for them to study, if their husbands and/or parents-in-law categorically refuse their permission they generally have no recourse but to obey.

Rural girls and those who only recently migrated to the city often have little hope of obtaining skilled work so that education does not hold the same appeal for them. One 10-year-old, selling sunflower seeds on the streets of Dushanbe, said that she was not in school because "what is the point of me going to school? I am a girl. Education will be of no use to me when I am married." Although some village girls may dream of going on to further education and a skilled job, most, unfortunately, will not even have the chance of finishing high school.

During Soviet times, practically all girls attended school, most completing from eight to ten grades. However, today many schools have either virtually closed down or only function very partially. Increasing numbers of children are not attending school at all. This is particularly the case for girls in rural areas. Those parents who can manage it try to ensure that their sons attend school but

they often refuse to send their daughters. This is partly through fear of their being subject to violence or coming into unseemly contact with boys but also due to the general consensus, as voiced above by the young girl in Dushanbe, that women simply do not need education. It is nice for them to be able to read, but not essential for their future lives in the village. To be laborers working on the collective farm, as are most of their mothers, needs little book learning. The likelihood of job opportunities requiring the sort of skills learned at school appears very slim and any other advantages of an education appear outweighed by the difficulties of obtaining it. Practically the only non-farm income-generating activities available to these women are petty trading and sewing.

### *3.3.3 Fertility rates*

High fertility has traditionally been regarded by Tajiks as a marker of high status for both parents, and the average number of children per family in Tajikistan over the last few decades has been five to seven (UNDP 1995, 43), with nine to fourteen or more not uncommon, especially in rural areas. However, young people in urban areas are already aware that the newly forming economic system is such that large families will adversely affect their future living standards. Even in rural areas, people are now seriously considering limiting family size, at least until economic circumstances improve. Such limitation is being actively encouraged both by the government and by international organizations, in particular UNFPA.

This new development is bound to impact considerably on women's identities as well as their lifestyles, as giving birth to large numbers of children may no longer be a way to high status, although in the present socio-economic circumstances it is difficult to imagine what might replace this. However, the *nouveaux riches*, especially the men, do still appear to view children as important status symbols, particularly since a man who can afford to have a large family today is demonstrating not just his virility but also his wealth.

### *3.3.4 Women's independence*

Many women now for the first time find themselves heads of households. In some cases, this is due to the death or exile of their

husbands. In others, this is a temporary circumstance owing to their husbands' migration for work purposes, usually to Russia.<sup>22</sup>

In their husbands' absence, women are increasingly forced to engage in income generation themselves. They now regularly go to market, both to sell their produce and to make family purchases. This is bringing them a hitherto unknown independence which cannot but affect their identities in the long run, if it is permitted to continue.

### 3.3.5 *Sex work*

For the first time in Tajikistan, money is beginning to be a determinant of social relations. For those who are well off, the strong familial and social networks are no longer of such paramount importance as before, since they can now use money to purchase almost everything they need, including those things that previously could be obtained only through specific relations with the state, mediated through position and job, or through family and personal connections.<sup>23</sup>

This is already affecting personal relations, especially in the wealthier families. It is also affecting identity, particularly for men. For the first time, they can gain prestige through money alone. This has given tremendous impetus to the development of criminality.<sup>24</sup>

Women have also been affected by these new money relations and this will only increase as the penetration of the global economic system gets under way in Tajikistan. In the long run, this will affect all personal relations, as it is doing in other parts of the

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<sup>22</sup> As noted above, a very significant proportion of men are now forced to spend a large part of the year away from their permanent Tajik homes in order to be able to earn a living.

<sup>23</sup> This has not yet lessened kinship ties, especially as the poorer members become increasingly dependent on the richer ones for pecuniary aid.

<sup>24</sup> As one young man who had recently moved to Dushanbe told me in 1995, "Before, money was not important. Now it defines who you are. I have no money, so I am no one. To get money, I would have to become a criminal. As yet I am unable to do this. I was brought up to be honest, but this means that I have no place in this new society. I do not know how long I can stay honest." In my experience, it is difficult to find a young man in Dushanbe now who is totally honest while the young women seem to have been much less affected by the desire for money, since they do not have the same pressures on them to acquire it.

FSU.<sup>25</sup> There is already a sharp increase in the number of Tajik women forced by poverty to take lovers who will help support them. Most of these women are unmarried, widows, or divorcees, but even some married women are taking lovers in order to keep their homes going.<sup>26</sup>

### *3.4 Future identities*

These changes will all undoubtedly leave their mark on the identities of Tajik women. Inevitably, the loosening of the previously strict boundaries of behavior will eventually bring about identity changes, although for the most part it has not yet materially affected the construction of the "ideal" female identity.<sup>27</sup> At the moment, the gap between "ideal" and "real" identities is widening. There are no clear responses to the situation in the way of changes in the former, nor is it to be expected that there will be, at least until the situation becomes more stable.

It is far from evident as yet what will happen to the economic situation of Tajikistan. Will there be a significant development of industry or will the current economic collapse prove irreversible in the near future? Certainly at present Tajikistan is falling into great poverty.<sup>28</sup> Rather than becoming an industrialized country, it is far

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<sup>25</sup> For instance, the change in Moscow, to a situation where connections and personal relationships are no longer as important as money in the acquisition of goods, services, and all other aspects of material life, has brought with it major changes in the value of personal relationships. Friends and neighbors are clearly much less mutually supportive in the new situation than when such support was an essential survival strategy. This change has become very clear over the last decade that I have been visiting the city.

<sup>26</sup> As yet, such Tajik women keep to long-term relations with one or a few men. It is relatively rare for them to have multiple relations with unknown clients, as prostitutes do elsewhere. This tends to be something done by Russian women, who are then seen as "real" prostitutes, while the Tajik women can avoid such a label, even if they are not always able entirely to avoid the censure of being "bad" women.

<sup>27</sup> It is unclear how those women who are having sex outside marriage, whether for money or for love, rationalize this in terms of the "ideal" identities. Do they think of themselves as "bad" women or do they rather see the "ideal" identities as something external, for keeping up appearances but having little to do with their real selves, so that they do not have to internalize the pejorative labels being applied to them by other, perhaps more fortunate, members of Tajik society?

<sup>28</sup> At the time of writing (September 1997) the minimum pension is worth less than \$1, state workers earn no more than \$15-\$20 a month and many considerably less.

more likely to become increasingly similar to the developing countries across its southern border, unless radical measures are taken to turn things around before the Soviet-built material and social infrastructures totally crumble away.<sup>29</sup>

The political situation remains similarly uncertain. Will the return of the opposition supporters signal a major swing towards Islamization or will a more secular state prevail? Can there be a mixture of the two—that is, will it be possible for secularized and Islamized women and men to coexist in an atmosphere of (psychological) non-coercion? Will any drive towards Islamization inevitably consist of coercion, in view of the fact that most Tajik women do not wish to wear a veil<sup>30</sup> or be secluded? What will be the relation of Islamization to the configuration of political parties that will take part in the general elections scheduled for late 1999 or shortly thereafter?

While the economic and political situations remain in chaos, gender identities will remain fluid. Very likely the “ideal” private identity for women will remain relatively static while their real identities move further and further away. Only a strong Islamic revival is likely to reverse this trend, and then in a way the women will not be likely to welcome, as was stated earlier.

But this may indeed happen if men find themselves without any positive new ways of constructing their own identities. As things stand today, it is highly unlikely that most men in Tajikistan will be able to achieve significant control over economic resources. Nor are they likely to be in a position to construct a satisfactory identity through well-paid and highly skilled work. Will they, therefore, welcome the opposition’s drive to Islamization as the only way they can see of restoring their prestige and status, to a great extent by enhancing their own position at the expense of their womenfolk as

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<sup>29</sup> In September 1997, Emamoli Rakhmonov, the President of Tajikistan, made a speech in the UN, in which he claimed that at least 200 joint ventures with foreigners were already in operation in the country and pleaded for further foreign investment. Whether this will happen depends on the ongoing political situation. Whether the result of any such ventures will be a significant improvement in the material infrastructure or indeed the living standards for the average Tajik is highly doubtful.

<sup>30</sup> See note 19.

in so many societies all over the world,<sup>31</sup> or will they see the potential losses from this as outweighing possible gains, and so resist?

No matter what happens with the men, the situation is unlikely to prove favorable for women. Even without Islamization, they face the grave danger of losing many of the gains of the Soviet period. It seems unlikely that a market economy would be likely to be favorable to them. The recent independence that some women have achieved has been accompanied by such tremendous poverty that they would greatly prefer to return to their previous dependence, if this would carry with it a return to their former material standards.

A better solution might be to make a concerted effort at producing positive change through the deliberate construction of new identities that will permit women to take greater control over their own lives while not necessarily moving towards the development of modernized identities.<sup>32</sup> This could perhaps be done through building on their own culture to form identities that do not totally reject their traditions, while allowing women greater social mobility, perhaps using concepts developed elsewhere in the South, such as autonomy (i.e. their control over their own lives).

Women can only start to make conscious identity changes with the goal of improving their levels of autonomy if they can construct a strong theoretical basis, such as has been developed through women's movements in other countries, including the South (see below). It would not be necessary for the majority of the women to do this. The support of a significant enough minority might be enough to produce positive change.

#### *4. A women's movement in Tajikistan?*

The new situation in Tajikistan, including the greater exposure to the outside world, may lead the way for women to start new ways of thinking about their identity. As yet, Tajikistan does not have a

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<sup>31</sup> Not just in Muslim societies. In the case of Tajikistan, this may be influenced by the contacts many young men from the opposition have had with military Islamists in Afghanistan.

<sup>32</sup> Modernized identities in the sense of more Westernized ones that often carry with them tremendous social dislocations.

women's movement of its own. In fact there is a very negative perception of female emancipation and women's movements in general. The latter were portrayed in the Soviet Union in very disapproving terms and still have the reputation there of being aimed at making women into men.<sup>33</sup> In Tajikistan, as in other Muslim countries, the Western women's movements have the added reputation of promoting sexual promiscuity.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, there is not much more respect for the Soviet path to female emancipation. To Tajiks, Russian women also appear promiscuous. What is more, Soviet emancipation has been largely discredited in Tajikistan both because of its attacks on the traditional gender identities and its association with women's double shift of housework and paid work.

The fact that women's movements exist in the countries of the developing world, including many Muslim countries, is unknown to most Tajiks who associate such countries with veiled and down-trodden women, not with feminism. However, contact with women's movements from countries where the lifestyles and ideal identities resemble those of Tajikistan could be highly significant. Their concepts and tactics should be easier to adapt to the Tajik situation than those of Western feminism. Also such contact with the East will show Tajiks that, Soviet prejudice notwithstanding, Asians are not culturally backward and do not need to rely on Europeans to help them develop social movements. This should aid in re-legitimizing Tajik culture that was denied validity by the Russocentric Soviet regime.

This does not mean that Tajik women cannot benefit by contact with Western feminism. Although much of its context and content are alien to the Tajik experience, much of the research and the theoretical explorations of Western feminism can be useful to Tajik women scholars in working out their own strategies. However, as activists, Tajik women can gain more from the Asian women's

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<sup>33</sup> One young man told me that he was against the women's movement for this reason. Why specifically, I asked? "Well, women are even allowed to drive cars. That is dreadful." "What is so dreadful about that?" I asked. But the young man did not know.

<sup>34</sup> Many people, even Westerners, confuse the Western women's movement and the sexual revolution. This has meant that in the minds of many Tajiks the Western women's movement is often associated largely with the soft pornography of B movies.

movements which, like those in other parts of the South, are at present far more vital and positive than those in the West.

One of the seminal moments in the Southern women's movement was the seminar on feminist ideology held in Bangkok in 1979. Here they came up with two basic long-term goals which have yet to be supplanted:

1. "Freedom from oppression involves not only equity, but also the right of women to freedom of choice and the power to control their own lives within and outside of the home. Having control over their own lives and bodies is essential to ensure a sense of dignity and autonomy for every woman."

2. "The second goal of feminism is the removal of all forms of inequity and oppression through the creation of a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally. This means the involvement of women in national liberation struggles, in plans for national development, and in local and global strategies for change" (Jayawardena 1982, vi).

The adoption of similar goals could be an important step forward for any women's movement to be formed in Central Asia. However, to get to the point where this will be possible will require a long, hard struggle with hardened reactionary thought-patterns left over from Soviet times, before even beginning to deal with the problems inherent in the Tajik culture itself.

There is a growing number of women's non-governmental organizations in Tajikistan, mainly concentrated in the two largest towns, Dushanbe and Hujant. These organizations have varied goals and approaches. They include a women's resource center in Dushanbe (containing literature on women from the FSU, the West, and the South), crisis centers, organizations concentrating on legal reform, etc. A network of women's organizations has been formed. The members meet regularly in Dushanbe and exchange information and build strategies for mutual co-operation.

However, these organizations are as yet nowhere near being able to formulate their own ideological basis. In fact, they are not even consciously trying to do this, since they have not been able to shake off the ideological boundaries inculcated by the Soviet regime. Their members do not appear to be dissatisfied with their own gender identities and have little sympathy with helping uneducated girls and women to make changes in theirs, other than encouraging them to follow the path the Soviet system laid down as the

way to liberation. They have not yet realized that the reason for the failure of women's emancipation under the Soviet regime lay not in the backwardness of the Tajik culture but in the whole Soviet approach.

This saw only a very narrow material cause for women's subordination and refused totally to deal with any other aspects of it. After more than seven decades of "emancipation", Soviet women still expect to take full responsibility for all domestic work. Few men make any attempt to help in the home and with child-rearing (cf. Bridger 1996). In the republics of the FSU even today, there is virtually no discussion of gender relations, men's place in the home and fathering, domestic violence, rape, child abuse, and the many other similar subjects that have long entered social and political discourse in the West. Here there has been no influence of the sort of social movements, especially the civil rights and women's movements, that have transformed public discourse in the West. While in Russia and some of the other republics there is a small number of women who have learned new ideas from the Western women's movements and are starting to build movements of their own, in Tajikistan this has yet to make any significant impact even on those women who run women's NGOs, much less on the population at large.

The discourse remains at the Soviet level and is very strongly that of the enlightened urban educated woman pushing her own middle-class interests or else acting charitably towards those less well off than herself, much on the lines that the bourgeoisie took with working-class women in late nineteenth-century England. And the consequences are the same. Working-class and peasant women obviously resent and reject the authoritarian, culturally hegemonic manner of the more educated.

The lessons learned from women's movements elsewhere teach us that in Tajikistan also change must come from within each separate group of women and answer their own internal needs. Nevertheless, the more educated women can make a real contribution by making a very serious effort to develop their own women's movement while at the same time making space for, and encouraging, grass-roots women's movements, especially in rural areas.

Whether there will ever be a women's movement in Tajikistan remains to be seen. However, it is likely that it will take a younger

generation of women not exposed to Soviet ideology before a significant movement can arise to help women in the active and conscious construction of new gender identities. Without such a movement, the conscious formation of identities in the post-Soviet era will remain in the hands of male political forces. These are unlikely to be favorable to women.

### *5. Conclusion*

Only when the uneducated majority of Tajik women, both urban and rural, begin to develop their own conscious approach to considering what it means to be a woman in Tajikistan in this new era will it be possible for a mass movement to evolve, or at least for the women of Tajikistan to be able to take an active part in the construction of the new Tajik nation. Certainly at present women are being excluded from this, as they were from the old one. The government's much-voiced concern over the fate of women remains at the level of discourse and in any case continues to be Soviet in both form and content. In this environment, there has been no more attempt to include women in decision-making than there was in the Soviet Union. Neither the few female parliamentary deputies nor the one female minister have a real place in the top strata of politics.

In order for a women's movement to have a positive effect on the construction of post-Soviet feminine identities, it will be necessary for it to have a positive effect on the construction of post-Soviet Tajikistan. The Russian women's movement has adopted the slogan "Democracy minus women is not democracy" (Moscow Center for Gender Studies 1993). Perhaps Tajikistan could similarly develop a slogan on the lines of "a nation minus its women is not a nation."

The problem is how to do that within its own culture. Having resisted the pernicious effects of modernization throughout the whole of the Soviet era, it would be a shame to see Tajik women succumb to them now. But it would be a greater shame to allow themselves to be pushed back toward even more repression. Can Tajik women overcome the difficulties of working out new identities in a meaningful way, one that does not continue to reproduce structural inequalities, within a culture whose "ideal" feminine

identities depend on at least outward obedience to males, and especially elders? This is a question that can only be answered by the women themselves and then only in time.

However, since gender identities do not exist in a socio-economic and political vacuum, women will not be free to choose at will whatever identities they like. They will only be able to negotiate within certain, probably quite narrow, margins. But the margins themselves may also be negotiable. If the women of Tajikistan can make a concerted attempt consciously to create positive change for themselves, they will also be in a position to influence the future development of the Tajik state. If not, they may well find themselves excluded once more not only from political influence, but from all public life. Therefore, the gender identities that will be assumed in the new Tajikistan cannot be separated from the question of whether the republic will take the path towards becoming a modern, industrialized nation, go down the road that will lead them to becoming yet another poor developing country (possibly with strong Islamist tendencies), or find some hitherto unexplored and perhaps culturally richer and more satisfactory "third way".

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# HOMELAND WITHIN HOMELAND: WOMEN AND THE FORMATION OF UZBEK NATIONAL IDENTITY<sup>1</sup>

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The discourses and norms which refer to gender are not central only to the self-definition of social groups. Gender also affects state origins, access to the state, and state resource allocation. States are shaped by gender struggles. Similarly, in the nation-building process, gender plays an important role insofar as it is central to the self-definition of social groups.<sup>2</sup> In this respect, women usually become the source of cultural identity and hence the target of various political goals in both state and nation-building processes. On the one hand, they represent the difference of one community from other communities and hence become boundary markers; on the other hand they function as the bearers of culture.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The data on which this article is based were collected during fieldwork carried out by Özataş in Tashkent, basically in two *mahallas*, Kokcha and Islam, in the autumn of 1995 for her MA thesis. See Özataş (1997). Özataş would like to thank KORA (Center for Black Sea and Central Asia) of the Middle East Technical University (METU) for securing a TICA (Turkish International Cooperation Agency) grant, which made her fieldwork in Uzbekistan possible. She would also like to thank the Gender and Women's Studies Program of METU for providing the opportunity.

<sup>2</sup> See Parpart and Staudt (1990). For the gendering of national identity, see, for example, McClintock (1993) and Sharp (1996). Familial connotations of nationhood are extensively discussed by Anderson (1983). On the same subject, see Moghadam (1994).

<sup>3</sup> Yuval-Davis and Anthias, for example, in their pioneering work classify the roles attributed to women in ethnic and national processes. Women are: biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities; reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups; central participants in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and transmitters of its culture; signifiers of ethnic/national differences; and participants in national, economic, political, and military struggles (1989, 7-10).

As Koreteyeva and Makarova (1995) point out, the process of nation-building involves many aspects, such as “ascription of official status to one language, promotion of national cadres, large-scale invention of ‘national’ festivals, and rewriting of histories”. This is generally accompanied by a search for origin(ality), essence, and authenticity. We argue that this is especially the case when it occurs in concomitance with an independence movement, as with Uzbekistan. The restoration of the national tradition tends to coincide with indigenization, and this causes the nation to differentiate itself from its manifestation under its former ruler in order to construct its own identity.<sup>4</sup> Thus, imagining the boundaries of nations, in the sense used by Benedict Anderson (1983), which involves the determination of where the homelands of those imagined communities will be, is another task in the accomplishment of the process of nation-building and nation-state building.

In this article, we want to argue that the post-Soviet Uzbekistan, in its search for a national identity, appropriates a specific local institution, the *mahalla*, the neighborhood community, as the most basic unit in the course of imagining the boundaries of their homeland, in order to preserve their national identity and make it “eternal,” or, as it is said in Uzbekistan, make it their “eternal legacy” (Mirolimov 1994). Thus, this article focuses on the place of women in the *mahalla*. We examine the parameters of the formation of Uzbek national identity from the point of view of everyday social practices, which we believe constitute the most important aspect of national identity formation, not only in terms of rendering this process thinkable, but also in making us understand the ways in which gender identity of women operates as a linkage between micro and macro practices of power exercised to maintain the new national order of Uzbek society.

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<sup>4</sup> For the theoretical discussion of indigenization, we mainly rely on Chatterjee (1990; 1993) and Anderson (1983).

*The Mahalla**Sening kochang, senin mahallang bormu?**Özbek tarihige alokhan bormu?*(Do you have a street, a *mahalla* where you belong?Do you have any interest in Uzbek history?)<sup>5</sup>

The *mahalla*, according to Uzbeks, is “a style of living”, the most appropriate one for “Eastern living conditions”. This understanding also prevails in official discourse. President Islam Karimov states: “*Mahalla* is the mirror of our socio-political life. Our people’s most valuable traditions, customs, and solidarity in both good and bad times are clearly seen in *mahalla* life” (Mirolimov 1994, 3). Similarly, for Kazim Tolaganov, then mayor of Tashkent, *mahallas* are the places where the true self and cultural heritage of the Uzbek nation are preserved and strengthened. According to Tolaganov, these are significant social and political units or “cells” which help in the creation of independence ideology and the training of youth. They also facilitate the application of laws and Karimov’s *fermans* promoting the self-governance of the citizens and the restoration of peace and order (Mirolimov 1994, 5-6). Shavkat Miralimov, the Uzbek author of *Mahalla Mehri* (The affection of the *mahalla*), defines *mahalla* as “a homeland within a homeland”, which prevented the Russification of the Uzbeks by preserving the spiritual culture, the glorified history, the language, and the religion of the Uzbek nation.

However, the *mahalla* was also used in the Soviet period (1924-1991) as a bureaucratic means of penetration into the lives of the local population. The Soviet administration reshaped this local institution to fit its ideological program. Its official recognition as a controlling body made the *mahalla* the social unit of the city. Hence, the functions of the *mahalla* were legalized. The Soviet administration preserved the *mahalla* structure in the old parts of the cities and built high rise apartment buildings in the new areas, with the hope of introducing new settlement patterns, but was unable to prevent the persistence of *mahalla* organization. Changes were made in both the old and the new *mahalla* arrangements. The

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<sup>5</sup> Sulton Akbariy, cited in Mirolimov (1994, 15); translation by Özataş.

traditional head of the community, *oqsoqol*,<sup>6</sup> was kept, but rather than being elected, he was appointed by the regional party committee. The “*mahalla* committee” was introduced ostensibly to help the *oqsoqol*, which fitted the traditional form of communal organization. The function of the committee was to organize ideological campaigns, lectures and seminars to train and socialize people. It informed the higher Soviet institutions about the activities of the *mahalla* and thus provided them with a functional means of controlling the daily activities of people. Although the committee members were appointed by the elders of the *mahalla*, they could only do this in cooperation with representatives of the regional Soviet or the city Soviet. The committees regulated the daily lives of the *mahalla* members, shaped public opinion, and policed the observation of norms of behavior. Women were and still are rarely chosen for these committees.

The new independent Uzbek state is also encouraging and developing this traditional institution in the course of its search for legitimacy. According to Koroteyeva and Makarova (1995), it appeals to popular tradition and appropriates the real form of people’s life. After independence, however, *mahallas* became more autonomous. Whereas in the Soviet system there was a one-way relationship between the state and the *mahalla*, an attempt is being made to establish a two-way relationship between the two in the new order. According to Article 105 of the Constitution, *mahallas* are defined as the institutions through which Uzbek citizens govern themselves. The *oqsoqol* and the members of the *mahalla* committee are elected by the *mahalla* members for a two-and-a-half-year period (Mirolimov 1994, 37). Mirolimov argues that the self-governance through *mahallas* became possible only after independence and quotes President Karimov’s speech where he pointed out the increasing importance of *mahallas* in this regard and took the opportunity to extend his gratitude and respect to *mahallas*, for, he claimed, “We all grew up in *mahallas*” (Mirolimov 1994, 38-9). The new government still informs the citizens and tries to shape public opinion through its activities in the *mahallas*. However, the authoritative character of the former administration is being reshaped.

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<sup>6</sup> Literally ‘white-beard’. The name indicates not only the traditional nature of the hierarchical organization of the *mahalla*, which is based on age, but it also shows that authority belongs to men.

In the daily life of Uzbek people, the *mahalla* is a real group, determining the daily social relations of individuals, placing obligations and responsibilities upon them in exchange for support and services, and it provides unity and solidarity. Members celebrate weddings and festivals, organize rituals and funerals together, and help one another when needed. In each *mahalla*, there is a community center, the so-called *camoat markazi* with its *masjid* (little mosque),<sup>7</sup> or a room in the administrative building set aside for praying, and the *choyhona* (the tea-house). *Mahallas* possess a whole range of objects such as tables, benches and kitchen utensils that are at the disposal of members for weddings and other ceremonies. There are certain people who specialize in important cultural rituals such as circumcision, praying, mourning, and cooking on specific social occasions in each *mahalla*. Members are practically obliged to participate in communal ceremonies (wedding, circumcision, birth, called *tois*), festivals, as well as street cleaning and building public buildings such as the *masjid* and *choyhona*. As a member from Islam *mahalla* put it, for instance, they think that each member of *mahalla* "owes" these services to his/her neighbors. The sanction is exclusion from communal life and the loss of its support. The Russian ethnographer Poliakov writes: "Any violation of the *mahalla's* way of doing things is inescapably followed by punishment in the form of social censure and shunning of the violator's home by the other residents" (1992, 78). He goes on to say that even if a person moves to another *mahalla*, which rarely happens, his bad reputation follows him.

The new Uzbek nation-state allows the Uzbek people to articulate their actual demands and problems to the upper levels of the state through the communicative mechanisms of the *mahalla*, hence appropriating it as an effective intermediary social institution as well as a prototype for a civil society. The *mahalla*, which was formerly used to represent what is local at the center and vice versa, has now started to represent what is construed as national, independent and sovereign in the new Uzbek life.

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<sup>7</sup> In the Uzbek context, the term *masjid* is applied a prayer room but a distinction is made between a simple prayer room and the *masjid*, the latter functioning more or less as a mosque, though a little one without a minaret. It serves as a mosque in the sense that it allows people to gather not only for prayer, but also for listening to sermons, etc.

*Women in the Mahalla*

As they gain a new importance in the process of nationalization, women play a greater role in the *mahalla* life of independent Uzbekistan, both in organizational and functional terms. The new state has introduced Women's Committees which operate at the *mahalla* level, a considerable advance over the Women's Committees which were introduced by the Soviet administration. Following a decree of President Karimov on 2 March 1995, a female vice-chair is compulsory for each administrative unit (*mahalla*, *rayon*, province), thus providing women with much more authority.

The *Mahalla* Women's Committees are linked to the *Rayon* Women's Committees (composed of ten to fifteen *mahallas*) which are in turn linked to the Metropolitan Women's Committees. Finally, all Metropolitan Women's Committees are linked to the Central Women's Committee in Tashkent. It should be noted that as well as *Mahalla* Women's Committees, there are also Women's Committees in factories, universities, institutes, and workplaces.

