

# CaucAsia

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## Contents:

GEORGIA	IF I'D BE A MAN... but I am a woman
SPAIN	MACHOS WILL LIKE TO HELP IN HOUSEKEEPING <i>The prime minister helps them to get into the way</i>
UZBEKISTAN	BRIDE KIDNAPPING IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE? <i>we do not think about it</i>
INDIA	VIOLENT MARRIAGE FOR MEN <i>they don't like it. Why not?!</i>
AZERBAIJAN	TRADITIONS: TURNING ON AND OFF <i>for promoting men's domination</i>
AZERBAIJAN	POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION <i>for women drivers</i>
KYRGYZSTAN	POLYGAMIST <i>love story?</i>
SWEDEN	HUSBANDS TAKE CARE OF CHILDREN <i>While their wives earn money</i>
GEORGIA	INFORCED WEDDINGS <i>still blooming</i>



Photo by Galina Petriashvili, Georgia

**Nino SUKHIASHVILI,  
Georgia**

meditations

# IF I'D BE A MAN

*HOW WOULD BE THAT?*

*Back in childhood we believed that a girl could become a boy if she'd jump over the rainbow. Neither I nor my friends had any doubts in the effectiveness of this solution; although there was one unanswered question - what happens to airplane passengers who accidentally fly over the rainbow? But probably the magic did not work on those who felt okay with their gender. I am not a child anymore, but sometimes I return to that puzzle.*

What would happen if I'd jump over the rainbow? Would the world be better, if I'd be a man? Would I feel myself more comfortably?

It is clear that I'd be granted definite privileges. I would be able, for example, to kidnap and force to marriage a woman I'd like. Despite of our strict legislation, the society would show me its loyalty. It would understand that I intend to marry, which is the determinative factor.

If I'd be a man, I'd have, let's say, plenty of lovers even after the marriage; and I would still remain a respectable person. If there is a woman in alike situation, how do you think the society would dub her? Yes, exactly.

I could also take bribes, fight, use bad language, offend poor people, steal - and I wouldn't be afraid of punishment. Even in case I'd be punished, that wouldn't be a big deal - those men who spent time in jail are still honorable people for definite groups, they are almost heroes for these groups. A woman who served a term of imprisonment is an absolutely different story, you know...

If I'd be a man, I'd NEVER do the dishes, laundry and would not care about cooking and ironing! That sounds like a miracle - I would have additional two or three hours per day and plenty of spared strength!

I would have impressively high chances to win the elections; as I'd have plenty of free time for being involved in the activities of my party. I would also be a wealthy

person with wealthy friends who would be glad to stake their money on my participation in the elections. With my strong fists and steel nerves I would feel perfectly fine in pre-elections (and other) scuffles. And I wouldn't need all those quotas; it would be just impossible for me to understand what others are talking about? I'd be sure that we have absolutely equal opportunities for anyone.

If I'd be able to drink more than others, I'd be boasting of it. However I'd have a higher risk of possible infarction. And probably would be terribly afraid of baldness. But in return, nobody would look at what I wear, and wouldn't care at what time I come home and with whom.

Ah, I'd find a lot of interesting and surprising details of our culture. I probably would understand why the society unconsciously supports strength, why is it so likely to infringe the rights of people, why does it endure dirty streets, homes without gas and electricity water supply and sewerage.

I probably would even understand finally, what is the reason for us to elect those whom we recognize as useless; and why do we then feel desperate and just keep whining.

It is not hard to comprehend it being a woman; it is only necessary to have a careful look round. But it would be interesting to give a glance on the inside: probably men's mentality and their psychology have an explanation or even an excuse?

## **DOING DISHES FROM SPAIN**

### **MACHOS OBLIGED TO HELP IN HOUSEKEEPING**

*The prime minister of Spain Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero portrays himself as a radical feminist and proves it in practice*

It's now a hard time for those men who enjoyed traditional image of macho. Henceforth, they will have to take care of what they used to despise: doing dishes, cleaning in the kitchen, and changing baby diapers. The lower house of Spanish parliament adopted the amendment, reforming the list of obligations for those who sign marriage agreements. The amendment was introduced by the Nationalist Basque Party; besides the obligation to live together, keep faithfulness and help each other, spouses will have "to share duties on housekeeping, taking care of children, parents and other dependants."

