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**COPING WITH THE CHAOS (*BARDAK* ):**

**Chaos, Networking, Sexualised Strategies and Ethnic Tensions, in  
Almaty, Kazakhsatan**

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## ABSTRACT

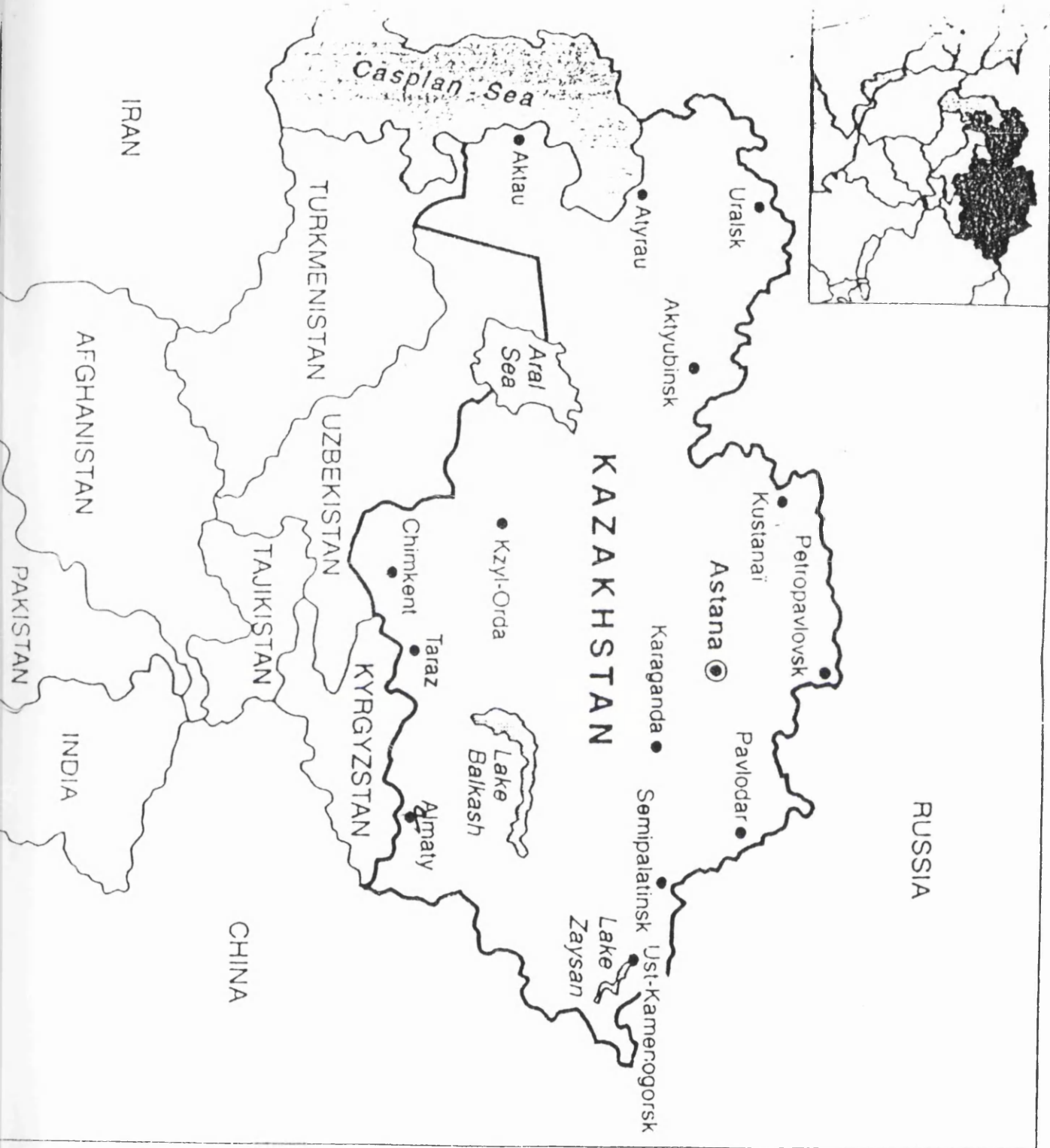
The aim of this thesis is to describe and analyse the main elements of the post-Soviet chaos (*bardak*) in Almaty, Kazakhstan. My focus is the ways in which the dispossessed people understand and react to what they term 'chaos' and their own dispossession and the variety of coping strategies they have adopted to survive in the new, harsh economic and political environment. My account draws on 15 months 'multi-site' ethnographic fieldwork in Almaty from July 1995 to Oct 1996. What dispossessed describe as 'chaos' are the circumstances of their plunder: a situation which they think has been deliberately created by members of the former Soviet elite and a variety of Westerners. It is, I argue, a situation created and exploited by the Kazakhstan state official and others, locally known as 'the mafia' (*mafiiia*) as part of their response to the collapse of the USSR, and the new liberal economic policies associated with the new style of 'global capitalism'. Their response also includes many forms of corruption, and a willingness to use violence against an increasingly impoverished majority of the population.

I particularly focus on networking and sex work as two important strategies through which the dispossessed cope with the poverty and social insecurity. One finding of considerable importance is that while network-based competition for resources has given a new surge to ethnic tensions in Kazakhstan, such tensions are counterbalanced among the dispossessed by their feeling of belonging to the same Soviet 'imagined community' (*Sovetskii narod*). Central to such feelings is a strong shared nostalgia for the Soviet era. This nostalgia signals a fear of, and constitute a form of protest against, some elements of post-Soviet change such as the implementation of market economy, widespread prostitution, the presence of foreigners, the emergence of new forms of class differentiation and the prevalence of consumerist culture and the monetisation of life worlds, particularly with respect to sexual relations. The dispossessed not only reject these changes but attribute them to corrupt 'alien' evil forces: alien persons, the alien consumerist culture and the 'wild capitalism' (*diki kapitalism*).

An examination of the complex responses of dispossessed to these 'alien' forces is the theme which unites this dissertation. In particular I document the ways in which both the imagined Soviet community, and those of other imagined ethnic communities are gendered through discourses and practices related to sexuality and marriage. I also describe how the dispossessed, of whatever the ethnic or religious backgrounds, often feel themselves to have far more in common with each other, and with others of the dispossessed throughout the territory of the former USSR, than with their co-ethnics or co-religionists outside this territory.

### **Note on Transliteration**

I have used the modified Library of Congress Transliteration, used in The Slavonic and East European Review.



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## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUNDS

### The Aims:

#### A young Kazakh man:

The life stinks here. Everybody has become a Raskol'nikov without his conscience. He killed an old woman but went mad for that. In Kazakhstan today you can kill a person for \$100 in the morning and in the evening drink the money with a prostitute in a restaurant without having any regret. You will sleep without nightmares. The next day you are prepared to kill again anybody for \$100. This is our life. It is not only what our elite and mafia do but everybody has the same mentality. Our people (*nash narod*) are starving but they are building their villas in Medeo<sup>1</sup>, buying their Mercedes and spending money on prostitutes in restaurants.

#### A young Kazakh woman:

Before, in the Soviet time, there were moral limits (*moral'naia planka*) and the authorities looked after (*nabludali*) them. There were high moral standards (*moral'naia vershina granitsa*) and the party took care (*sledila*) of them. You understand, there existed a moral code (*moral'nyi kodeks*), which was observed well. People were truthful (*liudi byli pravil'nye*). They were brought up in a good way. But today people have become like savage animals (*dikie zhivotnyye*). They behave according to the law of the jungle (*po zakonu dzhunglei*). Everybody who is strong (*sil'nyi*), hits, rapes, murders and robs, everybody else who is weak (*slabye*).

These two young Kazakhs describe above vividly aspects of what people called chaos (*bardak*). Two other descriptions are given by two Russians: a young Russian woman and an unemployed Russian worker in the following events:

It was ten o'clock on a summer evening. I stopped writing notes to prepare something to eat, but I had nothing in the kitchen. Then, I decided to go out and buy something from a kiosk. As I stepped out from my house I saw a tall blond-haired woman under the spotlight of a car which was moving very slowly behind her. The woman seemed to be bewildered as hounded game. First, she rushed in the direction the car was pursuing her, but feeling that the car was pursuing her she turned to the right towards the street, then paused for a moment and looked towards me. By now, I was a few yards from her. Seeing me, she ran towards me, kissed me, then took my arm and said: "Please help me. These men are pursuing me, they want to take me by force. Please pretend that you are my husband." Then without waiting for my answer, she

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<sup>1</sup> A rich suburb in Almaty.



dragged me with herself under the shadow of a nearby tree. I turned my back to the car, because if they knew I was a foreigner they might stop the car to pick a fight with me. Fortunately, they passed by.

The woman was on her way to visit a friend. She told me that a moment before our encounter when she was walking along the street, three Kazakh men in the car had 'invited' her into the car. But she had refused and turned into the yard hoping that the men would let her go. But the car had turned into the yard and pursued her.

I told the woman: "If you remember these men's faces let us report them to the police. I am your witness." She answered: It is useless. This is Kazakhstan. There is no order (*net poriadka*), it is chaos everywhere (*vezde bardak*). These men are Mafioso. Who will defend a poor (*bednuuu*) woman against them?

The woman used the word chaos (*Bardak*) to describe the current situation in Kazakhstan and the word poor/dispossessed (*bednuuu*) to situate herself. In the same way most people I met in Kazakhsan used the word chaos to describe the post -soviet change and the word dispossessed to situate themselves vis-a- vis such a change. A Russian worker gave another illustration of chaos by interpreting the following event: In the 9th of October 1996, Aleksaner Petreovich Terletskii, a 56 year old Russian worker poured a bottle of petrol over himself, and set light to himself and burned to death in front of the office of the Belgian multi-national company Traktebel. The event received high coverage in the Russian speaking media and great attention in my neighbourhood. The man was working as a driver in one of the Almaty, energy stations which were bought by the Belgian multi-national, Traktebel. Somebody had stolen his wallet, which contained his driver license and his salary. He said to a colleague that he would go to the police station to make a report. After making the report he went to his job, but was told by the manager of the station that he was sacked for leaving his work without permission. He resorted to the other authorities without any result. Finally, he became so desperate that he burned himself in protest. As result of this event Traktebel, already feared and hated in my neighbourhood, was discredited further (see below). People were particularly furious because the man had been working for the station for a long time and had only two years to go to

his pension. A Russian unemployed electrician, who gave me the news first, was of the opinion that now directors in the privatised companies treat workers as slaves (*oni otnosiatsia k liudiam kak k rabam*). Then, he added: this is chaos (*Eto bardak*).

*Bardak*, which literally means brothel, was used as a metaphor for complete chaos. It was used to describe different elements of the current situation such as corruption, cynicism, violence, the mafia, lawlessness and arbitrariness of state officials, the dissolution of the welfare state, the dispossession of a wide range of people from economic and social rights, alcoholism, prostitution, ethnic conflicts, despair, suicide and fear of the future. Another key word which was interchangeably used with chaos was wild capitalism (*dikii kapitalism*). *Bardak* is a metaphor with multiple inter-related meanings. It generally connotes to the extreme legal and immoral disorder in the social life. When it is used to describe a field of social relations it means that the interaction between people is based on illegal and moral ways such as chicanery, corruption and use of force. The very arbitrariness inherent in the current situation is described as an absolute disorder (chaos). It is used to describe disorder and lack of control in a person's mind or life as well.

But the chaos is seen by the dispossessed to effect different people in different ways. Those who are already powerful use these arbitrary methods to subjugate those who are weaker. The dispossessed used the words poor [ *bednye* (plural) , *bednaia* (feminine), *bednyi* (masculine)] and poverty (*bednost*) to depict their own dispossession and lack of power in general as a result of the chaos.

The aims of this thesis are:

- 1) To describe and analyse the main elements of the post-Soviet chaos (*bardak*) in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from the point of view of the dispossessed and their responses to it.
- 2) To contribute to the theoretical understanding of the post-soviet 'chaos'.

Although I acknowledge that my words will not be able to convey the depth of tragedy lived by the dispossessed I will try my best. My focus is the ways in which dispossessed people understand and react to what they term 'chaos' and their own dispossession and the variety of coping strategies they have adopted to survive in the new, harsh economic and political environment. My account draws on 15 months 'multi-site' ethnographic fieldwork in Almaty from July 1995 to Oct 1996.

What the the dispossessed describe as 'chaos' are the circumstances of their plunder: a situation which they think has been deliberately created by members of the former Soviet elite and a variety of Westerners.

It is, I argue, a situation created and exploited by the Kazakhstan state officials and others, locally known as 'the mafia' (*mafia*) as part of their response to the 'current crisis of hegemony' in the context of 'global capitalism'. Their response also includes many forms of corruption, and a willingness to use violence against the increasingly impoverished majority of the population.

Networking and sex work are the two important strategies through which the dispossessed cope with the poverty and social insecurity. While network-based competition for resources has given a new surge to ethnic tensions in Kazakhstan, such tensions are counterbalanced among the dispossessed by their feeling of belonging to the same Soviet 'imagined community' (*Sovetskii narod*). Central to such feelings is a strong shared nostalgia for the Soviet era. This nostalgia signals a fear of, and constitute a form of protest against, some elements of post-Soviet change such as the implementation of market economy, widespread prostitution, the presence of foreigners, the emergence of new forms of class differentiation and the prevalence of consumerist culture and the monetisation of life worlds, particularly with respect to sexual relations. The dispossessed not only reject these changes but attribute them to corrupt 'alien' evil forces: alien persons, the alien consumerist culture and 'wild capitalism' (*dikii kapitalism*).

An examination of the complex responses of dispossessed to these 'alien' forces is the theme which unites this dissertation. In particular I document the ways in which both the imagined Soviet community, and those of other imagined ethnic communities are gendered through discourses and practices related to sexuality and marriage. I also describe how the dispossessed, of any ethnic or religious background, often feel themselves to have far more in common with each other, and with others of the dispossessed throughout the territory of the former USSR, than with their co-ethnics or co-religionists outside this territory.

## **Summary**

In the rest of this chapter I describe my fieldwork practice, discuss theoretically the main terms used in this dissertation with reference to relevant literature and describe the historical backgrounds of Kazakhstan and Almaty.

In chapter two I deal with some aspects of the chaos as it was described

by the dispossessed. First, I discuss some aspects of the process of wealth differentiation such as the privatisation of state property, extraction of bribes and tributes, and manipulation of credits. Then I describe the upsurge of violence in relation to wealth differentiation on the one hand and the emergence of the post-soviet gender and ethnic ideologies on the other. In the next step I deal with feelings of loss and the ways people denounce the post-soviet change, by arguing that such change has resulted from a planned conspiracy by the West and the elite.

In chapter three I explore reciprocal exchange within networks as the strategy the dispossessed use to cope with chaos. First I review very briefly the concepts of reciprocity and network in the anthropological literature, then I discuss four forms of reciprocity: sharing of drinks, sharing of food and drinks, exchange of gifts and illicit help (*blat*). Then I discuss some aspects of networking practices. I argue that people are involved in two kinds of reciprocal exchange: the reproductive and urgent ones. The first are intended to sustain relations between people and the second to help with urgent needs. Networks are shaped around kinship, marriage and friendship. Moreover networks constitute the main moral community for individuals. While networks protect individuals against chaos, they contribute to it as well. Because the network-oriented competition for resources encourages nepotism, use of violence and ethnic tensions.

In chapter 4 I discuss the economic sexual strategies, practised by young dispossessed women. These women use such strategies to find strong and wealthy men who may protect them against poverty and violence. But the wider population of the dispossessed understand such strategies as chaos in sexual relations brought about by monetisation of sexuality. First, I explore patterns of such strategies from the point of view of young women. Then I show how the stigma the wider population imposes on these women legitimises the use of violence against them by hooligans and other powerful men, who exploit them. I demonstrate that the attitudes of the dispossessed on sex work vary with regard to gender and generation. While most men and older women condemn sexual strategies, young women find it a way, although not a desirable one, of making a living.

In chapter Five I deal with ideological and cultural responses of the dispossessed towards the post-soviet change. The expropriation of wealth, and the monetisation of life world are considered by the dispossessed as elements of an overall notion of alien, in opposition to which they imagine an authentic Soviet community and an authentic Soviet culture. Alien consists of alien persons and alien

phenomena. The alien person is one who comes from outside CIS territory, is male by gender, is wealthy and propagates prostitution and sexual diseases. Metaphorically, the alien person epitomises the manners and the culture of the new rich, consumerism and sexual promiscuity. Alien phenomena include the expropriation of state property, capitalism, wealth differentiation, the consumerist life style of the new rich and monetisation of lifeworlds, particularly sexuality. All these are considered corrupting for their imagined authentic Soviet life style. This is emphasised through expression of a great nostalgia for the Soviet era, which is idealised as the era of prosperity, security, trust, morality, generosity, stability, predictability of life and social peace. I explain this selectivity of the collective memory of the dispossessed which plays down the negative aspects of the Soviet era.

The notion of a unified Soviet people is questioned by the continuing ethnic tensions. In chapter 6 I explore such tensions. I do not discuss ethnicity in general in Kazakhstan or all aspects of ethnic relations but those which relate directly to ethnic tensions. These tensions, which are considered a strong element of chaos, are related to the Kazakhification of the state and the struggle for urban space. The Kazakhification of the state has two main components: monopolisation of high posts in the state institutions by Kazakhs, and the language policy. Both of these give the Kazakh elite a privileged access to the resources. The tension over urban space, has also two main elements: A tension between migrant Kazakhs from *auls* and urban Russian speaking, including urban Kazakh and a tension between migrant Kazakhs and migrant Muslims from other post-Soviet republics. Migrants resort to hooliganism and violence to impose their domination over urban space. The fact that urban Kazakhs and other Muslim groups side with non-Kazakhs and non-Muslims against rural Kazakhs fragments both Kazakh and Muslim Identities. Kazakhs claim a privileged position by evoking a primordial notion of the homeland. They say that the fact that Kazakhstan is the ancestral land of Kazakhs entitle them to be the masters of the country. Non-Kazakhs challenge such claim by evoking a constructionist notion of the homeland. They say all ethnic groups have built the modern Kazakhstan together and all of them are equally entitled to its resources.

I conclude the dissertation by making a comment on the main findings of the thesis.

### **The People and modes of Interaction**

In this section I will discuss the ways I interacted with people in order to collect material

for this dissertation. Let us start with the following event.

Gulnara:

If you don't mind, I want to tell you a slightly adventurous anecdote, before I give the floor to next person. In any anecdote there are good things, a rational kernel (*Ratsional'noe zerno*). We have got children here but they are old enough.

The anecdote:

(Gulnara: The husband marks the celebration of the fiftieth birthday of his wife. Close friends, acquaintances are present and several excellent toasts have been already given.)

The wife stands up and speaks:

According to tradition wife and husband are the same Satan (*muzh i zhena odna satana*), thus my husband is obliged to conclude the jubilee of my birthday.

The husband stands up:

My dear friends! My toast will be unique and special and I will deliver it in several steps. I ask you to raise your glasses at each step and drink to my lovely wife.

(Everybody became attentive.)

The husband:

Let us drink to the eighteenth birthday of my wife, when she was beautiful like a scarlet flower (*alen'kii svetocek<sup>2</sup>*) (thunderous applause).

The wives of other men:

Look! How he does love! What tender words he does express! He thinks of his wife at her eighteenth birthday as a scarlet flower.

(They drink)

The husband:

let us drink to the thirtieth birthday anniversary of my wife when she was soft and sweet as a bun (*bulochka*).

(Thunderous applause)

Every body drinks.

The husband:

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<sup>2</sup> Such a flower has a particular symbolic importance in the Russian culture and many sagas are told in relation to it.

Let us drink to the fortieth anniversary of my wife when she was like splashes of champagne (*bryzgi shampanskogo*).

Thunderous applause.

They drink)

The husband:

(with a sad and low voice) Yes, there is jubilee! there is jubilee! There is a fiftieth anniversary! There is a fiftieth year anniversary! There is ageing! There is ageing! There is decay! There is decay! there is physiology! There is physiology! There is droop! There is droop! You cannot escape all of these.

I have no choice but to acknowledge these facts. Let us drink to the jubilee of my wife's fiftieth birthday anniversary, when she has become like a bit of old beef (*goviadina*).

(Silence at the table!)

The wife stands up and speaks:

Husband and wife are the same Satan. My husband started a toast, and I, as the hostess, am obliged to conclude it. Let's my dear friends drink to my eighteenth birthday when I was like a scarlet flower.

The wife turns to the husband and says:

Oh dear husband, after so many years of faithful conjugal life, in the presence of the closest, relatives and acquaintances let me confess and open my heart, you were not the first one who picked that scarlet flower.

(Silence).

The wife:

Let us drink to the thirtieth anniversary of my birthday when I was soft and sweet as a bun. But my dear husband you were not the only who ate that soft and sweet bun.

(Silence!)

The wife:

Let us drink to the fortieth anniversary of my birthday, when I was like splashes of champagne. I try to remember, but I think you

my dear husband did not get a drop of them.

(Silence!)

The wife:

My husband honestly and sincerely said before every body that the physiological process of drooping, aging and decay are comparable with a bit of old beef. But what my husband in effect says, is that the spirit of a women (*iziuminka zhenshchin*) is kept intact if she bears in her the freshness of a scarlet flower, softness of a sweet bun and the splashes of champagne and tries to escape all these, drooping, decay and aging.

(Thunderous applause)

Then let us conclude the party with a drink to my fiftieth birthday.

(They drink)

(The end of anecdote)

Gulnara:

Therefore be it that you women well always be like a scarlet flower, like splashes of champagne, and put aside all these process of decay and aging. All these processes of aging stop if a woman succeeds in keeping her soul young.

(Turning to hostess) Do I speak the Truth aunt Tania?

Gulnara is a Kazakh woman, a university lecturer, also a neighbour and a friend of mine, and worked at the same university at which I worked. The audience beside me are our common friends whom I met through her. The occasion is a celebration on the eight of March 1996, IWD, at the home of a Russian family in the suburb of Almaty. Below I describe my experience of the day very briefly:

That day I got up early in the morning, took a shower and shaved, then got dressed. I had no time for a cup of tea, so I took the bunch of tulips that I had purchased the day before from the Vystavka and rushed towards a bus stop, three minutes walk from my house. There, I waited around fifteen minutes before Gulnara and her Jewish husband joined me. Meanwhile, three buses stopped at the bus stop, dropping travellers off and picking others up and then continued their journeys. All of them were packed with people who were dressed in party clothes and most of them were carrying flowers, mostly tulips, but roses as well. On the pavements, pedestrians,



dressed in the same manner and carrying flowers, were walking on the sidewalks. The Eight of March is an official holiday in the Soviet tradition. This day is celebrated almost in every family and every work place. Indeed, after New Years Eve it is the most popular holiday. Two or three weeks before its arrival, every woman I met talked with excitement about it. People buy presents and prepare poems and speeches to tell close women relatives and friends. On this day women receive presents, flowers, complements and well wishes from husbands, sons, lovers, colleagues and friends.

While admiring people's appetite for celebration at a time of trouble, I was contemplating whether such celebrations could be considered a Bakhtinian carnival or not? But Gulnara for whom I had been waiting, interrupted my thoughts by greeting me. In returning her greeting I handed the flowers to her, kissed her cheek and congratulated her on the occasion of the 8th of March. Then I shook hands with Yusef, her husband, a journalist. We took the next bus which was packed with people. After a few stops we picked up their eighteen year old daughter. Sara lives separately with her grandmother. Some stops later we picked up Naghima, a forty year old Kazakh single mother with her ten year old daughter Liela. Naghima is a clerk.

We changed our bus in the green Bazaar, where Erden, a thirty years old Kazakh man, a construction worker joined us, and Yusef left us and went to work in his office. Now we were heading towards a suburb outside Almaty, where our hostess and host, a Russian family, were living. After half an hour we arrived at the destination. In the bus stop we encountered the host accompanied by his grand son and a big dog. He was going to to the local shop to buy few bottles of vodka.

Before knocking on the door the women passed the flowers to me and Erden and advised on me how to congratulate the women inside. We were received by the hostess, her daughter, and Volodia, another guest, who had arrived earlier. Volodia was a construction worker as well. The interesting thing about him was that while both of his parents were Ukrainian he called himself a Russian. Both our host and hostess were Russians. The husband a construction worker and the wife a housewife. The daughter, who had divorced her husband recently and moved together with her twelve year old son to her parents', was a nurse. After performing the ceremonies and exchange of greetings, we jointly started to prepare the meal. Meanwhile I got out my camera and took several photographs. While we were preparing the meal Anna an Ukrainian woman in her thirties arrived. She, like Volodia, saw herself as a Russian. She was a clerk. Then the host returned from the shop with his vodkas.

When we finished the job, the hostess suggested that the guests should visit

their Russian bath (*Russkii bania*), before eating. First, I, Erden and Volodia visited the bath and when we were finished the women did so. While we three were sitting and sweating in the heat there, naked, Erden started to tease me in a friendly way: "Look Jakob, we are born with this between our legs, then why you Arabs are ashamed to show it to others. While laughing, I told him: "Shame on you; aren't you a Muslim?" He answered: "Of course; but first of all I am a Soviet person (*Sovetskii chelovek*), we are not strict (*strogie*) like Arabs and Turks." Teasing him back I said: "You are strict anyway. In Scandinavia men and women sit together naked in the sauna and drink beer." Volodia who was listening with amusement to our conversation, asked me: "Is it true?" I answered: "Yes, they really do it, but with friends. I myself have been several times in a mixed sauna." Now Erden, invented another fanciful joke:

If we do not sit together with our women naked in a bath this not because we are strict, but because it is dangerous. Scandinavia is cold and people are cold blooded over there. Here in Kazakhstan it is hot and we are hot blooded, sitting naked with our women, we cannot avoid to make love with each other.

This is dangerous, because making love in such a temperature causes heart attacks."

The women stayed longer in the bath. When they came back, it was already 2 pm and we had arranged the first course on the table: two sorts of salads, three sorts of cold local sausage, cold marinated fish, homemade cherry jam, butter, cheese, bread, three bottles of local vodka, a bottle of local champagne and homemade raspberry drink.

The host opened the ceremony of eating by welcoming everybody. As it was the women's day Gulnara took charge of the ceremony and appointed people in order, to give toasts. Meanwhile I plugged in my tape recorder to record, toasts, anecdotes and conversation. The ceremony lasted for four hours. During these four hours everyone, even the children, gave toasts which were addressed mainly to the women particularly the hostess. Toasts were spiced with anecdotes and jokes. After eating we went to another room and listened to music, danced, took photos together and sang folk songs in Russian from a song book called folk songs (*narodnye pesni*). At the end Gulnara arranged a Kazakh game the purpose of which was to collect money for the host family. She tied Liela's ankles with a shawl very softly. Then, while Liela jumped towards each guest Gulnara asked them to contribute with a sum of money. After everybody contributed, Gulnara asked Liela to offer the collected money to the hostess who was in another room.<sup>3</sup>

The hosts had provided the food and drink. They had purchased the meat, sausages, tomato, salad, cucumber, and alcoholic drinks from the market and the rest

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<sup>3</sup> I was told that this was a Kazakh tradition.

were homemade. In spite of this it was a costly party, but the host could afford it, because he was a construction worker and earned good money owing to the construction boom in Almaty.

While the cold food was prepared by all of us the warm food was cooked by only women.

Indeed as I discuss in chapter 3 sharing of drink and food and exchange of words and gifts are very important means of creating networks in Almaty. Moreover, in such celebrations people produce or contest cultural stereotypes. For example, Gulnara subverted the current market-oriented understanding of femininity, which reduces women to sexed-bodied objects, by suggesting that a woman's value lies in her mind not her appearance. The body of a woman may get old but she does not lose her value, because her soul could be always young. We may not agree with Gulnara's dualistic philosophy. However, many women whose bodies are potentially or actually exposed to violence or to transformation into commodities use such philosophy to protect their self esteem. I deal with these matters in chapters 1, 4 and 5.

The themes of this dissertation emerged out my participation in people's daily life, observing their practices and discussing with them the meaning of such practices. The events described above represent a significant example of the ways in which I collected my data through close interaction with people. I could interact in this way within nine networks and in addition with a good number of individuals or families without having access to their networks. For ethical reasons I cannot reveal detailed information about these people which might lead to their identification. However, in the course of my dissertation I refer to many of them, describe their social, ethnic and biographical backgrounds and let them speak for themselves.

Three of these networks were related to the university where I taught: a network of teachers in my department, a network of my women students who worked casually as translators for foreign businessmen, and a network of male Kazakh students who extracted tributes from other students. I was introduced to the fourth one, the one described above, by Gulnara, but the rest of its members did not work at the university. The other five networks which were related to the neighbourhood where I lived are as follows: a drinking circle of urban men, a network of Kazakh migrants from the south (both men and women), two networks of women urban street traders and a network of four women sex workers.

Although only a few individuals in each network confided information to me about their transactions with other people, the rest trusted me enough to tell me their

opinions on the current political and economic situation.

I established good relations with some families and individuals through university and the neighbourhood. Indeed, negotiation and establishment of trust was much easier with members of a family than members of network. Once a member of a family introduced me to the rest they trusted me while in networks I had to negotiate the trust separately with each individual. A friend of a member of a family is usually considered as a friend of the family. By contrast in networks friendship with a member of a network does not automatically result in friendship with other members and must be established individually.

In addition to my regular interactions with networks, families and individuals mentioned above I had hundreds of casual discussions with people in the neighbourhood, university and many other places.

In addition to the people above, workers in a factory shop floor were another source of information.

Although I mixed with people from all walks of life, I was careful to spend more time with the dispossessed and reflect upon their ideas and tried to see things from their point of view. I did so, because their voices are not represented either in the local or Western media or academic writings. Moreover, the research was gendered through the fact that I trusted more women than men, because I learned that they did not pose any serious threat to me. Thus this dissertation explores the uncharted themes mainly from the point view of dispossessed, particularly women.

I deployed a variety of field techniques: participatory observation, informal talks, collecting life stories, recording talks in celebrations, taking photographs, and copying videos from celebrations, formal interviews, organising discussion groups, taking part in political and cultural meetings and conducting surveys.

### ***Some problems in the field***

As the story above may indicate I met a lot of noble and friendly people in Almaty and enjoyed my time there. People invited me to parties, took me to the mountains and their dachas, and shared information generously with me. However, my research was not free from traumatic experiences and methodological difficulties. These were caused partly by the local fears of me and my fears of the local people. As foreign man I was suspected to be there to seduce their women and make money (see chapter 5). I feared locals, because of the general atmosphere of violence and crime resulting from the break up of the society.

At my arrival in Almaty, on the 15th July 1995, I was received at the airport by a friend and then housed in a one bed room apartment on the fifth floor of a five story cement house, a type of house which is called in both Russia and Kazakhstan a Khrushchev House (*Khrushchevskie doma*). The neighbourhood was not far away from the centre of the city. It consisted of a set of five and twelve story cement houses, a restaurant which was owned by Azaris and where the waitresses were Russians, around seven kiosks, an illegal market and a cafe.

I found the neighbourhood a very good place for fieldwork and very quickly established relations with people around. Each morning I went to the illegal bazaars and talked with them and warned them when the police were about to make raids. I became friends with one of the networks of the illegal traders. They invited me to their homes and I invited them to my apartment and we often drank local vodka or beer and talked for hours. In the afternoons I went either to the restaurant or the cafe and wrote my notes there and chatted with waitresses or customers. There I became acquainted with a young Georgian/Russian man, a Russian young woman who lived in another city but visited Almaty regularly and a young Russian female student with whom I started to exchange English lessons for Russian ones. We met twice a week, one time we spoke in Russian and the next in English. In the evening, I usually sat at the front of my house and talked with old women who were sitting there. At nights, I went to visit a Kazakh young couple who worked in a kiosk and sometimes I spent a whole night with them.

I liked the neighbourhood and was quite happy with my success in settling down in the neighbourhood and getting to know so many people in a very short period of time. Moreover, I was impressed by the people's hospitality and generosity. However, from the very beginning there was something strange. People warned me of each other. My landlord who had fixed a steel door behind the wooden door of the apartment, warned me: "Do not take anybody here unless s/he is scholar. It is very dangerous here." Indeed, all other people with whom I had established relationships told me that I should be careful with strangers. I did not pay too much attention to these warnings, and took people to my apartment and went to their places unreservedly.

Indeed, as I discovered very soon, this was very stupid and dangerous. In a space of two months my relation became strained with most of the people I knew, with exception of some Turks, two Tadjik brothers, a waitress in the cafe and the young Russian woman with whom I exchanged lessons. The main reason for this was that people started to ask me to lend them money, say, \$200, \$300, \$500. When I refused

to lend them the money they became upset and avoided me. The old women never asked for money, but avoided me as well. I spoke about this with the young Russian woman with whom I exchanged lessons. She was of the opinion that the old women might think the young women who visited me were prostitutes and because of that they did not trust me anymore.

Then other unfortunate incidents occurred. One day an Azarbaejani man who sold shashlyk in the neighbourhood and had tried unsuccessfully to bully me several times before rang at my door. When I opened the door, he jumped in, looked around and grabbed my shaving machine which was placed on the chair by the door and asked: "what is this?" Then he came in and sat down on the furniture. I got angry, and told him that I had not invited him in and I was busy and he should go away. He insisted on staying by saying: "You are a journalist and you speak with every body, now I want you to speak with me and write about my life." I told him that I would speak with him on another occasion, and then asked him again to leave. But he insisted again on staying by saying that he was available only on that day. Anyhow I refused to speak with him and insisted that he should leave. In the end he left the apartment while saying, "you are not a good friend". The awful thing about his visit was that I had not given my address to him, he had found it through other people.

The second incident occurred one evening when I was in the cafe. Some people had tried to open the door of the apartment. They did not succeed, but the lock was broken. The third incident concerned a Polish man with whom I had shared vodka few times. It was the middle of day and I was writing notes in my apartment. Suddenly I felt that somebody was trying to open my door from outside. Then I went to the door and opened it. The man behind door ran down the stairs. I recognised the Polish neighbour and pursued him to first floor. He went into one of the apartments. I rang the door, his brother came out. I told him that his brother rang at my door and then ran away, and I want to know what he had wanted. The man apologised, by saying that his brother was drunk.

All of these incidents made me feel that my way of interacting with people was wrong and unsafe. I felt myself under scrutiny from everybody. My Russian woman friend with whom I exchanged lessons was of the opinion that this was dangerous. She explained to me that locals did not like foreigners. The dominant image of a foreign man was one of a business man who come to Almaty in order to make money at their expense and seduce their women and spread sexual diseases. Because of that many people want to cheat or violate foreigners. Then she advised me to move to

a new neighbourhood. Finally I was convinced that it was better for me to leave the neighbourhood. By this time, it was already the end of September. I managed to get a teaching job in a university, described below, and through one of the students, I found an apartment in a new neighbourhood where I stayed until my departure.

I decided to mix with people more reservedly and publicise myself more carefully in the new neighbourhood. This strategy worked to some extent, I was less harassed in the new neighbourhood, but I encountered an important moral and methodological question: how to negotiate and establish the trust between myself and local people. The problem was complicated not only by the locals' suspicion of me as a male foreigner but my own fears of the locals. As mentioned, the locals consider foreign men to be rich and promiscuous. These make them in the local eyes both an economic resource and a cultural threat (see chapter 5). There is a widely shared opinion in Almaty that one should not trust a foreigner but benefit from him economically. What made me cautious was not that people might exploit me economically but, given the widespread violence and hooliganism, I might be physically harmed.

I decided not to let people know where I was living and never on any account to take them to my place unless I trusted them fully. This in its turn certainly limited my access to people's homes. So in the beginning my interactions with people occurred usually at university and in the neighbourhood cafe and market. The good thing in both places was that I did not need to make an extra effort to make contact and speak with people, they themselves approached me and started to talk. I had regular encounters with some people such as shop keepers and street traders in the neighbourhood and my own colleagues and students at the university and many casual ones with others.

Paradoxically, those whom I encountered regularly were less inclined to speak about the political situation while those whom I met occasionally usually embarked upon heated discussion, which often went on for hours as they expressed very strong ideas about the government, mafia, corruption and nepotism. The reason for the reservedness of the former was that I knew them while they did not trust me enough and the latter, did not need such trust to say what they did want to say, because I did not know them. As people were afraid of state officials and mafia, usually they did not tell their opinions to a person who knows them and whom they do not trust. They were simply afraid that the person might pass the information to a third potentially dangerous person, or he himself might blackmail them in future.

When people did not trust me they kept to the official representation of events or kept quiet. A good example was a woman at university. In the beginning she was telling me that there was no ethnic discrimination at the university but once she trusted me she expressed a diametrically opposite opinion and told numbers of stories of discrimination. She was afraid of losing her job. On the factory shop floor where I did fieldwork, as workers told me later, on an occasion when we were drinking vodka together, at the beginning they thought that the director had put me on the shop floor to spy on them. Even when they were convinced that I was not the director's spy, they still assumed that I was collecting information on behalf of a foreign company who wanted to buy their factory and insisted that I should tell them the name of the company.

Related to this notion they jokingly called me the English Spy (*Angliiskii shpion*)<sup>4</sup>. Only after being sure that I had a genuine interest in the working class and socialism did they begin to believe me that I was really an anthropologist and not an undercover spy. Foreigners are considered generally as potential spies. On several occasions people with whom I had close relations considered my work as a kind of intelligence gathering. Two such persons called me an intelligence officer (*razvedchik*). When I asked them for the reason, they answered that the foreign states may use the information I was collecting.

Although the casual discussions with anonymous people were very informative, because of the casual nature of the encounter, it was difficult for me to contextualise properly what they told me. So to establish relationships of trust with people became the main challenge to my research. The first thing I wanted to do was to create a public image of myself as a teacher. Indeed such an image in both the neighbourhood and the university helped me to win some people's trust, others respect and neutralise the hostility of many. Because as a teacher I was suspected less than a businessman to exploit locals economically and sexually.

Trust has its own economy. I won only the trust of a limited numbers of people in the neighbourhood where I lived and in the university where I taught. Gulnara at the university and Aleksander at the neighbourhood (see chapter 3) and some other people who are quoted or introduced in the course of this dissertation were among such people. Indeed, these people provided me with in-depth information on the post-Soviet change and more importantly introduced me to their friends and relatives and let me into their lives. Once won, the trust needed to be furthered. This was particularly required for getting access to some reliable information on people's networking

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<sup>4</sup> They called me an English spy, because I had told them that I was doing my dissertation in London University.



practices ( described in chapter 3). As I describe in chapter 3 people keep strictly secret information on their exchanges within networks, from others, because of the fear that they may be blackmailed (see Chapter 3 on *blat* ).

### ***Multi-sited field-work***

The fact that the daily practices of those people with whom I had established trusting relations were located in different places and I followed them, if not to all, to a good number of such places gave a multi-sited character to my field work practice. Related to this I defined the field, as a network of places linked to each other either through actual movement of people within and between them or through the meaning they invested in them. A neighbourhood, a university, a shop floor in a factory, two villages, a cafe, a club and some other places were some important elements of such networks. The neighbourhood was the central node in this network, because people from it were involved in all other places.

The significance of multi - sited field - work has been highlighted recently by a number of anthropologists (Marcus 1995; Gupta & Ferguson 1997; Hastrup & Olwig 1997). Indeed, this kind of field - work has been related to such recent conceptualisations of the dynamic of social relations as post-modernity, compression of time-space, transnationalism, deterritorialisation, post-fordism and so forth (Marcus 1995). It is argued that either the object of study moves between and within several places, or that the different dimensions of the same phenomena under study are spatially located in or the same dimensions are present, differently in different places (Hannerz 1992a). Marcus argues that under the post-modern condition multi-sited ethnography is necessary not only to study a moving object but to construct its global context. Gupta and Ferguson advocate an ethnography of shifting sites, combined with an attentiveness to cultural, political and social changes. Hastrup & Olwig, while attentive to the relevance of multi-sited ethnography for the contemporary world, emphasise that not all sites have an equal value for ethnographic studies. They suggest that anthropologists should focus primarily on cultural sites which function as the symbols of identity. For example, Olwig (1997: 20 -26) reports that In New Haven, the second or third generation of migrants from the Caribbean island of Nevis, descendants of a common ancestor, own commonly a piece small land in the island where "the family house" is build. She argues, that while the migrants are strongly attached to the land, such feelings stems from the fact that land is considered a symbol of identification rather than an economic resource.

While agreeing that recent change has given a new urgency to multi-sited ethnography, I would argue that such ethnography is demanded by the multi-sited spatial practice of urban dwellers in general, rather than globalisation and the so called post-modern condition *per se*. Because of the modern division of labour goods and services are produced, transported and consumed in different spaces by different people. As a result, individuals in their daily lives move within and between several spaces, crossing thresholds in and out. Such thresholds could be borders of a state, the door of the office of a bureaucrat, a private residence, a bar or a bus. Negotiating different rituals and rules of arrival, inclusion, enclosure and departure people establish social relations within and between such places. From this follows that culture as a dimension of social interaction is distributed differently with regard to place (Appadurai 1997; Hannerz 1992b; Keesing 1987; Mitchell 1987). The multi-sited fieldwork offers a prerequisite means for studying such a distributive aspect.

Although, I was well aware of the idea of the distributive dimension of culture, this awareness did not motivate me in doing a multi-sited field-work, I was rather pushed towards such a method by the multi-sited practice of people whom I studied. However, I found the method very useful for looking at the distributive dimension of ethnic relations and networking practices. Another advantage was that moving around provided me with first hand knowledge of the wider context of ongoing change in the city.

The disadvantage of such fieldwork was that it could lead to unfocused research and I could lose sight of the depth of social relations. From the very beginning I was aware of such a danger. I tried to solve the problem by focusing thematically and spatially. Thematically, after six months I analysed my data and extracted the main themes which are described in this dissertation. I devoted the next nine months of my stay to exploring these themes in any social location I happened to be with people with whom I had relations in depth. Indeed, multi-sited-field work proved to be a very useful tool for such purpose, because, it provided an opportunity for a cross-spatial translation and comparison of events and phenomena (Marcus 1995). I tried to examine the important questions and phenomena which emerged in a particular place, in other places as well.

Spatially, while moving around with people to different places I tried to focus my main attention on the neighbourhood where I lived. After the neighbourhood the university where I taught became very important. Among the other places, a factory shop floor, which I visited two days a week for four months was the the most significant one. As

the University was dominated by Kazakhs and the factory by Russians I used them for cross-ethnic comparison of networking practices. Below I describe these three places very briefly. Descriptions do not exhaust all aspects of the places but focus on particular dimensions which are more relevant to the themes explored in this dissertation.

### ***The neighbourhood***

As I want to conceal the identity of the neighbourhood under study, I will not use the real names of the streets but mark them with letters. The marked area was the place I usually interacted with people. The area consisted of residential houses, five kiosks, three shops, and an illegal market, a cafe-bar, a restaurant and a culture house (*dom kul'tury*).

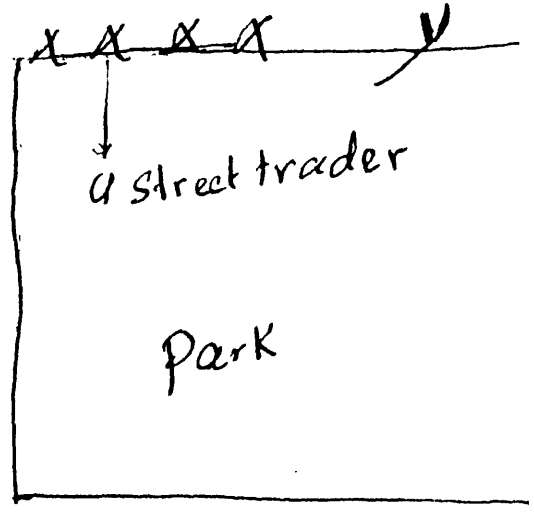
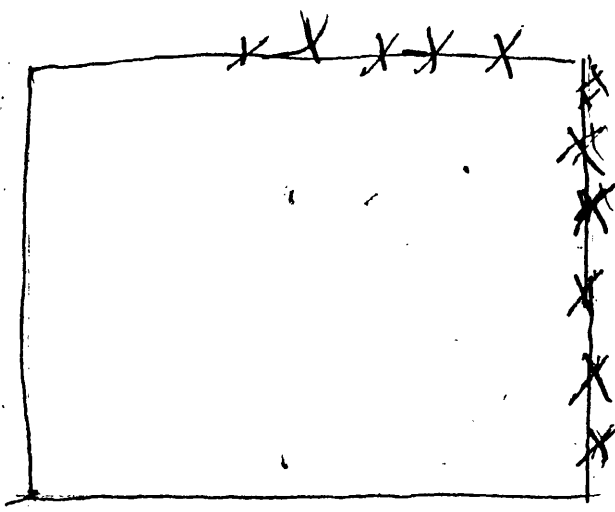
There were three types of residential houses each built in a different historical period. The first type, built during 1930s and earlier, consisted of a row of 13 one story houses, the owners were Russians. As far as the modern infrastructures were concerned, these houses were only granted electricity and sewerage. Because of their lack of central heating, central gas, hot water and telephone lines, they were not popular. Most of the owners had rented rooms to Kazakh or Tadjik migrants, mainly street traders.

After Almaty became the capital of Kazakhstan (1929), it underwent considerable expansion and modernisation. The new yellow houses built in the 1950s marked the new status of the city. These houses, which were four or five storied houses, had amenities which the first houses lacked. The state shop, opened in 1962, was a shopping centre not only for our neighbourhood, but for other neighbourhoods as well. These houses, which were given in 1950s to those who worked as state and party functionaries, were now inhabited by their children or grand children. Unlike the first group of houses Kazakhs constituted a considerable number of the owners.

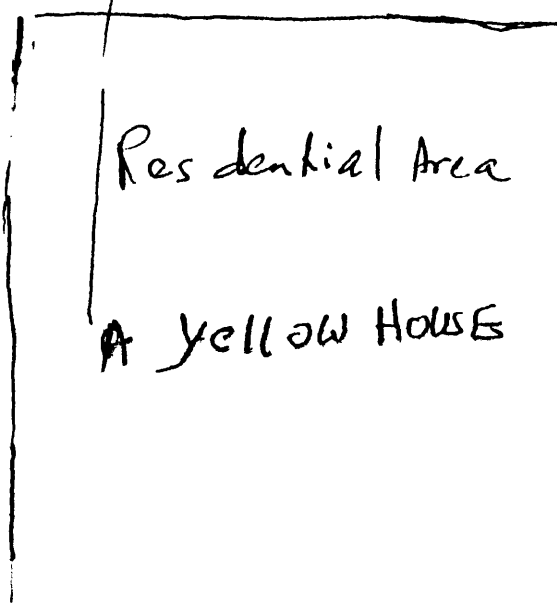
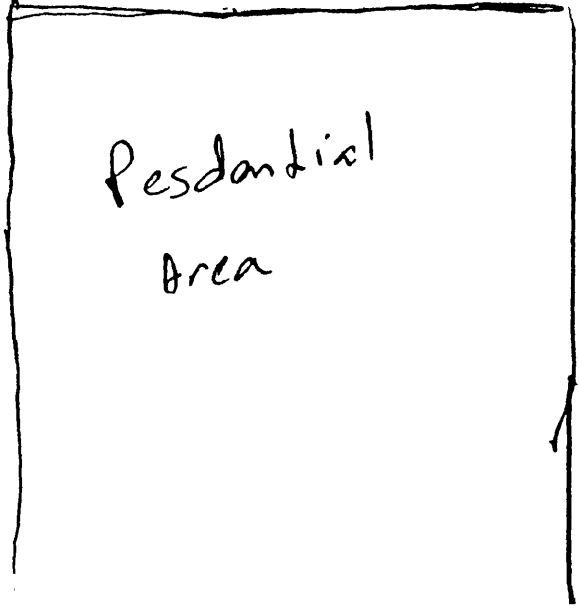
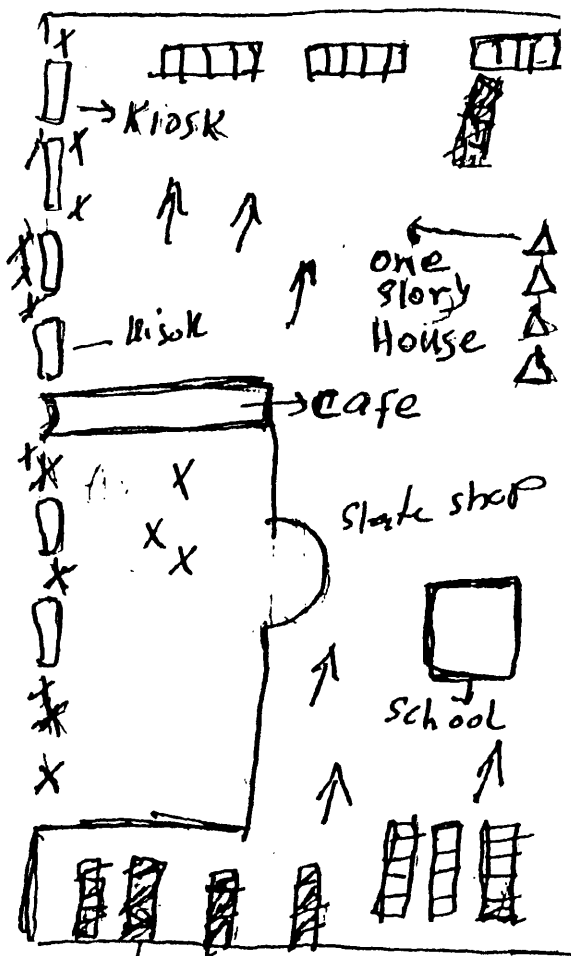
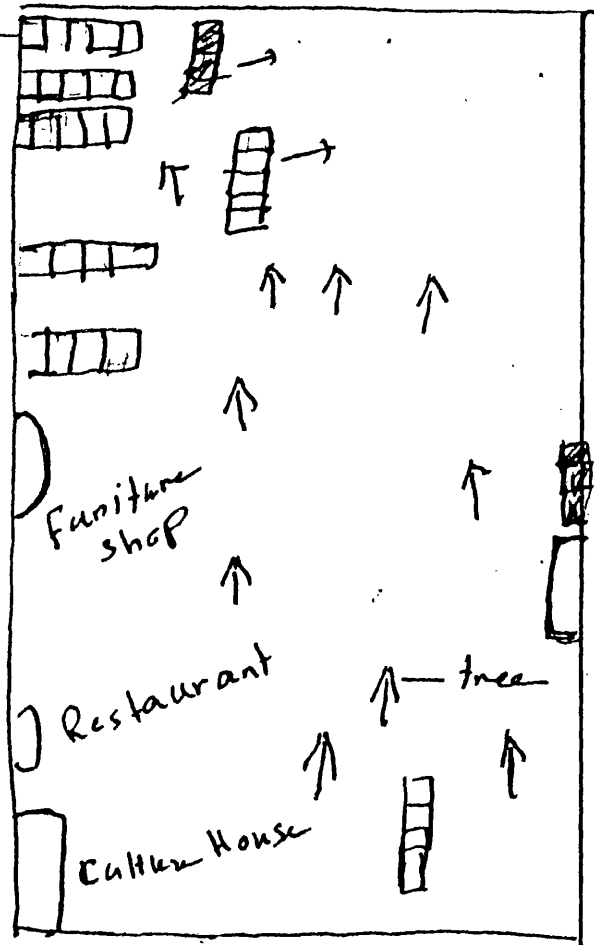
Until late 1960s the overwhelming part of the space now built up was undeveloped, in the 1960s and early 70s the majority of buildings, the third type of houses, were built. These houses, which were called Khrushchev houses (*khrushchevskii doma*), were five storied cement houses. Most of these buildings were given to different organisations, which in their turn distributed them to their own staff. Although Russians made up a considerable portion of the owners of these houses, they came from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

The residents in the neighbourhood were mainly workers in industrial

A Khrushchev House



< NEIGHBOURHOOD >



C

enterprises like the energy sector, furniture factories and machine industry, but other residents were teachers, university lecturers, police and army personnel, clerks and traders. Most of the people in the neighbourhood considered themselves poor, five families considered themselves average, of which two were considered rich by others. A considerable number of extremely poor (*bomzhy*) people, most of whom were Russian alcoholics or Gypsies or Tadjik and Uzbek female beggars, were present in the neighbourhood.

The ethnic combination of the neighbourhood was very complex. I could not map it exactly because 42 families refused to answer my questions or did not open the doors. Although most of those who opened their doors and did not answer my questions had Mongolian features, it was impossible for me to know about their ethnicity<sup>5</sup>.

From the families who answered my questions and other enquiries the following picture emerges :

Ethnicity	the number of families
Chechen	1
Cherkes-Ukrainean	1
Dungan	1
German	2
Georgians	1
Greek-Uigur	1
Jewish	2
Kazakh	15
Korean	3
Polish	2
Russians from Russian ancestors	20
Russians from mixed Russian and non-Russian ancestors	13

<sup>5</sup> As they were not willing to answer my questions themselves, I did not ask other people questions about them.

Russian -Armenian	1
Russian-Chinese	1
Russian - Irish <sup>6</sup>	1
Russian-Kazakh	2
Russian-Tatar	3
Russian- Ukrainian	17
Russian - Belorussian	12
Russian-German	1
Russian -Polish	1
Russian - Jewish	2
Russian-Uigur	1
Tatar	2
Tatar - Kazakh	1
Uigur	4
Ukrainian - Kazakh	1
Uzbek - Jewish	1
Uigur -Kazakh	1
Ukrainian	2
Unknown	42
<hr/>	
Total	167 <sup>7</sup>

These figures reflect only the owners of the apartments and not all their inhabitants. A considerable number of migrant Kazakhs who were tenants are not reflected in these figures.

Up to 1992 the neighbourhood had preserved the shape it took in the 1970s. Since then it has changed with five new kiosks, a restaurant, a shashlyk bar, a furniture shop, a food shop and the illegal street market. As a result of this development, many different goods from different countries are available in the neighbourhood. Even the state shop offers foreign goods, although a considerable part of its goods are still local ones.

Parallel with changes in physical appearance, the neighbourhood has undergone deep demographic and social change. The most dramatic demographic change is related to emigration of non-Kazakhs and immigration of rural Kazakhs. As far as I could map it out, 28 families had left the neighbourhood since 1986. The

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<sup>6</sup> According to an Irish man I met in Almaty, until 1985 there were an Irish community of ten thousand people in Kazakhstan. After perestroika most of the Irish migrated to America. According to him these Irish were descendants of Irishmen who deserted the British army then helping the Whites against Bolsheviks during the civil war (1918 - 1921). In 1930s, like many other ethnic groups, they were exiled by Stalin to Kazakhstan.

<sup>7</sup> Although, this figure does not represents the exact number of the families who lived in the neighbourhood, but the number of those I asked about their ethnicity, the two figures according to my estimation do not differ dramatically.

following table shows the destinations and the numbers of the emigrant families .

Destination	Number of families
Australia	1
Canada	1
Germany	2
Greece	1
Israel	2
Russia	17
Ukraine	4
Total	28

The in-migration of Kazakhs into the neighbourhood was a considerable phenomena, although it was impossible for me to determine the exact number I could estimate their number around 100 individuals, most of whom were young couples or single young men.

The social change in the neighbourhood was signified by the emergence of free trade, the presence of foreigners and foreign goods, poverty, unemployment, prostitution, suicide, hooliganism, the steel doors and the emergence of new religious sects .

Free trade was regarded in an ambivalent way. While it had solved the endemic shortage problem most people described it as an immoral and parasitic way of making a living, alien to their soviet scientific and industrial life. In spite of such derogatory attitudes, most families were involved with trade in one way or another.

The presence of foreigners and foreign goods was considered a dramatic change and was the object of identity politics (see chapter 5). Although there were foreign students in the Soviet era, foreign visitors to Almaty, they were kept in the student hostels or intourist hotels isolated from the local populations. Now, there were many foreigners who lived in or visited the neighbourhood. In addition to myself, five Iranians and two Indians were living in the neighbourhood. Moreover, the neighbourhood was frequently visited by South Korean and American missionaries. Every Sunday afternoon they hired the neighbourhood's culture house and held rituals there.

Poverty, unemployment, prostitution and a surge in suicide, almost unknown in

the Soviet era, all were of considerable concern to the neighbourhood during my stay there.

Another dramatic social change had been the emergence of hooliganism and the disintegration of the neighbourhood as a moral community. According to most people, most houses celebrated collectively occasions such as New Years Eve, the Eighth of March, and the First of May. Moreover, their doors were often open for each other and they invited each other frequently. Such celebrations and close relations had ceased to exist. Because of poverty, people could not afford to provide food and drinks for such parties now, and they did not trust each other as before. Indeed, each person I met warned me of the dangers the others might pose me. The fact that almost half of the front doors in the neighbourhood were changed from wooden to metal ones shows people's fear of each other. Such fears were intensified by the presence of hooligans in the neighbourhood. Some hooligans lived in the neighbourhood, others visited the neighbourhood cafe and the third group made raids into the neighbourhood. There were often some fights in the neighbourhood, or late noisy comings and goings by hooligans. These were according to locals, a post-Soviet phenomenon as well.

These changes had brought the following new social categories in the neighbourhood life: Illegal street traders (*torgashi*), suit - case traders(*chelnoki*), private kiosk and shop owners, foreigners (*inostrantsy*), prostitutes, migrants, hooligans and the dispossessed.

Illegal street traders traded along street C between streets X and Y. They were local women and Kazakh migrants (both men and women). They sold similar goods: vegetables, fruits, cigarettes, wine, matches, pasta, beer and so forth. The interesting thing about these traders was that competition was not between individuals but between groups. Firstly, urban inhabitants and migrant Kazakhs were jealous of each other. Secondly within this larger framework smaller groups compete with each other. Usually two to four women, who were friends or neighbours, or a group of rural Kazakh men and women, who were relatives or came from the same village, sold things beside each other. Not only was there no sense of competition between individuals within these smaller groups but they tried to sell things for each other. This was important because each trader had a particular number of customers who bought goods exclusively from her/him and to whom s/he sometimes gave goods on credit. For example, if a man asked a trader for vodka and s/he did not have it, she would not let him go. Instead s/he would refer him to a friend beside her/him who had vodka. On



the other hand, if a trader ran out of a particular good, her friends would lend her some items at the purchase price.

The new social relations formed around the street trade brought about radical structural change in the neighbourhood. Firstly, it created a tension between old inhabitants and migrant Kazakhs, the main body of the street traders, a continuous tension the main dimensions of which will be explored in chapter (6). Secondly, the illegal street trade provoked a new form of surveillance by the police. As the trade was illegal, the police took bribes from traders and frequently made raids on the market. In addition, the trade established new relations between the urban inhabitants of the neighbourhood as sellers and buyers.

The five kiosks in the neighbourhood were run by a combination of family work force and wage labourers. The two largest were owned by Kazakhs. A very small one was owned by a Russian/Tatar, a medium one by a Russian and a bread kiosk by an Azarbaejani. The employees in three of the kiosks came from the same ethnic group as the employers. The other two had a core of employees from their own ethnic group but sometimes employed others. However, they knew the employees personally or recruited them through friends and relatives.

As with the street trade, a new set of social relations within and outside the neighbourhood was formed around the kiosks, shops, the restaurant and the cafe-bar. Within the neighbourhood network of relations had been created between the owners of the kiosks and the neighbourhood inhabitants. For example, the owner of a Kiosk with whom I had established a good relationship showed me a list of 14 people to whom he gave goods on credit. He had learned the tastes of many customers and kept their favourite alcoholic drinks cold in the fridge, and because of that they bought exclusively from him. Moreover, a group of men, a drinking circle which will be described in chapter 3, had formed around his kiosk. The establishment of interpersonal relations between sellers and buyers, and provision of goods on credit were important elements of commerce in the neighbourhood. I personally bought on credit from three kiosks and the shashlyk bar. In addition to creating new relations within the neighbourhood, the kiosks linked the neighbourhood to wholesale shops on the one hand and different authorities mentioned in chapter 2 on the other.

The restaurant and the shashlyk bar created new places for meeting between local men, but they were also places where hooligans met and fought each other and terrorised others.

## ***The University***

The university was a ten minutes walk away from the neighbourhood. It had two buildings which included of offices, classrooms, two libraries and a canteen. The total teaching, administrative and technical staff amounted to around 100 persons, mostly teachers. There were around 4000 students.

Around 75 % of staff and almost all senior staff were Kazakhs. The rector was a male Kazakh Academician but most other staff were women. The same was true of students: they were 75% Kazakhs and overwhelmingly female.

The students were admitted in two ways: either by an entry test or paying fees. Those who scored five from all subjects were admitted free of charge. And then the university admitted all those who were able to pay the high admission fees of around \$ 5000. Students came from both Almaty and the rest of the country. The majority of students came from well off and influential families, although some students from poor families had been admitted because of their excellent performance in the entrance exams.

The teachers salary varied from department to department. In the most prestigious department, the department of international relations, a professor earned \$150-200 a month and lecturer around \$ 70. In the department of Russian language a lecturer earned \$30 a month. The salaries were paid regularly, but in the second half of the year half of the salaries were withdrawn and devoted to repairing the university buildings. Students, depending on their marks, received between \$15 -20 per month.

Each department had a Russian section and a Kazakh section. In the Russian section the language of instruction was Russian and the students had to come from Russian high schools.<sup>8</sup> In the Kazakh section the language of instruction was meant to be Kazakh and the students were meant to have come from Kazakh high schools<sup>9</sup>. But in practice, in both sections the language of instruction was Russian, and many students who studied in the Kazakh section had come from Russian schools. And while in the Kazakh section all students were Kazakh in the Russian section more than half were Kazakh as well.

The University was founded in the 1940s. It had very good teaching staff from the very beginning, due to the movement of Ukrainian, Belorussian and Russian university teachers to Kazakhstan during the second world war. After the war some of them chose to stay in Almaty. In my department the oldest member of staff was a Russian who had come from Leningrad during the 1940s. According to some teachers

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<sup>8</sup> High schools in which the language of instruction is Russian.

<sup>9</sup> The language of instruction Kazakh.

who had left the university, its standards were comparable with those of universities in Moscow and Leningrad.

During late 1970s and early 1980s the process of Kazakhification began. First with student admissions. Preferential quotas for Kazakhs ensured that 60 % of students were Kazakhs, although they were about 35% of the population. Until 1988 non-Kazakh dominated among the staff. Then most of them were replaced by Kazakhs. Many teachers who commanded foreign languages had left the university because their salaries were not sufficient for survival, and worked for foreigners, who had come to Almaty since 1990, as translators. Others had left for Israel or Russia. The general pressure to Kazakhify the university after 1986 was also a very important factor in pushing out non-Kazakhs from the university. As result at the time of my field - work the majority of staff member were Kazakhs.

