

Representation of Kyrgyz women in Kyrgyz Soviet Magazine *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary*

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Abstract

This thesis explores the representation of Kyrgyz women in the Soviet Kyrgyz magazine *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* (Women of Kyrgyzstan). The main question of the thesis is how the magazine presented the Kyrgyz woman to its readers in the early 1960s. I analyze the main discussions, topics, and issues that were raised in the magazine in order to find out how the Kyrgyz magazine defined and presented women's emancipation. This thesis also explores what the journal can tell us about Kyrgyz women cooperating in or resisting the emancipation process.

My research is based on an analysis of the Kyrgyz Soviet magazine *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary*, for the years of 1960, 1961, and 1962. In order to contextualize my topic, I first provide some historical background about the Soviet Union, the gender component of Bolshevik ideology and Soviet Central Asia. In Chapter 2, I analyze the main issues that were important for the magazine, which included working mothers' issues, the fight against Kyrgyzstan's so-called feudal past, women in public life, and women and religion. After establishing how the magazine defined and approached women's emancipation, in Chapter 3 I analyze the magazine on whether women in the early 1960s embraced or resisted the emancipation process. Historian Sheila Fitzpatrick has coined the term "top-down" approach for the way in which many scholars have looked at the Soviet Union, assuming an all-mighty state that imposed its will on its subjects, and leaving them without any agency. In chapter 3, I use her concept and Said's notion of Orientalism to guide my analysis in terms of women's cooperation with or resistance to the emancipation process. Through the letters, interviews and articles published in the magazine, it was clear that women did embrace the Soviet policies and laws concerning women's issues such as laws on marriage and divorce, and actively participated in the fight against the so-called crimes based on customs. There is lot of evidence t in the magazine for the cooperation of women in the emancipation process, however there was almost no information on how women resisted it, which may have been due to the nature of the journal

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Introduction

Scholars have done a lot of research about the women's magazines in the Soviet Union. These magazines were an important part of the bigger effort towards women's emancipation, a crucial dimension of socialism. There are also books about two of the Soviet Central Asian republics from a gender perspective, one about Tajikistan and one about Uzbekistan. To the best of my knowledge, however, nobody has done primary research about women in Kyrgyzstan during Soviet times. My thesis topic is the representation of Kyrgyz women. I would like to research the way Kyrgyz women were represented in the Soviet Kyrgyz magazine *Kyrgyzstan Ayardary* (Women of Kyrgyzstan). My study is particularly is focused on the representation of women of Soviet Kyrgyzstan in the early 1960s. I am interested in analyzing the main discussions, topics, issues that were raised in the magazine. This is the overarching question of the research project. I also would like to see what were the main topics and issues discussed in the magazine? How was the emancipation of women defined in the magazine? And lastly I also would like to look at the reaction of women to the emancipation process. Thus I would like to see how Kyrgyz women cooperated in or resisted to the emancipation process, to the extent that the magazine will allow me to discuss this.

Importance

There is quite extensive research on the way women of Soviet Central Asia, which includes Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, were approached by the Soviets. In other words there is a lot of research done on the role of Central Asian women in the Soviet ideology, how Central Asian women were represented in the Soviet magazines (which were nation spread). However what I would like to do in my research is to look only at the resources in Kyrgyz language (the magazine). I would like to analyze the women of Kyrgyzstan from the different perspective, which means analyzing what the Kyrgyz magazine said about the women of Soviet Kyrgyzstan, rather than the Russian publication on Kyrgyz women.

Methodology

In order to conduct my research I will be using discourse analysis of the magazine *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary*. According to Fran Tonkiss, discourse analysis focuses on “language and texts as sites in which social meanings are created and reproduced, and social identities are formed”.¹ She then continues by saying that “the way that we use language is rarely innocent, and discourse analysis can help to reveal how talk and texts are ordered to produce specific meanings and effects”.² In my case I will try to see how the magazine was able to produce specific meanings and effects, in terms of representation of women in the magazine.

Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary is a magazine that was published during the Soviet Union, in the Kyrgyz language. The magazine was published from 1957 until 1998. It was a monthly publication, and each of the issue had between twenty-three to twenty-five pages. For my research I have closely looked at thirty six publications in total, for the years of 1961, 1962 and 1963. The magazine discussed various issues, including political, economic, and social issues. The magazine was not only filled with information about events happening in the country, it also had satiric pages, pages with advice concerning the household, and every issue included an article related to health issues (specifically how to prevent illnesses). A lot of space in the magazine was devoted to articles that covered various issues, including successes of women at work and at home, working mothers issues, and informational articles about Party decisions and new laws. Apart from articles, the magazine also published regularly at least couple of letters from the readers, which also covered various topics. The magazine also published various short stories and excerpts from novels, and excerpts from articles written in *Krestyanka* (Peasant Woman) or *Rabotnitsa* (The Worker Woman). The last page of *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* was always devoted to the satire, where various women’s issues were demonstrated, through images, cartoons etc.

¹ Fran Tonkiss, “Analyzing Discourse,” in *Researching Society and Culture* 1998, ed. Clive Seal (London: Sage 1998), 246.

² Ibid, 247

I have chosen to analyze the early 1960s namely 1961, 1962, and 1963. First of all, as I have mentioned above, there is research on Central Asian women in the early years of the Soviet Union coming to Central Asia; however there is much less research about the ideology of the Soviet Union on women in the 1960s on women of Central Asia. And there was the very practical reason that these were the publications that I was able to find in the National Library of Kyrgyzstan.

Limitations

In her article about the journal *Women of China*, the historian Wang Zheng discusses the background, political ideas and actions of the journal's editors.³ Unfortunately I was able to find only limited information about my journal and its editors. The editor of Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary magazine from 1960 until 1970 was Kurman Kydyrbaeva, who was the first stenographer in Kyrgyzstan, and received her education in Moscow.⁴

Another limitation of my research project is the lack of information on the magazine itself. I was not able to find how wide spread the magazine was, how many copies were published each month, nor to establish why the magazine has started publishing in 1957.

Thesis will proceed in the following manner. In the first chapter I will briefly discuss the history of the Soviet Union, the gender component of the Bolshevik ideology and how it is all related to the Central Asian republics. In this chapter I will discuss two theoretical frameworks, which I will use for my analysis in my Chapter III. First is the top-down approach introduced by Sheila Fitzpatrick, and second Edward Said's Orientalism. I will briefly introduce these concepts and then analyze how authors I will discuss in my chapter use the top-down approach in their analysis; and discuss the Orientalism in relation to the Soviet Central Asia and Soviet government.

³ Wang Zheng, "Creating a Socialist Feminist Cultural Front: *Women of China* (1949-1966)," *The China Quarterly* 204 (2010)

⁴ Ysmael Kadyrov, *Kyrgyzdyn Ginnes Kitebi* (Kyrgyz Guinness Book), 2008, http://literatura.kg/uploads/kyrgyz_ginnes.doc

In my second chapter I will answer the first question which is: how the magazine presented the Kyrgyz women in the magazine? What were the main discussions and issues that the magazine considered important? This way I will try to analyze how the magazine represented women's emancipation.

In my third chapter I will return to two theoretical frameworks, top-down approach and Orientalism, and will analyze the magazine according to them. The main question of the third chapter is whether and how Kyrgyz women cooperated in or resisted in the emancipation process (which I will establish in the Chapter II). I will try to analyze whether the magazine provides any information on how women themselves participated or resisted to the emancipation process, and secondly whether orientalist approach was used in the magazine.

Chapter I Literature Review

Introduction

In the first part of this chapter I will briefly discuss the history of the Soviet Union, starting with the 1917 Revolution, more particularly how the revolution occurred, how the Bolsheviks came to power and, most importantly, what was the gender component of the Bolshevik Revolution. I will discuss the policies and laws concerning women's issues that the Bolsheviks introduced after the Revolution. Then I will proceed with how the Soviets came to the Central Asian region and what were the main changes that happened in Soviet Central Asia in terms of the woman question after Bolsheviks took control of the region.

In the second part of this chapter I will focus on the two main issues that should be discussed while analyzing the Soviet Union and Soviet Central Asia; first the top-down approach, second Orientalism. I will first introduce the concepts of top-down approach and orientalism, and discuss who coined those terms. Then I will briefly discuss how other authors used these concepts to analyze the Soviet Union. And then I will analyze how the authors that write about Central Asia use these concepts.

In the last part of my literature review I will demonstrate what kind of analysis I would like to conduct in my own thesis, basing it primarily on the kind of analysis of Marianne Kamp has made for the case of Uzbekistan. And I conclude with the questions that I was able to formulate on the basis of this literature, which I will then use in the subsequent two chapters where I analyze the Kyrgyz magazine.

Historical Background

The 1917 Revolution in Russia

The 1917 Revolution in Russia was a long and complex process. Before the uprisings in 1917, which led to a complete transformation of the political system in Russia, there were revolts in 1825 (Decembrist Revolt), in the 1860s (underground study groups in circles), in the 1870s (to 'go to the people movement'), revolts and strikes in 1902, and finally an unsuccessful revolution

in 1905.⁵ Mary Buckley in her book *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* looks at the “political construction of ideology on women”.⁶ She analyzes the changes over time, up until the 1980s. Regarding 1917 she argues that even though this was the perfect timing for the revolution to happen (after the 1905 failed revolution and 1902 strikes) it did not lead to political change in the country. One of the main reasons of people’s discontent she argues was the involvement of Russia in World War I, in time of scarcity of resources and declining economy. However, Buckley acknowledges that this was not the only reason why the 1917 Revolution occurred: peasants fought for land, intelligentsia for freedom of speech, workers for higher wages (also better working conditions and the right to revolt), etc.⁷

The Revolution started spontaneously, according to Buckley the revolts were not organized by Bolsheviks because most of them were either in exile or in prisons. And after the revolts happened in March Soviets did not have the support of the majority of the population. After the brother of Nicholas II rejected to become tsar, a Provisional Government was formed which created two powers in the country: the Bolsheviks and the Provisional Government.⁸

In November 1917, the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government through a coup d’état; however this did not mean that the Bolsheviks seized full power. Up until the 1920s there was a serious struggle over power, because the Bolsheviks could not fulfill their promises to the peasants and the soldiers. Since the situation in the country was unstable, the Bolsheviks turned into an authoritarian government, shutting down oppositional publications and expelling the opposition from the Soviets.⁹ In 1918 the Bolsheviks were challenged by the White army, which were supported by the Allies, and British, French, American and Japanese military troops were sent to Russia, which lead the Civil War to continue from 1918 until 1921.¹⁰ And finally the Bolsheviks established their power in the early 1920s in almost all of the Republics of the

⁵ Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 29

⁶ Ibid, 4

⁷ Ibid, 28

⁸ Ibid, 29

⁹ Ibid, 30

¹⁰ Eric Hobsbawn, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (Great Britain: Abacus, 1995), 63

Soviet Union except the Central Asian republics, where the Bolsheviks power was established the last, in the late 1920s.¹¹

The Central Asian republics include Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. In late 1860s, the Russian Empire took control over the territories that today are called Kyrgyzstan. After the Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviets took control over Kyrgyzstan in early 1920s. In 1924 the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous oblast was formed. And up until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan was one of the Soviet Socialist countries.¹² During the Soviet period Kyrgyzstan and the whole Central Asian region had to go through various changes in social, political and economic terms, which I will discuss in details later in the chapter.