The new rules were liked by feminists and supported by all Spanish women, who had to consider principles of their machos everyday. Men do not comment on the news anyhow. PM Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, who portrays himself as "a feminist" has been repeatedly stressing his belief that "political feminism" and "the great alliance of feminism and socialism" are exactly what promotes democracy and social progress not only in Spain, but in the entire world as well.

According to Zapatero, the main tool for further progress should be women's equality at work, in the society, in the field of state management, in science and culture, defense; Spanish PM is an active supporter of the initiatives aimed to combine work and family duties.

To help Spanish mothers, the lower house of the parliament made a decision to form the State Alimony Guarantee Fund, in charge for issuing monthly maintenance for under age children whose fathers do not follow the obligations set by the court.

When came to power, Zapatero expressed especial care towards women and practically implemented his idea of gender equality. He formed the new government, where the number of women equals the number of men. One of the most influential figures in the cabinet of ministers is a woman, vice prime minister Maria Theresa Fernandez de la Vega. The vice prime minister says she is glad to work at one of few gender-balanced governments of the world.

In March, the government adopted the packet of 53 measures aimed to develop gender equality in the country through the implementation of theses and principals of equality recorded in the country's Constitution and its legislative acts. The government initiated shortening of working day for women, so that it would be easier for them to combine office and house work. The government also addressed to employers requesting from them to promote women to managing positions. But at one of his meeting with employers, Zapatero stated that large Spanish companies, such as Telefonica, Repsol and Endesa, still do not have any women occupying key decision-making positions.

*Corriere Della Sera newspaper,  
Inopressa web site*

<http://www.inopressa.ru/print/corriere/2005/04/22/16:28:02/macho>

## **Alena AMINOVA, Uzbekistan**

### **tradition and economy**

## **ONLY FEW ARE AWARE THAT BRIDE KIDNAPPING IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE** *sometimes girls are kidnapped in order to reduce wedding expenses*

### **AYGUL**

She married a guy, whose mother dreamed about such a daughter-in-law as her. The period of their dating did not last for long, Aygul, Asan and his mother set a date for future "kidnapping," which should take place before fall. Otherwise, Aygul said, I'll marry another guy. Asan kidnapped his bride at the end of summer.

According to unofficial statistics, every fifth girl in Karakalpakstan gets married through kidnapping, while every twentieth bride states she practically did not know her husband before the wedding.

### **BAKHYT**

The guy saw her at the city library, traced her rout and two weeks later proposed to pick her up when she was going home. Bakhyt tried to refuse, but three friends of Sadirbay's forced her to get into the car and took her to Sadirbay house, where gathered the relatives of the bridegroom.

"We have been living together for two years," Bakhyt says, "but failed to get used to each other. I had a person I loved and planned to marry, but Sadirbay changed all my plans. After I was kidnapped, I could not go back to my parents, as they would not accept me. I have two younger sisters and they would not be able to get married, in case I'd return.

Bride kidnapping is an ancient tradition in Karakalpakstan, it is very popular in the republic. Oftentimes, it takes place in the circumstances of mutual agreement, but only few people are aware that the kidnapping of a bride without her wish is a felony. Klara Utepberganova, the chairwoman of Woman and Family non-governmental organization says:

"I think that young people simply do not know that kidnapping is a crime. There is article 136 in the Criminal Code of Uzbekistan, which envisages punishment for those who force a woman to marriage. But girls are not likely to address to law-enforcement agencies, because of the traditions which consider alike action as disgrace of girl's parents.

There are only some criminal cases on girls kidnappings in Karakalpakstan's court practice. Gulnara Bazarbaeva, the chairwoman of Nukuss city court says that these few court proceedings ended-up by sentencing kidnappers to small fines.

"This crime is listed among those which do not possess serious danger," Gulnara says, "generally, a girl is generally aware about guy's plan and she agrees with it; in these cases girls are kidnapped in order to shorten wedding expenses.

