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The image of the Kazakh women in the works of Russian authors in the context of imperial policy in the Steppes (the end of the XVIII - beginning of XX century)

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Abstract

The aim of the present article is to show in numerous ethnographic works, notes and memories of Russian authors of the end of XVIII – beginning of the XX centuries how not only the image of the Kazakh steppe was formed but also images of colonized ssubject-nomads, and in this case an image of the woman-Kazakh were formed. In the given article the authors have undertaken the attempt to show that in the works of the Russian authors of the indicated period a peculiar image of the Kazakh woman as “depressed”, “without rights” but at the same time “free from muslim dogmatism and reticence” was formed. Also these two opposite opinions or a stereotype with reference to the Kazakh women got on with each other not badly, moreover, both of them showed that the women-Kazakh were open for perception of the principles of ‘civilizing’ Russian influence as a result. In the opinion of the Russian officials, the Kazakh women could be successful in dissemination of the Russian culture in the traditional nomadic community.

Keywords: women’s problem”, gender relations, orientalism, bridewealth;

As a rule, cultural contribution of women as subjects of history, a women's view of the world, a specific female experience are little-known pages of the history. We know that all the traditional history is a history of wars,
revolutions, practically all controversial issues were solved with the help of demonstrations and by force, and women could not be objective in this plan to be presented widely. Those few women, who were mentioned in the history, are considered to be famous for their "masculine" behavior and which is usual only to men with courage and bravery.

Before the appearance of women's studies themselves central discourse of historical works was designed in such a way as if women and their group interests conceptually incompatible with the historical researches. Despite the fact that women (in spite of exceptionness from the world of policy and professional activity) at different stages involved specifically and only by available means in the world transformations, the researchers did not find proper understanding and elucidation of this fact. The exception were only the works devoted to women on a scale of Reverend Euphrosyne Poloskaya, Princess Olga, national heroine Janna D. Arc., Empress Catherine the Great and Maria Theresia, Queen Victoria and similar to them in importance and role in the world culture and policy. It happens because the historical process are reconstructed by historians as a chain of taken decisions and events that take place within the framework of clearly marked so-called public sphere, on the background of which there remained invisible all those who was forced into "low-status" private sphere. They were, first of all, women (art. / ed. I.R. Chikalova, 2001). Women's studies were accepted by the world scientific community, of course, not at once. The most significant turn in "women's studies" was taken place in the mid -to late 1980s when they came together with few new social- scientific concepts, especially, with the concept of the social construction of gender.

Family and marriage relationships of Kazakhs, including issues connected with the position of women in a nomadic society were highlighted by separate authors beginning from 1920s in the context of generalizing ethnographic works on the results of expeditions into one or other regions of Kazakhstan (S.F. Baronov, T. Y. Kuzmina, 1926).

In spite of the fact that the greater part these works were written in the context of the existed ideological directions at that time, they have an interesting material on issues of interest to us. In particular, in a number of works the authors touch little studied issues up to this time related to the practice of early marriages among Kazakhs, the problem of health and reproductive functions of the Kazakh women.

In the following 1940-1960-ies the problems of family and marriage of Kazakhs were reflected in the ethnographic works of the following authors (V.V. Vostrov, 1956).

Thus, the articles of Sabitov N.S., V.V. Vostrov and the other authors were based on the results of their own ethnographic expeditions to different regions of Kazakhstan in which they gave the analysis to those changes that have occurred in the sphere of family-marriage relations in the period of 1930-1950-ies (the decreasing of marriage arranged by parents, the reducing of the number of violent kidnapping of a bride, the possibility to enter into a voluntarily marriage, registration of marriage in the registry office, the improvement of women’s status in a family, etc.). At the same time the authors noted the stability of individual customs among the Kazakhs (to a greater extent in a latent form), such as polygamy, levirate marriage, saving of many family and marriage prohibitions and avoidances.