A fall in the level of education and further Kazakhification in the university were the two main post Soviet changes. Other changes were the abolition of the communist party apparatus in the university; the reorientation of the education towards business, tourism, international relations, and ethnicity; and the establishment of transnational relations.

The abolition of the communist party had occurred as a result of the disintegration of the USSR, not any demand or acute struggle at the level of the university. It seemed to me that in spite of this abolition things were managed as in the past, because nobody even mentioned the abolition as a significant event, either in a negative or positive sense. Although the holders of the higher posts have been replaced, many teachers and students were of the opinion that old procedures were preserved and intensified.

To accommodate the post-soviet change the university had established a new department of International relations, of which I was a member. Although the main aim of this department was to supply personnel for the foreign ministry and embassies abroad, it included business and tourism as important additional subjects. Business and tourism were among the most popular subjects, because they were assumed to help in making money. Another subject which had been created was "ethno-psychology" in which mainly Kazakh "traditional" material culture and knowledge about Kazakhs Zhuz and tribes were taught. This was certainly an ideological aspect of the Kazakhification of the University.

Besides the Kazakhification of the university, the most remarkable change was the new relations that the university, its staff and students had established with foreign

institutions, multinationals, politicians and businessmen. The American company Chevron and the Belgian Traktebel were among those who donated money to my department, thanks to the contacts of the head of the department who had earlier worked for their managers as an interpreter. The university had a well established contact with Tacis. The Tacis official visited two times during my stay at the university, and one week the university hosted a professor and lecturer sent by Tacis who delivered lectures on tourism and business. Moreover, Tacis sent teachers from the university to the U.K for one month and to Belgium for nine. The British council arranged shorter courses for students in Almaty.

In addition the university invited dignitaries from foreign embassies on different occasions, including American, German, French and Indian diplomats. Moreover, the university had, besides me, five foreign teachers: two Iranians, a Turk, a Pakistani and a German. Both the Turk and the Pakistani were Islamic missionaries. It had also a number of foreign students from Iran and Turkey.

The most attractive relations for students, and to lesser degree for teachers, were those with foreign businessmen. A considerable number of students worked for such business men as interpreters and secretaries. Some of my female students asked me if I had acquaintances among foreign business men to whom I could introduce them. Indeed, they tried to establish contacts with foreign business men by visiting the International business club (described in chapter 4), business centres and exhibitions. Some of them wanted work, others tried to find husbands or lovers. In spite of this multitude of relations, people considered the foreign influence in very contradictory ways. Among the staff, the higher echelons looked to America as the model for the future; lower down the scale staff were suspicious of foreign influence, particularly American. Among the majority of students, who mostly came from well off families, everything Western, particularly American, was very popular. However, a considerable number of students, mainly from poorer families, praised "their Soviet culture" and dismissed Americanism as a superficial and meaningless way of life. Indeed their attitudes on this matter were close to those of the majority of people in the neighbourhood and workers on the shop floor.

### ***The factory shop floor***

Some people who lived in the neighbourhood worked in the factory. I conducted field work on the shop floor of a furniture factory with a work force of around 5000. It had been founded in the 1930s and since then had been expanded

continuously until the recent recession. From the late 1970s until the recession, the factory provided furniture not only to Kazakhstan but to parts of Russia and the other Central Asian republics. As a result of new economic policies implemented in the 1990s, the factory, previously owned by the state, had been transformed into a cooperative (*Aktsionernoe obshchestvo*) in which both management and workers held shares. In spite of this the workers and some who worked in the administration considered the abolition of state ownership as immoral and catastrophic. Firstly, they thought that in the Soviet era their factory was funded by the government and provided with machines and raw materials, and its products were distributed centrally. But now the factory was short of money. Secondly, workers had been employed for life, their salaries had been paid on time and they had enjoyed a whole range of privileges provided by the factory.

Although the factory was in a better shape than many others, it did not work at full capacity. In the shop floor where I worked, some workers did not come to work two or three days a week and many others were on unpaid leave. The reason for this was that in spite of considerable market demand for new furniture, those people, who could afford to buy furniture, were more inclined to buy imported furniture. The factory bartered furniture for food and other goods with state shops and other factories, who paid several months of their staff salaries in furniture. Then the management tried to convince workers to take the bartered goods as their salary, but the workers rejected this and so had not received their salary for six months.

The factory consisted of an administrative part, a production line, a shop and a canteen. The canteen was used by both workers and clerks; even the director of the factory ate in the canteen.

The production line consisted of 8 sections (*tsekh*). I chose to do field work in section eight because it was less noisy, as most of the work was done by hand. The work in this section was to complete the product by polishing, repairing the defects, fixing edges and many other small things. This section had 25 workers, 12 men and 13 women. Among the men two were Uigur and the rest Russians and among the women three were Kazakhs and the rest Russians. However, among the Russians very few were only of Russian descent, but they called themselves Russians (*Russkii*).

The big difference between the factory and the university was that in the university the majority of staff and students were Kazakh women and in the factory the majority were Russians men. Even in the administration and management, the non-Kazakhs dominated. The Director was a Tatar and his deputy a Russian. Although

there were Kazakhs in the administration, they were not part of the hegemonic clique.

Another difference between the two places was that in the university both staff and students had mixed feelings about the post soviet change, on the factory shop floor all workers strongly denounced it. They considered privatisation to be theft, showed a strong Soviet patriotism and strongly denounced the new consumerist culture. Moreover, there was a high degree of class identification among workers. These were reflected in statements like, “bosses exploit the working class” (expressed almost by all workers); “The working class are the best people” (expressed by a Kazakh woman, 50 years old, who had worked the whole of her life in the factory); “We working class produce the wealth” (expressed by almost all workers); “ Give our greetings to the English working class” (expressed by an old Russian worker).

Both the division of labour and communication were gendered on the shop floor. The person in the charge in the section was a woman whose husband was an ordinary worker there. Apart from this the women complained that men left the dirty jobs like painting for them. Men usually worked with machines and performed largely fixed duties which were related to the final finishing of the product. Women moved around and performed diverse duties. During lunch time and breaks all women gathered in the women’s room and shared whatever they had. Men ate their lunches individually and chatted in the smaller groups of two or three. Few men used the canteen as they found the food both expensive and of a low quality.

While workers were conscious of ethnic differences, for them ethnicity was subordinated to class. This was expressed to me by both men and women. In the women’s room usually Kazakhs and Russians spoke to me of each other as “we” and “them”, but in a very friendly manner. Among the Russian men the working class identity was related very closely to their ethnic identity. I was frequently reminded that Russians were work-loving people (*trudoliubivye liudi*), that Russians belonged to the working class (*Russkii rabochii klass*). This was illustrated by the old worker who sent greetings to the English working class. The day I told them goodbye he said: “Tell the world that we Russians are hardworking (*truzheniki*); We have built this country; We work in Chechenya and elsewhere. We are not murderers, we are not colonisers, we are simple people.”

### **Some comments on the main terms: A theory of chaos**

In this section I try to clarify the meanings and the contexts of the main terms used in this dissertation by reviewing the relevant literature. These terms are: chaos,

the dispossessed, networking, sexual strategies and ethnic tensions. I will try to outline a theory for understanding of the current chaos by discussing these terms. Most of what I say in this section are results of this research, and thus according to conventions should be included in the concluding chapter. However, I came to these conclusions before starting to write the thesis. Although I have been very careful to avoid any application of the rule of the Procrustean bed these conclusions have influenced significantly the construction of the thesis. So I present them here as the theoretical backgrounds of the thesis. In additions to this, I present the local notions of these terms.

These terms correspond to particular dimensions of class, gender and ethnic relations. Here, I will outline very briefly my general theoretical approaches towards these concepts. I argue that such “identities” are negotiated interchangeably in the daily practices of power/resistance (Glick Schiller *et al* 1992; Low 1997). So hegemony is a key term for understanding the relation between different identities in a particular situation. The changes in the global economy and states are instrumental in the shaping of the local struggles for hegemony (Glick Shchiller *et al* op.cit.; Low op.cit.; Gledhill 1996; Castells 1996, 1997, 1998).

In the light of this general orientation I look at the terms below. The literature referred to is very selective and consist only of the most significant works pertinent to the terms mentioned above theoretically or ethnographically.<sup>10</sup>

## **Chaos**

In short what people call chaos, comprises the following inter-related processes of the post - soviet political, economic and social change : the chaotic mode of domination; the expropriation of public wealth by the dominant groups through such a mode of domination; the disintegration of society into networks; and the disintegration of the Soviet apparatuses of reproduction such as sexual morality and communist ideology; and the rise of ethnic tensions.

### **Chaotic mode of domination**

The political dimension of this chaos is a chaotic mode of domination, a situation which is created by the ruling elite in response to the current “crisis of hegemony” (Gramsci 1971). According to Gramsci (*ibid*) such a crisis happens in a

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<sup>10</sup> I have read widely the comparative and theoretical literature on these topics which I have reviewed elsewhere (Rigi 1995). Because of the matter of space I am not able to reproduce that review here but I mention the reviewed works in the bibliography.

situation where the whole old system is socially, economically and ideologically in crisis, while the revolutionary forces are absent or not strong enough to transform the system into a new one. This crisis is expressed primarily on the level of political and ideological representations. The traditional political parties lose their support and legitimacy, the old common sense is broken, and the ruling classes lose their moral and cultural influence on the population. In such a situation the old ruling groups, who have better cadres and much more experience, reorganise their forces in new guises. Fascism, Gramsci says, was such a device, through which landlords and large industrialists rearranged their forces by manipulating middle class prejudices.

Poulantzas (1983), discussing the Gramsci's concept of crisis of hegemony, argues that fascism is only one form of the exceptional states which may emerge as a response to the crisis of hegemony. While arguing that such forms are contingent upon particular historical conjunctures, Poulantzas distinguished empirically three forms of such states: Fascism, Bonapartism and Dictatorship. I would like to add to his list the chaotic mode of domination which has emerged as a response to the crisis of hegemony in the post-Soviet republics and elsewhere in the former Soviet block. From this point of view the chaotic mode of domination is a way the former communist elites rearranged their forces not only to keep but to extend their power and privileges. The domination in this context is contrasted to hegemony which is achieved through ideological and moral influence and leadership.

In the early 1980s Soviet society entered in a deep crisis of hegemony. This crisis expressed itself in moral corruption, the prevalence of cynicism, expansion of the second economy, loss of the ideological authority of the communist party, alcoholism and lack of discipline in work places, economic stagnation, high rate of divorce and rebellion of the youth against the Soviet life style.

In order to renew their hegemony the most sensitive part of the elite launched perestroika under Gorbachev's leadership. As Kagarlitsky (1988) observed there were two general opposed expectations of perestroika and glasnost. Workers and radical groups expected that they should result in socialist democracy while the elite wanted a transformation to capitalism. The workers and radical groups failed to become a political force capable of significantly influencing events<sup>11</sup>. On the other hand the elite failed to unite around a common platform. It was fractured along two general lines: conservative / reformists on the one hand and centre / periphery on the other. While both conservative and reformist agreed on transition to a market economy they differed

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<sup>11</sup> For a story of this failure see Kagarlitsky (1990).



with respect to the pace deemed appropriate for such a transition. The conflict between centre and periphery acquired primarily an ethnic character. While two Caucasian republics (Georgia and Armenia,) and the three Baltic republics plus Moldova wanted to secede the rest demanded greater political and economic autonomy from the centre. Indeed, these two conflicts were locked into each other, as a consequence of the fact that the conservative resisted the demands of periphery for more autonomy and reformists, while opposing secessionist tendencies, agreed to concede a higher degree of autonomy to the periphery. The intensification of these two conflicts led to the failed coup in August 1991 and the subsequent dissolution of the USSR in December of the same year by Yeltsin and the leaders of Ukraine and Belorussia.

The chaotic mode of domination which emerged as result of the processes of disintegration of the USSR had two main phases: 1987 - 1992; and 1992 onwards.

The first one was characterised by the disintegration of Soviet society as a moral community into networks of influence on the one hand and networks of survival on the other (1987 - 1992). During this phase the central planing, central distribution of goods and credits had collapsed. The communist party, Komsomol, KGB, MVD, the army and cultural/ideological apparatus were disorganised. The centre did not exert any authority over the periphery. The local and regional elites reorganised themselves in multiple networks of influence which acted independently of the centre (Humphrey 1991). Humphrey, who reported on such situation in provincial Russia (1991), described these decentralised power networks as 'suzerainties'. As Humphrey (ibid) illustrates, a main feature of chaos was the enormous illegal and quasi-criminal power that the collapse of the centre bestowed upon these regional and local networks, whose spheres of influence often overlapped. Acting arbitrarily, they negotiated their relation through the use of violence, exchange of bribes, tributes and favours. In doing so they spread violence, cynicism and corruption in all spheres of social life . Those who created these networks were the political and managerial elite, the black marketeers and the newly emerged mafia. An important element of this process was the disintegration of the welfare state. Those lower-down the social scale built their survival networks, creating new forms of moral communities (see chapter 3).

The second phase has been marked by the emergence of post-Soviet governmental institutions in independent Kazakhstan and the forging of a new balance of power between the holders of high offices in government institutions on the one hand and members of the networks of influence on the other.

The reinforcement of state institutions subordinated the networks of influence to state officials but did not eliminate them. State officials became supervisors/arbiters vis-a-vis these networks. From now on the chaotic mode of dominance was characterised by the intertwined over-centralised arbitrariness of the state officials on the one hand and centrifugal and anarchic arbitrariness of the members of different informal networks of influence on the other. The ways these two levels of arbitrariness are imposed on the population, articulated and adjusted to each other and also the tensions between them are significant elements of what people call chaos. The chaos is exacerbated by the fact that the gaps left by these two type of arbitrariness are filled by the violence of numerous groups of unruly hooligans (see Chapter 2).

This form of dominance is a result of the fact that the resistance of the democratic forces puts a limit centralised arbitrariness of officials of the government. This means that in spite of the fact that the main formal political power is concentrated in the hands of an authoritarian president, he cannot rule as a dictator. The president has subordinated the parliament (*mejles*) and judiciary and his decrees replace the law in many cases (Bremmer & Welt 1996; Olcott 1997). Moreover, as Olcott (*ibid*: 107) put it :

..Nazarbaev also has a broad spectrum of informal or extra-legal powers which accrue from his years in the communist party hierarchy, and from the years which his constituents spent as Soviet subjects. The president has a staff of several hundred who can conduct informal interventions or offer necessary persuasion in situation where the more formal powers are inadequate, or might work too slowly.

Presidential rule provides the general background for the arbitrariness of the state officials. However, such arbitrariness is challenged by the remnants of the democratic forces, which came to the fore during Gorbachev's glasnost (openness). In parallel with the disintegration of the Soviet state grew a plethora of free associations, free political parties, INGOs, free press, free opinions. The attitudes of the post-Soviet elite towards these forces is ambivalent. On the one hand the ruling elite has tried to curb this democratic space through closing the oppositional press, harassing journalists and leaders of oppositional political parties, fraud in elections (Bremmer & Welt 1996: 185 - 193). Such measures have been challenged by the oppositional forces<sup>12</sup>. On the other hand the regime needs a facade of democracy in order to introduce itself as a democratic break with the Soviet totalitarian regime. Thus it tolerates the activities of

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<sup>12</sup> Kazakhstan Economic Trends reports "A number of Kazakh opposition groups, including "Azamat", the communist party, the labour movement, prepares the establishment of a so-called "people front". The co-chairman of the opposition movement "Azamat", Mr. G. Abyseitov, accuses the government of rolling back democratic reforms and establishing a totalitarian regime in the Republic" (April - June 1998:70).

NGOs in so far as they do not interfere with the business of state officials and their networks. This imposes a limit on the formal arbitrariness of the regime. As result the regime is neither a dictatorship nor a democratic one, it is an authoritarian regime limited by democratic forces. Indeed, the networks of influence extend the arbitrariness of the elite beyond the limits placed on formal power by democratic forces. Such networks, bolstered by state officials, are often involved in illegal deals in the economic sphere.

### ***Tribalism?***

Many of the local intellectuals in Kazakhstan, most notably Masanov (1996a, personal communication with the author) see this mode of dominance as a revival of Kazakh tribalism. It is argued that Kazakhs lack a tradition of statehood. Under the Tsarist and the Soviet era while subordinated to the centre they preserved their three tribal confederations (*Zhuz*) during the Soviet time (Poliakov 1992; Masanov: *ibid*). Since independence, it is claimed, the Kazakh government has been an alliance of these three *Zhuz* rather than a modern state. The competition for power between the three *Zhuz* create the current chaos and disorder.

The tribalism theory is questionable on three grounds. Firstly, although the Kazakh elite regional division coincide with the old *Zhuz* divisions, the *Zhuz* no longer exist as a form of social organisation but only as a myth. Although every Kazakh I spoke to is conscious of belonging to one of the three *Zhuz* or Chengisid or Khoje outside these *Zhuz*, these divisions were neither important for friendship nor marriage which are the cornerstones of networking (see chapter 3). The students, teachers, academic staff and street traders were indifferent to and unaware of the *Zhuz* of their fellows. *Zhuz* hierarchies and *Zhuz* mobilisation mechanisms have ceased to exist. Secondly, members of the Kazakh elite and intelligentsia whom I met were far more sophisticated in their modern and global political and social orientation than their Russian counter-parts in Kazakhstan. To suggest that these people still manage their relations according to the old patronage codes of conduct of sultans, khans and bias is to ignore a century of modernization that the Kazakh community has gone through.

Thirdly, chaotic domination is not restricted to Kazakhstan; Russia and other post-Soviet republics without tribal backgrounds have experienced similar situations.

### ***A return to feudalism or the advent of wild capitalism?***

In a much broader sense such duality of power structures is a common feature of most

of the so called post-socialist societies (Verdery 1996a).

Verdery (ibid) considers this duality a return to a type of feudalism (ibid). True enough, the anarchistic nature of the patronage networks of the elite combined with authoritarian state officials as their arbiters, who use arbitrary methods, including violence for the expropriation of wealth, make the post-Socialist systems of power similar to feudalism. However, the metaphor fails to capture the complex ways in which these mechanism have become a part of late global capitalism. Thus, in this respect it seems to me that the local metaphor of wild capitalism, mentioned earlier, is a much more suitable notion.

Not only did the Soviet block disintegrate into the present state of affairs under financial, military, technological and ideological pressures of advanced capitalism (Verdery: ibid, Castells 1998), it also became a target of the imperialistic dominance of the latter (Gowan 1996).

As Gowan argues (ibid) Western powers under the supervision of the IMF, the WB and the main Western powers, mainly the USA and Germany, succeeded in transforming the former Soviet block into a market for their own goods at the cost of the latter's industry and agriculture. The expansion of NATO eastward, involvement of Western advisors, speculators, multi-nationals, oil barons, sex tourists, sex industry, banking systems and money laundering, mafia, missionaries, spies, financiers are a few of the many signs of the West's active intervention in the post-soviet change.

The case of Kazakhstan is an illustrative example. It is a country which followed IMF policies. In 1997 there were 1,388 joint ventures and foreign firms in the republic (Diugai 1998: 27). Multi-nationals such as Chevron, Mobil, Shell, British Gas, Statoil, and Traktele are among the main actors in the field (Dittmann, *et al* 1998: 55, 56). The total number of the employees of such enterprises amounted to 77, 893. The wages of foreigners working in Kazakhstan have been \$24 millions for 1997 (ibid, 24). Foreign financial resources make up 50% of total investment in the Kazakh economy (ibid, 23). Foreign Direct investment in the republic in 1997 amounted to \$2. 1 billion (ibid, 26). The following table demonstrates the share of different countries in such investment:

Country	share
Belgium	2%
Canada	3%
China	5%
France	2%

Great Britain	15%
South Korea	22%
Turkey	5%
USA	29%
Virgin Island	2%
Others	15%
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Total	100%

(Source Diguai 1998: 28)

The foreign investment has led to an uneven development and has made the Kazakh economy dependent on the export of raw material. Oil, iron, and non-ferrous metals account for 80% of exports ( Wurzel 1998: 20). Both foreign investors and government prefer investment in raw material, because of the quick returns (Wurzel 1998). The most attractive sectors for foreign investment are oil, gas, ferrous and non-ferrous metals (Diguai 1998: 26). For example, 44% of total foreign direct investment, \$2. 9 billion, between 1993 and 1997 went to oil and gas (Ribakova 1998: 44). In 1996 roughly 85% of foreign direct investment was in oil, gas, ferrous and nonferrous metals. The percentage for 1997 was 75% (Wurzel 1998: 17). The foreign investors control strategic sectors in economy. For example, the share of joint ventures and enterprises with major foreign participation in the total oil production exceeded 75% 1997 (Ribakova 1998: 44).

The dependency of Kazakh economy on raw material is evident from that when the prices of raw material fell in 1998, the GDP dropped dramatically, as result government cut the budget 20 - 25%. 57.3% of oil is exported to the countries in Western Europe (Ribakova 1998: 43). 90% of ferrous metals are exported to countries outside outside CIS (Ribakova 1998: 48).

The orientation of economy towards the export of raw materials combined with economic crisis has contributed to deindustrialisation. For example, the production of chemical products, mechanical engineering and building material dropped respectively 31.8%, 53.3% and 29.3% between 1995 and 1998. The output of agriculture fell by half (Wurzel 1998:17).

This pattern of development has created a close link between state officials and investors. The foreign lend money mainly to the government or under the government guarantees (ibid). Moreover, the foreign investors. because of high financial risks try to

deal mostly with the government (Diguai 1998: 29). On the other hand, the export of raw material generate tax revenues for the government and the privatisation of oil, gas, ferrous and non-ferrous metals has been a financial resource for the government.

The local contact net of these Western agencies are the post-Soviet networks of political and business quasi-mafia elite under discussion. Members of these networks are not only aping the luxurious life style of the Western bourgeoisie but launder their monies in Western banks, buy property in the West, visit expensive clubs in the West and send their children to study there, negotiate commercial contracts with the multinationals and have friends and associates among the representatives of Multinationals and other transnational organisations.

The multiple ways in which the local and national networks of power are articulated to “the global ecumene” of capital indicate that the present chaos is not merely understandable with reference to “the evil heritage of the Soviet past” as the apologists of capitalism suggest or merely the corruption of the post-Soviet elites but also the imperialistic interventions of Western financial, industrial and political agencies. An effect of such imperialistic policies has been the creation of uneven economic structures. Clover & Corzine (1998: 1) describe such an economy in Kazakhstan as follows:

Economic reforms also created two distinct economies. One is export-oriented, and includes privatised oil companies and metal plants, and the banks that finance them. Flush with cash, they are busy issuing ADRs and corporate Eurobonds. In the other economy wages are paid in vegetable oil, vehicle tyres and loaves of bread, if at all. The inhabitants of this economy live in Kazakhstan’s “dead cities” so-named by Mr Kashegeldin<sup>13</sup>, and barter whatever commodity they are paid in to heat their homes.

On a global scale the chaotic mode of dominance in the emerging post-Soviet capitalist economies are particular instances of the crisis of hegemony which results from the contradictions of late capitalism (Gledhill 1996; Castells 1998). Similar modes of domination prevail in many countries in the world among which Afghanistan, Angola, Pakistan, Mexico, and Colombia are just a few examples (Gledhill op.cit.; Castells, *ibid*).

The chaotic mode of domination is the political instrument of the implementation of the new liberal economic policies. The core element of such policies was the expropriation of wealth from the majority of the people by the elite and their Western allies. The main mechanisms of such expropriation which were mentioned by the dispossessed were: the transfer of state property into private ownership through illegal

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<sup>13</sup> The Kazakhstan previous prime minister.

and legal ways; the dissolution of the welfare state; the liberalisation of prices; eating up people's savings through the dramatic depreciation of their values; cutting of wages and pensions and postponing of payments.

The expropriation went through two consecutive stages, corresponding respectively to the two stages of chaotic dominance. The first step of expropriation began in 1987 when Gorbachev legalised private business in the form of cooperatives (Castells 1998). As Castells (ibid) argues the structural background of this expropriation was a transition to market economy in the context of a chaos which resulted from the collapse of the central political and economic institution of the Soviet state. The economic chaos was marked by the fact that the underground economy which was already (Grossman 1985) an important, although subordinated part of the Soviet economy, became the dominant form of distribution of goods and services. The members of the nomenclature accumulated legendary wealth during a short period through hoarding, bartering and selling of goods for much higher prices in black markets. Oil, steel, precious metals and weapons were illegally exported. Foreign goods were illegally imported and sold in the black markets. This process of plundering was bolstered by the violence of mafia gangs which filled the vacuum that had been created as result of the disintegration of the coercive apparatuses of the state.

The next step in expropriation was the formal privatisation and liberalisation of prices which occurred after independence. As Clarke & Kabalina (1995) argue in the case of Russia, the collapse of central economic institutions had made managers the *de facto* owners of enterprises. The formal privatisation was intended to give this a legal guise. Now, privatised enterprises became either practically the property of managers through being transferred to cooperatives or were sold for nominal prices to friends and relatives for bribes. So in a very short time a network of rich people was formed.

The accumulation of wealth through illegal methods still continues. Tax evasions, fraud in customs fees, creating private monopolies, illegal distribution of credits between friends and relatives, extraction of bribes and tributes are some of the standard methods which are deployed by the new rich groups. Liberalisation of prices, closure of factories, redundancy of workers on a massive scale, cutting and abolishing of welfare services are also carried out on IMF and other Western agencies' instructions at this stage.

Without the chaotic mode of dominance the stealing of state property and IMF led economic policies could not be carried out without provoking massive resistance. Only under the condition of chaos where fear of unharnessed violence, cynicism and lawlessness had paralysed the dispossessed, was an unchallenged transformation to IMF-designed wild capitalism possible<sup>14</sup>. Thus, It seems to me that the people are in a sense correct in claiming that the elite conspired to create the chaos with the purpose to plunder. This led to the creation of the dispossessed, which I describe very briefly below.

### **The dispossessed**

The result of the expropriation of state property was the rapid accumulation of wealth at one pole and poverty at the other and the creation of the new social categories of the New Rich (*Novye Bogatyie*) and the dispossessed (*bednye*)<sup>15</sup>. This polarisation is the most profound social change which has occurred as result of the transformation to capitalism. The new rich are distinguished from the rest of the population not only through their wealth but also their luxurious life style (see chapter 5) and their transnational networks. Buying luxurious cars, visiting expensive restaurants and night clubs and building pompous private houses are some elements of the consumption pattern of the new rich. The emergence of the new rich has influenced the physical appearance of Almaty.

Although, the local notions of the new rich and dispossessed are very close to a concept of class in a Marxist sense, their class positions are ambiguous. Such ambiguity is due to the fact that both the new rich and the dispossessed relations to production have been distorted by the collapse of the production apparatus and emergence of market on the other. The new rich collect their wealth not through direct

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<sup>14</sup> Thus, the liberal commentators who depict the post soviet criminal capitalism as deviance from civilised capitalism are either charlatans or ignorant or indeed both. They repeat their lies so often that in the end they believe them to be true. In a comparative perspective "blood and fire" have been the midwives of capitalism everywhere. Even the liberal Britain and the democratic France were no exception to this rule. Marx in *Das Capital*, reports on some of the brutalities of capitals in its earlier stages. In the contemporary world everywhere capitalism was established and supported at gun point. The Shah of Iran, Marcos, Pinochet, Generals in Argentina, Suharto, Mobutu Seseko are few among many dictators who bolstered the expansion of capitalism by torture, murder and all kind of crimes. Indeed the so called human face of the capitalism in Western Europe is not something which springs from the "nature" of capital but, was imposed on capitalists by two hundred years of organised struggle of millions of workers. However, such liberties are unstable; one has to remember how Thatcher savaged civil liberties in Britain when she had the opportunity to do so.

<sup>15</sup> Their story of dispossession like that of one which happened in England under the stage of so called primitive accumulation of capital (Marx 1906), as Marx put it, "is written in letters of blood and fire (1906:786)". While the peasant/artisan in Marx's story was dispossessed from his rights to land/means of production or from his bonds to community the post-soviet citizen is dispossessed from his/her rights to services and social guarantees provided by the state.



extraction of surplus value but plunder. On the other hand wages constitute small part of the dispossessed incomes, for survival they rely also on small trade and reciprocal exchange within networks .

Humphrey (1996:70), inspired by Marx<sup>16</sup>, defines the dispossessed in the Russian context as follows:

The dispossessed are people who have been deprived of property, work and entitlements, but in a second sense we can understand them as people who are themselves no longer possessed. That is, they are no longer inside the quasi-fuedal corporations, the collective 'domain', which confer a social status on their members and which in practice are still today the key units disposing of property and people in Russia.

Then she proceeds to include the following categories among the dispossessed: refugees, unemployed, economic migrants, demobilise soldiers. abandoned pensioners, invalid and single-parent families, vagrant and homeless (ibid).

The local concept of dispossessed in Almaty cover Humphrey's definition but stretch beyond it in two senses: 1)they include categories of people who do not fit in the definition; 2) Although the dispossessed might have become free from the particular set of Soviet era patronage obligations, for survival they are forced into a new set of such obligations in their post-Soviet networking practices (see chapter 3). As I discuss the second point in chapter 3 let me in the following explain very briefly the first one.

Although the majority of people categorise themselves in a homogeneous poor (bednye) group vis-a-vis the new rich, in reality the dispossessed is a heterogeneous category. Not only can one distinguish between different sub-groups among the poor, but the dispossessed are also ethnically differentiated. For an illustration let me introduce a rough classification of the local population according to the level of their wealth which I worked out with the help of a group of local people in my neighbourhood cafe:

- 1- Garbage seekers ( Russian old men and women ) and Beggars (Tadjik/gypsy women and children, Russian old men and women)
2. Unemployed alcoholics (mainly Russians).
3. Street traders [single mothers, Kazakh migrants from the south, war refugees (Tadjik men and Chechen women)].
4. Pensioners.
5. Urban working class (mainly Russian),civil servants (mainly Kazakh), academics

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<sup>16</sup> She does not mention Marx, but her definition of dispossessed is evidently similar to that of proletariat in Marx.

and scientific and technical personnel.

6. Sex-workers, suit-case traders (*chelnoki*) and those who worked for foreign companies.

7. The lower echelon of high state officials (main sources of income bribery), middle rank Mafioso and kiosk owners.

8. The new rich (*novye bogatyie*): Managers of the large enterprises, top ranked business men, top ranked state officials and top ranked mafia (mainly men).

Indeed, these groups were further classified by us into four wider categories: extremely poor (*Bomzh*)<sup>17</sup> (groups 1, 2), poor (*bednye*) (groups 3, 4,5), average (*srednyi*) (groups 7) and rich (*bogatyie*) (group 8)<sup>18</sup>. Group 6 were classified by others as average while they considered themselves as poor. While Humphrey's definition of dispossessed coincides with what locals call the extremely poor (*bomzhy*) the local's own definitions comprise a spectrum which includes groups from 1 to 6.

The extremely poor at the bottom of the dispossessed spectrum, are either non-locals (Tadjik female war refugees, gypsy women) or Russians ( old men and women or Russian unemployed alcoholic men). The main reason for the over-representation of Russians in this group are: 1) The break up of Russian networks because of massive out-migration (see chapter 3); and the fact that the economic crisis has stricken most powerfully the industrial working class, predominantly male Russians . Being unemployed, while many of them avoid getting involved in the “ demeaning” occupation of street trading, they have lost face by no longer being the breadwinners and have turned to alcohol.

The main bulk of the dispossessed according to the wider local descriptions is comprised from groups 3 to 6. Indeed, many of the people who had kept their jobs, and even those who owned apartments, cars, animals and small means of production like small boats, fishing nets and dachas allotments felt dispossessed. People like Aleksander (chapter 3), Saber (chapter 5), Saken and Anora (Chapter 2), the four sex

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<sup>17</sup> Bomzh which literally means homeless, today is applied to every body who has a extremely poor life.

<sup>18</sup> As with any classification ours is to some degree arbitrary. For example, sex workers perceived themselves to be poor rather than average. Indeed, while the income of a relatively young and “good looking” sex-worker may earn a night many times more than the salary of an industrial worker, there were broken sex-workers who were very close to extremely poor group. On the other hand, usually the level of income of street traders is higher than that of the urban working class and in addition at the end of each day they have it in form of cash in their hands while worker wages are postponed for several months or are partly paid in kind. But workers have apartments, usually cars, and often dachas (village cottages with land allotments), which contribute to their economy. On the other hand some workers like those of the construction industry had relatively high wages which were paid on time, because of the construction boom. Moreover, such a classification doesn't include people potential access to resources through their networks (see chapter 3).

workers and other women (chapter 4 )belong to this group.

Some people among group 6 who had sustained or improved their material standards felt dispossessed because of the experience of cultural and professional deprivation or insecurity (see chapters 2 & 5). I will discuss in chapters 2 and 5 the feelings of loss of high culture and insecurity common to all the dispossessed. Although group 7 was considered by most of people as wealthy, they themselves usually considered themselves as average. They were neither considered by others or themselves as dispossessed nor part of the new rich. It was, group 8, which was accused of dispossessing others from wealth through the stealing of public property.

In spite of the wealth differentiation between the dispossessed, in their anti- elite rhetoric they appear as a homogeneous group, interchangeably called, We (*my*), the poor (*bednye*), the people (*narod*), below (*vniz*), working class (*Rabochii klass*) and labouring people (*Rabotaiushchie liudi*). On the other hand the elite is called interchangeably as they (*oni*), bosses (*nachal'niki*), authorities (*nachal'stvo*), leadership (*rukovodstvo*), above (*verkh*), new rich (*novye bogatye*), new Russian (*novye Russkii*).

In the rest of this dissertation I use these concepts in the same polarised fashion, unless specified. This strongly articulated polarised consciousness among the dispossessed, is not only rooted in a common suffering, although differentiated in degrees, but in the ways, the depth of and the speed with which, the post-Soviet expropriation has been carried out. For survival the dispossessed have resorted to different strategies the most important of which are reciprocal exchange within networks by both men and women and sexualised strategies among young women.

## **Networking**

The most crucial point about networks is that as a result of the chaos the erstwhile Soviet "society" has disintegrated into two types of networks: Networks of new rich (*novye bogatye*) and networks of dispossessed. In other words networks have replaced society as a moral community. Indeed, while both of these networks have their roots in Soviet era structures, they were created during the period of the collapse of the USSR. While the first networks were formed for plundering public wealth the second were formed to cope with the harsh conditions of dispossession. The first type which were also networks of power and wealth included the state and party officials, managers of enterprises, black marketeers and the mafia.

In the anthropological literature networks were traditionally considered as a set

of face to face reciprocal relations (Hannerz 1992a). I return to this notion in chapter 3 and review anthropological literature. Recently, the concept has been redefined in relation to the so called informational revolution and globalisation. According to this new understanding networks are social relations established between people and institutions through electronic and other means of communication (Hannerz , *ibid*: 41, Castells 1996: 470).

In Kazakhstan while the networks of survival are of the first type, the networks of influence are a mixture of both types. A major result of the post -Soviet openness towards the capitalist world has been the transnationalisation of the networks of the new rich.

The dispossessed are not only deprived of such privileges, but their Soviet era possibilities for long distance communication have diminished dramatically as a result of the combined effects of their poverty and the dramatic increase in the costs of stamps, telephone calls, and travel.

In spite of this difference, both networks are anchored in local kinship, marriage, friendship and ethnic relations. As mentioned above, both of these networks have their roots in the Soviet era. Access to goods and services in short supply, lucrative posts in the political apparatus were available mainly through contacts. The growth of the black market in the context of the institutionalisation of ethnicity in the political structures of the Soviet state contributed significantly to the emergence and expansion of ethnically oriented networks in the last decades of Soviet rule in Central Asia (Poliakov 1992).

However, there is an essential difference between Soviet and post-soviet networking practices. The former while anchored in state institutions did not replace them but the post-soviet ones have replaced the state in two senses: The networks of influence have privatised the state as a corporate property of the new rich. A result of this was abolition of the welfare state as a moral community. In order to cope with economic hardship the dispossessed are building new types of moral communities based on networks of friendship, kinship and marriage, mainly among their co-ethnics. I think the idea of disintegration of Society into networks which develop in this dissertation is an original contribution to the field.

### **Sexual strategies**

As Molyneux (1990) argued, the effects of changes, started with perestroika, on women were contradictory. On the one hand the general political liberalisation of society offered women a space to organise their own independent movements. On the

other hand these changes have given rise to a new form of masculinity (Watson 1993) in the economic, political and ideological spheres.

On the economic level, the absolute majority of women became dispossessed, because of the masculine nature of chaos and the expropriation of wealth. This was highlighted by the dominance of men among the new rich and use of violence in expropriation of wealth. In addition to this, because of the demolition of the welfare state many women who worked in the service sector either lost their jobs or their work, which had been already undervalued and underpaid in the Soviet era, underwent further devaluation. Moreover, women are discriminated against in the labour market (Einhorn 1993) and their access to better jobs in many cases are conditional upon their accepting to provide sexual service to the male bosses (see chapter 4).

Now, women's access to wealth and influence is mainly conditional upon their relations with rich men either through sexual relations, including marriage (see chapter 4), or kinship. Under such conditions, women contribute to survival, through involvement in the street trade, suit-case trade, working on dacha allotments, conserving vegetables and fruits. In addition to these socially recognised strategies of survival, by which women contribute significantly to reciprocal exchange within networks, there are a set of socially stigmatised strategies which are used predominantly by young women<sup>19</sup>, namely sexualised strategies. The main difference between these two types of strategies is that the resources accessed through sexual strategies are not considered as part of family resources, and men who provide such resources are not considered as nodes of the family networks. In most cases women keep their practices secret from their families and the public in general. Another important aspect of the sexual strategies is their symbolic significance. Most people consider them as signs of a moral chaos caused by wild capitalism.

Sexualised strategies, which are based on the exchange of sex for wealth, include the exchange of sexual service for better-paid jobs, finding sponsors (lovers who provide materially for women), finding rich husbands and prostitution. While most of these strategies were practised in the Soviet era marginally (Posadskaya 1992, Waters 1989, Dobrokhotova 1984) their massive growth is a post-Soviet phenomena (Waters: *ibid*, Bridger *et al* 1996).

The post-Soviet expansion of sexual strategies is a result of the inroads of capitalism into the previous Soviet territory in general and sexual relations in

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<sup>19</sup> I heard that middle age rich women hired young male prostitutes, but this was on a very limited scale. Although, child prostitution does exist its very difficult to map its extension.

particular. As the majority of women are reduced to the position of a proletariat by the process of expropriation of wealth described above, they had nothing left but their hands or their sexual labour. As the demand for labour in general is diminished as a result of the economic crisis, while many women got involved in small trade, others particularly among younger ones chose to labour as sexual workers.

The emergence of consumerist culture is pivotal in pushing young women to adopt sexual strategies. Many the young women who cannot afford to buy expensive Western goods resort to such strategies for obtaining the necessary money (Bridger *et al* , op cit.). These have led to a widespread monetisation of sexuality and the emergence of a transnational sex industry (Shreeves 1992, Attwood 1996, Bridger *et al* , op cit ). The growth of prostitution in tandem with growth of pornography and images of femininity created by modelling, advertisement, tabloid press and soap operas has transformed the Soviet official iconography of femininity. In the Soviet era the official icon of womanhood was that of muscular “heroine worker” in baggy clothes, a tractor driver, or “heroine mother”. Today these images are replaced by that of women as sexed bodies (Ibid).

As *The Economist* reports the sex business has become globalised (February 14th 1988, 19 -20, 23 - 25). While the global poverty created by late capitalism is pivotal in pushing women and children into prostitution the cultural responses to prostitution vary situationally ( Beller-Hann 1995; Cox 1993; Kapur 1994; Waters op. cit).

In this dissertation I discuss practices of sexual strategies and responses to them in Almaty, Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan, the wide spread comodification of women's bodies has provoked a great deal of violence against them and a discourse of alien. Firstly, the appropriation, sale and consumption of such bodies like other commodities under the conditions of chaos described above are interwoven with violence. Women are frequently assaulted, kidnapped and raped (Zablina 1996). Secondly, such violence is motivated and justified by the current identity politics. Women who practice sexual strategies are considered as creators of chaos in relations of reproduction. Moreover, they are condemned for the alleged disgrace their practice inflicts on authentic ethnic and Soviet identities (see chapters 2&4 &5).<sup>20</sup>

The notions of women’s modesty are articulated to the demands of return to pre-

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<sup>20</sup> The formation of ethnic, national, regional and territorial identities are gendered through assigning different roles to men and women in these process (Yuval-Davis 1993; Greenfield 1995; Verdery 1996a; Krohn-Hansen 1997; Nagel 1998). Moreover, such identities are authenticised through construction of particular notions of women's sexual behaviour ( Mosse 1985; kandiyoti 1991; Ahmed 1992; MacClintock 1995).

soviet gender relations. The Soviet state intervened directly in family relations (Massell 1975; Akiner 1997; Ashwin forthcoming). An important element of the post-soviet nationalist rhetoric is a demand of the revival of the “ traditional family” and its values (Akiner 1997: 284). The notion of female modesty is central to this traditionalist discourse. In addition to this, the notions of an authentic Soviet “identity” is articulated to sexual modesty of women by the dispossessed (chapters 2 & 5). Such notions are radically challenged by the liberalisation and monetisation of sexual relations which have shaken the foundations of monogamous marriage. As Bourdieu (1977:168) would say this has brought sexuality from the universe of doxa to that of discourse. Now categories like virginity, premarital sex, wife, husband, lover, love, sex, chastity, honour and shame are problematised by heterodox discourses on sexuality.

The post-soviet chaos has had different impacts on different categories of men. The masculinity of rich and violent men has been enhanced because of their access to money and means of violence. In contrast, the dispossessed men’s masculinity has been undermined because of poverty.<sup>21</sup> They cannot properly fulfil their roles as breadwinners.

Most the dispossessed consider monetisation of sexuality as an important element of chaos. They hold foreigners and the new local rich men responsible for the monetisation of sexuality. It is assumed that their sexual promiscuity in combination with their wealth have created a strong demand for prostitutes. Moreover, this is depicted as a part of their allegedly corrupt consumerist life style. These allegation are articulated to a conspiracy theory which claims that the elite and foreigners conspired to destroy the Soviet union. The dispossessed use the notions of alien to challenge elite dominance and question their consumerist values on the one hand, and to create a notion of victimised Soviet people on the other. As women’s sexual conduct is a strong marker of Soviet identity, their relations with foreign men are strictly controlled. This dissertation makes an original contribution to the understanding of identity politics in the post-Soviet context by discussing the ways through which the dispossessed imagine a gendered Soviet identity.

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<sup>21</sup> Masculinity as any kind of identity is negotiated in social relations situationally (Cornwall & Lindisfame 1994). Moreover, masculinity is not only negotiated between men and women but between men themselves (ibid). So men in a particular relations of power could be divided into hegemonic and subordinate masculinities (ibid). Connell (1996) argues that the formations of different masculinities are conditioned by political and economic structures. For example structural unemployment, may undermine masculinity of the unemployed men.

## Ethnicity<sup>22</sup>

In chapter 6 I deal with ethnic tensions. In Kazakhstan ethnic tensions are conceived widely as a component and a result of the current chaos. Ethnicity is an important element of the local people's consciousness. This is illustrated by the fact that among the first questions every new person I met asked me was the following : "What is your ethnicity" (*kto vy po notsional'nosti*)? Or more importantly, in many cases, while inquiring about my ethnicity they asked : "Who are you" (*kto vy?*) The fact that the question in its second form equates the person in his entirety with ethnicity

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<sup>22</sup>The main theoretical approaches towards ethnicity in anthropology and beyond it could be roughly classified in three types: primordialists; culturalists; and interactionists. Primordialists divide elements of identity into primordial and acquisitive types. The first are ascribed to individuals at birth and the second ones are acquired through involvement in social life (Shils 1957; Geertz 1963; Van den Berge 1981; Kellas 1991; Grosby 1994). Grosby (op. cit.: 164 - 166) argues that primordial conditions of life, notably family, region, tribe, ethnicity and nation are given at birth. All these conditions which are necessary for individual survival give a sense of identity to him/her, and are emotionally associated with notions of blood relations and extended family. Apriority and affectivity are the main attributes of primordial ties, which are natural or are conceived as natural. Furthermore, they are held to be perennial and inextinguishable. The primordialist approach has been exposed to strong criticism for naturalisation and essentialisation of ethnicity (Eller & Coughlan 1994).

Culturalists accept the historicity of ethnic identities, but claim that they have their roots in antiquity. Armstrong (1992) states that myths and memories, are indispensable for the formation of ethnic identities. Smith (1986, 1991, 1992) argues the conflict between different myths, values, memories and symbols which constitute the cultural stuff of ethnicity contribute to contemporary ethnic conflicts.

The interactionist position, which has dominated anthropology since the 1960s, has challenged both primordialism and cultural archeology. In this approach cultural elements which mark ethnic boundaries appear as a diacritic to social interaction between people (Leach 1964; Barth 1969; Mitchell 1987; Cohen 1974, 1981; Rosens 1989; Hannerz 1992b; Appadurai 1997). The anthropologists associated with so called Manchester School, including M. Gluckman and his associates, developed a position of this type in studying the copper-belt area in Northern Rhodesia (today Zambia). Barth (1969) summarised and extended this position. While arguing that ethnic identity was the most elementary and a durable component of group and individual identity he suggested that ethnic boundaries are maintained through the communication between different groups. Cohen (1974), a disciple of Gluckman, while agreeing with Barth's interactionist argument, questions his assumption on durability of ethnic identity as a primordialist position. In his account ethnic identities are temporary and situational, contingent upon political competition between different groups. According to the situationalist position ethnic identities are distributive and interchangeable with other kind of identities depending on the situation (Mitchell op. cit.).

A new trend among American anthropologists (Fox 1990; B. Williams 1989; Verdery 1996a; 1996b) has tried to transcend the culturalist/situationalist divide by assigning a new role to cultural practices in the formation of identities. Such practices which includes imagining of communities (Anderson 1991) and Invention of traditions (Hobsbawm 1983) are pivotal for the formation of ethnic and national identities. In a broad sense, Fox argues, such practices are inspired by the modern nationalist ideologies, which "refer to the production of conception of peoples" (op. cit.: 3). This broad definition, Fox says, allows us to understand the situational malleability and fuzziness of these ideologies on the one hand and the flexible and assimilative relationships between their various forms of expressions on the other. The cultural practices related to the formation of national identities are part of the negotiation of power relations and struggles of hegemony or resistance.

A new range of theories have related the the proliferation of ethnic identities to the supposedly qualitatively new processes of changes which have occurred since the 1950s, most notably, the informational revolution and globalisation. Richmond (1984) and Castells (1997) argue that such changes have weakened the old loyalties to family, nation-state and class. Ethnic loyalties among other new social movements are filling the gaps created by this process. Appadurai (1990) claims that the current process of globalisation has deterritorialised national identities. Glick Shiller *et al* (1992) taking into account the last approaches, argue that transnational migration has brought about a multi-cultural encounter with a transnational character. Ethnicity, as a dimension of this multi-culturality is related to other forms of identity expressions: age, race, gender and class. The articulation of these different elements to each other are determined situationally, in the course of the negotiation of hegemony in daily life. State and global capitalism are the wider contexts of struggles for hegemony and negotiation of identities.



demonstrates its importance in the local notions of identification. When asked about their own ethnicity (*natsional'nost'*), people usually had two type of answers: hybrid (*metis/metiska*) or identified themselves with a given ethnic category. In the first case usually the component categories were determined through parents' ethnicity. Then ethnic categories are determined either through descent or cultural affiliation or both.

Although among the people who identify themselves as Russians, there are those who are of pure Russian descent, assumed cultural, religious linguistic, and phenotypical affiliations are the main criteria for marking their identity. Many such people have either mixed Russian and non-Russian blood or have no Russian blood at all. However, Russians between themselves do not distinguish between those who are from Russian descent and those who are not.

On the other hand, among non-Russians descent is the most important criteria for defining one's ethnicity. One important reason for this is that Russian culture and language played and still play a hegemonic role in urban life. Many of those who have been assimilated into Russian "culture" but do not want to identify themselves with Russians ethnically use descent to distinguish their ethnicity from that of Russian. Such people usually do marry within their own ethnicity. Besides descent four other criteria are associated with ethnicity: tradition (*traditsia*), national character (*natsional'nyi kharakter*), names and historical homeland (*istoricheskaiia rodina*). Tradition was defined by a variety of factors most notably food culture, and rituals.

Indeed, most people are of the opinion that any individual belonging to a particular ethnic group bears a common national character which is transmitted from one generation to the next through traditions. Although there are common stereotypes about the national character of Jews and Tatars, the ways people describe their own or others' assumed national characters are completely arbitrary, and depend on the private opinion of the describer and the situation. For example, while one Russian may tell you that the main attribute of the Kazakh national character is hospitality, another Russian may say laziness is such attribute. Actually, the notion of national character was taken for granted not only among Kazakhs but all ethnic groups. People in their daily talks frequently used stereotypes of the assumed national characters of different ethnic groups. A Russian woman described the assumed national characters of some ethnic categories the following way:

Jews are cunning (*kihtrye*) and greedy (*zhadnye*) but intelligent (*umnye*). Tatars are cunning (*khitrye*) but intelligent (*umnye*). Kazakhs are lazy (*lenivye*). Russians are open (*otkrytye*) and hard-working (*rabotiashchie*) and love to drink. Uzbeks, Turks and Azarbaijani are traders (*torgovtsi*), cunning

(khitrye) but not intelligent (*ne umnye*), Koreans are tidy (*akkuratnye*) and Uigurs are religious fanatics (*religioznye fanatiki*).

Another example was a widespread prejudice against Tatars and Jews as cheaters exemplified by the following proverbs: When the Tatar was born the Jew began to cry (*kogda Tatar rodilsia togda Evrei plaka*). The proverb implies that while both Jews and Tatars are cheaters, the latter even cheat Jews.

The popular notions of national character are in tune with Stalin's notion of nations' psychological make-up and the main stream Soviet ethnos theory developed by Bromely (1984). According to Bromely, the essence of ethnos which comprises of traditions and customs survive the transformations of the economic and political structures of a given Society.

Names are very important among Muslims. Kazakhs had strictly kept their names with exception of some female names which were adopted after favourite personalities such as Clara (Clara Zetkin), Svetlana (Stalin's daughter Svetlana Alliluyeva) and Roza (Roza Luxemburg). Koreans have chosen Russian first names but kept their family names.

After this short review of the local notion of ethnicity let us return the subject of ethnic conflicts. The Soviet state institutionalised ethnicity by establishing ethno-territorial political units, mainly Soviet republics and autonomous republics and regions within Soviet republics (Zasalvsky 1992, 1993; Brubkaker 1994). Another aspect of such institutionalisation was the registration of ethnicity at birth and a preferential quota for so called titular nationalities<sup>23</sup> (Zasalvsky 1993). Indeed, ethnic sentiments and the growth of ethnic cultures were promoted by the Soviet state as far as they did not question the so called Soviet patriotism (Liber 1991; Sunny 1992; G. Smith 1990). Contrary to the claims of the majority of Western commentators, ethnic sentiments in both their official and unofficial expressions were not only compatible with the Soviet state but were powerful instruments of the stability of the Soviet multi-ethnic state (Zasalvsky 1993). Indeed, in Kazakhstan most ordinary people, a few ethnic nationalists excepted, considered their own ethnicity as a subdivision of the wider Soviet people (*Sovetskii narod*). Through the articulation of the notions of particularity of different ethnicities to an over-arching notion of Soviet Peoplehood (*narodnost'*) a kind of Soviet patriotism was created which provided the basis for the hegemony of the regime in different republics. Again contrary to widely held opinions in the West, I discovered that the Central Asian Muslims have a strong sense of their

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<sup>23</sup> A titular nationality was the one the name of republic was derived from its ethnonym.

Soviet identity. This was particularly expressed in the pride they took in claiming that their people had, shoulder to shoulder with Russians and other nationalities, saved humanity from Hitler by destroying his armies. Another aspect of the institutionalisation of ethnicity was that the elite of each titular nationality occupied the hegemonic positions in each corresponding republic's political and ideological apparatuses.

On the level of the daily practice although ethnic tensions did exist ethnic accommodation was the dominant mood. Differences in traditions and culture were rather a matter of mutual fascination and learning<sup>24</sup>. People invited each other to their traditional celebrations.

The stagnation of the Soviet economy in the early 1980s and the subsequent crisis changed this mode of ethnic accommodation and as a result, ethnic tensions began to grow rapidly. The growth of ethnic tensions was not the reason behind the crisis of Soviet society but a by-product of such a crisis (Hobsbawm 1990/1994). Because of the economic crisis, the centre dramatically cut its economic aid and tried to crack down on the corruption of the elites of titular nationalities. The elites in the periphery responded by resorting to nationalism. The ideological crisis of Stalinism was another factor which gave rise to ethnic nationalism. Ethnicity and nationalism were the only ideologies which were compatible with Stalinism. Once the official communism was discredited, the only available symbols for constructing alternative ideologies were ethnic ones (Schopflin 1991). Not only did the elites in the periphery resort to ethnic symbols for legitimising their rule but even the centre resorted to Russian ethnicity. Gorbachev appealed to the nationalist feelings of Russians. In 1990, when support for him was nearly exhausted, he invited Rasputin, a Russian chauvinist, to participate in the presidential council (Drobizheva 1992: 107). Yeltsin worshipped Russian ethnicity by visiting the Orthodox church.

In Kazakhstan ethnic tensions are closely related to the competition for resources (Khazanov 1995). Ethnic conflicts were focused around the Kazakhification of state institutions. Although Kazakhs occupied the key post in the republican political institutions, with the general resurgence of nationalism they sought to Kazakhify the state further both ritually and administratively. The Kazakh language was declared as the state language and everybody was required to learn it for keeping his/her job. Indeed many non-Kazakhs, under the pretext that they did not command the state language were replaced by Kazakhs. This under the condition that state controls the main resources gave a privileged position to Kazakh elite networks. This has

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<sup>24</sup> For example many women claimed proudly to be able to cook the food of other ethnic group.

instigated a great dissatisfaction among non-Kazakhs. Another acute element of ethnic conflict is created by the massive migration of Kazakhs from the countryside to the cities. These migrants compete with urban inhabitants for urban space, including apartments and places in Bazaars.

In this dissertation I argue that ethnic relations are not predetermined by so called “cultures” but are part of a “complex sociality” (Fardon 1995) and negotiated situationally in power relations (Glick Chiller *et Al.* 1992). I illustrate this by showing that Muslim/Orthodox and Kazakh/non-Kazakh oppositions are problematised by struggles for resources.

### **Almaty**

I arrived in the city on the rainy afternoon of the 15 of July 1995. From the airport to the city it is forty minutes drive. The road stretches like a snake through green villages covered by trees and plants. On the left side of the road the Tinsan mountains stretching towards China tower over the city and its suburbs. The city’s structure is very plain. It is divided into rectangular areas by two ranges of long parallel streets stretching from east to west and from the foothills and mountains in the south to the north. The rectangular blocks consist of buildings; the majority are five, nine or twelve story cement houses. Stores and government offices are usually located on the streets. The residential areas inside the blocks include houses and large yards, often with play grounds and are usually covered by trees. In Almaty there is a remarkable contrast between the city and its apartments. While the apartments are small and usually crowded, the city offers you enough green space. It has many parks and most of its streets are like boulevards. In addition to this, there are large open spaces between neighbouring residential areas and between each area and its surrounding streets, all covered with trees.

In appearance the city is homogeneous. Everywhere, except the newly emerged villa area in the Southeast, is covered by similar buildings. However, socially the city is divided between the centre and the rest. The centre, where the elite and most foreigners live, has more green space, is cleaner, has some sophisticated and pompous buildings. Most of the recently created business centres, night clubs and shops are located there. Moreover, it is protected from hooliganism. The centre is part of the east and south east of the city where the Hotel Kazakhstan, the presidential palace and most of the departments of state are located.

Almaty was founded in the middle of the nineteenth century by Russians in the

south east of the Kazakh steppe. Then it was called Verny (belief). Verny was exposed to many violent earthquakes, most notably in 1887 and 1911 (Dombrovsky 1991: 13).

In the 1920s the Bolshevik changed its name to Alma-ta, a Kazakh word which means the mother of apple. Indeed, locals boasted that Almaty's apples were the best in the world. Yet it was still, as Trotsky's wife observed, a poor and slummy little town, connected to Moscow by a dusty road through Frunze (Bishkek), the capital of Kirghizia<sup>25</sup>.

In 1929 the capital was transferred from Gyzlarda to Almaty. In the 1930s the city began to experience rapid and dramatic change. By now it was connected to Moscow by railway. The rapid expansion of education and administrative apparatuses on the one hand and the collectivisation projects on the other were at the heart of the rapid development of the city. Now the city could boast of its museum, theatre, university and foremost of its Pushkin Library with 610,000 books in thirty-five languages (Dombrovsky 1991: 96). From Dombrovsky (1991) one gets the impression that a spirit of optimism and construction was commonplace among the population. However, as the Stalinist regime consolidated itself this optimism was gradually poisoned by the witch hunts, purges, persecution, putting in concentration camps and scapegoating of the so called enemies of people. And there was fear of the coming war<sup>26</sup>.

When the war began the Almatian contributed significantly not only by providing the front with manpower, weapons and food but hosting thousands of refugees from the German occupied territories. The refugees from the European parts of the Union contributed significantly to the modernisation of the city. Indeed, some of the most prestigious cultural and scientific institutions of the republic including the Academy of Science (*Akademiia Naok*) were founded during the 1940s.

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<sup>25</sup> Trotsky's wife who followed her husband to exile in Almaty in January 1927, described it as follows:

A fine thing in Alma-Ata was the snow, white, clean and dry. As there was very little walking or driving, it kept its freshness all winter long. In the spring, it yielded to red poppies. Such a lot of them - like gigantic carpets! The steppes glowed red for miles around. In the summer were apples - the famous Alma-Ata variety, huge and also red. The town had no central water works, no lights and no paved roads. In the bazaar in the centre of the town, the Kirghizes sat in mud at the door steppes of their shops, warming themselves in the sun and searching their bodies for vermin. Malaria was rampant. There was also pestilence, and during the summer months an extraordinary number of mad dogs. The newspapers reported many cases of leprosy in this region (quoted in Trotsky 1930: 467).

<sup>26</sup> The soviet newspapers wrote a great deal on the possibility of war and the German, Japanese and Italian potential for biological and chemical weapons. These created a great fear among the population, which was exploited by the regime to justify its repression. Many people, including the Kazakh intelligentsia were liquidated as a fifth column of the enemy.

After the war the city developed further on such a scale that in the early fifties the city had changed completely in comparison with the 1920s. Now, it housed a population of half million educated people who could impress an American, Marshall MacDuffie, who visited Almaty in 1953, by their knowledge of foreign languages, and passionate involvement in international politics (MacDuffie 1955)<sup>27</sup> .

After 1950 the importance of Almaty increased, due the increase of the weight of Kazakhstan in the Soviet union.<sup>28</sup> From the late 1960s until the commencement of perestroika the city experienced the most expansive urbanisation and modernisation in its history. Most of the city's existing buildings and infrastructure were built in this time. Most people got new apartments, and new hospitals, nurseries, schools, colleges, universities, sport centres, parks, theatres, music halls, and state shops were created. The streets were asphalted and the living standards and the general level of education increased.

The introduction of perestroika injected a spirit of euphoria and optimism in city life and stimulated cultural and intellectual growth. But this spirit was overshadowed and very rapidly replaced with one of fear, insecurity with the arrival of economic crisis and ethnic tensions. The economic crisis expressed itself in the a shortage of consumer goods which hit very hard in 1988-1992. Since 1992 the shortage has been solved by the import of foreign goods, which has been encouraged by the lifting of the state monopoly over foreign trade. 1992 also marked also the beginning of a

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<sup>27</sup> He wrote:

"Here I had one lengthy free-for-all conversation with some young strangers which could not have been planned...A Russian girl, a Kazakh girl, three Russian men, and three Kazakh men were seated there. We began talking to one of them and pretty soon got into a general conversation with every body at the table, most of them aiming their remarks at me, we sat there for several hours. Some persons went away to keep appointments and were immediately replaced by others. Still more people came up and stood around us and joined in. The Russian girl was majoring in German, the Kazakh lass in chemistry; one Kazakh man was at law school, the other two at a teacher's college; One of the Russian men called himself "a dynamiter" and his two Russian colleagues worked on the railroad. Later four Kazakh men replaced the Russians; two were from an agricultural-research station and two were medical students. As the afternoon passed on, other people came up and tried their French, German, and English on me. ..They asked me questions about America..."Tell us about your skyscrapers. Are they like Moscow's?"..." What do the American people think of Soviet people?"...Then they belabored me; Being young, they pushed their questions harder than others, it seemed to me. Certainly they spoke at times with unusual animation. " Why don't you admit China to the united Nations? ...What about Ku Klux Klan In the United States?...Why did you delay the armistice in Korea? ..Why doesn't your government abolish the atomic bomb?....Why did England and the United states go into Korea so far from their homes? Why don't they stay out of Korea? ...." Why has America failed to ratify the Geneva convention against bacteriological warfare? .... What do you have to say about the use of bacteriological warfare by your troops? (MacDuffie 1955: 237 - 239)"

<sup>28</sup> The increase of the importance of Kazakhstan in the Soviet Union was related to three factors. Firstly, Kazakhstan provided a great deal of material for the European part of the union; Secondly, the Soviet union major space station was located in Kazakhstan; Thirdly, Kazakhstan became important militarily. Almaty was the centre of the Soviet Army in Central Asia and considerable numbers of the Soviet atomic missiles were stationed in Kazakhstan.

qualitatively new era in the history of the city.

To give a taste of this new era, let me describe an interesting phenomenon which strongly attracted my attention on my arrival in Almaty. The phenomenon was that I frequently heard loud rock music in the streets, coming from cars passing by. The drivers seemed to use loud music to call people's attention to something which they thought was spectacular about themselves and their four wheel drives. The spectacular thing, according to locals, was the style of the drivers and the types of their cars. They were young and well-dressed men and their cars were of foreign marks (Volvo, Audi, Toyota, BMW, Mercedes, etc.), which were considered expensive and luxurious. Indeed, these men and their cars were the objects of the dreams and admiration of so many young women and the objects of envy and hatred from the dispossessed, and also the sign of a new era: the era of commerce, consumerism and violence. The fact that people called these men interchangeably businessmen or Mafioso is suggestive.