A wedding ceremony in Karakalpakstan costs a bridegroom some 1500-5 million sum (\$1 equals approximately 1300 sum). Sometimes the total expenses include bride-money and various gifts to her family members. However, the relatives of a bride are supposed to present their gifts to a newly-married and husband's family after the wedding. The discussions over the exchange of gifts generally represent a serious topic of conversation. The bride-money expenses are higher when a girl is a college graduate; sometimes a man has to cover the bride-money for several years.

Divorces are rare in Karakalpakstan, and even those women who were forced to marry a stranger try to keep their families.



Photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

## about violent marriage from India

### **DON'T WANT TO GET MARRIED!**

*In eastern part of India, in Bikhara state, there still is a tradition envisaging husband's kidnapping. Annually, hundreds of young men disappear for two or three weeks; after this period they come back home along with young wives they had to marry under the pressure of definite circumstances.*

Administrative workers, doctors, teachers and business figures are the most popular, and future mothers- and fathers-in-law even spy on potential husband. When kidnapped, the bridegroom is generally bitten, closed in a small room and starved for two or three days. Then the relatives of a bride start solemn wedding ceremony. The ceremonial room has a special ring for chaining the bridegroom; the future husband is accompanied by one of the girl's relatives, who jabs a sharp stick at guy's side.

The problem of enforced marriages is so severe that some single men prefer to leave their place of residence twice a year in June and December, which are traditional periods for weddings.

Others resolve the problem by getting married at the age of 15-16.

Alexander ZOTOV,  
PravdaRu

<http://portal-credo.ru/site/?act=monitor&id=5973>

## Mehriban ZEINALOVA, Azerbaijan

by request

### TURNING ON AND OFF THE TRADITIONS

*aggressive advocates of local traditions chose only those which promote men's domination*

Azerbaijani (Turkish) history states that a khagan (governor, monarch) was obliged to include signature of khatun (his wife) to any of the decrees he'd issue. Otherwise the document would not be considered legal. This historical fact proves that the role of khatun, who fulfilled different duties in the process of ruling the country was not small. That was a good and healthy democratic tradition, but today, when women face a lot of obstacles while trying to get to the decision-making process, the reason named for it is traditions.

In the works of Nizami Gyanjevi, we see the women of nomadic peoples who go into action, and participate in resolving the problems of their country along with men. But today, even driving a car is oftentimes considered as violation of traditions and a challenge (especially in

provinces of the country). Than why women were allowed to ride a horse in the past?

Today's Azeri men consider that the reason for women not being elected as the president of the country is traditions. But the history of Islam states at least 25 women who ruled and governed in their countries, why is not it considered as the tradition?

I believe that the word traditions is the code for those men who want to keep the power. But Mahomet Peihambar says: " People are equal as teeth of one comb. One Arab does not surpass another Arab; white man does not surpass black man, and a man does not surpass a woman."

#### DRIVING WOMEN FROM AZERBAIJAN

### POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION?

*Women drivers enjoy obvious privileges*

A driving woman is an extraordinary episode for the state traffic police of Azerbaijan. She is always in the center of attention; she receives burning looks; she is likely to be let to pass the way. Despite, Azeri woman does not always follow the traffic rules, police is likely to connive at the violation. It is a typical case, when a woman driver of a fancy car, who violates the rules, receives only thrilled glance from the police officer. Police is likely to ignore small violations; as it is considered as a bad form to punish women violators.

But this nice tradition will be probably changed after the number of women drivers increases.