A *Mahalla* Women's Committee is composed of eight or ten members who have different roles and functions and who are elected according to the advice of *mahalla* inhabitants.<sup>8</sup> As for their functions, a woman may carry out the task of organizing socially significant days (such as celebrations of holy feasts and weddings, funeral prayers and so on). Others may be responsible for the inhabitants of the *mahalla* and should know the living conditions and problems of each family. On each street in the *mahalla*, there are men and women, the so-called *koche bashligi* (head of the street), responsible for that specific street, who guide and counsel its inhabitants and who provide information for the members of the Women's Committees. The primary function of the Women's Committee is to advise and help families on every issue. This includes finding jobs for the unemployed and supporting the poor financially. Thus an Uzbek proverb says: "Each child has seven parents in the *mahalla*." The poor, families with many children, and widows were being paid 400 *soms* a month in 1995 in accordance with Karimov's order. This is organized by the *oqsoqol* and the Committee, which is familiar with the living conditions of each and

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<sup>8</sup> Members were not paid, but a government decision on the matter was pending when this research was being conducted.

every inhabitant. Committee members have additional functions such as giving advice on childcare or mediating in wife-husband and bride-mother-in-law disagreements. They also organize meetings, "question-answer" evenings and seminars for women. They invite doctors, lawyers, pedagogues, and specialists to these meetings. They talk on issues supposed to be "necessary for women", e.g.: "What should a good woman be like?"; "What should be the relationship between bride and mother-in-law?"; and "How should daughters be brought up?"

Although women seem to be active at every level of daily life in *mahallas*, *mahalla* organization does not incorporate every women of the *mahalla* into public life as such, in the largest sense of the term, but provides them with a space the meaning of which is rather determined within the confines of what is usually called private, though with wider boundaries and scope of activities. This is mostly reflected in the segregation that men and women utilize to enhance their social identity. The community center, the *masjid* or the praying room, and the *choyhona* are by definition men's places. Women have limited access to them only on specific occasions. There is a rigid sexual division of labor internalized and reproduced by both women and men. It is widely held that household chores and child-rearing are women's duties even if they are employed outside the home. More importantly, such familial functions are seen as a way of serving men while mindfully, rather than ironically, saying: "It is in Uzbek women's blood to serve men." Modesty, chastity, tenderness, sacrifice, orderliness, cleanliness and being hardworking are stated as the common features of Uzbek women and are highly valued. They are seen as requirements for a socially acceptable woman. Moreover, they are held to be the main characteristics which differentiate Uzbek women from Russian and/or Russified Uzbek women, who are categorically differentiated as women who smoke, wear make-up, dye their hair, do not do housework, and the like. Thus, if identity is construed in a relational way, Uzbek women identify themselves in respect to their Russian "other" in this ongoing process of both nation and national-identity building.

The parameters of Uzbek womanhood that are primarily determined within the activities and discourses of the *mahalla* are not confined to this web of locality, but are also approved by the popular media, and hence have become a meta-discourse which

circulates nationwide and superimposes itself on the local. Discussions about the proper behavior for a woman, about female labor participation, or about issues associated with being modern (such as cutting and dying hair) frequently take place in the print media, especially in *Saodat*, the popular women's journal, widely read among women *mahalla* members. *Saodat* also publishes didactic stories about relationships within the family, stories on historical Uzbek characters who are predominantly male, and practical knowledge on cooking, sewing, and childcare. It also depicts women of high position, demonstrating that they also act in conformity with modesty codes. In this way, a specific type of essential femininity of women is also fixed at the public level.

### *Redefinition of femininity*

The *mahalla* activities help and even determine the new definition of femininity both by creating different spaces for men and women and by attributing to them different roles and functions. This new conception of femininity provides the basis for national identity and new national Uzbek women. In post-Soviet Uzbekistan the stress on femininity is important in the sense that it denotes the position of the new regime vis-à-vis the "woman question". In the new Uzbek society, as Nanette Funk writes for post-communist states in general, "One response to state socialist conditions for women has been a strong essentialism: a position that women are, by nature, different from men, [a] difference the previous system failed to acknowledge" (1993, 6). In this context, women resent the androgynous conception of equality that was imposed upon them in the Soviet period. One of the major issues of the woman question in Uzbek society is the understanding of equality as identical treatment. This is where the "discourse of protection", which is a major component of the debates on the woman question, emanates from.<sup>9</sup> Women are granted a number of facili-

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<sup>9</sup> In the Soviet period, Uzbek women suffered a great deal by being forced to overwork under extremely bad, unhealthy conditions, especially in the agricultural sector. They were deprived of any autonomy in their lives and could not rely on their own traditional devices. Before independence, the suicide rate among women, including self-immolation to protest their living conditions, was very high, as was the child mortality rate. Women were caught between two oppressive systems

ties by the state: the principles of the Central Women's Committee promote equal rights, provide facilities for women, and protect women and children.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, the main emphasis is on the protection of mothers and children. Working Uzbek women have maternity leave for three years, two years paid and one unpaid. They can keep their jobs during this leave. There are kindergartens for children over three years old. The state pays mothers a family allowance for each child under sixteen.<sup>11</sup> In this way, it is believed

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of patriarchal control, one local, one Soviet. For an extensive discussion of the formation of the demands for the protection of Uzbek women see Vasikova (1994). Lissyutkina writes that, starting from the perestroika period, "Emancipation for Soviet women is not based upon a demand to work. On the contrary, liberation is perceived by many as the right not to work" (1993, 274). For a similar discussion, see Molyneux (1996, 307-8).

<sup>10</sup> According to Article 46 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, accepted on 8 December 1992, women and men have equal rights. In addition, Article 63 states that the family constitutes the basis of society and is vital in the preservation of the state and the society. The same article provides men and women with equal rights in marriage; and the consent of both parties is needed for the marital union. These provisions for basic rights and the emphasis on the family are no different from the Soviet legislation. The legal duty of the family in the Article 1 of the new Family Code is to raise children to have a socially desirable demeanor, that is, the child should be loyal to his/her country, industrious, responsible, and humanistic. However, the rights and interests of mother and children should also be protected (Article 5), and harmful residuals, customs, and traditions of the past should be removed (Articles 1 and 4). It is interesting to remember that the concept of emancipation from the "past" was first introduced in the Soviet period to provide a break from traditional bonds. However, in the national context, the "past" is both the Soviet period and the pre-Soviet period where patriarchal norms not only determined daily life but also the legal status of men and women in the society. Although the new Uzbek state displays a paternalistic outlook, especially towards women and children, justifying this by the demands of women concerning protection, it also wants to demonstrate its determination to remain a "modern" state.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Article 189 of the Labor Code is designed to protect pregnant women, including their transfer to "easier" jobs in some medically required situations while preserving their posts and paying the same wage. Article 191 of the Labor Code regulates pregnancy and maternity leave. Pregnant women have 70 days paid leave before the birth and 56 days paid leave after it. If there is any medical complication during the birth, they may have 70 days more paid leave; the same applies if twins are born. In addition, women have the right to take partially paid leave until their children reach two years of age, and another year of unpaid leave. If the father, grandmothers, or other relatives are responsible for looking after the newborn, this person is also entitled to benefit from these rights (Article 197 of the Labor Code). Article 199 of the same code regulates the rights of mothers in their places of work, which are all designed to allow women to take care of their children while they are working.

that the necessary conditions are provided for women to get an education or work while bringing up their children. In addition to reinforcement mechanisms such as family allowances, according to the law decreed on 7 May 1993 it was declared that administrators and employers who work for the proper protection of mothers and children will be awarded a national medal called *Soglom Avlod Uchun Ordeni* (Medal For Stronger Offspring). With all these decrees and regulations, what is most important is to protect and strengthen Uzbek customs and traditions and to preserve the Uzbek people from the impacts of cultural remnants of Russification by helping women. Thus, for example, the birth rate should not be controlled just because of the population policies of the state but, more importantly, because such control can also shape the moral and physical "quality" of coming generations.

Here, the *mahalla* functions as an institution of patriarchal control and represents the public face of family while preserving the basic distribution of roles between men and women. In this respect, it is important to see the ways in which the common dichotomy built on the differences between public and private spheres takes a rather paradoxical form depending on the meanings and functions which are attributed to *mahalla*. On the one hand, it constitutes the most immediate public space which allows the Uzbek people to actualize their public identity. On the other, insofar as it operates like an extended family by providing people with not only a kind of familial support but also a basic sense of solidarity and social belonging, it performs the functions which are usually seen as the functions of the private sphere. This double function of the *mahalla*, as we have indicated above, has been perpetuated by its conceptualization as "a homeland within a homeland", in which people are expected to acquire the basic components of their national identity. Thus, we argue that in Uzbek society it is in this context that it becomes possible for women to be construed as the locus of continuum between micro and macro practices of power and serve to homogenize the nation by being the carriers of the essentials of culture.

*Recapturing Islam in mahalla life*

However, the Uzbek woman is not just a national woman; she is also a Muslim woman. Religion is one of the major components of national identity in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. Religious activity is on the rise among the population in general, as well as in women's everyday *mahalla* life. In this regard, it can be said that there were two approaches among the members of the two *mahallas* where this study was undertaken. Although they all agreed that the influence of Islam is increasing in their lives today, some of them argued that because Islam had been outlawed in the Soviet period they had been unable to learn and practice their religion, but now they have the opportunity to do so; while others argued that the religion was always there but survived underground, always allowing them to preserve their spiritual essence.<sup>12</sup> In either case, regret for the past appears to be a common sentiment mixed with the enthusiasm and pride that they have today for their Islamic identity. For example, one extreme case was the lamentations of an old retired female professor of gynecology who prayed to God each day to be forgiven because she cured Russians as well as Uzbeks.

Women try to learn and actualize Islam in deed and thought as an ordinary but important part of their *mahalla* life. Female preachers, called *otin-oyi* in vernacular Uzbek, voluntarily provide women and girls with religious training. Usually each *mahalla* has its own female preacher, but sometimes two or three *mahallas* share one. Religious training in the *mahalla* is not compulsory but voluntary. It is free because female preachers do not accept money, but they do accept gifts. They have not usually received a formal religious training because this was not available in the Soviet period unlike in the present independent Uzbekistan. In one of the *mahallas*, Islam, women gathered once a week in the praying room of the administrative building. This room belongs to women only on Saturdays. Women are usually taught the Arabic alphabet and introduced to the Qur'an, to the fundamentals of Shari'a (Islamic law), and to Islamic morality and proper behavior. The women attending these gatherings were generally in their fifties or older. It was said that this was because the younger women were students or

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<sup>12</sup> For religious resurgence in Uzbekistan, see Malashenko (1993) and Abdvakhitov (1993).

working women and/or had little children. But in this particular *mahalla*, they were planning in the near future a separate class to provide religious education for young women as well.

At both the national level and in the *mahallas*, female preachers are highly respected and consulted. In *mahalla* religious gatherings, after reading the Qur'an, women have tea together, a well-known ritual in Central Asia, eat breakfast and chat. During these conversations, the preacher tells didactic stories about proper and improper behavior according to Islam and talks about their respective rewards and punishments. This is usually followed by exemplary cases taken by the audience from their own lives or from what they had heard. These gatherings take place in a highly emotional atmosphere in which weeping is commonplace. They usually end with a collective prayer, after which women extend their thanks to God. Hence, religion in general, and religious gatherings in particular, have become an integral part of the *mahalla* life of women, whether they are regular attendants at these gatherings or not. The daily discourse prevalent at the *mahalla* level is filled with religious motifs, questions, and sanctions, and having religious knowledge leads to the attainment of a new type of social respect and status.

*"Learning our religion": Women's religious education*

*The Medrese*

Uzbek women try to learn Islam both at the women's sections of the medrese, where available, and from the female preachers, *otin-oyis*, of individual *mahallas*, and then actualize it in deed and thought. For instance, in the Kokaldash Medrese of Tashkent, there is a women's section which consisted of five groups in three different grades at the time when this research was conducted. The first grade was composed of two groups of women with between twenty and twenty-two women in each. There was only one group in the second grade, which consisted of twenty-five women, and there were two groups of twenty women in the third grade. The women were predominantly secondary school graduates and most of them were aged sixteen or seventeen. There were also graduates of the Institute of Pedagogy, but these were only a minority. Some

students were from other cities of Uzbekistan and stayed in the dormitories. The course of education at the medrese is usually four years. There are classes five days a week from 2 to 5 p.m. and no classes were held on Fridays and Saturdays.<sup>13</sup> At this medrese, unlike others, the Arabic language was taught and books were read in the original as well as from translations. In the fall of 1995, the education was at the secondary level but a higher level was being planned. It was argued that the medrese provided women with “scientific education”, though the scarcity of properly educated teachers was also evident.<sup>14</sup>

The Director (Ilmiy Mudir) of the medrese, Muhammad Amin, stated that the medrese had been established approximately 500 years ago but was closed for 70 years, throughout the Soviet era. It was re-opened in 1990 and started functioning in 1991. Since it was considered part of the historical and cultural heritage, the government started to restore it in 1992. The medrese will also provide courses in *dunyaviy ilmlar* (humanities); for example, history, geography and English. The instructors give exams every three months and evaluate them out of 100 points. The graduates of the medrese receive diplomas or certificates and become *mudarrisa*. The director pointed out that the graduates could become religious teachers at secondary schools, translators or imams with the permission of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Diniy Nazarat). They could also call people to Islam. There were as yet no graduates at the time of this research. Education is free at the medrese and the medrese received no revenues or financial support. As the director put it, “After the repression of seventy years, the permission of the state is the most important support.” The state does not provide financial support, but Amin said that “the people themselves do”.

Another medrese in Tashkent, the Yengi Medrese or Ahmadcan Kari Medrese, also provides free and voluntary education for men and women, as it is supported by a waqf. The medrese teaches ritual prayers and the observance of other religious practices as

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<sup>13</sup> Friday is accepted as the weekly day of rest in Islam and is marked by a special Friday prayer in mosques. In secular Muslim societies, such as Turkey, Sunday is the weekly holiday.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, the instructor of the class *Özataş* attended was a nineteen-year-old girl, the youngest instructor at the medrese. Those who know the Qur'an and *fiqh* and are knowledgeable in Islamic protocol may become instructors.

well. According to the instructor, they “teach moral (*ahlaki*) and educational (*maarifî*) issues, the lives of the prophets and the fundamentals of Shari‘a”, and they call people to Islam.

The curriculum included topics such as *Muallim-i Söni* (Farabi), *Ustad-i Avval* (Aristotle), *Tarih-i Muhammad* (history of the Prophet Muhammad), *Ibodati Islomiya* (Islamic worship), *Gunoh Kobirlari* (graves of sin) and also *tecvîd* (reciting the Qur‘an with proper Arabic pronunciation), *kıraat* (the special method of pronouncing each word of the Qur‘an) and *hadis* and *sunnat* (the study of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad), and of course the Qur‘an. The books were provided free and the medrese had its own library as well.

### *Popular publications*

In addition to the education provided by medreses (though quite modest in range and scope) and the *otin-oyis* of *mahallas*, religious education is complemented by books which are popularly read by both women and men. These books can be divided into four categories. The first category includes those which teach the Muslim religion, its rules and requirements, such as *Musulmonchilikdan İlk Caboklar* (First Lessons from Muslimhood), *303 Cavolga 303 Cavob* (303 Answers for 303 Questions), *Islom Dini Nima?* (What is Islam?).

*Musulmonchilikdan İlk Caboklar* (1992) teaches the basic Islamic concepts such as *Alloh Taolo* (God the Most High), *İmon* (faith), *Kufr va Shirk* (heresy and polytheism), “*Paygambarlar*” (the prophets), *İlohiy Kitoblar* (the holy books), *Kur‘oni Karim* (Holy Qur‘an), *Hadisi Sharif-Sunnat* (sayings and deeds of Muhammad), *Fikh* (Muslim jurisprudence), *Halol va Harom* (licit and illicit), *Kiyamat Kuni* (Doomsday). In the introduction the authors, Abdulaziz Mansur and Bakhmanyar Shokir, thank God for the resurgence of interest in religion (1992, 3). They describe how the Uzbek people have begun to live as if they have been reborn through finding their lost spiritual essence, their most precious treasure, while addressing the issue of independence for Uzbekistan. They point out, however, that not everyone knows the rules and laws of religion and Shari‘a well. The knowledgeable ones inform the people as much as they can in *masjids*, medreses, and gatherings, but according to the authors, such things have to be

written and recorded for the public interest. They state that their book introduces the first lessons to young ones.

*303 Cavolga 303 Cavob* (n.d) also deals with the issues of *namoz* (ritual prayer), *taloq* (repudiation, divorce of a wife by her husband), *halol/ harom* (licit/illicit) and *haya* (shame, modesty) by giving answers to frequently asked questions. *Islom Dini Nima?* (n.d) introduces the concepts of *iymon* (faith), *poklik* (cleanliness), *gusl* (total ablution), *tahorat* (canonical purification of the body), *namoz* (ritual prayer), *suralar* (suras of the Qur'an), as well as the Arabic alphabet.

In addition, there are books that teach morality (*ahlok*) and proper behavior (*odob*) which can also be included in the first category of books. *Ilmi Ahlok* (1994) teaches children about good and bad habits, cleanliness, religious beliefs, obedience, respect, loyalty, and tenderness. Similarly, the anonymous book *Odobnoma* (Book of etiquette; n.d) teaches the specifics of proper and ethical behavior to the general public. In the introduction, referring to Hoci Sotimhon Munavvar, it is argued that the thought of *odob-ahlok* (good manners and ethics) has national, philosophical, political and practical aspects. The author further points out the differences between different peoples, nations and communities as regards the concept of ethics. For instance, he says the Russians are taught to start every thing or action from the left whereas they (Muslims) start from the right. Likewise, Christians drink to the memory of their dead in *taziyas* (visits to offer consolation for a loss by death), but alcohol is forbidden for Muslims and they say prayers for the dead ones to consolidate their memories. He claims that people with higher levels of development protect and maintain their own national morality and gives Japanese, Indian and Arab peoples as examples. On the other hand, peoples with lower levels of development are influenced by different nations and peoples and lose their essence.

Finally, Rizouddin Ibn Fakhruddin's *Nasiyhat* (Advice, 1993) teaches children and adolescents the proper ways of behavior. The book consists of three sections: for children, girls, and adolescents. The contents of the sections are very similar, using the same subtitles; the section for girls is more detailed and the one for the adolescents includes advice on marriage and occupation.

The second category of books consists of the those specifically written for women, such as *Akhlu Ayal* (Easy Women), *Tarbiyali*

*Hotun* (Well-behaved Women) and *Oila* (Family), all of which were written by Rizouddin İbn Fakhruddin. In *Akhlu Ayal* (1994), he provides women and girls with knowledge which he thinks will be necessary in their daily lives. He gives advice about family and religion and tells didactic stories to support his arguments.

At the very beginning of the book *Tarbiyali Hotun* (1991), the publishers claim that the book should be in every house and in every woman's hand. Rizouddin İbn Fakhruddin describes marriage as a gift of God and says that both women and men should preserve this gift respectfully (1991, 5-6). Shari'a and reason attribute some responsibilities and duties to women and some to men. In this book, he aims to describe the proper woman and her duties. If women perform their duties properly, they achieve the love and respect of their husbands and are rewarded in the other world. Proper women live better than non-proper women in this world and reach better places in the other world as well. Their names will be mentioned with respect on every occasion in gatherings and will be remembered with prayers. They may even be mentioned in books (1991, 7).

The first feature of the proper woman is her belief (*itikod*). Proper women do whatever Shari'a orders and refrain from doing anything it prohibits. They believe in God, the Prophet, and the Shari'a and do not believe in horoscopes, fortune-telling, and so on. (1991, 7-8). The second feature is obedience (*itoat*). Proper women obey their husbands, if this is not in contradiction with Shari'a and reason, because their husbands have rights over them. They respect and obey their husbands for the mercy of God. Such women will go to heaven. On the other hand, disobedient women and those who go out without their husbands' permission will be damned. There are *hadith* concerning this.

The proper woman, if she is really so, obeys her husband even if the husband is ignorant or immoral (1991, 8-10). Such women should also obey the relatives of their husbands (1991, 10-12). Another feature of proper women is their *sukhbat* (conversation). They talk with well-mannered women and refrain from interacting with women of bad habits. They even refrain from letting such women enter their homes in case they are devils. Moreover, proper women keep secrets (1991, 12-14), and they are content with what they have (*kanoat*) (1991, 15). They do not spend much and are careful (*itidol*) (1991, 16-17). They are clean and tidy and their

womanhood is visible in this way. They should keep their homes and themselves clean and attractive for their husbands. They should refrain from using other people's hair (*wig*) which is not clean. They should not wear make-up or dye their hair because such materials are not healthy for the skin and hair. They should keep their teeth clean for both appearance and health and take care of their hair (1991, 18-20).

*Haya* and *iffat* (shame and virtue) are two more features for proper women. Neither man nor society will accept a corrupt woman. God will damn her as well. A pure woman will be respected even if she is poor and a corrupt one will not be respected even if she is rich (1991, 20-1). Proper women do not gossip or lie. Lying to men is an even worse sin. Finally, a proper woman protects her health, which is a gift of God. Otherwise, she commits a sin by not respecting God (1991, 24-6).

At the bottom of every page of *Tarbiyali Hotun*, there are *hadiths* generally supporting the ideas of the author, such as: "The most precious person for a woman is her husband, and for a man his mother"; "Do favor to your mother first, then to your father"; "A woman going out without her husband's permission is damned by God"; "Do not hit women who are the weaker people of God"; "A woman with many children has a special place before God"; "I want my people [*umma*] to be crowded on doomsday"; "Keep your teeth clean"; "When you sell a house, buy another one with the money. Otherwise your money will not provide you with prosperity"; "Those who wash their hands after going to the toilet and who clean their teeth after having a meal are the good ones among my *umma*"; "If men and women treat each other tenderly and with affection, all their sins will flow from their fingers."

In *Oila* (Family, 1991), Rizouddin Ibn Fakhruddin deals with issues of women and family, women and *tarbiya*, bringing up children in good and bad ways, the duties and responsibilities of women, science and women, the duties of men, divorce, polygamy, and the responsibilities of parenthood. He considers marriage to be as important as building a nation (1991, 7). He sees women as the family. If the man is the head of household, the woman is the director of it. He thinks women are dutiful soldiers. According to his views, one can understand a nation by looking at its women. If the women are well-mannered, the nation is also well-mannered. If the women are thrifty, the nation is rich. If they are profligate, it is

poor (1991, 9). He considers women to be soldiers against poverty (1991, 17).

The third category of popularly read books is composed of general books such as *Özbek Halki Etnografiyasi* (Ethnography of the Uzbek people), *Özbek Udumlari* (Uzbek customs and traditions) with special sections about women and family. These books describe existing codes of behavior and it is possible to find in them clues concerning what is expected from Uzbek women, which this paper attempts to demonstrate.

Finally, there are books specific to women which used to be popular but are criticized now. These are the books that were written in the Soviet period to emphasize the achievements of socialism as well as the ideas of Marx and Lenin about women's emancipation. The religious books described above, which are easy to read and carry around, are widely consumed by the *mahalla* members, especially by women, and they may constitute the basis of the discussions in *mahalla* gatherings about similar subjects. Depending on their degree of education and professional status, women interpret differently the validity and the level of knowledge that such books reveal, yet most of them approve the necessity of their presence, seeing them as one of the basic needs of Uzbek people who were deprived of proper religious knowledge for so long. Furthermore, in spite of their didactic nature, these books try to convey their messages with an affectionate tone, rather than inducing a fear of punishment and/or emphasizing the wrath of God, and this also fosters their easy acceptance. It is not, however, possible to argue that religion has a rather secular outlook in all parts of Uzbekistan and in all sections of Uzbek society. Islamic fundamentalism is not considered by the majority of society to be the natural extension of the people's striving to learn their religion, but more as something imposed upon Uzbek society from outside. Thus, the veiling of women is not a social and political issue for Uzbek society, nor is gender segregation and seclusion of women from the public sphere.

### *Conclusion*

Although there are a few new women's groups that have started to question the future impacts of the paternalistic policies of the

Uzbek state on Uzbek women, in the sense that these can create a new type of dependency that Uzbek women may find themselves trapped in, it is hard to expect in the near future a separate women's movement in post-Soviet Uzbekistan which would reflect on former policies and rhetoric concerning women's emancipation.

Current stress is on respect, patience, contentment, and gratitude, which were said to be the most distinguished characteristics of Uzbek culture and were mainly maintained by Uzbek women. These are not perceived anymore as the national features of Uzbek women *per se*, but as features which are now said to be emanating from Islam. Therefore, we argue that in the new Uzbek society the sense of authenticity which enables the actualization of an imagined national true-self within the confines of a specific locale, the *mahalla*, is starting to be publicly legitimized through the employment of Islamic norms, idioms, and practices. Insofar as this particular role that religion plays in the formation of Uzbek national identity motivates the constitution of new gender identities of women, it also sets the boundaries of their national characteristics. Thus, it seems that the discourses of gratitude and patience which were nurtured by Islam and predominated during the construction of self-images of Uzbek people, both during their struggle for independence and the formation of new social order, operate as one of the most important driving forces in shaping and reshaping the dialogic boundaries of their national identity. It is where women carry the crucial responsibility of sustaining the continuance of national collectivity as well as the eternal legacy of Uzbek culture.

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## GENDER AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN POST-SOVIET AZERBAIJAN: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

NAYEREH TOHIDI

In post-Soviet Azerbaijan, as in other successor states to the Soviet Union, people are going through a semi post-colonial process of constructing a new and independent national identity. In their nation-building attempt, the Azeri elite, predominantly nationalist and male, seek to reassess, re-imagine, and redefine the ethno-cultural and national identity of Azerbaijan. One of the targets or objects of this redefinition is the role of women in society. This, however, has not been a totally one-way process prescribed merely by the male elite. Women have not remained simply as passive objects of nationalist transition, inter-ethnic conflict or international contest. Despite all the odds and limitations, many women in Azerbaijan strive for a subject status and demonstrate a considerable level of agency by taking part in various aspects of socio-economic restructuring and cultural redefinition.

As a borderland, geo-politically and geo-culturally situated between the “East” (Asia) and “West” (Europe), Azerbaijan has a multifaceted national and cultural identity. It is among the most secularized and relatively modernized Islamic republics. The interplay between several domestic and regional factors has shaped the gender dynamics and social status of women in Azerbaijan: including the Caucasian cultural and historic milieu, the Islamic tradition, the Russian political and cultural influence, and Azerbaijani nationalism. The definition of womanhood, manhood and Azerbaijani national identity in Soviet Azerbaijan were construed, in part, in comparison and contrast to the perceived image of the Russian “other”. Women were expected to be the main identity markers, the primary repositories of “authenticity” (*asalat*), tradition, ethnic codes and customs that would demarcate Azerbaijani cultural boundaries from those of Russian rulers.<sup>1</sup>

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Following its independence in 1991 and its entrance into market economy and capitalism, Azerbaijani nationalism is supposedly playing a central role in the democratization of society and in the articulation of its new national identity and gender regime. Yet, as will be discussed later, it is only within a new regional and international context and through a contest with certain new "others" (Turkey, Iran, 'West', and Armenia) that the Azerbaijani "national idea" is being articulated. Similar to many other post-colonial nationalization and democratization processes, these have been based on a male-normative modernism implying an even more unequal gender arrangement than the one in the former Soviet system.

Azerbaijan provides an interesting case for exploring a number of theoretical questions and practical concerns about the relation between women and nationalism in the post-colonial context. Recent feminist studies have demonstrated the gendered nature of nation-building, nationalism, national identity-formation, and inter-ethnic and inter-national processes (e.g., Pateman, 1988; Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989; Kandiyoti, 1991; Peterson & Runyan, 1993; Sharoni, 1993; Moghadam, 1994; and Einhorn, 1996). For example, what can be made of the problematic relationship between nationalism and feminism? Must they always be in opposition? Some feminists have warned women all over the world to be suspicious of locally prevalent pictures of 'national identity' and 'national traditions' because "such images or pictures are used to privilege the views and values of certain parts of the heterogeneous national population as 'definitive' of national life and culture" (Narayan, 1997).