We must also note the work of the well-known Kazakh ethnographer E.A. Massanov "Essay on the history of the ethnographic study of the Kazakh people in the USSR"(E.A. Massanov, 1966). The significance of the given monograph for my research (especially when I consider the issue connected with the reveal of the image of the Kazakh women in the works of the Russian pre-revolutionary authors) is that the author being one of the first authors, gives a detailed in-depth historic - graphical analysis of the works of Russian researchers of the XVIII - the beginning of XX centuries on history and ethnography of the Kazakhs.

In 1970s ethnographic works were published which directly considered the issues of family-marriage relations of Kazakhs (V.P. Kurylev, 1978). Among them one can pick out the work of H.A. Argynbaev, in which he analysed detailed enough the family and family relations of the Kazakhs, on the status of a woman in the family and society during the colonial period. This work is remarkable for that the author refers to the numerous archival sources related to the petitions of the Kazakh women to the Russian administration, but the author, in view of the fact that greater part of his works is of ethnographic character, does not aim to analyze them in detail. Therefore, the author only limited by facts of women’s appeals to the Russian administration explaining that by changing their mind under the influence of colonial policy and the desire to stand upon their individual rights (H.A. Argynbaev, 1973).

Present-day researchers from Central Asia, including Kazakhstan's authors, the greater part of them, focus their attention on the analysis of issues of the gender history related to the up-to-date period (beginning from 1990-s) (M.A. Uskembaeva, 2007).

The interest on the part of contemporary Russian authors to "women’s" issue in a nomadic and settled societies on
the example of Turkestan and the Kazakh steppe in the colonial period can be seen in a number of published articles. O.I. Brusina in her article (O.I. Brusina, 2007) “Marriage and Divorce in the People's Courts of Turkestan: the interaction of adat and shariat under Russian administration" based on the archive’s data, examining the practice of analysis of marital affairs in the People's Courts on the example of Turkestan in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries comes to the conclusion that a certain transformation of the position of adat and shariat takes place under the influence of the Russian administration, although "the direct approach of traditional systems of justice with the all-Russian law on the basis of any adoptions from it did not happen".

A brief historical and graphical overview on the problem considered by us showed that to the present a certain material has accumulated in this direction; at the same time, we see that on the whole, these works are of ethnographic character. Most of the abovesaid authors do not consider this issue in the context in which we consider, namely, the position of women in the Kazakh nomadic society under the impact of the colonial policy of the Russian Empire during the XIX-early XX centuries.

Today we can say in the firm belief that the Russian Empire was much more complex organization than it was presented before. First of all, the Russian Empire was distinguished by multi-ethnicity and multi-confession, hence, the aspiration, the desire of the center to carry out its policy towards the frontier areas of the empire more flexible when the imperial center had to look for multivariant ways and methods of control by regions (the Caucasus, Western region, Central Asia, the Kazakh steppe).

In the context of this policy, the Russian authority saw the peculiarity of Kazakhs in comparison with other settled Muslim peoples of Central Asia, which was contained in their "primitive" nomadic way of life, nearness to nature, and most important, still far from the influence of the Muslim "fanatism" that allowed to come to the conclusion that the Kazakhs-nomads were more susceptible to russianification. In the frame of the "civilization mission" of the Russian Empire on frontier areas, in particular, in the Kazakh steppe, it was supposed that it could be more effective to render "civilizing" influence on the nomadic population through the distribution of principles of Russian education and the Christian religion, and, it must be noted that colonial administrators withdrew a great role in implementation of this policy, mainly, to the Kazakh women.

Over XVIII and the beginning of XIX century in the views of the Russian public Kazakh steppe was more «unknown and unexplored", hence inspired some fear and apprehension, long remained virtually unexplored in geographical, ethnographic and political relations. At the end of XVIII-early XIX century the book summarizing the nature (Georgi I.G., 1799) and the first special study of Russian authors was published; where we can find information describing the Kazakh steppe and nomadic people who inhabited it (Andreev I.G., 2007). Reading these books E. Said in his famous work "Orientalism said "every author who writes about the East (and this is true even of Homer) and the proceeds of some eastern precedent, some previous knowledge of the East, to which he refers and on which rests" (Said E., 2006).