The Gender component of Bolshevik ideology

Buckley argues that during the first years after the Revolution there were different debates on practically every issue including the liberation of women. She also mentions that the issue of women's liberation did not just come up in 1917, but rather it was a process which started in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, there was a tension between the liberal (women from the upper classes who were for changes in the traditional family and also for individual rights) and socialist women (who were for changing the system as a whole, not just some parts of it).¹³ And if prior to the Revolution women's liberation was not a priority, after the Revolution there was a possibility to change the situation.

After the Revolution, Bolsheviks tried to eliminate all the restrictions of Tsarist regime including the laws concerning women. Among the restrictions they first eliminated were those concerning the working conditions. The new Labor Law stated that men and women should get the same wage for the same work performed. Also such things as maternity leave and financial support while on maternity leave were also included in the Labor Law.¹⁴

¹¹ Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 31

¹² "History", *President of Kyrgyz Republic*, accessed June 10, 2014, <http://www.president.kg/ru/kyrgyzstan/istorija/>

¹³ Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 32

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 34

Among the most fundamental changes in law were those concerning marriage and divorce. First of all, marriage became a civil union rather than a religious union. Marriages could be only registered if both parties agree to this union voluntarily. And most importantly if a woman married this did not mean that she would not have any property rights, as was the case before.¹⁵ Not only restrictions concerning marriage were abolished, the law on divorce made it easy for women to access divorce. After the introduction of the law the will of one of the spouses to get divorced was enough in order to void the marriage.¹⁶

Women and men were equal under the law in terms of labor laws, marriage and divorce laws. At least legally women now enjoyed the same political and civil rights as men. Women were granted the right to vote, to own property and receive an education.¹⁷ However Buckley argues that, while women enjoyed legal equality with men there was a long way of implementing these laws in practice.

Legal changes were made; however, Buckley argues that these changes were only the first step in achieving the liberation of women. That's why she discusses the two main theorists of the time Alexandra Kollontai¹⁸ and Innessa Armand¹⁹, who were the first and second heads of the Zhenotdel.²⁰ These two women were very active in discussing women's emancipation in the Soviet Union and played very important roles, including being the head of the Zhenotdel. Both Kollontai and Armand believed that women's emancipation of women was possible after the

¹⁵ Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 35

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 35

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 35

¹⁸ For more on Alexandra Kollontai see Natalya Gafizova, "Kollontai Alexandra" in *A Bibliographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Easter, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova and Anna Loutfi (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2006), 253. Also see Natalia Novikova "Communism as a Vision and Practice" in *Aspasia*, ed. Francisca de Haan, Maria Bucur, Krassimira Daskalova (New York and Oxford: Berghan Journals, 2007) no 1, 202.

¹⁹ For more on Inessa Armand see Natalya Pushkareva, "Armand, Innessa-Elizaveta Fiodorovna" in *A Bibliographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Easter, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova and Anna Loutfi (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2006), 33

²⁰ Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 44

Revolution and had very revolutionary views on marriage, child-rearing, working conditions and the education of women.²¹

One of the main problems Armand and Kollontai considered was the traditional family structure, which restricted women's potential through making women responsible for household chores. They believed that only with changing this division of labor the full emancipation of women would be possible. This is why they were active supporters of communal child-rearing, communal household and communal dining, which would free women from the household responsibilities.²² In order to achieve women's liberation, Armand and Kollontai believed in the necessity of separate women organizations which would deal only with women's issues (even though they discussed this in temporary terms). Although Lenin at the beginning did not favor a separate organization for women, he also saw that there was a need for one.²³ In 1919 the Zhenotdel was established, which dealt with issues specific only to women. Zhenotdel existed for eleven years, it was dissolved in 1930. During this period it had five leaders, two of whom contributed enormously to the emancipation process of women in the Soviet Union. These women were Inessa Armand and Alexandra Kollontai. The Zhenotdel had three main goals: "first, to expand the influence of the party over a large number of working-class and peasant women through enlightening them about politics and life; second, to draw these women into the party, trade unions, cooperative organizations and the soviets; and third, to liaise with other organizations, such as trade union, to promote the construction of nurseries and public dining rooms since these were necessary for women's liberation."²⁴ The Zhenotdel had different sections that were responsible for various tasks which included organizational-instructional work (organizing meetings), agitprop work (agitation among women), sector which supervised

²¹ Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 45

²² *Ibid*, 46

²³ *Ibid*, 56

²⁴ *Ibid*, 66

publications, and lastly a sector that supervised the liberation of “the women of the East” (Muslim republics of Central Asia).²⁵

After the dissolution of the Zhenotdel in 1930, only in Soviet Central Asia women’s organizations were left, and then they were called Zhensoveti (Women’s Councils), which had the same tasks as Zhenotdel.^{26, 27} The dissolution of Zhenotdel and Stalin’s proclaiming that the Woman Question was solved in the Soviet Union, mass mobilization of women started in the Soviet Union. The percentage of women employed was growing and there was a strong emphasis on women in the work force, not only throughout the Stalin period but also in the Khrushchev era.²⁸ During Stalin’s regime laws on marriage and divorce were amended, because of the perception that the laws adopted in the early 1920s were not benefiting women, and because the country needed more stable nuclear families.²⁹ And after Khrushchev came to power in the mid-1950s he was left with a lot of inconsistency in terms of the ideology on women because of Stalin’s proclaiming that the Woman Question had been solved.³⁰

Soviet Central Asia

Central Asia was the hardest part of the Soviet Union in terms of incorporating the population into the new way of living. This is the argument that most authors agree upon. For example Colette Harris in *Control and Subversion: Gender Relations in Tajikistan* argues that when the Bolsheviks came to power, they faced a lot of problems with incorporating the socialist ideology in the Central Asian republics. She lists different reasons for this such as religion, the fact that the majority of the population were peasants, and, most importantly, the cultural norms that defined gender identities and family relationships.³¹

²⁵ Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 68

²⁶ For more on Zhenotdel see Richard Stites, *The women's liberation movement in Russia : feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-193*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991)

²⁷ Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 147

²⁸ Ibid, 113

²⁹ Ibid, 128

³⁰ I discuss the context and the gender component of the ideology in 1960s in Chapter II

³¹ Colette Harris, *Control and Subversion: Gender Relations in Tajikistan* (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2004), 49

After the Soviet government was established in the Central Asian region, women's emancipation was one of the most important tasks, because the women of Central Asia were seen as the most backward women in the whole Soviet Union.³²

As in the rest of the Soviet Union, new laws regarding marriage, divorce, labor conditions and education were introduced. However, as the Soviets saw the region as the most backward and the women of the region as needing more attention, laws that were specific only to the region were introduced as well. One of these laws concerned the so called "crimes based on customs", which included bride-kidnapping, bride-price, polygamy and child-marriage.³³

As religion was seen as one of the limiting instruments of women's freedom one of the biggest steps towards emancipation was seen the unveiling of women in the Central Asian republics. However the reaction to the unveiling was unprecedentedly violent, both on the side of women and on that of the Soviets. This reaction made the Bolsheviks act in terms of the religion very accurate; however by the dissolution of the Soviet Union the Soviets were able to abolish the veiling practices in most of the Central Asian region.³⁴

The Top-down approach

When discussing the history of the Soviet Union it is very important to talk about the authors' approaches to the way they analyze the Soviet Union. A very common approach is what Sheila Fitzpatrick labeled the top-down approach. In her article "Revisionism in Soviet History", published in 2007, she introduces the notion of the top-down approach and discusses how US and UK revisionist historians in the 1970s challenged the dominant totalitarian approach in studying the Soviet Union.

Fitzpatrick argues that in 1970s revisionist historians challenged the totalitarian model of scholarship, for its depiction of the "Soviet Union as a completely top-down entity. The

³² Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006), 66

³³ Colette Harris, *Control and Subversion: Gender Relations in Tajikistan* (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2004), 51

³⁴ Ibid, 54

destruction of autonomous associations and the atomization of bonds between people produced a powerless, passive society that was purely an object of regime control and manipulation. The main mechanism of control was terror, with propaganda used as a mobilizing device in second place”.³⁵ She argues that the totalitarians were challenged by the revisionists for looking at the history of the Soviet Union only from one perspective. This perspective only showed the terror and the imposition of the Bolshevik rule and did not look into the support of the people for socialism, but rather the society was portrayed as having absolutely no agency.

The revisionists argued that the way the totalitarians wrote Soviet history it was through top-down approach, and what revisionists wanted to do is more bottom-up approach. However as Fitzpatrick writes in the time of Cold War, when the Soviet Union was equated with Nazi Germany, being “anti-anti-Communism” meant supporting evil.³⁶ In this particular context the revisionists began to challenge the dominant approach, starting with the Russian Revolution itself and claiming that the Revolution indeed had popular support.³⁷ Then the attention also switched to the Stalinist period, which was the hardest to contest. Even though, as Fitzpatrick argues, the battle between the totalitarians and the revisionists was much politicized and very intense, because of the political context, the revisionists managed to challenge the dominant approach.³⁸

The main goal of the revisionists was to do research from a bottom up approach, to analyze the support from the population, or the resistance to certain policies. They were not satisfied by the one dimensional scholarship of the totalitarians.³⁹

Top-down approach in Central Asian context

The top-down approach used by authors to describe the history of the Soviet Union, but also Soviet Central Asia. One of the representative examples could be the analysis of Colette

³⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Revisionism in Soviet History” *History and Theory* 48, no 4 (2007):80

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid, 82

³⁸ Ibid, 86

³⁹ However then she argues that the revisionists fell under the same trap and were challenged by the post-revisionists.