*Lala NURI,  
Baku*

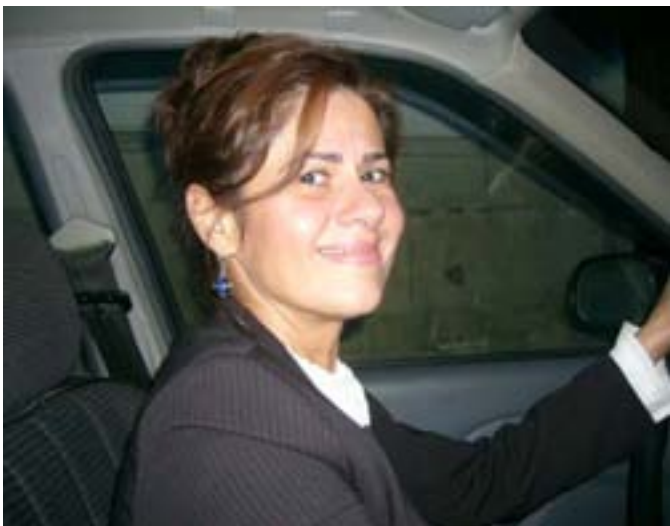


Photo by Galina Petriashvili, Georgia

#### WOMEN IN HISTORY

##### FROM ARMENIA

### TRADITION TO GOVERN AND COMMAND?

*In ancient times, noble Armenian women enjoyed large freedom and influence*

The wife of tsar Tigran the Great (95-55 B.C.) Cleopatra used two patronize Athenian orator Amphicrate, despite the latter was disfavored by her husband.

Women of prince's families had a right to receive guests and sit at the table with men; that was possible for Romans but Greek and Persian women would not venture to do so.

After death of father or husband, women participated in ruling the country as co-governors, when there were no other heirs. Historical sources highlight the following Armenian women-governors: the queen of Artashid dynasty Erato, who ruled along with her brother Tigran the Fourth (9-1 B. C.), and along during 6-12 B.C; Queen Paradzem (367-368), who ruled in Armenia after Persian capture of her husband Arshak the Second; in Armenian Kilikiyan kingdom princess Zabela was announced as queen after the death of her father Levon the Second (1219); Queen Marina ruled the country after her husband during 1373-1374.

There were 7 Armenian queens who ruled in Byzantium. Theodora (mid 9th century), who was later canonized by Greek Orthodoxy, is among these women. Three Armenian queens (Arta, Morphia, Rita) ruled in Jerusalem Kingdom during 11th - 12th centuries. In Georgia, the wife of Bagrat the Second Queen Sophie was the daughter of Armenian king Ashot the Third.

The most recent noble Armenian woman listed in the historic sources as a governor was princess Igdira, who received Spanish traveler in 1404, who visited Armenia after the invasion of Timur Lenk. In the 16th century Armenia was divided by Osman Turkey and Sefevid Persia; in the second part of the 19th century women 'disappeared' from the history.

*Source:*

*Vartan Atsuni; Armenian Woman in History, Venice, 1936*

## Natalya DOMAGALSKAYA, Kyrgyzstan

### Diverse life

# POLYGAMIST

*Polygamy in Kyrgyzstan was officially forbidden back in 1917*

*but male law-makers seem to be doing their best to revive polygamy. Once, there was even an open voting launched in the country's legislative body, monogamists won the battle however, by only several votes against. But the law is oftentimes separated from the real live.*

*Those Muslim men, who have corresponding welfare standards are likely to recall that the Koran enables them to have as many wives as they can maintain. It is also often that one of the wives finally appears in the street along with her children and without any rights for the house, alimony, and even a simple sympathy of those who consider official papers only, where she is not stated as a wife. But sometimes Sometimes live turns out to be so diverse!*

Once upon a time a young and beautiful woman with a small pretty daughter came to the office of my newspaper for a consultation. She was interested whether it was possible to punish her daughter's father for marital infidelity. The girl's father was one of the top governmental officials of Kyrgyzstan; the woman was distressed with the explanations of legal details.

...When Edil did not call and never returned home after their quarrel, Gulya felt really sorry. But thinking about all the details of the conversation she could find anything that would lead to the final break-up. Big deal - she just said that there was not enough money at the family and that every shopping had become a problem. Should that be a reason for divorce? But yes, he's got some problems at work he could feel hurt by what she said. Anyway, he should've called!

When Gulya and Edil met each other, she already stopped thinking about the possibility of having a happy family. Her first husband was an alcoholic, who used to speak too freely and could even beat her after drinking. Edil was different. He kept working at his responsible position from early morning until late night; if he drank that was only once in a while and within reasonable limits. He paid court to her unsparingly spending money. He never hid that he was married before and that has children "there," whom he assists financially. The most important was that Adil treated kindly

Gulya's son.