It has been argued that conservative state-nationalist projects can instrumentalize and objectify women or may homogenize and deprive them of their subject status as citizens. Women often play an active, yet secondary and marginal role, in nationalist struggles against colonial or semi-colonial domination.<sup>2</sup> In the often-cited

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Jaquette, 1994, on cases in Latin America and Jayawardena, 1986, on cases in the Middle East and Asia.

case of Algeria, women activists were even pushed back to their domestic role following the victory of nationalists over the colonial forces. Feminist critique of nationalism and its male-centered citizenship precedes modern projects of national independence movements and post-colonial experience. Feminism has been, among other things, a critique of modernity and capitalism in general since both projects were based on a masculine conception of the 'social contract' and 'civil freedom' that presupposed a male-centered "sexual contract" and "patriarchal right" (Pateman, 1988). Extension of the universal suffrage, civil rights and human rights to the female half of the society even in the Western countries began to materialize only thanks to the women's movements and the feminist redefinition of modernity, democracy and citizenship in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the process of post-colonial modern nation-building, women benefited by gaining new rights and improving their educational and employment opportunities precisely because the nationalist elite has seen such an improvement as a necessary prerequisite for national independence, de-colonization and modernization. Furthermore, a growing number of women in post-colonial contexts have negotiated and renegotiated with the nationalist elite for new spaces and diverse identities. By acting within but gradually moving beyond the narrow confines of the role and identity ascribed to women as custodians of national traditions or the embodiment of ethnic or national codes of conduct, some women have succeeded in practically subverting the masculine and homogenizing prescriptions of anti-colonial nationalism. The degree of women's success in moving beyond the boundaries dictated by conservative nationalists, however, has depended on the state gender policies, the strength of civil societies—especially women's NGOs (non-governmental organizations), the institutionalization of democracy, and the legal establishment of human rights at a general level.

This paper will examine how such theoretical patterns and practical issues concerning the gender dimension of nationalism apply to Azerbaijan in its post-Soviet quest for a new national identity. What are the predominant views and images of women and gender relations promoted by the Azerbaijani nationalist elite? What kinds of redefinition of women's roles in society are underway and how do the female and male elites configure these re/definitions within the construction of new national identity? How do women fare in the process of socio-economic transformation and

how do they respond to new opportunities, challenges and adverse impacts of post-Soviet developments?

*Why a regional perspective?*

Azerbaijan, located in the eastern part of the Caucasus, occupies a territory of 33.4 square miles about the size of Portugal. Given the historical background, geopolitical and geocultural situation of Azerbaijan, any nationalist discourse and identity construction in this country would inevitably be a regional process involving the interplay of identity politics in Turkey, Iran, and Russia. Factors that contribute to Azerbaijan's unique geopolitics include the following. First, the Azeris who make up over 83 percent of the population of the Azerbaijan Republic, are Turkic speaking and predominantly Shi'i Muslims who see themselves as a people who were divided up between Russia and Persia in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Over 20 million ethnic Azeris live in Iran and 7.3 million inhabit the Republic of Azerbaijan proper, having undergone nearly two centuries of Russian domination. Second, Azerbaijan forms a borderland between Europe and Asia, Islam and Christianity, Russia and Turkey, Iran and Turkey. The historical, ethnic, and political ties between Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkey and Russia represent a complex legacy that shapes contemporary Azerbaijani society. Third, Azerbaijani politics is deeply enmeshed in present international and regional rivalries over the oil reserves of the Caucasus and Caspian littoral states. And finally, the Armenian-Azerbaijani territorial dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, which again has a regional characteristic involving Russia and Turkey, casts a long shadow over Azerbaijan's society. With some twenty percent of its territory under occupation, one of every seven Azerbaijanis has become a refugee or been internally displaced, of which 55 percent are women and children.<sup>3</sup> It is in such an inter-ethnic, war-stricken, and nationally and inter-nationally contested milieu that women and men in Azerbaijan are going through a semi-decolonization process. All of these factors have turned Azerbaijan into a stage

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<sup>3</sup> For a brief analysis on the Karabakh conflict, see Leila Aliyeva, 1996. For detailed information, see the report by the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *CSCE Digest*, vol. 19, no. 1 (January 1996), 5-14.

upon which regional politics, including gender politics, are played out.

Given Azerbaijan's historical background and present situation, it is only natural that it has maintained a multi-faceted and syncretistic identity, reflecting both the local or indigenous characteristics of the Caucasus and the regional influences of Iran, Turkey and Russia. Azerbaijan's identity in modern times has been shaped and reshaped through several turning points or socio-political crises. The first major turning point as perceived by the Azerbaijanis themselves, was the Russian-Persian wars in the nineteenth century, which resulted in the treaties of Golestan in 1813 and Turkomanchai in 1828, which divided the Azeris to the north and south of the Aras river between Iran and Russia. After that, the "North Azerbaijanis" (under Russia) experienced a process of colonization and modernization first under Russian orthodoxy of Tsarist rule and later under atheistic Soviet style socialism.

The second major turning point was the short period of independence between 1918 and 1920, when the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was formed under the leadership of secular nationalists like Mammad-Amin Rasulzadeh and upon the collapse of the Russian Empire. It is this period to which today's Azerbaijani female and male intellectuals often refer proudly as the most important and inspiring turning point in their modern history. "Rationalism, liberalism and humanism advocated by Bakikhanov, Akhund-zadeh, Topchibashev, Zardabi" and other Azeri intellectuals gave impetus to Azeri nationalism and helped transform the previous religious-based Muslim (*ummat*) identity into a nationality-based Azerbaijani identity (Hadjy-Zadeh, 1998). The formula for a new identity, posited by an Azeri intellectual (Ali bey Hussein-Zadeh) at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was "Turkism, Modernism, and Islam", embodied later in the three-colored flag of the short-lived independent republic of 1918-20 as well as the present independent state. Some Azeri nationalists have characterized this short-lived republic as "the first democratic republic in the entire Muslim world that provided universal suffrage guaranteeing all citizens full civil and political rights regardless of their nationality, religion, social position and sex".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Nasib Nasibzadeh *Azerbaijan Demokratik Respublikasi. Magalalar va Sanadlar* (Baku: Elm, 1990), 44, cited in Swietochowski, 1985, 129.

The third turning point was the Bolsheviks takeover of Baku, which led to the establishment of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan and the seventy years of Soviet era that followed. The fourth and latest turning point began during the disintegration of the Soviet Union when the parliament of Azerbaijan was among the first to adopt a resolution of independence on August 30, 1991.<sup>5</sup> One of the most influential factors in the political process and identity construction of Azerbaijanis since independence has been the bloody conflict with Armenia. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was accompanied by a humiliating territorial loss and the devastating consequences of refugees and internally displaced persons, which have threatened Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and intensified nationalistic sentiments, making the quest for national identity stronger than ever before.

*The impact of transition on women*

The gender-specific effects of post-Soviet developments in Azerbaijan seems to have many common patterns with the ones reported about the former socialist states in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The following adverse effects have so far outnumbered the positive ones, at least in the short-run. 1. Deteriorating living standards and health status for many people, especially women and children; 2. Increasing and disproportional unemployment and poverty among women; 3. Rising 'cult of domesticity' and traditional gender attitudes; 4. Decreasing women's presence in government and formal politics, yet increasing activism of women in informal politics and new civil society; 5. Increasing commercialization of sex, especially trafficking in women's bodies, overt sex-discrimination, sexual harassment, and violence; and 6. Rising identity politics, inter-ethnic strife and ethno-nationalist discourse that renders women's rights and freedom hostage to their prescribed role as the primary guardians of national identity and cultural 'authenticity'. Though the main concern of this particular article is the 6<sup>th</sup> issue, that is, gender and

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed history of modern Azerbaijan, see Altstadt, 1992 and Swietochowski, 1985 and 1995.

national identity, the other five sets of issues have inevitably interacted with the question of identity and gender relations. Therefore, I shall briefly address all the above-mentioned main effects.

Despite its great potential, rich natural resources, especially the vast Caspian oil reserves, and highly educated human power, Azerbaijan has experienced a drastic economic decline since its independence. Several oil contracts with Western oil consortiums in recent years, promising an economic boom and imminent prosperity, have not materialized yet mainly due to geopolitical reasons. An alarming socio-economic polarization, a small stratum constituting the new rich and an impoverished majority has already started plaguing Azerbaijani society. Instead of a productive industrial capitalism, what has so far replaced state socialism in the former Soviet Union, including Azerbaijan, is what some have called "bandit capitalism".

In comparison to women in many developing countries, especially those in the Muslim world, women in Soviet Azerbaijan had made a considerable level of achievement, particularly in the realms of education, employment, primary health care, and legal rights pertaining to matters of family and personal status. According to many Azerbaijanis, although women have maintained their "respected" and "protected" position in post-Soviet Azerbaijani culture, the new economic conditions and political changes have jeopardized their hard won accomplishments and some positive legacies of the Soviet system, without correcting or removing the negative legacies of the previous order.

With the onset of restructuring and economic reform (*perestroika*), the "over-employment" of women emerged as a central 'woman question' and some, including Gorbachev himself, attempted to refocus women towards their role at home. Women were called to "return" to the family and take care of the "decay of family life". 'Restructuring' and 'democratization' of economy and polity did not include restructuring or democratization of the home, gender relations and gender division of labor in order to deal with the "decay of family life". Instead, women's roles outside the home were blamed for increasing juvenile delinquency and troubles in the family life hence women were called to redirect themselves toward their traditional roles. In 1992, the Russian media and television, still broadcast in Azerbaijan as well, launched

a campaign stressing that women were supposed to be the “guardians of home and hearth”.

Both secular conservative nationalists and newly emerged Islamists in Azerbaijan and some Central Asian republics have given an extra nationalist color to this trend. They blame the bygone Soviet system for “super-employment” and “abuse” of Muslim women, especially in the jobs that they see as “disrespectful” of women’s “feminine qualities” and “dishonoring” of “motherhood as their primary duty”.

Ironically, many women who have been worn down by the ‘double burden’ and hazardous working conditions have not really minded freeing themselves from the excessive toil in the sphere of production. The Soviet policy of promoting massive entrance of women into the formal economy did not accompany a corresponding provision for quality and adequate child-care, the facilitation of household appliances, and a change in gender-based division of reproductive labor. This lack of regard for a strategy of sustainable and human development and the one-sided emphasis on military build-up, heavy industrial production and growth, left the housework, household maintenance and the daily reproductive tasks to be carried out by primitive tools and the manual labor of, almost exclusively, women.

Both during the Soviet era and post-Soviet times, housework and household maintenance have remained the most arduous and time-consuming responsibility of women for the following reasons. The necessity for manual preparation of every type of foodstuff due to underdevelopment in food cycle technology, the lack of ready-made food supplies on the market and limited access to mechanized kitchen and home appliances. While in today’s market economy such supplies have been imported and are available in the stores, only a small segment of the population can financially afford to purchase them. The ongoing shortage and poor quality of safe running water and the increasing deterioration and inefficiency in public transportation in recent years have added to the difficulty of washing, cooking, and shopping for daily necessities.

Women’s largest rate of participation in Azerbaijan’s labor force was and still is in agriculture and manual farm work (54% in 1989 and 48.5% in 1993), especially in less mechanized sectors. While as of 1994 women constituted 44 percent of employees in urban industries, they held only 3.1 percent of administrative and man-

agerial positions. In urban industrial regions such as Sumgait and Baku as well as in rural areas and particularly in the cotton industry, workers, the majority of whom are women, have been exposed to deleterious substances.<sup>6</sup> Environmental and ecological hazards, one of the devastating legacies of the Soviet growth-centered strategy of development, have affected women's health more directly. Between 10 to 13 percent of infant mortality has been attributed to pregnant women's exposure to hazardous chemicals during their farm work (Afandiyov, 1992).<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that, although they make up the greater number (60-70 percent) of the newly unemployed, many women seem to be showing more resilience, creativity and adaptability in the face of new realities than their male counterparts. The universal literacy and high level of educational attainment among women, an undeniable achievement of the Soviet era, has been an asset for them in dealing with present hardship. By utilizing their language proficiencies as well as manual and home-making skills and artistic and handicraft abilities, many women, either enthusiastically or reluctantly and out of economic necessity, have become engaged in sporadic or regular income-generating activities within the informal economy. Included among such activities are: free trade, buying and selling (*alish-verish*), sewing, carpet-weaving and other handicrafts, food production and catering, cosmetic and facial service, laundry and other domestic services as well as tutoring in Azeri or Russian languages for the new rich or the increasing number of foreign residents in Azerbaijan.

A small segment of the female population seems to have already benefited from some new opportunities that the post-Soviet socio-economic and political transitions have opened up. These are usually young or middle-aged women who have quickly adapted themselves to the new market and business world of fierce competition, self-initiative, and entrepreneurship. Though no reliable statistics are available yet, women constitute a small portion of the new entrepreneurs managing or co-owning some of the newly opened

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<sup>6</sup> For detailed information and statistics on women's status in regard to work, education and politics, see my article "A Key Issue in Social Reform: Gender Relations" in *Azerbaijan: Human Development Report, 1995* Baku: United Nations Development Program, 1995: 36-45.

<sup>7</sup> Cited from her report in the Baku weekly *Faryad* (Cry), 20 October 1992, p. 1.

'joint-venture' shops, food stores, and home-based enterprises that usually employ women, especially refugees.

In addition, women clustered in service sectors such as banking, insurance, hotels, and housing might have ironically benefited from this particular occupational segregation of the Soviet times as these jobs are expanding, especially in the face of imminent foreign investment in oil industry. Some of the younger ones among these women have actually utilized their language skills, especially in English, and have enhanced their computer skills and office management abilities in order to enter into the new private sector and to work for the newly arrived foreign companies. These women are making higher salaries than their male counterparts in the public sector and seem to be enjoying their exposure to a new and more cosmopolitan environment. But there are widespread rumors (not substantiated yet) about exploitation, sexually and otherwise, of such young women desperately in need of jobs, by their male employers in these foreign companies. This, rumor or fact, has become a source of resentment especially among the less advantaged male Azerbaijanis.

At present, Azeri women need no longer define themselves primarily in comparison with or in contrast to Russian women, as they did through the years of Russian domination. In the context of post-Soviet Azerbaijan, the non-Muslim Russian "other" is gradually being replaced by the new "others", including the neighboring Muslim Turkey and Iran and the non-Muslim new comers from the West, especially the oil-enterprise related Westerners. Women are exposed to and affected by new and multiple options, models and images of womanhood. As discussed throughout this article, one of the main sources of inter-national and regional influence on the course of identity formation in Azerbaijan has been the ongoing emulation contest between Iran and Turkey over the presentation of models for Azeri women and men to follow.

### *Gendering the nation*

Questions about the place or role of women in this period of transition have been raised and discussed in connection with an intense soul-searching on what Azerbaijaniness means in the post-Soviet era. This search is carried out against a background of

regionally contested milieu and a domestically war-stricken and socio-economically unstable situation. How should Azeris, as the ethnic majority, reconcile their Turkic ethnic loyalty, Islamic tradition, and cultural authenticity with the goal of building an independent modern secular state without antagonizing or alienating religious and ethnic minorities inside Azerbaijan (Lezgins, Talyshis, Russians, Jews, Armenians, Kurds, Tats, etc.) and outside neighbors (Russia, Turkey, and Iran). The latter three, who have been competing over the hearts and minds of Azeris, are faced now with the increasing presence of Western newcomers (associated with Western oil companies) as a new source of influence in not only Azerbaijan, but in the geopolitics and geoculture of the entire region.

I shall begin to analyze this regional dynamism and its gendered nature using two post-Soviet illustrations; one concerning a campaign for the restoration of *shari'a* (Islamic law) in the marriage and family code and the other relating to a pictorial and symbolic gendered manifestation of national identity.

1. During the last year of the Soviet era (1991) and the political openness of *glasnost*, an anonymous "Open Letter" appeared in the Azerbaijani press that addressed a sensitive issue concerning gender relations, ethnic dynamics and national identity. Signed anonymously by 23 girls, under "23-lar" (23s), the letter appealed to the Sheikh ul-Islam of Azerbaijan, Allahshokur Pashazadeh (who is also head of the Muslim Directorate of the Caucasus), to legalize polygamy in Azerbaijan.<sup>8</sup> Making their case in a strongly emotional yet articulate language, they complained that "out of every ten young women in Azerbaijan, four have become spinsters with no chance for marriage." This ongoing problem is in part a result of the catastrophic economic situation and imbalance in the sex ratio due to the exodus of many young men from Azerbaijan and the loss of some to the war with Armenia. But another "more important" reason behind the large number of unmarried women, emphasized the letter, is the fact that "out of every ten young married men, at least one is married to a non-Azerbaijani woman, usually a Russian or a member of an ethnic group close to Russians".

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<sup>8</sup> The complete text of the letter in Azeri language and Cyrillic script appeared under the title "23-lar" along with an informative note by the editor in the journal *Ganjlik* (Youth), 1991, 50-51, Baku.

The letter went on describing the suffering and pain in the lives of this large number of Azerbaijani maidens for whom marriage has become a dream and child-bearing, an extremely important part of women's role within the cultural norms of Azerbaijan, an impossibility. These women "deprived of love and the joy of motherhood, have to live their lives in shame as they get blamed for any improper, sinful and out of wedlock relationships".

The inter-ethnic marriage practiced by some Azerbaijani men has, stated the letter, historically served the colonial agenda of the Russian Empire.<sup>9</sup> The Russian Tzar, Peter the Great, claimed the letter, had "advised Russians to let their daughters marry sons of the nationalities or ethnic groups under Russian rule. The purpose was to expand the Russian race and spread Russian blood among the colonized nationalities and thereby engender some potential support for Russia during future conflicts".

The proposed polygamy by this "23 girls" was, however, of a very unusual type meant to solve a specific demographic and social problem within the Azerbaijani context. It was to be restricted to only those Azerbaijanis married to Russians or to members of non-Azerbaijani ethnic/national groups. And only if the second wife was of Azerbaijani origin, the man should not be required to divorce his first wife. By practicing this, the letter argued, "we can resolve not only the pain and agony of thousands of Azerbaijani maidens, but we can also strengthen our national identity and put an end to the plot of Peter the Great against Azerbaijanis".

This "Open Letter" brought forth a vigorous open response by many women led by Aziza Jafarzadeh, a prominent writer and the former head of the National Women's Council (the then Zhensoviet), which effectively silenced this campaign for at least several years. The Azerbaijani elite women dismissed the letter as disingenuous and saw it as a ploy by the mullahs (Muslim clergymen) to restore the *shari'a* (Islamic law) and increase their influence in Azerbaijani society. While most likely some patriarchal mullahs and Islamists were behind the formulation of the proposition of polygamy as the solution, the grievance brought up in the letter seems to be one genuinely felt by women. Interviews with

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<sup>9</sup> The official rate of inter-ethnic marriage in Azerbaijan in late 1980s was about 14% in urban and 2% in rural areas. For an analysis on this, see Tohidi 1996 or 1997.

Azerbaijani women of the common classes show that there was and still is a genuine mass sentiment among them against inter-ethnic marriage as an unfair male prerogative. Related to this is also a serious concern about the increasing number of unmarried women for whom finding a morally and socially accepted way to have at least one legitimate child, if not a complete family, is a real issue. Azerbaijani society is still centered around the family, kinship, and heterosexual marriage and motherhood is still considered the primary goal for a woman. Thus, it is understandable how frustrating life can become for the many young women deemed failed and unfulfilled in these regards. During my interviews, a number of desperate women, considered “maidens”, confided that they would go so far as to become a temporary wife based on *sigheh* (temporary marriage as practiced in Shi’i Iran) in order to have a legitimate child.<sup>10</sup> Noticing my sense of dismay, one woman in the group, with no resemblance to the typical image of traditional or submissive women, shocked me further by the following argument.

“Why cannot we take advantage of the mechanisms that our Shi’a tradition has provided us? There are so many illicit and illegitimate relationships going on secretly between some maidens and some married Azeri men. Why cannot we stop this hypocrisy and pretension by legalizing and legitimizing what is already being practiced. Besides, I know of some friends of mine who have actually become *sigheh* or second wife of Iranian Azerbaijanis visiting Baku. We know these men are not going to stay here with us as our husbands, but our priority at this point is to have a legitimate child.”<sup>11</sup>

This is an unusually overt case of intersection of gender issues with ethnic identity and nationalist impulse. This issue, too, has regional implications; the above-mentioned campaign in Azerbaijan arose while Rafsanjani, the then President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was floating the idea of *sigheh* as a solution to adolescent waywardness or to economic barriers against an early marriage.<sup>12</sup> The

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<sup>10</sup> *Sigheh* or *mut’a* (temporary marriage) is a pre-Islamic tradition still retaining legitimacy among the Twelver Shi’ites. For more information on this practice see Haeri, 1989.

<sup>11</sup> Cited from an interview by the author with a group of three women (in their 30s), who worked as retailers in Baku, Spring, 1992.

<sup>12</sup> Based on a related measure taken by the Iranian government in 1993, no Iranian man is allowed to marry a woman from the Azerbaijan Republic without state permission. According to Azeris in Baku, this move by the Iranian government towards the restriction of such marriages is not necessarily for moral reasons.

restoration of polygamy was similarly being debated in various Central Asian republics.<sup>13</sup>

Though less publicly discussed these days, the existence of a large number of 'spinsters' is still a real concern and a serious issue raised by many single women, sociologists, and religious as well as secular political leaders in Azerbaijan. For example, through his earlier poetry (like the poem 'Shahnaz') and in his recent commentaries, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, a prominent popular poet, has raised this issue. While praising the patriotism and ethic loyalty on the part of Azeri 'girls' in a nationalistic tone, he also scolds Azerbaijani men who marry Russian, Armenian or other non-Azeri women, leaving "our own Azeri girls" single forever.

Instead of resorting to polygamy or *sigheh*, however, women's rights advocates and intellectuals like Aziza Jafarzadeh and Hassan Quliyev have proposed other reform measures to resolve this issue. Emphasizing economic hardship as the main cause of an alarming trend toward a reduction in marriage rates and a rise in divorce rates, they argue that the main reason for some men's preference for non-Azerbaijani wives over Azerbaijanis is also economic. They reason that, the Azeri brides, especially Azeri parents tend to demand too much from the prospective grooms in terms of jewelry, clothing and expensive wedding ceremonies. The 'outdated Azeri tradition of elaborate rituals and costly numerous wedding parties' in contrast to the simple, quick and inexpensive procedure expected by Russian girls has made marrying the latter more practical and attractive for many Azeri men.<sup>14</sup> The "Open Letter", however, attributed this simplicity and ease toward marriage ceremonies on the part of Russian women to their "cheapness, low class and easy availability".

2. The second illustration that I have already used in a number of previous writings on Azerbaijan is a symbolic one. During 1991-92, my first year of field work, which coincided with the beginning

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Tehran, they argue, is more concerned about the political implications that such close ties between Azeris in Iran and Azeris in the Republic may have for awakening nationalistic sentiments among Iranian Azeris.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Tadjbakhsh or Michaels for similar cases in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.

<sup>14</sup> Quliyev, Hassan, "Toy Adatlarimiz," paper presented at the Conference on Women and Wedding Customs in Azerbaijan, Baku, February 18, 1995.

of the transition of the Soviet Azerbaijan into the independent Azerbaijan Republic, I frequently encountered a recurring picture of a glamorous, blond and smiling Turkish beauty plastered on the walls of many stores, offices and private homes in Baku. Even on the walls of a large office in the Institute for Oriental Studies at the Academy of Sciences, where I used to study along with a number of Azerbaijani academics, the only picture I would see those days was none other than this Turkish beauty. "By winning the international beauty contest of the year, this woman has brought pride and fame for Turkey and Turkish women," I was told.

The replacement of Lenin's picture or the other typical political posters of the Soviet times by a Turkish "beauty queen" in the Academy of Sciences, was too striking for me to overlook it as just a trivial matter or simply a bad choice on the part of some academics. One could perceive this picture together with several other Western images visible in many republics, particularly Russia, as simply part of the influence of Western pop culture and byproducts of *glasnost* in those last days of the Soviet Union. In the context of Azerbaijan, however, this particular new image—a beauty queen from Turkey—conveyed certain gender-related messages and also important political statements relating to the growing ethnic (Turkic) and nationalistic orientation of society.

It was only one year later that the pictures of Lenin and the beauty queen in the offices of the Academy, as in many other places, were replaced by pictures of Haji Zeynolabedin Taqiyev (a pre-Soviet Azeri oil millionaire and philanthropist) and Mamed-Amin Rasoulzade (a pre-Soviet leading ideologue of Azeri nationalism and founder of the first Republic of Azerbaijan). This, to me, signified a beginning of Azerbaijanism more so than Turkism.

About four years later, however, another new image entered into the fluid popular culture of the country in sharp contrast to both the secular pro-Russian and pro-Soviet ideals of the past and the secular nationalist pro-Turkish and pro-Western orientation of contemporary Azerbaijan. This new image superseding the Turkish beauty queen at private homes was that of a demure young girl veiled in a white headscarf, whose eyes timidly focussed on a rosary she held in her hands. The caption on the picture was a *hadith* (prophetic saying) extolling the merits of prayer. Clearly, like the earlier one, this new image was loaded with messages regarding gender roles and the evolving identity of Azerbaijanis. While the

previous image reflected the post-Soviet, post-Communist “culture of display”, emphasizing physical and sexual beauty, Western fashion, and consumerism, the second one signaled modesty, morality, and Islamic values. A Western observer may suspect that this latter religiously oriented image was reflective of the growing influence of the gender role model prescribed by the other Muslim neighbor of Azerbaijan, that is, the Islamic Republic of Iran. But, it is interesting to note that both of those contrasting posters were actually produced in Turkey, albeit in different years and by different printers. This was indicative of change, diversity, and fluidity in women’s identities not only in Azerbaijan, but also in Turkey, where Islamic discourses have been gaining prominence in identity politics.

The popularity of such contrastive images is suggestive of, firstly, the complexity, diversity and fluidity of national/cultural identity in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, and secondly, an assumption that in present-day Azerbaijan, as in other colonial and post-colonial contexts, gender issues intersect with those of class, nationality, ethnicity, and religion. Recent changes in the identity politics of Azerbaijan and of its neighboring countries indicate that in this region, as elsewhere, national and political identities are fluid and shifting social constructs, rather than fixed and primordial attributes. If a conflict does not force people to dichotomize or polarize their identities, many people may prefer multiple and complementary identities (Ronald Suny, 1997). In 1994, for example, I found many intellectuals feeling nostalgic for the peaceful co-existence of diverse ethnic groups that marked cities like Baku and Tbilisi in the Caucasus. They were lamenting the loss of the “cosmopolitan and ethnically diversified identity” of Baku to its “polarized, conflict-ridden and dull” appearance in the early post-Soviet years. Lately, however, Baku is gradually gaining back its multifaceted identity, including a growing diversification in women’s images and roles. In the following pages, I will try to demonstrate how the major political forces and various elite groups in Azerbaijan view women and define women’s identity.