After the lifting of the state monopoly over foreign trade there emerged thousands of illegal street traders, thousands of kiosks, tens of medium sized shops, and the large super market Sum which sold local and foreign goods. Many bazaars have been created and expanded rapidly, the largest of which is Chinese Bazaar (*Kitaiskii Bazaar, Barakholka*). This bazaar, located on the outskirts of the city, consists of hundreds of different chambers in which traders sell goods imported from China, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Central and Eastern Europe. Such goods are sold in tens of other minor bazaars inside the city as well. Consumer goods with famous marks from Europe, the USA, Japan and Korea were sold in special medium size shops or in the Sum supermarket. Volvo, Mercedes Phillips, Nike, Addidas, Sony and some other famous multinationals had opened their own outlets in the city.

Another, remarkable change in the city is the presence of multi-national companies, like Chevron, Traktebel and Shell all involved in exploring or exploiting the vast mineral resources in the republic.

An important part of the new commerce are numerous entertainment places (hotels, bars, sex clubs, restaurants, night clubs, fashion salons) which have been created since 1992 and supply services for rich locals and foreigners.

The life blood of all this new commerce is the US dollar. Commodities are priced in the USD and money is saved in dollars. In Almaty there are tens of places where one can change dollars. The Dollar as a symbol alongside the word USA and the USA flag, evokes contradictory feelings among different part of the population.

Some wear them on their tee shirts as symbols of power, freedom and success. Others, particularly the dispossessed, hate them as the symbols of evil degrading forces. To supply the demands of the new rich and their foreign counterparts, pompous new buildings like Hotel Ankara, Hotel Marcopolo, and Hotel Astana are built<sup>29</sup> .

## **Kazakhstan**

Kazakhstan is a vast country, the second largest post-Soviet republic after the Russian federation. It is located in Central Asia and has an area of 2,724,900 sq km and borders Russia, on the west, northwest, northeast and east, China on the southeast, Kirghizia on the South, Uzbekistan on the south and southwest, Turkmenistan and the Caspian Sea on the west. Its landscape includes mountains, vast deserts and steppes.

It has a population of 16.5 million and more than 100 different ethnic groups, but the largest ones are Kazakhs, Russians, Ukrainian, Germans, Uigurs and Koreans.

Its name is derived from the Kazakh ethnicity and Kazakhs primordial claims on its territory have been recognised constitutionally both in Soviet and Post-Soviet eras.

Kazakhs trace their origin to Turkic tribes of ancient times. However, according to Olcott (1987) the name Kazakh appeared in history in the 15th century with the formation of the Kazakh Khanate. The khanate expanded and consolidated in the 16th and 17th centuries, and finally disintegrated into three Zhuz (tribal alliances) in the 18th century: the Great *Zhuz* (*Ulu Zhuz*), the Middle *Zhuz* (*Otra Zhuz*) and the Small *Zhuz* (*Kichi Zhuz*). Each of these alliances consisted of several tribes and each tribes of several clans who owned pastures collectively.

The smallest unit of Kazakh society was *aul*: a group of nomadic families who were related to each other through kinship and moved together. While the main occupation of Kazakhs was pastoralism, to a limited degree they relied also on agriculture for their livelihood. So there were both nomadic and sedentary sections of the population.

Their nomadic life style entered a process of decline as a result of the expansion of the Russian Empire eastward from the middle of the 18th century. The inclusion of Kazakhstan into the Russian Empire went through several phases. In the first phase Russians did not subjugate Kazakhs by force. Instead, to get support against enemies from the East Abul' Khyr, the Kahn of the Small *Zhuz* asked to become a subject of Tsarina Anna Ioannovna. She accepted this request and Abul' Khyr and his sons swore allegiance to the Empress on 10 October 1731. The leaders

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<sup>29</sup> The first two are build by Turks and the third one by French.



of the Middle Zhuz Semke and Ablai Kahn were subjugated in 1732 and 1740 (Olcott 1987). Finally the Great Zhuz was subjugated during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by a combination of diplomacy and force.

In spite the formal declaration of loyalty by the Kazakh Khans, a tension over land developed between Russians and Kazakhs. The Russians banned Kazakhs from using the pasture lands in particular areas. However, the ban, which was in effect up until 1880, was periodically violated by Kazakhs, which provoked the Russian army to raid the Kazakh area. The conflict culminated with the Kazakh participation in the Pugachev revolt against the Russian tsarina Katherine (1773- 1774) (Olcott:ibid, 36 - 38). After the defeat of the revolt, Kazakh tensions with Russians intensified, because Kazakh pasture lands were confiscated by the Russian government and given to Russian peasants.

Another factor which led to further Kazakh resistance was the fact that from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards the Russians began to establish a colonial dual rule within Kazakh territory itself. Until that time Kazakhs had been self governing. The Kazakh Steppe was gradually divided into different sub-administrative units, each administrated by a local sultan who was controlled by the Russian authorities<sup>30</sup>. Such administrative policies among other measures of the colonial power, provoked the Kenisary revolt (1837 - 46). Kenisary was a leader of the Middle Zhuz whose members suffered severely by the confiscation of pasture lands on the one hand and paying of taxes on the other. He tried to revive the Kazakh Khanate (Olcott 1987).

After his defeat the Russians increased their pressure on Kazakhs partly through a policy of forced sedentarisation and partly through different waves of massive migration of Russian peasants who had been freed in the anti-serfdom reform of (1861) and now came to Kazakhstan in pursuit of land (Demko 1969.) These two were accompanied by the tightening of the Russian administrative control over the Kazakh steppe. In 1865 the Tsarist government abolished the previous dual government of Russian authority and Kazakh khans and replaced it with Russian direct rule .

All these measures exacerbated the Kazakh's political and economic situation, and provoked a a new wave of resistance which culminated in the Kazakh rebellion of

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<sup>30</sup> The duties of such administration, the costs of which were paid by Kazakhs, included allocating pastures to different *auls*, collecting taxes for the central government and providing security for the Russian traders in the Kazakh area.

1916. The rebellion was particularly fuelled by the further confiscation of Kazakh pasture land for a new wave of Russian peasant immigrants who had lost their collective rights to land in the Russian mainland as a result of the Stolypin agrarian reform (1906 - 1910). Then, in 1916 the Russian government attempted to conscript Kazakhs for the first world war. The Kazakhs reacted with an armed resistance of the whole steppe, which was ruthlessly repressed.

The encounter with colonialism brought about profound changes in the Kazakh ecological, social and cultural structures. Agriculture became an important part of the Kazakh economy, and alongside it a considerable sedentarised rural and urban population emerged among Kazakhs. The most striking changes were the emergence of the modern schools, a written language, books, newspapers and the rise of literacy (Batunsky 1994, Kriendler 1983). Indeed, the emergence and expansion of modern education among Kazakhs was pivotal to the rise of a modern Kazakh intelligentsia and the formation of a modern national consciousness (Kriendler: *ibid*). The person who played the key role in the spread of Kazakh schools and wrote many text books in Kazakh was Ibrahim Altysarin, a Kazakh intellectual. Altysarin alongside C. Valikhanov and Abai Kunanbaev have been classified as the three founders of the Kazakh enlightenment (*Jadidism*) (Kreindler: *ibid*). As a result a widespread Kazakh press emerged in both Russian and Kazakh which fostered early notions of a national identity. Alash Orda, the first Kazakh national movement, was a fruit of these modern developments. It emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century (Oraltay 1994). After the the fall of Tsarism in Russia, the Alash Party founded the Alash Orda government (1917 - 1922). During the civil war it cooperated with the whites against the Bolsheviks, but when its leaders felt that the whites were in ultimate disarray, they withdrew their support for the whites and surrendered to the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks while abolishing the Alash government, assimilated its leaders and functionaries in the new Soviet government in Kazakhstan.

Another major change which was a direct result of colonisation was the emergence of a settler community. In 1916 Russians constituted one third of the total population in Kazakhstan, and the majority in the northern parts ( Demko op. cit. : 169). According to Demko (*ibid*: 200 - 1) the migrant peasants were much more industrious, adventurous and innovative than their counterparts who stayed in Russia. Their agriculture was more trade-oriented and they were inclined to use machinery. Urban centres, trade roads, railroads, telegraph, schools, medical centres and churches were established in Kazakhstan. Moreover, as result of the trade-oriented agriculture

Kazakhstan became connected to the European part of the empire through roads and rail-roads. In addition to this, the Russians introduced to Kazakhs more diversified and intensive use of land and new methods of raising livestock (Demko: Ibid).

The integration of Kazakhstan into the USSR opened a new and very important era. The civil war and the resultant famine had caused a dramatic reduction in the population of people and livestock. Nominally, Kazakhstan remained independent until 1923 . In that year it became an autonomous republic within the RSFSR, and in 1936 it was upgraded to the status of full Soviet republic. The first priority of the Soviet authorities during 1920s was to consolidate the new political and pedagogical apparatuses of the Soviet state in Kazakhstan. The Alash Orda functionary exerted a great influence on the different institutions until 1928 when they were purged as the representatives of propertied classes. The Kazakh language was standardised in this decade, and became the language of instruction in Kazakh schools. Educating and bringing women to the public sphere was one of the most important policies which was implemented by the Bolsheviks in Kazakhstan and elsewhere in the Central Asia (Massell 1975; Akiner 1997).

The 1930s were a decade of stormy changes. Politically, not only the intellectuals affiliated to Alash Orda, but also most of the Kazakhs who had joined the Bolsheviks during the Civil war were eliminated. Economically, a policy of forced sedentarisation of nomadic Kazakh and forced collectivisation of livestock was implemented. Another important policy was the expansion of universal education for both genders. The Soviet authorities had a keen interest in education infrastructure as means of spreading their ideology and consolidating their power. To implement its modernising program, the Soviet Government encouraged the migration of experts of Slavic origin into Kazakhstan. This, in combination with the death of many Kazakhs as a result of famine and repression increased the Slavic proportion in the total population.

The outbreak of the second world world war influenced Kazakhstan in a very particular way in comparison with other republics of the USSR. While the republic contributed to the manpower in the fronts and provided food for soldiers, it generously hosted millions of refugees from the German occupied territories. Moreover, a considerable part of heavy industry was transported to and reassembled in Kazakhstan. Among the refugees were highly skilled workers, high ranking scientists and academics. This lifted the cultural and academic level of the republic. Indeed, the Kazakhstan Academy of Science was founded by such scientists in the 1940s.

Another war-related policy which influenced the ethnic combination in the coming decades was Stalin's exile of many different ethnic groups, like Chechens, Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans, to Kazakhstan.

By the death of Stalin (1953), in spite all the tragic events of the two previous decades, Kazakhstan had been transformed into a modern republic with a formidable native elite who were in charge in many key posts in the republic. Although, Stalin eliminated the old Kazakh elite, he was careful to create a new one and assert his hegemony over Kazakhs through this new elite. The most dramatic undertaking in the post-Stalin era was the implementation of the Virgin Land Project by Khrushchev in Kazakhstan. As result of this project, a vast area of the Kazakh steppe was ploughed and cultivated (1955 - 63). This project brought about major ecological and demographic changes. As millions of Russians, Belorussians and Ukrainians moved in connection with the program, Kazakhs became a minority in the republic, 29 % of the total population (Matley 1969).

Despite this, the period from 1960 until 1986 was marked by the expansion and consolidation of the Kazakh elite in the key institutions of the republic. Indeed, in this period Kazakhstan experienced rapid urbanisation and expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus and higher education. For the most of the period Dean Mukhmed Kunaev, a Kazakh from the Great *Zhuz*, was the secretary of the communist party. As he was a close friend of Leonid Brezhnev and a member of the politburo of the Soviet communist party, he enjoyed an enormous influence not only in Kazakhstan but also in Moscow. Indeed, he used this influence to promote Kazakh interests in general and those of his clients in particular. Kazakhs, like other so called "titular nationalities", enjoyed preferential access to higher education and higher administrative posts. Indeed, Kazakh patronage networks dominated higher education and administration at the end his rule (Masanov 1996a). But according to most of the non-Kazakhs with whom I spoke, Kunaev promoted the interests not only of Kazakhs, but of all people who lived in the republic. Indeed, today most people, regardless of ethnicity, looking to him as a hero and consider his time the golden age of prosperity. Indeed, it was in his time that Kazakhstan experienced the most rapid economic development in its history. An expansive construction program was carried out, cities expanded dramatically, many new cultural and educational centres were created and living standards increased considerably.

Since the commencement of glasnost and perestroika Kazakhstan has undergone major political, demographic, economic, cultural and ideological changes.

The major political changes were intensification of ethnic conflicts, Kazakhification of the state, the abolition of the communist party and independence.

From the mid 1970s ethnic tensions between Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs began to develop due to the combined effects of two factors. On the one hand, the percentage in the population of the Kazakhs increased because of a higher birth rate. On the other hand, more Kazakhs graduated from universities and demanded better jobs. This created dissatisfaction among Russians. The reversed direction of migration was caused partially by such states of mind among Russians. During 1976 - 1980, 414,000 Russian left Kazakhstan, and between 1979 and 1988 784,000 (Dunlop 1993: 47). Ethnic tensions entered a new chapter in Almaty on 17 December 1986. Gorbachev had sacked Kunaev as the first secretary of the communist party and appointed Kolbin, a Russian from outside Kazakhstan, in his place. A big crowd of Kazakh students demonstrated in Brezhnev Square and the protest was repressed by the Soviet Army. The event was related to the Kazakhification of the state. Ousting Kunaev was part of Gorbachev's anti-corruption campaign. Kunaev, like all other leaders of titular nationalities, had established his own network of patronage and used state resources for private ends.<sup>31</sup> As the majority of his clients were Kazakhs Gorbachev could not curtail corruption in Kazakhstan without cutting the ethnic patronage system. Indeed, after the repression of the demonstration, both central and republican communist authorities blamed Kazakh nationalism. Kolbin held office until 1989 and removed Kazakhs from some key posts, without being able to achieve Gorbachev's anti-corruption goals. Nazarbaev, who replaced Kolbin, followed the Kazakhification policy on a greater scale. Kazakhification took a new turn with the independence of Kazakhstan on 15 Dec 1991. Indeed, independence was imposed on Kazakhstan . Although Kazakhs demanded greater autonomy for Kazakhstan within the USSR and a greater role for Kazakhs within it they were not by any means separatist. In a referendum in March 1991 more than 80 % of the population of Kazakhstan voted for remaining in the Union. Indeed, when the USSR was dissolved by Yeltsin and the leaders of Ukraine and Belorussia, Kazakhstan still hesitated for a while before declaring independence.

Independence led to a further Kazakhification of the state by the declaring Kazakh as the state language and purging non-Kazakhs from the state institutions. Russians reacted to these policies by demanding an equal constitutional status for the

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<sup>31</sup> According to I. Svanberg Kunaev, and his associates had monopolised 247 hotels, 414 guest flats, 84 cottages, 22 hunting lodges, and 350 hospital beds for their personal use (1990).

Russian language and the right to double citizenship.

Another result of the dissolution of the USSR was that the communist party and other Soviet organs were abolished. However, such abolition did not question the position of the old Kazakh communist elite. The same elite, with greater power than before, continued to rule under a new guise. The best illustration of this is the fact the N. Nazarbaev, the first secretary of the communist party, was elected as the first president. But the Country did undergo considerable political change. A new constitution was ratified, the Parliament was established and wide range of NGOs emerged. In addition, although the government tries to have tight control over the press and political parties, the voices of opposition are often able to make themselves heard in public.

Another important political change has been the openness towards the outside world. The old strict regulations on travel abroad by citizens of the republic have been replaced by milder ones, but not completely removed. In order to travel abroad, the citizen still requires permission, which is given for a maximum of one year. To live abroad one still needs permission and must pay a fee. The same is true of foreigners travelling to or living in Kazakhstan. Although, they are required to register and always carry their passports, they get visas and permission to stay if they have legitimate reasons. Unlike the Soviet time, foreigners can rent apartments in any neighbourhood and communicate freely with locals.

The most remarkable demographic changes have been migration and increased mortality. We can distinguish between three different trends in migration : emigration of non-Kazakhs, in-migration of Kazakhs and refugees and internal migration. In 1994 alone about 480,839 people left Kazakhstan, around 70,000 migrated into the country and 330,000 migrated inside the country (Masanov1996b:2). 283,000 Russians, 92000 Germans, 37000 Ukrainian and others left (ibid). Around 310, 000 (93,7%) of migrants inside the country were Kazakhs who moved mainly from auls to cities.

Migration on this massive scale is the direct result of the post-Soviet change. The Kazakhification of the state, the growth of ethnic tensions, the economic decline and sinking living standards are among the main reasons of the migration of Russians, Germans and Ukrainian out of the country. Among these Kazakhification was mentioned by the Russians as the strongest motive for out migration. The collapse of the rural economy is the main reason behind the migrations of Kazakhs to the cities.

Kazakhstan experienced rapid economic change, the main element of which

were the privatisation of the state property, the emergence of private business and the abolition of the welfare state. Another radical economic change was the lifting of the state monopoly over foreign trade and investment in Kazakhstan.

The political openness toward the outside world has been accompanied by a cultural openness. While different cultural streams have found their ways into Kazakhstan, the dominant trend is the American style of consumerist culture. This type of culture has penetrated different spheres of life, particularly those of media, entertainment and consumer goods. Although, it has become a kind of symbolic capital for particular groups in society, it is consumed by a relatively limited proportion of the population. This is so, because commodities which represent this culture, films shown on TV excepted, are very expensive for the majority of the population. Yet cultural Americanism has provoked a cultural resistance among the dispossessed which is expressed in a strong nostalgia for “the Soviet Culture”.

The main official ideological change has been the emergence of a rhetoric of the market accompanied by a widespread cynicism. Opinion creators, policy makers and academics are involved in endless rhetoric, arguing that the market economy is the natural order of social life. They explain all the present social problems by the alleged repression of the market by the Soviet regime in the past. This market orthodoxy is combined with an unharnessed cynicism. A Kazakh friend of mine said:

The life stinks here. Everybody has become a Raskolnikov without his conscience. He killed an old woman but went mad for that. In Kazakhstan today you can kill a person for \$100 in the morning and in the evening drink the money with a prostitute in a restaurant without having any regret. You will sleep without nightmares. The next day you are prepared to kill any body for \$100. This is our life. It is not only what our elite and mafia do but everybody has the same mentality. Our people (nash narod) are starving but they are building their villas in Medeo, buying their Mercedes and spending money on prostitutes in restaurants.

The main social change in Kazakhstan has been the emergence of the new rich on the one hand and the dispossessed on the other. Another social change is the widespread presence of foreigners in Kazakhstan. A wide range of foreigners, overwhelmingly Turks and Americans, mostly business men, personnel of multi-nationals, NGOs and missionaries are present in Kazakhstan.

**BARDAK: ELEMENTS OF CHAOS.****Introduction**

Let us start with a long discussion I had with a Kazakh colleague and a friend of mine. The talk was recorded one summer evening over a bottle of local vodka. My friend, in spite of my suggestion preferred to speak in English rather than Russian. I have not tried to correct his English where it conveys meaning. In few cases I have changed words, knowing the person and assuming what he meant.

T. I want to explain something for you. You are an Austrian Citizen. Aren't you?

J. Yes I am.

T. Have you a flat there?

J. Yes I have.

T. How many room has your flat got?

J. One room but it is as twice as large this room.

T. Have you a car?

J. No I have not.

T. Have you a salary?

J. No, but I have a grant.

T. Have you social guarantees?

J. Yes, in Austria I would have.

T. Listen now, I will tell you a story. I take from you your flat and give a very old one instead, reduce your salary twice, take away all your privileges (social guarantees) like medical services, transportation and others, steal your savings from the bank and then suddenly declare you as an owner ( we both laugh loudly). You see! Can you understand this point?

J. It is interesting, is it what has happened in Kazakhstan?

T. Yes it is but it is interesting for you, it is a tragedy for me. I live in my wife's flat, but it is not relevant for our traditions, for our Muslim way of life. I have not got a flat but at the same time I am an owner!



Can you understand this point? My government announces: "You citizens of Kazakhstan are owners." But what do I own? I have not got a car but I am proud of having two bicycles. I have no right to rest, I have got the right for the rest, but you see what rest can I speak about? My salary is only enough for the travel costs to Issyk-kul"<sup>1</sup>, it is not sufficient to the..( not understandable in the tape). Is it a life for us? So the government suddenly and even constitution proclaims you are free! Now you can do everything you want! But at the same time I am deprived of everything. But at the same time I am told that I have every thing. Is there any sense in this?

J. Madness!

T. ( with confirming voice) Madness! This gathering this evening was an example of madness. A lot of people gathered to discuss things that they have not any idea about. About private rights, ownership. Yet they imagine themselves as owners, but what do they own? What do they have? No one asks them. So, I am an owner, I am proclaimed as a citizen of a capitalist country with a prosperous future. Now I have the right to own my own flat but where is it? I just own air. Is this understandable from your position?

J. It is very interesting for me.

T. No! No! It is not interesting. For you, it is very interesting, because, you know when you get back to Austria your flat is waiting for you. You have your social guarantees and your expenses are paid.

J. But it has become difficult in Austria as well.

T. You are awaited there. So it is interesting for you. You came here, you see here, you are surprised, removed, but you cannot feel what is going under my skin unless we exchange our skins, that I become an Austrian citizen and you become a Kazakh. Then you can clarify your key questions. I am very friendly with you and other foreigners.....I wonder why did you come here? I wonder if you can get anything on our life without the experience we had before?

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<sup>1</sup> A lake in Kirgizia, where people usually spent their holidays on its bank.

J. No, but I want that people to share that experience with me. Because of that I want to hear people's life stories and their views on the past and present.

T. Ok.

J. Do you want some more vodka?

T. No, if I want I will tell you. So you see, before we had our general secretary of the communist party, and we felt all his decrees and all his regulations. We often complained openly that in spite of the fact that we had everything we were poor. But real life shows that before we thought that we had nothing, but at the same time we had everything. But now we have got everything, we have got Snickers, Finlandia, Absolut, Smirnov, skirts and shorts (he mentions all these goods with a derogatory and almost hateful tone), but have nothing. We had everything but we complained that we hadn't. Now we have all goods on the market but we cannot buy them. We have everything in shops but we have lost our way of life. In the Soviet time we had our money, our strength, our aspirations but now we have nothing. We are as corpses, we are moving corpses and this is very awful and regretful in comparison with the Soviet time.

J. What did you have in the Soviet time which you have not now?

T. You see, may be I couldn't do anything but at the same time my government always took care of my prosperity. Some of us waited for a government flat five years, some of us ten years , some fifteen years , but it was a real guarantee that we received the apartments, but now we are avoided. ....

J. In the Soviet time in spite of the shortages you had everything, but now you feel that you have nothing. Could you explain this for me?

T. Before we had the general secretary, but now we have our president. Everyone says that our president is an outstanding politician but he doesn't exist for me. I remember Brezhnev our general secretary.

J. Brezhnev or Kunaev?

T. No, Brezhnev. I mean the former Soviet Union. I didn't know him in

person. I have seen him in person only once when he came here, but he existed for me. But now I have the possibility to watch our elected president, to read him and to see him every day. But he doesn't exist for me. In that time we had little but it was real, today we have too much but not real. No, now it is half and half. You know we are going for one month to the U.K. for a training teacher course. In the Soviet time this was not possible. But the cost of the travel is equal to the price of one room flat in Almaty.

J. How much is the cost of travel?

T. 4, 000 - 5, 000 USD. If someone tells me do you want to go to England to be trained there, or do you do want me to buy a flat for you with the money? I immediately will answer I do not want to go anywhere, I just want an one room flat. Because, if I could receive a flat instead of this travel I would be sure that I would die in my own flat. Although I would not be able to change this flat for a two room flat I would be grateful.

J. What about the Soviet time? If you had a one room flat, had you the possibility to get larger flats?

T. Oh, yes, yes we had such possibilities. We had real guarantees, each person was guaranteed a flat by the government. You see some people in our department who are praising that fact that we are going to England, they say our times are very good, but one of them has a house and another one has two flats. You know I am looking for a job abroad in order to buy a flat here.....On fifteenth of June I will become 45 years old. So far I have not got my own flat. I have a piano in one flat, I have a grand piano in another flat, and I have a family which lives in the third flat. I have not got enough space to collect them in one place. I have got a library, a very good library, I have a very rich collection of records played by world renowned outstanding pianists. I cannot have them in the apartment. I cannot pass them to my son. I play piano very far from home. I want my son to listen when I play. I want him to watch me when I am playing, I want him to receive the essence of my

life. You see this is a tragedy for me.

.....You were puzzled when I told you that our ex chair was Svetlana Galevna. But the first child of my parents who died early was called Svetlana as well. They called her Svetlana after Stalin Daughter.

Actually my mother received a gold star as mother heroine for giving birth to ten children, but in reality she gave birth to eleven children, however Svetlana was never counted.

J. Did they like Stalin?

T.(With an excited voice and passionate tone) They liked him, they adored him, it was true, it was truth. (rhetorical tone) Can you compare Stalin with Gorbachev and Yeltsin, ha? Can you answer me sincerely, are they equal politicians or no? Please be sincere, can you answer me or no?.

J. Ah.. I am interested in your answer.

T. It was a fate that my parents lived in Stalin's time. It was a happy fate. They lived in a time with high values and a great morality and honesty. People were devoted to government and the government to people,... (a proud tone) My father was a communist, a real communist. ....They did not know what a bribe was. They did know about diverse ways of making benefits for themselves. They always did as they taught. It was a usual way; and moral norms were estimated very highly in that time. I want to escape from this life. All my brothers and sisters have higher degrees and all of us are living strictly on our state salaries and in result in poverty. When I see some young vulgar men who have got no brains but drive Mercedes and other expensive cars, people who have got no values are prosperous, my brain explodes. I cannot understand why the people who are outstanding scientists and artists live in poverty but these types of people can have luxurious lives.....We had a great army, we had a great empire, we had a great influence, we had a great capital, our people had great guarantees.

J. Soviet people or Kazakhs?

T. (With a very proud and emphasising voice) No, Soviet people, I

always spoke of the Soviet people. The fact that we were the Soviet people made us very proud. Now some part of our nation, those who have become prosperous, are very proud. They can be proud. (With emphasising and very pathetic voice) It is very painful! It is very painful. My brother is an outstanding pianist, he plays in a restaurant, is it fair? My sister is an outstanding scientist, she has no possibilities for continuing her scientific work. We are honest. We cannot join a mafia or another organisation.

T.'s attitudes and feelings toward the post-Soviet changes, in the discussion above, are typical of those among who feel dispossessed by change. In this chapter I will represent a general overview of the post-soviet conditions through the eyes of those who have become dispossessed. The most over-arching and common word people used to describe the situation was *bardak*. It literally means brothel, but the figurative meaning is chaos or total disintegration. *Bardak* was understood as the opposite of life under the USSR and is considered to be a result of the disintegration of the USSR. The following were described as the main elements of such chaos. First, the rapid accumulation of wealth in few hands through supposedly immoral methods such as privatisation, manipulation of credits, bribery and extraction of tributes. Second, the disintegration of society as a moral community, emergence of lawlessness and widespread violence. Third, the destabilisation of families as a result of new sexual practices.

People's reactions towards the chaos are expressed in two ways: a strong nostalgia for the Soviet time which is expressed through feelings of loss; and a conspiracy theory.

In the following sections I will discuss wealth, lawlessness, loss and conspiracy theory. Sexuality will be touched upon briefly here and discussed thoroughly in chapters 3 & 4.

### **Accumulation of wealth in a few hands**

The post soviet change has been characterised by the rapid accumulation of wealth on one hand and poverty on the other. The new rich (*novye Russkie, novarish, novye Kazakhstansy*) are accused of collecting their wealth through the following methods: dissolution of the welfare state, stealing and selling public property through privatisation, manipulation of the credit system, creation of monopolies, taking bribes and extracting tribute, drug trafficking and the creation of a transnational prostitution business. I was told the new rich come from three

sources: the old partycrats (*partikraty*) (high echelons of the communist party and Komsomol), old black marketeers (*spekulianty*) and new Mafioso. They dominate the rest of the population by the combined use of political power and violence exerted through the inter-twined networks of state officials and mafia.<sup>2</sup>

These have, accordingly, resulted in mass poverty, mass sexual labour<sup>3</sup>, child sexual labour, child labour, a dramatic expansion of alcoholism, divorce, despair and suicide<sup>4</sup> for the majority of people. In this sense, the dispossessed consider their interests diametrically and antagonistically opposed to those of the new rich. As result they make a clear dichotomy between themselves, labelled interchangeably as we (my), us (*nam*) people (*narod*), labouring people (*rabotnashchie liudi*), below (*vniz*) and the new rich, labelled interchangeably as they (*oni*), the bosses (*nachal'niki*), the leadership (*nachal'stvo, rukovodstvo*) and the new rich (*novye bogatye*). The interesting fact is when the dispossessed counter-poses the *narod* to the new rich, these concepts are not merely applied to the population in the post-soviet Kazakh territory but to the population of the former Soviet territory as whole. In this sense the dispossessed and elite in Kazakhstan are considered respectively as sections of the dispossessed and elite in the whole former Soviet territory.

This kind of the dichotomising consciousness has its root in the fact that both the emergence of the new rich and the impoverishment of the majority of people have happened almost overnight, and through extra-economic methods used by the state officials and mafia. In the following I will look on three of these methods, often mentioned by the dispossessed.

### **Privatisation as theft**

Up to the end of 1996, 15 101 enterprises were privatised in the three following ways or combination of them: the management and workers bought the enterprise, or there was the direct sale to buyers, or sale through auction (*Kazakhstan Economic Trends*, fourth quarter 1996: 156). However, in January of the same year the preferential treatment of workers in relation to privatisation was abolished. Now two privatisation methods remain: direct sale to investors and auctions. Moreover, the social guarantees for the employees of the private

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<sup>2</sup> For an example of the patterns of co-operation between bureaucrats and mafia in the Post-Soviet context see S. Handelman (1995). In Kazakhstan the same mechanisms are at work, but, with the major difference that in Kazakhstan the control of the state officials over Mafia is much stronger than in Russia. Thus, armed clashes between different fractions of Mafia are not as widespread as in Russia.

<sup>3</sup> for reasons behind the expansion of prostitution, see Bridger, *et al*, (1996). Although the book is on Russia, the economic and social problems, identified as the causes of prostitution are similar to those in Kazakhstan.

<sup>4</sup> For the scale and reasons behind suicide in Kazakhstan see Buckley (1997).

enterprises was abolished at the same month (ibid: 61).

From the point of view of the dispossessed, privatisation is stealing public property. Such opinion is well represented by the following statement made to me by a Russian woman worker on the shop floor, where I did field-work: "Privatisation is stealing people's property (*Privatizatsiia etovorovstvo sobstvennost i'naroda*)." The reasons given for such a judgment were of two kinds. Firstly, the dispossessed thought the privatisation of the state property was in itself a theft. Secondly, they argued that all three ways in which privatisation was carried out were corrupt. Let us look at each of these argument very briefly.

The idea that the privatisation of the means of production was theft seemed to me to be an ideological remnant from the Soviet era; however, the dispossessed used the idea primarily not from ideological concerns but from economic ones. They usually associated privatisation with abolishing the welfare state, tightening discipline in the workplace, restricting workers' rights to use products and means of production for private ends, redundancy of workers on a massive scale, postponing the payments of wages and liberalisation of prices.

As a result of crisis and reforms a universal welfare - state has been completely demolished overnight. The number of needs which were covered by the Soviet welfare system exceeded those of the most advanced welfare- state in the West, namely Sweden. Lifetime employment was granted in the Soviet Union but not in Sweden. Food, rent, transport, telephones, sport, art, and other forms of entertainment constituted a smaller portion of salaries in Almaty than in Stockholm. Health care, education and child-care were almost free of charge. As Humphrey (1983) and Clarke (1992) suggest, the welfare-state provisions were delivered primarily through workplaces, which provided labourers with various services: housing, nursery, resting facilities, clinics, pensions and travel. Both on the factory shop floor and in the neighbourhood, workers told me that their bosses (*nachial'niki*) were not committed to the labour force anymore and spent the income of the enterprises on purchasing luxurious cars, building villas for themselves and putting the money in the banks abroad. Most of the factories not only stopped delivering any service to their workers, but did not even pay the salaries in time. While managers justify this by resorting to external factors such as lack of money and the economic crisis, workers consider it a deceit (*obman*).

Another reason for workers dismissing privatisation was that they thought that it had undermined their control over the labour process and also their possibilities to use means of production and products for private ends. Ticktin (1992) argues that the Soviet workers exerted a considerable control over the

labour process. In the post soviet time privatised factories enforced discipline. The sharpening discipline is related to and enforced by the mass redundancies. Now fewer workers must do the duties previously done by more. The following event highlights this shift in discipline. In the 9th of October 1996, Aleksaner Petreovich Terletskii, a 56 year old Russian worker poured a bottle of petrol over himself, and set light to himself and burned to death in front of the office of the Belgian multi-national company Traktebel. The event received high coverage in the Russian speaking media and great attention in my neighbourhood.

The man was working as a driver in one of the Almaty, energy stations which were bought by the Belgian multi-national Traktebel. Somebody had stolen his wallet ,which contained his driver license and his salary. He said to a colleague that he would go to the police station to make a report. After making the report he went to his job, but was told by the manager of the station that he was sacked for leaving his work without permission. He resorted to the other authorities without any result. Finally, he became so desperate that he burned himself in protest. As result of this event Traktebel, already feared and hated in my neighbourhood, was discredited further (see below). People were particularly furious because the man had been working for the station for a long time and had only two years to go to his pension. A Russian unemployed electrician, who gave me the news first, was of the opinion that now directors in the privatised companies treat workers as slaves (*oni otnosiatsia k liudiam kak k rabam*). Then, he added: this is chaos (*Eto bardak*). According to him, in the Soviet time absence for sickness or even drinking at a workplace would not cause somebody to lose his job. The huge army of unemployed made workers docile in relation to management. Aleksander (see chapter 2), told me that they could not protest against the managers, because they would reply, 'thousands like you are waiting outside the factory door.'

The methods, by which privatisation was carried out were considered by the dispossessed to be ways the managers and the rest of elite had stolen public property. As Humphrey (1991) and Clarke & Kabalina (1995) have argued in the case of Russia, the local managers and other local authorities had become de facto owners of enterprises during the collapse of the Soviet state (1988 -1991).

They used their new powerful positions , in the absence of any central control, to collect wealth by illegal methods. They sold raw materials and other products illegally abroad and purchased and imported consumer goods illegally and sold them for very high prices in the black market. Another effective method was hoarding. According to most of people I talked with, during this period people in Kazakhstan experienced almost famine conditions. While the state shops were



empty, one could purchase everything on the black market for prices much higher than official ones. Such illegalities were not practised individually, but by the networks of managers, black marketeers and top bosses of the communist party. The new rich, originating from the old Soviet elite, began to take form in 1988.

The wide formal privatisation started in 1991. As result, and regardless of the legal forms of privatisation, the elite networks were the main beneficiaries. In the companies, owned by cooperatives of the staff, I was told by Aleksander (chapter 3), managers had begun to buy worker's shares or to tell workers that they must make sacrifices and accept the postponement of their wages and payment in kind. In relation to the other two types of privatisation, there was a widely shared opinion that the enterprises were either sold to friends and relatives for nominal prices, or sold underpriced for high bribes.

Among different ethnic elites Kazakhs are the main beneficiary of privatisation. They used their monopoly over political power to monopolise the economy of the republic (Olcott 1997: 117). They managed this through manipulation of the voucher system. People were given vouchers which they could deposit in holding companies. These companies could buy up to 20% of large state enterprises which would be privatised. From 170 such companies which were registered, 20 companies accumulated 60% of vouchers, another 19 got 20%. The largest single holding, Butia-Kapital, which accumulated 10% of vouchers belongs to a Kazakh, named Buta (Olcott 1997: 117-118). People believed widely that Buta was a relative of Nazarbaev. Although, as Olcott (ibid, 118) suggests, it is difficult to verify whether such a claim is true or not, it alludes to a widespread nepotism through which the Kazakh oligarchy appropriated state property.

People were particularly sensitive about the foreign buyers. When it became known, in the spring 1996, that Belgian multi-national Traktebel had bought Almaty Energy, people became both furious and afraid. A Kazakh woman, cursing both foreigners and the government, said: " People say that the Belgian will cut off the gas if the bills are not paid on time. But how can people pay bills on time while the payment of salaries is postponed for months?" Then she added: " Our leaders sell our enterprises to foreigners for bribes. They sold the Almaty Tobacco to Americans, the Karagandy Steel to English people and now they sell the gas to Belgians. This is shameful (*stydno*). " As this example illustrates, not only those who worked in enterprises, but people in general, opposed privatisation. They were particularly afraid for the privatisation of electricity, water, transport and health care, which they thought in combination with the liberalisation of prices would increase the level of their poverty.

The only area in which the dispossessed seemed to have benefited from privatisation was the privatisation of apartments. In the neighbourhood where I lived most of the people owned their apartments. These were privatised in 1992. The state had given people coupons in proportion to the numbers of working years (*trudovoi stazh*) of each individual. People could either sell the coupons or buy their own apartments. Most of people in the neighbourhood had chosen to buy. However, although people liked the idea of owning the apartments, all of the families, with the exception of four well off families, thought privatisation had brought trouble rather than comfort. Firstly, as a result of privatisation the costs of rent, electricity, gas and telephone had increased. In the Soviet time all these costs amounted to 1/10 or 1/20 of official family income, while in the September 1996 they swallowed half of the salaries. Secondly, now they had to repair the apartments themselves. In the fifth floor of the house in which I lived, water leaked onto a Russian family each time it was raining. They did not have the money for repairs. Another case was tension between two neighbours. Those who lived in the second floor complained that water was leaking from the bathroom of the apartment above them on the third floor. The third floor neighbours repaired the bathroom temporarily but water leaked again and again. Although the two parties quarrelled several times, they held the state responsible for this. The third floor neighbour told me that in the Soviet time he could manage to repair the apartment by giving (*podarit*) someone a bottle of vodka, but now he needed at least \$200 to repair the bath room, money he hadn't got .

Moreover, the arbitrariness of the state officials in combination with the ambiguities of land ownership was a source of fear for those who owned houses and apartments. A Russian, engaged in a small business, who had exchanged his apartment by paying some money to the owner of the house said: "I own this house but the land beneath it belongs to the state. Should they want to get rid of Russians they may tell me, the land is ours, take your house and go wherever you like." An Uzbek complained in the same way: " We can afford to buy a house or build our own, but we are afraid of this racketeer state (*reket gosydarstvo*). They may expropriate your house and property for any reason."<sup>5</sup>

### **Manipulation of the credits**

There was great concern among the dispossessed about the way credits were handled. A Russian man told me the following story when the

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<sup>5</sup> Although, according to a Russian lawyer, whom I consulted, the state officials could not confiscate anybody's house or apartment so easily, such statements show people's fear of the arbitrariness of the state officials.

## Kazkomertsbank was declared bankrupt:

For opening a new bank I need credits from the central Bank. But those in power lend money only to their own friends and relatives for opening a new bank. When the bank is opened, credits are divided between people who have established the bank together. Bank managers give credit to people, who they know will not pay back the money. Say, I am a bank manager, then some high official in the central bank will call me and ask me to lend \$ 1000,000 to a nephew of his to establish a business, I have no choice but to do it, because my bank is dependent on the central bank. Then a powerful minister calls and asks for a loan for his nephew, and I lend the money. As I constantly lend money to the cousins and nephews of ministers and managers, I know that my bank will become bankrupt very soon. Then I lend money to my own cousins and nephews as well. Of course, I will not forget my own interests. I open my own secret bank account in Switzerland and transfer millions of dollars there and then declare the bank bankrupt. In these ways while the manager and the members of the state racket (*reket*) have increased their wealth, the ordinary clients are the losers, they will never get back their money.

The scenario might be exaggerated, but during my stay local newspapers reported several cases of huge sums of money disappearing without trace. The greatest sum I know about was reported by Charles Clover in The Financial Times. He reported:

The lack of an independent judiciary has made it impossible to fight corruption, "pervasive throughout the government", according to the State Department report. Huge sums have disappeared from government coffers over the past few years, such as \$500 m payment by US oil company Mobil, for a share of Tengiz oil field in west Kazakhstan (Financial Times , Wednesday June 17 1998: I).

## Bribery

A rule of thumb in Almaty was that nothing could be done without contacts or bribes. A well-known Kazakh professor and opponent of government policies, put it to me as follows:

The system is corrupt from top to bottom. Each ministry is leased out according to its potential for taking bribes. For example, if the minister of education must pay \$100, 000 a year, the minister of justice or those in charge of customs must pay twice this. Then the minister of education appoints his own clients (*klienty*) as directors of different universities for different sums of money depending of the status of each university. Then the directors appoint the deans of each faculty, and the deans appoint their friends and relatives as chairs of different departments, professors, lecturers and so forth who take bribes from students. They then take a part for themselves and pass the rest above.

The professor's statement might be simplified and exaggerated. But most of people I spoke to shared the idea that bribery was a main source of income for the elite and for state officials in general.

Bribe (*vzятка*) is officially defined as money or other valuables given to a state

official as payment for illegal services (Ozhegov & Shvedova 1996: 78). In popular understanding in Almaty bribery is seen as an element of corruption.

The following are some of people's stories about corruption in education and trade.

### **Education and corruption**

Saken and Anora are both Kazakh. They are students, married to each other and come from south. Their four year old son lives with Anora's family in the *aul*. They have a precarious economic life. Each of them receives a small grant. In addition their families contribute meat, but to survive they work at nights for another Kazakh, a former class mate of Saken, in his kiosk. They receive 5% of sales each night. Now, the interesting fact is that Saken and the owner of the kiosk both completed their first degree two years before. While Saken continued to study, because he could not find a job, his classmate, Norlan, found a job as a customs officer through his brother who was the dean of the faculty in which Saken was a student. Saken told me that the brother knew some boss in the customs and bribed him with \$2000. I asked him where did the dean get the money? (I asked the question, because the official salary of a dean is so low that it is hardly sufficient for survival, let alone saving money). Smiling, Saken told me that their dean had a lot of income. Firstly, many students fail the entry exam but are admitted because they come from rich families and pay high bribes. Secondly, many students pay to pass their exams. The rate for a *zacet*<sup>6</sup> is 500 Tenge and for an exam up to \$100. In addition, there are students from wealthy families, who do not study well but want to have red diplomas (*Krasnyi diplom*). The rate for a red diploma is up to \$ 500. The job as customs officer had paid off very quickly. While Norlan's official salary was 2000 Tenge ( \$34 ), according to Saken he had bought two cars, two apartments, one for his family and one to rent, and had bought two kiosks. I met him, his wife and his children each morning and I spent the night in the kiosk with Saken and Anora. They came there to count the night's sales and bring goods to replace the ones that had been sold. They all were well dressed in foreign clothes. Saken estimated Norlan's total income from bribes from customs, from Kiosks and the rent of apartment at around \$ 6000 a month.

The importance of this figure becomes evident if we compare it with Saken and Anora's total income on the one hand and the minimum wage on the other. They earned \$100 each month from the kiosk and received respectively \$30 and \$18 as scholarships, a total of \$148. The minimum wage was 1700 Tenge (\$24) in

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<sup>6</sup> They mark the results of exams in two ways. In some subjects the results could be passed (*zacet*) or failed (*ne zacet*). In other subjects they are graded with marks (*ottsenka*) from 0 to 5. They call the first way *zacet* and the second *ekzamen*.

the third quarter of 1996 (Scheremet 1996: 36). Norlan's income was 40 times greater than Saken and Anora's total income and 250 times greater than the minimum wage. Although, according to Saken, he was not at all a rich man by Almatian standards, the ways he was collecting his fortune is a good illustration of the methods the new rich use to accumulate wealth.

Although for getting a lucrative job one must pay bribes, one cannot get the job only by offering bribes. One must have the right contacts as well. There is great competition for such jobs, and the job is given to a friend or acquaintance who can be trusted in the illegal deals in the work place. I asked Saken: "Why don't you apply for a job in the customs? Can't you borrow \$ 2000 from friends and relatives and bribe someone, get the job and then pay them back?" His answer was, that it was not so easy to get a job in customs. Many were prepared to pay more than twice the money his classmate paid for his job, but they won't get it. "They give the jobs to their relatives (*rodstvenniki*) and acquaintances (*znakomyi*). They do not trust strangers (*ne znakomyi*)." Then he added that a boss in customs was a friend of the dean, and because of that his brother got the job. He admits the customs' boss's relatives to the university and takes care that they get good marks and red diplomas and the boss gives a job to his brother.

I heard similar stories frequently from different sources. Zhulduz and Dana the sex workers we will meet in chapter 4 paid money to pass their exams. A university student told me that all eight persons in his group, including himself had been admitted through bribes and contacts and they often joked about it. He himself had been admitted through a cousin of his mother, who worked at the university. He said that they paid money, gave expensive drinks and a leather jacket to the cousin, which he passed to someone on the admissions committee.

Taking of bribes is a open practice. In the university where I taught a foreign student told me that he and another foreign student had answered all the questions correctly, but the teacher had said: "You are foreigners, before giving you *zacet* each of you must buy me ten bottles of soft drink (*sok*)." They had bought the drinks.

Another Kazakh student told me a funny story:

I had not prepared myself well for the history exam in the first year. When the teacher, who was an alcoholic realised this, he said: 'Dry wine! dry wine!' I was confused and did not understand what he meant, but the other students present in the room burst into laughter. Then he wrote something on a bit of paper and passed it to me. I read: 'two bottles of dry wine for the *zacet*.' I agreed, collected 200 Tenge, bought the wine and passed the exam.

Another story, was told by a young Kazakh girl in the neighbourhood about her former class tutor (*Klassnaia rukovoditel'nitsa*). She had told the whole class openly and collectively, that if they wanted to get good marks they should buy her a TV, a crystal chandelier and a video. They collected the money and bought these things. Then she forced them to help with the repair of her apartment. The girl said that they were surprised to see her expensive furniture, dishes, carpets and curtains.

Students told me that even allocations of grants abroad were taking place through contacts and bribes. A Russian young woman told the following story:

There are scholarships for language courses in Germany, for three or six months in Germany. The applicants send their documents through the ministry of education to Germany. The people in Germany choose some students. I and some others of my class mates applied for the scholarships but never received an answer from Germany. Those who were sent were not the best students. In Germany they will not discriminate against us, because they do not know us. Those in the ministry of education have not sent our documents to Germany at all, otherwise we should have received replies that we had failed in the competition. We went to the German House here in Almaty and asked them about why we had not received replies. They avoided giving us an answer. It is possible that the German house is co-operating with the Ministry of Education.

She added that they had learned from one of her teachers that those who want to go to Germany must pay \$ 300 to \$500. To whom the money should be paid was a secret, but those who wanted to pay would know to whom and how pay the money.

Although the people who told me the stories above suggested corruption was universal, there were teachers who were strongly against bribery. Among my acquaintances there were six who taught in different universities and resented bribery very strongly. "T", whose conversation with me began this chapter was offered bribes several times, but in spite of his poverty he refused. He told me that he would not accept bribes even if his family starved. Another young Kazakh historian who taught at *Kazgu* (the Kazakh State University) had protested to the dean of his faculty in the annual meeting of the staff by saying: 'Why are most of the students in this faculty illiterate? According to what criteria do you admit them?' The dean had answered that it was not his business to intervene in the admission procedure. Later the dean had called him to the office and had told him that he had committed an official offence and must apologise officially by letter or lose his job. He asked me for advice. I said I really did not know. He avoided apologising. I do not know what happened to him, because I left Kazakhstan. In addition there were students who were admitted without paying bribes, because they had scored high marks in the entry exams and passed their exams without paying bribes.

## Corruption in trade

Let us look at another area in which, people told me that corrupt methods were used for the accumulation of wealth, namely trade.

This section is based mainly on talks with Roslan, a Kazakh man who owned a kiosk in the neighbourhood and had been involved in trade since 1992, and street traders.

A main element of the post soviet change was the emergence of the private trade: illegal street trade, suit-case trade, kiosks, middle size shops and wholesale trade. According to locals, all these are sources of illegal income for state officials and the mafia. Let us look at each from the bottom to the top.

In my neighbourhood each illegal trader paid the police officers. Each person paid 30 Tenge a day, except the butchers who paid 300 Tenge a day. The kiosk owners did not like the illegal traders who sold the same goods they sold legally. The police, aware of this tension, had suggested to the kiosk owners that if each of them paid 1000 Tenge a day to the police the latter would prevent the street traders from selling goods around the kiosks. But the kiosk owners found the fee too expensive.

Kiosks started to mushroom in Almaty in 1992. At the time of field work thousands existed in Almaty. My neighbourhood had five kiosks. According to one of the owners, they usually had to pay bribes to:

Hygiene officers (*sanepidemstantsia*), fire inspectors (*pozharnaia inspektsiia*), tax inspectors (*nalogovaia inspektsiia*), the organisation of struggle against economic crimes (*OBEP*), the local police (*uchastkovyi militsioner*) and the mafia.

Although the first five offices are legal institutions, they share, according to Roslan, two attributes with the mafia: a) their representatives, like those of the mafia networks, act in arbitrary ways, with the difference that they resort to law and Mafioso to violence; b) they constituted nodal points in wider overlapping networks of influence. An owner of a kiosk must pay them the sum of the money they ask for, unless he is well connected with influential individuals within such networks, regardless of whether he runs his kiosk in accordance with legal requirements or not. As they interpret the law arbitrarily, they can always find something wrong and either close the kiosk or fine it huge sums. There is no point in an owner taking a state official to a court, because the official in question does not act individually but as member of a network, well connected to networks within the judiciary system. The sum of money paid to each of these persons, Roslan said, is negotiated individually, depending on the owner's connections. To show me how it worked,

Roslan took me to the tax department in our district. There, on a wall of a long corridor in front of the rooms of the inspectors, hung long lists, each containing hundreds of names. People were standing around each list, searching it. He told me that the lists consisted of the names of the private businesses in our district and their respective inspectors. And the people who were searching the lists were owners of such businesses, trying to find out their own tax inspectors and negotiate the amounts of tax and bribe money they must pay. The negotiation process and the sums in question depend on the owner's contacts. If he has influential contacts, he mentions them to the inspector, and then the inspector will contact the mentioned person(s). If he finds them powerful enough and they confirm that the owner is their person, then the owner, depending on the influence of his patron, may avoid paying at all or pay a much smaller sum. Roslan says, inspectors take part of the money for himself and pass the rest above. Each inspector has to pass a minimum amount of money to his bosses each month or he will be sacked. If an inspector avoids taking part in the system, he will be sacked and then disappear. According to Roslan, the relations with the other authorities mentioned above are negotiated in the same way. He himself did not pay either the police or the mafia but paid the tax inspectors and OBEP 3000 Tenge (\$ 50) each monthly, the hygiene officer 700 Tenge (\$11) and the fire inspector 300 Tenge (\$5).

Concerning the mafia he said:

When I bought the kiosk a young Kazakh man came to me and asked whether I needed a roof (krysha) (protection). I told him no thanks I have got one, and mentioned the name of a relative of mine who is a boxer. He said I will speak with him and went a way, and they never bothered me again. It is the way it works. They all know each other and cooperate, the police and racketeers respect each other. If somebody says he is my person, don't bother him, the others say let us negotiate. They usually solve conflicts peacefully. But if anyone has not got a roof and still avoids paying the mafia, then they will either burn his kiosk or beat him.

Pointing towards the local police station, he said:

I had a problem with them for a while, they took from me each day beer, vodka, juice and other things for around 1000 Tenge. I couldn't do anything until I found a contact through my brother in GSK.<sup>7</sup> The GSK man went to the police station and told them he is my person, don't harass him (*ne trogajte ego*). Since then they have stopped coming here for a year. But recently, they have begun again to tell me that I should go to the police station. But I will not do it. They can't do anything, I have got my contact.

The suit-case traders in addition to those mentioned above pay to customs officers. As result of the post-soviet change thousands of people, mainly women, are involved in suitcase trade abroad. They can pass up to 20 Kg of luggage

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<sup>7</sup> State secret committee ( *Gosudarstvennyye sekretnye komitet*)



through customs without paying tariffs, for each extra kilograms they must pay tariffs, but instead of paying tariffs they bribe the custom officers. Bribery in customs was a hot topic for discussion both newspapers and the public for a while.

However, the big fishes for the customs officers and others mentioned above are the wholesale importers. To illustrate the importance of these importers, Roslan with my help listed of the origin of goods which he sold in his kiosk in the following order:

**Germany:** Tampons, two sorts of white wine, red wine, two sorts of bottled vodka, cans of vodka, chocolate, biscuit.

**Hungary:** Wine.

**Italy:** Wine, liquor (Amarata), Tuna (beef).

**Bulgaria:** Wine.

**Israel:** Vodka.

**UK:** Vodka, gin.

**Greece:** Vodka, brandy.

**Austria:** Vodka.

**Latvia:** Vodka.

**Kazakhstan:** Beer, three sort of vodka, brandy.

**Finland:** Two sorts of vodka.

**Chili:** Yupi, zuko.

**India:** Tea.

**Switzerland:** Nescafe, chocolate.

**Brazil:** Coffee.

**France:** Sweets, wine.

**China:** Glue.

**Holland:** Two sorts of beer.

**Turkey:** Juice, pistachio, nuts.

**Iran:** Three sort of juice.

**Russia:** Tuna fish, three sorts of vodka

**Poland:** Shampoo.

**Thailand:** Condoms.

The origin of the following items was not clear: chewing gum (Orbit, stimrol), cigarettes (Winston, Camel, Sovereign, Kent, Salem) and Johnson-Johnson (facial wash, deodorant and facial cream).

After listing, he argued that in Almaty there were thousands of kiosks which mainly sold imported goods, most of which were provided by around 25 to 30 wholesale import companies, which he called *green-khouse* ( green houses). He

was of the opinion that such green houses pay bribes not only to the institutions mentioned above but even to the high state officials.

Once Roslan took me to one of these green houses. The place was fenced and two armed Kazakh policemen were guarding the gate. As they recognised Roslan, they let the car go through. We parked the car and walked through a long yard towards the shop. Then we queued and he bought the goods he needed. While leaving the place, he complained: "Everybody blames us Kazakhs for being nationalists. In this city there are more than thirty such firms (*firmy*). A few of them are owned by Iranians or Turks and the rest are owned by the local Jews, Russians and Tatars. Kazakhs own only a few of them."

I knew a Russian who imported food from Germany, France and Denmark. I was first introduced to him at a party, the host of which was his mother-in-law. Later, when we got acquainted he always complained that the state racket (*gosudarstvenyi-reket*) was plundering him and other businessmen. First he had established a production factory, which did well, but then went bankrupt because the state took 90% of the profit for tax and other fees. Then he started to import food. But now, he claimed, he was about to become bankrupt again. The reason for this was the discrimination of the Kazakh state officials against non-Kazakhs. He said:

If you have no contacts in the top, you will become bankrupt like me. I imported a huge amount of drinks for which I should have paid \$100000 tariff tax. But I bribed the customs for \$20,000 and took the goods out of customs. But I found suddenly that the retail prices for drinks are less than my finished cost. This means that there is a fellow (*tovarishch*), who has an influential uncle, who takes care of him. This fellow passes free of charge his goods from the customs, uses the buildings and transport free of charge, does not pay to the mafia and different state officials (*chenovniki*). Otherwise how could the prices of the drinks be so cheap in the market? If you have no contacts you cannot succeed in business here. I pay 70% of my profit to the state mafia. Before, the state had the monopoly over foreign trade, now the friends and relatives of the ministers have such a monopoly. It is the same with credits, they divide them between their own clans.

Although it was impossible for me to verify the true value of the stories told above, they represent truly the opinion of the ordinary people on how things were working. In Almaty there is a wide consensus that, as these stories also suggest, that the state officials and networks of influence called *mafia* own and distribute the main resources between themselves and their relatives. As the stories suggest different networks compete for the same resources. The tensions between them are resolved through contacts, payment of bribes and tributes or violence. People who are in powerful position extract bribes and tributes from less powerful people.

People who have the necessary contacts with particular power centres are not only free from payment of any tribute and bribe but may use the public services free of charge. Others may pay less owing to such contacts. However, such privileges are unstable because of the continuous shifts of the balance of power between rival networks. For example Roslan did not pay to the local mafia and stopped to give tribute to the local police when he find a more powerful contact within GSK.

However, If the local mafia finds a contact which is more powerful than Roslan's relative who was a boxer or the local police officers establish a new contact with a person who is more powerful than Roslan's GSK officer they will ask him to pay again. As networking is the key factor in such relations people actively try to establish new contacts with networks of the state officials and informal networks of influence. Kinship, marriage and friendship are the cornerstones of networking.

Owing to the chaotic mode of domination the balance of power between different networks is very unstable. Let me elaborate: the high positions in the state institutions are distributed arbitrarily and situationally by the higher authorities. The appointment of a new individual to a high state office make the renegotiation of the relation of the networks, both formal and informal, related to this office inevitable, because he wants to promote his own kith and kin, and friends. Such change are pivotal for the informal networks of influence, because as mentioned in the introduction the state officials play a key role in such networks. Such changes entail shifts in the balance of power of rival networks. The members of the weakened networks not only lose free access to some resources but must pay new bribes and tributes.

People who lack proper contacts but still avoid paying the demanded bribes and tributes are subjected to arbitrary treatment by the state officials and the "mafia". The state officials usually use the the law against such people. The gapes and ambiguities in the legal system combined with the widespread corruption in the judiciary allow the state officials to interpret the law arbitrary. Mafia resorts to violence.

## **Violence**

Violence was a great source of fear. People described it as a major element of chaos (*bardak*) . According to most people, widespread violence surged in 1988-89 as result of the collapse of the Soviet state, peaked in 1990 - 1993, and had subsided after 1994, when the state organs, which had been restored to a limited degree, checked and disciplined the mafia and eliminated many hooligan gangs.

The sources of violence were considered to be mafia and hooligans. People

distinguished very clearly between these two groups. Accordingly, the two groups differed in their origins, manners and methods.

The mafia members were considered to come from the ranks of Komsomol, KGB, MVD, the police, army officers, sportsmen, managers of enterprises and black marketeers. According to a Russian academic, these people were politically well informed and had well established contact networks with each other. As early as 1988, he said, they felt that the Soviet state was perishing forever and reorganised themselves into mafia groups with the deliberate purpose of filling the power vacuum which resulted from the death of the Soviet state. The Mafioso were considered to be part of the new rich and to have well established contacts with the state officials. They were described as educated (*obrazovanie*) and cultured (*Kulturnye*). Their use of violence was described as rational. According to the most people, Mafioso resort to violence as the last solution and usually try to settle conflicts through peaceful ways. On the other hand, the emergence of the mafia was related to two elements of the post-soviet economic change: the privatisation of enterprises and the emergence of new private businesses.

The formation of mafia networks was primarily a corollary of the appropriation of state property during the period, when the Soviet state was disintegrating (1988- 92). On the one hand different elite networks of the managerial and political elite needed the support of violent groups for protecting their wealth and expanding their spheres of influence. On the other hand police officers, sportsmen, army officers, Afghan war veterans, and criminals provided such services for the first group in return for a share of the plundered wealth.

From another point of view, the emergence of the mafia was a result of the disintegration of the coercive and legal apparatus of the state, which led to a general surge of violence and mushrooming of networks of criminals and violent individuals. Formation of the mafia networks, which themselves were constitutive elements of such a process appeared also as a solution to the security problem for the new rich. Mafioso, due to their physical training, contacts with army and police officers and sports clubs, and easier access to weapons, took the upper hand among violent networks from the very beginning. This superiority guaranteed the protection of the new rich, who rewarded Mafioso by accepting them into the club of new rich. The fact that most of the managerial and political elite and members of mafia had high positions in both the communist party and Komsomol, and thereby knew each other, facilitated their role in creating the networks of the new rich.

Beside privatisation, the emergence of the new private commerce

underpinned the emergence and consolidation of the mafia. As a result of economic reforms a wide range of kiosks, shops, restaurants, casinos, bars, discos, import and export companies emerged. The mafia had a twofold relation with such commerce. Firstly, they provided protection (*krysha* = roof) for protection fees. Secondly, they were among the shareholders and part of the new businessmen.

At the time of my fieldwork ( Jul 1995 - Oct 1996) actual violence by the Mafia was not high. However, there was a deep fear of them, and their invisible presence was felt everywhere. The two following sentences which were used by different people on a daily basis illustrate this: "Racketeers are the master in the street (*Reket khoziain na ulitse*)" and "racketeers are the master in the city (*reket khoziain gorada*)." I was told that the mafia played the role of courts and police. If some body did not pay back borrowed money, or did not fulfil his business commitment, his partner would report him not to the police but to the mafia, because the mafia managed the thing much more quickly and efficiently.

It might be that fears of an over-powerful and omnipresent invisible mafia, as Verdery (1996a: 219 ) has argued, symbolise the fears of the newly invisible market forces. However, in Almaty, such fears are related to a history of actual violence committed by mafia in the years 1988 to 1994. Since 1994, as the police had acquired the upper hand, the relations between different mafia groupings had been settled and the violence had diminished, although it still existed.

Everybody I spoke with told stories about how Mafioso burned kiosks and shops, or beat their owners or fought with each other, and about how they kidnapped and raped women. A young Kazakh female student of mine said that up to 1994, rich men forced young women into cars and then raped them. The victims could do nothing, because these men had contacts with the authorities. If a woman reported the offender to the police, the courts found her guilty instead. According to her, this had become so prevalent that some influential people called on the government to intervene. As a result of such intervention, the phenomenon had subsided, but without disappearing. Without exaggeration every young woman I spoke told me a dramatic story of violence, to herself, a relative, a friend, a friend of a friend , a neighbour, or a class mate. Less dramatic physical and verbal harassment was part of the daily experience of the most young women. <sup>8</sup>

Viktoria, a student of mine had experienced two such incidents. In the first one, she was seeing a friend off at the bus stop a car stopped and a Russian man tried to force her into a car, the driver of which was a Kazakh. On another occasion,

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<sup>8</sup>In chapter four I will describe an example of such dramatic violence experienced by Asel' a sex worker. In chapter five a young Kazakh teacher gives another example in describing the violence imposed on a friend of her.

a Chechen man had tried to rape her in the darkness but she managed to escape. Gulzhan, a young Kazakh woman historian, who sold goods in the illegal market told the two following stories:

**A:**

I remember, it was 1990. Sportsmen (*fizkul'turniki*) after being in a disco, came to the student's dormitory (*obshchezhitie*) looking for girls (*iskat' devushku*). They called loudly: 'Girls'. But nobody answered. Then they came in and took (*vytashchili*) some girls by force to their cars. Then the sportsmen burned out (*podozhgli*) the rooms of the girls who had managed to flee. Then they went away, without being afraid of anybody. They were Kazakhs. They usually say, boasting (*khvalit'cia*), 'we are not afraid of the police, we have contacts (*sviaz*) with the police.' In those times they raped many girls.