They started living at Gulya's house, but Edil bought new TV-set, refrigerator and a phone. The newly married were not in hurry about registering their marriage officially.

Soon Gulya had a daughter; Edil seemed absolutely happy, brought lots of flowers and candies to the doctors of the hospital, and loved to lull the baby when he was at home. However, his job involved a lot of traveling and business trips.

When Edil disappeared, Gulya decided to find his first wife. Despite of her expectations, "old hag Mavluda" turned out to be quite young, friendly and even beautiful woman. She invited Gulya for a tea and began listening the guest. "Oh, girl, why did you come here? You should've gone to Tanya or Damira, Edil stays there more often than at my house," Mavluda said. That was how Gulya found out that she was the fourth wife of Edil. But the most painful and unexpected was the news about Edil living with all four wives at a time! Mavluda recommended Gulya to come to her house again on Saturday, along with kids.

On Saturday, Gulya met not only Damira and Tanya, but their kids as well. There were six of them, including Gulya's daughter. Other wives were surprised about Gulya's reaction: "Well, why are you so unsatisfied? You don't have to work, Edil earns enough money, and gives you presents. You are not even registered officially! He's a free man and doesn't owe you anything," Tanya said. She grinned at Gulya and added: "it's hard when you learn it, but than it's okay. Me and Damira had babies almost simultaneously, and found out the truth only three years later but we don't regret any - just look how beautiful the kids are! They look like daddy!"

Damira, Tanya and Mavluda listed all the merits of their husband, and decided that it was necessary to find him and help:

"It's now our turn to help him, he always did his best for us when he had a job," Mavluda said.

Edil was found alone and drunk at the rented one-room apartment. The wives helped him to clean the house, his suit and face. Mavluda said she'd help to find a new position for Edil; Gulya does not contribute to the husband's assistance, she's too jealous for it. The layers she addressed to, did not help her any, explaining that the marriage was never registered with any of the women, and thus Edil is not a polygamist, but single.

There could be different emotions regarding this story; it's possible to be ironic, or concerned about women's dependence. But I can't get rid of one thought: what is the level of Edil's corruption; how much bribes did he take to support four houses, four wives and eight children?! Official salary of this polygamist did not exceed 3 thousand soms (approximately \$ 70).

## APROPOS ABOUT CHILDREN

from Sweden

### MEN IN CHARGE FOR TAKING CARE OF CHILDREN

*While their wives earn money and make career*

The families, where father is entirely occupied at home, while mother works and earns money are becoming a normal situation. One of the examples is the family of well-known rock musician Maria Fredricson. While the soloist of Roxette recorded new albums and traveled with concerts, her husband stayed at home with the baby daughter. He is papa-ledig, which can be translated as home-father.

This concept has already become quite official for Swedish legislation. According to the existing regulations, parents can choose which one of them stays at home and takes care of the newly born baby. And if a man chooses the status of home-father, the state will essentially assist and support him.

During almost one year (360 days) a parent who decides to work at home, receives 80% of his salary. Besides this, there is also a special fathers' 450-day leave, this period can be used during eight years.

According to statistics, last year there were over 70% of fathers who chose to become papa-ledig, statistics states that this figure grows steadily.

Sociologist Paula Dalberg considers that it is presently in fashion to be a papa-ledig.

Another explanation deals with pure economic reasons, when it is more profitable when a woman becomes the main bread-earner. Sociologists believe that increased number of househusbands is caused by recent changes at the labor market. During the period of economic decline the demand on male professions reduced dramatically, while women's professions remained highly demanded. Despite the crisis passed long time ago, the position of papa-ledig turned out to be an effective solution for dealing with unemployment.

*Svetlana PANKRATOVA,  
Stockholm  
IzvestiaRu*

<http://www.rambler.ru/db/news/msg.html?mid=4464369>

## ALSO ON POLYGAMY FROM UZBEKISTAN

Some time ago I had to deliver a speech at journalists' club of Namangan. There were editors of different newspapers based in Fergan valley gathered at the meeting.