*Gender views of the nationalist political actors*

Since its independence, three trends have emerged as the major political tendencies in the identity politics of Azerbaijan: Turkism (Turkchilik), Islamism (Islamchilik), and Azerbaijanism (Azerbaijanchilik). Some Azeri elites such as Abulfaz Elchibey, the former President and leader of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan (PFA)<sup>15</sup>, while declaring the necessity of integrating the three tendencies, gave prominence to Turkism. Others, like the current President, Heidar Aliyev, have pursued a more pragmatic approach by trying to maintain a balance among all three.

Generally speaking, the secular political parties of Azerbaijan fall under two broader categories: a) A conservative and ethno-centric (Turkistic) nationalism that tends to support a strong state. This is represented mainly in the PFP (Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan) led by Elchibey (a carry over from the earlier PFA). b) A pro-Western liberal nationalism represented mainly in the Musavat Party (led by Isa Gambar) that tends towards a civil nationalism or a pluralistic identity inclusive of various ethnic groups of Azerbaijan (Azeris as well as Talyshis, Lezgins, Russians, Armenians, Kurds, etc.). Similarly, the present government of Heidar Aliyev and the ruling party (New Azerbaijan Party) has pursued a pragmatic multi-ethnic Azerbaijanism. There are still smaller parties like the National Independence Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party of Azerbaijan, which as regards their views toward Azerbaijan's national identity can be roughly classified under the second category. Before discussing the gender views of these two main trends, I shall briefly address the third tendency in Azerbaijan's identity politics.

The third trend, Islamism (Islamchilik), which is weaker than the first two, has been represented mainly by the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan (IPA). In the view of IPA, religion, that is, Muslimhood (*Musalmanlik*) rather than ethnicity or nationality, makes up the primary basis of Azerbaijani identity. The reputation of IPA among

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<sup>15</sup> The Popular Front of Azerbaijan, established in 1989, represented the leadership of the anti-Soviet and independence movement in Azerbaijan. The Karabakh conflict with Armenia served as a catalyst for the creation of this front and its subsequent mobilization of the population against the Communist Party and its eventual take over of power in 1992.

many Azerbaijanis, especially women's groups, has remained negative because of its close ideological and financial connections to the conservative Islamists in Iran on the one hand and its intellectually low caliber and anti-democratic, sexist and sectarian views on the other. Four leading members of the IPA were tried in 1996 and have been imprisoned since then, charged with spying for Iran.

The gender agenda of the IPA has been similar to that of other conservative Islamists (fundamentalists) in the Middle East and North Africa. Enforced of sex segregation and compulsory veiling, the restoration of a male-biased law (*shari'a*) in the family law, and a return to the more traditional and patriarchal gender roles in public and private life are among the explicitly or implicitly stated objectives of the IPA.<sup>16</sup> In recent years, some of the more enlightened female members of this party have become disillusioned with the patriarchal practices of its leadership and have joined more moderate Islamic groups.

The Islamic trend in Azerbaijan, however, is not limited to Islamism of the kind advocated by the IPA. While, similar to post-Soviet Russia, interest in religion and even in some superstitious cults and practice is growing, political religion and fundamentalism is not. Islam and other religious beliefs are sought as the food of the soul and a spiritual resource in the face of ideological vacuum, economic hardship, increasing insecurity, and the fast pace of change in social life. For many political activists of nationalist and secular orientation, male or female, Islam is seen as a significant national asset and an important dimension of national identity. For instance, it was not only President Aliyev who made a highly publicized pilgrimage to Mecca in 1995; one of his main intellectual opponents, Isa Gambar, leader of the pro-Western liberal Musavat party, made a similar *haj* pilgrimage in 1998.

Another factor that should be accounted for in an analysis of the role and place of Islam in the identity politics of Azerbaijan is again the regional dynamics. On the one hand, the growing prominence

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<sup>16</sup> For more discussion on the role of Islam and women's status in Azerbaijan, see Tohidi, 1998. For an extensive research report on Islam in Azerbaijan, including the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan, see my unpublished manuscript *Islam and National Identity in the Post-Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan*, submitted to the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, Washington, June 1998.

of Islam in Turkey has influenced the pro-Turkey political groups in Azerbaijan so that they are following suit by paying more serious attention to the Islamic factor in their own polity. On the other hand, the decreasing credibility of the fundamentalist Islamists in Iran in the face of a growing Iranian movement toward moderation, democracy and pluralism has turned the pro-Iran extremist groups like IPA toward revision and a re-evaluation of their own brand of Islamism. One interesting shift in the identity politics of Azerbaijan has been recent attempts for open dialogue and reconciliation between secular liberals and Islamic groups. Even the IPA is in the process of changing its name to Democratic Muslim Party. This recently growing liberal and modern version of Islam, known as the “new Islamic thinking” in Iran is akin to the *jadid* movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century among Muslims in Azerbaijan and Central Asia.<sup>17</sup> The gender implications of such ongoing moderation and secularization in Islam in the Caspian region along with the influence of growing feminist movements in both Iran and Turkey on Azerbaijani women are without a doubt quite intriguing.

The gender dimension of the two above-mentioned dominant trends, conservative ethno-centrism and liberal nationalism, is prevailing at this point. The initial Turkistic orientation promoted by the PFA and Elchibey’s short-lived government was perceived as an alarming pan-Turkism by Iran and Russia. Azerbaijan’s refusal to join the Russian-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was seen as a further break away from Russia. An increasingly louder call on the part of Baku nationalists for unification between the Azeris of the Azerbaijan Republic and the Azeris of Iran made the authorities in Tehran particularly nervous about a potential nationalistic and separatist movement among the 25 million Iranian Azeris. For some Azeri nationalists in Baku, the demand for a unified or single (*vahid*) Azerbaijan has become an integral part of the national ideology or “national idea” (Hadjy-Zadeh, 1998:4).

In the cultural sphere, this stage accompanied a debate over the change of Azerbaijan’s alphabet from Russian Cyrillic (adopted in 1940 under Stalin) to either Latin or Arabic. This debate ended with a decision approved by the parliament to return to the Latin

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. See also Swietochowski, 1995: 223 and Altstadt, 1992: 55, 59, and 61.

alphabet similar to that of Turkey, a significant pro-Turkey step. Azeri language began to be identified as Turkic and many Azeris started to publicly identify themselves as Turks while many “Russified” elites who used to speak Russian much better than their own mother tongue, hurried to take private lessons in Azeri and improve their Turkic language skills. New books and publications came out in an attempt to rewrite Azerbaijan’s history by narrating national stories, reviving some forgotten myths and creating some new ones.

The old cultural and historical traditions embodied in Islamic, pre-Islamic and some pre-Christian *dastans* like The Book of Dede Korkut, Koroglu, and the Zoroastrian Avesta, have been reinterpreted and emphasized from a nationalistic perspective. This has been part of an attempt to trace the oldest repository of ethnic identity, history, customs, and the value systems of Azerbaijanis in order to imagine a nation with a longer history and an original identity. Such Turkic *dastans* (epic prose and poetry often recited to music) represent an integral part of Azeri identity, collective memory, examples of heroism and morality, and codes of honor and conduct underlying gender norms and sexual attitudes. One example is the “required betrothal contest between a young man and woman that the man must win before they can marry.” In one of the tales, Beyrek and his betrothed, Lady Chichek, have three contests—shooting arrows, horse racing, and wrestling. Elsewhere in the *dastan*, wives and mothers participate in hunting and battles.

Loyalty to the family, clan, or tribe is fundamental, as are bravery and honesty. Struggles to protect the tribe and homeland or to free the people from a foreign invader-conqueror are among the main themes of both *dastans*. Women and men are equally engaged in these endeavors (Altstadt, 1992:14). Such *dastans* are used to reinforce the current necessity for heroism in defense of the homeland in the war-torn Azerbaijan that has lost close to 20 percent of its territory to Armenians. The feminine metaphor of homeland denoted as the “motherland” (*ana vatan*) whose honor (*namus*) is to be protected and defended by all means adds to its emotional load as it becomes associated with the cult of honor (*namus*), still very strong in Azerbaijani culture. As put by Zamfira Verdiyeva, head of the Azerbaijan Women’s Association, before a large gathering of women in 1991, “Our land is our *namus*. We may give up everything—our wealth, houses, foods, clothing, and even

our lives—but not our *namus*/land.”<sup>18</sup> Related to this, certain heroic female legends like Tomiris and Rostameh have occasionally been promoted in the media, reinforcing the small, yet vocal, group of Azeri militant women who called themselves “Tomiris’ Daughters” and took part in the armed struggle against Armenian invaders during the war in the early 1990s (Onullahi, 1992).<sup>19</sup>

In practice, however, the predominant image or idea of womanhood and her role and place in society reinforced by the male leadership of the nationalist movement, has been far from the publicly and politically active one represented by legends like Tomiris.<sup>20</sup> Many men and even some women activists within the PFA were lamenting the “de-feminization” of women by the Soviet system because of women’s “over-working and over-employment”, especially in some fields “unfit for the female sex”. Men should be given priority for employment, particularly in the face of increasing unemployment rates, stated Elchibey during his term. Women, while expected to be patriotic and actively supportive of the independence movement and the nationalist male leaders, were rarely present in the leadership roles of the PFA. Other than Leila Yunesova, who soon split from the PFA in disagreement with the leader, and her later short-term position in Elchibey’s government as the speaker of the Defense Ministry, Elchibey appointed no new woman in his cabinet. Lidiya Rasulova, the only woman minister in Elchibey’s cabinet, has amazingly survived a number of Soviet and post-Soviet governments even up to the present Aliiev government, hence she can hardly be considered an outcome of recent nationalist transitions.

Actually, in Azerbaijan, like in all successor states to the Soviet Union, the female ratio in the political organs and legislative bodies has drastically declined (Buckley, 1992). Removal of the fixed quota of representation practiced under the Soviet system can explain only part of the decline in female representation. Like in many other parts of the world, women in Azerbaijan have not been socialized or encouraged to enter into politics and play leadership

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<sup>18</sup> Quotation from Verdiyeva’s speech recorded by author in Baku, 5 November 1991.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Seyidaga Onullahi “Qadinlarimizin Qehremanlik Tarikhinden” *Önd*, Baku, November 12, 1992, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> A legendary female heroine popular among people in the Caucasus, especially Azerbaijanis.

roles and most of the current nationalists do not seem to have an agenda to do otherwise. Furthermore, the nationalist government of PFA replaced many women in various administrative positions and many women state employees by its own male cadres. In response to this, the Vice Chair of the Women's Association of Azerbaijan, Elmira Suleymanova, a highly-respected academic and one of the prominent women's rights activists, expressed women's disappointment in the Azerbaijani press:

Our new government supposedly based on democratic principles has made a lot of promises to women. But many difficulties have arisen. In Baku, Sumgait, Ganje, and other cities, many of our women, both the ones with leading positions and the ones with less influential positions, have been removed suddenly and in a harsh manner with no explanation and for no wrong doings on their part.<sup>21</sup>

In the following pages, while reviewing recent political developments, I will address a few changes, some negative and some positive, in the gender discourses and women's issues of Azerbaijan since the removal of the Elchibey government.

The PFA failed to fill the post-Soviet ideological vacuum and respond to the quest of Azerbaijan for a new national identity with a balanced and convincing formula. Elchibey government's excessive Turkism and pro-Turkish policies resulted in negative consequences, not only in its foreign relations (especially with Iran and Russia) but also domestically, alienating ethnic minorities and the moderate intelligentsia. This was among the factors that contributed to an easy defeat of the PFA in the face of a coup d'état in the Summer of 1993 and the subsequent rule of Heidar Aliyev, a former KGB head and member of the Communist Party politburo.

Though far from being a democrat, Aliyev became popular for representing an image of an experienced and competent statesman, who can serve in the nostalgic quest for stability as the much needed father figure for Azerbaijan, a nation in the making. Since coming to power, Aliyev has pursued a more pragmatic and diplomatically balanced domestic and foreign policy. His heavy-handed policy against his critics, the rampant corruption and clientelistic power structure, poverty and increased socio-economic polarization of society, and the continuous stalemate in the Karabakh conflict,

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<sup>21</sup> Cited from "Khanimlarimiz niya yola gedmirlar?" (Why Our Women Do Not Get Along?), *Azerbaijan*, Baku: 9 February 1993, p. 3.

have turned away many of Aliyev supporters. Nevertheless, the sense of order and stability attributed to him seems to be a major reason behind his success in maintaining a considerable level of popularity.

In regard to gender policy, there have been some minor positive changes during Aliyev's presidency. Aliyev began his term with a woman, Lala Shovkat Hajieva, as his chief of staff. After less than two years, however, she resigned from her position in the cabinet and from membership in the ruling party (NAP) altogether. Later, she established her own party (Liberal Party of Azerbaijan) and ended up running as a presidential candidate against her former boss during the recent elections in 1998.<sup>22</sup>

Aliyev and the women cadres around him, however, have demonstrated gender attitudes and norms not very distinct from the ones common in Soviet times. The proportion of women in legislative bodies, specifically the number of women deputies in the parliament, has risen from 4.8 percent in 1992 to 6 percent in 1994 and 14 percent in 1996. Women hold only about 10 percent of the share of power in the high offices of the executive branch. Yet, the active presence of a number of seasoned women officials as ministers and deputy ministers in the present government has given a relative visibility to the political profile of women in 'high politics'. Included among these women officials are: Sudabe Hasanova, Minister of Justice; Lidiya Rasulova, Minister of Education; Fatma Abdullahzadeh and her deputy Dilara Seydzadeh, Director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Abdullahzadeh has also been leading the State Commission on Women's Status.

*Who constitutes "we", in the nation?*

Following the removal of the PFA from power, a debate over the reasons behind the defeat of the "national democrats" developed into a set of national debates over what should constitute "the national idea" or "a national concept of Azerbaijani statehood".

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<sup>22</sup> At a recent press conference, Hajieva spoke out, for the first time, about the reasons for her resignation from the President's office. She claimed that she could not stand the "corruption and bribery in the governmental bodies and also in the ruling Party." *Ayna*, Baku: 19 September 1998.

“Who is included in the notion ‘we, the nation’?” Is the formula ‘Turkism, modernism, and Islam’ applicable to present day Azerbaijan?” “How do we keep our country independent?” “Do we need a ‘big brother’, as some Russian analysts have claimed about Azerbaijanis?” “Modernization is necessary, but is Westernization necessary too?” “What should constitute the priorities of Azerbaijanis, liberty or stability and order?” “Does democracy suit Azerbaijan?” “Human rights or national values?” “How free should a free market be?” (Hadjy-zadeh, 98: 4)<sup>23</sup>

Although gender issues were not specifically and explicitly included in the topics of such national debates, the gender implications of these debates have been significant. One important political and ideological outcome of these debates and the subsequent splits among Azerbaijani intellectuals has been the emergence of the “nationalistic”, “liberal” and “social democratic” alignments.

Among the major groups split from the PFA is the Yeni Musavat Party led by Isa Gambar, representing a more democratic and liberal tendency, emphasizing a civil and inclusive nationalism and recognizing human rights and equal citizenship regardless of ethnicity, gender and religion. Women make up 13 percent of the Musavat Party, including prominent woman activists like Maryam Orujova in its leading board.<sup>24</sup> There have been a few smaller parties such as the Social Democrats Party, the Liberal Party of Azerbaijan, and the Independent Democratic Party, which are led or co-led by women like Arzu Abdollayeva, Shovkat Hajieva and Leila Yunesova, respectively.<sup>25</sup> During the last presidential elections (September 1998), Lala Shovkat Hajieva, Chairwoman of the LPA, was the only woman among those running for the presidential office. According to a number of pre-elections polls, Hajieva ranked among the five leading runners.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Similar debates around similar topics were taking place in Russia and other post-Communist countries in the CIS during 1992-1996.

<sup>24</sup> Reported by Hadjy-zade, 1998: 7.

<sup>25</sup> Leila Yunesova who was one of the founders of the PFA, split from it early on and founded the IDP, splitting again later to join the Vahdat Party. She has recently broken away from all political parties advocating an NGO, “Peace and Democracy Institute”, that she helped establish in 1996.

<sup>26</sup> Reported by the Women’s Rights Monitoring Group, the Center for Human Rights in Azerbaijan, *Information Bulletin*, no. 9, Part one, (1-10 September 1998).

Another tendency related to the outcome of debates over the nature of national identity that seems to be more pronounced in recent years is “Azerbaijanism” versus the initial pro-Iran and pro-Turkey alternatives. Many Azeri women and men express disillusionment now with their initial fascination with and infatuation for both Iranian and Turkish “brethren” for several reasons, some of which are gender-related.

Despite an initially intense longing for closer ties with Iran, the Iranian model lost its attractiveness for most Azerbaijanis very early on. During the last years of the Soviet regime and right after the outbreak of the conflict over Karabakh, a strong nationalist (Azerbaijanist) fervor emerged. One manifestation of this was a strong urge to unite with Iranian Azeris and the subsequent mass demonstrations and sit-ins held at the border between Azerbaijan and Iran. The Azerbaijani demonstrators were demanding that the Soviet authorities remove the border fences and visa regulations between Azerbaijanis and Iranians. Probably inspired by the tearing down of the Berlin wall between the East and West Germans, Azeri demonstrators finally tore down the border fences and crossed the Aras River to join their ethnic brethren in Iran. The ultimate objectives of this earlier set of demonstrations were not clear then. Did it reflect just a quest for unification between Azeris of Iran and Azeris of the Republic in order to form a new separate state independent from both Iran and Russia? Or was it, as many Iranians (including Iranian Azeris) prefer to assume, an indication of wanting to undo the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian take over of Azerbaijan and return it to Iran as her original “motherland”?

In either case, had the nature of polity at the Iranian national level been different, the whole orientation of Azerbaijan today would probably also be different. The Islamist political view dominant in Iran at that time with its conservative, backward-looking and depressing social and cultural mode, especially the gloomy and black-veiled image of womanhood that Iran has tried to impose on all Muslims inside and outside Iran, was reason enough to dampen the earlier enthusiasm among many Azerbaijani men and particularly women.

The growing travel, visitations and subsequent social interactions, as well as trade and economic exchanges between Iranians and Azerbaijanis seem to have resulted in further distrust and dis-

illusionment on both sides. There have been claims and counter-claims on both sides about unfair competition and dishonesty in the trade market between Azerbaijanis and Iranians. Moreover, many Azerbaijanis feel rejected or actually betrayed by their Iranian Muslim counterparts, especially by their Iranian Azeri brethren from whom so much support was expected in regard to Azerbaijan's fight against Armenian separatists. The longing and call of the northern Azeris for unification have not been reciprocated from the other side of the Aras. Nor has any material or genuine political support from Iran for the Azerbaijan side in the bloody Karabakh conflict ever materialized. Worst of all, as far as the Azerbaijanis are concerned, Iran has practically sided with Armenia and in its foreign policies Iran has collaborated with Russia.

Another, more subtle and less openly talked about, issue underlying the resentment among Azerbaijanis against Iranians has to do with sexual exploitation. Azerbaijanis resent what they perceive as Iranian male visitors taking sexual advantage of the Azerbaijani women who are presently in vulnerable and desperate situations. This has touched a sensitive nerve related to the cult of *namus* (honor), a very loaded gender issue in Azerbaijani culture.

The reasons for disappointment and at times bitterness on the part of many Azerbaijanis toward Turkey and Turkish influence have some *namus*-related dimensions as well. Not only are some of the films and programs broadcast by Turkish TV seen as sources of moral decay in gender norms, promiscuity and looseness (*achik-sachiklik*) in sexual standards, but Turkish men too have been perceived to be taking sexual advantage of Azerbaijani women. "What the godless Russians could not do to us in terms of dishonoring our women in seventy years, our own Muslim brethren from Iran and Turkey have done to us in the course of five years alone," a middle-aged Azeri man uttered angrily in the presence of several younger women and men, who nodded in agreement with him.<sup>27</sup>

But another, more openly complained-about source of disappointment, concerns the arrogant, the 'big-brother'-like and patronizing attitude on the part of Turks toward Azerbaijanis. After visiting or living in Turkey for a while, many Azerbaijanis say their

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<sup>27</sup> The author's discussion with a group of students and faculty in the Institute of Politology, Baku, 1996.

idealized image of Turkey did not match the realities of this country. Moreover, Turks have been buying up the best land and carrying out construction projects in Baku and other cities and have taken over many areas in the new business market, “practically turning Azerbaijan into a new province of Turkey.” In return, they have not been the promised source of salvage for the Karabakh issue and Azerbaijan’s lost territories.

*Women’s responses to social changes and identity politics*

Before discussing the current women’s activism and their collective and organized responses to recent developments, I shall present a brief historical and cultural background of women’s political role and social status.

Although the present activism of women in Azerbaijan is quite distinct from its initial stage at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are some interesting similarities as well. The political activism and social roles of Azerbaijani women outside the home date back to the years before the Bolshevik revolution. Women started to enter the public sphere through wage-labor in the oil industry, garment workshops, charity activities, women’s publications, women’s clubs and broad political groups that promoted women’s literacy, vocational training, legal rights, and improvement in their overall status.

With the introduction of new industries, capitalism and modern urban life in Azerbaijan around the turn of the century, Azeri women, like their counterparts in Turkey, Iran, and Egypt, had already become a “question”. The growing oil industry and Russian-European influence, especially in Baku, had further contributed to the debate over the “woman question” and the socialization of women.

Several ardent supporters of the emancipation of women emerged from within the ranks of Azeri nationalists and Muslim reformers upholding a modernist and egalitarian approach to Islam, known as the Jadid Movement. For most reformers, the secular nationalists, and the social democrats as well as the Muslim

modernists (Jadidists)<sup>28</sup>, the major issues concerning women were their seclusion, illiteracy, the veil and polygyny. The emancipation of women was for them a prerequisite for the revival of Muslim civilization, the formation of a new modern state of Azerbaijan and its economic, social and cultural development.

Among the reformers Mirza-Jalil Mammed-Qulizadeh (1866-1932) and his wife, Hamideh Javanshir (1873-1955)<sup>29</sup>, used their most influential and popular journal *Molla Nasreddin* (1906-1930) to criticize the establishment, corrupt bureaucrats and religious conservatives. Through powerful satire and cartoons, the journal played a crucial role in raising women's issues, denouncing compulsory veiling and seclusion, polygyny, wife battering, violence and other oppressive practices against women.<sup>30</sup>

Following that initiative, the first journal for and by women published in Azeri Turkic was founded by an Azeri woman (Khadija Alibeyova, 1884-1961) and her husband in Baku in 1911 as a bimonthly and later as a weekly aimed at enlightening women regarding their rights. While carefully avoiding direct criticism of Islamic authorities, *Ishiq* (Light) quoted and emphasized certain egalitarian passages from the Qur'an and Hadith supportive of women's education. Although influential and circulating throughout the region, it lasted only a year due to pressures from conservative clerics and lack of financial support.

While *Ishiq* promoted women's education, the first school for Muslim girls had already been founded in 1905 by Haji Zeynolabedin Tagiyev, an Azeri oil millionaire and philanthropist. People

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<sup>28</sup> *Jadid*, meaning 'new' in Arabic, Turkic and Persian, and *Jadidism*, derived from *usul-i jadid* (new methods), aimed at improving the curricula of the *maktab* (school) and their overall approach to teaching. In opposition to the conservative educators and ulema, known as *qadimists* (old thinkers), jadidism grew into a nationalist modernist interpretation of Islam through the endeavors of the Crimean Tatar journalist Ismail Gasprinski. See Tadeusz Swietochowski *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 30-35.

<sup>29</sup> See my forthcoming book in Farsi on Hamideh Javanshir, containing her fascinating personal memories and observations on the Caucasia of the early twentieth century.

<sup>30</sup> The journal was named after the legendary Molla Nasreddin (also called Nasreddin Hoja), a figure who appears in clever but didactic stories throughout the Middle East and Central Asia. The journal spanned borders and its articles were translated from Azeri-Turkic into many other languages. It was most influential in Iran, Turkey, Georgia, and Central Asia.

like Tagiyev represented the new industrial bourgeoisie, who played an important role in the modernization of Azeri society. Some of them remarked on women's education among the European women and Muslims of the Volga Tatars while postulating an egalitarian and progressive interpretation of the Qur'an.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, Russian colonizers, as in many other colonial contexts, were unconcerned about real emancipation and the improvement of women's status. For instance, Azeris had to petition the city council of the czarist regime in Baku for money to begin a pedagogical course for Muslim girls at the school for Russian girls. The Tagiyev school, the only existing school for non-Russian Muslim girls, was overcrowded and expensive. Azeri representatives on the city council, one of whom made a rousing "down with the veil" speech on the need for education to make women good citizens and good mothers (the two roles being inseparable to him)<sup>32</sup>, had to fight vigorously for the allocation of funds necessary to start another girls' school for Azeris.

While Azeri bourgeois men and their wives contributed to the reform, modernization, and nation-building of Azerbaijan, several women and men from the working class mobilized women for a more revolutionary agenda. As the social-democratic and Marxist movements grew throughout the Russian Empire, Azerbaijani workers in the oil industry organized around a group entitled *Himmat* (Endeavor). Muslim, Christian and Jewish women from the Tagiyev textile factory and other industries played a leading role in forming a women's wing of *Himmat*. As early as 1904-5, they made specific demands for "maternity leave for women, time on the job for nursing unweaned children, and medical care for all workers".<sup>33</sup>

Historically, the Ali Bayramov Women's Club, which pre-dated Soviet rule, played an enormous role in the social integration of Azerbaijani women. With the spread of revolutionary changes in the Russian Empire and the increasing participation of both Azeri and Russian women, the club's activities intensified. In 1920, by

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<sup>31</sup> See Azade-Ayse Rorlich *Volga Tatars: Profile in National Resilience* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986).

<sup>32</sup> See Audrey Altstadt *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), 56.

<sup>33</sup> Altstadt, 1992, 64. See also Sabir Mamedov *Put k progressu* (Baku: Azerbaijan Dövlət Nashriyyat Komitəsi, 1986), 4.

means of its seventeen chapters, the club waged a successful campaign for adult women's literacy and vocational training. It spawned a garment workshop originally with a staff of seven women, which ultimately developed into a huge textile factory still operating in contemporary Baku.<sup>34</sup>

In short, this period in the cultural history of Azerbaijan is distinguished by the emergence of a sense of national identity, modernist and reformist Islamic and secular elites, discourses on the "woman question" and a range of activities in support of women's emancipation.

The role of women during the seventy years of the Soviet era in Azerbaijan went through several stages as state policy and gender strategy changed from strict Marxist egalitarian ideological commitment and vigorous campaigning for women's rights to a later pragmatism centered on economic productivity. During the Soviet period, women's emancipation was generally declared to be a national objective of the Soviet Union, including Azerbaijan. An economistic perspective assumed that women's emancipation would automatically follow their participation in social and productive labor in the formal economy. Their massive entrance into the labor force was therefore encouraged. Universal access to education and gainful employment together with the establishment of equal rights in social and political domains—especially egalitarian changes in family law—did contribute to a rise in the overall status of women in both public and private spheres. Nevertheless, most women remained circumscribed by the "double burden" and by the expected subordination to men and dependency on male kin. Here is how Kifayat, a 37-year old nurse working in a town near Baku, expresses her feelings toward what is considered the "respected, yet male-protected" status of Azerbaijani women:

One of the major difficulties in my life as a single woman is that I do not have any *arkha*, no father and no brother. Russian women are luckier in this regard, as in their society a woman is accepted on her

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<sup>34</sup> For a detailed history of the club, see Azade-Aysa Rorlich "The 'Ali Bayramov' Club, the Journal *Sharq Gadini* and the Socialization of Azeri Women: 1920-30" *Central Asian Survey* 5: 3/4 (1986b), 221-239 and Tohidi, 1998.

own. But in the case of an Azeri woman, people always ask, "Who is her man? Who is her guardian?" as if I am nobody without an *arkha*.<sup>35</sup>

Even the very name of this Azeri woman, Kifayat, along with other female names like Basti (both meaning 'enough!' and denoting the wish of parents for no more female child) is a revealing indication of how sons are still preferred over daughters in this country.<sup>36</sup> This attitude has persisted to a considerable level despite equal rights under Soviet modernization and women's high educational attainment and high rates of gainful employment.