In our opinion, these two important factors to consider are appropriate, when we wonder how Russian explorers and travelers, getting to the Kazakh steppe perceived the new filed Russia - Kazakhs. Taking into account the nature of the compilation of the majority of works of authors in XVIII-XIX centuries, it should be noted that they were not in the original description of the appearance of the Kazakh people, their standard of living, life and culture. So, from a position of cultural superiority Russian travelers and explorers perceived nomadic Kazakhs first wild «rampant», «very prone to anger», but freedom-loving, prone to robbery, but not the blood-thirsty, cunning, greedy, at the same time thoughtless, artless and hospitable, religiously Kazakhs were the «bad Mohammedans», «ignorant and superstitious». It is noteworthy that in this period is still «unknown» Kazakhs were identified and compared with the already «familiar» tatars (Kazan and the Volga region), which affected the characteristic of the policies pursued by Russian authorities at the time.

As for the description and characteristics of the women, all the authors note their «extreme hard work and patronage in the economy», «homelike», and adding to the good health, simplicity of women in the home, the ability to easily carries all the burdens of the harsh nomadic life. So Christopher Bardanes, one of the best students of Professor I. Falk, who managed to be in the Kazakh steppe in the special unit in 1771 was struck by the fact that Kazakh women, «soon recover after birth, so that these things happen often and that on the same day happens migrations and new mother sits on the horse and freely without feeling the disease, can ride a horse» (Bardanes H., 2007). These works can also be seen that the authors show some sympathy for the women when they write about their «kind-hearted», «kind disposition» on compared with men, along with some regret note «kirgiz wives are not
respected, honoring them for single workers ..»(Histories of Kazakhstan in the Russian sources of XVI-XX centuries, 2007). All these qualities of a female Kazakh woman repeatedly emphasized and celebrated by all subsequent authors.

In the 20-50s of the XIX century works devoted directly to the Kazakhs (History of Kazakhstan in documents and materials: Almanac., 2011), in which we can observe some changes have taken place in the views of Russian authors describing the characteristics of the Kazakh steppe and the Kazakhs.

Thus, the administrative reform 20 years of the XIX century marked in the beginning of the process, when the eyes of the Russian public Kazakh steppe gradually ceases to be the edge of the «unknown», «alien», on the contrary, the region began to be perceived as «their», which receives a spread of Russian power. Accordingly, the Kazakhs are described not as forceful as before – «wild», «rampant», «hostile», they are now more likely presented «semi-wild», «ignorant», «trusting», while having the chance to raise their level due to the civilizing influence of Russian.

As A.I. Levshin noted "The female sex of Cossack people for many reasons must be preferred to the male one. Kyrghyz women outdo Kyrgyz men in diligence". They do all housekeeping, they care of the cattle, do needlework and making dress for themselves and to their children, they also have to take care of everything for their husbands, sometimes even to saddle their horses and put them on horseback. For all these works they are awarded by slavery, have their owners or masters as husbands" (A.I. Levshin, 1996).

During this period the Russian authorities attempted to codify customary law of the Kazakhs, where great attention is paid to family relations. In these materials, and also in the ethnographic works of that period, we find evidence of the wedding ceremonies of the Kazakhs; the authors describe in detail the bride-price, levirate marriage. Of course, the authors describe all of these customs and traditions inherent in nomadic society according to their own views, typical of the European norms of family relations. Hence, certain contradictions in their views when describing women in traditional Kazakh nomadic society, on the one hand, condemned the practice of forced marriages, powerless position of women, which is «sold» for parents of bride-price, and after the marriage became completely dependent on the will of the husband, his relatives. On the other hand, the same authors wrote that the nomad women have more freedom than women in the sedentary population of Central Asia. This «freedom» of Russian authors have seen, especially in the external manifestations, such as that women are among the nomads never «not to close the face», «not put into harems», «can ride free around on horseback across the steppe, like men», etc.

These two seemingly contradictory stereotypes that emerged in Russian researchers characterizing women in a nomadic society: on the one hand – «without rights», «humiliated» and the other side - a relatively «free» compared to sedentary women of the Muslim peoples - well established in the works of the later period (Vambery A., 1877), and found expression in the management practices of Russian authorities in the field.