Harris in her *Control and Subversion: Gender Relation in Tajikistan* where in one of her chapters she analyzes the Soviet rule in Tajikistan and how it has influenced women there.⁴⁰ Harris discusses in the developments of women's emancipation on the territory of Tajikistan before the Russian colonization and during Soviet rule. She acknowledges that for example the issue of the veiling of women was discussed before the Tsarist Russian rule, stressing that these issues were discussed even before the occupation. However in these discussions about the pre-Soviet rule, she does not deal with the position of women and their participation in or resistance to these particular problems. Harris claims that the Central Asian region was one of the most difficult parts of the Soviet Union for the Communist Party to promote "a new kind of consciousness".⁴¹ She then lists several reasons for that, such as the absence of industry, dependence of peasants on the elites and most importantly cultural norms, the prevailing religion, and very fixed gender relations. Harris claims then that even though there were so many obstacles, once the Soviet government was able to strengthen its power in the region, because it took serious steps towards achieving its goals.⁴²

Harris also discusses the way the policies of the Soviet government were incorporated within Tajik society and in Central Asia in general. She concludes that sovietization did not achieve its goals in terms of the woman question to the extent the Communist Party wanted it, however she acknowledges that there were achievements that were quite important for the women of Tajikistan and the whole region. She says "nevertheless, through such accounts"⁴³ Central Asian women had the chance to make themselves heard more than at any previous time...⁴⁴

This is a very interesting and important point that Harris makes in her chapter, however as in similar cases later, she does not develop these ideas. These types of claims show first that these

⁴⁰ Colette Harris, *Control and Subversion: Gender Relations in Tajikistan* (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2004), 42

⁴¹ Ibid, 49

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ It is referred to the backlash that women had to face after being involved with the Soviet institutions such as women's sections or participating in the unveiling process, which would lead towards violence against women.

⁴⁴ Colette Harris, *Control and Subversion: Gender Relations in Tajikistan* (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2004), 47

women of the region participated in the emancipation process, and, second that if not all of them, in any case part of the women wanted the emancipation offered by the Soviet government and actively participated in the process of emancipation. We can also trace some of this in the chapter where she analyzes the event of unveiling or Hujum in late 1920s. Harris' main point of the section on mandatory unveiling is to show how strict and harsh it was on women, for various reasons, which included social pressure, men's resistance to losing their privileges and religion. However, she also notices that there were women who unveiled for various reasons, but not because the government made them do so.⁴⁵ Harris gives no explanation for the cooperation of women, but rather concentrates more on why and how the society, clergy and men were against unveiling.

Harris suggests that Tajik women did not participate or resist the policies of the Soviet government. We do see some traits of resistance; however it is also shown in terms of clergy or the society, whereas in terms of cooperation there is almost no information.

Marianne Kamp in *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling Under Communism* analyzes various degrees of influence of the Soviet policies in the Uzbek context. Particularly she is interested in "why did the Party's efforts in some spheres, such as education, make an extraordinary impact, while Party ideas about marriage and family, although made into law, only gradually and partially change the Uzbek society?"⁴⁶

One of her sources is the Uzbek women's magazine *Yangi Yol* (New Path), about which she claims that "Uzbek language publications carried significantly different perspectives from Russian language publications, however careful the censors were about ideology".⁴⁷ Kamp argues that the editors of the magazine were able to use the tools that were provided by the Soviet government. While the magazine discussed issues that were also discussed in the main women's magazines of the Soviet Union, *Krest'yanka* and *Rabotnitsa* the Uzbek magazine was

⁴⁵ Colette Harris, *Control and Subversion: Gender Relations in Tajikistan* (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2004), 55

⁴⁶ Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006), 6

⁴⁷ Ibid, 16

different in the sense that the editors concentrate more on the problems that were more relevant to their context.⁴⁸

Above I have looked at different authors some of whom still use in their analysis the top-down representation, while analyzing the Soviet Union or the Soviet Central Asia.

Orientalism

While researching the history of the Soviet Union and its relationship with the Soviet Central Asia, it is impossible not to talk about Orientalism. In this section I highlight some authors who use the concept of orientalism to describe the history of the Soviet Union in relation to Central Asia. However I do not claim that if these authors used the concepts of the orientalism that they themselves Orientalize the Central Asian region.

Orientalism is of course a term coined by Said Edward in 1970. Said argues that “a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as a starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts...”⁴⁹ He argues that it there is in the scholarship overall a clear distinction between the West and the East. The West being portrayed modern and powerful; and the East as being dominated and backward, “in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient”.⁵⁰ Said was explicit in defining which countries he sees as the West dominating the East, he argues that until the end of the World War II France and Britain were the once dominating the East, and after the World War II the United States came to dominate the Orient (East).⁵¹

Said also discussed how the Orient was constructed or Orientalized, giving an example of the speech made by Arthur James Balfour in 1910 in the British House of Commons on how to deal with the problems in Egypt. Said carefully analyzes every part of his speech and comes to

⁴⁸ Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006), 98

⁴⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 2

⁵⁰ Ibid, 3

⁵¹ Ibid, 4

several conclusions. The orient was designated geographically, morally, and culturally.⁵² Said also discusses the notion of knowledge through Balfour's speech, because in the speech Balfour as a representative of the West, was persuading the rest of the Westerners to decide on the "problems" of the East (Egypt), because their knowledge supposedly much better than the knowledge of the Egyptians.⁵³ In this respect Said wrote "It does not occur to Balfour, however, to let the Egyptian speak for himself, since presumably any Egyptian who would speak out is more likely to be "the agitator [who] wishes to raise difficulties" than the good native who overlooks the "difficulties" of foreign domination".⁵⁴ In other words Orient is constructed and dominated through the knowledge that is produced by the West about the Orient, which leads to authority of the West over the East.

Soviet Central Asia

Among the most widely issues discussed by the authors, while discussing the women of Central Asia, is the way they the Soviet government saw these women. Soviet leaders consider the women of Central Asia the most backward in the Soviet Union. Authors such as Colette Harris and Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes make this clear in their books. Harris points out that there were in fact Muslim supporters of the Soviet government, however the government did not respond to their offer. She argues that Muslim supporters of socialism, tried to help and offered ways to incorporate the Muslim population into the Soviet ideology, however they were ignored due to the treatments of non-Slavs in the Soviet Union (as second-class citizens).⁵⁵ Harris also discusses the perception of Muslim women by the Europeans very clear while she discusses how they saw women who were veiled. She argues that the issue of unveiling was discussed much before the Bolsheviks came to power; however for the Bolsheviks it became the main concern,

⁵² Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 31

⁵³ Ibid, 32

⁵⁴ Ibid, 33

⁵⁵ Colette Harris, *Control and Subversion: Gender Relations in Tajikistan* (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2004), 50

since for them it “appeared monstrous”⁵⁶ because Europeans regarded veiling as a sign of restriction and lack of humanity.

Nantes in her book emphasizes the education of women. She discusses that one of the main tasks of the Zhenotdel was increasing women’s literacy, because their literacy rate was almost non-existent. However she also argues that it is argued by the Central Asian writers, that it was not true. Women of the middle and upper classes in Central Asian republics were educated based on the Koranic law, they could read the classics, and knew math. They also spoke Persian and Arabic.⁵⁷

Buckley also claims that the Soviet Central Asian women were the hardest to access, locating them at the last rang of accessibility by the Soviets. She first compares the rural vs urban women in Russia, arguing that urban women were much easier to access than the rural women. Further she adds that women in the Central Asia were even harder to access than the women from rural areas of Russia.⁵⁸

My analysis

I have highlighted the main themes that are raised while researching the women of the Soviet Central Asia, main events that were described by authors and policies and laws that were promoted by Soviet government for the emancipation of women of Central Asia. I also have discussed how authors approach the issue of Central Asian women’s emancipation. First most of the authors discuss the emancipation process in terms of top-down approach and only few analyze agency of Central Asian women themselves. Second, in order to conduct my analysis I would like to return to the analysis done by Marianne Kamp.

At the very beginning of her book Marianne Kamp states that “In basing my study of Uzbek women on Uzbek-language sources rather than Russian-language government and Party documents, I see Uzbeks in an active contest with each other to define their identity and

⁵⁶ Colette Harris, *Control and Subversion: Gender Relations in Tajikistan* (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2004), 53

⁵⁷ Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes, *Lost Voices: Central Asian Women Confronting Transition* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2005), 52

⁵⁸ Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 60

trajectory instead of viewing Russians as actors (the colonizers) and Uzbeks as acted upon or resisting (the colonized).”⁵⁹ In one of chapters in her book, she analyzes the Uzbek magazine, which was written by Uzbek women for Uzbek women.

In her attempt to unfold the discussion about the agency of Uzbek women under the Soviet government Kamp makes the following points. Hujum is discussed as one of the most important events of the Soviet government, and historians paid a lot of attention to the dramatic reaction this event caused. She claims in all of this the actions of women have been ignored, while women did act, whether it was resisting or accepting the changes.⁶⁰ Then she discusses the choices that women had at the time and how hard it was to choose whether to resist the traditional norms, or the soviet policies. She concludes “In Uzbekistan, if women resisted state pressure, they complied with the social pressure, and vice versa.”⁶¹ Kamp suggests that women had to make hard decisions in the time of the “modernization” of the region, and even if some decided not to participate or cooperate with the policies and laws of the Soviet Union this does not mean that they were just merely complying with the social norms of the Uzbek society.

In Chapter 5 “New Women” Kamp analyzes the Uzbek magazine *Yangi Y’ol* (New Path), she looks at the main themes (education for women, reforming marriage, rights, and moral agency) articulated in the magazine, and discuss the editors of the magazine. She argues that “the Uzbek women who were editors of *Yangi Y’ol* combined Jadid background with their own gradually formed understanding of Communism”.⁶² She further argues that women activists were able to have some success in promoting their vision of a new woman, with the instruments (the Uzbek magazine, women divisions etc.) that were provided by the Soviet government. She also argues that the Uzbek magazine followed the main lines of the vision of new woman of the main Russian magazines *Rabotnitsa* and *Krest’yanka*; however, unlike in the Russian magazine *Yangi*

⁵⁹ Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006), 5

⁶⁰ Ibid, 11

⁶¹ Ibid, 13

⁶² Ibid, 94

Y'ol advocated for the “continuation of families, private houses, and women’s primary roles as mothers”.⁶³

Kamp makes clear that she is looking at the Uzbek magazine because enough research has been done about Uzbek women during the Soviet Union based on Russian sources. She gives an example of the discourse around the Central Asian republics in the magazine *Kommunistka*. “*Kommunistka* devoted a whole section in nearly every issue to articles about Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Siberia, featuring the backwardness of the eastern nationalities and the Women’s Division’s success in rescuing those oppressed women from abuse and ignorance”.⁶⁴

Marianne Kamp pays a lot of attention to the editors of the Uzbek magazine. She discusses five editors of the magazine and argues that their own experience shaped their vision of the new Uzbek woman, which primarily concerned the education of women and unveiling.⁶⁵

Further Kamp analyzes the magazine itself and the messages it sent to its readers. She distinguishes several topics that were at the core of discussion in the magazine: such as education, land ownership, marriage, traditions, and honor. She analyzes the debates around these particular topics and how the Soviet government did negotiate the new policies with the Uzbek population. She claims that the laws and policies did not just become a reality but rather there was a lot of discussion around the issues concerned, and the magazine always had its own position on the issue.⁶⁶ For example, in terms of the marriage law, the magazine did advocate for the new type of marriage, however it did not resemble with the vision of the marriage that was promoted by the Russian magazines *Ranotnitsa* and *Krest'yanka*.