As illustrated previously, ethnic loyalty and the observance of endogamy by women (but not necessarily men),<sup>37</sup> the cults of honor,<sup>38</sup> chastity, shame, prudery, and virginity before marriage are among the ethno-religious customs prescribed as essential female attributes. A woman is valued for her physical beauty, advanced education (especially among urbanites), endurance, self-sacrificing motherhood, docility and subservience toward her husband, homemaking skills, hospitality, and delicacy. Such attributes constitute identity markers supposedly demarcating Azeris from "others", especially Russians and Armenians.

This persistence of and emphasis on the traditional family and kinship system entails paradoxical implications for male and particularly female members.<sup>39</sup> On the one hand, it usually offers solidarity and trust. It can provide economic, political, emotional, and physical support during such difficult circumstances as in the

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<sup>35</sup> Author's interview, Baku, August 29, 1994. The word *arkha* literally means 'back,' implying kin, primarily male kin, to lean on.

<sup>36</sup> I would like to thank Audrey Altstadt for drawing my attention to such female names.

<sup>37</sup> See my discussion on endogamy, inter-ethnic marriage and nationalism in Azerbaijan: Tohidi, 1996.

<sup>38</sup> The notion of honor (*namus*), so prevalent in the Muslim world is a very loaded, multidimensional and gendered term. One of its most important connotations is women's chastity, even though it is usually used in reference to men, because in both Shi'a Iran and Shi'a Azerbaijan the responsibility for the protection of *namus* falls primarily on the men. A woman's misbehavior, especially sexual misbehavior, brings shame and dishonor (*namussislig*) not only to her, but even more so to her male "protectors": father, brothers and husband. The findings of my studies in Azerbaijan attest to the continuing strength of the cult of *namus* among Azeris. In my sample, male respondents ranked *namus* as the most important theme in their early socialization even more frequently than females did.

<sup>39</sup> For patterns similar to the Caucasus, see Suad Joseph "Gender & Family in the Arab World" A Special *MERIP* Publication (October 1994).

recent warfare and economic hardship. On the other hand, it operates as a repressive device, limiting women's independence, individuality, and personal growth.

The persistence of the extended family structure has reinforced patriarchal norms. Some scholars have attributed the prevalence of the underground economy and corrupt political practices in the Caucasus also to this traditional heavy reliance on close familial ties.<sup>40</sup> Powerful obligations to one's relatives, clan, and region, especially on the part of women, may have delayed the constitution of citizenship and national-civic identity. This in turn may have contributed to duality and dissociation in Azerbaijan's modernization in general and women's emancipation in particular.

It can be argued, on the contrary, that under a repressive state lacking a civil society, with its network of political institutions mediating between the individual and the state, the family network becomes a substitute. The Soviet state was never actually hegemonic over people's ethnic and familial practices in the private sphere, where familial and religio-ethnic norms rather than the Soviet state ideology established the view of what is good and moral, especially with regard to women's behavior.

One may even argue that kinship networks have been intentionally organized to resist the state and to function as a buffer against politico-economic pressures. Rather than 'public' versus 'private' binaries, family and kin-related private, informal networks have actually constructed some important parts of the public or political life.<sup>41</sup>

Political factors aside, certain economic constraints have obviously contributed to the persistence of the traditional extended family structure. As in Soviet Russia, but even more so in the Muslim 'peripheries' of the former Soviet Union, the state's productionistic emphasis and the reduction of the "woman question" to its economic base made women's massive entrance into the labor force a

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<sup>40</sup> Ronald Suny "Transcaucasia: Cultural Cohesion and Ethnic Revival in a Multinational Society" in Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Beissinger (eds) *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society* (Boulder:Westview Press, 1990), 231.

<sup>41</sup> For a related analysis on this, see Diane Singerman "Civil Society in the Shadow of the Egyptian State: The Role of Informal Networks in the Construction of Public" (paper presented at the Colloquium on the Civil Society Debate in the Middle East, Center for Near Eastern Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, 29 January 1996).

priority without corresponding social and economic provisions for transforming the family structure and gender roles. The backwardness in food cycle technology; the housing shortage that forced young couples to live for years with parents; and the insufficiency of child-care facilities made the restructuring of the patriarchal and extended family infeasible. Azerbaijan has especially suffered in this regard as, for example, its child-care and pre-school education attendance has been one of the poorest in the former Soviet Union (16 to 18 percent versus 71 percent in Russia).

The following response by Betura Mamedova, a middle-aged college teacher, represents another Azeri voice contrasting with the earlier noted resentment of women like Kifayat. Such contrasts are indicative of the contradictory implications or the 'mixed blessing' offered by the traditional family structure:

We women are tenaciously clinging to our family and instead of getting weary of oceans of duties, we are energized by them. We are thought to be the backbone of the family and a buffer when things go wrong spiritually. We enjoy playing this role, because this is our life, and it is due to this family tenacity that Azeri people never forget their language, their culture and religion. One Azeri poet called it "blood memory" (*qan yaddashti*).<sup>42</sup>

As one can infer from Betura's comment, women are seen again as the guardians of the nation who have succeeded in playing this role thanks to "family tenacity". Her statement also implies that in a colonial or quasi-colonial interethnic situation the family would function as the bastion of resistance against assimilation (here Russification). The family, thus, is in effect the *dar al-Islam* to be protected from the penetration of the dominant "other".

#### *Pleasure and pain of paradoxical reality*

To an outside observer the hierarchical structure of the family and society favoring male domination in Azerbaijan may appear more paradoxical than elsewhere in part because of women's equal rights by law, their high level of literacy, and their massive presence in social and economic arenas. But many Azeri professional women

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<sup>42</sup> Comments received from Betura Mamedova in December 1995, as her feedback to one of the author's earlier articles.

seem to perceive this paradox differently. They consider it to be to women's advantage, rather than disadvantage:

Our way of life might seem paradoxical to foreigners, but I want them to believe that our women enjoy living the pleasure of this paradox.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps dual realities result in dual perceptions, or the distinction between the 'constructed realities' of men and women explains the pleasure of this paradox. As Pusta Azizbekova, a prominent academician in her 70s and director of the Azerbaijan Museum of History, explains:

Women's apparent subservient or male-dominated position is exactly that: apparent... Why not? Like Russian and Western women, we enjoy equal rights and legal protection. But we feel even more privileged as, in addition to what they have, we also enjoy the respect, pampering and protection we receive from our men and families. I enjoy having men open doors and wait for me to enter, pay the bill when we go out, and shelter me when we walk in streets and public places. What is wrong with that?

When I interjected: "But once you are an object of protection, you become an object, you become a dependent being," she replied:

Oh, it just appears that way. Only men think that we depend on them and by thinking so they feel satisfied and powerful. Let them take care of us under this illusion. We know very well who in reality is the power here and who depends on whom... God forbid a household without a man. A man to a household is like a gem to a ring, we Azeris say. But the gem stands on top, is nothing without the ring.<sup>44</sup>

Perhaps acting as assertive professional women in public, but showing docility and submission in private is a coping mechanism for Azeri women caught in the midst of the struggle against patriarchy on the one hand and the protection of their men's sense of masculinity in the Soviet quasi-colonial context on the other.

A further paradoxical observation is that some women seem to feel that the household is their only territory to exert real power and that they are the owners of the entirety of their families. The husband is to be served in regard to everything, from a cup of tea to preparing the bathroom for his shower. At times there seems a deliberate attempt on their part to infantilize their husbands in

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Author's interview, Baku, June 12, 1992.

order to keep them dependent on them in the household domain. This perception of domestic responsibilities as empowering and gratifying rather than as an oppressive burden is reflected in Betura's comment, not unusual from an Azeri woman:

The Azeri woman at work and at home is two, often radically different people. At work she looks confident, relaxed, and attractive. At home she is a busy bee because she has to see to a myriad of things: dusting, washing, cooking, sending children to school, checking their homework, scanning the daily newspapers (every family has to subscribe to newspapers), receiving uninvited guests. I can extend this list and you may stop believing me or you may ask what is the reward? And I will answer: the reward is *my* family and *my* children (emphasis added).<sup>45</sup>

#### *Changes within women's organizations*

Some of the more subtle gender implications of post-independence identity politics can be seen in the changes at the level of 'low politics' and the development of grass roots organizations of women, including the women's press. Though an important means for the construction of new identity, the women's press has been badly affected by financial hardship and paper scarcity. The women's journals existing since the Soviet times, like the "Azerbaycan Qadini" (Azerbaijani Woman), though adopting a more nationalistic tone, have not been able to publish regularly and maintain the same level of readership. A few new ones like "Ceyla" (edited by an Azerbaijani woman of Talysh origin, Anelya Ordoukhanova), seem to be more colorful and commercially attractive and at times more in tune with the needs and interests of younger generations.

The content analysis of the women's press in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, however, needs to be done in a separate research report. Here, I shall limit myself to a chronologically ordered brief review of a selective number of women organizations that have been more directly reflective of the processes of identity politics in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. This section will end with a glance at the new women's NGOs and some of the latest developments concerning women's movements in Azerbaijan.

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<sup>45</sup> Mamedova, December 1995. This part is cited from Tohidi, 1998.

Named after a woman activist and supporter of the PFA, Dilara Alieva, who died in an accident in 1990, the Association in Defense of Azerbaijan Women's Rights (ADAWR) was formed in the fall of 1989 and officially registered in February 1991. This was one of the first women's groups formed in opposition to the Soviet regime in the last years of its existence. As an active, vocal and aggressive political group, it functioned as the women's wing of the PFA. While occasionally engaging in charity and relief work among refugees, the main goal of this group was to provide the PFA with political support and carry out nationalistic and patriotic agitation and mobilization among women.

Despite its name, the practice of the ADAWR has not been based on a specifically 'women's rights' discourse or a gendered or feminist one, nor has it posited a defined plan of woman-centered or gender-related actions with a clear vision concerning gender issues. "Homai", the name of the monthly publication of the ADAWR, represents "a sacred bird that in Azeri mythology was believed to be the mother Goddess".<sup>46</sup> This kind of representation of women has been observed in other nationalist movements too. Narayan (1997), for example, demonstrates that in the Indian nationalist agenda, women were "equated with motherhood and goddesses" and became the "last unpolluted sanctuary" who had the task of "guarding the essence of national culture". In the views of ADAWR and other Azeri nationalists too, the "pure" (*tamiz*), "authentic" (*asil*), and "virtuous" (*ismatli*) patriotic Turkic women are supposed to preserve and symbolize "purity" of the national identity of Azerbaijan. They should do this by their loyalty to ethnic heritage, devotion to the male-headed family and male-headed nationalist government, proper behavior, and proper dress code and appearance.

During the short-lived government of the PFA (1992-1993), as its women's wing, the ADAWR naturally gained temporary prominence. Enjoying an official sanction, the ADAWR tried to assert itself as the national organization of women in Azerbaijan in order to replace the then largest women's organization, the Association

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<sup>46</sup> Stated by Khanim Khalilova, one of the then leaders of the ADAWR, during the author's interview with the leading members of the ADAWR in Baku, November 12, 1991.

of Women of Azerbaijan (to be introduced later). ADAWR criticized the AWA for “its Communist past, continuous connection with Ayaz Mutalibov (the last head of the Azerbaijan CP), and its present lack of patriotic cause”.<sup>47</sup> The ADAWR tried to dismantle the AWA’s network and regional chapters in various cities and towns and attempted to claim the office buildings and resources allocated to the latter by the previous Communist government. Before the tension and competition between the ADAWR and AWA could reach its highest level, however, the broader political developments in society turned against the PFA government. Following the exile of Elchibey to his home-village in Nakhjivan on June 17, 1993, the head of the ADAWR, Khanim Khalilova, left Azerbaijan for Turkey.

Throughout splits and fragmentation within the PFA in the years following its loss of state power, the ADAWR has remained loyal to Elchibey, who is now leading the more conservative and ethno-centrist PFPA (Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan)—a left-over from the much larger PFA. In recent years, a number of active members of the ADAWR, who could not approve of a continuous tailing of a male-centered agenda, have left the group. This has nearly turned the remaining entity into an instrument of or a female appendage to the increasingly conservative male leadership in the PFPA.<sup>48</sup>

The Association of Women of Azerbaijan (AWA), which represented women at a national level, was a carry over from the *Zhensoviet* (National Women’s Council), which used to operate under the control of the Azerbaijani Communist Party. Affected by rapid political changes, the growing independence movement and splits within the CP, the NWC also tried to adjust itself to the new atmosphere. During its national congress in November 1991, the NWC declared itself as a new organization, namely AWA, and appointed a new leader, Zamfira Verdiyeva, the then rector of the

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<sup>47</sup> Cited from Khanim Khalilova reported in the Baku daily, *Azerbaijan* (9 February 1993), p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> According to Leila Alieva, Director of the Center for Strategic Studies in Azerbaijan (interviewed by the author on the phone), in a recent meeting between various women’s NGOs in Baku, in 1998, the women representatives of the PFPA (the ADAWR) opposed the idea of women running for public office. They argued that women should limit their activities to supporting their male politicians and to charity or humanitarian services.

Baku Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages and a deputy in the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan. It also presented a new statement of purpose with a nationalistic tone. Since its official registration in December 1991, the AWA has declared itself as a non-partisan charity oriented women's group. It has functioned as a support network among mostly older or middle-aged and professional women, also offering charity and humanitarian services to refugees and war victims. During the early years of its existence and before the emergence of the more recent women organizations, the AWA used to be the sole representative of Azerbaijani women in regional and international women conferences.

The AWA has not gone through any fundamental structural or ideological renovation. Its practice has remained limited to mainly charity work, its goals and vision have remained vague and out of touch with the national debates, the younger generation in Azerbaijan and the new developments and discourses in international women's movements. Therefore, despite the strong personality and leadership competencies of its chairperson, Verdiyeva, the support base of the AWA has been declining and some of its members have left the association.

Among them, has been Elmira Suleymanova, who used to play a key role in the AWA as its vice-chair before leaving it for unspecified reasons. An energetic, forward-looking and seasoned activist and academic, Suleymanova started a new NGO in 1996 named Women and Development comprising mainly professional and academic women. Relative to most other women's NGOs in Azerbaijan, the WAD seems to have been more in touch with new realities pursuing a more gender-specific and clear goal. Thanks to Suleymanova's exposure to and contacts with other women's NGOs inside Azerbaijan and with regional and international women's groups and feminist networks outside, the WAD has been able to contribute to a rise in the level of discourse within and between various women's NGOs.

#### *Women's NGOs and emerging civil society*

The nature and process of formation of recent women's groups, women's NGOs (non-governmental organizations) have been perhaps unprecedented in the recent history of Azerbaijan. The

current political activism and the new NGOs among women and men in this post-Soviet era of increasing globalization do possess certain characteristics distinct from the pre-Soviet and Soviet eras. For one, internal concerns, domestic social issues and needs that would naturally shape the goals and nature of women's organizations are not necessarily the main moving motors behind every new women's NGO (or any other NGOs for that matter). In addition to the role of regional politics, other external factors have been influencing the nature and direction of new women's groups in transitional countries like Azerbaijan. In this regard, one needs to examine the role of the United Nations and its gender-related agencies like the UNDP and UNICEF; other international (mostly Western) donating and grant-giving foundations and aid agencies; and also the growing transnational feminist networks. This, however, needs to be done in a separate research report as more questions and concerns have arisen in regard to the advantages and disadvantages of the external donation-oriented NGOs in the transitional economies.

The UN-sponsored regional and world conferences of women, for example, have been an important source of mobilization, consciousness raising and network building for the burgeoning women's movement in Azerbaijan. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UNICEF have contributed to the gradually gender-oriented and better-focused activities of some of the women's NGOs in Azerbaijan.

As of 1998, there were about 20 officially registered women's NGOs in Azerbaijan, including the ADAWR, AWA and WAD, as discussed earlier; the "Women Oil Workers," led by Sulmaz Hajiyeva; "Business-Women's Association"; the "Baku Women's Council", led by Zarifa Salahova; "Cry of Mothers"; "Mothers of Soldiers"; "Sevil Women's Association", led by Sevil Aliyeva, the President's daughter; the "Charity Society of Tal'a" and "Omid"; the "Women's Dialogue for Peace in the Caucasus", and several other locally or provincially based women's NGOs. Among them are also groups like "Jewish Women's Association" and "Muslim Women's Council" that are basically aimed at promoting cultural identity and religious ideas and values.

Until recently, the function of most of these organizations was mainly of a charity nature or they operated loosely as social

networks and support groups. The emergency of the war-stricken situation and concern over basic needs and daily survival has pre-occupied many Azeri women, leaving little time and energy for gender-specific issues. Moreover, the continuing of economic deterioration and widening class disparity along with a sense of humiliation due to territorial loss have resulted in a growing disillusionment with political change and distrust toward political parties and political processes.

In addition to such motivational factors and a general decline in political activism compared to the early years of the independence movement, several other factors have contributed to the low representation of women in 'formal politics' and the slow formation and maturation of an informal genuine feminist women's movement. The low level of political sophistication and organizational skills among women, the cultural discouragement of women's political ambitions, extensive conformism, and limited individual initiative are among the hindering factors.

Following a Presidential decree in September of 1994, a "National Committee on Women's Issues" was created in an attempt to coordinate the activities of various women's groups in preparation for the Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing. A few years later, another Presidential decree was issued in January 1997 calling for the "strengthening of the role of women in Azerbaijan", and the establishment of the "State Committee on Protection of Women". According to a GID report from Baku, as a result of this event, many ministries and institutions have been mobilized to formulate their own proposals based on the priority areas in the country: e.g. women and economy (issues of poverty and property); refugees and internally displaced persons; women and health care; women and leadership; women and labor; women's rights; activities of women's NGOs and international organizations.<sup>49</sup> Azerbaijan has joined the CEDAW and has officially adhered to several UN conventions concerning human rights and women's rights. The success or sincerity of Azerbaijan's authorities in the implementation of these conventions, however, remains to be seen.

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<sup>49</sup> See "The GID Unit in Azerbaijan: A Growing Experience" Baku, February 1998.

Following the creation of the above-mentioned state committees and especially the preparatory efforts for taking part in the Beijing conference, a renewed sense of enthusiasm has emerged among women activists, at least the ones closer to the government. Although still limited to a small number of elite women and some political activists, this has set in motion a more gender-focused and systematic, and so far sustained, engagement of such women who may be among the potential leaders of a more massive and grass roots women's movement in future.

On the other hand, these newly created state organs, led by Fatma Abdullazadeh, head of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Office of the President, are to "oversee" all programs and activities dealing with women's status in the country. The extent of this overseeing is not clear yet, nor is the relationship between such state organs and the women's NGOs. The independence of NGOs from state control, however, is a necessary factor for the emergence of a civil society. Otherwise, a process of statization, bureaucratization and uniformalization of women's activities, similar to the one seen in the Soviet and other authoritarian regimes, will take away women's grass roots initiations, diversity and genuine voices.

One of the positive recent developments concerning women's NGOs has to do with the establishment of a GID (Gender in Development) unit in Azerbaijan (in September 1997) under the auspices of the UNDP. Under the directorship of Rena Ibrahimbekova (a capable, gender-conscious, and democratic-minded Azerbaijani woman with training in psychology), this Center has embarked on a series of impressive and unprecedented educational and capacity building programs among women of different walks of life. The organization of national and regional conferences on issues like "Women's Rights are Human Rights" and "Women in Conflict Resolution" (Baku, May 1998); the dissemination of brochures on research reports about so far untouchable issues like violence, rape and sexual harassment<sup>50</sup>; and the production of edu-

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<sup>50</sup> See the "Azerbaycanda Qadinlarin Veziyyeti" in the *Me'lumat Buletteni* no. 1, part 1 (January 1-15, 1999), published by the Center for Defense of Human Rights in Azerbaijan.

cational and empowering TV serials dealing with gender relations are among the innovative and timely activities of the GID in Baku.

The recent more liberal and democratic developments among Azerbaijani intellectuals and political elites as well as the emergence of new women's NGOs and centers like the GID in Azerbaijan seem to be promising. It appears that a genuine commitment to the introduction and promotion of a more egalitarian, gender-sensitive, civic, and inclusive discourse is about to emerge. Without the growth of such an egalitarian trend and without the creation of a civil society and a civic and pluralistic national identity, an inclusive democratization will not be possible in Azerbaijan.

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## WOMEN'S POSITION IN UZBEKISTAN BEFORE AND AFTER INDEPENDENCE

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### *Introduction*

The socio-economic and cultural conditions of societies generally affect how societies deal with gender issues. The concrete historical conditions and interests of different layers of societies determine how the issues are discussed. This was clearly reflected in the history of the Central Asian nations as well. Women's position in this region, which is the former colonial periphery of imperial Russia, was mostly determined by the strict traditions and canons of Islam. The Bolshevik Revolution introduced a significant socio-cultural transformation in Central Asia. This change was reflected in gender relations and women's position in society since the Soviet authorities attempted to increase women's participation in public life to actualize the building of the socialist regime. Although we believe that the Soviet achievements should not be overlooked, the socialist experiment caused many problems as well. Some of these problems were addressed in discussions following the dissolution of the USSR.

In this article, we discuss the position of women in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. In the first part of the essay, the Soviet legacy and current gender issues are analyzed. We review the state policies concerning women and their consequences in this section. The second part of the article, on the other hand, is based on Azimova's fieldwork in the Ferghana Valley, one of the regions where traditional ways of life are largely kept alive. Here we examine the role of women as the guardians of tradition and their role in the transmission and reproduction of traditional values, particularly through rites and rituals.

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*The changing role of women in Uzbekistan*

It would be incorrect to consider that discussions on the emancipation of women started with the October Revolution. The revolution was an upheaval, a forceful penetration of the Bolshevik rule, and was supposed to have raised the question of women's emancipation in the East for the very first time. Actually, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the progressive movement of national intelligentsia, which was called "Jadidism", laid out the question of women's participation in public social and cultural life in its program of renewal and social reconstruction. Certainly, it is impossible to reject the fact that the Soviet authorities in the 1920s conducted a series of actions more acceptable to the conditions of Central Asia for the emancipation of women. These actions found support not only from the women of local nationalities, but also from the progressive part of the population. As a result of very complex work, certain success was achieved in the provision of juridical rights for women and their introduction into the production sphere.

However, in the 1930s the process of women's emancipation was halted. An authoritative-bureaucratic system was established in the countryside and the authorities announced that most of the questions were resolved although they actually were not solved at all. The woman question was declared to be a resolved one as well.

Forcefully imposed emancipation had tragic results. Without rejecting achievements such as cultural revolution, increasing educational level and the economic participation of women, we would argue that the policy of using women as a cheap labor force and equalizing their labor with that of men in the 1930s-40s had very negative consequences. This policy continued until the 1980s. The position of rural women is particularly noteworthy. They suffered from the negative consequences of cotton monoculture. The major emphasis was made on the full participation of women in public production and the most important indicator was quantity.

The problem of women's double-burden was not resolved either. In addition to their heavy household chores, women's work was equalized with that of men in terms of length and productivity expectation. Hence, the patriarchal relations were far from being dissolved; they were even strengthened to a certain extent by

leaving the old circle of family duties to women in addition to their status as worker in public production.

Women, particularly rural women, suffered from poor health conditions, high infant mortality, the lack of normal utility conditions and a shortage of kindergartens. The funds provided by the government were insufficient. All these living conditions deteriorated due to the long working hours (especially during the season of cotton collection and refining), low wages, bad labor conditions, and a shortage of drinking water and food. The conditions of women working in industry were difficult as well.

In the 1980s, the question of women's emancipation from hard physical work was still current. By the beginning of the 1980s, the share of women was higher than that of men in hard physical work in industry in 11 republics of the USSR, including Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan.<sup>1</sup>

These problems were reflected in women's socio-economic and psychological problems. In 1986-1987, there were 270 cases of female self-immolation registered in Uzbekistan.<sup>2</sup> The reasons put forward included the burden of heavy household chores, the impossibility for women to realize their own potentials and articulate their needs, and hard economic conditions. At present, we do not have cases of female self-immolation and we would argue that it is due to the fact that opportunities for self-realization and employment are created for women.

To sum up, in the evaluation of Uzbek women's history, the achievements of the Soviet period should not be overlooked. On the other hand, the current problems of the women following independence should not be ignored in this climate of enthusiasm. As a matter of fact, independence has brought significant alterations in the political, economic, spiritual and cultural life of the nation. The resurgence of national self-recognition, historical traditions, and a rich cultural heritage has exerted influence upon women's position. The most important problem has been the restructuring of the economy, which has caused enormous changes in women's status.

The policies of the state concerning the woman question were reflected in a whole range of decrees and verdicts related to the

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<sup>1</sup> "Pravda". 1990. 8<sup>th</sup> of March.

<sup>2</sup> "Tashkentskaya pravda". 1988, 24<sup>th</sup> of December.

social protection of woman and family. First of all, a network of special government institutions to deal specifically with the issue was developed. In 1991, the Women's Committee of the Republic was established. However, it was unable to resolve many questions that depended on authority structures. This explains the order of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan entitled "Measures for increasing the role of women in the state and society construction of the Republic of Uzbekistan" on the 28th of November 1995, by which the new position of the deputy prime-minister of the Republic was established. This position was promoted to consolidate the position of the Women's Committees by increasing their involvement in the resolution of social and cultural development issues and their participation in administration.

Apart from this, new positions such as Deputy Chairmen of the Ministers Council of the Republic of Karakalpakistan, deputy *hakim*, head of the regional and district authority structures, were created. At the same time, the department for women's work in the Cabinet of Ministers was founded. All authority structures from top to the bottom, all mahallas and enterprises have such agencies.

Furthermore, the overall government program called "For Healthy Generations" was established. This program, along with other funds such as "Mahalla", "Navruz", and "Ecosan", conducts considerable work on issues like family planning and the education of young girls and women. It has gained recognition and created associations of women-economists, entrepreneurs, and lawyers. These associations are currently providing juridical consultations, assisting women in getting business education, providing consultations on taxation issues, and conducting research on business partners.

Moreover, the employment of women gained a specific structure in Uzbekistan in the independence years. During this time, there have been two trends in the indicators of women unemployment: The first one is the rapid growth of new jobs in the non-governmental sector. And the second one is the slow tempo of structural reorganization of female employment in the economic branches.

While reviewing the ongoing processes in female employment in Uzbekistan, it is important to analyze the demographic condition. Statistics show that between 1990-1995 the birth level was insignificantly reduced in the Republic from 33.7 to 29.8; however, the

absolute number of delivered babies remained stable. A number of important changes, especially the increase in the number of marriages and the decrease in the number of divorces, have influenced this tendency. In 1990, in Uzbekistan 217,000 marriages and 30,000 divorces were registered, and in 1995 these figures were 170,800 and 21,200 respectively.<sup>3</sup> This data tells us about the orientations in the republic for the family and enables us to forecast stability in family relationships in the future. In addition, it has serious consequences for the policy of social protection of women in the labor market.