**B:**

It was 1990. After exams I and two of my girl friends went to a disco called Iris to relax (*otdokhnut'*) and have a happy time (*povecelitsia*). At eleven o'clock we decided to go home. But a group of young men (*parni*) surrounded us and said that they wanted to take us with them. They said they wanted to take us because we were the most beautiful girls in the disco. We told them, you are Kazakhs and we are also Kazakhs, take Russian girls (*vybiraite sebe Russkikh*), please take them. They answered we take those to whom we are attracted. We cried, implored (*umoliali*), we resorted to their ethnic sense (*na ikh natsional'nye chuvstva davili*), told them we are Kazakhs. What are you doing? Why don't you respect us? It didn't help. They forced each of us into a separate car and took us to the great market (*Barakholku*). They stopped the cars there, left us in the cars and went away for ten minutes. We three jumped out of the cars and hid ourselves in the sewer. They looked around for us, but then thinking that we had run away alongside the road they started the cars and drove towards the main road. We came out from the sewer, ran towards the road and stopped a car and asked for help. The man took us into the car. It was already two o'clock at morning. The man brought us to our home.

Although young women were the main victims of violence, it was targeted on the population in general. Everybody I talked to expressed feelings of fear and insecurity. For example, a male colleague of mine said: "I am longing for a day to walk the streets free without worrying that somebody will knock me down." In 22 of 45 apartments in my block the wooden entry doors had been replaced with steel doors. My landlord, who had replaced his own single door with a double one, commented on this as follows: "In the Soviet time our doors were almost open, but today when somebody knocks we do not open the door before recognising the person." "Never open your door to strangers (*ne znakomyi*)," he advised me.

So far I have argued that the disintegration of the Soviet state, privatisation and the emergence of private business have been the macro-processes which constitute the social background to the emergence of mafia and widespread

violence. To these I would like to add two more factors: the disintegration of the Soviet moral system and the so called ethnic revival (*Vozrozhdenie*).

Although the last decades of Soviet society witnessed a general moral crisis, in Kazakhstan the moral disintegration which contributed to widespread violence is a post-soviet phenomenon. Gulzhan, the street trader and historian mentioned above, related the surge of the violence to the post-soviet moral decline in the following way:

Before, in the Soviet time, there were moral limits (*moral'naia planka*) and the authorities looked after (*nabludali*) them. There were high moral standards (*moral'naia versihna granitsa*) and the party took care (*sledila*) of them. You understand, there existed a moral code (*moral'nyi kodeks*), which was observed well. People were truthful (*liudi byli pravil'nye*). They were brought up in a good way. But today people have become like savage animals (*dikie zhivotnye*). They behave according to the law of the jungle (*po zakon dzhungli*). Everybody who is stronger (*sil'nyi*), hits, rapes, murders and robs everybody else who is weaker (*slabyi*).

According to many informants, as Gulzhan suggests above, the Communist party, in spite of its corruption and ideological contradictions (Ticktin 1992), played a significant role in the production of moral values. Thus, the disintegration of the party resulted in both political and moral chaos. The result was the mushrooming of hooligan (*khuligan*) networks. Hooligans are said to come mainly from Kazakh migrants from the south and rural areas, although Chechens, Russians and others supposedly exist among them. Culturally, they were described as uneducated (*neobrazovannye*), uncultured (*beskul'turnye*) and stupid/provincial (*menbeti*). They were described also as sportsmen (*fizkulturniki*): those who engage in boxing and wrestling and body building, wear training clothes gymnastic shoes in public, cut their hair short and move in groups. They were assumed to be involved in small and middle range crimes and to have contacts with middle and low rank officers. Maghsood and his friend, described in chapter 6, provide an example of such hooligan networks.

Most of the dispossessed were more afraid of the violence of the hooligans than those by the mafia. But before discussing this, let me remind the reader that the distinction between these two groups is not clear cut. According to Roslan, the kiosk owner above, the leaders of the most prominent hooligan groups are related to the mafia. Moreover, they are recruited as guards in business which supposedly have mafia connections.

Let us return to people's fear of hooligans. Such fear was not only caused by the widespread and random aspects of their violence but the ways it was ethnicised and gendered in relation to the ethnic revival (*vozhrozhdenie*). An element of the Kazakh ethnic revival is an emphasis on Kazakhs' primordial claims

over the territory of Kazakhstan. While resorting to such claims, the hooligans try to impose and sustain their dominance over people from other ethnic origins in public places through use of violence. However, the violence does not stop once dominance over non-Kazakhs is achieved, but continues to be the main way different Kazakh gangs fight among themselves for dominance over the places. As I will discuss the ethnic dimension of violence in chapter 6 let us consider here the gender aspect.

According to the women, whose voices will be heard in more detail in chapter 4, Mafioso have changed their tactics in relation to women. They do not use violence anymore, but act as “gentlemen” (dzhentl'men). If they want a woman, they try to seduce her by sending flowers and expensive gifts, and they invite her to a restaurant or to travel abroad. Hooligans, who were identified as the main source of violence, were considered also to be predominantly Kazakhs. The gang violence against women was galvanised and legitimised by two interrelated gendered discourses of identity politics: namely revival of a Soviet identity and the ethnic revival. Women's bodies and sexualities were considered the bearers of both the Soviet and ethnic identities, and so they were expected not to break the rule of sexual modesty. If they did they were exposed to violence and stigma. As I will explore the ways the discourse of the Soviet morality legitimises the use of violence against women in chapters 4 & 5, let me describe here the ways the ethnic revival has contributed to the surge of violence against women. This was related to two elements of such revival: linguistic revival and the gendering of ethnic revival. While the first reason only pertained to Kazakhs, the second was a common feature of all “ethnic groups”, however, with different level of intensity. Let us start with the first reason.

According to most of my informants, the years 1988 -1993 witnessed a surge of Kazakh ethnic nationalism, with a strong linguistic element . The loss of the Kazakh language had become a main theme for the media and popular discussions. Moreover, the state adopted a policy of replacing the Russian language with Kazakh at a stroke, by setting up Kazakh language courses and threatening to sack those who were not willing to learn Kazakh. This instigated a conflict between Kazakhs and non-Kazakh, on the one hand, and between Russian speaking Kazakhs and Kazakh speaking Kazakhs, on the other.

The Russian speaking Kazakhs were not only stigmatised as impure Kazakhs (*chala Kazakakhi*), but were exposed to the violence of hooligan gangs who had a claim on an authentic Kazakh identity. This kind of violence was particularly targeted on women. Almost all young Kazakh women I spoke with



complained that they were harassed by Kazakh men from the south (*luzhanini*), when they were heard speaking Russian. They were reminded that they should speak Kazakh, not Russian. Such harassment was at its peak in the high days of linguistic nationalism from 1988 to 1993. According to a Kazakh woman student of mine, in those years the hooligans from the south stopped the young Kazakh women in the streets and started to talk with them in Kazakh. Those women who failed to answer in Kazakh were insulted, beaten or even raped. According to her, this kind of violence was practised on such a massive scale that many young Kazakh women did not dare to walk the streets without male company. Gulzhan, mentioned above, described these years as the worst time of trouble (*samye smutnye vremena*).

According to the women mentioned above, the hooligans' violence in its linguistic guise was mainly targeted on young Kazakh women. They did not bother Kazakh men or people from other ethnic backgrounds. They had not, I was told, the courage to stop the Kazakh men because the latter could fight back. And, they did not care whether people from other ethnic backgrounds could or could not speak Kazakh. From this we should not conclude that the hooligans do not harass non-Kazakhs at all. On contrary, they harass non-Kazakhs widely, claiming that Kazakhstan is their homeland. Such a harassment is particularly imposed on non-Kazakh women, because, according to women, hooligans claim that the Kazakhs' primordial rights on the territory of Kazakhstan entitle Kazakh men to an undisputed right over the bodies of women who live in Kazakhstan. And they frequently resort to violence for enforcing such claims.

Gulzhan and many other women shared the opinion that the hooligans were not at all concerned with the Kazakh language as such, but used the language as a pretext to dominate women. According to women, they behaved in this way because they thought Kazakh girls were their property (*sobstvennost'*). They were said to think in this way because they were provincial (*menbeti*), uneducated (*neobrazovanye*) and uncultured (*bez kulturnye*). This kind of cultural explanation of the violence of the hooligans is very widespread in Almaty. Russians and other Russian speaking people, including the Russian speaking Kazakhs, assume that that hooligans come from the South which has a violent and backward culture. As Desjarlais & Kleinman (1994: 11) argue, the disordered violence cannot be attributed to any cultural norms because it destroys the normal cultural process in general. Moreover, as they argue (*ibid*) such violence is a dimension of the post-cold war world disorder. The chaotic mode of domination in Kazakhstan represents a particular case of such a disorder. So hooliganism is an expression of chaos

rather than being a result of the Kazakh culture. Indeed, most of Southern Kazakhs I met were very peaceful people. Moreover, they boasted that Kazakhs are a hospitable and peaceful people. Actually, these claims on women's bodies and the demand that they must know the Kazakh language were components of the ways the ethnic revival was gendered. Women were considered as both markers and reproducers of ethnic boundaries, not only among Kazakhs but among all other ethnic groups. Saber, a street trader from the south whose biography will be described in chapter five, expressed it in the following way:

A Kazakh, man or woman, must know his/her language. But it is more important for the women to know the mother tongue (*rodnoi ezyk*), because she brings up (*vospityvaet*) the children . If she speaks with them in Russian, how can they learn Kazakh?

It is important to note that the ethnically motivated violence against women is not limited to Kazakhs from the South but prevails among all ethnic groups. Considering women's bodies as both the bearers and reproducers of ethnic identities has contributed significantly to the surge of violence against them. This is so because the ethnic revivalism includes a rise in a masculinism, the main goal of which is to push women back to their assumed "traditional" roles prior to the changes brought about by the Soviet state. They are ordered to obey their husbands, devote themselves mainly to their domestic duties, and observe carefully codes of modesty. Although such demands in Kazakhstan are common among all ethnic groups, they are more evident among the Muslims than Slavic people. A strong emphasis on virginity, the revival of taking bride wealth (*kalym*) and the widespread stealing of brides (*alebghasheh*) are part of the ethnic revival.

On the other hand, young women from urban backgrounds, regardless of their ethnic affiliations, are more inclined to the images of femininity propagated by late capitalist consumerist culture and in demand in the current sexual market. They find the Soviet sexual morality conservative and repressive, let alone the pre-soviet ones. Moreover, as I discuss in the chapter 4, a considerable number of them practice sexualised economic strategies which challenge both the perceived Soviet and pre-Soviet sexual morality. As these women are considered deviant from the norms they are not only stigmatised but exposed to violence on a daily basis.

As I will return to the violence against women in chapter four let us consider in the following sections another element of chaos, namely feelings of loss.

People who have been stricken by the changes have responded to them in two major ways. One is a construction of the personal networks as a moral community, the other is voicing protests against the current change and those who are assumed to be responsible for it: the West and the elite. Such a protest has three

main strands: demonising the changes and its agents, expressing a strong nostalgia for the Soviet time and a conspiracy theory. As I will deal with networks and the first element of resistance respectively later, I will consider nostalgia for the Soviet era and conspiracy theory very briefly here.

## **Feelings of loss and strong nostalgia for the Soviet time**

Perceived losses are considered a dimension of chaos in the sphere of “life worlds”. The consequences of crisis and reforms have brought about chaos in people’s personal lives, because, they are seen to be unpredicted and unexpected contingencies, like earthquakes and epidemics and are not culturally understandable. Phenomena like mass unemployment, mass sex-work, child sex-work, child labour, begging and looking in the garbage for food, are alien to the Soviet “habitus”. So people lacked any skills or predisposition to deal with them, either individually or socially. To be sure, some people remember the wartime hardships and the famine after the war. But the difference, Aleksander (chapter 3) said, is that in that time we dealt with problems collectively and with solidarity and were sure of the future. Today, nobody cares about anybody else and we have no future.

The soviet era is compared with the present situation and remembered with strong feelings as the time of prosperity, happiness, stability, security and trust.

### ***Loss of prosperity***

The material poverty which resulted from the combined effects of unemployment,<sup>9</sup> cutting wages and delays in payment and inflation is felt as the greatest loss. Indeed, Brezhnev’s era was remembered nostalgically as one of the mass consumption. For illustrating this Ivan, an Russian unemployed electrician, who worked for himself, told me that in 1975 he and his family moved to a newly built apartment, which they received from his factory. Since that time they had purchased the following items: a car, a three seat sofa, a Hungarian wardrobe, a wooden Hungarian bed, four carpets which still hang on the walls, a vacuum cleaner, a fridge, a TV set, a gramophone, a washing machine, a kitchen table with four chairs, and fishing and skiing equipment. He added that each year they bought new clothes and that his family not only had enough meat and fruit but could afford even to buy ice cream and sweets for children. He, in the local manner, put a hand on his throat and said “ The salary was enough up to here” (*zarplata tak khvatalo*).

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<sup>9</sup> According to the official figures unemployment was 4.1% for the labour force in January 1996 (Istileulova 1996: 42). Although it is very difficult to estimate the real figures for unemployment, it seemed to me that they are much higher. Workers who still worked or had been sacked told me that most of the plants had cut their work force by a half or one third. In addition to this many factories were open nominally but workers were on unpaid leave.

In addition to this they had saved a considerable amount of money, like many other families in the neighbourhood. At the time of my fieldwork his family, and most of the families in the neighbourhood, could hardly provide for food and rent. As a sign of his poverty, he showed me his worn out shirt and said, "I have worn this for two years and have not got money to buy a new one." Most people could not afford to buy meat, vegetables or fruit. According to Ivan, his family purchasing power has reduced to a fourth of what it was in the Soviet time. The loss of material prosperity was considered to be a result of the loss of work and the devaluation of industrial work.

### ***Loss of work and the devaluation of industrial work***

Unemployment was experienced as a great disaster. Ivan, mentioned above, argued that in the Soviet time, finding a job was not an issue and they had greater opportunity to choose a job they desired:

In the Soviet time, after finishing high school, if you wanted to go to university you could do so, or you could chose a profession and learn it in a college (*uchilishche*) or a technical college (*tekhnikum*) in one or two years. When you were ready with your education, you could easily find a job. But today only those who have rich parents can enter universities. Even if you get a place for your children in a college by bribing someone , it is useless. There are no jobs available, they are closing the factories.

Now finding any job without connections or bribes was an almost unsurmountable problem, because the rate of unemployment was much higher than that of new job opportunities. Unemployment, which virtually did not exist in 1991, reached the figure 391, 747 in 1996 (Istileulova 1996: 45). While this figure might be much less than the real figure, it shows the sudden growth of unemployment. According to the same source unemployment doubled in the course of the year 1996. The official unemployment benefit was 2151 Tenge in 1996 (ibid: 42), but the unemployed in the neighbourhood with whom I talked denied that they received any money. Unemployment is higher among the male Slavic men who traditionally worked in the industrial sector, which the economic crisis has hit more harshly (ibid). Factory closures and unemployment have caused poverty, suicide, domestic violence and divorce. Let us begin a short discussion of alcoholism with the following example:

Mariam was a Kazakh widow and worked as an accountant in a state store. As her salary was not enough for survival, she traded illegally in early morning (6 - 9 am) before going to her job, and on Sundays. I joined her each morning from 7.30 to talk with her and observe what was going on. Apart from her, only two other women started their trade so early, a Russian *Babushka* and another old married

Dungan woman (*Dunganka*). The main articles the customers bought so early were local vodka, beer and cigarettes. In one morning Mariam sold 7 bottles of vodka, the Dungan woman 5 and the Russian Babushka 6. Indeed, most of the men who bought seemed to have had a very heavy drinking night. Some of the men who bought vodka were on the way to their jobs, and others were unemployed and came early to buy vodka.

I asked Mariam: "Why are these people buying vodka so early in morning, when they are already drunk?" She answered: "They want to get rid of hangover (*opokhmelit'sia*)." Mariam knew some of these men, and some of them received vodka on credit from her. She explained to me:

All these have social reasons (*sotsial'nye prichiny*). Our men were the breadwinners (*zarabatyvali na khleb*), they have lost their jobs, they cannot trade like us women, it is shameful (*styдно*) for them to trade. They have lost their faces, so they drink to forget.

Although in the Soviet time both husbands and wives worked, as Mariam said, the former were considered the main breadwinners because they usually earned more than their women. Moreover, culturally men have always been considered the head of the family (*glava sem'i*) and are expected to provide their families with decent lives. Being the main breadwinners gave men hegemonic positions in the family. To be a breadwinner has been one of the main ways masculinity has been constructed among the working class. This gave different meaning to work in relation to the formation of gender notions. Although work is important for women not only for survival but for being persons (Ashwin: Forthcoming), it is considered as one of the main parameters of manhood. A working class man becomes a man through doing socially valued work. Those men who possess good working skills are called not by other men but by women, "men with golden hands (*zolotye ruki*)". In contrast men who did not work were called lazy (*tuneiadtsy*). Thus, a man who contributes less than his wife, or fails to contribute at all to the economy of the family, is in danger of losing his manhood in the eyes of his family, relatives, neighbours, friends and even himself.

This has created a sensitive new problem in the relations between spouses. I knew several women at the university and the factory and in the neighbourhood, whose husbands were unemployed or earned less than them. Although most of these women did not blame the men for the situation, they recognised a major problem in their family lives which they dealt with in different ways. I knew several cases, but in only three was the relationship between spouses undamaged, because, the women were careful not to undermine their husbands' injured self esteem. One of these three women was 50, a Russian working in the factory. As she had kept her job, she earned 7000 Tenge a month. But her husband had lost

his job in another factory and was working in a swimming pool as a guard for 3000 a month. While she considered this a great loss for her husband, she said, that she would never mention it to him, but instead would be supportive during these hard times.

In the rest of the cases women blamed their husbands for being lazy (*lenivye*), or alcoholic, or intended to divorce them. Indeed, many women had divorced for such reasons and the husbands of two such women had committed suicide. These women complained particularly about two things. That their husbands avoided getting involved in the street trade, the only economic choice available to them, and that such men drank heavily and became abusive.

Indeed, although street traders earned more than average salaries, urban men refused to get involved. Urban men, particularly those from working class backgrounds, still considered trading in terms of Soviet values. They found it immoral (*ne moralnye*) and labelled traders as parasites (*parazity*) and profiteers (*spekulianty*). Kazakh urban men justified their refusal with an additional reason. They considered trading alien to the Kazakh honest nomadic “national character” (*natsional’naia cherta kharaktera*) and associated it with Uzbeks and Uigurs, whom they considered cunning (*khitrye*) and profiteers (*spekulianty*).

Urban women shared these derogatory attitudes towards trade. Trade, from street trade to large scale importing is one of the main ways of making money in post-Soviet Almaty. Together with the economic crisis and the unemployment, this has led to a process of deindustrialisation and strongly devalued people’s professional skills. This was experienced as a great personal and social loss. People felt their society was transforming from one of workers and scientists to one of parasites and cheaters.

Many women with higher education who were involved in street trading or suitcase trade felt that they had been forced to choose such jobs with negative status and low quality to survive. Pensioners excepted, around half the women in my neighbourhood illegal market had higher education.

A considerable number of suit-case traders are professional women whose status has been tarnished by the occupation in three ways. Firstly, they are accused of sleeping with their trade partner abroad for getting better deals. Secondly, they feel that they have been forced into this kind of occupation, which is still considered a parasite way of making a living. Thirdly, they feel that they are loosing their cultural and professional competence by leaving their professions. Examples of such women were the mother of a student of mine, a 40 years old Russian and her Uigur companion. After working 11 years as doctor, the Russian

woman had left her job and now was involved in the suit-case trade between Emirates and Kazakhstan. She was successful, and had two chambers in two different bazaars, one of which she shared with an Uigur woman, younger than her, and high laboratory specialist. Indeed, the material living standards of both women had improved in comparison with the past but both of them found the job humiliating and felt that they were dispossessed from their knowledge and expertise.

In spite of their negative attitudes, women got involved in trade out of concern for their children. They probably do so because in the local ideologies womanhood is mainly defined in relation to motherhood and nurturing. Viktoria, a young student of mine and a casino dealer whom we will meet again in chapter 4 said: "For protecting their children our women are even prepared to sell their bodies."

The loss of self-esteem and blame from their wives drove unemployed men to alcoholism and suicide. Puzzled at how these men got money to buy alcohol, I asked one Russian street trader who often complained about her husband's drinking habits. She answered: "The pig finds the dirt" (*svin'ia griaz' naideť*). As men usually drink with friends, usually someone gets the money from somewhere, or those who have a salary or pension buy the drinks. Some of them took the vodka their wives were selling. Another Russian woman had left a husband and later a lover, because both of them drank the vodka she had for sale. A Kazakh woman, a university lecturer who traded in the evenings, told me:

My husband is unemployed. He doesn't look for a job. He sits at home, invites his friends there and drinks my vodka with his friends. When I tell him, 'don't drink this, it is for sale.' He, answers, 'I will drink. Here is my home, take your vodka and go wherever you want.' The apartment belongs to him, I have not got my own apartment. If I find a man with an apartment who is not an alcoholic (*alkash*) I will leave my husband.

While the drinking circles are viewed by the men as a framework for reciprocity, women considered them as a great threat to the stability of families. Women thought that alcoholic men not only ceased to be responsible for the welfare of the family, but became a burden due to their expenses and abusive behaviour. In most cases of divorce, women had initiated the process. The reason they gave for this was that the husbands had been lazy, or an alcoholic or a womaniser (*babnik*), or a combination of three. On the other hand, the possibility of practising sexual strategies (see chapter 4) may encourage younger women with problems with their husbands to leave them (see chapter 5).

## ***Loss of leisure***

Another important issue people spoke of was their loss of leisure. Leisure is a privilege people think they have lost completely. In Soviet times it included travel, relaxation in particular places, sport, theatre, cinemas, music halls and celebrations.

It is now theoretically possible to travel abroad, but most people are too poor to travel to other cities in Kazakhstan, let alone abroad. In my neighbourhood people had close relatives in the neighbouring republics of Russia, Kirgizia and Uzbekistan whom they had not been able to visit in recent years. They had not even been able to call them or write to them. People complained that train and aeroplane fares, telephone calls<sup>10</sup> and stamps had become very expensive. A Russian woman worker, the one who shows her Iranian shoes in chapter 5 told me:

“ I am simple worker (*prostaiia rabotnitsa*). In the Soviet time I travelled to Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tashkent, and Riga. But now I cannot visit my daughter here in nearby Bishkek.”

Another young woman, half Russian and half Ukrainian, had divorced from her husband. Her mother had returned to Ukraine two years before. She had been waiting to leave Kazakhstan and join her mother for almost two years because neither she nor her mother had \$200 for the ticket. Travel to other parts of the former Soviet Union and the former Eastern block, which was quite usual, has been restricted by the new political geography. They were particularly unhappy with the post-Soviet borders between CIS countries, which they dismissed as having divided their country, the former USSR, into artificially different political entities. People complained that the police in other republics particularly made a lot of problems for the citizens of Kazakhstan. A young Russian single mother, a suitcase trader whose parents lived in our neighbourhood, had lived illegally with her son in Moscow for two years. She told me that to buy a propiska (a permission to stay) in Moscow is very expensive and those who have no permission are continuously harassed by the police. And furthermore Central Asians and Caucasians are subjected to racism, which people think is caused by the division of the Soviet union.

In the Soviet time people also had one month's holiday from work (*otpusk*) each year. They used it to travel to other places to visit relatives or they spent it in nearby beaches on *Kapchagai* (a lake 70 miles from Almaty) or *Iccyk-kul*, a lake in Kirgizia. In addition, there were special places for rest which were called *kurort*

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<sup>10</sup> In the Soviet time telephone was almost free.



(health resort), *sanatorii* (sanatorium) and *dom otdykha* (rest home, holiday home) . Access to these places was possible with a pass (*putevka*) provided by the workplace and the union (*profsoiuz*) paid a considerable part of the cost. Although these passes were distributed through connections, many people had access to them through giving a gift or a bribe, or demonstrating good work performance. There were places, available for children in the summer called *lager*. Although most of them, particularly pioneers camps (*pionerskie lageria* ), were used for ideological indoctrination, young people retrospectively evaluate positively the entertainments provided by such camps.

Swimming , skiing and ice skating were cheap and popular sports. Visiting theatres, cinemas, and music halls was a part of people's cultural habits, because the prices were cheap.

An important form of leisure were celebrations (*prazdniki*), both private and public. People told me that in the soviet time celebrations were one of the most important forms of leisure. People not only celebrated life cycle events, but even celebrated privately the official days like the Eighth of March, the first of May, New Year's Eve, the day of the Soviet Army (*den' Sovetskaia Armia*), the day of the October revolution. The frequency of celebrations in the course of the year was a phenomena which distinguished the Soviet life style from that of the rest of the world. The celebrations were encouraged by the particular relationship of the Soviet state to rituals (Lane 1981) and by the fact that the Soviet type of economic relations and power structures promoted ritualistic consumption of food and drink (Humphrey 1983). The shared consumption of food and drink and the exchange of gifts in private celebrations were among the main ways of creating and sustaining networks and also provided people with an autonomous sphere vis-a-vis the states. In the relaxed milieu of friends and relatives around kitchen tables, people endlessly mocked the Soviet authorities by telling jokes.

Because of the post-soviet poverty most ordinary people can no longer afford any of these forms of leisure. T., mentioned above, said: "I have not got the right to rest. I have holidays, but of what rest can I speak when my salary is only enough to buy me and my wife tickets to *Iccyk-kul*"." The dispossessed still try to travel to *Kapchagai*, but they have no access to the rest places mentioned above. The average price for such places was 700 Tenge (\$11) per person per day in the summer of 1996, while the average monthly wages were 5000 Tenge (\$80). In addition to low wages the giving of *putevka* had been effectively cancelled. Most of the workplaces did not pay worker wages on time let alone provide *putevka*.

For sport , the cheapest monthly ticket for swimming costed 700 (\$12) Tenge

in the Winter of 1995, increased to 900 (\$12 )Tenge in the Autumn of 1996. Ice-skating costed 100 Tenge a time. Those who did not own boots had to pay an extra 100 Tenge to hire them. Art consumption had collapsed. The most tragic change in leisure has been the cancellation of celebrations and parties. People in Almaty are hedonist, they love to eat and drink for a long time, give toasts and play games.

People saw the the collapse of the Soviet cultural apparatus as a regrettable process which had brought them cultural poverty. Moreover they were very nostalgic for what they considered the authentic Soviet culture.

### ***Loss of security***

People identified the Soviet era with security in two senses: economic security and social security in general. Economically, people said the life was secure, because the state guaranteed the provision of jobs, health care, higher education and other services for everybody. "But today", an Uigur electrician told me: " If you have a job today, you are not sure you have it tomorrow. If I become seriously sick I will die, because I do not have enough money to pay for medication." The increased nepotism and commercialisation of higher education have made it almost impossible for ordinary people to send their children to universities. The people most threatened are pensioners because their pensions are hardly enough for survival and their payments are delayed for several months.

The social dimension of this loss of security was related by people to the disintegrations of the state and the destabilisation of their networks.

The breakdown of the Soviet legal, administrative and moral system has led to the crime and violence of the Mafioso and hooligans; now an inseparable part of daily life. The general fear of violence described above and arbitrariness of state officials contributed to the feelings of insecurity. "In the Soviet time", an Uzbek woman from the neighbourhood said: "They did not bother (*trogali*) ordinary people, but today they can expropriate even your apartment ( *lishit' kvartiry*)or take anything they want from you."

The ethnic wars in Chechnia and Tadjikistan were another source of insecurity, because people felt they were happening in their own homeland (Soviet territory) and among their own people (Sovetskii narod). Moreover, the widespread presence of the war refugees reminded people of their own eventual fate and the possibility of ethnic war in Kazakhstan.

In chapter 3 I show how the networks of extended family, friends, colleagues and neighbours which constitute the main social survival networks, have been profoundly destabilised by post-Soviet social change. Unemployment , prostitution,

sexual promiscuity and monetisation of sexual relations are considered as a great threat to the networks, because they undermine marriage, a cornerstone of networking. Another post-soviet social change which undermines networking is the break up of trust under the pressure of the cynicism which is the moral dimension of wild capitalism.

Even some people who had improved their material living standards felt insecure. An academic who worked for a foreign company, said:

I have got a German car now which I did not have before, I have a Japanese TV which I did not have before, I have bought a new apartment and new furniture but I have lost a valuable part of my life. In the past, each month I read at least two or three new good books, went to the theatre, met friends who had cultural and scientific interests. I had contacts with scholars from other countries who met me here. I could take them to my apartment. Of course, the KGB's officials always interfered and were keen that after 11 o'clock they should return to the Intourist hotel. I was quite happy, my family future was guaranteed. But now all that peaceful life has gone, both I and my wife are working, we must save money, otherwise there is no security for me and my family. If I have a heart attack, without money I will die in the street. Without money my children will not be admitted into any university.

### ***Despair***

Because of all of these factors, people feel they have lost the happiness in life. The same male Kazakh colleague mentioned above said:

Before we had our general secretary....We complained openly that we had nothing while we had everything. But now we have got everything, we have got Snickers, Finlandia (a Finish vodka), Smirnov, Absolut (a Austrian vodka), skirts and shorts (he mentions these with disgust) but we have nothing. We had every thing but we complained that we hadn't. Now we have all goods in the market but cannot buy them. We have everything in the shops but we have lost our way of life. In the Soviet time we had our money, our strength, our aspirations. But now we have nothing, we are corpses. We are moving corpses, and this is awful and regretful.

An indicator of despair was widespread suicide. Indeed, among people I knew, six of their relatives or neighbours had committed suicide since 1993. All of these people were men, five Russians and one Kazakh. Five Russians killed themselves because of alcoholism, family disputes and divorce, and the Kazakh because of heroin addiction. As Buckley (1997) argues, suicide is more common among men in Kazakhstan because their public recognition has been more damaged by the post-Soviet change. One could guess that suicide is highest among the Russian male industrial workers because post-Soviet change has damaged their position more than any other group. Indeed, the fact that all five men above were Russian workers encourages such speculation.

Besides the lack of security, people felt that they had lost an egalitarian society.

### ***Loss of an egalitarian society***

People saw the Soviet system as a more egalitarian or less class ridden system in comparison with the present system, of diki *kapitalizm* (wild capitalism). People blame the new system for destroying the foundations of solidarity and egalitarianism. Egalitarianism has been destroyed in two directions: the increasing gap between the elite and the people; and the stratification between ordinary people.

In the understanding of the local people, the old society was divided into two groups: *oni* ( they, elite) and *narod* (ordinary people). The Elite consisted of the partycrats (*partikraty*), the high echelons of the communist party and the leaders of Komsomol. They occupied the highest position everywhere. They lived secluded and segregated lives from the rest, and had access to exclusive services and goods. In spite of all of these, the social gaps in the Soviet time, from the point of view of those below, are by no means comparable with those of the present situation. To illustrate this difference people usually compared the house of the ex-secretary Kunaev with the present newly built presidential palace. Actually Kunaev's house was very modest compared with the villas of new rich class which are mushrooming alongside Lenin street towards Medeo, let alone the new presidential palace.

Although the old elite enjoyed a privileged position, people say the rest of the people were in egalitarian positions in relation to each other. The patterns of marriage and housing illustrate such relations. The majority of houses in my neighbourhood were five story cement houses built in the late Sixties and early seventies, called Khrushchev houses. These Khrushchev houses dominate not only the neighbourhood but all Almaty. In the neighbourhood, people in these houses came from different positions in the division of labour, mainly workers, but also teachers, directors, university professors, police officers, engineers, doctors and so forth, and from many ethnicities. So there were no significant differences in people's housing patterns. The same was true of marriage patterns. Both on the level of the neighbourhood and university, workers married doctors, engineers, teachers and others from the intelligentsia. This was because some Soviet workers<sup>11</sup> usually earned more than the intelligentsia, and the cultural gap between workers and the technocratic intelligentsia was much less than rest of the world. It was not so because of the "low" level of culture of the intelligentsia but the "high" level of the Soviet workers' culture. Workers (especially women) from both neighbourhood and the factory told me that they often (twice a month) visited

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<sup>11</sup> I frequently use the terms Soviet workers, Soviet people and not Kazakhstan people, because locals themselves speak in those terms, their self-identity is still in a Sovietian framework.

theatres, watched ballet or attended concerts of classical music. This can be explained partly by the Soviet “habitus”, and partly by the quality of this art and its low price. This is not to suggest that cultural differences between workers and all strata of intelligentsia were levelled. The intelligentsia trained in humanities have particularly negative attitudes towards workers and depict them as *kalkhoznik* (from *Kalhoz* = collective farm), meaning uncultured, provincial and backward. But the technical and scientific intelligentsia have mixed with workers through marriage and their cultures are practically not distinguishable. But today this picture has changed. In addition, to the formation of a new lumpen bourgeoisie with its roots in the old elite, a stratification is taking place below. Some individuals are better positioned than others, through trade, contacts, working for foreigners, bribes, or involvement in middle rank Mafia activities. They have improved their material conditions while the absolute majority have become poorer. This has destabilised the relations of former neighbours, friends and relatives because the new material asymmetries have changed the previous reciprocal balances in exchanges of gifts and foods in parties. Now to be rich is something distinctive, proudly shown through clothes, cars, or by sending children to exclusive schools, giving them good pocket money and buying them chocolate. Those who cannot afford these feel excluded, humiliated, and express anger and bitterness. The egalitarian character of the Soviet system might be a myth. That the myth is so appealing to the dispossessed today depends less on the merits of the past than the misdeeds of the present.

### **Conspiracy theory**

The elite try to justify the situation by two related rhetorics of capitalism and independence. According to the first rhetoric, capitalism is the natural order of society and in long run it will bring prosperity and democracy for everybody. The Soviet past is depicted as deviation from this order and is blamed for all of present evils. To put the the train back on the right rails, it is claimed, a surgical transitional period (*perekhodnyi period*) is necessary to establish capitalist order. In spite of the short term sufferings, it is argued, this transition is necessary to bring about the capitalist Eden. During the last ten years, while the elite have been promising this Eden, the living standards of the majority have sunk below the poverty line. So they have become disillusioned. They believe there will be no improvement for the foreseeable future and expect worse to come.

Gulzhan, the historian and street trader mentioned above, mocked the whole concept of the transitional period in the following way:

“ We Soviet people<sup>12</sup> (*Sovetskii narod*) are a lucky people(*schastlivyi narod*). We are sitting always in the trans-Siberian express. We are always in transition. For seventy years we were in transition from socialism to communism, and now I don't know for how long we will be in transition from socialism to capitalism. But the the drivers of the train are the same people. Before, they promised us the paradise of communism but they failed to take us there . Now they promise us the paradise of capitalism. But nobody believes them anymore. ”

The rhetoric of independence is used to counteract this disillusionment . It highlights the sovereignty(*suverinitet*) of the state as the only guarantee of the freedom and sovereignty of the people (*narod* ) and individual. Moreover, it is related, if not to the material welfare of the present , to the welfare of the generations to come. The protection of sovereignty, it is claimed, is not only the most important moral agenda but an absolute precondition for the creation of a prosperous future. In relation to these three concepts of future (*budushchee*), country (*strana* )and people(*narod* ) , the rhetoric of independence (*nezavisimost'*, ) is deployed to create a moral community identified with the new state and its territory. Then the rhetoric goes on to say, that the protection of sovereignty demands a high degree of economic self-sacrifice and this self-sacrifice is again praised as a contribution to the future.

From the point of view of those who suffer from the situation, this is obviously a phoney rhetoric for two reasons. On the abstract level the new capitalist ideology of the elite puts self-interest at the heart of economic activity but the elite demand that ordinary people sacrifice their own present interests for the future of an imagined moral community. On a practical level, while the members of the elite use all available means to get rich and spend enormous amounts of money on conspicuous and lavish consumption, they demand that ordinary people endure the present hell of hunger and poverty for the sake of the future of such a community.

In contrast to the elite's propaganda and rhetoric and quasi-theories of right-wing Western<sup>13</sup> analysts, the people do not see the crisis as a necessary outcome of the contradictions of the old system either. Nor do they see market reforms as a necessary and adequate remedy for the contradictions. It is assumed that both the crisis and the reforms are results of a deliberate conspiracy jointly prepared by the corrupt former Soviet elite, who are still in power, and the West. Accordingly, the old elite with the new masque of democracy on its face, is the main beneficiary of

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<sup>12</sup> When people used the pronoun “we” to denote a collective identity, they usually referred to the “Soviet people”, unless we were speaking explicitly of Kazakhstan or a particular ethnic category. In the latter cases the pronoun referred to the people of Kazakhstan or the ethnic group in question.

<sup>13</sup> I wrote these lines before the recent events in South East Asia, Russia and, Brazil and elsewhere buried the new liberal orthodoxy. Recently , the economic policies of the IMF and world bank, and the governments of Russia and Kazakhstan have shifted towards Neo-Keynesian economic policies.

the reforms. "They have changed from partycrats to democrats to get rich", is a standard judgment on the elite in Almaty.

A central element of common evaluations of the past is sympathy for the Soviet distribution system and hatred for the Soviet elite. They do not identify the system with the elite. Accordingly, the old system was a compromised one in which the elite dominated and exploited others, but the interests of the ordinary people were also considered to a great extent. Through the reforms the elite broke the social contract based on the compromise and took away the whole cake for itself. Thus narod (the people ) lost the rights they had achieved during seventy years. A factory worker summarised the transformation from the Soviet past to the present in the following way: "*Ran'she oni vorovali, no nam khvatalo, seichas oni voruiut no nam ne khvataet*" ( In the past they stole but there was enough for us. Now they are still stealing but there is not enough for us).

The theory of conspiracy suggests that socialism is an economically viable solution to the present problems, although people believe that the present ruling elite will never allow a return to socialism. This longing for socialism is expressed in what has been labelled "Soviet nostalgia". No doubt there is a strong Soviet nostalgia among the dispossessed, but nobody wants the return of the KGB or queues. People argued that neither shortages nor totalitarianism sprang from the nature of a socialist society, and they claimed that socialism and solidarity were compatible with democracy and abundance. They thought that the dark sides of the former so called "socialist societies" were historical contingencies which could be avoided.

## **Conclusions**

The dispossessed share the opinion that the mafia and the political and managerial elite intentionally created chaos and lawlessness and want to make it a permanent state of affairs. This was because when nobody is held responsible according to law, a limited networks of bureaucrats, Mafioso and businessmen can control the main material resources and check the whole population through spreading a general feeling of fear, the exact source of which is not clear. In a such a fearful and hopeless situation networking is the main possible way through which people try to survive and still keep a minimal level of a sense of agency. I will deal with this in the next chapter.

## NETWORKING AS A RESPONSE TO THE CHAOS

### Introduction

The main focus of this chapter is reciprocity and its related form of social organisation, namely networks, and their implications in the post Soviet Kazakhstan. Under the post-Soviet condition people have deployed a variety of strategies for surviving such as taking things from work places, engaging in the street or suit-case trade, working intensively on their dacha lots, taking small bribes and conserving vegetables and fruit in summer. Howell (1996) identified the following strategies which were used by rural Kirghiz families to cope with the post-soviet hardships: borrowing; reducing consumption; selling animals which are family assets; and finding new sources of income. Each of these strategies is very important for the economy of each household and thus deserves a detailed analysis. However, here I am not primarily concerned with separate kinds of economic activities, but want to explore how the resources of individual households are linked to each other, and thereby constitute a larger aggregate potential resource through reciprocal exchange within networks.

### Definitions

Following Sahlins (1972: 188), I treat "redistribution" as the collection and redivision of wealth by a central authority and "reciprocity" as an exchange between two parties. Reciprocity does not necessarily imply a symmetry of positions between partners, but is a form of exchange based on interpersonal relations as opposed to the casual and alienated market-orientated exchange (Lomnitz: 1977: 133). From this it follows that:

1) the partners have at least a minimal knowledge of each other; 2) the relation is sustained over time (Lomnitz : *ibid*), although the objects of exchange may change; 3) the relation may be described by participants in terms of commitment, obligation and trust, which are different from those which are applied to market exchange; 4) The economic exchange is always accompanied by a minimal level of rites and ceremonies associated with inter-personal relations, such as greetings and expressions of concern for each other's lives and families. Further, people may exchange goods and services for gratitude, love, respect, blessing, reputation, prestige, status, authority and power. As Bourdieu has demonstrated in the case of both less and more complex societies (1977, 1984), cultural assets such as prestige and status and material wealth such as money, goods and services are mutually convertible. Thus, the criteria which determine the reciprocal character of



a relation is neither the nature of the exchanged objects (tangible or intangible), nor the symmetry of the relation, but the degree to which the partners conceive of the exchange as a component of a wider, multidimensional interpersonal relationship.

Here I treat networks as a set of such relations which are linked to each other. Although this definition of network is a very limited one, in the sense that it does not exhaust all meanings and functions which are associated with the term in the era of multi-media communication (see Hannerz 1992: 41), it suffices for the present purpose. As a set of face to face relations, networks are the social organisation of reciprocity. I have no intention of reviewing the anthropological literature on networks here<sup>1</sup> but to mention three basic network-related concepts, originally developed by Mitchell (1987), of particular interest for this chapter. These concepts are: “reachability; multiplexity and intensity” (Rogers & Vertovec 1995: 16). Reachability measures whether a given network line, which consists of at least two links, is circular or open ended (ibid). Multiplexity indicates the different types of social bonds which relate two persons to each other (kinship, friendship, sharing of work, marriage). And intensity is related to the degree of commitment or instrumentalism which partners may display in a relation (Rogers & Vertovec 1995: 17). With reference to my field experience I would add, that a network which includes many intersecting circular lines, with a high degree of multiplexity, and as a result with a high degree of commitment by its members to each other, is considered by the members as a “moral community” (Cohen 1966: 25). In such a community, those included are treated differently and with different expectations than outsiders. Individuals are expected to be generous and committed to fellow community members, while instrumentalism is legitimate with respect to outsiders (Caplan 1981:64 ). Networks, which are often based on work places, or kinship or marriage and include ties of neighbourhood, are examples of such moral communities in Almaty.

### **Reciprocity and networking as strategies of survival**

From the point of view of the welfare of ordinary people one of the most important economic changes in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, is the change in the balance of contributions of redistribution and reciprocity, as respective functions of the state and networks. The Soviet system organised one of the most comprehensive welfare systems in the world. The interesting fact about the Soviet redistribution

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<sup>1</sup> In the anthropological literature the genealogy of the concept of network is traced back to Radcliffe- Brown (1940) or Barnes (1954). After them a variety of authors have developed the concept further (Wolf 1966; Mayer 1966; Mitchell 1969, 1974, 1987; Hannerz 1980, 1992 ).

system was that the very nature of the economic system and the ways in which redistribution was organised actually encouraged reciprocity:

1. As Humphrey (1983) demonstrates, in the Soviet system, power was a matter of status rather than wealth. The fact that the accumulation and transformation of wealth was limited by the law encouraged people to reciprocate their material resources for status or for access to influential individuals, who could offer privileged access to resources (Humphrey 1983).

2. Another base for reciprocal exchange was the shortage ( both real and artificial ) of some goods. It is a well-known fact that shortage was an endemic aspect of the command economy<sup>2</sup>. In Almaty shortages were not universal, but were restricted to particular goods, like cars, refrigerators, TV sets and apartments. The shortage was both partly a result of the dynamics<sup>3</sup> of the system and partly an artificial one, as those at the top (*verkh* ) sold goods on the black market for much higher prices. Although such goods were rationed mainly through work places, privileged access to them was possible either through the black market or by reciprocity.

In order to understand the change brought about by the post-Soviet reforms in the spheres of redistribution and reciprocity, let us, consider the following equation:  $A = B + C + D + E + F$ .

Where:

A = the total resources of a family.

B = the sum of the family members' salaries and pensions.

C = the sum of contributions of welfare institutions.

D = the sum of the products from domestic production ( from dacha allotments and domestic animals, conserving of fruits and vegetables, fishing, gathering and hunting). E = the sum of resources acquired through reciprocity.

F = the sum of resources created through trading (*torgovat'* ) in the market.

The amount of E depends on the social positions of a given family 's members and their networking skills.

In the Soviet time, B+C constituted the main bulk of the household resources and D+E played an auxiliary role, but an important one. F= 0, for most of the ordinary families. Although (D+E) was very important for enhancing the household economy and E included goods which were in short supply, they were not

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<sup>2</sup> For a sophisticated view on shortage in the command economies see Kornai (1992: 228-301).

<sup>3</sup> In the Soviet economy, there were a system called *Val* in which the performance of each production unit was measured according to the gross volume of products in term of the total number or weight of the products , and was accordingly rewarded. Each enterprise tried to maximise its own rewards through maximising of gross volume with less consideration to the actual use value of products. Thus, depending on the measuring method, they produced either very small or very large goods which were not properly usable. So the shortage was partly a result of surplus of unusable products. For this reason the Soviet economy was called an economy of waste (Ticktin 1992: 10-11).

necessary preconditions for survival; a family's basic needs could be satisfied by B+C.

The economic reforms which followed perestroika and independence resulted in basic changes in the above equation. Firstly, because of the dismantling of the welfare state much of the redistribution related to family welfare collapsed. As a result C practically ceased to exist. Secondly B either does not exist as a result of unemployment, or has been reduced threefold as a result of the combined effects of inflation and wage cuts. And the payment of B is usually postponed for several months, making it less effective in the household economy. This means that the aggregate contribution of B+C to the family economy has declined dramatically. As this constituted the main bulk of the family income, its decline has meant that the majority of families have found themselves below the poverty line and net survival has become the main issue of their life. This has given a new importance to D+E, which have become the main resources for survival. To these two resources F has been added through suit-case and street trading. In order to illustrate this abstract, but simple model, let us look at the different ways one worker's family manages to survive.

Aleksander is a man in his late 40s. He is of Moldavian background but calls himself Russian (*Russkii*). He is married to Ludmila, a half-Russian and half-Ukrainian woman who calls herself Russian (*Russkaia*) as well. They have four children, two sons and two daughters; an unusually large number for a Russian family. Three years ago Kostia the oldest son left with his wife's family for Russia. The rest all live together with Babushka, Marina Aleksander's mother in law and Sharik a black dog in a three bed room apartment in a *khrushchevskii dom*<sup>4</sup>. Aleksander is a skilled carpenter in a factory, where he has been working for 24 years. The factory has been privatised through division of the shares between the personnel. At the beginning the Factory Director got 25% of the shares. Later he bought most of the workers' shares for very cheap prices, under the pretext that the banks would only give credit if the majority of shares were concentrated in one hand. While the production volume, Aleksander says, has increased, the director has reduced the number of workers from 1400 to 600. In A's team (*brigada*) three workers have been sacked and their duties transferred to him.

Aleksander works six days a week and his salary is 5000

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<sup>4</sup> *Khrushchevskii dom*, a Khrushchev house, denotes the five store cement blocks which were built in late 1960s and early 1970s as result of a housing policy launched by Khrushchev.

Tenge This was \$83 in October 1995, and fell to \$71 by Oct 1996 as a result of inflation<sup>5</sup>. The family's official income consists of the sum of his salary and his wife's mother's pension (1400 Tenge = \$20). "My salary", Aleksander says, "is one third of what it was in the Soviet time". Usually the payment of his salary is postponed by at least four months; fortunately his mother in law receives her pension regularly. He eats his lunch in the factory canteen on credit, which is then deducted from his salary. Those in charge in the factory insist that workers should accept part or all of their salaries in kind. But workers, Aleksander says, resist this, because the prices in the factory shop are much higher than those outside and the quality of the goods on offer is bad. The manager barter windows, doors and furniture with other factories and big food shops for food, wine, sugar and other goods. He later tries to persuade the workers to receive these bartered goods instead of money.

Aleksander claims:

The Director tries to kill two birds with one stone, to sell his goods and make extra profit at the same time. The manager says that there is no money for paying our salaries. But he lies, because, he is building an expensive house for himself and has recently bought a Mercedes.

The expenditure of the family is at least 25,000 Tenge a month. This consists mainly of food, rent, oil for the car and vodka and beer. Every evening he drinks two bottles of *zhiguli* (a local beer) and two *stakans* (small cups) of vodka, which together cost 70 Tenge. Their clothes are not new, and they cannot afford to buy new ones at the New Year as they did in the Soviet time. However, when winter was about to arrive both daughters, Natasha, 21 and Nastia, 19, argued with their mother about buying *sapogi* (boots) and *pol'to* (overcoat). Their mother, Ludmila Mikhailovna, opposed their demands, showing them her own worn out shoes and saying, "Look at me. If I had money I'd buy a new pair of shoes for my self." But Aleksander was of different opinion. "It is time", he said, "for them to marry and nobody will look at a girl with worn-out clothes." Some days later, he told me he had brought the boots and overcoats, I asked him, for how much? He answered *becplatno* (free of charge). How?! (free of charge)?!, I wondered. I got them, he said, from my niece who runs a shop with her husband in the Nikol'skii bazaar, they are

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<sup>5</sup> I use in this dissertation the symbol \$ as US dollar. The reason for using it so often in this text is that the local people almost always measured both their incomes and expenditures in US dollar. Those who could save, saved in US dollar as well. Its exchange rate to the Tenge, the local money, changed steadily during my stay in Imaty. On my arrival, 15 July 1995, it was 55 Tenge; it increased to 70 Tenge in October 1996.

*chelnoki* (suit-case traders). "What generous relatives you have!", I exclaimed. "Yes, but", he answered proudly, "I help them as well; at the beginning of the summer I changed their windows and doors free of charge. I took the material out of the factory without the Director knowing. You see, that was a very risky business."

Aleksander's family survive through the involvement of all the family members in economic activities. Aleksander himself, as his wife and neighbours would say, is a man with golden hands (*zolotye ruki*), a man who masters several skills. He is a good carpenter; he knows how to weld and build; he is a good farmer, fisher and hunter. In addition to all these, he is an excellent networker. Through combining his professional and networking skills, he earns money for the family's needs (*zarabotat' den'gi na khleb*). First of all, he manages to work for himself as well as in the factory. He finds customers through relatives and friends and then he "steals" some of his Director's customers by charging them less than his boss does. This is possible because the manager sends them to him to order the work. He manages also to take out some material and instruments from the factory and sell them through friends and relatives, usually for cheaper prices, but sometimes he gives them away free of charge. He usually, helps a number of different people by providing them with material, installing doors and windows and repairing them, and receiving help from them when he is in need.

From all these activities Aleksander earns between 12,000 and 20,000 Tenge a month, which constitutes the main bulk of the family income, much of it more or less being illegal. To manage it he bribes the guard (*akhrana*) and has the consent of his colleagues on the shop floor. Aleksander does not consider what he does to be theft, because, according to him the main thief is the Director himself, who has cheated the workers by buying their shares very cheaply and now does not pay them decent wages on time.

Aleksander's mother lives in a village 60 miles from Almaty. She worked the whole of her life for the neighbouring Kolkhoz as a *doiarka* (milkmaid). Her husband, who was a tractor driver, is dead. Now she has retired, but has her own *ogorod* (garden) where she grows fruit and vegetables and keeps domestic birds and animals. In addition to this she has received a piece of land where they plant potatoes. All the members of the family except Natasha (the older daughter), who considers farming

degrading, contribute to the work. Part of their meat and milk and the whole vegetable and fruit consumption is provided through the land. Women together conserve vegetables and produce jam in summer for the coming winter (around 60 three litre bottles of tomato salad, and around 40 half litre bottles of jam). In the summer (1996) they had a potato harvest of 2000 kg. They sold some part of the potatoes and bartered another part for a small pig. They gave one sack to a Russian man named Valerii who provides them with fishing nets, and two sacks to Aleksander's sister whose husband has committed suicide. They also kept a part for the summer and autumn consumption, and stored the rest in the *pogreb* (cellar), for the rest of the year until the next harvest.

In addition to their own land the whole rural area is used as a resource for survival. The lake, six miles from Aleksander's mother's village is the most important resource after the garden. Each time he goes to the lake. Aleksander catches up to 20 kg of fish. He gives some of the fish (the best part) to a local Turk, Memet, who is in charge of the lake, and some to the Russian Valerii. The rest of the fish is divided between his mother, her sisters, his nieces and his own family. Occasionally he gives fish to some friends on the factory shop floor or to the guard there. Over the years Valerii and Aleksander have become friends, some times spending a whole night on the lake, in Aleksander's small boat, drinking vodka and fishing together. In addition to giving fish to Turkish Memet, he gives him fruit and cuts wood for him with his electric saw which he has brought free of charge from the factory. Aleksander has developed a good relation with Memet. On all of the occasions when I went with Aleksander to the lake, we first would visit Memet in his home, a few hundred yards from the lake. He usually received us with vodka, tea or watermelon. Before fishing we stayed there for some hours and talked. Aleksander also hunts birds, but not as often as he fishes. He has an old rifle which is repaired by a Russian friend, who receives a share of birds and a bottle of vodka each time he repairs the rifle.

The neighbouring *Kolkhoz* is another economic resource. Aleksander barter things from the factory with villagers (*kolkhozniki*) for milk, fruit and meat. In addition to this, he receives hay for his animals free of charge from the *kolkhoz* and picks maize from the collective farm for family consumption. In

the summer family members eat a lot of maize and also give it to friends and relatives. The first time I saw Aleksander picking a big sack of maize from the collective farm, I asked whether it was illegal. He burst into laughter, and cited a local proverb: " *vse vokrug kolkhoznoe vse vokrug moe* (everything around *kolkhoz* belongs to me)." Later, at home when Aleksander's wife, Ludmila, brought the cooked maize to the table, he told the story to the family. They all laughed loudly, amused by my ignorance. In the summer, Aleksander usually receives free watermelon from the local Koreans for whom he may provide casual services.

Each Friday evening he buys cheap vodka and cigarettes from the *optovyi bazar* (wholesale market) in Almaty and brings them to his mother. The old woman then sells them for cash or barter during the week. Before selling the vodka she adds some water to it to increase the volume.

Ludmila, who is 46 years old, worked in a factory until she developed a problem with her spine. She was operated on twice before becoming completely unable to continue to work. She left the job without a *Kopeika* (a penny) as insurance, nor does she receive a pension. She contributes to the family economy by selling cosmetics with help of her younger daughter, Nastia. Her older son Kostia, who is involved in suit-case trade between Russia and Kazakhstan, brings them these cosmetics. He receives in exchange fruits, eggs and vegetables, all of which are more expensive in Russia. Mother and daughter sell the cosmetics mainly through friends and relatives. But they also advertise them through *Karavan*, the most popular local newspaper.

Natasha, before marrying a Turk-Bulgar and leaving for Istanbul, was involved in illegal street-trading. First, she received some goods from her cousin's shop and cosmetics from her mother, sold them in the streets and received 5% of the sale from the cousin. However, she complained that her cousin and cousin's husband were cheating her, that other girls worked on more favourable contracts, that in winter it was very hard to stand in the cold, and that men harassed her almost every day by offering her money or jobs for sex. In late summer she sold text-books in the street, which she received from a Kazakh woman by the name of Gulia. Gulia was her friend's sister and was working in a school library. The books actually should have been sold through the library at school, but instead they were sold for higher prices in the black market. Neither Gulia nor

any other member of her family dared to sell the books, because of the fear of being identified by somebody from the school. The illegal sale of the school books was not limited to Natasha, at the beginning of August they were sold in this way everywhere.

Natasha was more satisfied with the terms of her contract with the Kazakh woman than those with her own cousin. For each book they paid a certain amount to the school and the surplus was to be divided equally between them. Natasha, who is exceptionally honest for a young woman from Almaty, cheats Gulia a little. She does so because she feels that Gulia in her turn is cheating her. She suspects that Gulia pays less to the school for each book than she tells Natasha. Thus, if Natasha sells a book for 150 Tenge she tells Gulia 120. Natasha was generally ashamed to trade (*torgovat'*), but she tried to ease the burden by joking: "It is better to sell stockings and books than sell your body."

After finishing high school at the age of 17 she wanted to enter university, but the family had neither the connections nor the money to obtain her a place through bribing, so she failed to be admitted to any university. Later her father bribed a manager of a technical college for \$200. As a result she received one year of training and became an electrician. Then her father found a job for her in the Army through his cousin, a retired army colonel. In exchange he had to provide the colonel with doors and windows for his new apartment. The family also had to play host to the colonel and ten of his friends and former colleagues for dinner: a dinner which would cost the family at least \$100.

Natasha did not like the job, because the army people had a reputation for being both drunkards (*alkashi*) and macho (*babniki*). She was really afraid of being sexually harassed, but she had to take the job anyway because street-trading was so unstable. She did not like to be involved in the suit-case trade with other countries, mainly a female profession, either. This was because, according to a widely shared local opinion, women who are involved in this kind of activity sleep with their trade partners abroad to get the goods for lower prices. Natasha would usually say "I will not fuck (*trakhat'sia*) with Arabs and Turks for *khleb* (bread)." Fortunately, she met the Turk-Bulgar and married him. As a result she was freed from taking the job, and her family were freed from their obligation to the colonel. To find a good husband is not only a matter of prestige and



survival for a young woman but for her family too, because the groom and his family constitute a link to new networks. Later the colonel asked Aleksander to bring the doors and windows free of charge for him. Aleksander avoided doing so and instead asked for one hundred "boxes" (his word). Aleksander told me that it was just to charge the colonel in spite of the fact that he was a relative because according to Aleksander, the colonel was tricky (*khitryi*) and rich, and that it was dangerous for Aleksander to take the things out of the factory. "They cost two hundred dollars in the market, I charge him just half that," Aleksander said.

Baba Marina, the mother-in-law, in addition to her pension, contributes to the family economy by illegally selling cigarettes, vodka, chewing gum, wine, beer, Turkish and Chinese pasta on the pavement in the evenings in summertime. In spite of all of these activities, the family save very little money, they just survive. We have also to keep in mind that much of the trade in which Aleksander's family are involved is illegal.

As the above example illustrates reciprocal exchange constitutes one of the main strategies of survival for ordinary people . The exchanges take a variety of forms including: sharing of alcoholic drinks; sharing of food and drinks; giving gifts (*podarok* ); exchange of words (*khvalit', gororit' khoroshie slova*), giving help (*pomoshch'*), and some others.

From the point of view of survival in Almaty, we may classify reciprocal exchanges into two types<sup>6</sup> : 1) The reproductive ones, which are related to the reproduction and maintaining of those social relations vital for survival; 2) The urgent ones, which contribute directly to survival. The sharing of food and drinks, exchanges of gifts and words are prime examples of the first type, and help with immediate needs is the most important example of the second one. The first type occur routinely and recurrently. Exchanged goods and services are expected, but not demanded, by the receiver and the giver(s) decide(s) on the nature of the objects offered . Moreover, the exchange is an element of the rituals of daily life, the life cycle of a person or an institution or cultural events. Although the recent poverty resulting from the recent "Thatcherite" onslaught on people's living standards has made the continuity of this type of exchange problematic , it is still expected to take place. The second type occurs when the objects of exchange are demanded by the receiver, who needs them desperately, and is not personally able to provide them.

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<sup>6</sup> Sahlins (1972: 193-96) , with regard to the degree of altruism or instrumentalism involved , classifies reciprocity as three types: general reciprocity; balanced reciprocity; and negative reciprocity. In the first type, altruism dominates and in the third, instrumentalism.

This type of exchange which covers a vast number of needs from repairing a toilet seat to finding a job or a place in university, is understood by locals as help (*pomoshch*).

Analytically these two types of reciprocity are distinguishable from each other. In reality their functions overlap. Some forms of reproductive reciprocity like gift exchange (see below) are intended to contribute to the receiver's household economy while on the other hand any form of exchange bolsters the existing relations between partners. Moreover, both types of reciprocity are usually elements in multiple exchanges between the same partners. For example, Aleksander and his relatives, including the family of his nieces and less frequently that of the Colonel, visited each other and in celebrations exchanged gifts and words of honour and affection. On the other hand Aleksander drank vodka and beer with most of the men with whom he exchanged goods and services. The two types of exchange presuppose each other.

### ***Sharing of alcoholic drink***

Sharing of alcoholic drinks is an informal event and usually carried out without consuming food, but sometimes people may consume some *shashlyk*(kebab) and salt smoked fish with it. It is usually a business of men and happens outside the home unless the apartment belongs to a divorced man. It cannot usually happen where women live, unless women are 'alcoholics'. Although most of the women drink on particular occasions they are very strongly against the informal collective drinking of men.

In the neighbourhood where I lived and did fieldwork a considerable number of men drank in pairs or in groups. I knew one of these groups and usually drank with them. We usually drank at evenings after work. In winter we used a kiosk in which one of the men worked at nights and in summers we used the neighbourhood's open cafe or simply drank in open space. The gatherings were spontaneous and irregular, and the participation of individuals was irregular as well. A drinking session could include from four to ten men, accompanied occasionally by three young women. One of these women was the fiance of one the men, the second one was her married sister who was divorcing her husband and the third was their friend.

These type of women were considered by outsiders as bad women or vulgar women(*Plokhie devushki, vul'garnye devushki*). Most of the men in the circle had ambivalent attitudes towards them. While they behaved in a friendly manner towards the women they considered at least the second and third women sexually

available and always created a sexual space through jokes and touching, which the women did not always like.

It seemed to me that women were not bothered about outsiders' judgments, because without concern they freely did everything which violated the local image of the "modest woman" (*skromnaia zhenshchina*). In relation to men in the circle they acted more subtly. As they never paid for drinks, they resisted the men's demands gently with smiles. They slept with some of the men in the circle, but with those they liked, and this occasionally created tensions. The most severe case was when Oksana, the married woman, chose a newcomer, a handsome young man, as her lover. Two of the men who wanted her were offended. One chose not to come to the circle for a while, but the second made some trouble at the beginning. He began to approach Oksana more directly, and one evening this led to a very serious verbal clash between him and Oksana's lover, Volodia. As other people mediated this did not develop into a physical fight. The two men shook hands and their relations became normal.

All the men with the exception of the owner of the kiosk and those who worked there were from the neighbourhood. The distance of relationship varied; while some were close friends; others had known each other for a fairly long time and three people were new comers. The drinking companies were open to strangers as well.

Ethnicity was not important for urban men, but Kazakhs from Aul usually drunk separately together and were excluded from drinking circles of urban men. The urban men considered them trouble makers. As I drank with them as well sometimes, they did not approve of my drinking with Russians. Once one of them came to me and said: "Brother, you have forgotten us, your Muslim brothers, and have become a Russian".

People's income levels were usually the same. In buying drinks such as vodka and beer there was no order, those who had money invited others, and there was no sign of counting. Usually, if nobody had money somebody would buy it on credit. All these men bought in credit from the kiosk. And some times the kiosk owner invited others. Women did not contribute.