What is unique about Kamp’s research is the way she approaches the sources that she was able to use in her analysis, which are Uzbek-language resources. She argued that this magazine was a very powerful tool in the hands of the editors of the magazine, in terms of representing the new woman of Uzbekistan. Through doing the analysis in this particular way she is not trapped

⁶³ Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006), 98

⁶⁴ Ibid, 99

⁶⁵ Ibid, 100

⁶⁶ Ibid, 122

in discussing either what the Soviets did to the Uzbek women, or how the Uzbek society fought against the Soviets, but rather explores what these women actually did and thought about the emancipation process. This is what I would like to do in terms of the analysis of my thesis. I would like to see how the Soviet Kyrgyz woman was presented to its readers, what these women were concerned with and how they negotiated the different issues.

Conclusion

In my literature review I briefly discussed the historical background of the Soviet Union, beginning from the 1917 Revolution, its gender component and the Soviets in the Soviet Central Asia. I looked at the main changes that were implemented after the Bolshevik revolution, such as marriage and divorce laws, crimes based on customs and unveiling. Then I also tried to engage with two very important issues, namely the so called top-down approach and Orientalism. I first introduced the concept of top-down approach with Sheila Fitzpatrick's article and then I tried to show how this particular approach is used or not by the authors that research the Soviet Central Asia and even more importantly the gender aspect of it. I also discussed Said's concept of Orientalism in order to discuss how the Soviet government perceived the Soviet Central Asia. I looked at the authors that study Soviet Central Asia by using the concept of Orientalism, however the fact that they have used these concepts ("backward" for example), does not necessarily mean that these authors Orientalized the Central Asian region, but rather they argued that the Soviet did so. And lastly I demonstrated the type of analysis I would like to do in my own thesis, through the example of Mariiane Kamp's analysis of the Uzbek magazine *Yangi Yo'l*. I also formulated the questions would to address in my subsequent chapters.

Chapter II Representation of Kyrgyz women in Kyrgyz magazine *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary*: Main Discussions, Themes, Discrepancies

Introduction

In this chapter I will analyze the magazine *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* for the years 1960-1963. I will focus on the way the magazine presented the Soviet Kyrgyz woman to its readers. I will analyze in particular how she was represented in the magazine with regards to motherhood, work, household, traditions and religion. An important question will be to what extent the representation of women in the Kyrgyz magazine was different from the Soviet Union's ideology on women. Were there issues that were specific for the Kyrgyz context and if so how the magazine did approach these issues?

The Woman question solved?

The years of publications that I am analyzing are the last years of the Khrushchev era, in which according to Buckley ideology on women in the Soviet Union was not fixed. She comes to this conclusion through the discussions in the magazines about the successes of women and failures of the government in liberating women.⁶⁷ Buckley also argues that this was a very complex time for the formation of ideology on women because Stalin in 1930 had declared that the woman question was solved, but in the Soviet magazines there were a lot of examples provided to demonstrate that the situation was quite different.⁶⁸

In this context she argues that "the way in which women's roles were treated in the press was, however, often inconsistent."⁶⁹ She argues that the articles in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (Komsomol Truth) , *Partiinay Jizn* (Party Life) gave conflicting messages about women and their roles. She claims that even though some articles stated that the liberation of women were achieved and successes of women presented, however, at the same time other articles discussed various problems and obstacles for women's liberation.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 140

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Ibid, 142

⁷⁰ Ibid,

My analysis of the Kyrgyz magazine, however, demonstrates a somewhat different approach to the ideology on women. Most of the articles praise the successes of women in various fields: as teachers, tractor-drivers, brigade-leaders, railway constructionists, and etc. However these articles do not, at least, not explicitly, claim that equality between the sexes was achieved and the woman question was solved. Almost every article has two parts. In the first part women's successes are acknowledged, but in the second part things that need to be improved and developed are discussed. In one of the articles, published in 1962, Yumatova the director of a kolhoz, discusses the adoption of the new Program⁷¹ at the kolhoz and the kind of attention the New Program gives to women. She first discusses the achievements of women of her kolhoz and how they work no less than men and that some of them are performing their jobs for more than hundred percent. However, further Yumatova turns to the problems that women face and one of the problems she considers are the household chores. She says:

“Particularly in the new program a lot of attention is paid to improvement of the household and of women's conditions... In these twenty years women will be freed from household chores...In order to make the work of kolhoz women easier, the bakery has been built. Now women do not have to make the bread themselves and waste time on it.”⁷²

Yumatova praises the successes of women at work, however, she also acknowledges that women face a lot of problems in performing their job. This is a very representative example because most of the articles in the *Kyrgyzstan Ayardary* do not just show the success but also the hardships of women. They agree with the path that the Soviet Union is taking in terms of women liberation, but never suggest that it has been achieved.

⁷¹ The magazine does not give enough information on the New Program and when was it adopted. Yumatova in the article claims that the new program pays a lot of attention to improving women's conditions, provide for family needs, to make the living conditions of villagers the same as of city dwellers, and freeing women from household chores.

⁷² A.T. Yumatova, “Bizdin Turmushubuz,” (Our Lives) *Kyrgyzstan Ayardary* 93, no 1 (1962):3

Female political roles and the obstacles

Buckley further argues that after Khrushchev's plea at the 20th Party Congress in 1956 more and more attention was paid to the political role of women and particularly to the obstacles for female participation in political life. Such reasons as childcare, the lack of governmental support, and "feudal attitudes", she argues were the main obstacles for women's participation.⁷³ She further pays a lot of attention to the household chores that women performed and how much time this required, preventing women from being politically active as men, they had that time free from chores.

Household chores

The Kyrgyz magazine paid a lot of attention to the huge amount of work that women performed at home and how this limited women's freedom and development. A lot of articles mention this problem and most of them draw the legitimization for their claims from the new Program. One of the articles of the magazine is very informative on the liberation of women from the household chores and their role in the Soviet Union's society overall. It says:

"Women should be provided all the opportunities in order to participate fully socially, economically and politically. In order to do so women should be freed from the household..."⁷⁴

Child care

Even though a lot of attention is paid to women's house labor and the way it limits women, in *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary*, this topic is never discussed distinctively from childcare. One of the most frequent ideas that are raised in the articles of the Kyrgyz magazine in terms of child care is that this is the duty of the whole community and the parenthood should be always a shared responsibility⁷⁵.

A lot of articles discussed this issue and most of them paid a lot of attention to the day-care centers and kindergartens. Most of the articles, stories and interviews in the magazine voice

⁷³ Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 144

⁷⁴ F. Baigeldieva, "Adiletty Talap" (Fair Treatment) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 110, no 6 (1963):17

⁷⁵ See as well, I. P. Polyakova, "Jany Adamdyn Jany Yiy" (New House for New Person) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 107, no 3 (1963): 19. Also see K. Kalykov, "Baktyluu Yi-bylo" (Happy Family) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 96, no 4 (1962): 14.

the opinion that these facilities are the most important steps in liberating women. One example is F. Baigeldieva's article published in June 1963, where she discusses the importance of the child care and the fact that this would let women work even more successfully. Baigeldieva discusses the child care issues in a particular region in Kyrgyzstan (Jeti-Ogыз), where agriculture is the main resource of income and the fact that a lot of women are involved in this agricultural work. She praises the successes of women at work, however, she also admits that in order for women to work they have to endure a lot of hardships and one of the issues is related to child care. Since the agricultural work is seasonal the author argues that at least seasonal day-care centers and kindergartens should be provided for working women.⁷⁶

Motherhood

Even though there are so many various obstacles for mothers to participate in paid work, the articles in *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* represent motherhood as one of women's most important roles and this role does not clash with that as a worker. Buckley also argues that during the Khrushchev era "the promotion of motherhood remained an explicit and central theme of the Soviet social policy..."⁷⁷ She claims that the promotion of motherhood was always a central theme. Motherhood is definitely present in the Soviet magazines⁷⁸, and *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* was not an exception.

Motherhood was probably one of the most frequent themes that was brought up in the Kyrgyz magazine. However, even though the articles can be read as a promotion of motherhood, this motherhood definitely had the characteristics of the Central Asian region. One of the aspects of the motherhood was the big number of children and happy motherhood was defined in the number of children woman has. *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* published a lot of articles about mother-heroes who had ten or more children and about the importance of motherhood⁷⁹. One of the

⁷⁶ F. Baigeldieva, "Adiletty Talap" (Fair Treatment) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 110, no 6 (1963):17

⁷⁷ Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 157

⁷⁸ Lynne Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman: Women's Magazines as Engineers of Female Identity* (New York: St. Martin's Press and Center for Russian and East European Studies, 1999), 146

⁷⁹ See also A. Izmailov, "Chynchyl jana Ak Nietty Boluu" (Being Honest and Modest) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 93, no 1 (1962): 9. Also see F. Baigeldieva, "Adiletty Talap" (Fair Treatment) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 110, no 6 (1963): 17

articles in the magazine in 1961 was called “Enenin Tilegi” (Mother’s Wish), and tells the story of a woman, Nurjamal, who is the mother of ten children. Nurjamal gives a small interview about herself and her children. She discusses the achievements of her children in the local kolhoz and how they are helping her and the whole country. However, the story does not just end with the description of children and their achievements but also tells the story of Nurjamal herself and how she is still working and always was working for the kolhoz, and it mentions her future plans.⁸⁰ In this small story both, a happy motherhood and the working woman are presented without any hints of giving up one or the other. As such, this article is representative of most of the articles in *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* about motherhood, which praise both the mother and the working woman⁸¹.