Professional and technical changes should not be ignored in the transition period either. Strict conditions in the market can render many specialization categories obsolete in future. In particular, unqualified employees can lose the opportunity of employment, because eventually the necessity for less qualified labor in the production process would disappear. The economy of Uzbekistan today has a strong demand for qualified personnel. In 1995, a significant quantity of vacancies, i.e. 40,000 of them, required high qualifications. That is why the task of the system of ongoing professional education is preparation, retraining, and upgrading of the qualifications of women personnel.

The largest part of the female population lives in rural areas. Accordingly, the most important problem is the economic support of women engaged in the agrarian sector. A lot of things have been done concerning this issue during the independence years. All obstacles which could bother women engaged in the agrarian sector and prevent a woman from considering herself a full owner of land were legally terminated. Long term rent of land with title of inheritance and with unconditional entitlement for the use of the crops of their own labor was allowed. One million hectares of agricultural land was provided for personal farming. As a result, the self-employment of women was permitted. A range of economic privileges was established for them. They are now completely free of value-added and property taxes and are exempt from income tax for two years.

Among the problems of female employment, there is one which requires careful consideration. It is the improvement of working

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<sup>3</sup> Archive of Women's Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

conditions and job security for female employees. The issue is fully reflected in a new Labor Code, which was approved in December 1995 and put into force on the 1st of April 1996. It provides significant privileges and social protection for working women engaged in industry with heavy and hazardous labor conditions. Some of these are the right to term retirement on pension, a reduced work-week, the prolongation of labor vacation and free meals. In addition, it was prohibited to use female labor in certain types of work.

The economic support of women was expanded during these years by a number of measures for their social protection: the increase in the minimum wage, material help for poor families, the introduction of a new scale of subsidies as a means of providing economic support to families with many children, the increase to two years of the length of paid vacation given to mothers for child-care, the stimulation of private entrepreneurship for women, an increase in wages, salaries, pensions, stipends, and subsidies.

The formation of a non-governmental sector led to the emergence of new spheres for women's activities, which provide opportunities for the development of their abilities. This sector, first of all, permits women to engage in private entrepreneurship in small and medium size businesses. Today in the republic, according to the official data, out of 64 thousand there are 15 thousand women entrepreneurs—1790 of which work in Tashkent, 944 run farms, and 300 are the heads of small and joint venture private enterprises.<sup>4</sup>

However, woman entrepreneurship in the republic still bears an elite character and according to the opinion of experts has not yet acquired a mass character. Presidential orders on the creation of a support fund for private entrepreneurship and small business, on the creation of an agency for insurance protection of private entrepreneurship and small businesses, on the stimulation of the development of small and private entrepreneurship and so on form the conditions for free competition, plan additional measures for the support of entrepreneurship, and provide privileges on loans, taxes and rent. However, female entrepreneurship encounters the

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<sup>4</sup> Archive of the Women's Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

opposition of local authorities. The inertia of the old mentality is still strong.

To overcome this, as a result of a proposal made by the Women's Committee, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic adopted a plan to create the "Women's Fund for the promotion of small business and private entrepreneurship" in 1996. This "Women's Fund", i.e. *Bunjdkor ajl*, which is the government special organization, assists women, supports their entrepreneurship activities in private medium and small size businesses, and helps create new jobs especially in the agrarian sector.

*Women's survival strategies: Their role in keeping traditions alive*

While taking into consideration the changes in Uzbek women's lives and the problems they are encountering, it is important to analyze women's organization of their daily lives, particularly in rural areas, and their survival mechanisms. As is well known, women are considered to be the guardians of traditions and must carry out the function of transmitting them to the next generation.

The daily life in Uzbek villages, particularly those of the Fergana valley, is divided into *male* and *female* areas, which is reflected in the segregation of space. In the *ichkari*, inside yard, women are separated from men when they have wedding, burial, and other rites whereas the *tashkari* (outside yard) is the men's domain. This division of space into two parts is obvious in all spheres of the Uzbek family life and daily activities. The transmission of information about ethnic and religious traditions occurs in the female domain, *ichkari*, by means of observation and participation in the rites.

A village in Uzbekistan consists of a network of neighborhoods, which are called *mahalla*, in which the traditional life of the Uzbek people goes on. Each mahalla has its own government and traditions. Neighborhood relations are carried out by groups of women. Naturally, women of one mahalla mix with those of others. However, we can gain the fullest picture of the activity of these women's groups by taking a single one as an example.

Women's collective life is centered on participation in family events, public and family rites, decisions concerning children's upbringing, the organization of women's private life and their pos-

terity. When we take a closer look at female gatherings, we can see that the oldest generation (women aged 55-80) gathers during the celebration of religious rites. Moreover, they take part in all cycles of the rite system. As a token of respect for their life experience, they are invited to all events. Thanks to their presence, the importance of these events increases. Not a single family event can be conducted in the mahalla without women of this age group. The exceptions are the rites where representatives of other age groups gather together. This group plays an important part in the burial rite, as the keepers of the traditional religious legacy. Particularly in this cycle, Islam and pre-islamic elements are the most clearly expressed.

During wedding rites, the presence of this female group is also desirable, as they give advice about how to conduct the celebration. Who else could be better informed about traditional rites, which are typical for the Uzbek village of the Fergana valley. Every family tries as much as they can to conduct their rites in accordance with all the traditional standards, because public opinion demands it.

Some of the most respected women of the oldest age group, together with other participants of the wedding procession, accompany the bride to her new home. They stay there until the next day to conduct the rite of *yuzotchi*, the uncovering of the face. The children's rites, *beshiktoy* and *chilya-guzaron*, the rites in honor of a newborn child, also cannot take place without their participation.

We can divide the next age groups into two subgroups: the 40-50 year olds and the 50-55 year olds. The latter subgroup takes an active part in religious rites. They, with their contemporaries and young women, take part in the preparations for celebrations, such as cooking meals for the guests. Some women of the former subgroup, who are near neighbors, or the relatives of a hostess, as a rule do not sit during the religious rites but serve the guests instead.

From the group of women 40-50 years old is chosen the *yanga*. She is an adviser and a mediator between the bride and groom. The *yanga* always has blood ties with the bride—she is either an aunt or the uncle's spouse or a daughter-in-law of this age group. The *yanga* accompanies the bride and stays with her during the first days. She helps the bride adjust to her new home, but she is not present for more than two or three days. Most importantly, the *yanga* is present on the wedding night, when she is a witness to the

girl's virginity. Upon informing the relatives about it, she receives a present from the groom's mother. On the whole, we can say that the *yanga* carries out the role of a second mother in the bride's life.

The aforesaid reveals the main function of middle aged women: the presence and active participation in religious rites. Besides this, they also make other preparations for the rites; e.g. *kurpa-khashar*, making baked goods for the *fotiha-toy* and other rituals.

The third group of contemporaries is the young women. They are those who have recently married and have not yet reached the age of 40. In public life, they carry out the preparatory work for the celebrations: cleaning the house and yard, cooking meals, and preparing the *dastarkhans* and so on. All work or services are their responsibility. Sometimes, the *yanga* is chosen from this group according to family relations.

Every age group differs not only by degree of activity in the rites, but also by their relations to them. Old women, whose children are already married, usually pay the most attention to the religious or burial rites. This is how they prepare for life after death. Middle aged women are occupied with wedding rites and children's rites, so they need to know everything about them in order to carry them out according to existing traditions. They also take part in religious rites, which have a prominent place in the traditions of the Fergana Valley. Women of the third group, dream of conducting their own rites as well as other people's. At this age, it is not secret that they are preparing for the *sunnat-toy* for their sons (the circumcision), then they will compile a dowry for their daughters and their future daughters-in-law.

We should note that every age group listens to the advice of their elders. At the same time, such rites as preparing *sumalyak*, wedding rites, visiting holy places, and others require the presence of women of all age groups.

Rites in the mahalla are carried out by certain groups of inhabitants, who form mahalla councils. Two women are also included in this council: *otincha* and *dasturkhonchi*. These two figures play an active role in all traditional events. *The otincha* is a woman who knows the Arabic script, who can read religious books and who strictly follows all Islamic regulations. She is an active participant in the burial ritual cycle and religious rites. As a rule, she teaches the family in which the misfortune occurred how to execute the rites

and how to behave during mourning. She necessarily attends all ceremonies. During the burial rites, she reads religious books.

*The dasturkhonchi* is a very energetic woman, learned in traditions and at the same time a very helpful person. She holds this position until old age. She plays an active role in all wedding ceremonies. Her duty is to inform the women's part of the community (mahalla) about all coming of wedding celebrations. For instance, she gathers members of the community to prepare provisions, to bake bread, etc. When the wedding is about to start, her activity increases. At the wedding party after all the women have gathered in the women's side, she entertains everybody, accepts gifts, and makes sure that every guest is attended to and given something to eat. In addition, the mothers of both the bride and the bridegroom discuss with her all the stages of the wedding ceremony and all the preliminary preparations.

When comparing women with men, one can see that it is the women who are the keepers of traditional customs and rituals. Their active role is the result of the fact that men rarely interfere in the conduct of the rites. Their role is to support the financial expenses for the events. One may explore the rites much better by receiving information from women than from men. Besides, quite unlike the way that males participate in the rites, women have their own traditions: burial, which is connected with revival of nature in spring; wedding, *yuz-otchi*; children's rites, i.e. *chilya-guzaron*, *beshik-toy*; and others.

In recent years, much has been written about the daily life of women and of women's rights within the family. However, little attention has been paid to the fact that women have always sought to lessen their burdens in everyday life through the help of other women. Women spend the majority of their lives within the family. Their time is consumed by family cares, which narrow their circle of acquaintances and their possibilities for coming into contact with contemporary knowledge and culture. Women, much more so than men, have preserved the system of traditions and religious rites, which includes both Islamic and pre-Islamic elements.

After Uzbekistan gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the legal Islamic clergy voiced disapproval of several of these pre-Islamic traditions. Despite this, women of the Fergana valley continue to practice them; in fact, these rites are more widely followed than before. Actually, Uzbek women consider them as

their original ethnic rituals. These rites, called *Bibi-seshanba and mushkulkushad*, are celebrated by old women on purpose to facilitate the solution of problems in the private lives of women of all age groups.

Throughout periods times when social and economic shocks occur, women strictly maintain traditional rites and customs. Their interaction with each other during the observance of these rites helps them feel more comfortable. The point is that women have not retreated into their families. In the community environment, they find support from other members. Today as before, an important function is carried out in women's world: the transmission of the spiritual heritage to the next generations.

### *Conclusion*

Although the government is sensitive about the gender issues and has developed policies addressing women's problems, there are still many problems due to the hardships of transition. First of all, there is the problem of female unemployment. According to the official statistics, the ratio of women in the overall number of unemployed was 48.3% in 1994. In 1995, 115 thousand women were registered on the labor exchange.<sup>5</sup>

The other problem is the decrease in the number of educated women, although women in Uzbekistan have a very high level of education on the whole. The share of women in high and middle educational institutions was 41% in 1991, whereas it dropped to 39% in 1994. The percentage of educated women in industry has significantly dropped from 25.4% in 1992 to 18.7% in 1994.<sup>6</sup>

There has been a reduction in the number of women working in fields such as science and scientific services. Low wages and salaries in this area led to a 50% decrease in the number of women. A significant decrease has also been observed in areas such as trade and the service sector (from 200.900 in 1990 to 168.700 in 1993).

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<sup>5</sup> Ubaidullaev R.A. "Problemi zanyatosti jenshin Uzbekistana i puti ih resheniay v usloviyah perehoda k rinku" Uzbekistan: strukturnie preobrazovaniya v economice I zanyatost.

<sup>6</sup> Uzbekistan:strukturnie preobrazovaniya v economice I zanyatost jenshin. Tashkent, 1996, page 49.

However, the increase in the share of economically active women results in equilibrium. At the present time, there are a lot of women working in new spheres like the private sector and small businesses. Economic difficulties push women into the market, and it is important to note that this, in turn, naturally exerts influence on internal family relations. Women, whose earnings are the core income in the family budget, have a higher status.

Therefore, we see that there are a lot of problems yet to be resolved. Many of them are the heritage from the former Soviet regime; others have been brought about by market economy. However, the discussion of gender issues has dramatically changed in comparison with the Soviet period.

Uzbekistan, by virtue of having its own way for national, political, social, economic, and spiritual development, provides itself with free self-determination in all spheres of life. For the full development of the republic, it is necessary to have the full participation of women in these processes. They constitute 51% of the population and the main labor force. It should be stated that, notwithstanding the difficulties, the feeling of independence and freedom, the development of cultural and national traditions, and the restoration of an objective history of a nation help to overcome economic obstacles. We believe this can best be understood by those nations, like Uzbekistan, which suffered from totalitarianism and dependence for many years.

## ENGENDERING SOCIAL MEMORY: DOMESTIC RITUALS, RESISTANCE AND IDENTITY IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

SETENEY SHAMI

A turning point in feminist scholarship came with the recognition of the significance and multiple meanings of the domestic sphere. The pre-occupation with “combating androcentric bias” (Kandiyoti 1996, 4) had focused on women’s participation in public life as the source of power and emancipation, and equated the “public” with the formal spheres of economy, politics and social hegemony. This perspective had turned the domestic arena into an ambiguous zone in feminist research. On the one hand, the identification of women with the domestic and private spheres was seen as the source of women’s oppression; on the other hand, these spheres were treated as residual and left undertheorized (Yanagisako 1979). The shift, which began in the late 1970s, to examining the domestic sphere more closely not only problematized dichotomies of the private and public, but also began to draw attention to differences between women beyond those of class and social-legal status (di Leonardo 1991). Differences that are structured through the social reproduction of households, domestic groups and communities, highlight the multiplicity of women’s identities and the significant relations of power and dominance between women. The later shift “from woman to gender” (Kandiyoti 1996, 6) further focused analysis on the cultural construction of the domestic sphere and the private negotiation of gender identities. The private and public are now recognized as interpenetrated spheres, and questions about the locus of change have become less uni-directional (from public to private) and more cognizant of cultural complexities.

In “post-Soviet” scholarship, the domestic sphere gains additional importance in debates concerning the impact of Sovietization on ethnic identity. The domestic sphere is identified as having been the primary arena for the reproduction of ethnic and religious identities and the “woman question” as one of the major challenges to the Sovietization of the “ethnic peripheries” (Lubin 1982; Massell 1974; Suny 1993; Tett 1994; Tohid 1996). This

research refines our understanding of the articulation of the political and the domestic and illustrates interesting issues concerning the Soviet era in different locations. However, it often leaves unanswered a problematic question: Is the positive valuation of women as “custodians of tradition” being justified because, in this context, tradition is seen as the site of resistance to a hegemonic and totalizing ideology and political practice? Such a perspective may once again mask the intricacies of inter- and intra-gender domestic relations and inequalities as well as resurrect the boundaries between the public and the private.

This paper examines some implications of the pivotal role of the domestic arena for identity among Circassians in the North Caucasus.<sup>1</sup> It focuses on relations of domination and subordination between women, on domestic rituals as the enactment of social memory and on the roles of grandmothers in setting some of the limits of Sovietization and Russification. Examples of Circassians in the diaspora are interposed to give some perspective on the ethnography from the Caucasus. Finally, a brief description of the emergent phenomenon of women’s participation in the marketplace and informal transnational trading is presented. This serves both as a counterpoint to the emphasis on the domestic roles of

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on my fieldwork among the Circassians in the North Caucasus in 1992, 1993, and 1995, as well as in Jordan and Turkey (since 1979). Some background on the history and politics of ethnic naming is necessary. Those that are called Çerkez, Tcherkess or Sharkass by others call themselves Adyge in their own language and recognize divisions into various sub-groups, which speak different dialects of the same language and originate from separate but contiguous territories in the North-West Caucasus (e.g. the Kabardey, Shapsoug, Hatukuey, Besleney, Bzedoug, Abzekh, and so on.) The Adyge and others (Abkhaz, Chechens, Osettes, Ingush, Daghestanian groups) were pushed out by the Russian expansion in the latter half of the nineteenth century and a mass migration to the Ottoman Empire took place. In their places of settlement, in the Balkans, Anatolia and the Syrian province, the various groups grew closer and dialects merged. In the North Caucasus, not having qualified as a “nation,” the Adyge were divided into different administrative republics and districts and were treated as three separate peoples with different languages and different alphabets and called the Adyge, the Kabardin, and the Cherkess. They are the titular nationality in three republics, although shared with Turkic groups in two of them, namely: Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Adygeia. These are all currently republics within the Russian Federation. In this paper, I will use the term “Circassian” to mean the Adyge in the most inclusive sense and put aside this complicated issue and its implications for identity although the renegotiations of these identities is at the very heart of this historical moment.

women, as well as to raise some possibilities of the transformation of these roles.

*1. Domestic performances: Ritualizing women*

We are having tea at the end of the evening meal. It is August 1993, and we are in a large village some distance from Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria. At the table, there is myself and another Circassian woman from Jordan (Lina), our hostesses (Fatimat) and her mother-in-law (Nana), Fatimat's brother's wife (Asyet), and Fatimat's mother (Marjinat) who is also Asyet's mother-in-law.<sup>2</sup> The all-female table thus includes two guests, two mothers-in-law and two daughters-in-law. Fatimat's married daughter (Karimat) scurries in and out, bringing heaped plates of food and bottles of soft drinks and clearing away the used utensils. However, it is Fatimat who serves us chicken, fried pastries, cheese, tomatoes, buttermilk and cake, getting up from her seat every few minutes. The two elderly ladies, and especially Nana, are keeping up a lively conversation. Everyone seems relaxed and merry until a moment of intense drama transfixes us.

Fatimat gets up to pour a second cup of tea for everyone. She approaches her mother-in-law intending to pour some tea into her cup. Before she has the chance to do so, Nana raises her arm and imperiously knocks aside Fatimat's hand, indicating through her gesture that she still has a few drops of tea in her cup. Fatimat stands there supporting a two-gallon steaming tea-pot waiting for her mother-in-law to drink up the last sip. Nana ignores her completely and goes on telling lively stories about herself as a young widow working in the kolkhoz. She dwells on the difficulties of those years when they used to work so hard, but all the same they managed to enjoy themselves and raise their young sons properly. Fatimat, a woman in her early fifties and mother of several grown and married children, still stands there for a full five or six minutes holding the heavy pot while the rest of us become fully aware of what Nana is doing. She is showing us where the power in this

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<sup>2</sup> All personal names mentioned in this paper are pseudonyms.

household lies. She finally drinks her tea and nods to Fatimat to serve her.

It was one of those scenes that anthropologists live for as they do fieldwork, a scene that, as it unfolds, makes you acutely aware that you are witnessing something important. It did not take much of an anthropological imagination to notice that, all through the short performance, the air around the table was tense and pregnant with meaning.

*The domestic drama continues to unfold*

Fatimat's own mother sips her new cup of tea and pronounces it cold. Nana immediately confirms that the tea is indeed cold. At this point, Asyet (Fatimat's sister-in-law) suddenly speaks up. She says that she has just remembered a story about the Prophet Muhammad. "One day, the Prophet was sitting with his daughter Fatima and a man came and told a story. The Prophet listened to the man and said, "You are right." Another man then came and told a conflicting story. He listened to this man and said, "You are right." His daughter Fatima asked him, "How can they both be right?" The Prophet explained that these were different points of view. Each man tells the story the way his mind tells it to him, the way he sees it. "Therefore," Asyet adds, "some may think that the tea is cold, whether it is so or not." With this intervention Asyet shows her solidarity with her sister-in-law, Fatimat.

Through such domestic ritual performances, women enact their relations to one another as well as delineate some of the pivotal roles of the domestic arena in the construction of identity and tradition. There are two qualities to these performances that make them significant and powerful: their ritual quality and their improvisational quality. Such moments are crucial events in the transmission and perpetuation of both domestic and kinship relations of hierarchy and authority, as well as of collective social memory. In other words, domestic rituals can be seen as occasions of "performative memory" (Connerton 1991, 71).

*Meals and memory*

Meals, such as the one described above, are rituals in so far as they are formal, performative and a "rule-governed activity of a symbolic

character which draws the attention of the participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance" (Connerton 1991, 44). But they are rituals of a particular kind and on a different level from the public performances that usually constitute the focus of anthropological analysis. They are also different from the events and practices upon which Connerton focuses in his analysis of social memory: public/national/religious commemorative ceremonials and bodily everyday practices. Recognizing such domestic performances as ritual contradicts standard distinctions between "ritual" and "everyday life" and emphasizes that ritual is "about power and disorder, about order and resistance" (Dirks 1994, 502).

Ritual meals may take place on different occasions, such as weddings, funerals, and other events that link private experiences and transformations with public participation and legitimization. Meals may also accompany public ceremonies. The meal described above was domestic, not public, but was lent a ritual status through the presence of guests from abroad. Being all female gave it a semblance of informality compared with meals in honor of guests consisting of men only or of mixed company. For example, there were no formal toasts and speeches that habitually accompany such meals. There was no assigned *themade*, or godfather, of the table. Yet, Nana's one gesture of authority marked the significance of the occasion. Nana made it clear that, despite the apparent informality of the setting, this was an occasion where the hierarchy and distribution of power in the domestic sphere was to be demonstrated and perpetuated. While the gesture was improvised and arose out of the context of the moment, it confirmed the ritual and performative quality of that context.

That the performativeness of ritual is conveyed through both utterances and through set postures, gestures and movements (Connerton 1991, 58-9) was well illustrated on this occasion. Throughout the meal, the two elderly ladies were eating with gusto, keeping up a steady conversation, laughing and having a good time. Although Fatimat and Asyet joined in the laughter, they were noticeably quieter than they had been at lunch and earlier in the day when we had been alone with them. They also were not eating. When I asked why, Asyet said that she usually did not eat in the evenings and Fatimat said that she had a little trouble with her stomach. Looking at their substantial figures and remembering

that Fatimat had told us at lunch that her stomach hurt if she did not eat, these explanations did not ring true. Both Fatimat and Asyet were sitting at the end of the table furthest from the elderly ladies. They had positioned themselves at such an angle to the table, that they were part and yet not part of the group. Unobtrusively, they observed the Circassian custom of not eating in the presence of elders and parents-in-law, participating through this abstention in constructing the occasion as one of performative memory.

Connerton distinguishes between three types of remembering: personal, cognitive, and “habit-memory”. The first focuses on life events, the second on specific rules and codes while the final one is the ability to reproduce a certain performance—a habitual practice. Connerton goes on to make the point that habit-memory is “an essential ingredient in the successful and convincing performance of codes and rules” (1991, 36). This meal was riveting in its combination of the three types of remembering. The elderly women focused on a particular set of events that were etched deep in their personal memory. Most of their conversation was about the period of W.W.II and just after, when both of them were young war widows and Nana was in exile in Kazakhstan.<sup>3</sup> Marjinat recounted stories of the meanness of the foreman who supervised them in the kolkhoz, and the general laughter indicated that this man was a well-known figure in family lore. Marjinat told how they would fool him and sneak apples hidden in their bosoms, store them and then sell them out of season. Suspecting them, the foreman had said, “I wish I also had this tree which grows apples winter and summer.”

They talked about how, although they were widows, they had been able, through their physical labor, their guile in circumventing kolkhoz rules, and their faithfulness to their sons, to reconstruct their shattered families. This emphasis on bodies, strategies, and sons carried clear messages for their daughters-in-law, as well as to us, the Circassian guests from the diaspora. These women had ensured survival, culture, and lineage. The task, though much

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<sup>3</sup> Although the Circassians were not among the “punished peoples” of the Caucasus that experienced wholesale deportation and exile, many families were relocated to Central Asia on suspicion of collaborating with the Germans and a variety of social “crimes” as well as for reasons of pre-revolutionary social status and wealth (see Goldenberg 1994).

easier now, had to be continued by the following generations. Personal memory, here, was part and parcel of the social memory of the family and the cultural group as a whole.

In addition to the articulation of personal and social memory, the interaction at the table was an enactment of cultural codes and rules, or of cognitive memory: Karimat serving, Fatimat and Asyet not eating and not speaking, the order and ways in which we were served our food, the elderly ladies' assumption of their centrality; all these practices were conducted with an air of ease and simplicity and yet were fraught with unspoken codes. Habit-memory was also ingrained in the performativeness of the scene, with the climax reached when Nana made the codes governing domestic hierarchy and authority that much more explicit. Why Nana felt this necessary I cannot tell, but the style of the communication, without direct speech and through gesture and implication, made it all the more powerful, illustrating that "in all cultures, much of the choreography of authority is expressed through the body" (Conneron 1991, 74).

In this context, it is fitting that the resistance shown by Asyet, the indirect victim of the witnessed scene, would take the form of a religious parable. It was rather startling to hear her attribute this particular story to the Prophet, because it is recognizable in the Middle Eastern context as a story figuring Nasrettin Hoca.<sup>4</sup> Asyet may have wished to make her parable more powerful by invoking the Prophet, for the point of her intervention was unmistakable. Given that the two grandmothers invested themselves with religious knowledge and authority (as will be discussed below), invoking a religious tale that affirms the relativity of truth and the responsibility of authority to accord each person their proper due was an effective and powerful rhetorical device.

While Fatimat remained silent throughout the scene, she did eventually get a little revenge. The two elderly ladies were still talking when she told them that they should leave because we, the guests, were tired and wanted to go to sleep. As they left, my friend Lina and I started to accompany them out of the room as

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<sup>4</sup> Nasrettin Hoca, Joha, and the Mullah, as he is variously known, is a historical/mythical figure widely popular in the Middle East as a trickster, teacher and "wise-fool".

politeness demands. Fatimat made a gesture to us to the effect that this was not necessary and that we should stay in the room. Lina, startled, whispered to me in Arabic, "Look at how she is kicking them out!" We sat down again. Karimat finally put aside her apron and also sat down. She and Fatimat had tea, ate a little and chatted with us before we all went to bed. Fatimat thus used this final scene of the day to reassert her authority over the domestic space and appropriate us as being unambiguously her guests.

### *Domestic Hierarchies*

While the ritual quality of our visit was clearest during this evening meal, power, authority and domestic hierarchies had been demonstrated from the beginning of our visit and continued throughout the duration of our two-day stay. To a large degree, this was due to the reason we were there. Lina and I had arrived bearing a letter from Fatimat's twenty-year-old son, Ali, who had gone to Jordan to study Islamic theology, Shari'a, at the university some months before. Lina had met Ali and was friendly with the family with whom he was living in Amman. As this was the first news the family had received from their son since he had left, there was a great deal of excitement surrounding our visit.

Immediately upon our arrival, we were made aware of the important place that Fatimat's mother-in-law, Nana, held in the household. Nana joined us as soon as we entered the house and after greeting us, began to ask about Ali, her grandson, to whom she referred as "my son". She constantly reiterated that she was the one who had brought him up and she was the one who missed him the most. Although Fatimat was clearly anxious to listen, she and everyone else left the room and the first person to hear the news and ask questions about the young man was Nana. Only after an hour did Fatimat join us. At that point Nana left the room. Everything was retold and answers were given to Fatimat's concerned questions about her son's well-being, what he was eating and how he was managing in Jordan. We spent most of that first day repeating the same few stories and information that we knew about Ali as various members of the family and extended kin group came to meet us. Fatimat's husband, just as anxious, could not bring himself to sit with all these women, but would wander in and out

under the pretext of showing us his two-year old grandson and would eavesdrop on the conversations.