Drinking took hours as men came and went. The atmosphere is very relaxed and men talk about their lovers (*liubovnitsy*); all men, both married and unmarried, occasionally had lovers. But they complained that it was expensive to keep them constantly, because they must buy flowers, drinks and presents.

Although drinking is a form of leisure, and talk about women and sex dominated the conversation, men exchanged a variety of goods and services free

of charge or for less than market prices. They chased women together and helped each other to find new lovers, and provided each other with alibis (*alibi*) for wives when one of them spent a night with his lover. They borrowed small amounts of money from each other, exchanged information, exchanged services, and found customers and contacts for each other. The particularity of this exchange was that neither the nature of the services and the goods nor the time of exchange were predetermined. When a person had a need, others helped if they could. For example I have known of the following cases. A Kazakh merchant helped a Russian to find a lawyer. A Russian construction worker helped a Bashkir to buy an air ticket, in short supply, for his wife. A Russian suit-case trader sold a jacket for a lower price to a Kazakh. A Ukrainian lent his car on a Sunday to a Russian to take his family to his dacha. I guess that there were many other transactions between many of them which they hid from me.

To share alcohol with a man has a great symbolic meaning. It obliges you to respect him; to consider him an acquaintance, not a stranger, next time you see him to not just pass him by, but greet him, pause and exchange words; and it is a basis for friendship.

Although men remarked on each others' birthdays and drank a special toast, they never invited each other home. It was, perhaps, because wives were reluctant. The exception was two old friends, a Kazakh and a Ukrainian, who visited each other's homes. Another exception was a single man who often invited others to his home. Interestingly, some of the men invited me, and their wives were friendly. It was because the women thought that I took part in the circle as a "journalist", not because I was an *Alkash*.

### ***Sharing of food and drink***

Home has a higher symbolic value than a bar or other similar place where people gather casually. It is the place where people receive relatives and friends and share food, drinks, words and affection. One can distinguish between two types of sharing of food: the ordinary sharing of the food between family members on a daily basis and the ceremonial sharing of food. The latter occurs either on public celebrations, ceremonies of life-cycle of individuals and institutions, or when a person or a family or a group of persons are invited as an acknowledgement for some help they have provided or are expected to provide for a member of the family, or when the person(s) invited are "prestigious". In the latter case the guests' prestige is meant to enhance the self esteem and reputation of the hosts, so they invite some of their relatives and friends as well to show off their

'honourable' guests. The meal usually takes place at home, but it can take place in a restaurant, or some official place like a work place. The length of the ceremony, the number of types and the total amount of food and drinks served depend on the occasion, the place, and the wealth and social importance of guests and hosts. However, the amount of food and drink, in contrast to the poverty of most people at present, is usually impressive.

Consumption is controlled from the beginning to the end. A person who is called *Tamada* (usually in weddings or other official big parties), or the most senior person, opens the ceremony by mentioning the relevant event and persons, and giving a toast (*tost*). After the toast everyone drinks together. Then follows the consumption of the cold food (*kholodnoe*) or first food (*pervoe*). While eating, at approximately equal intervals, the *tamada* gives each person a turn to offer a toast. And of course people raise their glasses and drink together again, and then eating resumes. Between toasts, people chat and tell jokes and anecdotes. After a while the warm food (*goriachee*) or second food (*vtoroe*) is served, and after that the dessert.

When the eating is finished and the last person has given his/her toast, the same person who opened the ceremony closes it by once more addressing the hosts, the guests and the event.

Actually, toast giving, particularly among Kazakhs, is an art of oratory, and the toast is more like an elaborate speech. While the form of each speech changes according to the respective teller's skills and taste, the content of all includes some invariable elements. Firstly, all of them thank the host, as the head of the family (*glava semi*), for his generosity for providing the impressive food table (*stol*). Secondly, they admire the hostess' cooking skills and hospitality (when the celebration takes place at home). Thirdly, they highlight the event and address those persons who are particularly related to it. Fourthly, they link the individual to the group by emphasising the collective bonds between people who are present. With regard to this, people usually hold with the rhetoric on the virtues of collective bonds like kinship and friendship and so forth.

The order of the toast giving is determined from the top down, according to seniority. On official occasions and in religious communities seniority is defined by rank, and in private parties by age and gender. In the latter case the priority is given to men and those who are older. While in pure Muslim gatherings the gender aspect is usually observed more strictly, in Russian or mixed gatherings it is negotiated more flexibly. Toast giving is a significant way through which power relations are legitimised discursively. This occurs through the order and the content

of the toast, its length and the body language of the teller. The ways in which people address each other depends on the symmetry or asymmetry of relations. This is signified in the ways the name of the addressee is mentioned. A person of higher status usually calls the person with a lower status, if younger, by a nickname (Medinka instead for Medina, and Alesha instead for Aleksei). A person from a lower status always calls a person of higher status by his/her name plus patronymic (*Otchestvo*), like Sergei Mikhailovich, or Medina Hosenovna. When they use related pronouns a person with higher or equal rank/status calls the one with lower / equal status "ty"(you, subject), *tebe* (you, object) or *tvoe*(yours), while the latter use the pronouns, *Vi* (you, subject), *Vam* (you, object), and *vashe* (yours). The first group of pronouns are used for the expression of intimacy or for patronising some one, and the second signify distance and respect. The body language and the content of the toasts are in tune with this logic of hegemony. As the senior person feels (or give the appearance of feeling) confident, his/her voice is didactic and the body is relaxed. While s/he chooses her/his words more freely and mixes them with anecdotes and jokes, s/he usually mentions the achievements of his/her junior addressees in an evaluative but approving manner, and usually gives him/her the highest mark; then reminds him/her of the appropriate moral conduct in life, gives him/her instructions and mentions what is expected from him/her in future.

A person from a lower status, with a modest voice and a humble face flatters and praises the higher person, depicts him/her as exemplary in character, highlights her/his moral and academic, but rarely economic, achievements. S/he uses more formal and standard words of praise and flattery. Moreover, people in higher positions usually speak longer and address a larger number of persons than those in lower positions. Toast giving is gendered, in addition to the gendered order of the giving, by the way a woman is addressed. A woman, regardless of her social position and professional achievements, is praised at first hand for her moral achievements in relation to her family life. She is depicted as an exemplary wife and mother and is wished the love of her husband and children. In the case of a woman who is unmarried, she is wished a good husband and is advised how to behave as a good wife and mother.

### ***Gift (podarok)***

Gift is a very ambiguous category, and is mixed up with bribe and tribute. It is usually given in a celebration, and is accompanied by toasts from the giver(s) to the receiver(s). The manner in which the toast is given depends on the

symmetry/asymmetry of the relation as described above.

The gift is usually given collectively, by a family, a group of friends or colleagues, or those who share the same religious faith. The recipient is one person, or two in the case of marriage. In special cases a gift is given individually as well. The most usual case is when it is given by a man to his mistress or fiancée. Another case is when the gift is a cover up for a bribe or tribute. So a gift often symbolises the belonging of an individual to a group and such a link is explicitly highlighted by the toasts which accompany the gift. The ways in which a counter-gift is usually dealt with have to do with the symmetry/asymmetry of relations between the people involved. In the case of symmetrical relations the counter-gift is always given and its monetary value usually matches that of the gift. The exception is when the gift or counter-gift is given partly as a compensation for something the recipient has already done or expected to do for the giver in the near future. In such a case the gift and counter-gift, depending on the social distance, are not necessarily of equal value. In the case of asymmetrical relations the giving of a counter-gift is treated differently depending on the occasion and the type of hierarchical relation between parties involved. In this context we may distinguish occasions related to the individual life cycle from the rest.

The hierarchical orders which may influence the counter-gift are social rank and gender. With regard to life-cycle ceremonies a counter-gift is always given but its amount and type might be influenced by the social hierarchies mentioned above. For example, while the birthdays of all staff in a particular work unit [a department in a university (*kafedra*) or a team (*brigada*) in a factory] might be celebrated and each member of the staff might receive a collective present from the rest, the presents received by those in higher ranks [head of the department (*zaveduiushchii kafedroi*), or the leader of the team (*brigadir*)] are distinguished by their higher values.

On occasions which are not related to an individual life cycle, a counter-gift is treated differently depending on the type of hierarchy in question. In social hierarchies gifts are given by those below to those above but counter-gifts are not given. At the eighth of March celebration at the university three women who worked as secretaries at the dean's office gave her expensive flowers and two bottles of expensive (expensive in the local context) shampoo as a gift without receiving anything in return but probably her protection. On the same day most of my female students bought flowers for their teachers but did not receive anything from them. During exam time at the end of the year, students in each class collect money and buy gifts for teachers without receiving anything from them, but winning their

kindness in giving marks. Actually, this kind of gift, which is very close to tribute, is a well established practice in Almaty. Those who want to be on good terms with their bosses provide them with gifts. With regard to gender men usually give gifts to women, and in turn receive their hospitality and affection. In post-Soviet Almaty, giving presents to women by men has become a strong symbol of masculinity, not only for the rich but even for the poor. At eighth of March, a young worker spent the whole of his salary buying earrings for his girlfriend.

The gift usually consists of money or objects with direct utilitarian characteristics unless the receiver is a foreigner. In the latter case people usually give artifacts which symbolise the local "traditional cultures". I was involved with a group of friends who believed in a quasi-religious cult, the cult of Ivanov. They celebrated the birthday of each member. I was the only person who received a Kazakh traditional hat, the rest received money. On another occasion, in a modest working class wedding in the neighbourhood where I lived, all who were present gave gifts in the form of money with the exception of the groom's mother and the uncle of the bride. While the former gave the bride gold earrings, the latter gave them travel tickets to St Petersburg. The most impressive gift came from the mother of the bride. She had taped together dollar notes and had made a long band from the notes. When she gave her gift all who were present burst into cheering. Other people had put the money in envelopes.

As the gift is oriented towards utilitarian ends, the amount is quite important. It varies depending, on the one hand, on the wealth and status of the receiver and givers and, on the other, the social distance between them and the occasion. In the cult group, each member contributed 300 Tenge and the sum of collected money amounted to around 3000 Tenge (\$ 50) each time. However, when the gifts were exchanged between relatives or close friends it could come to higher amounts.

## Help

Celebrations (*prazdniki*), sharing of food and drink and exchanges of words and gifts are ways of sustaining relations over time and creating new relationships in which a wider range of goods and services are exchanged. The latter includes a variety of forms, the most important example of which is help (*pomoshch'*).

Giving help (*pomoshch'*) is the most prevalent form of reciprocity between relatives and friends. It acquires a quasi-barter form of exchange. As with barter, it is given in exchange for some help which the giver has received in the past or in expectation of receiving some help in the future. But locals clearly distinguish



between help (*pomoshch'*) and barter (*barter*). In the former "the focus is on"<sup>7</sup> the relation between people and in the latter, on the relation between things (Humphrey & Hugh-Jones 1992 : 1). To clarify this, let us consider the following example. As the reader might remember, Aleksander's mother bartered vodka with some of the other villagers. She often donated Vodka to her nephew who was living in the same village and who usually helped her with any emergency in the absence of Aleksander. I asked Aleksander whether his mother bartered the Vodka with her nephew. He answered: "No, she just gives it to him and he helps her, this is a relation between relatives (*rodstvennye otnosheniia*)." Then, I asked him what is barter? He answered : "exchange of goods" (*obmen tovarov*). As this example illustrates, in barter the economic aspect of the exchange is recognised explicitly by the partners, while in the case of help this aspect is disguised by ideologies, discourses and feelings which are associated with marriage, kinship and friendship.

Moreover, while in barter the delivery and the receiving of the bartered goods by each of the partners occur either simultaneously or separately (Humphrey & Hugh - Jones 1992: 1), the giving and receiving of help do not take place simultaneously. And the kind of help which will be received by the giver in future is unspecified beforehand. Although the receiver may compensate the giver partially by providing him with some money, gifts and food, this is not considered by any of partners as a full compensation. For example, the colonel mentioned above, who found a job for Natasha would impose an expense of \$ 300 on Natasha's family, \$100 for food and drink, and \$ 200 for doors and windows. In spite of this, the colonel would claim that he had helped Natasha's family and that they should be grateful and indebted to him, because, they would have had to pay much more, if the colonel had not been a relative.

Return is delayed until the giver has an urgent need which can be satisfied by the receiver. However, the delayed return is not the end of the process but the beginning of a new cycle within it, which leads to a new giving. This cyclical characteristic means that the present act of giving is associated with acts of receiving in the past and future. In this way the relation between two parties is sustained and renewed over time and thus requires a different morality than barter. As the continuity of relationship provides a protection against the contingencies which emerge as part of the passage of time, the sharing of food and drink and exchange of gifts and words are meant to keep the relationship strong. However, from this we should not conclude that the act of giving will be followed

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<sup>7</sup> I have borrowed this phrase from Humphrey & Hugh-Jones (1992 : 1)

unproblematically with an act in return. The way the former recipient may react to the request of the former giver depends on how their relationship has evolved meanwhile. If the receiver finds the giver no longer reliable or thinks that the value of goods or services s/he demands are too high with regard to the current state of affairs between them, the receiver may either avoid providing him/her with goods or services or demand a higher immediate compensation than usual. The same is valid for the case in which the receiver finds the giver less important owing to the promotion of his/her own social position or access to other people who may replace the giver more efficiently.

And finally it differs from barter in the sense that in barter the values of exchanged objects, although estimated subjectively and with reference to different “regimes of value” (Appadurai 1986, quoted in Humphrey & Hugh Jones 1992: 1) (Humphrey & Hugh-Jones 1992: 1), are assumed to be equal, with regard to help people do not necessarily compare the values of exchanged “objects” . For example, Aleksander and Memet did not match the value of fish and the cost of cutting wood. The fish Aleksander catches from the lake should have cost him 100 Tenge each time, because Memet charged others who were fishing there this amount of money. If Aleksander had purchased the same amount of fish in the market in Almaty he would had paid 2000 Tenge. But neither the Turk nor Aleksander were aware of such a value. Aleksander never sold the fish and the surplus of the family consumption was given to friends and relatives. On the other hand cutting wood with the electrical saw had no fixed value, Aleksander instead did it as a favour.

The second major characteristic of help is that it is often obtained through the illicit use of personal influence: *blat* . Resources which are reciprocated through *blat* are appropriated resources: resources to which the appropriator is not legally entitled. “*Poluchit' po blatu* “ [to get on the quiet, come by through influence (The Oxford Russian Dictionary: 26)] has been a way of life in the late Soviet and post-soviet social systems. As Berliner (1957: 182) suggests, the word *blat* is an old one, but under the Soviet system has acquired new meanings. *Blat* literally means crime, pull, influence, wangling, protection (Oxford Russian Dictionary: 26). But in daily usage the intensity of its negative connotations changes depending on the context. People from lower down the social scale usually condemn *blat* at the top of society as theft and crime while approving *blat* among themselves as a strategy of survival. Another context in which *blat* is invested rhetorically with negative meaning is ethnicity. Most of the non-Kazakh ethnic groups, particularly Russians, relate *blat* rhetorically, in a strong negative sense, to Kazakhs. They may tell you

that Kazakhs monopolise the jobs and places in universities for their own relatives, or some may even tell you that Kazakhs are *blatniki* (corrupted, fixers, wangers). On the other hand they justify their own use of *blat* as way of getting on with life.

The illegal use of resources has been a universal phenomena in the Soviet and post-Soviet eras (Dallin 1951: 181- 196; Berliner 1957: 182-206; Grossman 1985; Humphrey 1983: 221, 222-223, 324; Humphrey 1991: 9, 11, 12; Handelman 1995: especially chapters 4, 5; Ashwin 1996: 28-29). Dallin and Berliner, on the basis of information gathered from Soviet emigres, demonstrate that *blat* was already a considerable phenomenon in Soviet society during the fifties. But many people told me, *blat* was considered a serious crime before Khrushchev's reforms, and so only people in higher positions were involved in it and ordinary people could only do it marginally. During the rule of Khrushchev *blat* began to expand because people feared the state less, but its expansion was limited owing to people's commitment to socialist morality. The *blatniki* were judged more severely than a decade later under Brezhnev's rule when *blat* really began to thrive due to growing shortages (*defitsit*) and general disillusionment with socialism and the subsequent moral decay. Humphrey (1983), who deals with social relations in two Kolkhozes under this latter period among the Soviet Buryats, observes that illegal methods were used for access to goods which were in short supply or for allocation of places in education, and goods were also sold on the black market (221-222, 368-70). Grossman claims that while everybody was stealing from public organisations this was morally legitimised by the public (1985: 256).

In Kazakhstan, in the same period under Kunaev's rule, *blat* became a way of life. Every body from the top to the bottom illegally appropriated "public property". While the portion of a person's share from appropriated resources was determined by his/her status and networking skills, most people had their share of it. The saying , "*vse vokrug kolkhoznoe vse vokrug moe*" (everything in the Kolkhoz belongs to me) expressed by Aleksander above illustrates this. Actually *blat* had become a very strong institution in any work place in Almaty. Whilst many scarce goods like cars and apartments were distributed through the workplaces according to a queue, those who had good connections or paid bribes received the goods sooner. Aleksander and his wife mentioned, with anger, how the director of the factory gave the car, which according to their position in the queue should have had been sold to them, to some body else.

On the other hand, while the directors of the enterprises sold considerable parts of the products on the black market or reciprocated them in their own networks, ordinary workers were involved in the illicit use of resources as well. On

the state and collective farms they used tractors and other instruments illegally and they slaughtered animals, used crops, hay, fodder and other things free of charge. Workers took instruments and products out of the factories as well. Aleksander told me that while the director of their factory forced the workers to work on Sundays to produce for the black market, the workers took small things (*meloch'*) as well. He said:

"I have brought the material for building the *bania* (sauna), the garage and *pogreb* (cellar) from the factory. Everybody took things out. We workers joked that Brezhnev had said, 'You can take anything out from the factory as long as you keep it within the Soviet Union.'"

Although in the early eighties *blat* had become very widespread and almost everybody was involved in it, the main body of resources were still distributed centrally through legal channels. Politico-economic changes during perestroika and its aftermath in the late eighties and early nineties changed this picture. During this period, *blat* became the main method of distributing of resources owing to two factors. First, as Humphrey (1991) demonstrates in the case of "provincial Russia", as a result of the collapse of central economic and political institutions, the power of the local authorities including those of the directors of different enterprises, increased dramatically. Now they decided how to distribute the resources. Second, there was a dramatic growth of shortage. In Almaty goods such as milk, sausage, butter, sugar, sweets, vodka, cigarettes and soap which were previously available disappeared from the state shops. According to people, they were "sold under the counter" (*torgovat' iz pod polu*) or on the black market for several times more than the official prices. This shortage was partly a result of the recession and the collapse of central planning, but hoarding was instrumental as well.

This situation contributed to the further expansion of *blat* in several directions. Firstly, it became the main way through which different directors and high officials of the party bartered goods and services with each other. Secondly, the existing patronage system in workplaces expanded beyond recognition (Humphrey 1991:9) as those below became more dependent on those above to obtain goods. Thirdly, the links between black-marketeers (*spekulianty*) and leaders of different production units multiplied. And finally, *blat* became a significant element in ordinary people's relations as well.

In spite of the fact that shortage has disappeared as a result of the lifting of the state monopoly over foreign trade, the *blat* system continues to expand. This is primarily due to the lack of money and changes in the structures and functions of the state. Lack of money in the hands of ordinary people, in addition to the cutting

of wages and unemployment, is caused first by the short supply of money in the country (Scheremet 1996: 31-32). This has led in its turn to the enterprises either postponing the payment of ordinary people's salaries or trying to pay them in kind. According to Scheremet (ibid), enterprises' debts to private households amounted to 50 billion Tenge in November 1996.<sup>8</sup> For the same reason the payment of pensions is regularly postponed as well. The state debt to pensioners in September 1996 was 44 billion Tenge (Verk 1996: 2). Another factor which contributed to the lack of money was that the value of money which people kept in the *sberkassa* (saving bank) evaporated as a result of the transformation from the Ruble to the Tenge (1992-1993). For example Aleksander's family had saved 18,000 Rubles during the eighties, of which 6000 was saved for Natasha's dowry (*pridannoe*) and the rest for buying a new car for the family. Aleksander's mother had saved 7000 Rubles as well. They lost all this money, which according to them was equal to the price of two cars, as a result of the reform. This was not an exceptional case. Most of the families in the neighbourhood where I lived had lost considerable sums of money as a result of the transition.<sup>9</sup>

This shortage of money encouraged further *blat* both among the elite and the ordinary people. At the top, different elite groups compete for the existing reserves of money through the manipulation of the credit system. At the bottom of society, the ordinary people cannot purchase a considerable part of needed goods and services from the market because of the lack of money, so they intensively exploit their dachas (land allotments) on the one hand and exchange goods and services with friends and relatives on the other. Illicit deals play a prominent role in the latter. Although the possibilities for people in a lower social position to illegally appropriate resources are very limited, they try their best to do this, as the example of Aleksander (above) illustrates. In addition to Aleksander, in our neighbourhood, I knew three electricians, two construction workers and one machinist who were doing these kind of things. The resources appropriated by each individual in the working classes might be very small, but the sum of such resources when pooled by the members of an extended family play a great part in their survival, depending on their ability to reciprocate them with other resources. Both the quantity of appropriated resources and the extent to which they are exchanged for other resources depends upon the scale of a given extended family's networks and their skills to exploit these networks for reciprocity. I will deal with networks in the

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<sup>8</sup> The importance of this figure can be estimated with regard to the fact that the average salary in Kazakhstan in the same period was 5000 Tenge.

<sup>9</sup> As the Soviet economy was an economy of shortage most people had a considerable surplus of money which they saved.

following sections, so let us consider the other key factors which enforced the use of *blat* .

Firstly, the state ceased to fulfil its welfare duties and forced people to rely more than before on their networks, and thus on the illicit use of resources for survival. Secondly, what locals called “privatisation of the state” (*privatizatsiia gosudarstva*), which means that each of the institutions of the state has become the “fiefdom” of those in charge, has provided a new general ground for the use of *blat*.. The leading bureaucrats on the one hand use these institutions for collections of bribes and tributes and on the other reciprocate their resources. This has increased the grip of the bureaucrats on the social and economic life of the population in a more arbitrary way than before. They play a decisive role in selling the state’s property, leasing land, issuing of business licenses, extracting taxes, using buildings and other facilities, giving credits, manipulating custom tariffs, distributing of jobs, accessing higher education and giving protection through the control of the Mafia’s networks.

The privatisation of the state in combination with the prevailing mentality of “*dikii kapitalism*” (wild capitalism) has generated a widespread cynicism among people. They have lost any commitment to other people beyond their own relatives and friends. In such a situation, there are two main means for obtaining resources: through bribery and connection (*sviaz*”). Access to resources is much cheaper through illicit reciprocal exchange. Even if in many cases people have to bribe their friends or relatives in order to obtain resources, the amount of a bribe is much less than in the case in which the recipient is a stranger (*neznakomyi*). Owing to this situation networking has become the main way of obtaining resources in Almaty.

## **Networking**

An equivalent of the English word ‘network’ does not exist in the local language. The closest word to it is *sviaz*’ (connection). Phrases like *cherez sviazi* (through contacts), *c pomoshch’iu/*, *rodstvennikov*, *droozei*, *znakomykh* ( with the help of relatives, friends, acquaintances) signify the basic strategies of exchange within networks. Networks include complex sets of links contingent upon time and place. But the most important and durable ones are those which are based in a workplace or build upon kinship and marriage bonds. This “network of networks” constitutes a framework for the exchange of different types of expropriated resources between people who occupy different niches in different branches of the division of labour.

A work place is a strategically important social setting for networking for several reasons. Firstly, due to the prevailing nepotism, many of the people who work in a workplace unit are related to each other directly or indirectly prior to starting the work.<sup>10</sup> This makes it much easier for them to establish close relations with each other.

Secondly, as in the case of the factory where I did part of my fieldwork, each work unit, such as a team ( *brigada*) on a section ( *səkh*), and the section itself, constitute some kind of strong community. Actually, not only are each of these units called a collective ( *kollektiv*) but people have a strong sense of belonging to a collectivity. This is so because, as Humphrey (1983) has argued in an other case, in the Soviet time those in the top and bottom of the hierarchy in a work unit were mutually dependent on each other. The bottom was dependent on the top for receiving different privileges and the top was dependent on the bottom's work for fulfilling the planners' demands. Moreover, the leadership of a given collectivity ( *kollektiv* ) represents and negotiates the interests of its members both horizontally and vertically beyond the work unit. Although the unity between managers and workers has begun to split as a result of privatisation, it has been enforced between the rank and file on the section and brigade levels. This has become so, because, in the privatised plants the managers have increased the control to stop the Soviet type appropriation of resources by ordinary workers.

Thirdly, as the welfare benefits have been cut and the payment of salaries delayed for several months, workers' and their families survival are partly dependent on appropriation of resources from a work place. This involves multiple illegal deals between many individuals based on mutual trust.

The negotiation, achievement and maintenance of trust create an intimate milieu in the work unit. This intimacy is furthered by celebrations of each colleague's birthday, or official celebrations like the 8th of March, shared consumption of drink and food and exchanges of gifts. In many cases, relations are extended to outside of the work place. On both the factory shop floor and in the university several of the retired people had maintained their contact with their colleagues who were still working. In both places their children had got jobs or education places through their parents who had worked there or were currently working there.

Marriage and kinship networks are the most important forms of social organisation of reciprocity. However, their weight in this respect varies in relation to

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<sup>10</sup>On the factory shop floor where I did field work with no exception all apprentices were the children of those who worked or had worked there. At the university department of which I was a member, all staff had been recruited through connections.

ethnicity. While marriage networks are equally important for all ethnic groups, kinship plays a lesser role in Russian networks than those of Kazakhs'. This is expressed in two dimensions: differences in kinship obligations; and differences in the numbers of kinship links in a given family network. Kazakhs have much stronger kinship obligations than Russians. This results in Kazakh kinship networks transcending more successfully the distances in kinship relations on the one hand and the geographical distances between relatives on the other. While it is a common practice among the Kazakhs with whom I spoke, to receive at home, feed, and give accommodation to distant relatives (*dalnie rodstvenniki*) when they visit Almaty, Russians usually even lack contact with such relatives. Moreover, Kazakhs' strong commitment to kinfolk transcends the obstacle of geographical distance for networking. Kazakhs who live in distant areas from each other keep in contact and are engaged in reciprocity. On the other hand, geographical distance is a real problem for Russian kinship networking. Although Russians keep in contact with close relatives (siblings, parents, children) regardless of geographical distance, their reciprocal relations with relatives is effected strongly by geographical distance. The differences in the ways Kazakhs and Russians deal with kinship and geographical distances result in differences in the scale of their networks . Kazakh networks include a considerably greater number of people than those of Russians. The scale of ethnic networks, the significance of which will be considered later, is influenced as well by differences in the size of families owing to the higher birth-rate among Kazakhs. A Kazakh person in his/her thirties has considerably more siblings, cousins, uncles and aunts, than a Russian person of the same age. The greater a network , the greater the possibilities of accessing the resources for its members, because its members can occupy a greater number of positions at the different levels of the total division of social labour.

Marriage creates a very strong alliance and commitments between the relatives of the spouses. Through marriage, the families of the couple create new channels for accessing resources and establishing new reciprocal relations between each other. Moreover, as the household is a place of celebrations and sharing of food and drink it is one of the most important places for networking. Due to the importance of marriage for relatives the choice of spouses is controlled, if not arranged, by parents. The control is usually imposed with regard to ethnicity, wealth and influence. Parents and relatives usually urge young people to find a socially suitable spouse within their own ethnicity. But while among the young people, particularly young women, the wealth of the spouse to be is very important, ethnicity has less importance for Russians than Kazakhs.



Both sides usually give the following reasons for the preference of endogamous ethnic marriage: First, ethnic tensions make the communication between families of a couple difficult. Moreover, ethnic tensions may lead to ethnic wars which may cause a family based on a mixed marriage to split, and in order to avoid such a tragedy one has to avoid inter-ethnic marriage. Second, cultural differences, which are related to reciprocity, create difficulties and confusions. It is argued that Russians and Kazakhs have different traditions with regard to consumption of food, religious ceremonies, relations with relatives, gender relations and relations to elders. Muslims may not eat pork, Russians eat more *borshch*<sup>11</sup> and vegetables, while Kazakhs eat more meat and *beshparmak*.<sup>12</sup> That Russians celebrate Easter (*paskha*) while Kazakhs celebrate *korbanat*. (feast of the sacrifice). Kazakhs usually depict Russian women as free (*svoboda*), which has a negative connotation. It can mean that the woman in question is sexually “loose”, but generally it means that Russian women are bold and do not obey their husbands and do not respect their husbands’ parents and relatives. Russians consider Kazakh culture anti-woman. In relation to generation, while the Kazakhs say that Russians do not respect their elders and do not take care of them, Russians consider generational relations between Kazakhs as patriarchal. In relation to relatives Russians usually say Kazakhs have many guests and the women in a Kazakh family must work very hard feeding the guests and washing the dishes. On the other hand, Kazakhs consider Russians individualistic and greedy.<sup>13</sup>

Although ethnically endogamous marriage is the main pattern of marriage, especially among Kazakhs, it is far from being unproblematic. Against their parents will, many young people choose to marry outside their own ethnicity. Moreover, while ethnicity is not usually an issue when both partners are of European origin, Tatars are famous for their flexibility with regard to mixed marriages.

The wider networks which result from the articulation of marriage and kinship networks to those based in work places acquire an ethnic character for three reasons: the conceived relation between kinship and ethnicity, the dominance of endogamous ethnic marriage and the ethnic division of labour. In Almaty kinship is usually conceived as a subcategory of ethnicity and relatives in most cases belong to the same ethnic group. As I have already touched upon the

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<sup>11</sup> *Borsh* is a Russian food

<sup>12</sup> *Beshparmag* is a Kazakh food

<sup>13</sup> I hope that I am not giving the impression that Kazakh and Russians always speak negatively about each others. In many cases both of them express positive attitudes to each other. For example many Russians admire Kazakhs for being a hospitable people (*gostepriimnye narod*) and many Kazakhs conceive of Russians as a cultivated people (*kul'turnyi narod*).

role of ethnicity in marriage, let us here consider the ethnic division of labour. In the Soviet time different ethnic groups occupied different economic niches in Kazakhstan. Today this picture has begun to change because Kazakhs are purging others from their own zones and they are moving into niches which were traditionally occupied by other groups. But this has not yet gone so far as to change the previous pattern of ethnic division of labour. Russians still dominate the middle and lower ranks in industry (the higher ranks have been partly replaced by Kazakhs) and Kazakhs dominate the political apparatus and higher education. For example, in the university where I taught 75% of the staff were Kazakhs and all the higher positions were occupied by them. On the shop floor of the factory where I conducted fieldwork the situation was reversed. Out of 25 people who worked there, two were Uigur, three Kazakhs and the rest Russians. Both the Brigadier and the Master were Russian as well.

The prominence of ethnicity in networking has led to the current ethnic tensions. Kazakhs are usually accused by non-Kazakhs, including Muslims like Uigurs, Tatars, and Turks, of discriminating against others. The large scale of the Kazakhs' networks in combination with the Kazakhification of the state apparatus, given the determinant role of bureaucrats in the manipulation of resources, in combination with the prevailing corruption, has given rise to a phenomenon which is called "tribalism" by the local intelligentsia (Masanov 1996a). Tribalism denotes the exclusion of non-Kazakhs from strategic resources, on the one hand, and the fierce contest between different Kazakh networks for such resources, on the other. It is argued that the rival networks of the Kazakh elite compete for resources according to the old tribal alliances, called *Zhuz* (Masanov 1996: 47- 50, 55- 59). The Kazakhification of the state which was carried out by purging non-Kazakhs during perestroika and after the independence and the privatisation of state, are the main factors which bolster "tribalism". But the monopolisation of strategic resources by Kazakh networks is a post-soviet phenomena. In addition to this, there are other aspects of social change which have negatively effected networking in general.

### **The negative effects of changes on networks**

The most important factors which have influenced the networks in this way, from the local point of view, are the following: wealth differentiation, the growth of the capitalist mentality, the growth of poverty, migration, the breakdown of trust and the problem of secrecy.

For students from urban origins, the most important criteria for choosing

friends was class. After class gender was important and ethnicity had no importance. They told me that one cannot mix with those who are richer or poorer than oneself, because those who come from families with different levels of wealth dress differently and spend different amounts of money. A teacher who told me that in the Soviet time they never chose their friends according to the criteria of class, but goodness (*dobrota*), complained that today their children are forced to do so.

There are those who can afford to buy American jeans for their children, give them good pocket money and buy chocolate for them and those who can afford none of these. Children make remarks about this. Those who enjoy these privileges tell the poorer children, my parents are rich (*bogatye*) and yours are not. My own children hear these kinds of words every day.

It is not only among school children and university students that class matters, it has even influenced relations between friends and relatives. As communication between families, then and now, is organised around the kitchen table and guests must be served impressively with food and drink, those who have become relegated to the lower class ranks cannot afford to offer food and drink at the required level or at the same level as those who have benefited from the situation. Even if people with unequal access to wealth still keep their relations, the distances between them have widened and reciprocal exchanges, with the exception of those between close relatives, have practically ceased to occur. It must be underlined that from the local point of view it is not the unequal access to wealth in itself which has alienated people from each other but the new capitalistic greediness (*zhadnost'*) which accompanies it. People frequently complained that in the past (*ran'she*), people were *generous* (*shchedrye*) and kind (*dobrye*) but now they have become greedy (*zhadnye*) and evil (*zlye*).

What natives conceive of as greediness signifies a profound yet incomplete process of transformation in the Soviet "habitus". As Humphrey (1983) argued for the Buryats, such habitus was oriented towards shared consumption rather than accumulation of wealth. Although wealth was distributed unequally in Kazakhstan as well, the wealthier people, particularly those among Kazakhs, channelled the surplus of their wealth into redistribution through collective consumption in private parties and public ceremonies. But today because of investment opportunities on the one hand and the creation of new needs as a result of the emergence of a consumerist culture and availability of a wide range of new goods on the other, people tend either to transform wealth into capital or to use it to satisfy the new needs of the household rather than spending it on relatives and friends.

Although the significance of this new mentality in local experiences acquires a dramatic scale, because it represents a radical break with the past, it is still far from the prevalent individualistic materialist mentality in the West. It should be

considered as a transitory phase between the old Soviet mentality and the latter. People still help their relatives on a scale which is unimaginable in a capitalist country like Austria. A Kazakh business man had paid \$5000 to provide a place in a university for a distant relative. A Russian man who works as a doctor in Germany had provided for a cousin to study in Australia. In addition to this, the greed of the rich man in Almaty should not be confused with that of the Weberian ascetic capitalist. As the former acquires his wealth through parasitic ways, he is inclined towards a luxurious life style. He spends a lot of money on himself, his family and his mistresses. If he has become greedy in the eyes of his neighbours, friends and relatives, it is because he has distanced himself from those friends and relatives who have not succeeded in catching up with him; and he does not respond to their expectations according to the perceived standards of generosity .

In the neighbourhood where I lived two families who were accused of being greedy by neighbours were both involved in middle range business. In both cases both husband and wife worked in the business. In the first case the wife was an Uzbek and the husband a Jew and in the second case the wife was a Kazakh and husband a Korean. When I asked both families whether they helped relatives, friends and neighbours, both told me that they helped close relatives (including parents and siblings) but they cannot afford to help neighbours, friends or distant relatives. Both wives complained that they must spend a lot of money on their own family. The Uzbek woman proudly showed to me the Italian furniture which she had bought for \$19000. She said: "We have saved enough money for building our own house but we are afraid of this Kazakh racketeer state (*reket gosudarctva* ). If you have a good house they may expropriate it from you at any time." In addition she had a house maid and home teacher who taught English to her daughter for \$10 per hour. The interior of the second family's apartment was less impressive but they had bought the neighbouring apartment and had extended their apartment from three to six rooms. In addition to this they send their daughter each summer to Cambridge.

It is not only the indifference of the wealthier towards the poor which has undermined networks; the impoverishment of the majority of people has also tended to undermine networks. For the majority of people net survival has become the main issue of life, and so they lack any surplus of resources for either inviting relatives and friends home or for helping those who are needy. Besides social stratification and poverty, the dramatic increase of physical distances between people as a result of ethnically-based migration has had a negative influence on networking. The massive out-migration of non-Kazkhs (500, 000 persons per year)

has led to people losing parts of their valuable contacts. Although some migrants from their new locations in Germany, Ukraine, Russia or Israel may send letters and money to their old friends and relatives or even invite them to their new homelands, they are not able to help them in the same way as they did when they were in Almaty. Even if this adds a transnational dimension to networks, on a practical level it has led to the weakening of networks. The negative effects of migration on networks are distributed unevenly with regard to age and ethnicity. Usually, old people of Slavic origin suffer from them most seriously because many of those middle-aged Russians and Ukrainians who leave Kazakhstan cannot afford to take their old parents with them and many Russians who are married to Germans and Jews migrate with their spouses to Germany or Israel, but because of migration rules cannot take their parents with them.

Another factor which has effected networking negatively is the prevailing milieu of mistrust between people which has resulted from the general social chaos and its concomitant morality. The dismantling of the welfare state and resultant poverty, alcoholism, break up of families and prostitution at the one extreme, and the prevailing mentality of the "*dikii kapitalism*," which is a combination of cynical individualism and propensity towards organised criminality at the other, are the main features of this chaos. The destruction of the welfare state is widely interpreted as the destruction of the larger society as a moral community, and this understanding has led to the individual ceasing to have any social commitment beyond his or her own networks. The result is that any person beyond someone's networks is not only excluded from the moral community, but is suspected as a potential threat, on the one hand, and could be subjected to deception, chicanery, theft, black mailing and even physical violence, on the other. The illicit nature of a considerable number of transactions within networks, with regard to the arbitrariness of the state officials, makes trust an essential precondition for networking. If an official finds out about an illicit deal he must be bribed to keep quiet, or you are really in trouble. Owing to this people keep their deals secret from unrelated persons, because the latter may either blackmail them or report them to the officials. A Russian woman who herself had found her job through a relative, while refusing to tell me who had helped her, said:

Here we know that everybody has got his or her job through contacts, but we do not reveal to each other who has helped us. You do not sit on a branch and saw it at the same time.

This general atmosphere of fear and suspicion of strangers makes the establishing of new relations much more difficult than before. In addition to this, the social chaos, unemployment, poverty, divorce, addiction to alcohol and drugs undermine people's commitment to each other. Just as many former friends and

neighbours, under the new pressure of change, have become “estranged” to each other, so those who still keep their relations fear the risk of the same fate as well. This uncertainty and ambiguity of relations within networks, under conditions where relations are an absolute precondition for survival, create an existential paradox which is partly resolved through a moral rhetoric. A striking aspect of daily talk in Almaty was an overemphasised rhetoric of morality. Words like *vernye* (faithful, loyal), *vernost'* (faithfulness), trust (*doverie*), to trust (*doveriat'*), *Poriadochnyi* (honest, decent, respectable), *ne poriadochnyi* (dishonourable), *obiazatel'stvo* (obligation), reputation (*reputatsiia*), cunning (*khitryi*), uncomplicated (*prostoi*) were frequently used to describe the assumed “national personality” (*natsional'nyi kharakter*) of different ethnic groups or the attributes of a particular person. The main moral virtues which people highlight are honesty, obligation, trust, a good reputation and the ability to keep things confidential. One of the most usual words of praise with which people give credit to their friends and kin is *Poriadochnyi chelovek* (an honest, decent, respectable person). On the other hand the word *ne poriadochnyi chelovek* (dishonourable) is used to discredit a person. In toast-giving and on other occasions people praise in formal ways honesty (*poriadochnost'*), devotion (*predannost'*), loyalty (*vernost'*) and highlight the importance of having a good reputation (*reputatsiia*). Reputation as a part of “symbolic capital” is gendered. From women’s point of view a trustworthy man, among other things, should not be an *alkash* (alcoholic) and *babnik* (womaniser). And from both men’s and women’s point of view a trustworthy woman should not be a *suka* (literally bitch, but used for stigmatising any woman with allegedly loose sexual behaviour).<sup>14</sup>

## Conclusions

Reciprocal exchange through networks constitutes one of the main strategies of survival in post-independent Almaty. It consists of two types: reproductive and strategic. While the former contributes to the maintenance of social bonds between people, the latter is directly involved in survival. An important aspect of strategic exchange is that it is associated with the illicit use of resources.

The main pattern of social bonds which frame both types of exchange are friendship, acquaintance, kinship and marriage. The networks of each extended family’s members are shaped around these bonds which acquire an ethnic character due to the close connections between marriage, kinship and the division

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<sup>14</sup> Women are usually not associated with alcoholism.

of labour and ethnicity. This is not to claim that such networks do not include very important non-ethnic links, but that ethnic links overwhelm the former.

This, in combination with the large size of Kazakh networks and their dominance in the state apparatus, which still controls the main resources, gives rise to ethnic tensions. While Russians usually associate the current economic problems with the alleged corruption, nepotism and mismanagement of Kazakhs, the latter blame the former for their alleged colonial past. While this has given some currency to ethnicity, it has not yet led to other degrees of ethnic coherence or ethnic solidarity either among Russians or Kazakhs.

The main moral community for an individual is the family and the family's networks. Anybody outside the circles of relatives and friends, regardless of ethnicity is feared, suspected and can be cheated and violated. Due to the vital importance of networks for survival, the individual is defined primarily by a role in the networks, rather than to any sort of "imagined communities", including ethnic ones. Obligations, viewed as strategies of reciprocity, to partners within networks override all other types of loyalties .

In spite of their importance for survival, networks are in danger of disintegrating under the pressures inflicted on them from the outside world. In order to counter such dangers people resort to a rhetoric of morality.

But good moral conduct is expected to be applied only in relation to friends and relatives, not to other fellow citizens in general. This type of morality in combination with the fact that people from lower down the social scale feel alienated from the elite, due to the demolishing of the welfare state and the arbitrariness and corruption of state officials, make problematic the 'imagining' of a nation-state or people-state from below. The notion of a society at large does not exist for individuals unless as a crowd of strangers each of whom constitute a potential threat. It is a dark threatening wilderness of violence and crime from which the individual takes refuge in networks. This is an expression of what the dispossessed call chaos. In such a situation the concept of a civic society which consists of sovereign individuals who are related to each other through mutual rights and duties is alien to the networking habitus. Every body knows the secret name of the night is *sviaz'* (contact ). Tragically and paradoxically networking as a response to the chaos perpetuates it.

## **WOMEN AND SEXUALISED STRATEGIES: Violence and Stigma**

### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on two inter-linked issues: the political economy of sex in Almaty from the point of view of the women involved in it, and the moral issues which have emerged among the wider population as responses to the new sex economy. As indicated in the first chapter, the process of wealth differentiation in post-Soviet Kazakhstan has been dominated by networks of small groups of men. Under such conditions, a considerable section of young and attractive women, who lack wealthy and influential relatives to provide economic security for themselves and their poor families, have no other choice than sexualised strategies. The most important of these are: finding a good job by responding to employers' sexual demands; finding a wealthy husband; finding a "sponsor", a lover who will support her financially; and sex work.

In addition to the prevailing poverty, the desires created in young women by the consumerist culture are pivotal in tempting them to practice sexualised strategies. The availability of restaurants, bars, discos and fashionable dress in Almaty creates a strong desire among the young people for the consumption of expensive goods and services. Such desires can be understood in the light of this kind of consumption becoming a part of youth culture and identity. For many young women without rich parents, the only way to access the pleasures offered by the "free" market is to transact their own bodies. Although sexual strategies are seen by women who practice them as survival strategies the wider population consider them as a significant elements of chaos. Those who can afford to buy sexual services offered by such women are well off men, both locals and foreigners. Women try to find such men either on streets, through trying get a lift in an expensive car or by attending places rich men usually visit, such as business centres, restaurants, night clubs and hotel lobbies. To have a sense of such places, let us to get acquainted with one of them.

### **International business club, a place for sex work**

I visited the international business club in Almaty on Friday evenings for a good while. My reason for visiting the club was that I frequently had heard the local people saying that "prostitutes" are responsible for the spreading sexual diseases, including AIDS(*SPID*), which they contract from foreigners. Actually, the images of sexual diseases, prostitute, prostitution and the ways these are related to those of foreigners, constitute components of a wider local discourse on the alien, through



which people construct negatively an authentic Soviet “identity”, with which I will deal in the next chapter. As the club was famous for being one of the main places where the foreign men met local women, I began to visit it to meet some of the alleged culprits.

The club is owned and administrated by Turks and staffed mainly by local young beautiful women, mostly “ Russians” with some Kazakhs among them. The guests consist mainly of white<sup>1</sup> men from Australia, Europe and America and the beautiful young local women, from any ethnic origin. The male visitors work in embassies or multinationals like Shell , Chevron, Volvo, KLM, Lufthansa, or provide consultancy work for the government, or run their own businesses, or are business men who visit Almaty for short periods to exhibit their goods.

The local young women consist of different categories. The first group are the lovers and a few wives of the white men. The second group work as secretaries or interpreters for white men. The third group are those who come here to find foreign husbands, or “sponsors” ( a lover) or find a job. And the last group are young prostitutes.

In addition to these two main groups, one can occasionally meet a few men from the Middle East or South Asian origins or a few American or West European women. Visiting the club for a while I saw just one black man there, he was from the USA.

The guests mix, drink and eat until midnight when the club is closed. Then they drive in their expensive cars, accompanied by their women, home or to Manhattan, a disco in Almaty, or to KEMEP another disco bar owned and run by an American, or Casino Plaza besides Hotel Pakhat palace ( Marco polo) which is run by Turks or to other similar places.

The business club and other entertainment places mentioned above are part of a wider newly created economic, social, and cultural sphere. In the eyes of a rich foreign or local man who has enough money and a beautiful woman in his company, or a superficial and biased Western journalist, this sphere has transformed Almaty from a “boring” Soviet city to an “alive and vibrant” one. The shopping centres, business offices, exhibitions centres for foreign goods, fashion salons, restaurants, casinos and hotels which have shaped the new face of the city belong to the private sector. The owner of these businesses are those foreign and local men who mix with a particular type of the young beautiful local women, and lavishly spend money in the numerous entertainment places. The most impressive of these places are the Hotel Rakhat Palace ( Marco polo) built, owned and run by Turks, and the restaurant Dostyk. Turks, Americans, Italians, the local Koreans, and

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<sup>1</sup> In this context 'white' denotes the colour of skin.

other locals have their own share in creating this small Babylon.

Most dispossessed people, young and beautiful women excepted, not only cannot afford to visit these places (with the exception of shopping centres), but associate them with prostitution and immoral sexual behaviour. The dispossessed stigmatise these places because the men who own, run and visit them have a privileged access to wealth or means of violence, and as a result to beautiful women by virtue of their wealth and violence, and people think that such men corrupt social morality and spread sexual diseases. Moreover, these places and men associated with them symbolise the wild capitalism which has ruined people lives.

Paradoxically, such condemnations have no serious repercussions on the rich men, but impose a strong stigma on the young poor and attractive women, who, as one of my female students said, “try to have a share of the wealth stolen from society by the rich men” through the use of different sexualised strategies. Moreover, such stigma makes these women targets for physical violence and actually legitimises the use of violence against them. Let us look at some details of these strategies as they are practised by the women.

### **Finding a job**

As mentioned in chapter 3, most of jobs are distributed through connections. According to local people, many young and beautiful women, without proper connections are forced or enticed to trade their sexuality for access to jobs with higher salaries than those paid by the state. These jobs are concentrated in the private sector described above. The expansion of commerce, and entertainment have created new types of job for women as dancers, strippers, waitresses, sellers in private shops, secretaries and interpreters. However, people say, these jobs are distributed selectively, most of them are given only to young and beautiful women. According to a widely shared local opinion, such women reciprocate sexual services to their employers for getting the jobs. This opinion is part of the local hegemonic patriarchal ideology for keeping women in their “traditional roles”, but the sexual exploitation experienced by women themselves is real. The following example illustrates women’s worries and difficulties in this respect.

My landlords, a working class Russian family, had debts to relatives from borrowing money to pay compensation to the man with whom they had exchanged another apartment for the one I lived in. Their 21 year old daughter and her husband lived with them. She was very fluent in English and taught it to some of the children of the neighbourhood and transcribed English translations of very

complicated juridical texts, translated from Russian by a Local Jew, for very cheap prices. I told her she could find a job as translator in a foreign company or translate for business men in exhibitions for a higher salary. She answered, “my mother and husband will not allow me to do such a job, because women who work for business men must sleep with them.”

Zhana a young unmarried Kazakh woman and a friend of mine, displayed similar attitudes on another occasion.

As the winter was getting colder I asked her to help me buy an electrical heater. She took me to Sum, the biggest supermarket in Almaty. The building is a large four story house. The interior of each story is divided into several parts, separated by fences, with a store in each part. All types of goods, like carpets from Turkey, fashion cloths from Calvin-Klein, perfume from Christian Dior, TV sets from Japan, . are sold in these stores. While we were wandering in the supermarket I commented, “ so many beautiful women!”. “Of course they are beautiful”, Zhana said, “they are handpicked, they are mistresses (*liubovnitsy* ).” Then she explained that the owners of the shops, who are men, usually give jobs to young beautiful women for sexual favours. Zhana’s opinion was shared widely by the people in the neighbourhood and other places.

Three advertisements advertised in Karavan ( p 116, date 23 08 96) under the rubric, we are looking for work ( *ishchem rabotu* ) illustrate people general understanding.:

1.

Woman (*zhenshchina*), 36 years old-work. Sex is not offered ( *intim ne predlagat* ). Tel:..

2.

An intelligent woman(*intelligentaiia zhenshchina*), high paid job (house keeper, interpreter, and others). Sex is not offered (*intim ne predlagat*). Tel: ..

3.

A girl ( *devushka* )-work. Sex excluded ( *intim iskliuchen* ). tel: ..

The second advertisement is targeted at foreigners who usually employ housekeepers and interpreters. The interesting element in this advertisement is that the advertiser demands a high salary for cleaning.

Many young women had direct experience of situations in which men had tried to entice them into a sexual relation by offering them jobs. The reader might remember young Natasha from chapter 3, who complained about sexual harassment imposed on her by men. Here is a story in her own words:

When I was selling jewellery(busy)on the street, a Kazakh man approached me, and asked me :  
“Do you need a work?” I asked what kind of work? He answered, to sell in a cafe, located in some

college. He gave me the address, I met him in this cafe and when we talked , he suggested I should become his lover (*liubovnitsa* ). I did not accept this and rejected the job, but we exchanged phone number. After a while, he called me and told me that I could sell hand bags, shampoo, and jackets for him and take 5% for my self. I accepted this but went there with a Kazakh girl friend. After some days he called and asked whether I had sold anything. Then he asked me what about your friend, I want her to be my lover. I said no. He said why do you speak for her. I said because I know her. I sold one jacket but could not sell any of handbags, so I returned his hand bags. After a while he called me and told that he is going to establish a business in another city and asked me whether I wanted follow him, I rejected him again.

A Kazakh young woman who taught English at university had a similar story to tell. She complained that the dean sent her own people to Europe to Tacis programs , and that she has applied twice but failed to receive the grant, although she was much more qualified than those who were sent there. Then she expressed her desire to visit Europe. I advised her to work for some international companies, suggesting that they might send her to Europe. She answered:

They will not give you a job unless you sleep with them. Once I applied for a job in KLM. The Pakistani man who interviewed me, told me you will get the job if you will be a good girl. I asked him what do you mean that I will be a good girl? He answered , behave in a way which pleases me. As the secretary in his room was laughing at me, I lost my patience, took a piece of paper, and wrote "sex" and handed it to him. When he read the word, he nodded positively. Then I got angry, told him, sorry, I can't be that good, find somebody else, and left the room.

In spite of the risks of sexual exploitation and stigma many young women seek these jobs, because in these sectors women usually earn two to four times more than in traditional occupations. For example, let me compare the salaries of Mira and her sister Gula who lived in my neighbourhood.

Their father is an Uigur and their mother is Russian. They divorced long ago and the children stayed with their mother. Mira is 28, has a son and is divorced from a Russian man. Gula is 21 and is married to a Russian. The older sister works as a waitress in a cafe which is a part of greater complex which includes a restaurant, bar and casino, and is owned by a local Tatar and a local Jew, who has become an Israeli citizen after perestroika. The second sister works in a bakery established recently by a Turk from Turkey. The first sister works 24 hours and has 24 hours off, the second works from 8 o'clock a.m. to 8 o'clock p.m. seven days a week. Mira earns \$ 200 a month, and Gula 3000 Tenge (\$50). Mira got her job through her lover, a Kazakh young business man who is a Mafioso and knows the owners

of the complex. I asked Gula: "Why you don't try to work in a cafe as well? She answered: "My husband will never let me do it. He is very jealous."

Actually, unlike the international business club the male clients of the complex are locals or from other part of the former Soviet union. Mira tells me that they are Mafioso and Businessmen. Mira's attitudes towards having the job through the Kazakh man are ambivalent. On the one hand, she thinks her salary is OK, and the manager and other customers respect her because of him. "If some body bother me" while pointing to the three Kazakh young men who work as guards, "they will fix him. They are his acquaintances". On the other hand she is in trouble because she does not like him any more but is afraid to leave him.

In the beginning I loved him, but once I discovered he was married and had a child, I felt cheated and lost my love for him. One day he brought his wife and son to the cafe-house and introduced them to me. I became friends with his wife, but can't tell her the truth. When he wants to spend a whole night with me, he tells her that he is going to do some business. As he realised that I do not like him any more, he told me that he loved me and if I disappear, he will burn our apartment and kill my sister and mother. He is a racketeer (*reket*); he will do that.

The notion of mistress is a stigma in Almaty. A mistress is seen as an immoral and unworthy woman. However, Mira's mother, her sister and women friends know about relationship and think it is Ok. Mira herself says that she would not mind other people judgments if she loved him. But she does not not like him any more. Yet it seemed to me that she tried to justify morally her own position, because once she commented on other young women who visited the complex, saying with a tone of disgust in her voice: "a married woman will never come here, these girls are either prostitutes or mistresses (*liubovnitsy*)." The fact that she had accepted the position of a mistress was a matter of expediency rather than choice. In a way Mira felt hostage to her lover both because of his potential violence and her job.

Women who receive such jobs are very insecure, the employer may replace them with new women or simply become erotically fed up with them.

For example, Mira says, " I have no future, the boss (*nachal'nik*) can sack me any time he wants, and if I get sick, nobody will take care of me and my son. I have no

insurance (*strakhovka*). I asked her whether she was a member of a union. She answered that capitalists (her word) do not like unions, they existed only in the Soviet time but do not exist any more.<sup>2</sup>

Although women who work in the bar, restaurant and casino earn considerably more than those who work in most other sectors, their jobs are dangerous because a considerable number of the visitors to such places are Mafioso and hooligans. Several times, I witnessed, "Hooligans" eating in the cafe and trying to run a way, and Mira had to stop them. As they knew there were Kazakh guards they paid, but Mira felt insecure. She said they could hit her if they encountered her by chance alone somewhere. Viktoria who works as dealer in the Casino Plaza, mentioned above, describes the unpleasant conditions of her job:

I am a dealer, I am not allowed to speak with clients, I can't speak a word. When you lose your money, you can say everything, ask your friend, you go mad. Our Casino is a new one; we have been working since September. In the beginning each month we had two or three fights between clients, then our boss asked the local police to protect us. When a client loses his money, he wants to kill you. You can be replaced by somebody else, but until this happens you must stand twenty minutes, and listen to every thing about your relatives, your family....Sometimes it is limited to insulting .. In our casinos people shoot dealers ..once they shot at a girl in another casino.

While the director of this casino is an Iranian man who has become a Turkish citizen, and all inspectors are young Turkish men, the dealers are young local women. The clients are men, both foreigners and locals. Among the foreigners German speaking people predominate and among the locals, Kazakhs. Women who come to the casino, according to Viktoria, are prostitutes or mistresses who accompany men.

Zhana, who stigmatised women who were working in the Sum, and her friends; worked for foreign businessmen in exhibitions (*vystovki*) as translators. The girls find out about the date an exhibition starts through media or friends . Then they try to be the first to attend the exhibition on the first day. When the gates are opened tens of girls rush towards businessmen in their exhibition chambers. In each chamber usually, two or three businessmen do three minute interviews with girls and choose those they find suitable. Zhana said:

They choose girls , both according to their language skills and beauty, but beauty is obviously more important. I am not beautiful but I have learned to be charming. When you approach them you have got five minutes to entice one of the business men in the chamber to fall in love with you. Her Friend Valentina, a tall beautiful Ukrainian, says that she uses her female attraction as a strategy for getting the job. She flirts with them and gets the job, but in the end if she likes someone she sleeps with him otherwise she rejects him. While Valentina seems to master the situation with confidence, Zhana feels more

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<sup>2</sup> She was obviously wrong, because unions existed formally, although they had lost most of their erstwhile welfare functions.

vulnerable.

I hate businessmen, they always try to buy me. They offer to me, Valentina and Malena to sleep with them. But so far we have rejected them. They usually start at \$100, then they increase it to \$200, \$300. Once a Russian businessman offered me \$500. But I refused him, he was so ugly and fat if I had slept with him I would have died. We say to each other how stupid we are, because if we had slept with them each of us would have had thousands of dollars by now.

Zhana and her friends have come into contact with foreigners through working as interpreters in exhibitions or visiting the international business club. Once when Zhana was working for two business men from Cyprus, I visited her twice during her work. At the university she had told me that she had charmed two business men. In the evening one of them, nearly 55 years old invited her to dinner. I became upset, and as she realised my reaction she became slightly angry and told me: "You have no right to be angry with me. It is my body, not yours, I can do with it what I want." I agreed with her. Later she told me the following story:

We dined in Marco Polo, When we ate he was always trying to touch me. Each time he wanted to tell me something he put his finger on my arm, my hands or some where else on my body. Each time he did this my body reacted in a very bad way. Finally I moved away from him to such a distance that he was not able to reach me any more with his dirty hands.

At the end of her work, after three days, she had become really exhausted. She told me:

Oh God! You cannot imagine how much energy I must spend in protecting myself. .. I and my friends discussed the possibility of sleeping for money for many months, finally we decided not to do this. ...Many times, the idea has tempted me. Yesterday I saw a leather skirt which costs \$ 100, I loved it, but I do not have the money to buy it, if I sleep with some body I can get the money and buy the skirt. .. I have no money to go to good places on my own. I get them to bring me to Marco Polo or the Italian restaurant, but finally I avoid them and quit.

While girls have room for manoeuvre with foreign men and can reject them, they have not the same power vis a vis the local men. They cannot play the same game with them. Once they are trapped in such a situation with a local businessmen they have no choice but to respond positively to their sexual demands; otherwise they will be physically violated or raped for cheating the man. A young Kazakh female teacher told me: "if our men give a you a box of chocolates they ask you to sleep with them. If you avoid it, they tell you I have bought this and that for you and you must sleep with me."

## Finding a sponsor

Another way in which young women, mainly divorced ones, try to get access to material welfare is to find a sponsor. I actually encountered the phenomenon in the first month of my stay in Almaty. I mixed closely with a group of illegal street traders, a young single mother of Chechen, Kazakh and Russian mixture, a married couple ( the husband Kazakh and the wife Uigur) and another unmarried couple who had recently begun an affair (the man a local Korean and the woman a Kazakh from Karagandy). As they were amused by my “profession” (ethnographer) and were curious to hear about Europe, we met almost every evening and drank cheap beer or Vodka. As Nina the single mother, and I were the only single people in the group, an attraction developed between us which the married couple noticed. One day Talgar, the Kazakh man, asked me: “ Jakob, do you want to be a sponsor of a woman?” “What does it mean?” I asked. “That you support her both financially and morally”, he answered. I found myself in a very embarrassing situation, partly because I usually do not like a third person to mediate in my relationship with a woman, and secondly I interpreted the word as protector. As I found this very insulting for both me and the woman, I explained to him in a very friendly way, that I did not like the idea, and that I thought that a woman should be her own sponsor. After this Nina and I both found ourselves in an embarrassing situation, because they had interpreted my answer as a rejection, while I really liked her. I just denounced the sponsorship. Fortunately, another unpleasant event came to our aid. My friend called me from Austria to say that I should return to sort out a problem which had emerged with my grant. When, after two weeks, I returned from Austria we both forgot about it. And I forgot the concept of sponsor for several months until it came up in the discussions I had with my female students. Through these discussions I discovered that sponsorship was a well established institution in Almaty and that almost everybody between the ages of 15 and 50 of both sexes and of all ethnicities knew about it.

Sponsorship is a form of widely practised reciprocity between a man (the sponsor) and a woman in which sex is exchanged with money and other things. A Tatar young woman who was a university student, defined a sponsor as a man who provides materially for a woman (*muzhchina kotoryi obespechivaet zhenshchinu material'no*). To become a sponsor is the privilege of men who have benefited economically from the post Soviet social change. This is expressed clearly from the following definition of a sponsor provided by Olga , 22 years old, half Russian/ half Kazakh and a student of mine: “ He is a rich or a rich enough man who provides money, fashionable dress and other presents for a woman and sleeps with her.”



A female colleague of mine, told me this kind of reciprocity was practised even in the Soviet time to a limited extent. However, its wide practice, according to Olga, mentioned above, is undoubtedly a post- soviet phenomenon. She said:

Living in the Soviet union we hadn't such kind of words. .. It is a new word. I will explain to you how the word appeared. When we began to have shows, big parties, and musical events it was necessary to find some body to finance such events. These kind of people are called *metsenat* , it is just the same as sponsor. After that the girls started to call their lovers sponsors because of the money, because of the financial side.

While every body knows about sponsorship, moral attitudes change according to generation among the women. Women over forty are critical of young women who find sponsors and will not let their own daughters become *liubovnitsy*. In the most cases they did not consider them as proper woman. The young women approve of it. Viktoria, the casino dealer above, sees it as one of the strategies by which young women can have a share of the wealth collected by the men. Olga, linked it to freedom:

A sponsor is a man who visits a woman two or three times a week, he gives just enough money to go and buy something fashionable and beautiful. Some times, if he is rich enough he gives gifts like a car or gold thing like a gold ring . A husband is a man you see every day and sometimes he bothers you, or he begins to make you nervous. .. I have a lot of girl friends and neighbours who are divorced from their husbands. They don't want to marry, they want to have sponsors. Unmarried women prefer the sponsors to husbands as well. Women want, the freedom but at the same time they want to have the money. You have no obligations, he is not your husband. You may get acquainted with another person whom you really love. You get the money from the sponsor and have the second man for your soul.