Another issue that the magazine raised quite often, while discussing motherhood, was the success of children and in particular of girls. These articles tell the stories of women who have a lot of children who, like their mothers, are working as hard as they can. The articles describe how proud their mothers are, especially when it comes to the achievements of their daughters. One of the interviews published in *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* “Enenin Baktysy” (Mother’s Happiness) tells the story of a young girl, her achievements and her mother. The mother wrote this:

“Some years passed. Mairamhan [the daughter] finished her education. She became self-confident, smart and outgoing, which would make any parent very happy. The fact that she found a job is also very exciting news! Which parents would not want their child to find the right job, to find her place in the community and work for the country?”⁸²

The mother is very proud and happy that her child was able to find a job and work for the community. The article praises not only motherhood but also the up-bringing of children which

⁸⁰ T. Ashyraliev, “Enenin Tilegi” (Mother’s Wish) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 83, no 3(1961):6

⁸¹ See also Abdymanap Abdyldaev, “Baatyr Ene Bayandait” (The mother-heroine is telling a story) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 106, no 2 (1963): 18. And also see Japar Jumaliev “Meenetkech Kelin” (Hardworking Woman) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 94, no 2 (1962): 20

⁸² V. Varanin, “Enenin Baktysy” (Mother’s Happiness) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 94, no 2 (1962):9

would leads them to work and finding their place in the community. In a similar story about happy motherhood and working children, one of the issues that were raised is the very young marriage of a daughter. This is another very important issue for the Kyrgyz women's magazine and one of the most frequently discussed topics – the so called feudal past.

Feudal past

The Kyrgyzstan's feudal past was considered one of the obstacles preventing women from fulfilling their full capabilities. Events and actions that were referred to as the signs of the feudal past were bride-kidnapping, bride-price, young and arranged marriages. Articles, interviews, letters sent in by the readers, short stories and pictures are used in the magazine in order to discuss these.

One of the interviews tells the story of a woman and her children. "Leilinin Kubanchy" (Happiness of Leili) is an interview with a woman who lost her husband and was left with three children. This is also a good example of what Marianne Kamp called stories with a salvation narrative.⁸³ When she analyzes the Uzbek magazine *Yangi yo'l*, she argues that most of the stories told about women in the magazine had a salvation character to it, in terms of the Soviet government saving women from the traditional lives that were awaiting those women. Leili's story follows the same pattern; Leili is only able to survive thanks to kolhoz and the help of the Zhensovet to put her children in kindergarten, school and university. However unlike in the stories in the Uzbek magazine, this one does not only talk about the salvation of the woman, but goes beyond that and discusses the new attitude that this woman had developed towards the feudal past and crimes based on customs (such as bride-kidnapping, young marriage, bride-price and polygamy). Leili tells the interviewer that she has met with the parents of a young boy that she does not even know and was proposed by the parents to give her daughter into marriage, even though the daughter has not even finished school yet. Her answer was:

⁸³ Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006), 110

“Recently the soon-to-be in-laws visited me and offered a lot of bride-price for my daughter. When I saw with what they came [meaning the proposal and the bride-price] I told them to leave as they came and to forget the way to my new house.”⁸⁴

So, she refused the proposal and was very angry with the fact that the parents of the boy also came with the bride-price. The issue of the bride-price also was discussed quite frequently in *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* as a sign of the backwardness and things that are left from the feudal past⁸⁵.

One of the biggest issues in terms of feudal customs that were discussed in *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* is bride-kidnapping. Reports, letters, short stories and interviews were used in order to discuss the issue of bride-kidnapping. One of the articles was written in the form of the informational bulletin, which provided information on the new laws regarding the crimes based on customs that would come to power in 1961. It said that:

“Even though there are quite a lot achievements in terms of crimes based on customs, they were not still eliminated from their roots. There are still some cases of bride-kidnapping, polygamy, child marriage, which makes girls to drop out of their schools, and bride-price... if the groom will pay the bride-price both parties will be punished with two years of imprisonment...if a girl under 16 is given into marriage the husband will be sentenced for 5 years... and if a girl under 16 was kidnapped the husband will be imprisoned for two years... and if a man has two or more wives the husband will be punished with one year of imprisonment of 1000 soms fine...”⁸⁶

These practices were very much condemned and women themselves took quite a big part in implementing these rights, which could be seen through the letters they sent to the magazine.

⁸⁴ A.G. Kardam, “Leilinin Kubanchy” (Leili’s Happiness) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 81, no 1 (1961):19

⁸⁵ See also A. Mambetahunov, “Lektor Asan” (Asan the Lecturer) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 83, no 3 (19 61): 21. Also see A. Arzymatova, “Jandana Bashtady” (Started to Revive) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 97, no 7 (1962): 17. And see Kadyrjan Joldoshev “Chon Enenin Kairatyna Nebereler Syimyktanat” (Grandparent’s Happiness in Successes of their grandchildren) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 105, no 1 (1963): 11.

⁸⁶ A. Esenbekov, “Ayaldardyn Erkindigi Jana Ukuktaryn Korgoo Kamkordugunun Jany Korynyshy” (New perspective at women’s liberation and their rights protection) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 84, no 4 (1961):21

There are a lot of letters sent in by the readers⁸⁷ on the issue concerning the bride-kidnapping, however there is one letter that drew a lot of attention from women from all parts of Kyrgyzstan and received a lot of responses. This letter was published in the rubric “Write to Us” and the magazine placed it under the heading “Ainagul, you are right!” The letter tells the story of a school girl who was kidnapped by a young man with the help of his aunt. The language used in the letter is very judgmental. For example the author says “Bek [the young man who kidnapped Ainagul] hears everything about her from his aunt and “falls in love” with her immediately. Once he saw her he declared that he wanted to marry only her, and otherwise he would kill himself.”⁸⁸ Ainagul was kidnapped, however she did not want to stay with him and get married; she was able to call the police and the authorities rescued her. The failed-to-be-husband was imprisoned for 8 years and not only the friend who kidnapped Ainagul but also all the rest of his friends were sentenced for helping in the crime.⁸⁹

This letter received a lot of responses from readers, even after a year passed from its publication. Most of the letters were from young girls who as Ainagul studied in schools and were praising her courage. Some mothers also sent letters, thanking Ainagul for giving an example of the path that young girls should pursue, which was first getting an education, then finding a job and only then thinking about marriage⁹⁰.

Woman and Religion

Most of the crimes based on customs are referred to as signs of feudal past, backwardness and related to Islam, since the Sharia Law permitted polygamy and child marriage. Marianne Kamp and Colette Harris also write about the role of Islam and how the Soviet Union worked on issues related to religion. Colette Harris, for example, argues that because of the very harsh

⁸⁷ In 1961 alone 23 letters from readers were published in the magazine, and more than half of them (12) were about the problems of “crimes based on customs”.

⁸⁸ O. Usubaliev, “Ainagul, Seniki Tuura” (Aigul, You are Right!) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 81, no 1 (1961):21

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ See also K. Kasymbekova, “Chyn Jyrokton Alkysh” (Best Wishes) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 84, no 4 (1961): 18, also Yrynbyby Kayipova, “Chon Yrakmat” (Thank you very much) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 84, no 4 (1961): 18 and also see Burulkan Abdylova, “Azamatsyn, Ainagul!” (Good Job, Ainagul!) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 85, no 5 (1961): 19.

response to the unveiling process in Tajikistan, the policies concerning the religion in Tajikistan were moderate and gradual. She even concludes that in some remote areas the practices of religion and tradition were never changed.⁹¹ Marianne Kamp also writes about a process of gradual change in Uzbekistan. She also discusses the unveiling process and why it was important for the Soviet government.⁹² Kamp mostly turns her attention to the laws concerning the marriage and the courts that were in charge of these decisions.⁹³

Even though *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* paid a lot of attention to various spheres of women's liberation there were relatively few articles about women and religion. Even though there was a rubric which was called "The Atheist page", it was not included in the magazine regularly. An article in 1962 tells the story of a man who was once befriended with a mullah and became disappointed when he saw that the mullahs only talked about hell and heaven in order to make money. One of the messages of the article was that only backward people might believe in religion, which is why less and less people believed mullahs nowadays. When the man meets the mullah, he asks him:

"Why are you not talking about the other world, hell, or heaven?"

"There were no such things from the very beginning, my son."

"Then were you lying to us, mullah?"

"Looks like you are still young! If mullah will not lie and won't persuade the backward population, how is he going to survive? You have grown so old and you still do not know this?"⁹⁴

This article quite explicitly refers to the backwardness of people who believe in religion. The next article about religion, published in 1963 focused on women's role according to Islam. The article starts with a story of a woman who was accused by a mullah of cheating on her husband,

⁹¹ Colette Harris, *Control and Subversion: Gender Relations in Tajikistan* (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2004), 62

⁹² I have discussed this in my literature review

⁹³ Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006), 112

⁹⁴ A. Kubatbek, "Jyrgalyn – Beiish, Kuuralyn-Tozok" (Happiness in Heaven, Hell is Waste) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 95, no 3 (1962):21

who then killed her with stones, according to the Sharia Law, with a group of young men. Then the author concentrates on how religion portrays women. One of the ideas that the author emphasized in the articles is the subordination of women towards men. He says:

“Muslims up until now consider women as being lower than men... The Koran teaches men to treat their women as commodities... Woman should be subordinate to her husband in every sphere, should follow everything her husband says, if not than husband should beat his wife, and if the wife cheats on her husband, the Koran permits men to kill their wives.”⁹⁵

The author not only argues that Islam is only limiting and is tool for subordinating women, but also he talks about such practices as easy divorce for men and being almost impossible for women. And the fact that after divorce women usually do not get any support from the ex-husband and just get thrown away with her children.⁹⁶

Morale code (men)

While the magazine writes a lot about the role of women in the society in relation to the family, community, children, religion and work, a considerable number of articles and of letters⁹⁷ sent to the magazine by its readers discuss the moral image of men. Most of them raise the issue of divorce and men leaving their wife and children without any support after the separation. One of the ways this issue was raised is through a rubric, which was named “Aktikendin Burchu” (Aktiken’s corner). Aktiken was presented as an aunt, and women were writing letters addressing this woman; some letters asked for advice, sometimes authors of the letters just shared their stories. One of the letter said “Ejeme Ishenip” (With faith in you [auntie]). The letter was sent by a woman, who was the mother of five children and recently got divorced from her husband. She says that through time he became indifferent towards his children and finally left her for another

⁹⁵ Y. Petrash, “Islam Dini Ayaldar Jonyndo” (Islam on Women) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 107, no 3 (1963):21

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ There were published 4 articles in 1962, 2 articles in 1961, and a total number of letter to the Aktiken Burchu rubric was 11 letters (for years 1961, 1962, and 1963).

woman, who was the head of the village council. And then she continues: “both of them are Communists. And both of them know by heart the Soviet social moral code”.⁹⁸ Here the authors refers to the soviet moral code and the fact that even though these two particular people were Communists, the husband left his wife and his children.