Throughout the two days we stayed with them, it was noticeable that the various people who shared authority over Ali, his two grandmothers, his mother and father, were rarely present at the same time when the subject of Ali and his future was discussed. This was partly due to the “avoidance” relationships that characterize domestic relations in Circassian culture such that in-laws should not be too often in one another’s presence and married couples should not be together in front of their parents. However, it also had to do with compartmentalizing and apportioning authority (with its accompanying love and concern) over Ali, the absent subject who had created this ritualized performative occasion.

On the second day of our visit, the family and various relations gathered to record a cassette tape for us to take back to Ali in Jordan. The order in which the messages were taped was roughly the same as the one in which Ali’s news had been received. Asyet’s eighteen year-old son operated the tape-recorder with great formality, standing respectfully throughout the long proceedings. Before each new message was recorded, the tape was played from the beginning and listened to each time with the same solemnity.

Nana was the first to record a message and, significantly, she spoke not to Ali but to the grandmother of the family with whom he was staying. She pleaded with the Nana<sup>5</sup> in Jordan to take care of her “little son” and prayed to God to ease the burden that Ali was imposing on the host family. Nana also thanked her for the gift of the prayer beads and carpet that we had brought with us from Ali’s host family. Nana’s message was followed by those of Ali’s sister, Karimat’s mother-in-law (Ludmilla), then Ali’s maternal grandmother (Marjinat), then his maternal uncle (Fatimat’s brother, Asyet’s husband), then his father, then Fatimat. In this way, the queue of messages was ordered by generation, age and gender. Farther relatives (Karimat’s mother-in-law and Fatimat’s brother) were given precedence over closer relatives. Ali’s mother and father were noticeably at the bottom of this queue, Fatimat being the last of all.

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<sup>5</sup> Nana is a term of endearment for grandmothers often used by Circassians in Jordan as well as in the Caucasus.

When their turns came, Ali's father and mother each took the tape recorder to another room to record their messages in private, although it was then played for everybody to hear. Fatimat began her message to her son by saying "What can I add to what has already been said? But they are insisting that I say something." Thus she recognized the authority of those who had preceded her and diminished her right to communicate with her son. Her brief message asked Ali to convey her greetings to the Nana of his host family. She then urged Ali to be a son to the family and a brother to their children. In contrast to Nana, all the others spoke directly and less formally to Ali himself. Although they all sent greetings to the Nana in Jordan, they did so through Ali rather than speaking directly to this woman who was older than they were.

After the grandparent and parent generations had recorded their messages, they were followed by Karimat (Ali's sister), then Aseyt's son (his cousin). The first moment of levity in the proceedings came as they tried to make Karimat's toddlers speak to their uncle. After everyone had spoken, Nana recorded a closing message, this time opening with a formal prayer, repeated thanks for the host family and ending with an address to Ali. The whole tape was then played over several times and listened to with great respect.

Nana's final message was again an assertion of her primary role where Ali was concerned. She said: "*Bism Allah al-rahman al-rahim*, first I pray for God's mercy on all Muslims, second I pray that our child who is in a strange land will achieve his hopes and that all Muslims in our land will become like him . . . I pray that God will bring Ali back to his people as a Yefendi,<sup>6</sup> I hope that this mixed-up world will be calmer when Ali comes back and Islam will unite us as one family. This is it, Ali! Because I am the first one who took you down this path, God give you the strength and ability for you to take me to heaven." Nana paused, "That's enough," she said and gestured that the tape recorder should be switched off.

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<sup>6</sup> "Yefendi", as religious shaykhs are called by Circassians in the Caucasus, is the local variant of the Turkish word "efendi".

*2. Sovietization and its limits: The roles of grandmothers*

The point has been made by several scholars (e.g., Atkin 1989, Dragadze 1994, Tett 1994) that Islam during the Soviet era became almost entirely a domestic and private practice. Religious knowledge was transmitted to the younger generation in the home, and mothers are said to have played the major role in this. Ali's experience confirmed that his religious education had been largely at home and privately arranged. However, it was not his mother, but rather his grandmothers (both maternal and paternal) that took the credit for this education. Nana said to Ali, "I was the first one who took you down this path", and made the point that he could repay this debt only by taking her to heaven; that is, through his good deeds and piety. The day before, Ali's maternal grandmother, Marjinat, had made a similar claim, at the same time stating her position in the kinship hierarchy. She said, "After Nana I am the one who is the most sad about Ali going away." She said that she was the one who had first helped Ali learn the Qur'an. She, herself, had learnt as a child, from a Yefendi who was related to them. In addition to herself, a Yefendi who had studied in Uzbekistan taught the Qur'an to one of her sons and to Ali. Fatimat's mother stated her involvement in Ali's religious education as proof of her attachment to Ali and her almost equal share of authority over him.

Fatimat, Ali's own mother, was completely marginalized by the claims of the two elderly women, who spent most of the time sitting together holding hands in a show of affection. Their competition with one another was also apparent. Soon after hearing Marjinat talk about her religious knowledge, Nana got up saying that she was going to pray and, glancing at us to make sure that we were watching, she performed her ablutions at the courtyard tap.

Such demonstrations of religious faith and knowledge in other households were rare and may have reflected this family's experience in Central Asia. Some authors have argued that Islam had a tenuous hold in the North-West Caucasus, especially after the massive emigrations of the late nineteenth century. This is in contrast to the north-east regions of Chechnya and Dagestan, which are characterized by strong Sufi movements, the abundance of holy shrines and the important role of religious shaykhs as community leaders (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985, Subtelny 1989).

Many Circassians of all ages in the Caucasus said that they did not know how to pray, had no idea of the five pillars of Islam, thought that the Hajj sounded bizarre and asked in disbelief if Islam really allowed a man to take more than one wife. Upon hearing that a man could marry four wives, one elderly man said wonderingly: "What is this religion that allows you to do whatever you want?"

In spite of the absence of institutionalized forms of Islam, however, the Islamic component of Circassian identity is very important, and similar to other peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia, it is emphasized as a major marker of difference from the Russians.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, there is a high degree of interest in learning more about Islam. Visitors from Jordan and Syria, seen as coming from the holy lands and closer to the source of truth, are often asked about the Qur'an, Islamic practices, the correct way to pray at a funeral and so on. Islamic phrases such as *bismillah* and *mashallah* are common during greetings, farewells, and while clinking glasses of vodka and whisky. On the other hand, during the speeches and toasts that accompany ritual meals, the Adyge word for the Supreme Diety, *Tkhe*, is used more often than "Allah". Many Circassians also make the point that their traditions are their religion. *Khabze* is the word that is used for tradition, which encompasses many meanings such as a way of life, etiquette, morality, respect and authenticity. "Circassians have always worn their religion (Islam) very softly, like silk," one woman said.

#### *Incorporated practices*

The general point illustrated by the domestication of religion during the Soviet era is that of the household as the prime site for the construction and reproduction of ethnic and religious identity. A revisionist scholarship has emerged on the limits of Sovietization and the parallel process of Russification, emphasizing a prevailing dualism of "Soviet in public, ethnic in private" (see Tohid 1996). Religion and tradition clearly have a central role as resistance. In

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<sup>7</sup> It should be pointed out that there are Christian Circassians in the Caucasus, in and around the town of Mazdok in the republic of North Ossetia, who see themselves equally as distinct from the Russians as their Muslim co-ethnics. In this, they are similar to the Abkhassians, who are both Christian and Muslim. In the Caucasus, religion does not mark ethnic groups off from one another as neatly as is reported for Central Asia, making relations in this region even more complex.

addition, and equally importantly, they constitute a source of power and a contested realm within the household. They reinforce and contest different inequalities—including generational, gender and intra-gender ones. The articulation of various levels of hierarchy (state/family/age/gender), as well as the resistance to these hierarchies, complicate private/public dichotomies and show that women “occupy specific locations in nexuses of multiple stratifications” (di Leonardo 1991, 31). In examining these nexuses, theories of patriarchy have often focused on how domination within the family and domination of the state mutually reinforce one another (Mohanty 1991). In the Soviet context, as in many colonial situations, the relationship between tradition and the state is rarely straightforward (see Chatterjee 1989). Among Circassians in the Caucasus, resistance to the family may be interpreted as compliance with the state and, conversely, resistance to the state is articulated as domination within the family. The roles played by grandmothers is one aspect of these complex relations and highlight some of the ways in which forms of domination and resistance become internalized or “incorporated” (Connerton 1991, 90; Bourdieu 1994).

As resistance to the state, the role of intertwined personal and social memory came through clearly in the tales of Nana and Marjinat concerning the kolkhoz years. Exiled, their families scattered, their labor mobilized for the state, the grandmothers used their guile and faith to perpetuate identity. While the Soviet “nationalities policy” may have “preserved” the culture of groups such as the Circassians in the form of folklore dance groups, ethnographic texts and museum displays of material culture, stories such as those told by Nana and Marjinat serve to stress the vitality of this culture in everyday life, and ritual occasions serve to center this culture in the domestic arena. As de Certeau emphasizes, in a different context, “memory is a sort of anti-museum” (1984, 108).

When considering how memory is translated into domestic relationships, several points emerge from observing Nana, Marjinat, Fatimat, Asyet and Karimat. Tradition and religion mark the domestic setting but women have differential access to such authority, with grandmothers monopolizing much of its sources. However, grandmothers do not always have the last word. Fatimat played on the traditional concern for the comfort of guests to assert her share of authority over the domestic arena. On the other

hand, the outspoken challenge to domestic hierarchy by Asyet took the form of a religious story rather than one from Circassian tradition, myth or legend. Asyet implicitly drew a parallel between herself and Fatimat with the Prophet's daughter. This emphasized their subordinate relationship to their mothers and mothers-in-law. Yet at the same time, their apprenticeship status and their quest for guidance gives them the right to question powerful judgments. When Asyet "just remembered" the story about the Prophet, she used her own memory and knowledge as a powerful foil to the oppressive use of religious authority which reinforces domestic "traditional" hierarchy.

Religion and tradition, religious identity and ethnic identity are intertwined in the Caucasus, as elsewhere. However, it may be important to keep them analytically distinct as can be seen when comparing differences in practices observed in the Caucasus with those of Circassians in the diaspora. In Jordan, for example, the elderly are also seen as the custodians of Circassian tradition. Some may have actually emigrated as children from the Caucasus, or even if not, they grew up at a time which is perceived as the last era for the authentic practice of Circassian traditions in Jordan. As in the Caucasus, it is usually grandmothers that are the icons of tradition. Although this authority is acknowledged, young Circassians in Jordan mostly tolerantly dismiss this knowledge and practice as being behind the times. The pursuit of modernity for this generation may take the form of individualism and western-style consumerism, or an Islamism which interprets Circassian traditions and customs as anti-Islamic and hence "wrong". Religion, in the latter case, provides an argument against, and an alternative to, tradition.

In the Caucasus, religion and tradition reinforce one another. This raises interesting questions concerning how religion operates in the absence of an institutional infrastructure, when Islam as a "discursive tradition" (Asad 1993) becomes almost exclusively an oral tradition.<sup>8</sup> In the post-Soviet situation, one wonders how religious instruction, as a source of women's power in the household, will be affected when the young men who are going to Jordan and Turkey to study Shari'a, like Fatimat's son, come back with their

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<sup>8</sup> This is not to suggest that the notion of textuality in Islamic faith has been lost sight of in the Caucasus but rather its practice.

scriptural and “correct” knowledge of Islam? Religion (as made distinct from tradition) may become a site of resistance that can subvert both family and state hierarchies. Age hierarchies may be inverted while gender hierarchies may be reinforced.

As yet, in the Caucasus, only the greatest expressions of respect for tradition are to be heard from the younger generation. The one “tradition” which is occasionally disputed by younger Circassians is that of drinking alcohol during toasts at ritual meals. Some argue that this is a Russian practice and hence, a priori, anti-traditional. In other words, it is not tradition that is being rejected but rather non-authentic practices. Tradition, (re)constructed as resistance, reproduces “bodily practices” (Connerton 1991, 88) that are internalized and incorporated in ways that transmit social memory and cultural practices. For most young Circassians of the diaspora, the codes and rules that are incorporated by Fatimat, Asyet and Karimat are familiar. They have been taught these rules; however when they practice them they often do so with a high degree of self consciousness. People may even state that “in this household we observe the *khabze*.” Using Bourdieu’s (1990) terms, one might observe in different settings (rural, urban), classes and locations, a continuum of practices from habitus to codification. The varying levels of ease in the performance of tradition indicate that often the notion of the code may be there but the practice is not. As Connerton says (also following Bourdieu) there is a difference “between being able to *recognise* a code and being able to *incorporate* it” (1991, 90; emphasis in the original.)

The scurrying Karimat, for example, is a familiar figure from the diaspora: the daughter who waits upon the guests and elders. In the Circassian villages of central Turkey, young men and women remain standing in the presence of guests, ready to meet their every need. They serve guests at the table, they hand them towels when they wash their hands, they hurry to place a cushion behind a back that begins to sag, they bring a glass of water when a voice becomes hoarse and they even accompany a guest to the outhouse carrying a light and water jug. Many of the young women in these villages only go to primary school since attending high school would entail living in the provincial capital during the winter months, which is problematic both economically and morally. Their lives are, to a large degree, circumscribed in the domestic and village context. Karimat, on the other hand, had lived away

from home for five years while getting a college degree in a Russian city. No young woman of the diaspora who had higher education would scurry in quite the same way as Karimat, however polite and respectful she might be of guests and elders. If “in habitual memory the past is, as it were, sedimented in the body” (Connerton 1991, 72), Circassians exhibit different levels of this sedimentation.

I have described elsewhere the interesting encounters between Circassians of the diaspora and Circassians of the Caucasus (Shami 1995, 1998). One sentiment often heard from Circassian young women of the diaspora is their disbelief at what they perceive to be the subservience of women in the Caucasus. One woman in her early thirties, originally from Jordan and who currently lives in the United States and works as a computer analyst, said that she could not understand this backward adherence to tradition in the Caucasus. “Imagine,” she said, “we are in the home of a woman who is a medical doctor and she is standing serving food while her husband sits at the head of the table and ignores her.” “Why,” she asked indignantly, “if both a husband and wife are guests at a table, does the wife have to stand up while her husband makes a toast but the husband does not stand up when she makes a toast?” For this woman from New Jersey, adherence to tradition is conditional upon women’s education and employment. While she could understand an uneducated woman being subservient to her husband she could not understand a medical doctor who was “traditional”. This raises the question of how Soviet patterns of “modernization” operated in the Caucasus.

#### *Interpenetrations of private and public*

Recent scholarship has argued that Soviet policies were resisted, accommodated and adapted by local societies, especially in the rural areas of the ethnic peripheries (Suny 1993). Compared with some Central Asian republics such as Azerbaijan (see Dragadze 1994), the North Caucasus appears to have witnessed even less Soviet modernization. According to informants, the current modest presence of Circassian women in the formal labor market goes back only twenty or so years. They state that previously women’s work outside the home was only on state farms and was mostly seasonal. Working women consistently complain of the “double burden” and attribute to it the rising rates of divorce. This may

imply that maintaining the “ethnic in private” was simpler, and less of a contradiction, in the North Caucasus than elsewhere, due to the limited participation of women in creating a “Soviet in public”.

Generational differences in work experiences, however, belie premises of unilinear patterns of women’s participation in the formal labor force. The stories of Nana and Marjnat indicate that older women had to work when they became war widows or lost their husbands through exile and forced resettlement. In a well-recognized pattern, in the post-war/post-exile period, women were re-circumscribed in the domestic arena. While saying this, however, it is important to look at the interpenetrations of private and public, of domestic and national.

At home in the Caucasus, women engage in a number of income-generating activities mainly through domestic agriculture. A large part of the population live in the countryside, but even in the city, those who live in houses have large gardens and many have a plot of land outside the city. Both the gardens and the plots are planted with vegetables and fruits and are used for raising chickens and geese. These activities are important sources of subsistence for the family as well an opportunity for small-scale marketing in weekly or road-side markets. In addition, women are engaged in cultivating tradition. These roles are, and have been, intertwined practices of subversion. Thus “perhaps most frustrating for the central government was the close connection between kinship, culture and the ‘second economy’, the illegal wheeling and dealing protected by favors and bribes, family loyalties and codes of silence” (Suny 1993, 116).

The privileging of kinship and family and the high value that is assigned to the domestic sphere arises out of a complex set of political, economic and cultural contingencies and ruptures, as Fatimat herself emphasized on one occasion. Perhaps in reaction to our witnessing the repeated marginalization of her maternal role, Fatimat took pains to assert to us, in private, her attachment to and protectiveness of her children. In all his life, twenty-year-old Ali had spent only one night outside the home. He had started attending high school in Nalchik but after one night, he decided that he disliked the student hostel so much that he preferred to make the daily commute to Nalchik even in the winter rather than move away from home. Fatimat explained their protectiveness by saying that she and her husband had had difficult lives. They had

to work hard to build this life. Her husband's family was rich and so they had been exiled to Kazakhstan, from where they returned after 14 years and had to start all over again. Fatimat's father had died during the war when her mother was pregnant, and her mother had to work hard. Fatimat helped her mother and then her husband. She said that not everybody could live as well as they now did. She stressed they were able to do so because of her efforts and her husband's hard work as a foreman at a factory. In this way, Fatimat sought to recover some of the credit for the survival of the family, which had been previously usurped by Nana and Marjinat.

The preciousness of domesticity is thus a recognition of its fragility in a context marked by war, exile and deportation. Talking of the Second World War, one man said, "The person who did not lose a father, lost an uncle, the person who did not lose an uncle, lost a brother." These past experiences are ever-present in the consciousness of the Caucasian peoples and influence current political dynamics in the region (Goldenberg 1994). In domestic discourses, this historical period appears over and over as the baseline reference for the (re)construction of family and tradition after Circassian culture almost succumbed to the many ruptures that tore its fabric apart. Sovietization, Russification, and reactions to them should not be seen only as hegemonic ideologies, but also in terms of the politics of displacement that they entailed, especially in the 1940s and 1950s. Fifty years later, Nana and Marjinat deployed their memories of this period to assert their centrality in the domestic sphere, which is simultaneously the site for the construction of identity.

The domestication of identity goes hand in hand with another representation: that of the country and the city. Bloch attributes the "traditionalism" of peasant societies to the role of grandparents as primary caretakers of children (in Connerton 1991, 39). Writings on the limits of Sovietization also stress the importance of traditionalism and place the center of its gravity in rural contexts. Although these authors see traditionalism as resistance, they often portray it in passive terms: as turning inward, creating enclaves and minimizing interaction with the "Soviet" reality (see Suny 1993, 115). Nana and Marjinat, on the other hand, show that grandmothers derive their authority and roles not through simple continuity of a handed-down traditionalism, but through active reconstruction of family and culture in continuous interaction with

the wider Soviet context. It is true, however, that a rural essence pervades these representations.

The rural context of anti-Soviet traditionalism has been explained as a result of “uneven” rural/urban Sovietization (Suny 1993, 116). This dichotomization, which is familiar from modernization theory, may have to be reinterpreted in the context of the North Caucasus. Here cities are recent, developing only after the establishment of the Soviet Union. The capital cities of Nalchik and Maykop remain small urban centers of 250,000 inhabitants or so. More importantly, the majority of urban dwellers are Russians. In other words, the ethnic divide between Russian and non-Russian generally coincides with urban and rural dwelling. Therefore, while cities may be “more Soviet” than the countryside, this does not mean that Circassians were more or less Sovietized according to urban or rural dwelling.

Circassians in the cities often live in hostels belonging to their place of work, such as factories and hospitals. Even those who have flats or houses also maintain a house in their village of origin. Real hospitality, for visitors from abroad for example, has to take place at the village home. Flats in the city may have minimal and standard looking furniture whereas the houses in the villages tend to be large and comprise several separate buildings with specialized functions within the courtyard. The houses are decorated with metal trimmings along the roofs and outer walls. Inside, the walls are often painted with large Caucasian motifs and designs. There is clearly a high degree of investment of money, effort and sentiment in these houses.

Just as the rural home is the “real” home where one can be a Circassian, it is the rural woman who is the “real” woman. Images of the city and Circassian women who live in the city present classic stereotypes. City women do not speak Circassian, they drink alcohol and are morally loose “just like the Russians”. It was startling to hear these descriptions of behavior in the tiny, provincial cities where it is impossible to maintain any degree of anonymity or achieve an escape from family and community sanctions.<sup>9</sup> However small and intimate the cities are, they are regarded as Russian and

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<sup>9</sup> After less than two months of fieldwork in Nalchik, even I could not walk down the street without meeting someone I knew and when I went to a concert, I recognized at least a third of the people in the audience.

alien spaces. While the territory on which the cities stand is fiercely defended as an ancient homeland, the urban built environment is not seen as bearing any relation to Circassian culture. Perhaps the striking emphasis that Circassians give to the beauty of the natural setting and surroundings of the cities can be interpreted in this context.

“City women” therefore represent all that is alien and Russian in the Caucasus. Yet, who are these women? Leda was sometimes described as one such “city woman”. A single woman in her mid-thirties, Leda lived alone with her small daughter. She was a part-time graduate student at a major Russian university and working at several jobs to make ends meet. She said that she considered both her Circassian republic and the whole of Russia her home. She loved Maykop<sup>10</sup> but she also loved Leningrad. She was very proud of how well she spoke Circassian and that her daughter was equally fluent in Russian and Circassian. Her Ph.D. thesis was going to be on the Adyge theater and she was interested in adapting Circassian mythology to the modern theater. Her close female friends were working in television and radio, preparing programs on Circassian culture and history.

Leda’s relationship with her home village was unbroken. Her mother often came from the village to visit, bringing foodstuffs, and Leda’s daughter often went to stay in the village. Leda insisted that I photograph her with her arm affectionately across her mother’s shoulders. Slim and tall, she dressed in close-fitting dresses and short skirts. However, during a visit to a professor’s house to meet guests from Nalchik, she dressed in a long-sleeved dress and her demeanor was one of great modesty. She later commented, “These Kabardey<sup>11</sup> adhere to tradition and they are very critical. They could find a hair in an egg.” Leda spoke only once about her daughter’s father, saying that she had always wanted a child and that she had carefully picked out a handsome and talented father. Whatever Leda’s life-choices were, she hardly

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<sup>10</sup> Maykop is the capital of the republic of Adygeia where the Circassian population is only 22% of the total population. Generally Maykop as a city is regarded as “more Russian” than Nalchik.

<sup>11</sup> The Kabardey historically had a hierarchical semi-feudal social organization and princely families. They are generally considered to have the finest manners and *khabze* among the Circassians.

fit the image of the “denaturalized” Circassian, cut off from her culture, as magnified in the stereotypes of the “city woman”.

### *3. The locus of change: Globalizing women*

The change in representations of womanhood and femininity, as well as in domestic relations of authority and hierarchy will not necessarily come from women like Leda through their education and white-collar employment. This is especially true if these accomplishments are perceived as marks of Sovietization. A more powerful challenge might be the emerging activities of women in transnational trading and marketing. These activities constitute a new departure because they are made possible precisely by the break-up of the Soviet Union and the breakdown of long-standing borders and boundaries.

During the second day of our stay with Fatimat and our subsequent visits and encounters with her, it became clear that she was engaged in a number of informal economic activities of exchange and barter. Fatimat kept asking us what things from the Caucasus would be valuable in Jordan. We couldn't think of anything. She said that she heard that a material from which teeth fillings are made sold well and also hearing aids. We said we did not know. “How about copybooks?” she said, and she told Karimat to bring a school copybook to show us. Finally, Fatimat said that she had asked and asked us what we might like in Jordan and that we were not telling her and we were not giving her any ideas what she might give us as presents. “So tell me frankly,” she said. While Fatimat did want to give us gifts, and she later did so (thankfully not including tooth amalgam and hearing aids), she was also trying to gather information to expand the small-scale trading activities in which she was involved. When someone we knew said that she was interested in buying an old Circassian belt, Fatimat arranged for several belts to be brought and shown to her over the course of the next few weeks and eventually sold her one. Fatimat talked to us at length about her efforts to secure her children's futures. She said that the parents usually try to build a house for each of the sons, while the youngest son takes over the house of the parents. The girls, she said, get furniture. Fatimat said that she is now relieved

because she has bought jewelry, *birlant*, for all her children and land for her sons.

While Fatimat engages in small-scale trading, Karimat's mother-in-law, Ludmilla, a large woman in a red dress, is a major business woman. She works as the director of a school but also brings in commodity goods from Turkey which she sells at the open-air weekly markets. The economic returns from her activities were quite evident. Ludmilla took us to see the house that she was building on the outskirts of the village. This was her third house, in addition to a government allocated flat and the house she currently lives in. The new construction was a huge red-brick two-story building with four bedrooms, and the interior was just being finished with expensive parquet floors, marble ledges and shiny wallpaper.

Ludmilla is one of the globalizing women who are transforming both private and public spheres, as well as formal and informal economies. The cities of the North-West Caucasus are not the metropolises of the Russian Federation, nor the historical cities of Central Asia. No multinationals, foreign companies or NGOs are finding their way there. These were the most peripheral of the ethnic peripheries of the Soviet Union. However, the transformation of the economy is just as profound as elsewhere in the former Soviet Union and peoples' strategies are a response to these changes.

Economic change in these regions is accelerated by the growing transnational links with a variety of countries. Turkey plays a pivotal role in these networks and a host of small companies have sprung up in the Caucasus exporting iron, milubdin, leather and PVC plastics (see Shami 1998). However, these transactions are heavily impeded by confusing regulations, difficulties of transportation and the prevalence of extortion and bribery. On the other hand, "suitcase" trading is booming and this is an activity that is the sole province of women.

Charter flights twice weekly to Istanbul bring women organized in groups with a group leader. Starting with small amounts of capital of \$US 100 or \$US 200, these women buy t-shirts, jeans, children's clothes, leather jackets, and shoes that they then sell in open-air markets for tiny margins of profit. Some smuggling of gold and hard currency also accompanies these activities. One woman in her late twenties, Sveta, explained that she finances her

younger sister who goes to Istanbul every two weeks and her brother's trips to China. In addition, she and her husband were planning to go to Germany to buy cars. Clearly business is booming and is built upon reciprocity, equal and unequal, within the family and kinship group. Although Sveta complained of the hard work and low profits, she is building two houses in her home village, one for each of her sons aged five and seven.

Engagement in markets is not a new activity for women, who played an important part in the "second economy" of the Soviet Union. The scale and the scope of their activities now, however, have grown immensely from the arena of domestic agriculture. The trade in commodities is not an exclusively female domain but exhibits a clear gender division of labor. Istanbul, other Turkish cities on the Black Sea Coast, Aleppo and Damascus, and recently Italy are female destinations for buying clothing and simple household items. Germany is the destination for washing machines, household equipment and cars and there it is the men who play the leading role. There is also a growing connection with Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, where electronic equipment and furniture are purchased in the duty-free markets.

Women who engage in regional trading activities are regarded with disapproval by some men and women and are accused of engaging in prostitution during their trips abroad. This is an extension of the image of the uncontrolled city women and globalization is perceived as presenting new and elusive dangers to culture and identity. One young historian complained, saying, "Our girls are not good like our men, they have an angry psychology. They watch American TV and they want to use bad words and drink cognac. They do not speak beautifully like the young men. I, myself, would not marry a girl who works. I want to marry a woman, not a man in woman's dress."