Another young woman, a Kazakh student, who told me boldly in front of her two female friends that she had five sponsors, and actually her friends knew some of them, and said that we girls call them among ourselves *koshelek* (wallet). She said that she had a boy friend whom she really loved. Then she explained to me: "Girls usually meet several men but one is for the heart and the rest for the money (*odin dlia dushchi octal'nye dlia deneg*).

Olga and her friends speak openly about their sponsors to each other.

To have a sponsor is not a secret. We usually discuss among friends who are married. who are divorced. Who has a sponsor. What sum of money he gives her, and what does she buy for the money.

She added:

Women find sponsors in night clubs, business centres and on the streets . It is very simple if you are on the street and see a man driving a very expensive car. You know that he is a businessman,

that he is rich. You stop the car, pretending that you need a taxi. If he sees a beautiful woman he will never object to stopping the car and getting acquainted. Doesn't matter whether he has a wife, because he has the possibility to support another woman.

Although many women prefer sponsors to husbands, in addition to the risks involved in finding a sponsor, the instability of the relationship and the alienation involved in it make sponsorship problematic. This is expressed in Olga's nostalgia for types of relationships which supposedly existed in the Soviet time:

In Soviet times if you met a man you could prolong your relationship, your spiritual relationship, not a sexual one. You could meet for a month or two. But in these days if you meet a man, in the first encounter he asks you to go to bed with him. Noone is looking for a soul mate, they just want sex. But in the Soviet time men wanted to find soul mates through getting acquainted with women. Now days the time has changed.

I talked with tens of young women who had sponsors. I met them usually in a cafe in the Circus or in the cafe, mentioned above, where Mira worked.<sup>3</sup> Although most of them spoke comfortably about sponsorship (*sponsorstvo*) and their own sponsors they, like the young Kazakh girl above, clearly distinguished between a relationship based on feelings and sponsorship. The later was considered a relationship based on money, but it was considered to be different from prostitution, because of the length of the relationship and the mutual friendship. Although many of them liked their sponsors, their prime motives for choosing them were material rather than emotional. They described sponsorship as alienating and dehumanising but necessary for survival. Most of them said that it was a common practice for a woman who had sponsors to have a true lover besides. They said that women gave their bodies to sponsors but they kept their hearts and souls for their lovers.

This understanding of personhood which divided a person between body on the one hand and soul and heart on the other was a way by which women tried to preserve a degree of self esteem. The dispossessed usually thought that growth of commodity relations was polluting their authentic Soviet humanistic values. People were particularly critical of the monetisation of sexual relationships. Women who had sponsors subscribed to such ideas but through dichotomising between body on the one hand and soul and heart, on the other, tried to resist the alienation which the comodification of their bodies inflicted on them. They claimed that the essence of their personhood , soul and heart, was not for sale, it was exchanged only for love. The surface of the person, the body, could be transformed into a commodity without this being able to colonise the realm of heart. Such dualism

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<sup>3</sup> I usually spent hours each day in one of these places writing my diary notes. Amused by what I was doing and seeing me as an potential sponsor they usually came to my table or I went to their tables. By buying them a couple of Danish or Dutch beers, luxurious and favourite drinks, I could speak with them for hours.

reflects the fact that most young women, while attracted to consumerist culture and new sexual habits, find them enormously exploitative. Olga's nostalgia for the Soviet era's supposedly authentic relation between men and women illustrates this.

From the women's point of view a major problem with sponsorship is that although it is not considered to be prostitution it evokes disrespect and stigma. It is not a relationship which could be integrated into family relationships. Moreover it is unstable. So the ideal situation for a woman is to find a prosperous husband. And the young women are actively seeking such a husband. Indeed, according to all women I spoke with, a woman's only net for fishing a husband is her beauty and her feminine erotic skills.

### **Finding a husband**

I had group discussions with three groups of my students on marriage, the first, third, and fourth year students.<sup>4</sup> The age of the participants varied between 17 and 22. While all these groups consisted of both sexes, the girls took the lead in discussions. They had much clearer ideas about marriage and the kind of spouses they wished to have than the boys did. One of the first year girls, half Tatar and half Russian, said in the group that they usually considered the boys of their own age as immature and communicated with those who were older than them. A half Russian and half gypsy "boy" commented on her statement: "They want oldies (*stariki*) because they have got money." His statement created an agitated situation. Girls and boys argued loudly and in an disorderly way with each other, rejecting or supporting his statement. But when we returned to discuss the subject in an orderly manner all the girls admitted that money would be a main factor in their choice of spouse. I will return below to this.

The girls' higher consciousness on this matter stemmed from the two following factors. First, all of them, with the exception of a girl with a Ukrainian father who had grown up with her single Uzbek mother, considered marriage and mothering the main goals of their lives. Second, they were at the age of marriage and were actively seeking husbands.

In all these discussion groups young girls said that they were actively looking for husbands, and that marriage was an economic matter in the first instance rather than a matter of love.

"To marry", one of my female students said, and the rest of them agreed with her, "is the main career of a woman's life". To be a good mother and a good wife are the

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<sup>4</sup> I had no students from the second year.

most important statuses which a woman may acquire in her life. This is illustrated, when women are addressed by a toast giver in a celebration. As mentioned in chapter 3, a woman is endorsed first for her domestic achievements in relation to her children and husband, rather than for her social and academic ones. Besides its cultural importance, marriage has acquired an important new economic role in post-soviet Kazakhstan, owing to the gendered aspect of wealth differentiation. For many young women the access to wealth or well being is provided through marriage with wealthy men. The age of marriage is between 17 and 22. When a girl reaches the age of 22 she is expected to have already found a suitable husband for herself. Otherwise she will be reminded by her mother to find a husband, pressured by the jokes of friends, and the gossip of neighbours. "If she reaches the age of 25", said Natasha ( from chapter 3), "and is still unmarried, then neighbours begin to give her the nick name *staraia deva* (the old maid)." One of the most important events for a mother is to marry out her daughters ( Natasha's example in chapter 5). Through marriage a girl (*devushka*) is transformed into a woman through the consummation of marriage and losing her virginity. People distinguish between a female child (*devochka*), virgin woman (maid) (*devushka*) and a woman (*Zhenshchina* ).

The dream prince for most young women is a man who has a good income and is physically strong. A poor man is considered by young girls to be morally weak. He obviously lacks the manly will, skills and determination necessary for earning money. A " cowardly man" ( *trus* ), a man who lacks the courage and the skills to use physical violence to defend himself or his woman, is not desirable either. Usually, according to girls, men who have money are physically strong as well. They are Mafiosos themselves or have access to the Mafia. The importance of a man's physical strength is partly a Soviet cultural inheritance. As a militarised society it highlighted the physical strength of men. They have a men's day (*muzhskoi den*"), 23 February when women congratulate men. This day happened to be the day of the Soviet army. In addition to this cultural-historical factor, the surge of violence against women in the post-Soviet era has forced women to seek protection from "strong men".

However, women have no taste for hooligans. The ideal type was called gentleman (*dzhentl'men*). The attributes of a such gentleman were described by many young women as follows: a man who has enough money, dresses elegantly and drives an expensive car; he brings his lover or wife to the place she works or studies and takes her back, by car; he takes the hand of the lady to help her into or out of the car; helps her taking out or putting on her coat; defends her against

aggressors; buys her flowers and expensive presents ( *podarki*), invites her to restaurants; and buys her fashionable clothes.

Below I describe the ways young women try to find such gentlemen, through the reconstruction of my talks with Gulmira, a student and friend of mine, a young Kazakh woman. What she told me actually had been told earlier and was told later by many other women as well and concurs with my own observations. Although what follows is not a direct speech I have kept her as the narrator.

“Girls try to find a rich husband in bars, restaurant, parties and on streets. On the streets their main strategy is to stop expensive cars. But to stop an expensive car or attend an expensive night club is a risky business, because those who drive such cars or attend such places are part of M organisation<sup>5</sup>. Girls are not against having Mafioso either as their husbands or sponsors. However, they distinguish between two types of Mafioso: *Eristokratnye Mafioso* ( Aristocratic Mafioso ) and *vulgarnye Mafioso* ( Vulgar Mafioso ). An aristocratic Mafioso is of urban origin, has high education, does not display violent behaviour in public places, and is involved in criminal activities in a rationale, civilised ( *tsivilizovannyi* ) and sophisticated way. In a public place, when approaching a woman he behaves like gentleman. They are mainly urban Kazakhs with some Russians among them.

Vulgar Mafioso consist of two groups: Kazakhs of Rural origin and urban Caucasians. The first group are involved in sport, cut their hair very short around the neck and high in front and the top, and wear jeans and gym shoes. They move in groups and attend bars, restaurants, and discos. They have an organisation and force businessmen to pay them money, otherwise they burn their shops. In any market there are these kind of people. They have contacts with high authorities. Caucasians dress like aristocratic Mafioso but their actual behaviour is vulgar.

While the girls try to avoid the second type they desire the first type and have husbands and sponsors among them. But to avoid the second type of Mafioso is not an easy task, because if a girl, or a group of girls, attend a place without male company the Mafiosos think they are looking for men. Thus, usually, the second group of Mafioso approach girls, sit at their tables asking them for a dance and try to buy them drinks. When a girl is approached by a racketeer (*reketer*) she is already in great danger, because they move in groups and most of the groups know each other. But even if they do not know each other there is an unwritten law (*ne pisannyi zakon*) between men, that they should never intervene on behalf of a woman. Women are plainly not worth a quarrel between men.

Girls tackle such situations in different ways. The most important rule is to keep quiet, and to avoid dancing. But you have to do this in a way which is not

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<sup>5</sup> In Almaty, Mafia is called M Organisation.

offensive; you have to play shy (*stesnitel'nyi*). If a girl starts to speak or smile, or accepts their offer of food, drink and dance, then she must follow them. Otherwise she will be beaten or taken away by force. Even if she will not speak with them, they may take her away anyway. It is very important to behave in the club like a modest girl (*skromnaia devushka*) not as a vulgar one (*vulgarnaia devushka*). The former keeps quiet, does not look around, is not dressed provocatively, does not smoke or drink alcoholic drinks, does not laugh loudly. The latter does all of these. If you behave like a vulgar girl you send signals to the Mafioso that you are available.

Another way to avoid a racketeer is to play stupid. Men usually think that women are stupid, and you can use this against them by pretending that you do not understand what they want from you. If the Mafioso are persistent a girl may accept their offers of a dance, but then try to run away, by saying I am going to the toilet. In such a case they act very quickly. Another way to get rid of this kind of man is to mention the names of well-known racketeers like Dolet Turlikhanov or Serik Kunakbaev. If a girl does this in a confident and decisive way the hooligans may believe her and go away.

But the dangers are not limited to those caused by the vulgar racketeer. The aristocrats can be very dangerous as well. Many men may play aristocratic in a public place, but once they bring a girl to an apartment they change their faces. They may rape the girl, or beat her. Even worse is not to be raped by one man, but by several men, or to be beaten or killed, because when men get drunk they can do anything. They may rape you and then throw you out of the apartment without giving you money for a taxi. Then you are again in danger that other men may take you away and rape you again. You can never trust a man, even decent men who are fathers are involved in raping girls. They play different roles in different places. At home they are good fathers and husbands, but sometimes they need relaxation; they may pick up a girl from a disco and rape her.

The safest occasions for finding a husband are private parties like weddings and birthday parties. On such occasions you are more secure. A man whom you know may not rape you easily. But the problem is that it is difficult to find rich men in such parties.

Another problem for finding a husband is that men want to marry a virgin girl. Men want non-virgin girls for sex but once they decide to marry, they want innocent girls (*nevinnye devushki*). They think that if they marry women who have already slept with other men, then they may sleep with other men in future as well. But if the girl is beautiful and smart she can entice the man to fall in love with her, and even if she is not virgin the man will marry her anyway.

But once you find a good man who wants to marry you, you cannot trust him. Rich men have lovers beside their wives. It is a fashion in Almaty. Both sides play with each other and cheat on each other, both sides often have sex with others (*otdykhaiut*)<sup>6</sup> but do not tell each other. Marriage does not last for a long time. I do not like womaniser men, but if my husband is rich enough I will let him have relations with other women. Otherwise he doesn't deserve it.”

The difficulties in finding husbands or sponsors drive many poor non-virgin women to prostitution.

## Sex Work

Sex work by women was a widespread phenomena in Almaty. In my neighbourhood six women and a fourteen year old girl were involved in sexual labour. A young couple, who lived in one of the houses and were drug addicts, earned their livelihood through drug dealing, gambling and the husband being a pimp (*sutener*). In the last month of my stay in the neighbourhood a massage service was advertised in the neighbourhood, which happened to be a covert brothel. At least five other women from the neighbourhood had advertised sexual services in *Karavan*. The prevalence of sex work in Almaty is illustrated by the fact that it is widely advertised in the most popular local newspaper weekly, *Karavan*. In the issue of 23 of August 1996, out of 136 of advertisements under the rubric:” I am looking for work”, 75 are concerned with sexual labour. Indeed, a prostitute is usually called a Karavan girl (*Karavan Devushka*). Only 50 of the total job searchers are men. Among women who are looking for “ordinary” jobs few have declared “*intim iskliuchen*” ( sex excluded). This is related to a prevailing praxis in Almaty, in which women are expected to respond to the sexual demands of their bosses.

In the following sections I will describe the life stories of three sex workers and the conditions of their lives and work and the stigma and violence imposed on women suspected of illicit sexual behaviour.

It was early evening of a nice day in May. As usual, I had been wandering along the pavement, in the street close to my residence and talking with people who sell goods illegally, or with those in the kiosk or those who gather in the cafe-house. I decided to buy a bottle of Coca Cola and go home. While I was greeting the shop keeper, a young beautiful Kazakh woman who had already bought cigarettes smiled at my face and greeted me. I greeted her, and said: “I have never seen you before. Do you live around here?” She answered: “Yes, but we have

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<sup>6</sup> The Russian word *otdykhat'* has two usages in the local language: literally it means, to rest or to have a holiday, but it is used as a metaphor for having casual and illicit sex.

moved here today.” Pointing to one of the block houses on the opposite side of the road, she said: “ We live there, on the first floor.” She waited for me to buy my Coca Cola. Since we had to go in the same direction, we walked together to the other side of the street. Close to my house we stood to part, but she invited me to her apartment. I followed her.

The door was opened, and while we were entering the apartment another young woman with loud voice shouted : “I want to smoke, why are you so late?” Then she stared a moment, with an unwelcome look at me, but turned to the woman I accompanied and with an angry voice asked: “who is he? Haven’t I told that you are not allowed to bring clients here?” The first girl in an apologetic voice, said: “He is not a client, he is a neighbour, he is a foreigner (*inostranets*).” When the angry woman heard the word foreigner she calmed down. With a changed mood she turned to me and said: “Excuse me, I thought you were Caucasian. If they know where you live then it is difficult to get rid of them. They always come sit and drink and want to fuck for free (*besplatno*).” Then they invited me to tea. The first girl asked me what kind of business I was doing. I answered that I was not a businessman but an anthropologist. Then they asked me about anthropology and my practice in Almaty. They were amused that I wanted to write about people’s life in Almaty. After a while the first girl asked me whether I wanted to sleep with her for money, I thanked her, but said no and that I had a girl friend (*podruga*). Then they asked me whether they could watch *Tropikanka* (a Brazilian serial) in my place. They did not have their own TV. I agreed. I met them for five months on a daily basis because they watched soap opera every day, first *Tropikanka*, later *Kassandra*, and *Novaia Zhertva*. Later they were joined by two other women. They were called Zhulduz, Asel’, Dana and Alma. The following is the biography of the first three; the fourth, Alma, was unwilling to speak about her life.

These biographies are illustrative not only of sex work but offer examples of dispossessed migrant Kazakhs who are anti-Russians but Soviet patriots, with whom I will deal in chapter 6. Moreover, they illustrate the ambiguous and contradictory encounter of local women with the post-Soviet “sexual revolution.”

### **Zhulduz**

I was born as a twin (*dvoiniashka* ). I came first. I had a scar (*shram* ) on the left side of my upper lip. My parents took me to a doctor who told them that I would not be able to speak. Because of this my parents left me in an orphanage (*detskii dom*) where I grew up. I found them later but I do not care about them. Through searching documents, I found the place where they live. I went there twice, but did not tell



them any thing about myself. The first time I sat by the door of their house in the yard, until my twin sister passed by. I asked: "Girl ! May I use your telephone?" She said: "Sure." I went in. She looks like me but has got long hair. I met my parents but have no feelings for them. I went there the second time and asked for something. I have six brothers and four sisters. I got this information from their neighbours.

In the orphanage where I grew up there lived around 1000 children. It had two sections: one for boys and one for girls. I have fond memories of the house. People who worked there were very kind and we had a lot of celebrations (*prazdniki*). In addition to public celebrations, we celebrated each person's birthday. Life was peaceful there, but when we became older we had fights with boys, because they tried to bully us and take our money when we received our monthly scholarships. I learned karate. I fought them back, and they never had the courage to assault me. I was the favourite one. If I was sad or quiet, others surrounded me and asked, "Zhulduz, are you sad? Why are you quiet?"

When I was sixteen a woman, a friend of one of those women who worked there, found new parents for me. The first woman was always kind to me, brought presents for me and took care of me. One day she came to the orphanage, and told me, look Zhulduz, there is a family who want to adopt you as their daughter. I met them and agreed to live with them. My father is a editor and mother a doctor. They love me very much. They had lost their only daughter before adopting me. She had just disappeared. My parents pay for my university fees. I will go home to *Zhambyl*<sup>7</sup> very soon and bring presents for them.

I had my first sexual experience at the age of seventeen when I slept with a German from Germany.<sup>8</sup> He was studying the Russian Language at university. I was ashamed and cried for a week. I am Muslim (*musul'manka*), I am Kazakh, I had lost my virginity (*devstvennoct'*). After one year I left the German. He was greedy (*zhadnyi* and) I didn't like him.

I began to work three months ago. My teachers demanded money for letting me pass the exams with high marks. I had to pay \$ 100 for an exam and \$50 for a *zacet*. As I did not know what to do I consulted girl friends. They told me work. Then one of them took me to the Hotel and introduced me to a pimp (*sutener*), a German man from Germany. He became my pimp and ever since has found clients for me. When he finds a client he gives me a ring and gives the address or telephone number of the client. Most of them stay at the hotel, but sometimes I go to their apartments. Most of my clients are Germans or German speaking people. Sometimes I have English clients as well. Each night I spend with a client I receive

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<sup>7</sup> A city in South of Kazakhstan Zhulduz comes from.

<sup>8</sup> There are local Germans as well.

\$100 and my pimp receives \$50. Ninety percent of the university students are working. In my class, six of my friends are working.

### ***Asel'***

I was born in Taldykorgan 1973. I have three sisters and one brother . The brother is older than me and my sisters are younger. My father and mother are both pensioners. My father was the head of the brigade (*Zav brigady* ). My brother who lives separately with his own family is trading. He brings sugar from Taldykorgan to Almaty and sells it here. One sister is 22 and married, and the other two go to school. My parents are very poor(*bednye*), I and my brother support them economically.

At age of seventeen when I was still in Taldykorgan I began to go out (*druzhila*) with a Kazakh boy a few years older than me. After a while he wanted to fuck me (*trakhat'*). In the beginning I resisted, but he told me he loved me and we should marry. Finally I agreed. The first time I slept with him it was very painful, and I became unconscious. I had pain for a month, but later I got used to it and did not feel pain any more. We usually fucked in the streets at nights or in his brother's apartment when he was not at home.

For a while I was very ashamed of losing my virginity (*devstvennost'*) and I did not talk about it with anybody. After one year I talked with my sister (my brother's wife)<sup>9</sup> . I told her, 'I sleep with Saken but he has promised to marry me.' She said, "what can we do, Fate (*sud'ba*) has decided this." I did not tell my mother about it, but I think she knew. I hid it very carefully from my father, as if he has known it he would have hit me. Our relationship continued until his family moved to an other town. He never came back to visit me, I knew that he had cheated me and only wanted to fuck. I really loved him but he did not love me. I became very disappointed and depressed, and then I enrolled in the university in Almaty. Here I had two lovers (*liubovniki*) at the same time, before the accident, one Kazakh and one Korean, and I loved both of them.

It was 1993. I was living with my cousin (*dvoiurodnaiia sestra* ) in a dormitory (*obshchezhitie*). I was 19 years old and she was 17. One evening two young men. a Kazakh and a Chechen came to visit a girl who lived in the neighbouring room, but she was not at home. However, they stayed and ate food. At midnight, my cousin went to the common kitchen, and then these men followed her into our room. When she tried to stop them from coming into our room one of them punched her in the face. They had smoked *anasha* (a local equivalent of marijuana) and

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<sup>9</sup> According to the Kazakh tradition, when a unmarried woman has a problem she must take advice from her brother's wife, who is reckoned as her sister.

were very high. I began to cry very loudly, calling for help. One of the men put his hand around my throat and tried to strangle me. My cousin was a virgin (*devstvennitsa*). They wanted to do this (she makes a ring with one hand and by moving a finger in that ring demonstrates the act of penetration). I resisted, and as he was drunk and high I managed to escape down to the second floor, to a girl who was living there. Then we went up together to the third floor to our room where the two men kept my sister, we succeeded in convincing them to let my sister go. We took her with us to the second floor to the girl's room and closed the door behind us. But as soon we closed the door they banged on it. When we did not open the door they threatened to break the door down unless we opened it. The girl who was living in the room became afraid and opened the door. I jumped out from the window, wanting to call the two young men who were working in the kiosk around the corner for help. But I broke my back. The men in the kiosk who had heard my fall ran towards me and asked what was happening to me. I told them the story, and they ran to the second floor and helped my sister. Then they took me to the hospital in *Chapaeva / Zhandosova*. It was two in the morning, and there were no nurses and doctors and no facilities. I was crying the whole night because of the pain.

Next day the two men who had caused the event came to the hospital and told me they would kill me if I reported them to the police. The police came to the hospital, but I said that I fell by myself. After three months, when my parents came to visit me in the hospital, I told them what had happened to me. They reported it to the police, but the latter never found those two men. I laid six months at the hospital and six additional months at home. Then I walked for two months with the help of crutches (*kostyli*) before being able to walk normally. But I haven't recovered fully yet. I have pain in my back and legs in the winters when it becomes cold. And I have headache continuously.

When this happened I was in my first year of university, studying a nursing course. Then I finished the course and began to work as a nurse in a hospital until six month ago. Twenty- five women worked in our work-unit (*kollektiv*), nurses and doctors, seven of whom were young women. Most of the people with the exception of the older (*starukhi*) ones left the job. They paid only 3000 Tenge (\$50). It was a very little money. Some of them began to trade, others to sell their bodies. Since March I begun to sell sex for money. I had friends who were already engaged in this job, and they took me with them to the hotel. I did not want to ask my parents or my brother for money. When I was studying they supported me, and now I am a grown up person (*vzroslye chelovek*). I support my parents with money. In addition to this I do not want to go back to Taldykorgan, as it is boring there. Almaty is more

exciting. I like it, there are cafes, restaurants and dancing here.

**Dana** : *zhizn' moia zhestianka* ( my life is a hell), *zhivu po dvoram* ( I belong no where).

I am 28 years old. I was born in a village in the mountains around Almaty. My father was a driver and worked for the State farm (*sovkhos* ) and earned 100 rubles a month. My mother was an accountant and earned 80 rubles. My parent had six children, two daughters and four sons. My older sister, who is 33 years old is a doctor. She was married and has a son , but her husband was killed in 1984 in Afghanistan. She lives in her own apartment. My older brother was killed when he was 30 years old in 1993. He had finished *narkhoz* <sup>10</sup> and was involved in a big business on the state's behalf. Before his death he wanted to construct a *mechet'*(mosque ). He has left a wife with two children. My second brother, who is 31 year old, has no permanent job but finds jobs through friends. He is a construction worker. He helps the wife and the children of my dead brother. He himself is married and has two daughters who are twins and a son. My third brother who is 25 years old is a construction worker as well. For the moment he is constructing a mosque in Orbita<sup>11</sup> .

I was born in 1968. My childhood was a very happy one. It was really wonderful. I went to a Kazakh school. We had a lot of celebrations (*prazdniki*). We celebrated the New Year. In the summer I was in the pioneer camp (*pionerskii lager*). It was the most comfortable place because we relaxed there, we played, we sang, and met new friends . We swam in lakes. They showed us films. We went to the mountains and at nights sat around the fire (*koster*).

Our family was a happy family. My parents loved us very much. My mother continues to love us very much. In the Soviet time it was really better. Now if you get a salary it is not enough for anything. Our family was a large family, my father and mother earned together around 180 Rubles. It was enough for everything. We had our own cows, horses, sheep and a large garden. We had fruit trees and grew vegetables in the garden. My mother worked in the garden and we helped her. We ate fruit and vegetables in summer, gave them to our friends and relatives, and conserved them for the winter. People were kind (*dobrye*), they loved each other and helped each other, they were happy. Now people do not help each other, they only think about money, they think about themselves.

{At this moment I interrupted her provocatively by saying : "In the the Soviet time KGB controlled every body." She agrees. "Wasn't it bad?", I asked. She answered:

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<sup>10</sup> *iinstitute narodnogo khoziactva* (the Institute of the National Economy)

<sup>11</sup> Orbita is a suburb in Almaty.

No! Now the young people do every thing they want. They begin to fuck very early at age 13 or 14. They do not respect their elders and parents. We acknowledged that our parents were bread winners, but now the children do not do this. In the Soviet time there existed law (*zakon*), now there is no law. Now some times I am afraid to be in streets. My parents were not members of the communist party, but they were Soviet patriots (*sovetskie patrioty*). Everybody liked the Soviet Union. Now, my mother always speaks about the Soviet time ( *Sovetskom vremeni* ).}

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In 1985 I started university, but left it and worked in a kindergarten.

When I was sixteen years old I liked a Kazakh young man (*paren\**), five years older than me. He was studying in Moscow and in mid-term and summer holidays (*kanikuly*) he came to Almaty. He was a very clever and many other girls liked him as well. He did not know that I liked him. In the summer when I was 18 years old, I took a bus from the mountains to our village. He was travelling by the bus as well and began to talk to me by saying: 'I have seen you before'. 'I have seen you before as well', I replied. Then we met the next day. We sat in a park and talked. He told me: 'I will return to Moscow within two days, I am happy that I have met you, please be a good girl and study well, I will write to you from Moscow.'

Then he wrote from Moscow and I answered his letters. In the third letter he wrote that he loved me and wanted to marry me. I wrote back that I loved him and wanted to marry him as well. Next summer when he returned from Moscow we were together the whole summer. We kissed and played but did not fuck (*trakhali*). Then he returned to Moscow. In April, when he came back home I asked him to fuck me. I told him: all my girl friends tell me stories about how their boy friends fuck them, I want you to fuck me as well. He refused to do it, by saying, 'if I fuck you now , then you will be opened, and if you fuck with others in my absence, I have no way to find about it.' He returned to Moscow. Meanwhile I became friends with another boy, who touched me and wanted to fuck me, but I did not let him to do this. When the first boy came back from Moscow, he found out through his friends about the second one. He got angry and fucked me on the street and then went back to Moscow without writing to me.

A while after his return I got a lover who promised to keep our relationship secret. One summer day, both I and my lover were invited to a friend's birthday party. We went to a room, made love and were lying in bed. Suddenly the boy from Moscow appeared in the room. He didn't say any thing, just stepped back, but told my girl friend, 'tell Dana, that every thing is finished between us, I will never meet her again, we do not know each other any more and my love for her is finished.' I cried.

Actually, he had come back from Moscow to our home and asked about me and my mother gave the address of apartment where the party was held. I went to his home and asked him to forgive me, but he refused to do this. He married a Russian from Moscow and had a son but divorced because she did not want to live in Kazakhstan and he did not want to go back to Moscow. Then he married a Kazakh woman and divorced her. Then he married a third woman who is a Kazakh and a bad woman as well. One day I was sitting in a bench around the circus, and suddenly, somebody put his hands on my eyes. When he removed his hands, I saw him. He said, 'I am married for the third time, my wife is a bad woman, I am not happy, I still love you, let's marry.' I told him, 'you broke my heart, you drove me away like a dog, I will not marry you, forget about me, I have already forgotten you.'

Twice two other men asked me to marry them, but once they found out that I was not virgin they refused to do so. The first one was a Kazakh, he asked me, 'are you a *devushka* (a girl = virgin).' I said, 'no, how could a woman of my age be a *Devushka*. The second one was a young man from Turkey who studied at university. He asked the same question and my answer disappointed him.

{I told her: "You can find a European husband. They do not care about virginity." She answered (seriously): "I do not like Europeans. Germans and the English eat pork (*svininu*) and smell like pigs, I will never marry a Russian. Then, smiling, she asked me: will you marry a *Russachka*<sup>12</sup> ? I said: "yes if I love her." Smiling, she said: "then you are a pig as well." Then, with an angry voice, she asked: "Why do you, Iranians, Arabs and Turks like *Russachki*? Aren't you Muslim? There is an Arab in our university. (making fun of his Arabic accent she mimicked him): 'I am a Muslim, and do prayers 5 times a day.' But after a month we saw our Muslim with a *Russachka*, kissing her in the street. Turks are not better than Arabs, Iranians are the worse, they only choose *Russachki*. What is wrong with Muslim girls, aren't we Kazakh girls as beautiful as *Russachki*? You know! Iranians are uncultured (*beskul'turnye*). I have a class-mate who is *Russachka*. Her boy friend is an Iranian. He invited us to a party. We were nine girls, and when we arrived at his place he began to count us like sheep by pointing his finger at us, then he invited nine Iranian man. An ugly, fat man sat next to me and began to touch me. I avoided him, my friends avoided other men as well. Iranians are hungry like wolves, they are sex hungry. Next day the *Russachka* asked why we left.}

During these years I had several lovers, I really enjoy sex. Somebody had told my mother that I was sleeping with men, when she asked in the beginning I kept quiet, but then I told her the truth that I was not virgin any more. She cried and asked me to find a husband. My father has died but my brothers do not know about

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<sup>12</sup> *Russachka*, a derogatory term for *Ruskaia* (a Russian female) which is used by some Kazakh women

it. My sister thought that it was no problem.

I began to work six months ago. Once I came out from the university and walked along the street. An expensive car stopped and the driver with a bad Russian accent invited me into the car. I stepped into the car. Then he asked me if I wanted to go to his apartment. We drank and had sex in his apartment. The man was a German and paid me \$100. Actually, I did need the money. My teachers demanded \$ 500 for giving me excellent marks. I said, 'I have not got this money', and then they were satisfied with \$300. As I had not got that money, I consulted girl friends (*podrushki*), and they told me to work. I worked, earned the money and paid the teachers and passed the exams. I have not slept more than ten times with men for money. Since May I have not seen any clients. I do not like to continue to do this. My life is very empty. Money doesn't mean anything to me, and I want to marry and have a child. Prostitutes are human beings; they have the right to marry. Jakob, help me to find a Muslim husband. I want to marry an Iranian and I will stay in Iran. Find an Iranian for me.

{I told her: "Iranians are like Turks and Kazakhs, they expect you to be a virgin, and in addition to this you must put on paranjeh in Iran." She answered: "I will put on paranjeh. I can live in Iran, Turkey and Emirates but not in Europe and the USA. I tell her: "I have a good Russian friend who wants to marry a Kazakh woman and virginity is not important to him, will you marry him?" She immediately answered: Never. I do not like *Russiani, sviniani* (Russians, pigs )....I am a Muslim (*Musul'manka*), I want a Muslim husband. I do not like Russians. We must hit them. My father did not like them either, he always spoke with me in the Kazakh language and urged me to learn the Kazakh language. My mother speaks with me in the Russian language, and tells me Russians are good people and we must respect them. It is the same with my older sister, all her friends are Russians, (making fun of their names) Nataassa, Olggaa, Irina and other idiots ( *drugie duraki*). My sister cannot speak the Kazakh language fluently. (She imitated her sister to make fun of her.) You see Uzbeks are good fellows (*molodtsi*) . They have preserved their language. In Uzbekistan if somebody speaks Russian in the street, Uzbeks will hit him. But in Almaty, our capital, nobody speaks the Kazakh language, every where you hear Russian. If perestroika had not begun, today you would not be able to find anybody who could speak the Kazakh language. Chechens are *molodetsi* . They want to throw Russians out of their territory. We must do it here in Kazakhstan as well.}

Her clients are both foreigners and locals. Among the foreigners West European citizens dominate. Most local clients are Kazakhs, mostly businessmen from other cities who come to do something in Almaty.

### ***Motives***

As these biographies demonstrates the women's main reasons for involvement in prostitution are economic. However, their tragic backgrounds have played a part in their choice of sex work.

The loss of virginity has been a great blow to the three girls' self-esteem. Actually Zhulduz regretted the loss of her virginity more than doing sex work. Although, all three chose to sleep with their lovers, afterwards they had developed strong feelings of guilt, and by the time I got to know them they had still not come to terms with their feelings of loss. They felt that they had lost a precious and essential part of themselves. This feeling of loss was felt more strongly by Asel' and Dana, who had loved the men who deflowered them and expected to marry them. Both felt betrayed. Then, as Dana's experience shows, because of the loss of virginity their chances of marriage have been made marginal. Although both women had enjoyed sex with several lovers, in their feelings extra-marital sex is structured as a type of perverted and deviant pleasure. As non-virgin and unmarried women who indulged in illicit sex, they had developed a negative image of themselves which contributed to their involvement in sex work. While Asel', Alma, and Zhulduz distinguished between sex for pleasure and sex for money, Dana combined the two, but they all perceived their work to be morally illicit.

Although all the women share economic motives their economic goals differ. Dana wants to earn enough to survive, and pay her teachers. She has no particular economic plan for the future. In addition to money, she enjoys the company of other sex workers. As a result she is not actively involved in the work. She wants to finish her studies and become a doctor and live on her salary. Alma, Asel' and Zhulduz, have clear economic goals. Zhulduz, in addition to paying her teachers, wants to save money. She says: "I want to buy my own apartment in Shymkent, buy good furniture, a TV, video, buy myself a red diploma, travel to Spain and rest on the beaches. I want to be independent. I do not want to marry.

Asel' has similar goals but she wants to marry. She says: "If I have enough money and an apartment with good furniture I can buy a husband for myself." Alma wants to collect \$4000 and start her own business. All the girls very clearly see their present work as temporary, a way of getting an independent financial start. They say when they get the money they need they will stop work. To collect the money



the girls economise and work very hard. Although the girls are consumerist on the level of fantasy (Turner 1994) in practice, they live a harsh life, work hard and save money.

All four live in a one bedroom apartment with a small kitchen and bath. The apartment's furniture when I visited it for the first time, consisted only of a bed and an easy chair. At nights, Asel' slept in the bed and Zhulduz in the armchair. The blankets and sheets were old. When Dana joined them, she and Asel' shared the bed together. But when Alma was forced to move there, they asked their landlord to provide them with an extra bed, which he did. The apartment had a telephone, which was essential to their work. They loved to listen to music but could not until one of the Zhulduz's clients gave her a tape recorder as a present. They did not have their own TV either, so they watched soap operas at my place. They ate only two times a day. Their food was very simple, usually an omelet for brunch, and some simple food with meat, vegetables, and pasta for dinner. They never bought wine, beer or other drinks. Their major costs were paying the rent, buying cigarettes and paying for taxis. They paid \$130, \$32.5 each, per month to a Kazakh man from whom they had hired the apartment. They spent money on buying cosmetics, dresses and dye colour and wigs. But they said that although they enjoyed make up and dressing well, they would not spend money on these things if it was not necessary for their job. They buy none of the popular journals, like *Kakado*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Speed*, which my female students bought and read. They borrowed some issues of *Speed* and *Kakado* from me and read them eagerly. When they attend the restaurant and the hamburger bar where they look for clients, they do not buy drink and food. They usually try to get the male visitors to invite them.

They usually charge their clients \$100, but Asel' and Dana who are a little round, and thus have fewer clients, sometimes take clients who pay less. Although \$100 is much higher than the average monthly salary of workers, the girls thought that it was not such great money, given the nature of their job. They argued that the work was difficult and dangerous, that they had no pensions and insurance, and that the length of the time a sex worker can work actively is relatively short. "If a woman is over thirty, she cannot work successfully as a prostitute, because there many younger competitors", Asel' said, and the other girls agreed with her.

The girls, with exception of Zhulduz, could not have more than three clients a week. The reason for this is that women who sell sex outnumber the men in their work place. Another reason for the lack of enough demand for sex in the hotel is that according to Asel', Almatian men, prefer call girls to prostitutes who offer

themselves in restaurants because they do not want to be seen with a prostitute publicly and call girls have the reputation of being first class prostitutes. Asel' said that although their work is much harder and more dangerous, the money is much less than the call girls receive. She said they may earn up to \$500 per night. I asked her: "How do you know that?". She said: "Give a ring to a Karavan girl (*Karavan devushka*) and check by yourself." I asked: "How can I find such a girl's phone number?" " It is easy, I will show you, go and buy a weekly Karavan", she answered. I went to my apartment, and brought the latest issue of weekly Karavan. Under the rubric " we are looking for work" (*ishchem rabotu*), she showed me announcements which were put within rectangles, and said: "All these are call girls, call and ask." I dialled one of the numbers and a young woman picked up the telephone. I said to her: "I read in an announcement in Karavan that you need a job, what kind of job are you interested in?" "Sexual service" (*intimnye uslugi*), she answered. When I asked the price she mentioned \$250 a night. Then I called several other places, the prices varied from \$50 an hour to \$ 300 a night.

The girls' pimp finds some clients for them, but they themselves actively look for clients. They have two main ways to find clients: using the telephone and visiting the hotel. They had got a lot of numbers which belonged to different rooms in the hotel. When a girl sleeps with a client in a room, she takes the number and dials it each day in search of new customers. But it seemed to me that they had somebody in the hotel who called them and gave the names and the numbers of the new guests in the hotel. Each of them called, afternoons, for at least 45 minutes. Around seven o'clock they went to their workplace. The place is a complex which consists of a well known hotel in Almaty, but by Almaty standards a second or third rate one, a restaurant-casino attached to the hotel, owned by a well-known foreign businessman, and a hamburger bar owned by the same businessman. The guests of the hotel and the restaurant- casino are foreign and local businessman and local rich men. Girls walk the streets around the hotel, attend the cafe in the lobby, the restaurant and the hamburger bar. I walked several evenings there. The striking aspect for me was that the girls outnumbered the men, and the girls confirmed that it is always the same, with the exception of the music festival, *Azia Dausy* (Voice of Asia), in the second half of July. Then, according to the girls, the hotel is full of guests and they work every night.

Dana said: "We approach foreign men and ask 'do you want sex for money?' but the *sovetskii* (the Soviets) approach us and ask 'girls do you want to rest?' and we say yes. The fact that the girls do not know any languages but Russian and Kazakh is a great disadvantage for them. They felt that they needed to learn

English but had no time for that. However, they learned from me some elementary sentences in relation to their job. One afternoon I went to their apartment, as usual, with my note book and a pen. When I sat down Asel' approached me with a pen and a notebook in her hands. She sat down in front of me, and imitating me said: "Interview". Everybody in the room burst in laughter. Then she said: "I am serious, Do you think that you only can interview us, and we can't interview you? I want to interview you." "Give me your first question", I said. Then she asked me to translate for her some sentences from Russian to English. While I was translating, she wrote the English sentences with cyrillic letters in her note book. The following are the English translations of the sentences.

Hello.

What is you name?

Good day?

Good evening

How do you do?

How old are you?

Do you want sex for money?

Do you want to meet me today?

When do you want to meet me?

I like your character.

What do you like about me?

Do you like other girls?

What is your phone number?

My address is..

Then other girls copied the translations in their own notebooks. And they repeated these sentences for a few days until they learned them.

### ***The clients***

The women have German, English, American, Czech, Lithuanian, Turkish, Iranian, Chinese, Russian and Kazakh clients. The women themselves classify their clients in stereotypes according to the clients' wealth, taste in women, their manners in relation to women and their sexual performance. First, they distinguish between two sorts of clients: Our Soviets (*nashi sovetskie*) and foreigners (*inostrantsy*). The former, which consist of the people from the former Soviet Union (the three Baltic republics excepted) are divided into locals who live in Almaty (*mestnye*) and visitors (*priezzhie*) from other parts of the former Soviet territory. They say that the

locals usually prefer call girls to them. Then they divide foreigners into Westerners (*zapadnye*) and Orientals (*vostochnye*). Among the Easterners they distinguish between Chinese and Muslims. Among the *Sovetskie* the majority of their customers are Kazakh businessmen from other cities who visit Almaty occasionally.

"The girls", says Asel', "prefer foreigners to *Sovetskii*, because, ( putting her hand on her pocket) they have Dollars. Local men may fuck you and not pay you."

Dana intervenes:

Among the foreigners Europeans are better than Asians; they think that we are much more beautiful than *Russachki* but the Chinese think that *Russachki* are more beautiful than us. After sleeping with us, they ask us to find them *Russachki*. We ask them , 'aren't we enough good.' They answer, 'you are good but our girls look like you, we want to try blonde and white girls.' The Germans and English like us more than *Russachki*, because their own girls look like *Russachki*. Arabs, Turks and Iranians like *Russachki* more than us. When Arabs and Iranians prefer *Russachki*, we want to beat up *Russachki*, we want to beat up Arabs and Iranians as well.

Meanwhile, Zhulduz jumps up and kicks an imaginary Russian woman in her face in the air, and says: "We have to beat up *Russachki* like this."

Europeans, Asel' says, are more cultured. When they invite you to their apartments, they try to make it romantic. They turn off the light, light candles, and invite you to wine.

Alma says: "Russians are sex maniacs (*seksual'nye man'iaki*), first they touch your body every where and then have sex with you for a long time." "Chinese do sex like dogs", Asel' says. She parts her legs and bows her knees forward, opens her mouth and shoots out her tongue, and begins to breath heavily and rhythmically to demonstrate the Chinese allegedly "dog-like" way of doing sex. All the girls laugh for a good while, amused by Asel"'s performance. Zhulduz says: "I do not like Kazakhs, they watch pornographic films and ask us to suck them, but we avoid this, we are Muslims; then Kazakhs go to *Russachki*. Kazakh men like *Russachki*, they say *Russachki* are experienced and do every thing." Dana says proudly: "*Rossiani* like Kazakh girls. They travel here from Russia to fuck Kazakh girls."

The women views of their clients are related to the ways their clients objectify them and the ways they in their turn objectify their clients. In both cases the person is alienated and reduced to a stereotype.

The clients objectify the women by comparing their appearances and skin colour with Russians. This combined with the fact that supply of sex exceeds the demand has created a hatred towards Russian sex workers among them. Although migrants are generally against Russians these four sex workers expressed the strongest anti-Russian feeling explicitly. They were particularly against Russian women. The reason for such feeling was that they were compared with Russians on

a daily basis and such comparison affected directly their incomes.

By creating stereotypes of their clients, the women make the clients the objects of their own knowledge, and thereby create a sense of agency and work out practical strategies for enticing and manipulating them. The most prominent of these strategies is the art of performance. To illustrate this, consider the following event:

One day when I was in the girls apartment, Alma and Zhulduz, began to perform (in a theatrical sense) a sexual act. They were moving their hips very fast backward and forward, as if they were making love, and were crying as if they were experiencing orgasm. While the other two girls were laughing at their performance, I became embarrassed. Asel' who had felt my embarrassment said: "Don't worry Jakob!, it 's not to do with you, it is a rehearsal (*repetitsiia* )." I asked her: "What do you mean?". She answered, any prostitute is an actress ( *aktrisa* ). Dana who was listening to her, intervened by saying why only prostitutes? Any woman is an actress. In our work, Asel' continued, we act like we enjoy sex and get orgasm. But we must do this very skilfully, like professional actresses, otherwise men will find it not interesting, and will not hire us the second time, or recommend us to their friends.

The girls have learned the art of performance from other girls, through watching pornographic films, often with their clients, or reading magazines. The fact that through performing "fictive sex" they get their clients involved in "real sex", gives them the feeling that they master the situation. In Marxist terms, while girls sell their sex-labour power, they try to retain a partial control over the labour process itself. This bestows them with a sense of agency, which is amplified further by mocking their clients' sexual tastes and sexual behaviour among themselves.

In spite of this intensive acting of sex, three of the girls, (Zhulduz, Alma, and Asel'), said that they never feel sexual pleasure in sleeping with clients. They do it as a job, and their clients bodies are part of the material conditions of their job, like condoms, the bed, mattress and pillows. Asel' obviously distinguishes between "real sex" and what she does with her clients. She has a Kazakh lover she meets twice a week. She enjoys his company and sex with him. Dana, in contrast to the other three girls gets involved emotionally.

The majority of them, (with an ironic voice, and smiling), want to talk after sex. Please, they say, talk a little. But I am in no mood for talking. Of course it depends on the client, if I like him I will talk with him, and I will do intensive sex with him. But if I do not like him I just lie like a cow. In the latter case the client usually ask me why are you like this? I answer, I cannot help it. I really like sex. Once I had client whom I liked, we had sex the whole night. In the morning, exhausted, we slept, when we woke up in the evening we had sex again and then separated.

All four women said that Dana was an exception, and most sex workers do not get emotionally involved with their clients.

They do not hate their clients but do not respect them either, because they think the clients also do not respect them. Asel' said: "Each time I sleep with a client, I feel bad, because they do not respect you, they do not consider you to be a woman."

In spite of this disillusionment they wished their clients treated them more humanely. For them the ideal client is Richard Gere in "Pretty Woman". All of them had seen the movie. Zhulduz carried a photograph of Gere and Julia Roberts in her wallet. When I saw the photo accidentally, I asked the women: "What do you think of them?" Alma said he was a real man, he did not care that she was a prostitute, he loved her and married her.

Actually Zhulduz had her own Gere. She became emotionally attached to one client, a German (from Germany). From Zhulduz's point of view, the German was a good man because he wanted to help a poor Kazakh. The German, Zhulduz said, will donate his jeep to a poor Kazakh when he finishes his job here. The German had hired an apartment in Samal, one of the Almaty's best areas. Zhulduz visited him two or three times a week. For each time, she received \$100. But the German bought her presents as well (a watch, a tape recorder, a dress and an electric piano). She always showed the presents to me and was proud of her relationship with the German, and mentioned him as "my German" (*moi nemets*). The German taught her to play piano, and she taught him Russian. On her birthday, she told me the German had promised to call her. As the German did not call she became very sad. But next day when I met them she said with a happy face: "The German came this morning and brought this piano as a birthday present. He could not call yesterday because he was in Tashkent."

When the German was about to leave for Germany, Zhulduz became sad and quiet. She lay in bed and did not speak to anybody. Finally one afternoon she burst into tears, and cried and cried. Then she told me: "The German will leave for Germany tomorrow. He will be away for six months. I love him, I will miss him. I said: "Can't you travel to Germany?" She said: "I have not got the money. " I asked her: "Do you want to marry him?" She said: "Yes." I said: "Then tell him you love him and want marry him." She said: "I am ashamed. I slept with him for money. I am a prostitute."

Besides clients, the police and hooligans are the other important people in the girls' job, because of the dangers they impose.

## **The police**

The place the girls worked was safe, because it was protected from hooligans by the police. However, the police themselves occasionally harassed the girls. Asel' said:

The police usually do not intervene, they usually negotiate the issue with our pimp. If they arrest one of our girls, the pimp will tell them, 'come and fuck our girls but do not disturb. They fuck the girls and do not disturb next time.'

I asked her whether the police take money or not? Asel' answered: "I do not know, but I think the sex is enough." She told me that prostitution is illegal, a prostitute could be condemned to one year in prison and a pimp to three years. Dana is of similar opinion:

When we walk around the hotel we usually encounter the police (*minty*). Our relations with them are friendly. We greet each other. They usually ask whether we have clients or not. We sleep with them free and they do not bother us.

In spite of this assertion, she said that the job was dangerous because of the police intervention.

It is a very interesting but dangerous job. It is interesting because you meet people from different parts of the world and talk with them about interesting subjects. It is dangerous because the police (*minty*) always control you. Once I was talking with an Arab, who showed me Dollars and said that he wanted to fuck me. He did not know Russian and I don't know English. He just showed the sexual act with his hands. Five yards from us two GSK police in plain clothes were standing and watching us. One of them called me, 'Hey girl, come here.' When I went to him, he said, 'aha, you are involved in prostitution.' I said, 'I am not such a person, I do not know what prostitution is.' He said, 'you say that you do not know what is prostitution.' I answered, 'of course I don't know.' 'I will show you! I have seen you here before; another girl said that you are a prostitute', he said. 'What girl? This man is my colleague, we work together in a company (*firma*). 'What company?', he asked. I said a name. It was the Arab's fault. I told him 'go into the hotel, I will follow you.' But he did not understand Russian, and continued to show me dollars and did not recognise the police. Then one of the police went to bring the girl, but suddenly a Kazakh young man saved me. He stopped his car and said to the police, 'she is my girl friend and is waiting for me here.' The police had no choice but to let me go. I jumped into the car and he drove away. Then he said, 'lets fuck.' 'I refused. Then he said, 'I saved you, otherwise you would now be fucking with more than one police man. I said thank you and agreed to do it. We did it in his car.'

Zhulduz had a similar experience of police harassment:

Once I was in their apartment an Italian man visited her. Next day I asked her how she knew this Italian man. She answered:

I met him yesterday when I was there in the hotel but the police stopped us and asked him for his passport. He showed his passport, and then they let him go, but they held me like this (she demonstrates they way the police gripped her by holding her hip very strongly by her right hand). But the Italian paid \$ 50 and the police let me go. (I asked her why the police held her?) Because I am a prostitute (*prostitutka*) and the police knew me.

## **Hooligans**

Girls are exposed to dangers from hooligans. They distinguish between them and Mafioso. Their description of hooligans coincides with "the vulgar Mafioso" introduced earlier. As Asel', put it, Mafioso do not disturb a woman, they are gentlemen. If they want a woman, they invite her to a restaurant and buy flowers for her, but hooligans and menbets (*menbeti*) bother women and foreigners. According to her these are mostly young Kazakh men of rural origin.

One evening when I came late home, around eleven o'clock, I saw a woman in darkness smoking in front of the entry of my house. I greeted her. When she answered my greeting I recognised her voice, she was Asel'. "Why are you standing here?", I asked. She did not answer but instead said, " why are you so late? I knocked at your door at 9 and you were not home. Since then, I have been waiting for you here. "What can I do for you?", I asked. She answered: "Zhulduz has brought two Chechens to the apartment. They are her clients. She says they have promised to stay only one hour, but now they have stayed for several hours and drunk vodka. They want me free, but I don't like to do it. I came to your apartment to call Bakhyt, a young Kazakh man who is a boxer and a friend of Zhulduz. He knows that we work, but he has promised to help us against hooligans." She called, but unfortunately Bakhyt was not at home.

Then Asel' asked me: "Please come with me and call Zhulduz to the door. They may think that you are Bakhyt and leave." As I did not want to confront the Chechens, I told her: "Let's try another trick; I'll call Zhulduz and say I am Bakhyt." I was afraid that the Chechens could tell from my accent that I was a foreigner, not Bakhyt but as most Caucasians in contrast to Kazakhs speak very bad Russian, I took the risk. I dialled their number but nobody answered. When I dialled a second time one of the Chechens answered. I told him with an angry voice: "May I speak with Zhulduz?" The Chechen answered " You have dialled a wrong number", and put down the telephone. I tried to dial the third time, but Zhulduz called and said they had left. I told Asel' they have left. As she was still afraid to go alone, she asked me to follow her. I took the knife from the kitchen and followed her. The Chechens were gone. I asked Zhulduz with an irritated voice: "Why do you bring Hooligans here?". She answered: "What could I do? They have not their own place and I want to work. They promised to stay just an hour but stayed and drank vodka." Asel', interrupted our conversation by kissing my face and saying Jakob, "you are very nice." I calmed down a little, but still with a irritated voice told them: "You know that I cannot fight with such madmen."

Three weeks after of this event, somebody woke me up at two in the morning



by ringing at my door. When I asked who it was, Asel' said: "It is Asel'. There are some bad men there (their apartment), could I come in for a while?" I opened the door. She was shivering not of cold, because it was middle of summer, but from fear and anger. I told her: "If you want to sleep here, the mattress is over there." She accepted my offer with satisfaction and arranged the extra mattress for herself. After a while I slept but Asel' woke me again saying: "Jakob I am afraid, it is noisy at the yard the men are calling Asel'." I heard the three men, who were making noises in the yard. Then they got angry and began to shout even more loudly in Kazakh. Then the car started, and they drove away, but, after a while they came back.

I asked Asel': "Why do you bring such idiots to your place?" She said: "They are acquaintances ( *znakomyi* ) of Alma, they are from Karagandy." Then I asked her: "Why then did you flee here?" She answered: "One of them wanted to sleep with me and I didn't like it." A short time after this Alma was robbed in her apartment. A Korean acquaintance of hers, who was a drug addict, broke through the window into her apartment on the ground floor. By putting a knife to her throat he forced her to give him the \$500 she had earned recently. The same man had forced her to pay him \$200 earlier.

Such incidents were part of their daily life. They risk being beaten, raped or even killed someday by someone. However, they continued to work as sex workers, because they did not want to live in poverty.

### ***Feelings about their job***

Actually, the girls do not like the job. Three of them ( Alma, Zhulduz, and Asel') consider it a humiliating way to earn good money. On one occasion Zhulduz told me: " I feel I have lost my pride".

Dana has more ambivalent attitudes. While she is not hunting clients as actively as the other three girls she tries to find some meaning in her job. Firstly, she thought that their job had an altruistic dimension. Once she told me:

I had two married directors from Shymkent last night. They were very satisfied with me (with a proud voice) and told me that they will call me next time they are in Almaty. You see we do a real job, we give people something their wives are not able to give.

Secondly, as she expressed it above, she enjoyed communication with clients. And thirdly, she liked other sex workers.

The girls who are involved in this job are very kind (*dobrye*) and honest (*prostye*). We have good relations with each other, we work in groups. Our group consists of four. When we meet the girls from other groups we greet each other and ask about their work. We work in the same place, we walk around the hotel. Sometimes we find clients for each other. For example once I and Asel' were walking , a girl from another group approached us and said we need two girls, the numbers are more than our girls.

On the other hand she was the only one who said explicitly and repeatedly that she did not like the job. On one occasion she said, "I don't want my daughter to be a prostitute. I do not want a daughter, I want a son." Other girls expressed their derogatory attitudes towards their jobs indirectly. Because of her job Zhulduz did not find herself worthy enough to express her love for the German ("I am ashamed, I slept with him for money. I am a prostitute.") Soon after the German's departure Zhulduz, who was very sad, said: "I don't want to live, but it is difficult to kill oneself." Then she repeated again: "I don't want to live." I asked her: "Why?" Crying she moved forward and backward her finger, which was pointed towards between her legs, and said: "I am tired of doing this, but I have nobody to take care of me in this world. I am alone."

Asel' showed her negative attitudes about sex work when she said that a married Kazakh woman never gets involved in prostitution (see below). Another way they express negative feelings for their job is their strong nostalgia for the Soviet time. Both Dana (see above) and Asel' admired Soviet time for its sexual purity. Asel' said: "We had never heard the word prostitute in the Soviet time. Every woman had a decent job and a good salary. They did not need to get involved in prostitution."

The women thought that they had a higher degree of autonomy than married women and those women who work in ordinary jobs. They arrange their time as they want. They have very few domestic duties. They get up at two in the afternoon. Then one goes shopping to buy fresh bread, meat and vegetables and cigarettes and another makes some omelette for breakfast. After breakfast one of them washes the dishes and another one hovers. Then for some hours they chat, mock their clients and ring around to find customers. Around five one of them begins to cook the evening meal which is very simple and is prepared quickly. At six they come to my apartment to watch a soap opera, then they go back to their own apartment to eat the meal, make up and take a taxi to the hotel.

Appreciating the autonomy the job has bestowed on them, they try to make it fun and normal for themselves through joking about their clients and mocking them. Moreover, the girls display their autonomy in the ways they relate to their immediate social environment. Although they had negative images of themselves due to their jobs, they would not allow anybody else to put them down or patronise them. Dana said:

Once I had a Turkish client. He was a good man who walked with me one week but did not sleep with me. He finally asked me, 'why do you do this?' I told him, 'you are a client, it is my own business.' I do not like it when clients ask why do you do this?

Another example which highlights the women's struggle for autonomy is Dana's reaction to her older sister, who tried to persuade her to stop doing sex work.

A friend of mine had told her that I work. When she asked me, at first I denied it, but when she insisted, I told her the truth. She became sad and angry and asked me, 'Why do you do this? Stop it.' I told her I am a grown up person (*vzroslyi chelovek*), I am twenty eight years old, I do not need somebody else to vindicate what I do (*opravdyvat menia*).

Asel', who was listening to our conversation, turned towards us and angrily said: "It is true, we are not children, we do not need anybody's permission for what we do."

Another way women struggled for autonomy was by asserting their presence in the neighbourhood by breaking the masculinised order of time and place, by their noisy traffic at evenings, midnights and early mornings. I am not aware what people in the neighbourhood thought about them, because I intentionally avoided asking other people questions about them. The women had asked me not to discuss anything about them with other people. But they had been photographed with Kazakh butchers who sold meat in the square and actually received meat from them free of charge.

Another Kazakh man from the south, with whom I had good relations and who worked at the cafe there, once told me: "Do you know Zhulduz?" I said: "Yes." Then he added with sympathy: "She is a good girl." A third man, a Kazakh who worked the kiosk where I first met Zhulduz, expressed strong negative feelings about them. Once when I was sitting in the kiosk and talking with him, Zhulduz came to buy something from the kiosk. When she went a way, while following her with his eyes, he said with a insulting voice: "Prostitute". Then added: "She and her friends are prostitutes. They damage our reputation; people will think that Kazakh women are bad (*plokhie*)". I said: "May be they have no other choice." Pointing to the women who were selling things at the pavement, he said: "They can trade like them."

Later I asked the women: "Aren't you worried that you may create a bad reputation for your nationality (*natsional'nost'*). Dana answered:

Prostitution has nothing to do with nationality. Each nation has its own prostitutes. In Iran you have your own prostitutes. Haven't you?(I agreed, yes we have. Austrians have their prostitutes as well haven't they? I agreed again. And the English have their prostitutes, haven't they. I nodded, yes.

When Dana finished her rhetorical statement, Zhulduz and Asel' confirmed her point of view by saying, "it is true."

The women do not hide their jobs from their girl friends. Several of Asel's former colleagues and classmates visited her. I asked Asel', whether they knew about her job, and she said yes. I asked: "What is their reaction?" She said: "They

think it is normal ( *normal'no*)." I asked her: "Have they changed their behaviour towards you?" She said: "Why should they?" They know many girls do this. They say it is your private business (*lichnoe delo*). Actually, all four girls before starting to work had their own friends who were already working. These friends brought them to the hotel and introduced them to the pimp. Aigula, an old friend of Asel', 22 years old, who visited them regularly, expressed her feelings in the following way: "yesterday I met Asel' and Zhulduz. They told me that each had earned \$100 the night before. It is twice my monthly salary. It is very exciting. I want to earn money as well but I cannot do it ."

With regard to relatives, while the girls are not worried about letting young women know their job, they hide it very strictly from older women and men. For example Asel' said:

My cousin (*dvoiurodnia sestra*) knows about my work. I told her, 'you know there are rich men, foreigners who pay good money for sex; I sleep with them sometimes.' She said, 'it is normal, you are unmarried you have no husband, if you earn some money from rich men it is good.'

When I asked Asel' whether her cousin herself would sleep with somebody for money, she became offended, and said furiously, "Never; she is married. "But you", I said, "said to me before that many married women do this." "Yes", she answered, "but they are *Russachki* not Kazakhs (*Kazashki*). A Kazakh married woman will never sleep with anybody other than her husband, but *Russachki* do this.

*Russachki* want many men and never become satisfied with one man."

Asel's siblings and parents do not know. They think she is working as a nurse in Almaty. She said: "My mother would be very sad if she knew it, but my brothers would beat me and bring me back by force to Taldykorgan. Dana's mother and her brothers do not know either. "If my brothers", she said, 'learn it some day, I hope they will kill me, but they will not do this. Instead they will reject me as their sister." Asel's Kazakh lover does not know either. Asel' told me: "I have told him the other girls are my sisters. Please don't tell him about my job, or he will beat me."

In spite of the fact that the girls have justified their work to themselves, they are far from having a happy life. Asel' often complained about having headaches and pain in her legs and back. Dana had two standard sentences which she always repeated about her life: "My life is a hell" (*Zhizn' moia zhectianka*); and "I am uprooted" (*zhevio po doveri*).

Zhulduz feels herself alone in the whole world and Alma is often sad. Although they repress their feelings of sadness and despair, on particular occasions these feelings surface strongly. For example in one occasion when I told them about the wedding party of a female friend of one of my female students which I had attended the night before, they suddenly became quiet, sad and depressed and after a while

left the apartment. Although all four women by any measure are strong individuals, they are not able to avoid internalising the social stigma on sex work on the one hand and social stereotypes of a “decent women”, on the other. For them the ideal situation was the love of a man and successful marriage. Even if they felt that their chance for such marriage was marginal, they showed their dream through their strong involvement in the love affair between two main characters in a Mexican soap opera called *Kassandra*. *Kassandra* and David Luis love each other and want to marry but David Luis, accused of a murder he has not committed, is detained and prosecuted. The prosecutor is a man whom *Kassandra* had left on the night they were to marry because of her love for David Luis.

The women engage with the serial and in the dramatic moments express very strong feelings of empathy and disgust. For example, when *Kassandra* is crying, they become sad, and say: “Oh dearest, beauty, don’t cry” (*dorogaia*, *Krasavitsa*). When *Kassandra* and David Luis meet in prison and kiss each other, the women became very happy and look at them with admiration. When the doctor who is the brother of the prosecutor cures David Luis the girls admire him. When Roberto the Prosecutor refuses to be convinced by the doctor that David Luis is innocent, *Asel’* pointing at him says with an angry voice: “This man is idiot. He does not understand that David-Louis is innocent.” *Asel’* says: “I love *Kassandra* most because she is kind ( *dobraia* ) and beautiful. After her I like David Luis.” Through their concern for the love between *Kassandra* and David Luis, the women actually relive their own past loves and visualise their dreams. *Asel’* said: “When I see the love between them I think about my own beloved (*liubimykh*).” *Alma* said: “ I love David Luis. He arouses me. He is kind and attractive.” The women wish and dream that some day a young, handsome and prosperous man like David Luis might ask for their hand.

But the reality is much harsher. Women who practice sexual strategies successfully, are better off than those dispossessed women who avoid it. However, they are continuously exposed to stigma and violence.