The format of the rubric does not seem to ask for response letters from the readers, but sometimes there are published short responses from the Aktiken aunt. In one of the responses another case of a man’s immoral attitude was discussed and he was shamed for his behavior. This is a very interesting way of communicating with readers and raising certain issues, in this case, the easy divorce that men were able to get without any responsibility for their actions. This resembles the way Wang Zheng describes the magazine *Women of New China* and how editors were able to draw much attention from the readers and use their letters to influence certain issues. Wang Zheng discusses how the editors of *Women of New China* used their journal as a forum in order to discuss women’s problems. One of these was that quite a lot of men divorced their wives and got married to young girls. This issue drew a lot of attention from the readers and invoked responses.⁹⁹ Wang Zheng argues that the editors of the magazine through this technique were able to use the ideological principles in favor of criticizing the gendered norms. She argues that “rather than a one-dimensional tool for educating women to from a socialist outlook, the expose of a male official’s affair highlighted another dimension of the magazine. It demonstrated how state feminists used the dominant political language (in this case “Communist morality education”) to shift the magazine’s target of education and legitimize their gender critique of what was quite prevalent sexual practice among male officials”.¹⁰⁰ Wang Zheng gives a lot of credit to the editors of the magazine and does not consider them as mere followers of the regime but rather as feminists who used these tools in order to critique certain gender norms in a society.

⁹⁸ S. Toksombaeva, “Ejeme Ishenip...” (With Faith in you (Aunt) *Kyrgyzstan Ayalday* 95, no 3 (1962):23

⁹⁹ Wang Zheng, “Creating a Socialist Feminist Cultural Front: *Women of China* (1949-1966),” *The China Quarterly* 204 (2010): 838

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 840

It is very likely that the “Aktikendin Burchu” rubric in the magazine was an attempt also to draw women’s attention to the problems such as divorce, polygamy and bride-kidnapping through these letters and responses from the ‘aunt’. Nevertheless these issues were raised by the magazine and these issues were raised in the light of judgment and shaming the husbands and men who acted in this way, which was also quite specific to the region.

Conclusions

In this chapter I tried to demonstrate how *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* presented the Soviet Kyrgyz woman to its readers. In order to do so I highlighted the main topics discussed in the magazine such as motherhood, the woman worker, the working mother, Kyrgyzstan’s feudal past, and women and religion. I also tried to highlight how the Soviet Kyrgyz women in the magazine were presented differently from what was the main ideology on women of the Soviet Union. In order to do this I tried to pull out some of the topics that are specific to the Kyrgyz context such as crimes based on customs (which include bride-kidnapping, bride-price etc.).

One of the conclusions from analyzing the issues of the magazine in the early 1960s, it is clear that in terms of the ambiguity that was present in the ideology of the Soviet Union on women in 1960s, when the Woman question was declared solved and the magazines, were giving various messages in the articles. However, in the Kyrgyz magazine we do not see this confusion, because the main narrative is that Soviet Kyrgyzstan is on the right path in liberating women, but that it still requires a lot of time and effort to achieve their liberation.

Another conclusion of the analysis is that motherhood was praised and was in no contradiction with praising the woman worker. These two identities, as Buckley argues, in the Soviet Union were the identities that were not separate from each other; the Kyrgyz magazine clearly demonstrated this in various ways through letters, articles and interviews.

One of the issues that were particular to the Kyrgyz context was the fight against the so called feudal past. Women were expected to be and represented in the magazine as active participants in battling the “crimes based on customs” such as bride-kidnapping, bride-price,

child marriage and polygamy. One of the techniques used by the editors of the magazine in order to fight these crimes was the rubric *Aktikendin Burchu* which told the stories of women, whose husbands left them with children or who had kidnapped them.

Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary in the early 1960s raised various issues concerning women's role in the society, family, religion, tradition and education. Women of Kyrgyzstan were presented as everything but backward, they received education, worked, were mothers, and participated in public life. And if some issues such as motherhood were approached by the magazine as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, other issues, such as the crimes based on customs, were discussed in terms that were specific only to the Kyrgyz context. The magazine represented women from various perspectives and praised achievements of women, and the same time the magazine paid a lot of attention to the problems that still needed to be solved.

Chapter III Kyrgyz Women's Cooperation in and Resistance to the Emancipation Process: through *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary*

Introduction

In this chapter I will focus on Kyrgyz women's reaction to the emancipation process. Thus the main question of the chapter is: how did Kyrgyz women participate in or resist to their emancipation¹⁰¹? As I was able to establish in the previous chapter, there are several topics that were important in terms of the liberation of women which include: public life (political participation, participation in clubs, lectures etc.), conditions of working mothers, the country's feudal past, education and work of zhensoveti. In this chapter I will analyze how women contributed, whether by supporting and embracing the policies or by resisting them, with regard to the several issues mentioned above.

I will analyze my sources accordingly to the two theoretical frameworks I introduced in Chapter I. In another words I will start with Sheila Fitzpatrick's concept of top-down representation. I will try to analyze whether Kyrgyz magazine *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* discusses the emancipation process as imposed from above or whether it provides us with information on women participation in the emancipation process. With regards to Orientalism I would like to first discuss how Orientalism is relevant in the case of Soviet Union and Central Asian context, and then turn to the magazine itself.

Top-down approach

As discussed in chapter I, Sheila Fitzpatrick introduced the notion of top-down approach, used by authors to analyze the Soviet Union, which describes the Soviet Union as a top-down entity. Not only this approach is used by authors to describe the history of the Soviet Union, but also there authors that still study the Soviet Union and its relationship to Soviet Central Asia. Such authors as Colette Harris and Lynne Attwood¹⁰², they describe the history of the Soviet Union and its policies regarding the emancipation of women in the region, taking the Soviet

¹⁰¹ Which I explained in the second chapter

¹⁰² The detailed discussion is provided in the Chapter I

Union only as imposing the policies on the Central Asian republics. Laws concerning the unveiling, marriage laws, and crimes based on customs are discussed in the light of imposition from the Soviet Union, without addressing the actual reaction of the population and particularly of women.

Below I will analyze whether there is a top-down representation in the Kyrgyz magazine *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary*. I would like to see how the reaction of women was represented in the magazine, whether they embraced the policies of the Soviet Union if so what was the reason, if not how did they resist those policies.

Crimes based on customs/Feudal Past

If we look at the contents of *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* in the early 1960s, it is clear that the policies and laws concerning the traditional customs such as bride-kidnapping, bride-price and polygamy have a very important place in the magazine's rhetoric. Let me first clarify what is bride-kidnapping and bride-price means. Bride-kidnapping is a falsely perceived long-lie tradition. It is an act of non-consensual bride abduction. Bride-kidnapping was always a crime during the course of Kyrgyz history, during the Russian empire the rise of cases of bride-kidnapping was regarded to the negotiation between the Russian officers in the region, which included the eradication of Islam and preservation of customs (which included bride-kidnapping) that are attributed to the pre-Islamic times in the region.¹⁰³ The decrease of cases of bride-kidnapping was considerable due to the implementation of laws concerning the crimes based on customs; more and more women felt safe to report to the authorities on the cases of bride-kidnapping. However after the collapse of the Soviet Union the cases of bride-kidnapping have increased drastically.¹⁰⁴ Rise of religion and traditional customs in the region after the independence one among reasons women feel less prone to report the cases of bride-kidnapping.

¹⁰³ Bruce Grant, "The Traffic in Brides: Bride-Kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan by Petr Lom", *American Anthropologist*, 107, (2005): 689, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/3567387.pdf?&acceptTC=true&jpdConfirm=true>.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

Bride-kidnapping and bride-price

Bride-kidnapping was a very important topic in the magazine *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary*. Short stories, interviews, articles and letters sent by the readers of the magazine all discussed the issue of bride-kidnapping. In an interview published in the January in 1961 A.G. Kardamanov tells first the story and then interviews a woman named Leili. Leili was left with four children after her husband's death and had to go through a lot of hardship in her life before she was able to find a job in a factory, and have her children study in the schools and universities. During the interview Leili mentions her daughter's success at school a lot and emphasizes how proud she is of her daughter. The interview ends with Leili telling what has happened very recently to her and her daughter.

“Recently, ‘as bees gathering around the honey’¹⁰⁵, future in-laws visited me and offered a high bride-price for my daughter. This way they wanted her to terminate her education. But I made it clear that this is not acceptable, and made sure that they will forget the way to my new house.”¹⁰⁶

Leili explained that that she was not happy with the proposal, and that her refusal had nothing to do with the amount of the bride-price, but rather with her own principles that most importantly concerned the education of young girls.¹⁰⁷

This example out of many similar ones demonstrates that education was fundamentally important for the women who were writing to the magazine or who were interviewed. Education was very important to women in terms of their liberation and equality with men. It is also clear from the interviews and letters that women took active part in order to make sure that girls get their education. Letter sent by the teacher of Osh

¹⁰⁵ Kyrgyz saying

¹⁰⁶ A. G. Kardamanov, “Leilinin Kubanychy (Leili’s Happiness),” *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 81, no 1 (1961):19

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

University, Z. Kulumbaeva, told the story of a very young girl who escaped the unwanted marriage in order to continue her education. Kulumbaeva tells us in the letter that the girl, Azimkan, was let to take an exam in a completely different school (for university application), after she heard that this girl was kidnapped and then ran away, and that continuing her education was her only chance to escape the marriage.¹⁰⁸

Another letter tells the story of young girl called Nuralieva Ainagul. Ainagul was a student in her tenth grade in school, in Frunze (currently Bishkek-the capital of Kyrgyzstan). A young man, Chokoev Bek, decided to kidnap her with the help of his sister. One night after she got out from the cinema with her friend, she was kidnapped by the young man with his friends. After arriving to the Kant city, where he lived, she was persuaded to stay, however she did not agree. She saw a woman among the women who were trying to persuade her to stay, and Ainagul understood that this woman might help her, so she asked this woman to call the police. As a result she was freed and the young man was sentenced for eight years of prison.¹⁰⁹

Not only short stories, interviews and letters discussed the issues of bride-kidnapping and bride-price, but also a lot of reports were published on this matter. It is interesting that these reports contained not only the names of the offenders, but also their places of inhabitation and their occupation. One of the reports indicated that in the Kirov region two friends, Ibraimov Juman and Abdykerimov Keneshbek, kidnapped a girl who had just turned fourteen, and these two young men were caught and sentenced to 4 and 5 years of prison. In addition a young woman was also charged with the offence of helping these two, however since she was a mother of a new-born child, she was given probation.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Z. Kulumbaeva, "Azimkan Tilegine Jetet (Azimkan will reach her goals)," *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 84, no 2 (1962):21

¹⁰⁹ O. Usubaliev, "Ainagul ,Seniki Tuura! (Ainagul, you are right!)," *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 81, no 1(1961):21

¹¹⁰ A. Osmonkulov, "Sot Joobuna Tartyldy (Punished by the Court)," *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 81, no 1 (1961):21

Another short story centers on the issue of bride-price. The short story is about the old man who complains to his neighbor about not paying the bride-price, even though he possesses the money to do so. However his neighbor, young woman, who was working in the factory, did not agree with him and did not pity him for his sorrows. She explained that these types of traditions are left in the past. Even though the old man was not convinced, he saw however that his other neighbors are also not paying the bride-price anymore and then he only stops worrying about it.¹¹¹

Through the examples provided above it is clear that the way women responded to the policies regarding the bride-kidnapping women embraced them. In the magazine we do not see the top-down representation, but rather it is clear that women themselves participated in fighting the bride-kidnapping, reporting the cases to authorities and warning young generation about their rights. It is also clear that bride-kidnapping was also closely related to young girls' education. We could also see through examples that girls and women were very much aware of the importance of education and paid a lot of attention to it.