However, these two opposing views or stereotypes against Kazakh women got along well with each other and, moreover, in the end they both gave hope that women Kazakhs are open to the perception of the foundations «civilizing» Russian influence.

It may be noted that these approaches continue to exist today; it is assumed that the women of the nomadic peoples possessed a greater degree of freedom than women settled peoples. There is a view that in the pre-Soviet Central Asia, women living as in the two poles. The position of the sedentary population (Uzbeks and Tajiks) to a large extent determined by the Shariat. Wives of the nomads played a big role not only in the household, but also in solving the major issues beyond the family relations (Women in Kyrgyzstan: Tradition and new reality, 1995).

The other view is considered existing in science myth of freedom and equality of women among the nomadic peoples did not hold any critics. If you look at the nomadic society strictly scientifically, it was a little romance, but a lot of hard labor for physical survival. N. Nurtazina rightly pointed, anyone who examines the history of nomads objectively, make sure that women were oppressed parts of the society, because all the material and labor activity has been assigned to them(Nurtazina N.D., 1999). According to E. Shukurova, kyrghyz woman had a high proportion of self-reliance, but not because of an innate love for kyrghyz democracy, but because of the nomadic way of life in which a woman went to a certain range of responsibilities, administration of which is associated with the need to provide it with some degree of freedom (Women in Kyrgyzstan: Tradition and new reality, 1995).

In the late XIX- early XX centuries the so-called «women»s» issue in the traditional Kazakh society even more updated. The problems associated with the position of women in society, vividly discussed in the pages of local periodicals, in particular in the newspaper «Dala uyalaty» - «Kirghiz steppe newspaper», which was published in Omsk, from 1882 to 1902. The thematic publications and article of the authors (many of whom were members of the
local population) affect all of the same issues: the complete powerlessness of Kazakh women, neglecting relation of men, the negative effects of early marriage among Kazakhs, etc. So, in the article «Woman», the anonymous author (under the initials V.M.) links so sad state of women in a nomadic society with a lack of education and ignorance of the Kazakhs, with the fact that women, do not see their real situation and get used to it. However, the author quite optimistic, believing that «the best time and come to the Kyrgyz Women»(Dala uylatyt (Kirghiz steppe newspaper), 1899, 1891, 1892, 1890, 1896), linking it to the example of Western Europe with the spread of education among the nomadic population. It is noteworthy that this article resonated with Raimzhan Marsekov (one of the educated people of that time), in which he attempted to show that the Kazakh woman «is not depersonalized, but instead is largely a counselor husband ...», but his arguments were not convincing to his opponent, who made a response posted.

Thus, the image of the «oppressed», «no rights», but at the same time «free from dogmatism and Muslim closure» of the Kazakh women, who finally emerged by the end of the XIX century in the Russian public, reflected in management policy, rhetoric and vocabulary of the central and local authorities. According to Russian officials, the Kazakh women could take on the role as the successful distributors of Russian culture in the traditional nomadic Kazakh society. This is clearly demonstrated in numerous memos, presentations of imperial officials of central and local authorities, there were debates and discussed the means, methods of carrying out the policy of russification of the local Kazakh population in which much attention is paid to the Kazakh women. So the military governor of Turgay region, Major General Barabash in his report to the Minister of Internal Affairs, «On the procedure for marriage and family affairs of Kyrgyz», from May 10, 1893 wrote: «... protecting family life against the invading Tatars diligently carried out - fanatic Mohammedan, Kyrgyz women as educators of the young generation, act in the interests of Russian and therefore deserve all the participation and support of the Russian administration»(The Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1923). This kind of thoughts was founded in the representation of the Ministry of National Education «On the development of such institutions for Kirgiz women» Interior Minister from December 17, 1903: «... it is necessary not to miss until the time and, with the help of Kyrgyz women may be more widely spread Russian influence among the Kirghiz. One woman will do in this direction much more than a few men»(Russian State Historical Archive (RSHA), 1922-1936).

How far Kazakh woman met the expectations that were laid on her imperial power in the successful implementation of the policy spread Russian influence among the nomadic population of the Kazakh steppe, not the purpose of the given article, but, of course, is an interesting issue that requires a separate analysis.

References


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