Yet, the returns from these shady trading activities, in which more and more women are engaging, are being invested in domains that have been construed traditionally as theirs: building homes and providing for their children. The scale of their activities, however, means that they are accruing a great deal of power for themselves. The respect that Ludmilla was accorded went beyond her being Karimat's mother-in-law. Her turn in recording a message to Ali came directly after Nana and before Marjinat, Ali's maternal grandmother. Fatimat literally dragged us away from a

lunch with another family in the village to meet Ludmilla when she stopped by. While Nana and her rival, Marjinat, put on performances of tradition and religion, and Fatimat attempts to support and supplement her husband's efforts to improve their living standards, other women are not seeking to enlarge their share of the domestic, but are simply taking over the whole domain as concretely manifested in the massive houses that they are building for the next generation.

#### *4. Past and present: Engendering social memory*

Connerton makes the point that "images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past . . . are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances" (1991, 3-4). By interpreting the significance and context of a particular ethnographic moment (one home, one meal, one gesture), I have argued for the importance of domestic performances in the transmission of memory and the reconstruction of tradition. Recognizing occasions such as female gatherings, meals and visiting as ritual performances replaces ritual in the private and particular sphere of the household. In the home, ritual and everyday life are intertwined (Bourdieu 1994, Dirks 1994), reinforcing domestic and kinship hierarchies but also invoking and transmitting social memory.

These domestic rituals, the utterances and gestures that accompany them, and the remembrances they invoke, conjoin past and present and simultaneously glorify and gloss over the repeated ruptures that Circassians have experienced and are experiencing. In the Caucasus, Circassian discourses of identity represent the domestic sphere as bounded, private, authentic, and safe from Soviet domination. Yet this very representation, which is often echoed by scholars of Soviet and post-Soviet societies, articulates a particular experience of Soviet ethnic policy and ideology. Experiences of exile, war, displacement, and forced labor shape the domestic arena and mark it as the site for the reproduction of identity and resistance to the state. As was recognized some time ago, it is necessary to move "beyond the recognition that domestic relationships are influenced by extradomestic, politico-jural considerations to the realization that domestic relationships are part and parcel of the political structure of a society" (Yanagisako 1979,

191). As stressed in descriptions of the Soviet “second economy”, private and public, family and market, citizenship and dissent are interpenetrated and dialectically related. Understanding “the simultaneity of oppression experienced by women” (Alcoff 1994, 101) helps avoid essentializing the categories of “woman”, “tradition” and “religion”. Comparisons made between Circassians in the Caucasus with those in the diaspora similarly reveal the contingency of these categories.

Remembrance pervades the domestic domain. Personal memory, codes of behavior and incorporated practices all serve to perpetuate a “traditionalism” that is actively constructed and reconstructed. Grandmothers and granddaughters, mothers-in-law and daughters-in law, participate in these performances of tradition. Their various roles and differential access to authority shows the importance of seeing women not only in relation to men but also to one another (di Leonardo 1991). Relations between women, even in the limited sphere of the domestic group or the kinship group constitute a significant part of the practices and experiences through which “subjectivity becomes en-gendered” (Alcoff 1994, 109).

The relations between Fatimat, Nana, Marjinat, Asyet, Karimat and Ludmilla constitute only a partial account of a complex “matrix of habits, practices and discourses” (Alcoff 1994, 114) that shape women’s subjectivities. What emerges clearly, however, is the role of social memory as constructed and articulated by women in shaping the emergent and shifting category of “woman”. Grandmothers emerge as the icon of Circassian cultural continuity, not simply through caretaking but through an active role of struggle and labor. In everyday domestic life, the interplay between personal memory and habit memory and the negotiation of intra-gender authority shows that “resistance is encoded in the practices of remembering . . .” (Mohanty 1991, 38).

The North Caucasus is at a deeply significant historical juncture. Economy, polity and society are being transformed in manifold and complex ways. While any level of speculation is bound to be inadequate, it is clear that the domestic arena as the ritualized sphere for the reproduction of identity will be profoundly affected. Does the post-Soviet era spell the end of grandmothers? Religious authority and knowledge are likely be taken away from them as young men learn to read the Qur’an and the “correct” inter-

pretation of Islam. Globalization offers economic avenues to women which will empower a different generation in radically different ways. While Marjimat smuggled apples in her bosom as resistance to Sovietization, Sveta smuggles gold and dollars with which she begins to construct a post-Soviet era.

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## CONCLUSION

AYŞE GÜNEŞ-AYATA  
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This volume has brought together scholars and experts on women's studies from several different countries to share their insights on the roles and identities of women in one of the most volatile regions of a rapidly changing world: the geographical area stretching from Anatolia to the Caucasus and Central Asia. The former Soviet Union and the Republic of Turkey were the sovereign political authorities in this region until the late 1980s when the demise of the former gave rise to the emergence of a number of 'new' nation-states built on long-existing communities which had enjoyed limited cultural and political autonomy under the Soviet system.

A basic observation on the recent social and political history of this region is that, in this part of the world, states have taken major initiatives in shaping women's roles and status, especially in public life, as part of a deliberate strategy of modernization and economic, social and political development.

In the West, changes and improvements in the status of women can be attributed to processes of overall social change that were often also heavily influenced by the political aims of women's movements. In Central Asia and Turkey, most policies to increase women's participation in social, economic and cultural life have been initiated by the state and often in settings where demands by organized women's groups were not very strong. These policies, although formulated in the different historical and ideological contexts of the various societies in the region, in general, prioritized women's education, encouraged their integration into economic, social and political life, and succeeded in making them equal citizens in the eyes of the law. In Turkey, these transformations took place within the framework of republican reforms, in the Soviet Union within that of the socialist state.

However, this type of 'progressive' mission, in neither case, targeted nor could effectively eradicate deep-rooted gender discriminatory cultures and/or attempt to transform the day-to-day

dynamics of gender relations particularly in the private sphere. Thus, the essence of the 'gender project' of these states remained essentially limited to the creation and legitimization of a new public identity of 'emancipation' for women. To the extent that state policies of this kind promoted radical breaks from the existing and accepted female identities prevailing in the strongly patriarchal traditional cultures in these states, they were, nonetheless, revolutionary attempts of an unprecedented nature.

Also common to both endeavors was the attempt, by both Republican Turkish and Soviet states, to effectively disassociate religion (and all that comes with religion in legitimizing traditional discriminatory gender perceptions) from the public sphere by institutionalizing secular polities. While the nature and extent of secularism practiced in these countries, under the essentially very different political and ideological frameworks of Soviet communism and Turkish Kemalism, varied significantly, Muslim women living under the jurisdiction of these two states have had very different life experiences than their sisters in the rest of the Muslim world. Clearly the opportunity to live public lives that are unrestricted by the so-called 'Islamic laws' of gender-based limitations and segregation has helped liberate these women in ways very different from their sisters elsewhere in the Muslim world. Muslim women under these secular states have, to a large extent, been free of religious constraints that predetermine their life-chances. Among these, one can readily count the requirement for physical separation of sexes, which inevitably has negative repercussions on women's educational and occupational attainments; the prohibition of access to any and all occupations and positions in society; the emphasis on the primacy of motherhood in all women's lives as a 'divinely ordained' function; the obligation to consent to unequal inheritance shares, divorce and custody rights, and polygamy. Obviously, the lifting of each of these constraints can be considered a critical stepping stone in the attempt to create gender egalitarian societies. Yet, it is the juxtaposition of what these secular states have provided for women in political and legal grounds, with such other factors as the economic, historical and cultural realities of the different countries that helps explain the developments that are not readily visible but are embedded in the specifics of individual communities. Several of the articles in this volume have attempted to do just that.

Despite the differences among the member countries themselves, the former Soviet Union tailored a model based on working women actively participating in the social and economic life needed for the construction of socialism. Similarly, the image of the ideal woman in Republican Turkey was presented as the educated, professional woman who is both an active and successful member of society and a good wife and devoted mother in her private life. Obviously, for both models of new women's identities, conflict with expectations of traditional gender roles was unavoidable. In both systems, resolution of such conflict was attempted at the expense of women's energies through their double-burdening. Despite such similarities, however, the role envisaged for women in the economic policies of the two states has been radically different.

In the Soviet Union, a primary aim of the state was to integrate women into the labour force and benefit from the female labour potential in economic development. Consequently, as pointed out by V. Moghadam in her article in the present volume, labour force participation of women in the former Soviet Union has consistently been high. Since women's integration into the labour force was a specific aim of the state, resource allocation for social services necessary to support the realization of this goal was also prioritized. Women in the Soviet Union were not only educated so that they would be equipped with necessary skills, but were also provided with child-care services to make it possible and easier for them to leave the home.

With the introduction of the market economy, the rationalization of the economic system meant a reduction in the demand for labour which, in turn, meant less need for incentives to attract women as a source of labour. Faced with the urgent need to cope with the demands of rationalizing the economy, the women workers in the former Soviet Union were faced, in the aftermath of its demise, with the same labour problems encountered by women in most market economies, albeit on a traumatic scale. Women became the first to lose their jobs and the last to be re-employed. Since the economic transformation of the socialist state has also meant the disintegration of the existing support systems, women's chances of reintegration into the labour market were further reduced. Moreover, the new job market that was evolving was more dominated by the services sector than the old industries which had formed the backbone of the Soviet economy. This new job market

demanded workers with new skills, thus requiring massive re-training of the existing labour force, which women workers are less likely to receive in conditions of scarce resources.

In consequence of these processes, the landscape of female employment in these transition economies reflects, first and foremost, 'feminization of poverty'. Large numbers of women are unemployed or employed with wages below subsistence levels. Moreover, there is widespread overburdening of the female population, where women are trying to hold on to those jobs they have not already lost or have somehow carved out for themselves, even though they no longer have the benefit of support services.

Consequently, on the one hand, with the reality of the double-burden felt deeper than ever before in women's lives, the notion of gender equality is being fast reduced to empty rhetoric and the presumed equality in the public sphere is becoming meaningless in the every day life of women in the transition economies of the former Soviet Union. On the other hand, women in these situations develop new survival strategies. In most cases, these strategies involve networking among women, mainly among female relatives. Relying on female kin for child care or developing communal arrangements for sharing labour and other resources often come into picture.

One such survival strategy described by S. Shami in her paper on Circassian women is observed when these women develop entrepreneurial skills using old family networks and cultural links. In some parts of Central Asia and the Caucasus, women have been traditionally involved in retail trade in the local daily markets. The new entrepreneurship of the new age can be seen as an extension of this trading tradition carried out by women on quite a different scale. Capitalizing on the shortages of consumer goods in the local economies, many women of the region have become "suitcase traders" and retailers who travel long distances from home for extended periods of time. They use their existing informal networks and cultural affinities to make this new way of earning a living for themselves and their families possible.

Similarly, the shortages of food experienced in the former Soviet republics have also pushed women into utilizing another survival strategy, that of creating and functioning in what may be called a 'subsistence economy'. Women's role in the 'subsistence economies' of the region is significant. Women in towns and cities

practice horticulture in their small gardens, they barter food with each other, many also retain or revitalize their rural links. Such 'subsistence' activity not only ensures the survival of their families but also functions to help reinforce rural structures and foster demographic stability by discouraging rural-urban migration.

Some articles in this volume, such as the ones by Shami and Harris, discuss the phenomenon of "return to subsistence" within the family, which also has the indirect effect of changing women's status within the family. These developments, however, also often function to reinforce the gender-based traditional division of labour at home as well as bolster women's unpaid work in family enterprises and hamper their participation in public life; all of which have negative implications for women's empowerment and equality. In fact, most available research, e.g. Harris in this volume, shows that in many of the former Soviet countries there are significant rates of withdrawal from the labour force and even from education, for women.

The Turkish case is significantly different from that of the former Soviet Union. In the 1920's and 30's, the Turkish state also interfered deliberately with existing gender relations in the society with the aim of fostering modernization and Westernization, granting women rights of equal citizenship and encouraging them to take part in public life. However, the state here did not necessarily pressure women for massive labour force participation. Rather, it encouraged and facilitated professional women's participation in public life. In consequence, women's labour force participation, particularly in terms of paid labour as reflected by the urban female labour force participation rate, has remained noticeably low throughout the Republican period. Dayıoğlu argues in her article that, even though the trend in the last two decades (in both industry and services) has been towards increased participation of women, this is a slow process and is mainly instigated by the expansion of education and services to large segments of the female population.

Furthermore, as opposed to the former Soviet Union countries Turkey has been experiencing significant rural-urban migration since the 1950s. Prompted by mechanization in agriculture and the fast-paced integration of rural and urban economies as well as the disappearance of the subsistence economy, the general trend in Turkey has been a relative decline in the importance of women's

position as a part of family labour. For the massive numbers of women coming to urban locations, the likelihood of getting a paid job has been very low since the available but scarce jobs in the cities require new skills. Women who have recently migrated are almost always unskilled in anything but agricultural labour and thus can only be employed in the lowest paid, lowest status jobs, if at all. Added to such inbuilt economic disadvantages facing migrant women, there have also been, particularly for the earlier generations, the cultural barriers presented by traditional, patriarchal values restricting women's access to 'outside the home' activities. Such values and norms have functioned to prevent most migrant women from seeking and possibly acquiring paid employment, unless the economic need of the family was overwhelming.

The conditions and characteristics of the uneducated or little educated migrant women from low income urban areas contrast sharply with those of another segment of the female population in Turkish cities. Educated, professional women who enjoy equal status and earn salaries comparable to those of men have been the creation, as well as the showpiece, of the Republic as living testimony of its success in achieving the goals of modernity and Westernism. While subtle and indirect forms of gender-based discrimination are by no means absent from the private and/or public lives of elite women in Turkish society, primarily because their everyday living conditions are so distinctly superior to other women and 'apparently equal' to men, their problems rarely reach the public agenda. Awareness of and sensitivity towards the violation of their rights, in the contemporary Western sense of these concepts, are still minimal.

The role of women in the creation of national identity is another issue that has been discussed in this volume. In many countries, including Turkey, nation-state building has implied adoption of Western life styles, more universalistic norms and a desire for progress. In these cases, there have been attempts to change the public order by measures imposed from above, often in the form of egalitarian reforms for women's rights and by integrating them into the public system. This type of Westernization has manifested itself in state actions such as changing the civil code, the dress code, etc. In Turkey, a prime example of such a case, women have been accorded both real and symbolic roles as actors and reflectors of the new identity which signified the nation-state.

How representative the state is of the 'native' and/or to what extent such identity-creating reforms are conceived as impositions from foreign sources is usually very significant in this context. In many parts of the world, such reforms have been made by colonial administrations. For example, in the Magrib countries, many similar reforms were attempted by colonial authorities to modernize the local culture only to be met with strong resistance, which then evolved as a potent force of national identity creation.

To put it differently, opposition to and rejection of the gender related values of the West, as well as the symbol of the Westernized woman as presented by the colonizers, have functioned as a launching pad for the creation of a national identity in some Muslim societies such as those in Arab North Africa. Similarly, in other countries such as Iran, attempts at Westernization have not only alienated masses but have also created enormous negative reactions.

Turkish nationalism and nation-state building experience draws a sharp contrast in these cases. In fact, here the ideology of Westernism, in general, and the image of the Westernized woman, in particular, have been used as keystones in creating the nation-state identity of the Turkish Republic. This can largely be attributed to the fact that the republican regime in Turkey did not inherit a colonial past and its reform experience did not involve any colonial powers that had imposed their values on the native culture, as in many other societies. In other words, Turkish modernizers did not find it contradictory or difficult to be simultaneously Western oriented and nationalist because the two notions did not carry, in this culture, real memories of deep hostility that often come from being dominated, exploited and humiliated.

Furthermore, the concepts of modernization and Westernization in Turkey were linked to the notion of progress rooted in the nationalist ideologies of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These were embraced by the elite of the Ottoman lands as Sirman demonstrates in her article on changing marital roles and family norms. These changes in Turkey were also, no doubt, influenced by intellectual currents emanating from their Turkic kin in the North and the North East. As Rorlich argues convincingly in her paper, egalitarian gender relations were part of the nationalist discourse of Turkic ethnic groups when they were colonized by Russia.

What is perhaps not as well-known is that there were strong linkages between these ideological movements and the founders of the Turkish Republic. Not only have there been significant numbers of immigrants from these communities to Istanbul, colouring the cultural composition of the city particularly in terms of middle class life styles and values, but also the founding fathers of the Republic such as Ziya Gökalp had been deeply influenced by these ideologies. It is thus no coincidence that M.K. Atatürk, in underlining women's emancipation and egalitarian gender relations as a *sine qua non* of progress and modernity in the Republic, had also based his case on the Turkic cultural heritage of the people. A unique combination of Western and Turkic images have thus been used in the Turkish Republic to transform women's traditional roles. This process itself has been intricately linked with national identity construction and nation-state building in this Muslim patriarchal society without any colonial experience.

In contrast, the newly emerging countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia, developing their national identities in juxtaposition to the Soviet-imposed 'internationalist Westernism', do so in a very different context and time. Obviously, in clear reaction to Soviet colonialism, nation building efforts in these societies also entail a rejection of the Sovietized identity. Women, once again, are key actors and symbols in this effort. Several of the articles in this book (those by Alimova and Azimova; Harris; Saktanber and Özataş-Baykal) have discussed the process these post-Soviet societies are undergoing in search of the 'indigenous' and the 'native' particularly with respect to women's identities. While inbuilt into this search is the perennial question of what the 'native' actually is and what a return to the 'indigenous', 'national' and/or 'authentic' means, more relevant to our purposes has been whether such an endeavor is necessarily emancipatory or empowering for women and protective of their human rights.

Often the roles women are assigned to play in creating a national identity are contradictory to the goal of women's empowerment. As such, they pose a significant threat to the improvement of women's conditions and status in the newly emerging states and societies of the region. Some writers in this volume, such as Heyat, Baştuğ and Hortaçsu as well as Shami, indicate that family, even during the Soviet period constituted a nut shell where the basic traditions, identities and values of the people were protected. As the family

and the small neighborhood communities are considered to be the institutions least infiltrated by the Soviet regime, in its aftermath, many political movements have searched for the essence of 'national' identities in these institutions. In a situation of normlessness created by transition problems, the need to search for roots and extract strength, courage and support from family values is self-evident. Reflections of such a search could be observed in cultures of Central Asia and the Caucasus studies in this volume in a variety of instances. Ranging from symbolic to the social and economic, such trends as women's increased use of national costumes; increasing religiosity; highly vocal demands for women to 'return to their homes' to fulfill their caring functions and family responsibilities exemplify these changes.

It is also the case that often these new nation-states, in dealing with the fundamental question of defining the 'native', the 'national' and the 'indigenous', and in searching for cultural continuity, become involved in 'construction' and 'invention' of tradition. Women, often are key facilitators of such construction for the society. They do not serve just as identity makers, reproducers and boundary definers of societies, but as demonstrated by several authors in this volume (Harris, Shami, and Alimova and Azimova), women play a pivotal role in 'inventing traditions' in ceremonies and in disseminating religion in the communities.

Islam survived throughout the Soviet period in the Caucasus and Central Asia, albeit usually in disguise. Upon the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Islam in these societies has come to represent the opposition to the past in, at least, two distinct ways. It has come to serve as the nucleus of a reaction to communism and Westernization, both of which were imposed on these societies by the Soviet regime. The resurgence of Islam in this region has thus acquired a significant meaning in the nation-building process reminiscent of other colonial cases around the world. Furthermore, in these countries with complex demographic structures, religion is a clear distinguishing factor in setting boundaries of communities in societies with very complex ethnic compositions. In many cases here, Muslim religious identity may separate a variety of the politically dominant ethnic groups in the country from the Russians. To the extent that the latter are associated with the Soviet regime in public consciousness, often times, the most significant ingroup-outgroup boundaries are between natives and 'others'.

Here religion serves internal as well as external identity requirements.

Interestingly, in contrast to the early Turkic nationalism, which contained emancipatory traits for women and made very little use of Islam and religiosity; or the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century nationalisms in the region which were being built around the notion of 'progress', contemporary nationalisms are more conservative, if not reactionary. Articles in this volume by both Sirman and Rorlich provide historical evidence for this fascinating phenomenon. In contemporary times, as the articles in the section on Gender and National Identity Construction underline, there is an increasing emphasis on tradition, religion and community as the foundation of the nation building process. Consequently, the role accorded to women in this process of nation building is a controversial one. In the past, Kemalist nationalism in Turkey achieved a significant degree of success in integrating egalitarian gender values, attributed to both progress and Westernism as well as to the Turkic roots of its heritage, into the creation of a new national identity. How the post-Soviet states are going to fare in the face of this resurgence of religiosity and conservatism remains to be seen.

Family constitutes the core of resurgence and perpetuation of patriarchy. Every social and political system has its own ideal family; and with this, the system reproduces its own ideology. In many countries of the region, the family institution has been emphasized recently as a distinguishing symbol of national identity. Preserving the family, retaining its unity and searching for authenticity have thus become the axes of the important nation building endeavor in the region. In this collection, one finds various discussions of different types of patriarchy and different role models attributed to women within the family. Some of the articles, such as those by Saktanber and Özataş-Baykal; Alimova and Azimova; and Harris, referring to the changes within the family in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan after the fall of the Soviet Union, point to more closed and patriarchal relations, where the stereotypical gender division of labor is strengthened.

The Central Asian and Caucasian countries often also have problems of ethnic minorities and the dominant groups entertain fears that the demographic balance can easily be upset and the native population may lose its majority status. Thus, states have often instituted incentives for population increase. Consequently,

the world view that expects women to get married at younger ages and have large numbers of children as part of their 'national' duty is popularized.

Furthermore, the state, in its effort to intensify 'family unity' and elevate the 'family' and 'native family values' as part of its program of national-identity-promotion, encourages women to stay at home and be more active agents of the political socialization of the young. This ideological change, together with the economic difficulties discussed earlier, has contributed in many of the former Soviet countries to a decline in the social services formerly available for working mothers. Obviously, the reality of fewer child care facilities and fewer social services available make mothers' desire to stay at home a rational one. Also, in the former Soviet Republics of the region, in very different fashion from the practice in the Soviet period, patriarchal values and attitudes are openly legitimized and their perpetuation ensured not only by private but also public forces such as religion and political rhetoric and their communication through the mass media.

Throughout the Soviet period, the restriction on migration had meant that small, isolated villages and neighbourhoods in the territories of these republics often remained quite intact in terms of their 'indigenous' cultural values and practices, particularly with regards to private life. In fact, the official ideology of egalitarian gender relations had found it difficult to penetrate these enclaves even during the Soviet times. Now that even the state's rhetoric has moved towards more emphasis on the traditional role of women as mothers and keepers of the 'home fires', these local communities have found receptive political ground for the reinforcement and repopularization of patriarchal values.

In the present volume, there are many examples of how the communities cushion the individual and the family in a cocoon of security, solidarity and identity during periods of extreme social political and economic upheaval. It is also obvious that in many of these cases the customs, traditions and religion are used as restrictive forces on women. Community, while providing a supportive network, rarely becomes a liberating and empowering arena for women. On the contrary, it is usually oppressive. As the community, the gatekeeper of traditional patriarchy and its values, becomes the banner of national identity in the region, the new nation states with old patriarchal cultures emerge as entailing significant limitations

on the individual freedoms of particularly their female citizens. Since the community provides basic security and solidarity and is becoming increasingly more indispensable for women in the ex-Soviet societies of the region, many patriarchal traditions such as bride price, ceremonies of marriage, expectations of patrilocality and strict gender division of labour are not only unchallenged and reinforced but have also found new breeding grounds to expand in.

Change after the Soviet regime, however, should not be considered as uniform. In Shami's article, we encountered an example of Circassian women, who without threatening the basic traditional and indigenous identities in their ethnic community, have successfully found ways of empowerment by being involved in new economic activities and utilizing women's networking in this informal economy. Here, it is argued that these women, whilst implementing a survival strategy for their families and themselves, in a complex manner are also searching for new forms of self actualization.

It is also important to draw attention to the fact that two types of patriarchies are discussed in this volume: the traditional and modern patriarchy. So far, our discussion in this concluding chapter has revolved around the arguments on aspects of traditional patriarchy encountered in the societies of the region. Tell-tale signs of this kind of patriarchy are institutions such as extended families, patrilocal traditional communities, the reinforcement and legitimation of patriarchal ideology by religion, gender-based division of labour, the clear presence of age and gender hierarchies within the family, bride prices and arranged marriages. In traditional patriarchy, there are also noticeable parallelisms between public and private orders and consistency in their values.

Modern patriarchy, on the other hand, often entails a predominance of nuclear families, neo-locality and individual-choice-based marriages often legitimized by "romantic love". Here, the public order can impose rather egalitarian rules but the family itself is not quite adapted to this either in terms of gender based division of labour or with respect to the patterns of authority relations. Modern patriarchies, nonetheless, mean fewer children in the family, more women having paid employment and relatively more egalitarian attitudes towards women within the family. Various articles in this volume have shed light on the dynamics of not only the traditional patriarchy but also of the modern. For instance,

Heyat describes in fascinating detail how patriarchy was 'modernized' in Azerbaijan, while Imamoglu and Hortaçsu and Baştuğ present aspects of such modernization in marriage and family in urban Turkey and Turkmenistan.

In this collection of essays, an attempt was made to comparatively analyze various challenges to women's rights as well as obstacles to their empowerment coming from cultural traditions, state practices, religious legitimization and the demands of developing market economies in societies of Central Asia, the Caucasus and in Turkey bringing forth the specificities of each social and historical experience.

What is significantly lacking here is an overview and analysis of the political dimension, i.e. the democratization and emancipation attempts coming from the women of these societies themselves to counter these forces. After all, the first article in the volume, written by Beneria, argues that women have their own interpretation of and reaction to the emergence of the market economy and the globalization process. In this context, one needs to look for not only women's informal resistance strategies within families and communities, but also the organized and institutional political participation and resistance of women to different forms of patriarchy, the emergent political and economic system. Although not covered by any of the contributors to this volume, such reaction exists in these societies in different forms and to varying degrees. In some, there are feminist movements, in others there are active women's NGOs engaged in efforts to develop some kind of feminist consciousness and gender sensitivity in their societies. There are also women, albeit in limited numbers, functioning in the formal political institutions of these countries as local representatives, mayors, MPs, and political leaders at various levels.

These efforts have been supported by international pressure demanding implementation of the principles of universal human rights of women by all states, with respect to all the communities, age groups and classes of people living under their jurisdiction. In this regard, almost all of the states that are discussed in this volume have ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) even though this does not by any means imply that significant and wide spread violations of women's human rights do not exist in these societies. Still, to the extent that such action indicates the political will of the state and

signifies its consent for accountability on an international level, it is, potentially, a powerful force that can be used to counter those perennially restricting discriminatory traditions, culture and religion in these societies. No doubt, the states and societies of the region will, in the future, bear increasing pressures from the progressive demands coming from their own women's rights groups, as well as the international bodies. The demands for emancipation, empowerment, and more egalitarian gender relations are already on the agenda of all these societies.

While, as many researchers in this volume indicate, the realization of these goals can only become possible with further economic development where new jobs, new occupations and new prospects become available for women, such development is itself contingent on the availability of gender-sensitive analysis of the social, political and economic realms in these societies. At the present time, studies of the area from a gender perspective or research on gender relations in the region are rudimentary.

The purpose of this collection of works by expert scholars in women's studies and the region will have been amply achieved if it, in any way, serves to stimulate such much-needed interest and helps promote future gender-sensitive research.

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