One of the discussion participants was the member of our parliament and local university teacher. He was an extremely strong supporter of polygamy! My logical assumption that in this case polygamy should be introduced for women who wish to have more than one husband was rejected categorically and indignantly. Provincial journalists listed the debates attentively, and I am sure they made a conclusion that they should share the opinion of the representative of authorities. It's not a big deal that his opinion contradicts existing legislation, it is more important that he, the representative of legislative power was sure about his rectitude. We did not even mention the Constitution somehow.

*Muyassar MAKSUDOVA,  
Media Development Institute Journalists' Association  
Tashkent*



Photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

**Lali NIKOLAVA,**  
**Georgia**

a sad story

## UNHAPPY MARRIAGE

### *Inforced weddings still blooming*

Provincial town of Marneuli is the center of Georgian region which is predominantly populated by ethnic Azerbaijanis. Local beauty saloons display wedding dresses directly in the streets; these white, blue, red robes are expected to be bought for the happiest day in a bride's life.

...Young hairdresser professionally plays with the hair of a younger girl. The girl holds white bridal veil and sadly looks into the mirror. There are two more young women in the saloon, they exchange glances with obvious satisfaction, and give recommendations to the barber without paying any attention to the bride. These two are future sisters-in-law; they are in charge for the appearance of the bride, which is very important - there will be a lot of guests at the wedding including relatives from Baku.

"What is your name?" I asked the girl. She looked at me with tears in her eyes.

None of women reacted, only the barber smiled with understanding and answered me:

"Her name is Rakhima."

"Why does she cry today? Doesn't she like her future husband?"

"She doesn't know him," the hairdresser replied, "she marries the guy chosen by her parents."

"Can't she refuse to marry him, if she doesn't want to?"

"Nobody asks her," the barber smiled again.

The expression of the girl did not change anyhow during the dialogue, she looked like she did not even hear the conversation.

"Why doesn't she say anything?" I asked the hairdresser.

"She doesn't understand you, she speaks only Azeri," the barber answered.

Young sisters-in-law suspiciously listened the conversation; they guessed that we talked about their future relative and kept looking at me curiously.

"Just never mind it," the barber said, "she will get used to it; everyone cries to the begin with, but than these girls have babies and get used to their new lives..."

To be fair enough, it is necessary to say that not only local Azerbaijanis, but a lot of Georgian girls fail marry their loved ones. Some of them get kidnapped, just as it was three hundred years ago; others yield to parents' persuasion; there are also those who consciously decide that it's already time and age for marrying just anyone. And this is the reason for these girls' tears on the day which is supposed to be very happy.



Photo by Lali Nikolava, Georgia



# SOS

This is the fifth edition of the magazine "CaucAsia".  
The magazine is prepared on volunteer basis.  
The success, which our work has, will hopefully interest some donors.  
We look forward to your proposals!  
Sincerely,  
"CaucAsia"

## **The edition was prepared by:**

Galina PETRIASHVILI (editor) - Georgia

Nino SUKHIASHVILI - Georgia

Alena AMINOVA - Uzbekistan

Mehriban ZEYNALOVA - Azerbaijan

LALA NURI - AZERBAIJAN

Tamara OVNATANYAN - Armenia

Natalia DOMAGALSKAYA - Kyrgyzstan

Lali NIKOLAVA - Georgia

## **Photo:**

Umida AKHMEDOVA - Uzbekistan

Lali NIKOLAVA - Georgia

Galina PETRIASHVILI - Georgia

## **Design:**

GMC design-group, Georgia

## **Translation:**

Diana PETRIASHVILI - Georgia (GMC)

CaucAsia

INTERNATIONAL COALITION



GenderMediaCaucasus

JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION

17 Ioris Str. TBILISI, 0103, Republic of Georgia

Tel. (995 32) 77 60 18; (995 99) 90 11 24; fax (995 32) 23 09 45

e-mail [galapet@ip.osgf.ge](mailto:galapet@ip.osgf.ge)