### **The stigma and violence**

In this section I will discuss how the public moral attitudes to sexualised economic strategies instigate and legitimise domestic and public violence against women.

The ways different people approach morally sexualised strategies depend on the current sexual ambiguities engendered by the encounter of the so called

sexual revolution (*seksual'haia revoliutsiia*) with Soviet official ideology on sexuality, on the one hand, and the revival of "ethnic - traditionalist" sexual morality at the other. The sexual revolution which has meant more liberal practices and discourses of sex, on the one hand, and the commercialisation and advertisement of sex on the other, is oriented towards pleasure.<sup>13</sup> The Soviet and ethnic sexual moralities are oriented towards reproduction. Those who adhere either to the sexual morality of the Soviet time or to an ethnic one consider the sexualised strategies corrupt and perverted. Thus, women who practice sexual strategies are stigmatised as deviant from women's idealised roles as wives and mothers. Such stigma in its turn legitimates the use of widespread domestic and public violence against women in general. The violence is particularly justified, because men who have embraced the sexual revolution for themselves have very ambiguous attitudes towards women who practice extra-marital sex. While they adore such women as objects of desire and sources of pleasure they usually share the opinion that such women are moral pervers.<sup>14</sup> Such duplicity from men is related to the particular ways rich men benefit from the sexual revolution. Culturally, the consumerism which is the main life style of this group of men includes a very strong sexual element. Having young and beautiful women as mistresses and wives has become one of the main symbols of the post-Soviet masculinity. Having women as lovers is not only a matter of prestige for rich men, but also for those who are not wealthy. I communicated regularly with a group of men, of middle income, most of whom were married. One of the main ways they tried to impress me or each other was by telling stories about their success in seducing women or showing their skills in this. Men who were particularly successful, apparently had a better sense of their manhood. The following proverb, recited frequently by both men and women illustrates this: "*muzhchina Kotoryi ne guliaet ne muzhchina*" ( A man who is not involved in illicit sex is not a man). When I asked different people about the

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<sup>13</sup> The post Soviet sexual revolution shares its pleasure orientation with the libertarian one which was practised in 1920s in the Soviet Union, or advocated by authors like Riech (1972/1936) and Marcuse (1966), or that which was practised by the proponents of the so called the counter-culture, in the 1960s in the West. But is radically different from them in that it has come primarily to be identified with the commercialisation and advertising of women's bodies and sexualities through the market and the media.

<sup>14</sup> A young, beautiful well dressed and perfumed woman is adored in Almaty not only for the passions and desires she may stimulate or satisfy, but also because her body and correspondent stimulations and satisfactions are symbols of the new consumerism. She is the jewel in the crown in hotels, restaurant, business centres and other similar places. She is invited to restaurants, receives flowers and expensive presents, and her beauty is praised. But, for enjoying these privileges she pays a high price: she is stigmatised and exposed to violence.

interpretation of the proverb, most of them said that it is in the nature of men to seek other women than their wives.

Economically, the commercialisation of sex as an important component of the consumerist culture, has become a multi-million dollar business from which a whole range of men benefit: owners of tabloid newspapers, who sell their papers by publishing pictures of nude women, producers and distributors of pornographic films, owners of hotels, casinos and restaurants, and pimps. The presence of women in entertainment places is a necessary precondition for attracting the men who spend money. Moreover, as mentioned before, the post-Soviet poverty of women has forced them to practice sexual strategies, which are considered by the locals as a principal element of the sexual revolution.

Thus, such men use moralising discourses, instigated by the transformation of sex into a commodity, and targeted on women who get involved in extra-marital sex, to impose their terms on women in the relationships of exploitation. From the point of view of women who use sex as an economic strategy, both the Soviet style sexual morality and its binary opposite, the commercialised sexual revolution, serve in a complementary way the interests of powerful men. The stigmatisation of women who do not conform to the puritan moral norms makes them defenceless against the men who exploit them both sexually and economically. The surge in wide-spread domestic and public violence against women partly legitimised by moralising discourses, is one of the main strategies for such exploitation.

In the following, first I will introduce very briefly some elements of the moralising discourses and then show how such discourses legitimise violence against women.

Let us list the local sexually-oriented stereotypes of femininity:

Modest (women, girl) [*skromnaia (Zhenshchina, devushka)*]/ vulgar (woman, girl) [*Vulgarnaia (Zhenshchina, devushka)*]; good woman ( *normal'naia zhenshchina*)/ bad woman ( *plokhaia zhenshchina* ); loose woman (bitch) ( *suka* ); woman (*zhenshchina* )/ girl ( *devushka* ); a virgin woman (*devstvennitsa* ); innocent girl ( *nevinnaia devushka* ); clean girl (*chistaia devushka*); the old maid (*staraia deva*); Wife (*zhena*)/ mistress ( *libovnitsa* ); Fiance ( *nevesta* )/ girl friend ( *podrushka*); prostitute( *prostitutka* ).

“Modesty”, which has a very high positive virtue, is related to a woman's sexual behaviour, bodily expressions and her relations to time and place. First of all, a modest woman does not engage in extra-marital sex. Secondly she does not display sexuality through dressing provocatively, walking, or laughing loudly in public. She does not drink and smoke in public places, does not attend restaurants

and bars without her husband or relatives, does not walk the streets alone at night, and does not speak with strangers. A vulgar woman is one who commits such acts. Actually a "vulgar woman" is considered to be a bad woman and a "modest woman" as a good one. Another word for a "vulgar woman" is *suka*. *Suka* is a stigma and attached to women who are allegedly involved in illicit sex. Although literally it means bitch, in practice it is not as strong a stigma as prostitute.

The opposition girl/ woman which is constructed with reference to sexuality is important. A girl is an un-de-flowered female, and a woman is the opposite. An un-deflowered woman was usually called innocent by many young women I interviewed. She is called clean as well. The innocence and cleanness attributed to a virgin woman imply that a woman who has experienced premarital sex has become both sinful and polluted. Her sin is less condemned in religious terms than it empowers the woman with an untamable force. According to men I spoke with, a woman who has sex with another man than her husband before marriage cannot resist the temptation to taste other men after marriage either.

"Virginity" is a great virtue for an unmarried woman and its loss a great shame for her and her family among all ethnic groups. However, its negative effects are stronger among Asians and Muslims than Europeans. While pregnancy without marriage damages the reputation of a Russian family, the parents of the girl will admit that their daughter gives birth and will raise the child. Both non-Muslims and Muslims said Muslims will consider this a great shame and could beat the woman in question.

Marriage provides the only legitimate framework for sex and gives women the highest status they can achieve: wife and mother. A young woman over 25 who is not married yet, is pressured and usually called "the old maid."

Sex outside marriage imposes a stigma on women. My male students, distinguished between a "girlfriend" and a "fiance." While they did not necessarily devalue their girlfriends, they did not trust them. They said that they expect their girlfriends to sleep with other men (*Ona mozhnet guliat s drugimi muzhchinami*) and usually they will not trust them enough to marry them. On the other hand, they said they could trust their fiance and wives. The young women were well aware of these attitudes.

The same distinction is made between a "wife" and a "mistress." The former is praised and respected as the agent of reproduction and the servant of the practising of kinship and family rituals. The latter is stigmatised as the practitioner of illicit sex and a danger to family. The prostitute is represented as a category on the same wave length, but more evil.



One of the effects of constructing illicit sex as the binary opposite of sex between spouses is the lumping of different types of extra-marital sex together under the category of “*guliaet*”. *Guliaet*, which literally means to walk, is used as a metaphor for all sorts of illicit sex. For example, when it is said about woman that “she has illicit sex” (*Ona guliaet*), depending on the context, the sentence could be interpreted as she is loose, or she is unfaithful to her husband, or she is a prostitute.

This kind of dichotomy goes along with widespread duplicity. In other words, while a considerable number of people seek a variety of sexual pleasures, they still try to do this secretly. Such secrecy is motivated by the following factors: First of all, people keep their sexual affairs secret out of concern for their own reputation (*reputatsiia*). Reputation of a person, which is a high asset in networking, is closely linked to sexual behaviour. A man or woman with allegedly loose sexual behaviour is called *babnik* (lecher, womaniser) or *Suka* (slang for prostitute). However, such labels affect men and women very differently. Women may not trust a *babnik* but his reputation enhances his own sense of his masculinity and wins him prestige among his male friends and acquaintances. On the other hand, a *suka* is depicted by both men and women as a perverted being who cannot be trusted. Although a stigmatised woman may have friends and relatives who do not care about her label, she is exposed to a great moral pressure which may undermine her self-esteem. The second reason people keep their sexual affairs secret is concern for their spouses and families. They simply do not want to disturb the family life or, even worse, cause a split. As the family is one of the main sites for networking, divorce undermines the spouse's access to resources. Again these, concerns vary with regard to class, gender and generation. A wealthy man, or for that matter a wealthy woman, is less afraid of divorce. With regard to gender, women are more worried about the fate of the family, and they are afraid of being exposed to physical violence by their husbands, if their infidelity is betrayed. The younger generation, are less afraid of divorce, because after divorce they can rejoin their parents. While a young man can easily marry again if he is prosperous, the chances of young divorced women remarrying a prosperous man are undermined, but she can find sponsors or engage in other sexualised strategies.

The third reason people keep their sexual affairs secret is their concern for social order. On one occasion I discussed this matter with a group of men, all of whom, with one exception, had extra-marital relations. All of them insisted that open practice is dangerous and corrupting for society. One of them said:

If everybody talks openly about his sexual affairs this will create chaos, because then everybody will go around and fuck with everybody else like dogs and this will destroy society. We will be like animals. Nobody will respect anybody else.

Actually, women who allegedly break the perceived codes of modesty are considered as dangerous to both family and society, and so the use of violence to discipline them is legitimised. Indeed, as young women challenge this type of morality, they are subjected to both domestic and public violence.

Domestic violence, most women told me, which was already a considerable phenomena in the soviet time, has intensified as result of post-Soviet social change. Social and economic problems like growth of alcoholism and unemployment and the growth of suspicion of parents and husbands against young women's sexual conduct can result in domestic violence . The suspicion is a result of the dynamics between the commercialised sexual revolution on the one hand and the claims to an authentic Soviet sexual morality on the other. To clarify this let us have a look at the following case:

The reader might remember Aleksander's family (chapter 3). The main problem which disturbed the family peace time and time again was a dispute between Ludmila, the mother, and her two daughters, Natasha and Nastia, over the latest time she allowed the girls to come home. In summer, which was lighter, this time was 10 pm and in winter 7 pm. But the daughters, particularly the older one. Natasha, an independent and articulate woman, usually broke this rule. When I asked, Ludmila about her worries, she answered:

In the Soviet time it was safe for a young girl on the streets. Now there are businessmen, rich foreigners, Mafioso and hooligans who are looking for young girls in bars, restaurants and streets. Each time they are out I am worried; A foreigner may cheat them by giving them dollars, or hooligans may kidnap and rape (*nasilovat*) them. They are young, they do not understand. I am responsible for their reputation and for marrying them. Tell me, who will marry a girl, who, excuse me, is not a virgin? It is very difficult to be a mother in these times. Before, it was easier, both girls and boys were simple (*prostye*), they met each other, fell in love and married. But, now boys have become cheaters (*aféristy*) . They just want to have sex.

Her daughters disagreed with her. Natasha said: "My mother grew up in a village, she has not changed her provincial attitudes, she doesn't understand urban life ( *gorodskaiia zhizn'* )." Nastia agreed it was dangerous to be outside at night, but recited the following Russian proverb: "Do not be too afraid of the wolf, or you will stop going to the forest (*volka boiatsia v les ne khodit*)."

In the same manner, husbands or their families control young wives. Actually, young women helped each other go out with men by providing "alibis" (*alibi*) in the following way. A girl friend of a young woman, who has a date with a man, rings the latter's' mother and asks her to permit her daughter to accompany the first girl to visit a third girl friend. They inform the third girl of the matter in advance. Then the woman goes and meets the man. If her mother rings

the third girl she will say, 'they went to buy something from the shop.' Mira, the waitress (above) told me that this method was also used by married women against their husbands. The unmarried, supposedly virgin women, and young married women were much more strictly controlled than divorced young women. In some case, like that of Mira, the waitress, their lovers had contact with the rest of the family.

However, young women were less afraid of domestic control and violence than public violence. Women see the surge of public violence as a post-Soviet phenomenon. It has seen such a dramatic growth that almost every young woman I spoke with had been exposed to direct sexual harassment ranging from "minor" ones like verbal abuse or touching to more dangerous ones like being kidnapped, raped or beaten.

The rise of public violence against women has several causes. It is an integral part of the general social chaos, emergence of Mafia and hooligans, and the surge of violence (chapter 2). The very commercialisation of women's bodies make them potential targets for violence in a situation where organised violence is an integral part of the appropriation and selling of any commodity. Men, like members of the Mafia and police, who are agents of organised violence exploit such women economically and sexually. But as the women above said, women suffer more from the unorganised violence imposed on them by hooligans than that from Mafia and police. The public violence against women is legitimised by the morality mentioned above. According to such morality a woman who breaks the moral codes on sexuality, dresses improperly, visits inappropriate places and breaks the gendered rules of time, invites such violence on herself. Moreover, she is depicted as a pervert who must be disciplined or eliminated. This results in the absence of any social pressure on the police and judicial systems, dominated by powerful men, to give any protection to women in public.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

Women's involvement in sexual strategies is motivated partly by poverty and partly by their desires to access expensive goods introduced by the consumerist culture.

The ways in which different people approach morally sexualised strategies depend on the current sexual ambiguities, engendered by the encounter of so called sexual revolution (*seksual'naiia revoliutsiia*) with a sexual morality which is allegedly inherited from the Soviet time. While these women are adored as the sign of a "modernity" (*znaksovremennosti*) brought about by capitalism, simultaneously they are stigmatised by the "traditional" morality as perverts and thereby the use of

**violence against them is instigated and legitimated. The sexual revolution and the so called traditional Soviet morality are constructed as binary opposites of each other, but in practice they are complementary axes of the exploitation of women by powerful men. The women who practice these strategies have ambivalent attitudes towards the social stigma imposed on them. On the one hand they justify their practice with reference to economic needs, sexual freedom and their rights over their own bodies. On the other hand as their ultimate goal in life is to achieve the officially sanctioned roles of wife and mother, some of them have negative feelings about their involvement in sexualised strategies.**

**Sexual strategies and the sexual revolution are considered alien phenomena through negation of which the dispossessed create a sense of belonging to a Soviet imagined community. I will deal with this in the next chapter.**

## CONSTRUCTION OF THE ALIEN: Imagining a Soviet Community

### Introduction

In the conclusion of the previous chapter I suggested that notions of prostitution, illicit sex and alien were used negatively to create images of an authentic Soviet identity. Such images are part of the people's responses to wild capitalism (chaos). In this chapter I will explore, from the local point of view, the most important of ways this was done. In Almaty I kept hearing people, classify people, social manners and goods and territories rhetorically as Soviet (*Sovetskii*), ours (*nashe*), or in opposite terms such as foreigner (*inostranets*), foreign (*inostranye*), abroad (*granitsa*), from abroad (*iz za granitsy, iz za rubezha*), not ours (*ne nashe*). The conversations in which the meanings of such a categories were negotiated were part of and responses to, current political and social change on the macro level. The most notable changes were: the so called sexual revolution (liberalisation and monetisation of sexual relations), the presence of foreign men in Almaty, the travel of women abroad, prostitution, the introduction of the market economy, consumerism, consequences of the disintegration of the Soviet state and dissolution of the welfare state .

In spite of my expectations, I found a very strong Soviet patriotism among the majority of dispossessed people, regardless of their ethnic or rural or urban origin. This is not to suggest that there were no anti-Soviet feelings among a part of population. On the contrary, one could observe very quickly that the population was polarised in their attitudes to the Soviet past. The new rich (*novye bogatye*), sections of the intelligentsia and the younger generation of the middle class rejected the Soviet era as tyrannical, boring and monotonous. The rest of the population had positive attitudes towards it. However, this polarisation has not led to a homogenisation or fixation of attitudes at either pole. On both sides, the intensity of feelings expressed in relation to Soviet identity vary with regard to sociological factors such as class, gender, generation, ethnicity, rural or urban backgrounds, personal histories on the one hand, and the situation and active involvement of the speakers on the other.

This plethora of opinion on Sovietness is created by deploying two intertwined strategies of negation and remembering. As I have already touched upon the nostalgia for the Soviet era in chapter 2, let me begin by considering negative ways of imagining of the Soviet community.

## The negative construction of the soviet identity

Negatively, Soviet identity is defined in contrast to a notion of alien (*ne nashe, zarubezhnye*) which is created from the articulation to each other of notions of an alien person (*inostranets*) and his alleged manners, alien phenomena, and alien goods.

### Alien person

Although the notion of alien is attributed implicitly to those locals who have allegedly adopted an alien life style (see below) its explicit representative in the local imagination is the foreigner (*inostranets*), a person who comes from outside the former Soviet territory, is male, and is assumed to be rich. He is engaged in some kind of business and propagates prostitution, sexual disease, including AIDS and a consumerist life style .

This kind of negative homogenising and essentialising view of the foreigner is in fact mostly articulated by the dispossessed. The intelligentsia and rich people have a rather differentiated, yet in a different way essentialising, notion of foreigners. They divide foreigners in an evolutionary manner: civilised (*tsivilizovannye*) and cultured (*kul'turnye*) Americans and Europeans, semi-civilised Arabs, Turks, and Iranians and other Asians and uncivilised (*netsivilizovannye*) and uncultured (*nekul'turnye*) black Africans. They explicitly express very strong racist attitudes towards Africans. But they usually feel insecure and humble in relation to Americans and Europeans, and make symbolic capital of their association with them as the representatives of culture and civilisation.

I am concerned mainly with dispossessed people's concepts of the foreigner, although I will comment occasionally on those of the intelligentsia as well. In the first sense, the foreigner is contrasted to a Soviet person (*Sovetskii chelovek*), who is considered a member of the Soviet people (*Sovetskii narod*) associated with the Soviet homeland (*Sovetskii Rodina*), i.e, former Soviet territory, the three Baltic republics excepted. While people widely and explicitly conceived the people of other post-Soviet republics as their compatriots, they explicitly excluded the Baltic people from this. When asked the reason, they usually said that those from the Baltic states were always separatist and never became real Soviets (*nastoiashchie Sovetskii*). A young Kazakh woman, a student of mine, is typical: "People from the Baltic (*Pribaltika*) were different from the rest of us. They never became Soviets (*Soveskimi*) from the heart (*v serdtse*). Even in the Soviet time,

they were chewing gum while the rest of us had no idea of a chewing gum.”<sup>1</sup>

Actually when people, regardless of their ethnicity, used the phrase “our people” (*nashi liudi, nash narod*), they usually referred to the “Soviet people” (*Sovetskii narod*). The term referred also to another meaning, namely Kazakhstan people (*narod Kazakhstana, Kazakhstanskii narod*), but it was rarely used. For example, when people spoke of the sufferings or the glories of the *narod*, or cursed Gorbachev for betraying the *narod*, they referred to the first meaning of the word. But when they criticised Nazarbaev for not having done anything for the *narod* they referred to the second one.

Among the dispossessed the rules of trust and reciprocity are applied in different ways to Soviets and foreigners. While a foreigner is depicted as cunning (*khitryi*) and greedy (*zhadnyi*), the opposite attributes are attributed to a Soviet.<sup>2</sup> Because of this cheating foreigners or expecting them to pay higher rents for apartments is legitimised.

While the foreigner is conceived of as an evil figure, he is sought as a resource as well. Such ambivalence is evoked by fact that he is identified as a male who is rich. As a wealthy person who has access to transnational business networks he is considered a potential resource. But his very wealth combined with his gender, make him a competitive man in the sexual market and thereby a sexual risk.

### **The foreigner as a resource**

The people in my neighbourhood and other places looked to the foreigners not only as a direct economic resource, but also sometimes as a resource for learning languages or access to information or access to networks.

For example, a foreign visitor to the visa section in the police office in Almaty will be surprised by the presence of the few foreigners among the tens of people who queue there each day. I visited the place on several occasions to arrange my residential documents. On one such occasion, when I stayed there the whole day, of more than a hundred people queuing only three were foreigners, myself, a young Chinese woman and a young German man. The rest were locals who had come to pick up or deliver passports which belonged to foreigners<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Chewing gum was a rare and expensive good in the Soviet time and treated as luxurious and a symbol of West.

<sup>2</sup> These kind of glorified positive images of a Soviet person do not correspond to the actual ways the local people treat each other with mistrust and chicanery.

<sup>3</sup> As people push and elbow each other, officials are impolite and often offensive, and one must stand for hours before coming forward to the desk, foreigners who are businessman or in touch with local institutions send locals to arrange their affairs.

The people queuing were young and old men and women from different ethnic backgrounds. The foreigners on whose behalf they were queuing came from all corners of the world, but the majority were Americans, Europeans, Turks, Arabs and Iranians. Moreover, most of these foreigners were business men, working in foreign companies, or linked to some local institutions. The foreigners were mainly the locals' employers or their tenants,<sup>4</sup> or were connected to them through the institutions in which the locals worked. In some rare cases the foreigners were either the husbands of a woman in the queue or the husband of somebody's daughter.

As this example suggests, there is an interdependence between foreigners and a wide range of locals, mainly of an economic nature. The dispossessed, elite, immigration authorities, the members of police, tax inspectors, the members of Mafia, hooligans, local businessmen, bar girls and prostitutes see a foreigner as a multiple potential economic resource. The dispossessed try to find a job or hire an apartment to a foreigner. Some may try to marry a daughter to him, others try to get access to grants and scholarships in Europe and the USA. Some look to him as a source of information, others try to learn a language from him. The tax and police officers and other corresponding authorities may try to extract bribes or gifts. Some locals will try to establish legal or illicit business links abroad. Members of Mafia and Hooligans try to benefit by threatening him or offering him security and sexual services. The bar girls and prostitutes find him a lucrative sponsor or client.

In my neighbourhood two men were working for DHL, and another was a driver for the American embassy. A single mother was working in a Turkish cafe, and Gula mentioned in the chapter 4, was working in a Turkish bakery. Many of my students were working for foreigners as interpreters. People in the neighbourhood and at the university asked me to find for them foreign employers, reliable foreigners who could marry their daughters, or foreign business partners. Another way people were interested in me was information about the West. They usually asked about the size of apartments, wages and welfare systems in the West. However, in spite of this search for foreigners, they were suspected and their presence was considered an evil by dispossessed people regardless of their ethnicity.

### **The foreigner as evil**

The foreigner is demonised by the dispossessed. For them, the foreigner epitomises the promiscuous rich man (both local and foreign), who is feared and

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<sup>4</sup> People usually try to lend their apartments for higher rents to foreigners.



hated for seducing women, involvement in prostitution and spreading sexual disease; and they associate such promiscuity with an alien life style of consumerism, which is accused of contaminating the authentic Soviet way of life. The rich promiscuous man is also associated with alien evil forces who allegedly conspired against the Sovetskii narod, destroyed the Soviet union and now establish wild capitalism (*dikii Kapitalism*).

Lets begin with the foreigner as the epitome of the promiscuous male.

Consider the following event:

One day I was speaking with two Chechen women, who were war refugees, in the neighbourhood square. A middle aged Kazakh woman approached me and in a very friendly voice told me: "You are Iranian; aren't you?" Then, without waiting for my answer, she said: "I know from neighbours that you teach at the university. My daughter has finished university. She knows a little English which she wants to improve by speaking with foreigners. Could you help her?" I agreed and gave her my telephone number. That same afternoon her daughter called me and we decided to meet on the street and go for a walk. Our talk was very inspiring for me. Both the young woman and her mother were entrepreneurs. The mother had been a doctor, had left her former job and had opened a travel company which sent tourists to Iran. The daughter was planning to open a cafe in a suburb of Almaty. The parents had divorced when she was five and since then mother and daughter had lived without a man at the house. We talked for hours about her life story, gender relations, and her future plans. Then we accidentally arrived at an open cafe not far away from the university where I taught. As both of us were tired we sat down at a table and ordered two beers. After finishing the beer we left the cafe, crossed Abai street and chose a bench on a very small hill next to the Auiezova theatre, just hundreds of yards from my university.

While we were continuing our conversation, two young Kazakh women and two young Kazakh men, each with a bottle of wine in his hand, passed us. I recognised all four, as students from the university where I taught. I had spoken before with one of the men, who was from Shymkent, and he usually exchanged greetings with me. This time, as they were a little drunk, all four greeted me cheerfully, and I greeted them back. Then the man whom I knew less well said something in Kazakh I did not understand. They chose a bench five yards from us and opened a

bottle of wine.

Surprisingly, the woman I accompanied suddenly became sad and silent. I asked her whether she was bothered by their presence. "No," She answered "but did you understand what the boy (paren') told you in Kazakh?" I said, "no". "Well", she said, "he told you: 'you have got a prostitute for the evening' ". Furious I rushed towards them. The woman tried to stop me by saying, "it is not important don't bother", but I went to them anyway. When they saw me approaching them angrily they got worried. I turned my face towards the man who had insulted us and said to him that his behaviour was shameful, then explained to him that the woman was my neighbour. The man who had become afraid and embarrassed denied that he had said anything wrong, and instead handed me a glass of wine as a gesture of reconciliation. I refused to accept the wine and pushed his hand back. The wine spilled on his trousers. As I became embarrassed by this, I turned back. While I was almost back to our own bench he shouted: "you have spilled wine on my trousers, you must apologise for that." I did not answer him. Instead we went back to our neighbourhood.

This was not a single isolated incident but happened repeatedly whenever I was out with a woman. Men invariably, and women in some rare cases too, stared, abused us verbally, or sometimes became physically abusive. The male Iranians and with Turks whom I got acquainted had similar experiences. Such behaviour is a very complex phenomena, related to changing gender images and relations, on the one hand, and local images of foreigners, on the other. The foreigner is assumed to be the representative and partly the agent of all "evil phenomena". First of all they are held responsible for the "emergence" and the growth of prostitution. People claimed that their Soviet society was a pure one (*chistoe*), in which spouses did not cheat each other, where love and family were the main motive for the relation between two person, and nobody could imagine selling herself. It was said that sex before marriage was not imaginable. But once the foreigners came with their US dollars, promiscuous sex and sexual diseases, they contaminated the local population both morally and physically.

The alleged moral corruption and spread of diseases were not only associated with foreigners who were present in Almaty, but with foreign men in general. It was argued that local women who travel, either as suit-case traders or prostitutes, contract sexual diseases abroad (outside the former Soviet territory). This must be understood in relation to two of the main post-soviet survival

strategies mainly adopted by women, suitcase trade and sex work abroad. As a result of the post-soviet reforms a numbers of markets have been created in which mainly foreign goods are sold. The suppliers of such goods are mainly suit-case traders, overwhelmingly women, who travel to countries like Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. These women are mainly former professionals like doctors, teachers and engineers and as mentioned in chapter two, they have the reputation of sleeping with their trade partners abroad in order to buy goods cheaper. Another reason for the travel of women to the Emirates and Turkey is prostitution. I have no statistics but according to the locals it is a massive phenomenon. Beller-Hann (1995) explores the ways the presence of allegedly Russian prostitute women in Turkey has provoked stigmatising discourses against them, and has influenced local politics. In Almaty the travel of women to the Emirates and Turkey has become a subject for films (made in Russia), songs, newspapers and daily talks. In almost all of these cases the women's presence abroad is associated with illicit sex.

The two following examples, published in two different issues of *Karavan* are representative of the ways the media stage such images :

The first one is a caricature, which shows an Arab sheik, dressed in his Arabic dress, rushing towards a huge bare female leg in front of him, while his wife, veiled in a black dress and with face covered, clings to his dress and tries to hold him back. <sup>5</sup>

The second is the following article, published on the first page of *Karavan* No 194(489)(date: 2. 10. 96, p 1):

**AUTUMN:**

**Birds fly south, but "the nocturnal butterflies" fly to the north.**

The United Arab Emirates surprised the world once more with its unconventional approach to solving social problems. In Abu Dhabi an act has been ratified on the amnesty of illegal immigrants, who comprise two thirds of the population: they may leave the country until the 30th of September without any hindrance .

In the Arab world they do not like joking- many used the possibility of leaving the country voluntarily, among them many sweet representatives of post-Soviet Asian countries. Recently, "Tushka"<sup>6</sup> landed in Almaty, packed inclusively with representatives of the first ancient profession. They returned

<sup>5</sup>Unfortunately, as I failed to save this issue of *Karavan*, I am not able to give the exact reference.

<sup>6</sup> The corrupted name of Tu, a local type of passenger aeroplane.

home tired and satisfied. Arabs saw them off without hiding their tears... (Translated by author)

The article is juxtaposed with a colourful photo of two sexy female legs crossed, wearing a pair of fancy red shiny shoes, with two green dollar notes in the front of them on the floor. The Russian word *osen*"(autumn) is written in large red letters on the top of the photograph.

The author of the article is a woman by the name Irina Savinko, her family name suggests an Ukrainian origin. The photographer is a woman as well by the name Mikhaila Sorokoumova, possibly an ethnic Russian.

I will return to these extracts below. Let us look at the dispossessed's attitudes on the matter.

The dispossessed replicate widely the images produced by the media. Even those whose close female friends and relatives were involved in suitcase trade expressed stigmatising attitudes to women who travel abroad, while representing their own friends and relatives as exceptional. But these attitudes were clearly gendered. Men, without exception, had homogeneous condemning attitudes towards both women and foreign men alike. Women's attitudes were more mixed, flexible and contradictory. Some women, usually older ones, condemned the travellers. The younger ones expressed empathy, and instead blamed both local and foreign men for women's involvement in transnational prostitution. The two following quotes illustrate such gendered attitudes:

A local Korean man, whose own wife had been involved in trade with Pakistan and was now working for a Turkish company in Almaty, said : "*Chelnoki* (suitcase traders) have created a bad reputation for our women in Turkey and the Emirates. They sleep with every body for money. Now people in the other countries think that all our women are prostitutes."

Viktoria, a student of mine, the casino dealer from Chapter 4, had made a trip to Pakistan, and her brother and his wife were involved in the suit-case trade with Emirates. While saying that most of the female suitcase traders were sleeping with their trade partners she defended this practice in the following way:

Our women are responsible for survival of families, often with two or three children. Their husbands earn very little money. For divorced and unmarried women it is difficult to find a husband, because those of our men who have got money are so rich that do not know how to entertain themselves. They want to change their women every day. When a Russian woman meets a foreigner she thinks that God has just helped her.

[..]It is easier for a woman than a man to negotiate a deal with a man in the Eastern countries.

Women may sleep with Arabs sometimes to get a better deal and sometimes to earn money. It could be profitable to sleep with Arabs, because they are rich people and it is exotic for them to sleep with Russian women. But I know about women who stayed with Arabs for a long time, not as a wife but a lover, worked for them, slept with them. They were exploited by Arabs and not paid so much. But Arabs are better than our men here.

Men here can do everything with women. I think it is better in the Arab Emirates. They will not really hurt you. But here they can beat you! Here, they can even kill you. Sometimes they will not pay you at all.

This brings to the fore an element of conflict of interest between the foreigner and the local strong men. Although the local strong men benefit economically from the presence of foreigners in Almaty<sup>7</sup>, they use the notion of the “evil foreigner” to secure their monopoly over local women’s bodies.

Women are a threefold resource for these men. As lovers and prostitutes they are a source of sexual pleasure. As pimps and managers of illegal brothels, owners of entertainment places they benefit economically from women. Moreover, wives run their households. A foreigner is a competitive rival, a threat to his domination over women. The presence of foreign men in Almaty and women ability to travel abroad provide those women who practice sexualised strategies of survival with an alternative source of men and thereby a space of manoeuvre against local men. What particularly makes a foreigner a threat to the local dominant men is both his money and his vulnerability (*bezzashchitnost'*) in the eyes of the local women. Many local women including prostitutes told me that they felt safer with foreign men. They thought foreigners were not able to force them into sex without their own consent or violence on them. This positive view did not mean that women thought foreign men were more women friendly, but that due to the circumstances they could not use violence against women. Asel' formulated this as follows:

The foreign man has no contact with the police and Mafia. He has no local contacts (*sviaz'*) no friends. The police and authorities wait for him to do something illegal, then he must either pay great bribes to them or go to jail. We know polices, hooligans and Mafioso, all of whom will be interested to help us against a foreigner, but they will not help us against a local man because they all know each other, and will not fight with each other to defend women.

In spite of the fact that a rich foreign man cannot use violence and is dependent on the local strong men even for his own protection he is a strong rival for the local dominant men because of his money. This is well illustrated by Asel's description of her foreign clients: “ They are better, they have green dollars.”

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<sup>7</sup>The local influential people benefit economically from the foreigners' presence in Almaty, as their business partners, or by receiving money from them as bribes, or protection fees against Mafia, or visitors of entertainment places, or buyers of sexual services.

The local strong men deploy the notion of “evil foreigner” to claim a shared Soviet identity with the local women and thereby establish rights of decision over their bodies. As the bodies of women are considered to be bearers of the collective Soviet identity, contact or even worse her sexual contact, with the evil and promiscuous foreigner is damaging for such an identity. Relating collective identities to sexuality and the policing of women is a well known phenomenon and at least in the Muslim and Christian worlds (Ahmed 1992; Kandiyoti 1991; MacClintock 1995 ). But from the women’s point of view in Almaty, there are two distinctive features to the local dominant men in this respect. Firstly, their use of the notion of a collective Soviet identity related to an authentic sexual conduct of women is completely cynical. According to most of the women, such men will not hesitate to sell local women to foreigners to make money or acquire other privileges. Moreover, such men are the main beneficiaries of the post-Soviet change and represent a consumerist life style which includes a strong element of sexual promiscuity. They have no commitment to the images of authentic Soviet sexual morality; they rather ridicule such notions. They are not opposed to contacts between foreign men and local women in principle, but rather try to mediate themselves between local women and foreign men. I frequently heard stories from both foreign businessmen and locals about how local men introduce beautiful local women to foreigners to get good contracts or establish a relationship or just as pimps. According to the locals, sex is a part of signing any good business deal. Secondly, their claims on women in relation to foreigners transcend ethnicity which is otherwise partly constructed through the policing of women’s trans-ethnic sexual relations. For example, Kazakh men have strong claims on Kazakh women’s bodies in relation to men from other local ethnic groups. They make the same claims on the bodies of women of any other ethnic group of the *Sovetskii narod* in relation to foreign men.

The actual targets of the discourse of the evil foreigner are not so much the foreigners as the women seen with them. Although foreigners may be abused occasionally, any such victims are not rich or influential, but instead Afghan refugees, students or those who work for NGOs. Businessmen or the professionals of multi-nationals live in well protected areas, visit well protected clubs and are personally protected either by the government or Mafia. Their local women have none of these privileges. The local dominant men try to control local women’s relationships with foreigners through both ideology and violence.

The stigmatisation of women’s relationships with foreign men is not only a

strategy to control their sexuality, but is also intended to prevent them using the economic opportunities offered by the transnational economy to develop their careers, independently of local men. As discussed in chapter 4, wealth is concentrated in the hands of influential men and women's access to it depends on their relations with such men. Nevertheless, the presence of foreign business and multinationals which are "manned" mainly by foreign men, and transnational links with abroad, provide some opportunities for women to develop their own economic activities. The woman above who sent tourists to Iran is one example. At the university I met a considerable number of women, both students and teachers of foreign languages, who worked for foreign companies as translators. The head of my department had worked for Chevron and Traktebl. Thanks to her efforts Chevron had provided the department with a grant for buying computers and a photocopier. Some other teachers had left the school to work with foreigners. Jamila, a Kazakh woman, is one of them. Her story is one of success and stigma: Jamila, was in her early forties. When I met her, she worked for an Austrian company and was married to an Austrian. She had divorced her former Kazakh husband. The reason for divorce had been his alcoholism and violence. Jamila had left her job as a university lecturer in the English language in 1990. The reason, according to her, had been that the salary was not enough for her and her daughter to survive. As she could speak English very well, she found a job as a cleaner in an Austrian company. While emptying the bin in the Austrian man's office by chance she read the drafts of letters he threw away, and offered to correct his grammatical mistakes. Once the Austrian discovered her skills in English, he employed her as his secretary. She was then promoted to higher posts. She said: "As I worked honestly and very hard the Austrians trusted me and consequently promoted me. Many Kazakh young men who tried to please Austrians by introducing girls to them were not trusted. But my brother in law believes that I could not get the job or the promotion without sleeping with Austrians." When I asked her: "Why does he think so?" Laughing loudly, she answered: "Because he is a stupid Kazakh." But Jamila was not angry with him. On contrary, she had saved this man and his family from poverty. Firstly, Jamila had found him a job in an Austrian company as a driver, for \$400 per month, six times more than the average salary. Secondly, she had exchanged her apartment and their apartment for a larger one and had furnished the latter through Austrians with Austrian furniture. A few days after I met her she found an English tenant for the apartment who rented it for \$1000 per month. Jamila gave all this money to her sister's family. Jamila explained the reason for her generosity towards the family as follows: " When I left

my husband they received me generously and supported me. My sister's husband has grown among Russians in the North. He is not like a Kazakh man. He helped me and now I help them back." Jamila's, leading role in the family economy had bestowed her with a hegemonic authority in family affairs. She had used her authority to subvert this man's former dominance over her sister. She told me : "He abused my sister before both physically and verbally; He is a stupid Kazakh man; but now I have registered the apartment in the name of my sister, and have told him if he continues to abuse my sister any more I will throw him out in the street. As he knows that I am serious and that I know good lawyers, he has stopped abusing my sister any more."

As this example demonstrates, some women use relations with foreigners, who are overwhelmingly men, to acquire a greater economic role in the family networks and thereby strengthen their own positions. So the women's contacts with foreigners undermine not only the sexual monopoly of the local powerful men, but also the authority of local men over women in general. The sexual stigmatisation of such women is an ideologically suitable way to control women's contacts with foreigners because it has, as we will see below, great resonance among the wider population. But as a considerable number of the local women particularly the younger ones, challenge the stigma, the bearer of dominant masculinity resort to violence to reinforce their control. The following example is illuminating:

On 24th of February 1996, on my way from university to home I dropped at in the pizza bar at the circus. After eating pasta, I decided to stay there for a while and write down my diary notes. I became so immersed in writing that I ceased to notice both the passage of time and the numbers of cups of teas I had ordered, until the familiar voice of a woman interrupted me: "May we join you?"

Trying to hide my irritation with a smile, I said please. Then, I recognised the woman, a young Kazakh who taught English at my university. She was accompanied by a younger Kazakh woman and an English man, both of whom I had not met before. The English man was a geologist working for a multinational which was exploring for mineral resources in Kazakhstan. The two women were respectively from Shymkent and Zhambyl, big cities in the South. They had met the English man, as I found out later, in the International business club mentioned in the chapter 4. As the first woman told me later, all three belonged to a common



circle of friends and acquaintances, about some of whom they shared intimate knowledge during the conversation. We sat there for several hours and discussed different things, mainly the relations between Russians and Kazakhs. But gradually we felt a growing attention towards us from a group of three Kazakh men sitting at a neighbouring table. Fortunately this did not develop into a dramatic event. But when they were passing by our table on their way out, one of them said in Russian to the women: "This shameful " *eto stydno* ". The women who had become afraid did not answer but became silent and to avoid him looked down at the surface of the table. While all of us felt relieved when they left the place the English teacher launched into the following piece of rhetoric:

Unfortunately our Kazakh men are uncultured. They come from the south and rural areas here to Almaty. Then they engage in boxing and body building and get involved in violence and different crimes. They treat Kazakh girls as prostitutes. If they invite you to something they expect you to sleep with them. If you avoid it they will tell you: 'I have spent money on you. I have bought this, and that for you, you must repay it.' Even if they buy you a bite of chocolate, they will ask you to sleep with them. If you will not agree to do so, they will force you to do it. If they see you with a foreigner they think you are a prostitute. They will insult you and your company, or even attack you physically. But if they feel that the foreigner is protected by the state or Mafia they will not say anything, but later they will hit you whenever they find you alone. When you are out with your girl friends without having male company they will impose themselves on you. Once, when four of us , all girls, were sitting at the table in this place, a huge Kazakh man approached us and said: "You come with us tonight." We became afraid, and decided to leave the place. But, outside the door, he grabbed the arm of one of the girls and said: 'Where? I told you that you should come with us.' Fortunately, a group of police were standing by their cars a few meters from us. When he realised their presence he let us go.

If they take you to a place of their own they will rape you collectively, because they are usually drunk or high on drugs. This is very dangerous because they have sexual diseases. If you report them to a court, they will not do anything and may prosecute you instead. There are no laws in this country. Our men are violent. Once one of my friends who was waiting for a bus in a bus station was clubbed down by a man who jumped out of a car which stopped beside her. When my friend had lost consciousness he tried to take her into the car with help of two other men. But, fortunately the people around stopped them. Then they drove

away. Shame on our Kazakh men, they are cowards and criminals. The Chechen men never assault their own women.

As the woman above suggests, the use of violence against women to control their relations with foreigners is an element of the wider violence imposed on them by dominant men. The sad aspect of the situation is that subordinate men and a wide range of women, not only do not question such violence but conform to the notions of foreigners and honour and shame which give legitimacy to such violence. Below I analyse their motives for this.

### **Weak men and the foreigner**

The weak men who lack wealth and means of violence, use the notion of “the evil foreigner” to challenge both foreign and local rich men in the sexual market. They try to do so by the exploitation of the notion of the foreigner as the epitome of the rich promiscuous man in general. This notion of foreigner has to do with the monetisation of the sexual relations. As described in the chapter 4 money and violence play determinant roles in different types of the post-Soviet sexual relations ranging from marriage to prostitution. A “weak man” has no great chances in the Almaty sex market, unless he is extra handsome or lucky. The reason for his misfortune is that he does not fit into the image of the post-Soviet gentleman (*dzhentl'men*)<sup>8</sup>, described in chapter 4, who is desired so strongly by the opposite sex.

Although for most of the Almatian men it is impossible to reach a status of gentleman, because of its high expenses, they are still obliged to provide their lovers or would be wives with presents or invite them to restaurants. All young women I spoke with expected their would-be-husbands to do so. Actually, a man who fails to fulfil such expectation is not considered to be a real man (*nastoiashchii muzhchina*). But this imposed high costs on the ordinary men. For example, a young Kazakh male student spent the whole of his monthly scholarship for inviting a young Kazakh woman whom he loved to a restaurant. In another case a young Russian/German worker paid the whole of his salary buying a gold earring for his girl friend. But as all men cannot afford to spend money, their chances of finding a lover or a wife are undermined. Actually, a group of men with whom I communicated complained that it was expensive for them to find or keep lovers. The following case is an illustration of such men's situation:

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<sup>8</sup> The reader should not confuse such a gentleman with a man of aristocratic breeding or with the one who has a sophisticated engagement with “high culture”. His manners are rather representative of the habitus of the newly shaped lumpen bourgeoisie, the so called new rich (*novarish*) (see below).

Saber is a Kazakh man who has migrated from Taldykorgan to Almaty. He was a tenant in a Russian family and paid the \$50 rent a month. He was born and grew up in a kolkhoz in an *Aul* (village) in the Taldykorgan region. His father who is dead was a shepherd (*cheban*) and the mother, who is still alive, has been a milkmaid (*doiarka*). He has two brothers and one sister. The older brother and sister are married and have moved to Taldykorgan where they are involved in street trade. The younger brother and the mother still live in the *Aul*. The younger brother, 22, works as a peddler, moving back and forth between the *aul* and Taldykorgan. The mother sells vodka, Chinese pasta, matches and cigarettes in the *aul*.

Saber had been a year in Almaty by the time I met him first (October 1995). First he worked for the neighbourhood's open cafe, preparing, grilling and selling *shashlyk*<sup>9</sup>. He lost this job, because the owner's brother in law who migrated from an other *aul* in south took it over. Then, he traded illegally until the cafe was taken over by a new Kazakh man who employed him again. Both of these jobs were very hard. He was selling *shashlyk* even during evening in winter in the open space when the temperature went down to minus twenty. He kept himself warm by drinking cheap local vodka. He got 5% of the sale, which amounted to \$100 a month. In addition to the cold, there were bullies and hooligans who avoided paying for the *shashlyk*, whom he had to fight to get the money. He earned slightly more from trading, but he was not satisfied with the job because he found it degrading. When he worked for the second time in the cafe for the new owner his salary was increased to \$150 and in addition to this he took home meat and onions free of charge.

He found living and working in Almaty very harsh and was very nostalgic for the *aul*. "In the *aul*", he said, "people are uncomplicated (*prostye*) but here in Almaty you have both good and bad people." He was also very nostalgic for the Soviet time (*Sovetskoe vremia*) and spoke passionately about his job:

"I worked as a veterinary surgeon (*veterinar*), I had ten people under my command, most of whom were my relatives and friends. We treated sheep, horses and other animals. People appreciated our services. We received part of our salaries in advance and had a peaceful life. All relatives were together"

But this "golden time" had ended for Saber because of the

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<sup>9</sup> Shashlik is a form of grilled meat.

economic crisis. From 1988 onward suddenly the credit and supplies of fuel and medicine for animals were cut and state shops and other enterprises stopped buying their animals. The director of their collective began to sell animals on a grand scale on the black market, and the kolkhoz stopped paying people wages regularly. People began to leave the kolkhoz and migrated to Shymkent, Taldykorgan and Almaty to earn money through illegal street trade. According to, Saber, 90% of the people have left the kolkhoz. He himself left the kolkhoz in 1990 when he found a job as a seller in a state shop, through a relative, in Taldykorgan. But after four years he was forced to leave the job because somebody else had stolen two tons of sugar which was blamed on him. Then, in the autumn of 1994 he came to Almaty to a cousin who had already established himself in our neighbourhood as an illegal street trader. During the two years at Almaty he has not been back home but sent money for his mother with relatives.

So far I have introduced Saber's social and biographical backgrounds. Let us explore how these influence his chances in the sexual market. A month or two after I met Saber the first time, he formed a relationship with Madina, another street trader, who comes from an other *aul* in the Taldykorgan region. Madina, who has been in Almaty for ten years, is living with her elder sister, sister's husband and their three children in a two bed room apartment in our neighbourhood. Both sisters, who have degrees from university, sell potato, bread, banana and wine, illegally together. Madina left her job as primary school teacher because she found the salary not enough for survival. She has divorced her former husband, by whom she has a three years old son, who lives with Madina's mother in the *Aul*. Unwilling to go in details, she mentioned the economic and moral problems as the reasons for the divorce.

The relation between Saber and Madina was a good one. They did not have a shared economy, as each worked separately and they lived separately as well. At the beginning, Saber seemed to not appreciate their relationship very highly. Once, as usual, he was teasing me on sex, by saying: "Tell the truth Jakob how many woman have you fucked (trakh) here since your arrival?" Smiling, I answered him: "When will you stop talking about sex? You have got Madina now." He answered with a nonchalant voice: "She is only a mistress" (*ona tol'ko liubovnitsa*). As discussed in the chapter 4, mistress has negative connotations among the

locals. But as the course of events showed later Saber was, emotionally, much more dependent on Madina than he was ready to confess. By the end of July, suddenly, Madina and her sister separated from the rest of the group and moved their selling place a kilometre from the previous place, where Saber was now working again in the cafe house. The reason for this as Saber's cousin told me was that Saber had quarrelled with Madina. As Saber did not tell me anything about the subject I did not ask either. But Saber became very depressed, was losing weight, and began to drink heavily and harass Russians. One day, the day after I had mediated as a friend between him and a Russian whom Saber had wanted to beat up, he told me:

Forgive me Jakob for last night. I am not a hooligan. I do not like to fight with people, but I have a very hard time now. When I get drunk I cannot control myself anymore. I loved Madina and wanted to marry her, but she was cheating on me (*obmanyvala menia*). She was fucking around with others without me knowing it. One day a good friend of mine, a Kazakh, came to the cafe, and seeing me talking with her, he asked about our relationship. I told him about my intentions. He said: "don't be stupid, she fucks with others, sometime ago I fucked her myself." I spoke with her. She denied everything, but I knew that she was lying, so I left her. Now she has started another relationship.

Then he added:

It is expensive to have girls, you must buy presents, and give them money. After divorcing my wife, can you imagine it, I had not sex with a woman for two and half years until I met Madina. I met my former wife and married her in Taldykorgan, 1990. She was a Kazakh migrant from another *Aul*. We loved each other. I never blamed her or hit her. She gave birth to a son. We had a good relationship but her mother insisted that we should go and live with her. I did not like this. But once when my wife and son went to visit her mother she prevented them returning to Taldykorgan. I went to their *aul*, to bring them back. My wife cried and told me she loved me but couldn't leave her mother. I became sad, and went back alone to Taldykorgan. I hoped they would come back, but as they didn't I went there the second time, but this time I understood that she would not come with me and we divorced. After a while she married another man who is much

older than her but a rich one. I am not angry with her for this; how could she and our son survive on their own? I still miss her very strongly. To live alone here in Almaty is very boring ( *skuch'no* ) for me. It is difficult to marry. You have to pay at least 50,000( \$ 800) for *kalym* (bride price ), then you must buy a lot of presents and kill animals. At my age I cannot steal (*ukrat'* )<sup>10</sup> a seventeen years old girl, because, if the girl will not marry me it will go to court. I will save money until I have got enough. Then I will go back to the *aul* and marry someone.

As this story suggests, lack of money results in the sexual deprivation<sup>11</sup> of unmarried migrant Kazakh men like Saber. But they are not alone in this. All the poor urban men, regardless of their ethnic origin, are in the same boat. Two Russian young brothers, aged 25, and 28 years old, who were my neighbours, complained that they had not met women for ages because of their lack of money. The younger one was an electrician with a salary of 2500 Tenge (\$ 37) a month and the older one an unemployed former army officer. He had become an alcoholic and was living on his brother's and mother's salary, who all lived together.

It is not only the poor man's poverty which makes him undesirable but even his style and job. Actually, the only sexy job in Almaty today is to be a businessman, foreigner or local. Workers, academicians, officers, and university lecturers are not reckoned to be "real men" (*nastoiashchii muzhchina* ). In order to be seen as attractive one must dress in a suit, put on a tie and shiny shoes. Many young lads without the cash resort to small crimes to provide these. A 19 year old Kazakh and his half-Tatar half-Russian friend told me that without small crimes, mainly thefts, it is impossible for them to have access to girls. Although, they were well aware of the risks being imprisoned, they said they will continue to do this.

The rich men, locals or foreigners, not only undermine the chances of poor single men to find partners but are a potent threat to those men who already have partners, because they are a strong pole of temptation for the poor men's partners.

What makes poor men's partners less resistant to such temptation is the current ambiguities and instabilities in the relationships between spouses among the dispossessed. A good looking wife in a poverty-ridden family with a disastrous relationship with her husband, may seek to divorce or find a well off man as a sponsor.

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<sup>10</sup> stealing girls ( *aleb Kasheh* ) is an old Kazakh tradition which has been revived.

<sup>11</sup> Sexual deprivation due to gender, class and race is a universal phenomena , yet unnoticed and undiscussed.

Mira, the waitress, from chapter four, said that it was a common practice among Russian young women to have lovers. Viktoria, from the same chapter said that many married women had sponsors. The loosening of the old sexual morality under the influence of the sexual revolution and temptations of the consumerist culture encourage such women to divorce or find sponsors. To lose one's wife because of poverty is a disaster which may lead to suicide. In the neighbourhood, I knew of two women whose husbands, a construction worker and an electrician, had committed suicide. The neighbours said the reason was that their wives were involved with other men. Both of these women, in their mid thirties, were broken, alcoholic and very poor. So the rich men not only undermine the single poor men opportunities to find wives or lovers but rich men may take poor men's partners from them.

To resist the rich man in the sexual field and keep him away from his own partner the poor man resorts to the discourses of a moral community of the Soviet *narod*, constructed to question the new rich and post-Soviet change in general. Such a discourse contrasts the Soviet community with the overall notion of the alien (*ne nashi*) to bolster the position of the weak men in sexual competition by using the following strategies. Firstly, they question monetisation of sexual relationships and the sexual conduct of the rich men. Such discourses reject the intertwined emergence of consumerism and wild capitalism which privilege the rich men in the first place, by depicting them as alien, that is non-Soviet.

Secondly, rich promiscuous men are excluded from the community, by the virtue of the fact that their promiscuous sexual life and consumerist culture for locals are epitomes of the foreign.

Thirdly, particular moral and sexual obligations are imposed sexually on dispossessed women. They are expected to communicate sexually within the community, otherwise they are shamed for smearing the collective honour of the community. Moreover, their sexual behaviour and social conduct is checked by the morality of modesty described in the chapter 4. So the Soviet moral community is based on a sexual morality which is a double edged sword. While one edge is used for challenging the new rich's hegemony over working people, the other edge is in the service of the dispossessed men's hegemony over dispossessed women. Again, the claims of identity turn out to be claims on women's bodies by men.

Women's reactions to the obligation imposed on them by the discourse of community vary with generation. Younger women challenge such sexual morality, the burdens of which are imposed on them. But the older women are its guardians. Actually, the conflicts between Ludmila and her daughters Natasha and Nastia,

mentioned in chapter 3, illustrate such conflicting attitudes. As Ludmila said mothers are responsible for their daughters' reputation and successful marriage, so they control them very strictly.

The young women resist the Soviet sexual morality because they are attracted to the consumerist culture and use sexual economic strategies to gain access to materially protected lives and consumerist goods. Among the dispossessed, the young women are almost the only group who are more or less attracted to the consumerist culture. Both in the neighbourhood and at the university young women were the main readers of tabloid journals like *Kakadu* and *Speed*, and were the main groups who visited entertainment places described in chapter 4.

Although mothers worry that their daughters will be seduced by foreigners or local rich men they will be happy if their daughter can find a good husband among either group. The marriage, of Aleksander and Ludmila's daughter Natasha with a Turk-Bulgar illustrates this.

At the end of April 1996, Natasha suddenly and resolutely declared to her family that she wanted to marry a Turk-Bulgar, who worked in a construction project in Almaty and whose family had recently migrated from Bulgaria to Istanbul. This was as a declaration of war to her mother who opposed her decision strongly, saying: "Why don't you find a Russian? I do not trust foreigners." Natasha's counter argument was that foreigners are also human beings. And that even if he was a Turk, he had grown up in Bulgarian culture, close to Russian, and spoke Russian fluently. Aleksander agreed to the marriage if she could get the consents of her mother and her grandmothers but warned her that the man could be a pimp (*sutener*) recruiting women under the cover of marriage for brothels in Istanbul. Natasha's best friend, a young unmarried Kazakh of her age, tried to discourage her by saying that foreigners were cunning and one should not trust them.

Two people who supported her from the very beginning were her younger sister Nastia and the grandmother Baba Marina. Nastia was of the opinion that Natasha was the wisest person in the world and whatever she decided was correct. The old woman attitude stemmed from her own diasporic experience. She said:

I am Ukrainian (*Khokhliachka*). I fled with my family from Ukraine to Siberia because of hunger (*golod*) when I was fifteen years old. In Siberia we lived with Russians, Kazakhs, Kalmyks, Tatars and many other people together. Then I came to Kazakhstan. Here we have lived with



hundreds of other nationalities in peace for many years. There are many good people among any nationality. Let's invite the boy home and check him out. If he is a good person, let the girl marry him.

Natasha had given her mother an ultimatum that if she would not agree with Natasha's decision she would go with the Turk alone to register the marriage and then move in with him. Ludmila had no choice but to accept the old woman's suggestion. Fortunately all members of the family immediately liked the Turk, Nzem. Aleksander's mother, who met him few times, also liked him. Aleksander, who introduced him to me, was very proud of him. He even introduced him to his Turk friend who was the guard of the lake.

As it turned out, by marrying the Turk Natasha enhanced her reputation among friends and neighbours as a smart girl who had managed to find a good husband. Her husband's pleasant character also improved the image of foreigners among Natasha's close neighbours and friends. After this event two Kazakh women, both mothers of Natasha's friends, asked me whether I had reliable foreign friends who were willing to marry their daughters. But beyond immediate friends and neighbours, people who did not know Nazem thought she had made a mistake. A Kazakh man (a migrant from Kirgizia), who sold things illegally beside Natasha on the pavements, learned from me that she had married and moved to Istanbul. He said: "He will sell her. How could her family let this happen?" He expressed this in such a naive and sincere way that I burst into laughter. The man was embarrassed by my laughter and defended himself by saying: " I am not stupid, I have read in news papers that they sell Russian girls in Germany and Turkey." I asked him: "What newspapers?" At this moment a half Russian half Tatar woman, a street trader who knew Natasha, came to his help by saying: "He is right, they sell our girls abroad. I will never let my daughters marry foreigners." I told this to Natasha's family. Ludmila said that the woman was jealous, because nobody took her daughters.

Although young women were inclined to sexual strategies and consumerist culture, they also shared with older women and men very strong feelings against them as elements of wild capitalism, which had allegedly destroyed the Soviet era relations between men and women based on trust, love, respect and security. I will now examine in some detail the dispossessed's attitudes towards consumerism and wild capitalism.

## Consumerism and the dispossessed

Let us return to the picture of the two sexy legs, a pair of fashionable red shoes and two green USD notes. In addition to the direct implication in the text that Arabs are the clients of the transnational prostitutes, the picture includes a quintessential sub-text of the negative construction of sovietness.

While the legs symbolise simultaneously prostitution and sexual promiscuity, the glamour of the shoes and the Dollar notes represent respectively, consumerism and the monetisation of the life worlds, two of the main elements of late global capitalism. The notes represent the currency of a foreign country which was the main external force involved in the destruction of the USSR, and, the article alludes, the notes are paid by the foreigners, namely, Arabs. Thus dollars, legs and shoes are linked to foreigners. It is implied that foreigners, male by gender, try to corrupt the Soviet *nord*, through consumerism and monetisation of life worlds.

I am not suggesting that either the author of the text or photographer had such a reading consciously in mind while composing the material. But the reading captures the dispossessed's understanding of these phenomena.

One significant way people challenge consumerism is to ascribe Soviet or non-Soviet identities to goods. Goods such as, cars, sausage, sweet milk, vodka and beer are divided into ours (*nashi*), Soviet (*Sovetskii*) and not ours (*ne nashi*), from abroad (*Zarubezhnye, zagranichnye*). The puzzling feature was that people claimed proudly: "Our Soviet goods (*Nashi Sovetskie tovary*) are much better than imported goods ( *importnye tovary*)." My landlord, Aleksander and many other men usually boasted on their Ladas, Volgas and Zhigulis<sup>12</sup> proudly, saying they are well adapted to our climate and our roads, which a Japanese or a German car cannot endure. I frequently heard people saying our sausages are much better than German ones. My dispossessed friends often preferred the local beer and vodka to foreign ones. Such attitudes regarding Soviet goods seemed to me bizarre; I had read in respected economic histories of the USSR that bad quality consumer goods were standard in the Soviet economy, but the attitudes reflected deep concerns with post-Soviet economic and social changes.

Foreign food and drink, the famous brand alcoholic drinks excepted, are suspected to be bad, and people usually prefer local food and drink to the imported ones. The locals divide the rest of foreign goods with regard to quality and origin into three categories: Bad (*plokhie*); not bad/good (*ne plokhie /Khoroshie*);

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<sup>12</sup> All three cars were produced in the Soviet Union

excellent ( *otlichnye* ). Yet they still dismiss all of them, for different reasons.

The bad goods are supposed to be imported from China, Iran and Turkey and are dismissed for their poor use value. The Chinese, Iranians and Turks were often blamed for dumping of low-quality goods into Kazakhstan. A Russian woman, a factory worker, pointed to her Iranian shoes and said:

Look at these! They are not shoes, they are shit ( *dermo* ). Our soviet shoes were usable for two years. I bought these six months ago but they are already worn out. Our goods are much better than those from China, Iran, and Turkey.

When she ended her rhetoric her Kazakh friend, a female Kazakh worker, added: "Our family never buys foreign goods ( *zarubezhnye tovary* ). We buy our own Soviet goods ( *Sovetskie tovary* )." Goods which are imported from central Europe, mainly from Poland, are classified as not bad or good. These are dismissed for protectionist reasons. Most of the dispossessed are in favour of restrictions on importing foreign goods, which they think contribute to the closure of local factories and the growth of unemployment. A Russian woman, who had lost her job as a computer engineer because of the closure of a factory and was working as a seller in a neighbourhood kiosk said: "Our president is not a clever man. He has opened the borders to foreign goods. Our factories are closed and our people become unemployed. Our goods are not worse than those from abroad."

The third type of goods which are called Western goods ( *zapadnye Tovary* ) or very rarely also Japanese goods ( *laponskie tovary* ) are dismissed for political reasons. These goods represent the consumerist culture associated with foreigners and the new rich. The rejection of such goods is not the rejection of their use value as such. It is a rejection of the flamboyant erotics of the "post-modern" consumerism inscribed in them through advertisement and fashion, and it is a rejection of the arrogant way they are used to distinguish the life style of the new lumpen bourgeoisie. The following example illustrates this. My landlord, an admirer of the Soviet goods spent several months of rent he received from me on replacing their own old Soviet TV set with a new Toshiba set. I asked him the reason. He said the Japanese TV worked better, because the sounds and colours were clearer. I told him jokingly: "Then you admit that some of the foreign goods are better than those of yours." He said: "Of course, but they are not for us poor people ( *bednye liudi* ), they are only for bosses ( *nachal'niki* ). We cannot even afford the cheap and bad Chinese goods. If I had money to replace my Lada with a Volvo I would do it. But I have not got the money. "

In this sense people distinguish clearly between consumption and consumerism. Consumption is oriented towards the use value of the goods due to their physical structures and material substances. Consumerism is related to the

prestige/sign values inscribed in them by the genres of fashion and advertisement which form the social practices of “distinction” (Bourdieu 1984).

To clarify the distinction, let us compare the Russian worker’s wornout Iranian shoes with those in the picture. The Russian worker who called her Iranian shoes shit considered them simply as footwear and measured their value against their durability. This evaluation is different from that inscribed in the red shoes in the picture. The latter, which may remind the reader of Imelda Marcos and her fabulous shoes, does not express the tastes of dispossessed women in Almaty but that of a luxurious prostitute or the wife or lover of a rich man.

I am not suggesting for a moment that consumption in local terms constitutes a natural process stripped of any cultural history. On the contrary, the Soviet type of consumption as illustrated by Humphrey ( 1983) and discussed by myself on sharing of drink and food in chapter 3, are highly ritualised and related to the regimes of the body ( Appadurai 1997, Bourdieu 1977). Moreover they constitute elementary forms of reciprocity around which social networks are organised (see chapter 3). What I suggest is that late capitalist consumerism represents a break with the Soviet type of consumption.