Morality of men

The morale of men with regard to their family was another very important topic in the magazine. Letters sent in to one rubric called Aktiken (more information on the rubric was given in chapter II). Aktiken rubric was a forum for women's letters and most of the times they concerned family relationships, and moral conduct. One of the letters sent in by Zulaika Abdyrakmanova tells us her story. Abdyrakmanova writes in the letter that she is suffering from two illnesses, first related to her health and second related to her ex-husband.¹¹² She first describes how she got married, that she was kidnapped and had to give up her education, which she very much regrets now. And then how she got sick and

¹¹¹ Shurubek Kyzaev, "Kichine Angeme (Short Story)," *Kyrgyzstan Aylaldary* 82, no 2 (1961):20-21

¹¹² Zulaika Abdyrakmanova «Je Yidon Jok, Je Chyidon Jok» (I have neither home, nor education) *Kyrgyzstan Aylaldary* 84, no 4 (1961): 20

had to get treatment in the hospital for two month and that in these month her husband married another woman. She is asking an opinion of Aktiken (the rubric is set up the way that the Aktiken, is a auntie and women write letters to her in order to ask for an advice of her opinion). And then she concludes with saying that because she was sick she was not able to finish her education and had to get married, and because she was sick she divorced and since she has no education she feels that she is in desperate situation.¹¹³ Through this example we can see that Abdyrakmanova gives education a very important role and claims that at least if she has been educated she would be able to live happy life. Another point she makes in the letter is that she does not approve the way she had to marry and the behavior of her husband.

Letter sent to the same rubric also talks about the immoral behavior of a man named Tukai Shamyraliev. The letter sent in by S. Toksobaeva tells the story of her family and immoral behavior of her husband. She first says that they got married and after she had three children the attitude of her husband, Shamyraliev, has changed and after she gave birth to her fifth child she found out that her husband had another affair and the woman he had an affair with was a head of the Soviet Council of the village. In this letter there is also an emphasis on the fact that both the husband and the woman with whom he was having an affair were Communists and that their behavior was not moral.

It is clear from the letters sent to the magazine, that women did not want to comply with the immoral behavior of their husbands and in order to launch a discussion and raise the issues of the behaviors of their husbands, they voiced their concerns and used the Communist ideology (by emphasizing that their husbands were Communists, which made the behavior even worse) as a justification for them being able to voice their problems. Through the examples provided above we can see that the magazine did not imply that the policies and laws were merely imposed on Kyrgyz women, but rather that

¹¹³ Zulaika Abdyrakmanova «Je Yidon Jok, Je Chyidon Jok» (I have neither home, nor education) *Kyrgyzstan Ayladary* 84, no 4 (1961): 20

women did participate themselves in their emancipation. In other words *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* does not present the Soviet Union and its policies as a top-down approach.

Zhensovety

In *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* the work of the Zhensovety (Women's Councils) was a very important topic which received a lot of attention. Articles in the magazine portrayed the work of Zhensovety with regard to the following issues: involving women in production, developing the working conditions of women, childcare, healthcare, science and involving women in public life (attending lectures, clubs, listening to reports, participating in political life).¹¹⁴

Some articles¹¹⁵ discussed the involvement of women and their active participation in the activities of Zhensovety as it is done in the article published in 1961 "Bizdin Birinchi Iigilikter" (Our First Achievements). This article discusses the work of the Zhensovety in Frunze. O. Morshinina- the author describes various spheres in which Zhensovety were active in the city and emphasizes the work of a particular Zhensovet, where women were able to open sewing classes within the factory¹¹⁶. Morshinina further makes two interesting points. First she demonstrates how in one of the sewing factories the Zhensovet was able to help women to get promotions in their factory and that more and more women are getting into positions that require qualification. Secondly, Morshinina, talks about the way the Zhensovety are also being formed within small neighborhoods and how they are working with women of the neighborhood.¹¹⁷ For example, the Zhensovet with the help of mothers in the neighborhood was able to open a

¹¹⁴ O. Morshinina, "Bizdin Birinchi Iigilikter (Our first achievements)," *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 83, no 3 (1961)16

¹¹⁵ Articles with primarily the same arguments such as: women's active involvement in the work of Zhensovety, participation in events such as lectures, clubs and cinemas, improving the qualification, improving the working-mothers conditions etc. See M. Eroshenko, "Jakshy Demilge" (Good Level) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 105, no 1 (1963): 7 also see F. Baigeldieva, "Bardyk Shart Tysylyygo Tiish" (Time for improving the conditions) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 97, no 7 (1962): 16

¹¹⁶ O. Morshinina, "Bizdin Birinchi Iigilikter (Our first achievements)," *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 83, no 3 (1961)16

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 17

playground for children, and mothers and members of the Zhensovet take turns in order to watch after children at the playground. The members of Zhensovet also make sure that the buildings of the neighborhood are clean and everything is in order.¹¹⁸

An article written by B. Borubaeva, the head of the Alai region's Zhensovet discussed the successes and the problems of the Women's Councils in the South part of Kyrgyzstan. Borubaeva demonstrates that more and more women are employed in high positions; however she acknowledges that it is not enough. She discusses the way Zhensovet deals with this issue, such as childcare, women's active political participation and fighting against feudal attitudes towards women¹¹⁹. Alai Zhensovet also held a regional conference, where feudal attitudes towards women were discussed. Borubaeva also in her article paid a lot of attention to the education of young girls and how they are fighting the underage marriages in the region, through making them responsible under the law, and Borubaeva mentioned that eight people were sentenced for underage marriage.¹²⁰ The case of underage marriages is very closely linked with the education of young girls, Borubaeva argued, thus it was crucial for the Zhensovet to work on this particular issue.

Through articles like these it is clear that women actually did participate in the work of the Zhensovet. Women in the magazine put a lot of effort in order to participate in the events organized by Zhensovet and examples also show what kind of work and successes they were able to achieve through working in or with Zhensovet.

Working Mothers

Kyrgyzstan Aylaldary paid a lot of attention to the conditions of working mothers.

In the year of 1963 alone seven articles and interviews focused on the conditions of working mothers alone. Articles on Zhensovet also regularly had a part dedicated to

¹¹⁸ O. Morshinina, "Bizdin Birinchi Iigilikter (Our first achievements)," *Kyrgyzstan Aylaldary* 83, no 3 (1961):17

¹¹⁹ B. Borubaeva, "Aylaldaryn Aktivdylygyn Jogorulataly (Let's increase the women's activism)," *Kyrgyzstan Aylaldary* 95, no 3 (1962):3

¹²⁰ Ibid

working mothers' issues. The insufficient number of day-care centers and kindergartens was number one concern, as well as issues related to health and governmental support.

One example were the hospitals in the villages and particularly the Maternity Hospital (Rodilnyi Dom/Roddom). One of the letters sent in to the magazine by the readers touched upon this topic. The author of the letter, Ysy Chudiev, describes the situation of the Maternity Hospital, she acknowledges that at first were hesitant to the idea of giving birth in the specialized hospital, however after some time and being informed about the hospital, women were more eager to give birth in the Maternity Hospital. The Maternity Hospital was built for women of a particular kolkhoz; Chudiev claims that the location however was too far from the factory that the women worked at. Thus some women were still unable to get access to the hospital treatment. The author lists the names of the directors of the factory and of the local administration, while claiming that the authorities did not respond to their request for a transportation which would help women to get from factory to the Maternity Hospital.¹²¹

Another article written by the head of the "Communism" kolhoz, A.T. Yumatova, also discusses the issues of working mothers too. First of all she describes successes of women in her particular kolkhoz and their concerns regarding the kindergartens and household chores. One of the successes that Yumatova describes in her articles is that the kolkhoz built a communal bakery, which "was built in order to lessen the household chores for women of the kolkhoz."¹²²

One of the letters sent by a reader of the magazine also addresses the problems of working mothers. The author of the letter Aisha Satarova a mother of ten children. She discusses the problems women face once they have children, because of the lack of support from the government in terms of kindergartens and day-care centers. Satarova claims that even though the government has done a lot to help working mothers, there is

¹²¹ Ysy Chudiev, "Kolhozduk Torot Yiy (Kolhoz Maternity Hospital)," *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 82, no 2 (1961):17

¹²² A. T. Yumatova, "Bizdin Turmushubuz (Our life)," *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 93, no1 (1962):3

still a lot to be done.¹²³ She also gives couple examples of women who left their jobs because they could not leave their children.¹²⁴ Another concern expressed by Aisha is that women are not involved in any public activities, because they do not have the opportunities to do so, which include lack of agitation and conditions for working mothers.¹²⁵

Through the examples provided above I tried to demonstrate the fact that women took action to make the lives of working mothers easier. These women might have been at first hesitant, as in the case of the new Maternity Hospital, however once they understood the benefits; they were able to claim their rights from the authorities.

Orientalism

While analyzing the women's reaction that is represented in the magazine *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* I also paid attention to as what were their reasons to participate (mostly represented as participated) or resist to the policies and laws of the Soviet Union. The reasons of the Soviets to modernize the women of the Soviet Central Asia are described by authors as orientalist. The Central Asian women were considered from the very beginning of the Soviet rule the most backward women in the country, and veil being the first and foremost sign of backwardness. For example such authors as Colette Harris also makes this perception of Muslim women by the Europeans (Russians) very clear while she discusses how they saw women who were veiled. She argues that the issue of unveiling was discussed much before the Bolsheviks came to power, however for Bolsheviks it became the main concern, since for them it "appeared monstrous"¹²⁶, since for Europeans it was a sign of restriction and lack of humanity.

¹²³ Abdymanap Abdylidaev, "Baatyr Ene Bayandait (Mother-heroine is talking)," *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 106, no 2 (1963):18

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Colette Harris, *Control and Subversion: Gender Relations in Tajikistan* (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2004), 53

The fact that Zhensoveti were left only in the Central Asian republic, after the dissolution of Zhenotdel is also another sign of the way Soviet government perceived the women of Central Asia. Since the government saw the Soviet Central Asian women the most backward it was the only region where the Zhensoveti were kept after the dissolution of Zhenotdel in 1930. And even after Stalin declared that the woman question was solved in the Soviet Union, still it was mentioned that the Central Asian republics still have to work on women's issues.¹²⁷

Against this background I tried to analyze how women in the Kyrgyz magazine defined and described themselves, whether they considered other women in Kyrgyzstan backward or used this language in the magazine at all. It is very rare to see words such as "backward" used to describe the women of Kyrgyzstan; however, there are a lot of references to Kyrgyzstan's "feudal past" and to "feudal attitudes" towards women.¹²⁸

Magazine paid a lot of attention to the public life of women and involvement of Zhensoveti in these particular activities. One of the articles, which discussed the women in the South part of Kyrgyzstan, first listed the most successful women of the region, around various spheres, from women who fulfilled their jobs in kolhoz and women who were elected to the Supreme Council of Kyrgyz Soviet Republic.¹²⁹ In the second part of the article the authors discussed problems that still were to be solved in the region. Problems included the little number of women-leaders, not sufficient number of facilities such as day-cares and kindergartens and resistance of husbands to let their wives to participate in the public life (events organized by Zhensoveti such as: lectures, clubs, reports or cinemas). The author especially emphasized husbands who were in the Communist Party, however also did not let their wives to participate in the activities. Not only it was said that they were part of the Party, but also their names and places of living

¹²⁷ Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1989, 125

¹²⁸ Also see A. Sadirov, "Azamat Kyz" (Well Done!), *Kyrgyzstan Ayladary* 82, no 2 (1961): 17.

¹²⁹ U. Abdygulov, "Ayaldar Arasynda Ishtooni Yakshyrtabyz (Developing the work among women)" *Kyrgyzstan Ayladary* 81, no 1 (1961):1

and occupations were indicated.¹³⁰ The fact that these men would not let their wives to participate in the public life was regarded as signs of backwardness and past feudal attitudes.

Feudal attitudes were used in the magazine as a sign of or synonym of “backwardness”. The backward woman in Kyrgyz magazine was the one who was not able to participate in the social activities that were organized by the Zhenotdel because of her husband. This was very much judged by the women through the reports and letters sent in by the readers.¹³¹ Bride-kidnapping, bride-price and polygamy were also always referred as the signs of backwardness which the Kyrgyz state has already passed, but in some areas it is still present and should be fought against.

Orientalist language was not used in the magazine frequently, however in cases where the issues concerned the so-called crimes based on customs, the feudal attitudes which were considered backward, was always emphasized. Nevertheless in the magazine’s rhetoric there was never mentioned that women of the Soviet Kyrgyzstan in early 1960s were backward, but rather that they were modern, getting an education and working for the country. And backwardness was only used in cases to describe how women were treated (feudal attitudes towards women).

Conclusion

In this chapter I used two theoretical frameworks such as top-down approach and Orientalism to guide my analysis. The main question of the chapter was whether and how the women of Kyrgyzstan embraced or resisted the emancipation process. In the first part I analyzed the way women reacted to the policies regarding the bride-kidnapping, motherhood, and public life. In this part I have also discussed the top-down approach, and

¹³⁰ U. Abdygulov, “Ayaldar Arasynda Ishtoonoy Jakshyrtabyz (Developing the work among women)” *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 81, no 1 (1961):1

¹³¹ See also A. G. Kardamanov, “Leilinin Kubanychy (Leili’s Happiness),” *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 81, no 1 (1961):19. Also see A. Arzymatova, “Jandana Bashtady” (Started to Revive) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 97, no 7 (1962): 17. And A. Arzymatova, “Jandana Bashtady” (Started to Revive) *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* 97, no 7 (1962): 17.

I tried to see how the magazine presented the participation of women in their emancipation process. One of the conclusions is that it is clear from the magazine that there were a lot of women who indeed embraced the emancipation offered by the Soviet government. As for example it was demonstrated above in terms of fighting against the “crimes based on customs”, or in terms of actively participating in the work of Zhensovet, also in terms of fighting and demanding the rights for themselves (the working mothers’ concerns) and also in terms of using the ideology in order to voice their dissatisfaction with the immoral behavior of men. Letters sent by the readers, interviews and articles demonstrated that there were a number of women who did not see the emancipation as something that was imposed on them, but rather they actively cooperated in the process, and even used the ideology for their benefit (case of immoral behavior of men). Thus we can conclude that the magazine does not suggest that the emancipation was imposed from above, but rather the opposite.

Secondly I also used the concept of Orientalism to guide the second part of my analysis, where I have looked at the way the magazine either used the Orientalism in the rhetoric of the magazine, and if so in what manner. I have discussed why the relation between the Soviet government and the Central Asian republics could be considered as Orientalist. Since the Soviet government saw the Central Asian republics as the most backward part of the country, and women of Central Asia as the most backward part of the population, the Soviet government did pay a special attention to women of the Central Asian region. The modernization of Central Asian women was a very important project for the Soviet government, however, this modernizing line of thought, identifying itself as modern (Soviet government) and the other the backward (the Central Asian republics), is perfect example of Orientalism. In the chapter I tried to see how Orientalism was used by the magazine. One of the conclusions is that backwardness was rarely mentioned in the

magazine overall, however, when it was mentioned it was not referred to women themselves, but rather to describe the “feudal attitudes” towards women.

In this chapter I tried to demonstrate the women’s reaction to the Soviet emancipation of women. It was clear from the examples provided in the chapter that women indeed participate, however in the magazine there was almost no mentioning of the way women resisted in the emancipation process.

Conclusion

In my thesis I have analyzed the representation of Kyrgyz women in the Kyrgyz Soviet magazine *Kyrgyzstan Aylaldary* in early 1960s. My main questions were: how did the magazine present the Kyrgyz woman to its readers. And what were the main topics discussed in the magazine? In addition I also analyzed how, according to the journal's contents, women participated in or resisted the emancipation process. A lot of the literature about women in Soviet Central Asia discusses the process of women's emancipation there according to the top-down model, i.e., they suggest that women's emancipation was imposed on them and that women did not actively participate in their emancipation. In my analysis of the Kyrgyz magazine *Kyrgyzstan Aylaldary*; I wanted to explore how Kyrgyz women reacted to the Soviet-initiated emancipation. Second, I also used the concept of Orientalism to guide my analysis. Scholars have established that the Bolsheviks in Moscow regarded Central Asia as the most "backward" part of the Soviet Union and the women there as the most backward part of the population – all in typical "West-East", "enlightened-backward" orientalist fashion. I wanted to find out if *Kyrgyzstan Aylaldary* spread a similar message, or if it wrote about some of the women in Kyrgyz magazine in this way.

My first chapter, the Literature Review, provided a brief historical background on the Soviet Union, starting from the Revolution in Russia in 1917. I also looked at the gender component of Bolshevik theory and practice and then I tried to highlight the main changes in the Central Asian context, concerning women's issues. I also introduced my two main theoretical issues, namely so called top-down approach coined, by Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Orientalism by Said. Analyzing this literature helped me to frame my questions that I have mentioned above and that I tried to answer in my second and third chapters.

In Chapter 2 I was able to establish what the main issues were for the magazine in terms of women's emancipation, which included motherhood, the woman worker, childcare, woman and religion, the fight against Kyrgyzstan's so-called feudal attitudes towards women and women's participation in public life. One of the conclusions of the chapter was that some of these topics and their representation were in line with the Soviet overall ideology, as in the case of women's identity with regard to both motherhood and the woman worker. *Kyrgyzstan Aylaldary* clearly did not portray these two identities as conflicting with each other. However, in other aspects the Kyrgyz woman was presented with different concerns, as in the case of fighting against the feudal attitudes towards women. Women were presented as educated, hard-working women who were aware of their rights and were active in their implementation, which I have further discussed in my third chapter.

In that chapter I have looked at the way women reacted to the emancipation process. The main question of the chapter was whether and how women cooperated in or resisted the emancipation process, through the magazine. I was able to analyze the letters, articles and interviews of women on various topics in the magazine. In this chapter I used two theoretical frameworks to guide my analysis: first top-down approach, second Orientalism. It was clear that in the early 1960s a lot of women did support and embraced the emancipation that was offered to women. Women were active in *Zhensovet*, were actively fighting against the feudal attitudes towards women such as bride-kidnapping, bride-price and polygamy. One of the ways women participated was through reporting the cases of bride-kidnapping, another way was making sure that young girls finish their education and participate in lectures, listen to reports and join the clubs that were organized by the *Zhensovet*. Another very interesting finding was that women with the help of the magazine started a discussion about men's so-called immoral behavior, by which they meant husbands leaving their wives and children without any support after the divorce. Women clearly thought that this was a very important issue and were able to express their opinions through letters sent to the magazine. The contents of the magazine does not suggest that the Soviet emancipation of women was imposed on women from above, but rather that women themselves actively participated in the emancipation process.

Then I have used Said's concept of Orientalism to guide the second part of the analysis. My conclusion is the following, *Kyrgyzstan Ayladary* always portrayed women as educated and hard-working, however never mentioned that Kyrgyz women were fully emancipated. One of the reasons for this still incomplete emancipation were the "feudal attitudes" towards women; these were the only cases when a notion of ("Eastern") backwardness was used in the magazine.

Through my research I was trying to give some voice to the women of the magazine, be it the readers or the authors of the articles. I wanted to make sure that the main topics that these women considered important were discussed in my thesis. However, it is a small project and the scope of my research was limited. For the further research I would like to do more substantial research not only including the magazine itself, but also to research who were the women who wrote for this magazine, who were the editors, and how they saw the emancipation of women in Kyrgyzstan.

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