### **The break with the Soviet type of consumption**

This break is primarily marked by the fact that in consumerism the relation between the prestige values inscribed in the goods by the genres of fashion and advertisement and their material structures and physical properties becomes arbitrary. This represents a radical break with the working people’s experience of consumption in Kazakhstan. Such a break is different from the “experience of rupture” described by Miller as consumption ( 1995: 1)<sup>13</sup> . For Miller, the experience of rupture is a result of the modern division of labour which entails a separation between, ownership, production and consumption of goods. The break with the Soviet pattern of consumption in Almaty in contrast represents a new late capitalist cultural element resulting from the post-Soviet marriage between market and media. To understand this transformation we need to compare the Soviet centrally “planned” distribution of goods with the post-Soviet “free” market, from the consumer’s point of view. While the former was consumer independent, the latter is consumer dependent ( Kornai 1992). In the former the consumers sought suppliers through networks of patronage, while in the latter, the suppliers of goods

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<sup>13</sup> “I want to reflect on a condition in which very little of what we possess is made by us in the first instance. Therefore to be a consumer is to possess consciousness that one is living through objects and images not of one’s own creation.”( Miller 1995:1)

seek the consumers through advertisements.<sup>14</sup> In the former, the goods were often but not not always , literally, hidden.<sup>15</sup> In the latter they are fictionalised, eroticised and exposed to the gaze of the buyers through advertisement.

The prestige goods imported from the West bring a new dimension to the world of consumption in Almaty through fashion and advertisement: the consumption of signs and images. This pattern of consumption evolves around two intertwined libidinal sub-terrains: fantasy and erotics.

Firstly, consumption is used to create fictions of identity evolving around fictionalised role models. This is realised through the imitation of the body language and life styles of celebrities such as actors, actresses, singers, models, and characters of soap opera through the use of sign-commodities. While some of these celebrities are Russians from Russia, the majority are from the West, particularly America.

So through the articulation of the body to Western commodities and imaginary association with Western celebrities, an identification with the West, mainly America, is created. The existence of the Russian celebrities among the role models does not imply a Russian identity, because they themselves are logos of Americanism. The distinction between the West (*zapad*) and the Orient (*vostok*) have been in the Soviet time the corner-stone of an orientalist fantasy in Kazakhstan, according to which the West represented civilisation, progress, openness and culture and the Orient meant parochialism, despotism, backwardness and stagnation.

Historically the West was represented by Russians. But as result of the post-Soviet change another, overlapping image of the West, represented mainly by Americans, has emerged. While some groups in society consider this new version of the West as the cradle of civilisation, the main terms of its description are glamour, wealth and power. All these image are propagated by the media. But the images of a powerful America emanate particularly from two recent historical facts: the USSR is considered to have been defeated by the USA and US dollars are practically the main currency in the daily life of the country. So the identification with the West through Western commodities is an identification on the level of fantasy, with the civilised, the glamorous, the wealthy and the powerful.

The notions of America as elegant, muscular and rich correspond to those of

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<sup>14</sup> An example of this was the institution of *Tolkach* discussed by Humphrey (1983) and Berliner (1957, chapter XII).

<sup>15</sup> In the Soviet system, in theory, consumer goods were centrally distributed through work places and state shops, but in practice this was effected through a myriad of patronage networks. Particularly, access to goods in short supply was possible through networks. Both shortage and patronage were endemic elements of the system. The directors of enterprises acquired their power and influence through the manipulation of goods.

the local rich men. Such an identification with glamour and power through the use of sign-commodities creates an economy of erotics in two senses: It produces and stimulates desires through the glamorous exhibition of sign-commodities and images, which are the symbols of power, and It makes those who can afford them, the new rich men, sexy and powerful.

The new rich who manipulate these signs and his foreign counter-part are the main beneficiaries of this economy of erotics. It goes without saying that among the foreigners the Americans are the most sexy. I gave the name of thirteen different nationalities including those of Russians, Kazakhs and Americans to 20 of my female students in two classes and asked them to rate them according to their desirability for marriage. For ten girls the Americans were first choice, for four they were the second choice, for four the third choice and for two the fourth choice. Most of these girls came from well off families. Actually, for the new rich and those who are influenced by the new consumerist mentality, Americans are not only sexy for marriage but sexy in general. They are invited to parties as honoured guests, lent apartments in the best part of the city and given access to local institutions and information.

More specifically, the intertwined economy of fantasy and desire are created through the fictionalisation and eroticisation of sign commodities by the media. Actually the market and media have undergone analogous changes and are underpinned by analogous logics.

Firstly, both have become liberalised. This has resulted in diversification of goods available in "the free" market, and diversification of types of media and their contents. In Almaty in 1995 to 1996 there were seven commercial local TV channels, and three channels from Moscow. Although the number of cinemas had not changed dramatically, the films they show had diversified. In addition to this, different types of video films are available. The profound change in the print media is marked particularly by the emergence of magazines and newspapers which contain a high proportion of advertisements, gossip, erotica and pornography. In addition to *Speed*, *Karavan*, and other magazines, Russian translations of *Cosmopolitan*, and *Play-boy* in English are available. The book market is filled with translations of horror, pornographic and detective novels.

Secondly, media has become part of the market. Tens of goods are advertised through different TV channels, radio, daily papers and magazines. Moreover, to sell its own products, the media uses the images of sign-commodities.

Thirdly, market and media, have both become erotic spectacles. Television,

video and the print media sell their products through visual erotics. Visual pleasures are offered by the pictures of beautiful women and luxurious commodities not only on the covers and front pages of magazines and newspapers, but more spectacularly and nakedly on the inside pages. In this sense the images of commodities including those of women's bodies are consumed as part of the consumption of media (Jameson 1991, chapter 8 ). The shops like Sum, described in chapter 4, which offer sign goods and exhibitions (*Vystovki*), arranged by foreign merchants, form similar spectacles. A glamorous and desire provoking space is composed by juxtaposing beautiful perfumed women (sellers), who are fashionably dressed and with the latest make up on their faces, with sign commodities beautifully exhibited.

In this way the luxurious shops and other places like expensive restaurants, business centres, casinos, bars and discos, mentioned in chapter 4 have acquired double functions in relation to consumption: they offer visual pleasures on the one hand and prestigious goods and services on the other.

To summarise the argument, the pluralisation of the market and media, their articulation to each other, and their analogous practices create intertwined economies of fantasy and erotics articulating representations of the West as the centre of civilisation, glamour, wealth and power.

These notions inform the ideology and the visions of the new rich. Any idea which contradicts this image of the West or for that matter any person who resists it is depicted as anachronistic, backward and irrational. The main pillars of the current Orientalism in Kazakhstan are not primarily the texts written by the Russian travellers, spies, merchants and novelists on Kazakhs in the course of last two centuries, but the new consumerist ideology, in which the majority of Russians themselves appear as the oriental other: provincial and backward (*Kolkhozniki*).

The authors of this new ideology are mainly the local elite regardless of ethnicity. The interesting fact about this new form of Orientalism in Kazakhstan is that it is not imposed by one "ethnicity" or "race" on another, but by the rich on the poor regardless of ethnicity.

The reason for this is that the dispossessed, unlike the elite, have not embraced the transformation to the market economy and its corresponding consumerist life style. So the dispossessed are depicted by the elite as hostile to progress and change, which are considered as the gifts of the West offered through the market economy. The word *Kolkhoznik*, which literally means a person who works in a Kolkhoz, has become the derogatory category denoting the working people who oppose capitalism. The genealogy of the word betrays its orientalist

connotations. In the second half of the nineteenth century the Russian enlightened intellectuals used the word *muzhik*, to denote the alleged backwardness, stagnation and ignorance of the Russian peasant. The negative connotation was clear, the word also meant bumpkin and lout.<sup>16</sup> Stalin claimed that his collectivisation of agriculture has transformed the *Muzhik* to a new Soviet man. The Soviet dissidents then began to mock this Soviet man through inscribing the old meaning of *muzhik* into the word *Kolkhoznik*, which now epitomised the inertia and backwardness of the Soviet man. Today this meaning is applied to those who resist capitalism.

The dispossessed's hostility to consumerism is related to the current social stratification. Ideologically, the members of the new rich "class" whose role models are American billionaires in soap operas, have made sign-commodities a means of "distinction" ( Bourdieu 1984). To drive a Mercedes, to consume expensive western goods, to spend dollars in restaurants and casinos, to build villas, to buy expensive furniture, to travel to the West, to send children to the Western universities, to have beautiful lovers and American friends are signs of distinction.

In order to oppose the new rich, the dispossessed associate consumerism and its intertwined fantasy and erotics with foreigners, prostitution, theft and immorality in general. Such attitudes should not be attributed to working people's inertia or inability to adapt to social change. Nor should they be interpreted as showing the dispossessed to be opposed to consumerism on principal. They may enjoy watching soap operas or visiting exhibitions but still oppose consumerism for political reasons. To paraphrase Walter Benjamin, I would say that while the new rich have brought fashion and glamour into class distinctions, the dispossessed bring class distinctions into the world of fashion and glamour. If the new rich uses the sign commodities to construct an Orientalist discourse its other Oriental is the *kolkhoznik*. The working people stigmatise consumerism to question such Orientalism and the arrogant life style of the New Rich and their alleged foreign associates, whom they consider a bunch of thieves and criminals. Thus, the working people have a complex relationship with Western goods. As they know for sure that such goods, food and drink excepted, are of better quality, than their own, they may buy particular goods, if they can afford them, while refusing the ideological values the new rich inscribe onto them.

To oppose the consumerist arrogance of the new rich, the dispossessed resort to a rhetoric of an authentic soviet life style and a Soviet culture based on higher moral and aesthetic principles. Morally, it is claimed that Soviet life style and

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<sup>16</sup> Today it has a positive connotation, real man.



culture encouraged sexual purity and fidelity, humanism and solidarity. Aesthetically, they claim that their Soviet art was more genuine and of a higher quality. Actually, working people in Almaty have a more sophisticated taste for art and knowledge of so called “high culture” ( theatre, classical music, ballet, opera, the classic realist novel and sophisticated films), to which they refer as the authentic Soviet culture, than its counter part in the West. This has been so for historical, social, economic and cultural reasons. Historically, from the very beginning the Soviet regime used these forms of art as an instrument for agitation and political education and rituals of ideological indoctrination. Given the extension of the state rituals ( Lane 1981) this type of culture came to constitute an important part of Soviet “mass culture”.

Socially, the technocratic and professional intelligentsia was not segregated from working people. They usually lived in the same neighbourhood and married each other. Thus the intelligentsia’s engagement with high art influenced the working class as well. Economically, such art was cheap, although access to good places were distributed through patronage networks. Culturally, the population was highly educated. Even in the Soviet time, the distinction between the elite and ordinary people was not made through access to “high culture”, but through access to Western consumerist goods, the enjoyment of which was the monopoly of the elite. While consumerist culture represents the tastes of the new criminal rich class, the “high culture” represents the tastes of the rest of the population.

One of the tragedies experienced by the local people is a process of deculturation due to the collapse of Soviet mass culture. The reasons are primarily economic. Because of the cut in state subsidies, the Soviet apparatus of cultural production, including the Russian film industry, has almost collapsed. This was more evident in cinema and theatre where actors and actresses had to work on advertisements to make a living. And, because of the post-Soviet poverty, most people could not afford to pay for the few programs which were delivered.

The main entertainment was watching foreign soap operas and foreign (or occasionally Russian) action films, which they called *boeviki* . Most people considered *boeviki* to be superficial but entertaining. They engaged more passionately with soap operas. In our neighbourhood six soap operas were watched: *Dynasty*, *Bold and Beautiful (Dikie i Krasivye)*, *Santa Barbara*; *Tropikanka* (Brazilian). *Kassandra* ( from Latin America), and *Novaia Zhertva* ( The New Victim), also from Latin America. People told me about two other Mexican serials like *Prosto Maria* (simply Maria), *bogatye tozhe plachut* (The rich cry too), *Rabynia*

*Izaura* ( *Izaura the Slave*).<sup>17</sup>

The interesting fact was that people liked the Latin American and Brazilian soap operas more than the American ones. They said that the former were more heart-felt (*serdechnye*). The display of intimacy and emotions (particularly between lovers and close relatives) in the Latin American films are much closer to the “structure of feeling” (R. Williams 1981) of the local people. People definitely also preferred the old Soviet films (*staroe sovetskoe kino*), which they described with nostalgia as more humane (*chelovechnoe*), *dushevnyi* (heartfelt) and *serdechnye* (warm, heartfelt, sincere), to any type of foreign films. Besides the significance of consumerism for cultural struggle the dispossessed dismiss it as part of the new wild capitalism.

### **Wild capitalism as an element of the alien**

On an abstract level the transformation of the “free” market has democratised access to goods. People have no need of patronage networks; if someone has the money s/he can buy the goods. But for the majority of Almatians such democracy and egalitarianism has turned out to be a fiction. Because of the new poverty they cannot afford the goods. The dispossessed think foreigners and the local elite, marked by their corrupt alien life style (sexual promiscuity and consumerism) jointly represent the forces which have destroyed the Soviet Union and established the wild capitalism. In this way foreigners, the local new rich, their alleged habits (sexual promiscuity and consumerism), and those social conditions which allegedly underpin their privileged positions such as prostitution, Mafia, , monetisation of life worlds including sexual relations, and privatisation of the state property are lumped together as alien forces of an evil character.

In this sense the new rich are not only excluded from the Soviet *narod* but also depicted as a traitors (*izmenniki*: ). The rich men are accused of contaminating the Soviet authentic culture, propagating alien immoral habits and the destruction of the Soviet Union itself. The significance of this latter allegation must be understood, in the context of a widely held conspiracy theory that the Soviet elite led by Gorbachev conspired with foreigners to destroy the Soviet Union. Perestroika is considered simultaneously as the greatest treason (*izmena*) and the greatest deception (*obman*). Thus, Gorbachev, admired in the West as a great historical figure, was seen as a great traitor (*izmennik*) and a great deceiver (*obmanshchik*). Without doubt Gorbachev was the most hated person among the ordinary people in Almaty. In this sense the negative feelings about the alien were

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<sup>17</sup> For the Brazilian and Latin American names of serials I have used the Russian titles and have translated them literally into English.

articulated to a strong nostalgia for the Soviet time.

### **Summary and conclusions**

The articulation of the overall notion of the evil alien to a strong nostalgia for the past creates a sense of a Soviet *narod* whose homeland is the former Soviet territory. The concepts foreigner, the new rich, sexual promiscuity, prostitution, sexual diseases, authenticity, consumerism, wild capitalism, deception, betrayal, loss of freedom, loss of security, loss of happiness, loss of trust, despair and fear of the future are the main tropes through which such an articulation is shaped.

Both the rejection of the alien and the idealisation of the Soviet past are also reactions to social chaos (*bardak*) ( see chapter 2). They are also part of the dynamics of current ideological “class struggles”. While the new rich use consumerism to alienate the dispossessed from “civilisation”, the dispossessed alienate the rich from the Soviet *narod* by linking their habitus and economic position to alien forces. Money, sexual promiscuity, consumerism and wild capitalism, underpin the privileges of the new rich and also represent the social reality brought about by the post-Soviet change. Thus the negation of such phenomena by the dispossessed evokes a strong romantic image of the Soviet past. From my point of view, this image of the past certainly includes a strong element of forgetting. People are simply unwilling to remember the KGB and economic shortages. Yet we should conclude not from this that people long for the return of a totalitarian political regime or an economy of shortage. No doubt, people are demanding the restoration of the welfare state. However, the distorted image of the Soviet era as a time of happiness, freedom, security, and trust stems primarily from the miseries of the present time and lack of any hope for a better future. Most working people, regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity, believed that they had no future. In the working people’s construction of time the present and future are judged from the vantage point of the Soviet time ( *Sovetskoe vremia* ). It almost seems that time flow has ceased to exist for them since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Recall the assertions of the Kazakh teacher cited in chapter 2: “But now we have nothing. We are corpses. We are moving corpses.”

Paradoxically, by turning their backs on the dark future they expect from wild capitalism and looking backward, people imagine an alternative future which is free of both the evils of the Soviet era and the miseries of the present. Through distorted and romanticised images of the Soviet era people design the contours of a better egalitarian future. While nostalgia becomes an element of utopia, the projection of utopia onto the past provides evidence of its possibility in the future.

In this way people explicitly contrast socialism with capitalism; the former is identified with egalitarianism and the latter is considered as the cause of all the present miseries.

However, the Achilles heel of this egalitarian discourse is its authoritarian attitudes on gender relations. Notions of cultural authenticity defined partly by women modesty perpetuate patriarchal gender relations. The claims of a shared Soviet identity between men and women, when translated into the field of gender, turn partly into men's claims on women's bodies. Women are discouraged from transgressing the rules of modesty. Or they are stigmatised and violated. Paradoxically, the main beneficiaries of such gender ideologies are a group of powerful men who are excluded from the Soviet community by the ordinary people. They cynically use the popular morality to impose their own terms on women. The dispossessed men resort to gendered notions of a Soviet authenticity because the post Soviet change such as unemployment, wage cuts , consumerist culture and sexual promiscuity of rich men, both foreigners and local, undermined their masculinity. This observation points to an important aspect of the relation between masculinity and wealth in the post-Soviet conditions. The post-Soviet Change has undermined the masculinity of the dispossessed men and enhanced that of the rich men.

The fact that all working people hold the elite and foreigners responsible for the present situation is a key factor in preventing large scale ethnic conflicts emerging out of the present chaotic and desperate situation. The intensification of competition between ethnically based networks for resources, and the post-soviet ethnicisation of the state have led to an intensification of ethnic tensions, which will be dealt with in the next chapter. But the scale of such conflicts would be larger and their forms much more violent in the absence of a feeling of common Soviet identity between Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs. For example, while the tensions between Russians and rural Kazakhs migrants represents the peak of ethnic conflicts in Almaty, neither group holds the other responsible for the current situation. Both groups point to the elite. Actually, the rural Kazakhs who are more religious and "traditional" are the most ardent defenders of the Soviet identity because the post-Soviet change has literally ruined their lives.

## ETHNIC TENSIONS

### Introduction

In this chapter I deal merely with ethnic tensions but not with all significant aspects of ethnicity. I do so, because the locals considered ethnic tensions as an element of chaos. These tensions are primarily caused by the fact that ethnically based networking articulated to the Kazakhification of the state is pivotal for the distribution of resources. State institutions themselves are considered as important resources, because accesses to a high post in such an institution provides access to various resources through reciprocal exchange within networks of influence. Indeed, non-Kazakhs blamed Kazakhs for monopolising state posts and places in higher education. Another sphere of contest was urban space, notably apartments and markets. There was not a great competition for jobs in the industrial sector. Owing to the collapse of industry, wage cuts, and salary postponement both migrant and urban Kazakhs were not inclined to work in factories. Thus, in this chapter I explore the Kazakhification of the state and the struggle for urban space.

### Kazakhification of the state

In spite of the fact that Kazakhstan has more than a hundred different nationalities in the both the Soviet and the post-Soviet eras the republic has been primarily associated with Kazakhs. In the Soviet time the Kazakhs were considered as the titular nationality and the republic was named after them. They also enjoyed legal quotas in both higher education and administrative posts. However, the association of the republic with Kazakhs did not create acute problems for non-Kazakhs, because all Kazakhstan's inhabitants were de facto citizens of the Soviet Union. After the dissolution of the USSR, non-Kazakhs can choose to become citizens of the new state or "repatriate" to their own "historical homelands" (*istoricheskaja rodina*)<sup>1</sup>. Most of them are not content with these two alternatives. Aleksander expressed the paradoxical situation of non-Kazakhs in the following way: "Here I am a second class citizen" (*vtoroj sort grazhdanin*) but in Moldova nobody is waiting for me."

The worries of non-Kazakhs are caused by the ritual and administrative Kazakhification of the newly independent state. Firstly, the Kazakh language has been declared in the constitution as the state language (article 7.1, p 7). Secondly,

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<sup>1</sup> Both notions of repatriation and historical homelands are official words. From the point of view of most non-Kazakhs I talked with, both of these terms were misleading because they considered Kazakhstan as their homeland.

the state rituals, holidays and heroes are related to Kazakhs. Thirdly, the names of streets and places have been changed to Kazakh ones and the pictures published on the money are of Kazakhs. Administratively, non-Kazakhs have been systematically purged from the high and middle ranks of the state apparatus and replaced by Kazakhs. Even in an elected organ like parliament, Kazakhs constitute the majority although they were not more than 42% of the total population at the time of the election.

The dominance of Kazakhs in the state institutions is brought under the spot light by the non-Kazakhs. They argue that state officials distribute posts in state institutions, credits and places in higher education among their friends and relatives. On the other hand, non-Kazakhs questioned the legitimacy of such domination by referring to the constitution or to Nazarbaev's speeches, which associate the state with the people of Kazakhstan (*narod Kazakhstana*) and not merely Kazakhs.

Theoretically, the Constitution identifies the state with the people of Kazakhstan. However, in spite of this, both the the constitutional status of the Kazakh language and the preface to the constitution open possibilities for an interpretation which may award Kazakhs a privileged position. The Constitution begins:

"We, people of Kazakhstan (*Narod Kazakhstana*),  
united by a common historical destiny,  
creating a statehood on the primordial Kazakh land (*iskonnoi Kazakhskoi zemle*).  
Conceiving ourselves as a peace loving civic society, devoted to the  
ideals of freedom, equality and consent,  
Wishing to occupy a deserved place in the world's association,  
realising our, high responsibility in front of present and future generations,  
proceeding from our sovereign right,  
accept this genuine constitution."

(Translated by the author from constitution, 1995: 3) (Emphasis added).

The identification of the state with the people of Kazakhstan, as distinct from the Kazakh ethnic category, is counterbalanced in the prelude to the constitution by the inclusion of the phrase "on the Kazakh primordial land". Such inconsistencies and ambiguities, which correspond to both the real domination of Kazakhs in the state and its nominal identification with all ethnic groups, characterise the relation between the state and ethnicity in Kazakhstan. They are interpreted differently by Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs. From the Kazakh point of view the primordial

association of the state territory with them is interpreted to mean that non-Kazakhs should accept Kazakh hegemony in the state if they want to stay in Kazakhstan. For example, a Kazakh colleague claimed that ethnic discrimination did not exist in Kazakhstan. I asked him: “ Why, then, are 75% of students in this university Kazakhs?”

“Because” , he answered, “we are in Kazakhstan. If we were in Russia or Uzbekistan, then 75% would be Russians or Uzbeks.”

Non-Kazakhs interpret this ambiguity in a different way. They reject the Kazakhs primordial claims on the state territory by resorting to a constructionist concept of homeland (see below) and depict Kazakhs as usurpers of state power. Moreover, they blame the current chaos on Kazakhs’ assumed corruption, ignorance, irresponsibility, laziness and tribal anarchy in running the country. Let us take the example of a Russian family in my neighbourhood.

The father is 44 years old and works in a power station. The mother is 40 and works as an engineer, but her factory works at half capacity, and so she works half time and is paid half. The daughter is 21, married, and studies French at my university. Her husband is a student as well and lives with the family. Although none of them are “pure” Russian they see themselves as Russians. All of them told me that the Kazakh elite discriminated against Russians.

The father said that people were afraid of speaking of the discrimination in official circles. When I asked him whether his Kazakh colleague had nationalist attitudes towards him, he answered: “No, they are helpless like me. Only those in high positions (*na verkho* ) have the power to discriminate. Kazakhs discriminate not only against Russians but against other Kazakhs as well. They come from three different Zhuz who struggle against each other.”

Then his son-in-law said: “Kazakhs have large families and lots of relatives. Once one of them gets to a high post, he will give all the good jobs to his own relatives.” According to him, the most attractive jobs were in the state apparatus because of the opportunity of taking bribes.

The mother in the family said:

Each Kazakh comes with a lamb on his shoulder from the *Auls* here, bribes another Kazakh at a university with the lamb and gets a place. Then he gives them some more lambs and buys a red diploma. When he has the diploma his father gives some more lambs to another Kazakh and he gets a job for him. But he cannot do the job, because he has not got the knowledge. What he does is sit there and take bribes (*vziatki*).

Her daughter said:

to be admitted at the university one either must get five on all parts of the entry examination or pay a high fee around US\$5000 each year. I had to pass exams in writing, reading, speaking and retelling a story which I heard from a tape recorder. I got five in the first three parts. In the fourth part

the sound was so low I could hardly hear it. I told to the examiner, who was a Russian woman, that the sound was low. She answered that the sound was very good and that I should listen carefully. As I was not able to hear adequately, I failed to tell the story in a good way. She gave me a 2. She was discriminating against me.

I interrupted: "Why? Wasn't she a Russian?" She replied:

Yes, but she was afraid for her own position. She tried to strengthen her own position by pleasing Kazakhs. Then I turned to the examination committee and said: 'I have got 5 from the other parts! Is it logical that I have got 2 from the listening?' They said no and let me listen again. The sound was still low, but I managed to get 4. But as they knew that I deserved more, they gave a 5 and I entered. The Kazakhs were treated differently. For example, when I was passing the writing part a Kazakh girl used a dictionary and had her books with her, which is against the rules.

Such complaints from non-Kazakhs were widespread. A student of mine, a Tatar woman married to a Kazakh, wrote an essay on ethnic discrimination in Kazakhstan. She read the essay in class and then we discussed it. The central point in her argument was that Kazakhs discriminated against others in the public sector, while in the newly created private sector ethnic discrimination was less due to the logic of profitability (rationality) and the considerable presence of non-Kazakhs in the sector. She suggested that the management of the private firms employed people because of their skills, not ethnicity. All the students, even Kazakhs, agreed with her.

Kazakhs were also blamed for distributing credits among themselves (see chapter 2). An old woman in the neighbourhood told me: "They borrow money from abroad and then the money disappears without trace. They give it to their relatives." Pointing to her two granddaughters, she said: "My grandchildren must pay this money in future."

I began to speak with my Kazakh friends and acquaintances about the non-Kazakh accusations. All of them confirmed that Kazakhs had a monopoly over state power. But they argued the real power lay with networks of the Kazakh elite and that the majority of Kazakhs were more dispossessed than any other ethnic group. For instance Saken, who worked with his wife in another Kazakh's kiosk, accepted that the leadership in Kazakhstan consisted of Kazakhs, but argued that majority of Kazakhs were among the poorest people of the country. He said:

Look around for yourself. Russians and others who complain that we Kazakhs are nationalists have apartments and cars. But the majority of Kazakhs have nothing. I have been seven years in Almaty, and I still live in a dormitory (*obshchezhitie*). I have no car. Russians say we Kazakhs are lazy. You see yourself, Anora and I work even at nights, but we cannot save any money. Almaty is a Russian city, most of the Kazakhs here are students, or migrants (*priezzhie*) who either live in dormitories or rent rooms from the urban people. In the auls these people come from, people are starving (*golodaiut*). Don't think that everywhere in Kazakhstan people live like in Almaty. In the auls life is much more difficult, people survive only on bread and tea and children walk around



without shoes.

Roslan, another Kazakh and the owner of one of the kiosks in the neighbourhood, persistently criticised the Kazakh elite's corruption and nepotism. Yet he shared Saken's opinion that the majority of non-Kazakhs, particularly Russians, were much better off than the majority of Kazakhs. While admitting that the state resources were in the hands of the Kazakh elite, he argued that Russians, Tatars, Jews and Koreans dominated the private large trading sector. According to him, most of the wholesale shops, which sold goods to retailers like him, belonged to Russians, Tatars and Jews. And most of the casinos belonged to Koreans. The first three groups, he suggested, knew people in Russia ( the Jews also in Israel), who provided them with goods and credits. The Koreans were supported by South Korea. But Kazakhs had none of these advantages. Moreover, he said, most Kazakhs have grown up in the auls and lack necessary language skills to get a job in the private sector. Their Russian is not good enough, and unlike Russians, Jews and Tatars they have no knowledge of foreign languages<sup>2</sup>. Kazakhs also lack the professional skills which are necessary to compete with Russians in the labour market created by the new private sector. He mentioned the multi-national in which our Russian friend Nikolaevich was working. Their average salary, he said, is \$500, ten times more than the average salary of a university teacher. All of them are Russian, but they still complain that Kazakhs take every thing for themselves<sup>3</sup> .

The Kazakhification of the state has led to a widespread, albeit mostly unorganised and still passive resistance among both non-Kazakhs and the majority of Kazakhs against the Kazakh elite. However, such resistance is manifested differently by Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs. While non-Kazakhs oppose the very project of the Kazakhification, Kazakhs question the particular ways Kazakhification has been carried through. A relatively successful example of such resistance by the urban population was in the sphere of language policy (see below). Another example of such resistance was the very low participation of non-Kazakhs in the state rituals, the most important of which during my stay was the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Abai Kunanbaev's birthday. In the

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<sup>2</sup> He did not consider Russian a foreign language.

<sup>3</sup> Actually, I visited the work place several times. All people who were working there were Russians with the exception of a half Uzbek half Tatar woman and a Chechen man. Once, sitting in Nicolaevich's office and drinking tea with him and a Russian colleague of his, I told them, teasing, "you Russians get \$500 here while my Kazakh colleagues at university earn only \$50, and you still call Kazakhs nationalists." His colleague, smiling, told me the \$50 is their nominal salary. Their real incomes (dokhodi) come from bribes they receive from students and is much higher than our salaries. I teased them further: "Why have you not got a Kazakh here?" Nicolaevich, smiling, told me "because they are lazy, they do not like work hard, they prefer to sit in a governmental office and collect bribes."

neighbourhood I found very few non-Kazakhs enthusiastic about the celebration. As Abai was famous as a representative of cosmopolitanism, no one opposed his anniversary as such. But most non-Kazakhs shared the opinion of a young Ukrainian woman : “Why should Nazarbaev spend so much money on celebrations while the majority of our people live in poverty.” The third example of such resistance was that people usually refused to use the new Kazakh street names. This was so widespread that although I learned the new Kazakh names of the streets , I now remember Almaty’s main streets by old names like Lenina, Kirova, Dzerzhinskaia, Komsomol'skaia and Kommunisticheskaia. Not only Russians were frustrated by the name change but even non-Kazakh Muslims. An Uigur electrician who lived in the neighbourhood told me that he had found a temporary job in Dzerzhinsky street. I asked him for the new name of the street. He answered:

I don't know. Why they should change these names? They say because they were communists. It is not true. They changed the names because they were not Kazakhs. Zhambyl<sup>4</sup> and Kunaev<sup>5</sup> were communists also, but their names have not been removed because they were Kazakhs.

The most important form of such resistance is that the majority of people question the identity of the new state. The elite have refashioned the notion of the Kazakhstani people (*Narod Kazakhstana*) and identify the state with it. Such a strategy , according to a local Russian intellectual, is directed towards three goals: to achieve a legitimacy for the elite, to create a notion of a break with the Soviet past, and to prevent the ethnic conflicts through the idea that Kazakhstan belongs to all its inhabitants and not merely Kazakhs.

Although the notion of the People of Kazakhstan appeals to the population the ways they use it challenge the Kazakh elite’s use.

Firstly, people used the notion to locate the people who inhabit Kazakhstan in the wider concept of the Soviet people. In this sense the *Narod Kazakhstana* is understood as a sub-division of *Sovetskii narod*.. A woman Kazakh student said “When we meet foreigners ( *inostrantsev*), we are *Sovetskii narod*, but when we meet people from Russia ( *liudi iz Rossii*) we are *Kazakhsatnis (Kazakhstantsy)*.” This statement illustrates in more than one way how the locals construct the concept of the *narod Kazakhstana*. Firstly, it constructs the two versions of Peoplehood in relation to foreigners and in relation to people from Russia. Secondly, the People of Russia and those of Kazakhstan are implicitly included in the wider Soviet people. Thirdly, the image of the people of Kazakhstan is constructed in contrast to that of people from Russia (*Liudi iz Rossii*), not ethnic Russians (*Russkii*). Why is the

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<sup>4</sup> A Kazakh poet.

<sup>5</sup> The general secretary of the communist party in Kazakhstan (1962- 1986).

Kazakhsani territorial identity constructed in contrast to Russia and not another post-Soviet republic? To be sure, people have the same feelings of identity and difference towards other post-Soviet republics, with the exception of the three Baltic republics, but Russia plays a central role in their imagination. Moscow was, and is, considered to be the centre. People strongly believed that what happened in Moscow determined their fate. This was illustrated by the extraordinary attention they paid to the two rounds of presidential elections in 1996 in Russia rather than the referendum on the constitution and the election of the Mejlis (parliament) in Kazakhstan. The majority of the people in the neighbourhood, regardless of ethnicity, watched ORT (Russian state television) and NTV, both broadcast from Moscow rather than the Kazakhstan national television. They read widely Moscow's newspapers like *Argumenty i fakty*. Moreover, Moscow and St. Petersburg are still centres of cultural inspiration, particularly for urban Kazakhs. "Leningrad and Moscow", said a woman Kazakh university teacher, "are our Mecca and Medina." Patterns of art, fashion, music, Mafia and business which are fashioned in Moscow are imitated in Almaty.

Secondly, the phrase *narod Kazakhstana* also denotes the dispossessed people who are assumed to suffer from the Mafia, the corrupt elite and the *dikii kapitalism*. In this context people (*narod*) is the opposite of the elite which people call interchangeably the leadership (*rokovodstvo, nachal'stvo*), bosses (*nachal'niki*), they (*oni*), the top (*verkh*) and the new rich (*novye bogatye*).

These two uses of the concept of *narod Kazakhstana* by the ordinary people are different from those used by the elite in two senses: They represent a continuity with the past through integrating the Kazakhsani identity in the Soviet identity, and they represent a break with the elite through opposing the *narod* to the elite, Mafia and the new rich. In this way they question the ways the elite construct the very identity of the new state.

The Kazakhification of the state and the ways it has been carried out hamper an identification between the state and the *narod*, imagined from below. Kazakhification of the state, most Kazakhs told me, has alienated not only non-Kazakhs but also most Kazakhs as well. The state has been monopolised in the name of the Kazakhs by tiny, yet very powerful, rival networks of the Kazakh elite who were the high echelons of the former communist party (*partikraty*). They have expanded their old power base by converting to the new market orthodoxy and by restructuring the old state apparatus. The main characteristic of this restructuring is that it happened through the rivalries, horse trading and clandestine deals between the networks of the old Kazakh communist elite, not through a democratic process

(Masanov 1996a).

In spite of the constitution and elections the new state has strong authoritarian tendencies (Bremmer & Welt 1996; Olcott 1997). In this sense not only the non-Kazakhs but even majority of Kazakhs have been excluded from the state. In Almaty, both urban Kazakhs and rural migrants complained about the elite monopoly of the state. The main concern of urban Kazakhs was the language policy (discussed below). The economic life of the rural migrants had been ruined by the collapse of the Soviet economy, and they complained the elite did nothing to help them. One of the main reasons for the widespread resentment against the Kazakhfication of the state is that a wide range of people link it to so called privatisation of the state property (chapter 2). There is a widely shared opinion among people that those networks which are linked to state officials and Mafia have monopolised the main resources on such a scale that the resources left for the rest of the population are hardly sufficient for survival. It is argued that those who have links with Mafia and the state officials manage to get rich. The rest are starved and bullied by both the state officials and Mafia.

Those who see themselves as underprivileged by this processes, understand it in two different ways . Underprivileged Kazakhs of both urban and rural origin attribute it to the corruption of the elite and their links with Mafia. Non-Kazakhs, particularly Russians, recognise that the majority of Kazakhs are excluded as well, but associate it rhetorically with Kazakhs in general. The reason for this is that non-Kazakhs think that even the dispossessed Kazakhs benefit from the state language policy and the support of the state officials in their disputes with non-Kazakhs over urban space. In the following I will deal with these issues.

### ***The Language policy***

A prime concern with the revival of ethnic languages (*rodnoi iazyk*) was a common feature of the national movements instigated by glasnost'. In Kazakhstan such concerns, expressed by Kazakh intellectuals like the poet Solemenov, acquired a new urgency after Independence. Although knowledge of the Kazakh language did not become a precondition for acquiring citizenship in the new state it became a formal precondition for getting or keeping a job in the state sector. In the beginning the Kazakh elite intended to force the population to learn the language in a short time. But three major problems prevented the success of a short term program: the lack of the necessary infrastructure, the lack of economic incentives and political resistance.

Although Kazakh schools existed in the Soviet time and in the universities

one had the option of studying in Kazakh, the Kazakh language had been ousted by the Russian language in Almaty. Although Kazakh schools dominated rural areas, the experiences was hardly adaptable to Almaty, because both books and teachers were orientated to a Kazakh speaking population. In Almaty, the main language of communication at home and at work is Russian, even for the overwhelming majority of Kazakhs. Kazakh is taught as a second language with the help of Russian. There are no good books, good dictionaries or trained teachers for this purpose. Surprisingly, although the Kazakh language has become one of the main emblems of the state, the elite do not invest enough money to improve its infrastructure. The lack of good teachers and good books make learning it very difficult. Many Kazakhs who put their children in Kazakh schools, had to transfer them to Russian schools. The reason was that insufficient language skills made the overall performance of the children worse than those in Russian schools (Dave 1996).

In addition to the lack of good infrastructure, the lack of practical incentives is another factor which discourages people from learning Kazakh. While Russian functions as the daily language and the knowledge of English and other foreign languages brings economic advantages, the majority of people have no practical incentives to learn Kazakh. Although a sufficient knowledge of Kazakh is a precondition for occupying high administrative posts, such knowledge in itself does not entitle someone to such posts, because they are monopolised and distributed by the elite.

The resistance of the urban population, including the urban Kazakhs, to the state language policy also hindered its short term success. The Slavic people were the most ardent opponents of the policy, because they considered it a challenge to their cultural hegemony in the city and part of the wider process of Kazakhfication. Their attitudes are well illustrated by what a young Ukrainian woman, a student of German, said :

My husband says the Kazakh language is a dead language. It has no future, so why should we waste our time to learn a language which is of no use to anybody. When Nazarbaev ordered us to learn the language, neither I nor my husband nor my younger sister paid any attention. We said to each other, if we learn a new language we will learn English or German, or another European language. But my mother was forced to go to Kazakh classes, because otherwise she would lose her position as a chair in the faculty of.. . But it was so difficult for her to learn the language. She said that the language is not beautiful, it sounds strange. It is a very backward (*ne razvityi*) language which cannot accommodate modern times. Kazakhs force it on us to prove they are the masters here.

People of Slavic origin were the core of the opposition to the new status of the Kazakh language, but other urban people, including urban Kazakhs, contested

this also. The language of most urban people is Russian, and so they assumed the new language policy would discriminate against them. A Korean university teacher expressed this discontent in the following way:

In the Soviet time 50% of places at the universities were given to Kazakhs and 50% to others. But today 80% of places are given to Kazakhs. You can see this in your own university. The Kazakh sections alone take 50% for Kazakhs. Then from the 50% which are devoted to the Russian section 30% is taken by Kazakhs and the rest is left for others.”

Urban Kazakh attitudes to the language policies are more contradictory, varied, and complex than among other groups. They simultaneously benefit and lose. Their ethnic identity combined with their very low knowledge of the Kazakh language entitle them to privileged positions in the state apparatus. Purging of non-Kazakhs from the high and middle ranks of the state, under the condition that Russian remains the main language in state institutions and life in general, has provided vacant places for urban Kazakhs who command the Russian language well. But at the same time, there are complaints that the Kazakh elite use Kazakh language status as a pretext for monopolising the top posts for their own relatives. Such complains are made because Russian has become the mother tongue of the urban Kazakhs and their knowledge of Kazakh is below the required level for the top posts in the state. So the urban Kazakhs have a dual position. Confronted with Russians they lean on their claims of knowledge on the Kazakh language to justify their own privileges. But they are unhappy at being deprived of the most powerful offices because of their insufficient knowledge of Kazakh.

The emotional relation of urban Kazakhs to the Kazakh and Russian languages is very complex and contradictory. While many of them regret their lack of knowledge of the Kazakh language and blame it on the Russians’ alleged colonial policies, they are more attached emotionally to the Russian language. For example, I was invited to a small family party given by the Kazakh mother of one my students. She invited her older sister and her family and two men with their families who were her cousins. This woman had complained on earlier occasions that because of the Russians’ colonial policies they had lost their mother tongue. But during the party, they spoke in Russian all the time and gave their toasts in Russian , and once they got drunk both men and women sang Russian songs for a long time.

In my university department only two people talked in Kazakh together. When these two addressed others in Kazakh, the latter answered in Russian. Two of my classes, each with 16 male and female Kazakh students, belonged to the Kazakh section. In the Kazakh section, Kazakh was the formal language of instruction. But

to my surprise the students, with the exception of two girls who came from Shymkent and Kyzylorda, spoke Russian to each other and all of their teachers, most of whom were Kazakh, also taught them in Russian. I asked the students in one class, "If you don't speak Kazakh and your teachers do not teach you in Kazakh, why have you joined the Kazakh section at all?" A male student from Almaty, jokingly answered: "Because we Kazakhs are smart(*khitrye*). While the rest of class burst into laughter, I asked him, to explain it to me. He said:

We want to have as many Kazakhs as possible in the Russian section. But there are others who want to have places there as well, so we keep half of the places for the Kazakh section. In addition, it is good to have in your diploma that you have finished in the Kazakh section. It will help to get a better job in the future.

Then I asked the class whether the rest agreed with him. They agreed. I then asked, "Why then don't you speak Kazakh?" The whole class went quiet. Then the girl from Shymkent, one of two girls who spoke in Kazakh, interrupted the silence by saying "They are ashamed of speaking Kazakh." I asked others whether she was correct in her judgment. After another moment of silence, a young married woman from Almaty, with an apologetic and embarrassed voice, said: "Young people in Almaty do not speak Kazakh because they are afraid of being called *luzhanin* (Southerner)." The word for Kazakh men<sup>6</sup> from the south who are supposed to command the Kazakh language and have preserved the Kazakh "traditions"(*traditsiia*) is a very strong social stigma in Almaty(see below). Depicting the Kazakh language as a stigma is a Soviet legacy. The Russian language was associated with civilisation, progress and urbanisation and the Kazakh was depicted as a backward tribal language (*ne razvityi kochevoi iazyk*). A woman Kazakh student of mine who had recently learned the Kazakh language with enthusiasm said :

My mother remembers often with regret, how I spoke Kazakh sweetly when I was a little girl and how she encouraged me to forget it. After staying two years with my grandmother in the *aul* from the age of two, my parents took me back to Almaty. My mother says, that I had learned to speak Kazakh beautifully in the *aul*, because there every body spoke in Kazakh. But she became embarrassed and ashamed when I spoke Kazakh with her in shops or other places, so she discouraged me from speaking Kazakh."

The continuity of stigma in Almaty indicates Russian cultural hegemony. Although this cultural hegemony, does not result in either political or economic hegemony it still provides a basis for Russians and other non-Kazakhs to feel at home in Almaty, in spite of the Kazakhification of the state. Yet as mentioned above the constituency of the Russian language does not consist merely of Russians but almost the majority of the urban population. This has led to the emergence of a new

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<sup>6</sup> The equivalent word for women is luzhanka.

concept of *Russko iazychnoe naselenie* (Russian speaking population) in the language of journalists and intellectuals who challenge the Kazakhification of the state<sup>7</sup>. The concept signifies a block of population united with the common political interests of defending the rights of the Russian Speaking Population (RSP) against the Kazakhification. Although the term had not yet been popularised among ordinary people, it corresponds to their feelings of sharing a common cause against the state language policy on the one hand and the migrant Kazakhs from the rural areas on the other.

Because of the effective resistance of the RSP the elite made some substantial concessions. Firstly, they have practically abandoned their initial demand that every body should learn the Kazakh language at a stroke or lose their job. Secondly, the constitution declared the Russian language (article 7.2, p 7, 1995) the official language of the republic, while Kazakh still preserves its higher status as the state language. The higher ritual status of the Kazakh language is counterbalanced by the Russian dominance in practice. When Nazarbaev began to address the people of Kazakhstan in Kazakh in New Year Eve, 1996, on the Kazakh national TV a Russian man said: "He will speak only five minutes in Kazakh, then he will speak half an hour in Russian."

However, we should not conclude from these concessions that the Kazakh elite have abandoned their long term project of making Kazakh the first language in the daily life. This is clear from what two members of the elite, a director of a prestigious institute of Academy of Science and the rector of a prestigious university told me. Both men were very optimistic about the future of the Kazakh language. The director of the institute told me that the number of Kazakh schools had grown rapidly since independence and will be increased even more rapidly in the coming years. He was of opinion that as Kazakhs put more and more of their children in Kazakh schools, the infrastructure will be improved. He mentioned the massive Kazakh migration to Almaty from the *aul* and the Russian out migration, the higher birth rate among Kazakhs and the fact that Kazakh population has a much lower average age than the Russian one encourage the future success of Kazakh. "If you" he said "had come to Almaty ten years ago you could not hear anybody speaking Kazakh. But today you hear it every where in the bazaars and the streets. And ten years later the situation will be much more better."

The rector added two points to his argument. Firstly, the urban Kazakhs have already been warned that the present situation will not be tolerated in future. "Today the ministers speak Kazakh, but under them there are still many who do not

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<sup>7</sup> I learned the concept and its meaning from N. Masanov, a Kazakh social scientist, in an interview I had with him.



speak Kazakh properly. This situation will not be tolerated a generation on. If their children want to make good careers then they must learn Kazakh.” Secondly, he admitted that they try discriminate positively in admission to universities in favour of Kazakh speakers. He hopes that through such policies Kazakh will replace Russian within a generation or two .

This has created a great fear among the Russian speaking population for the future of their children. They suspect that the lack of knowledge of Kazakh will disadvantage them in future.

As the director of the Institute said, the constituency of the Kazakh language is not merely the Kazakh elite but Kazakh migrants from the south and Kazakhs who live in rural area and southern parts of Kazakhstan. As I did not carry out any field-work among the Rural Kazakhs my discussion will be confined to migrant Kazakhs from the rural areas and the south.

Prior to perestroika the migration of Kazakhs from the rural area to the cities was almost negligible. This was partly because Kazakhs preferred to stay in the rural areas with their kith and kin, and partly because of difficulties getting residential permission ( *propiska*). However, as a result of the economic policies which accompanied perestroika, Kazakh Kolkhozes began to stagnate and disintegrate, so that many of those who worked there were forced to migrate to cities to survive. In addition to economic migrants, the students from rural areas and repatriated Kazakhs from other countries, came to Almaty. The influx of these Kazakh speaking Kazakhs into Almaty has introduced a new cultural element and has caused a new social conflict.

Both the presence of Kazakh people and the Kazakh language and “culture” are asserted more strongly than before. A Russian woman complained:” Almaty has become a Kazakh city. If you take a bus, the majority of travellers are Kazakhs, before perestroika you seldom heard people talk Kazakh, but today you hear it every where.” The presence of migrant Kazakhs in Almaty has caused conflicts over apartments and control of public urban space.

### ***Contest over apartments***

The apartments had been privatised in 1992. Kazakh migrants who were often the tenants of the urban Russian speakers, were discontented with this. Before privatisation the state provided apartments, but now they had to purchase their own apartments. One of the main aims of the young women who were involved in prostitution, discussed in chapter 4, was to buy their own apartments. The rural Kazakhs thought that the privatisation of apartments privileged Russians.

Saber, mentioned in chapter 5, who was a tenant of a Russian family said: "Russians have rooms for their dogs but Kazakhs have no place to live." Indeed, he left the Russian family because their dog gave birth to puppies and Saber did not like the smell. He added, "In the Soviet time they kept us Kazakhs in kolkhozes and the Russians occupied apartments in the cities, and now they have become the owners of apartments." Anora, a kiosk seller, who had lived for seven years with her husband in a student dormitory, told me, "This is our land (*nasha zemlia*) Russians must leave for Russia and leave apartments for Kazakhs."

Moreover, migrant Kazakh tenants complained that Russians and other urban people exploited them by charging high rents. Saber, whose landlord was an unemployed and alcoholic Russian, complained: " I pay \$ 50 a month to this Russian alcoholic (*alkash*), I feed him and his family. This is half my income ."

On the other hand, non-Kazakhs see Kazakh migrants as a threat to their ownership. The Uzbek women mentioned in chapter 3 had bought an apartment for her mother, but the mother went to live in Vladivostok with another daughter who was married to a Russian. She wanted to rent the apartment to a friend of mine. Showing me the steel door she said: " I changed the door, because Kazakhs are looking for empty apartments. When they find one they break in, and then it is difficult to throw them out without paying large bribes to judges." Although Non-Kazakhs rented rooms to Kazakhs, they were usually unwilling to rent a whole apartment to them. A Russian family rented an empty apartment for \$130 to a foreigner, but avoided renting it to a young Kazakh man who was prepared to pay \$200. When I asked why, the son told me: "If you rent an apartment to Kazakhs, firstly you are not sure they will pay the rent, and secondly you are not sure that they will leave the apartment when you need it." Aleksander, mentioned in chapter 3, told a story about a dispute between a Russian colleague of his and his Kazakh tenants who resisted leaving the apartment. As the subject had been brought to a court, the Russian man was fined \$1200 for not having paid the taxes for the rents received. As he could not afford to pay so such money, while Kazakhs were still living in the apartment, he was given a deadline by the tax authorities to get the money, or his apartment would be confiscated. Again a half Kazakh and half Russian woman rented her mother's apartment, who had left for Russia, to a Kazakh family. They avoided paying rent for three months, because of lack of money. She evicted them with help of another Kazakh man.

### ***The contest for control of public places***

Let us start with a detailed example:

It was the evening of June 26 1996. After writing my diary notes in a Turkish cafe in the centre of the city, I returned to my neighbourhood. But instead of going home to my own apartment I went to the neighbourhood shashlyk bar. The Azarbaijani girl who had closed her bread kiosk and was ready to go home greeted me and asked for the time. I greeted her and said: "Half past ten." Then the girl while greeting an old Russian woman who lived in the neighbourhood and sold things in the evening on the pavement, handed to her a loaf of bread. Expressing her gratitude, the old woman embraced her and kissed her face. While most of the street traders had already gone home, some were still packing up their things. Very few still tried to sell. Passing by one of the kiosks, I greeted the Kazakh woman inside. Greeting me, she asked: "Where have you been so late?" "My apartment", I answered, "was hot. I went to a cafe in the centre to write my notes."

Then I went around to the second Kiosk and turned up into the platform of the Shashlyk bar. Nikolaevich, an acquaintance of mine, a little intoxicated, was sitting with another young Russian man, whom I had not seen before, drinking vodka and talking. Seeing me, Nikolaevich shouted as usual: "Khelo my friend! khow are you? Come here and have a drink." When I joined them, Nikolaevich introduced his companion to me, as Kolia. Kolia, was younger than Nikolaevich and completely drunk. Nikolaevich was talking about a dispute with the blood bank concerning a car accident. Just a few metres from us a young Kazakh man, who had arrived two weeks before from Zhambyl, was preparing shashlyk. Saber was standing with his arms around Madina, chatting with her and the young Kazakh.

While Nikolaevich was talking, an older Russian man approached us and asked for cigarettes. Handing him a cigarette, Nikolaevich shouted in a friendly way: "Oh, Iura where have you been?" But Kolia, who did not like the old man or did not like him asking for cigarettes, suddenly raised himself and tried to assault the old man. Iura ran away. Nikolaevich turning towards Kolia, snapped: "Calm down." But Kolia, paying no attention to Nikolaevich, chased, caught and began to abuse Iura physically, but mildly. The young Kazakh who was preparing shashlyk ran to help Iura. Approaching them, he aggressively ordered Kolia: "Don't bother him". Kolia, without saying anything, obeyed him like a school child, and let Iura go and came back to our table. Nikolaevich blamed him and told him: "Go and bring Iura back

here." Kolia went to bring Iura but Iura would not come. Nikolaevich went himself and brought Iura to our table. Nikolaevich, said, "Jakob you write about people, write about Iura's life. For two years he has been homeless (bomzh)." Iura, offended by being called a *bomzh*, protested: "No, I lived with my cousin." Nikolaevich, paying no attention to Iura's protest, told us the story of how Iura had been a famous sportsman but was thrown out of his house by his wife and her lover, who sold the apartment and moved to Russia.

Meanwhile Saber and Madina were joined by another Kazakh street trader from the south and moved to a table not far from us. They opened a bottle of Vodka. Five southern Kazakh men, who were usually described by other men and women as hooligans or racketeers arrived by car. They parked the car in the corner of the square, sat at a table, opened two bottles of vodka and ordered shashlyk.

Kolia went to the nearby kiosk and bought a bottle of vodka for himself, Nikolaevich and Iura and a can of cola for me. While Nikolaevich was opening the bottle, Kolia took my arm and pointed at the table of five Kazakhs. Laughing, he said: "Look he fell off the chair!" I turned and saw one of the Kazakhs who rose up from the floor and managed his chair. But I did not stare and quickly turned my face away. After two minutes the man who fell down approached our table and with a polite but a cunning voice said: "*Tovarishch* (comrade, fellow) when I fell down you laughed at me. I want to have some words with you." Then he took Kolia's hand and raised him from his seat and the latter followed him obediently. The Kazakh brought him to the middle of the bar, stood face to face with him and spoke for only a minute, very calmly. Kolia paralysed and bewildered kept quiet. Suddenly, the Kazakh grabbed his neck and tried to throw him on the floor. Kolia resisted but defensively. Within a second the Kazakh threw him on the floor and began to kick him wildly in the face. Suddenly three of the four remaining men from the visiting Kazakhs' table rushed towards them. The fourth remained there and watched. I thought they wanted to stop their friend but instead they joined him in kicking Kolia. In addition to them Saber and his male companion rushed towards the scene and took part in kicking Kolia as well, while Madina, Saber's lover remained at the table watching. Then the young Kazakh man who worked there rushed to stop them. But, confronted with the aggressive reaction of the man who had been offended by

Kolia he retreated to his shashlyk place. While the six men were kicking Kolia violently and indiscriminately all over his body, he suddenly became unconscious and motionless. The six Kazakhs continued to kick him. The older Kazakh sitting at the table and watching intervened by coming forward and suddenly shouting "Stop." All the men stopped at once, and went to their respective tables, leaving Kolia unconscious and bloodstained on the floor.

Nikolaevich and I did not intervene because we were afraid of the Kazakhs. Nikolaevich pretended that nothing had happened and told me: "Interview Iura, his life is a good case." Then proceed to tell me: "Iura became homeless..", But Iura interrupted him: "I have never been homeless." Nikolaevich said: "Then tell me why did you live the whole winter in the barracks?" Iura answered: "Because I had a conflict with my wife." He took out a bunch of keys from his pocket, showed them to us and said: "Here are my keys." Nikolaevich, pointing to the crystal rectangular key-holder, told me with a joking tone: "Look Jakob, this is his credit card." Neither of us liked his joke. Although Nikolaevich did not intended to insult Iura, he was patronising him. According to the local norms he should not have called him by his first name in the first place, but by the first name and patronymic, because Iura was older than him. Moreover, he should not have talked about Iura's life so nonchalantly. While we were speaking Saber came to our table and ordered Iura: "Come with me." Iura, without protest, followed him to the place where Kolia was still lying unconscious. Saber ordered Iura to take Kolia's legs. When the latter refused to do so, the former punching him in the face shouted angrily: "Mother- fucker (*tvoiu mat*) do what I say." Iura, intimidated, took Kolia's legs and Saber took his arms and they pulled him from the middle of the platform to the foot of the wall into the darkness. Saber obviously did not want the police to see Kolia. Then Iura returned to our table and Saber to his. Then Saber began to stare angrily at Nicolaevich. As he had a good relation with me I called him to our table. He greeted me in his humble and friendly way. I greeted him back. Then, pointing to Kolia, who was still unconscious, he asked me: "Is he your friend?) "No", I said, "but please be calm." He agreed. Saber went back to his table.

Then, after a while, Iura for some reason went to Kolia who was still lying there motionless. He took Kolia's hand in his

and tried to help him get up. After a while Kolia, recovered and, humiliated by Kazakhs, jumped on Iura and began to beat him. While Iura lay under him trying to resist, nobody went to separate them. Kolia continued to punch Iura. Iura took hold of Kolia's hair and pulled. Kolia was not able to punch any more, so put his hands around Iura's neck and tried to strangle him. At this point, the oldest Kazakh at the hooligans table went to separate them. The Kazakh man took Kolia's shoulders and tried to pull him back, but he resisted and still had Iura's throat in his hands. Finally the Kazakh held onto Kolia's wrist and twisted his arm hard. Kolia released Iura's throat. Iura, feeling somebody was helping him, kicked Kolia in the chest and got up. While Kolia fell down again on the floor, Iura came to our table and began to drink from the Vodka which Kolia had bought earlier. Then another young Russian man, an acquaintance of me and Nikolaevich, joined us. The Kazakh man who seemed to be the leader of the gang of five told him with an imperative voice: "Come here! (*idi siuda*)." The Russian man humbly obeyed him at once and went to their table.

In this cruel human drama, different actors and spectators, outline some of the main characteristics of the contest for control of public urban space in Almaty. The roles played by each represent their respective force to negotiate their positions in the field of power relations in a particular place. Firstly, this control is negotiated through and backed up by the use of brute force. Secondly, the struggle for the control over urban space is the business of men. This is illustrated clearly by Madina's behaviour. While the men acted in the different moments of the drama, Madina remained a pure spectator. Thirdly, ethnicity is very important in this struggle. Through such struggle the dominant masculinities are articulated to a dominant Kazakh ethnicity, and both are reconfirmed. Fourthly, status, wealth and connections with influential individuals play very important roles in such a struggle.

Let us have a closer look at the ways these factors conditioned the degree and significance of each person's intervention.

Kolia, by assaulting Iura, transgressed the important local custom that a person must respect those senior in age. However, Iura's marginal status as a homeless person made Kolia's conduct less reprehensible. Iura's lack of respectability was also evident in the way Nikolaevich treated him. Moreover, the fact that Iura was a Russian made him an easy target for Kolia: his insult to Iura was considered an interpersonal affair. If Iura had been a Kazakh, Kolia would never have dared either

to bother him, or would have paid a high price. We saw his assumed assault later on a Kazakh provoked a collective Kazakh reaction.

The facts that Kolia turned down Nikolaevich's mediation between him and Iura, but obeyed the young Kazakh who prepared Shashlyk, illustrates the same logic. If he had refused the Kazakh's order, the latter would have punched him and other Kazakhs would have joined him. In the square of the neighbourhood and the platform of the neighbourhood's cafe, the Kazakhs' dominance was recognised by the non-Kazakh men, and they were careful not to provoke conflict with Kazakhs. The exception was Akhmet, a Caucasian Bashkir and a so called Afghan, a veteran from the war in Afghanistan, whom the Kazakhs respected.

Kolia by pointing to and laughing at the falling Kazakh man broke the unwritten law (*ne pisannyi zakon*) of Kazakh domination. However, he did this out of drunkenness and carelessness and had no intention of challenging the Kazakh. But the latter, perhaps knowing this, could not leave such carelessness unpunished. By beating Kolia up he saved his own face and reinstated the status quo, which Kolia had challenged unintentionally. The participation of other Kazakhs in kicking Kolia highlights their concern to preserve Kazakh domination.

The differences between me, Iura and Nikolaevich, on the one hand, and the two Kazakhs, who did not take part in kicking, on the other, again highlight Kazakh domination. According to the local custom shared between people from all ethnic backgrounds it was the duty of Nikolaevich and I to defend Kolia, because he was sharing a drink with us. But we did not intervene, because both of us knew it would lead to a fight with Kazakhs, which none of us wanted to take up. Thus, we were "reduced", like Madina to pure spectators. Such feminisation was a greater minus for Nikolaevich than for me. Firstly, there was a greater expectation placed on him than me to take part in the local games of masculinity, because he was a native and I foreigner. Secondly, Nikolaevich was a Russian and I a Muslim. I had at least exchanged a greeting with all the Kazakhs involved and some of them were my acquaintances. They did not expect me, a Muslim, to fight them for a Russian. But as the fight took an ethnic dimension Nikolaevich was expected to defend Kolia, his co-ethnic. His failure to do so certainly made him a coward (*trus*) in the eyes of Kazakhs.

Iura's status as a homeless person made him free of any manly and ethnic obligations, because his masculinity had been already degraded.

In contrast to the three of us, the two remaining Kazakhs displayed their masculinity through intervention. The young man rushed towards the stage in order to mediate, and thereby enhance his own masculinity. But not being able to counter

the threat of the Kazakh who began the fight he retreated to his sub-ordinate position. However, the latter did not consider his intervention an offence, but an act out of proportion to his junior position. It is worth mentioning that if Nicolaevich or I had tried to mediate, the Kazakh would without doubt have considered it an offence and an invitation to fight. The right to mediate and settle the conflict was the monopoly of the senior member of the gang, who was also the boss. He reaffirmed his leadership by intervening in the conflict. Although, the punishment could not be initiated without his permission, he distinguished himself from his proteges by not taking part in the beating and displayed his hegemonic position by stopping the kicking at a stroke.

The collective kicking of Kolia was meant to reaffirm Kazakh collective dominance in the square and on the platform. But such dominance does not imply that all Kazakhs were equally in the control of the place, nor does it exclude the fierce struggle between Kazakhs themselves. Different levels of control were exerted by the police officers, state officials, Mafioso violent gangs, owners of the place and migrant Kazakhs from the south who traded in the illegal market. One could speak of the existence of different layers of Kazakh dominance, in which the same Kazakh individuals took dominant or sub-ordinate positions vis - a - vis each other .

The police officers, who were mainly Kazakhs, had a daily presence there. They usually ate free in the shashlyk bar, harassed illegal street traders and alcoholics, received bribes from them and from the Kiosks. Not only non-Kazakhs but also Kazakhs who were poor and lacked contacts with influential people, were very afraid of them. Saber dragged the unconscious body of Kolia into the darkness because of such fear. He explained to me some days later that if the police had seen Kolia's unconscious body he and his friend would have run into trouble, and would have had to pay the police a large bribe to avoid of being charged. I asked him why the gang did not care about this. He answered that the gang's leader knew every policeman in the district and the police would not make any trouble for him and his friends for the sake of a drunk Russian (*P'ianyi Russkii*).

Officially the cafe and its attached platform, the neighbouring shop and the square belonged to the state. Those in charge of the complex were Kazakhs, who leased it to their own associates. Mafioso, according to the neighbourhood, mainly Kazakhs, were involved in the control of the space, through extracting protection money from the kiosks and the shops around. Hooligans who drank and fought frightened ordinary people. The owner of the place, who was on good terms with



the police through serving them shashlyk and was supported by the migrant Kazakhs traders, had considerable control over the place as well. The migrants supported him partly because he himself was a migrant, and partly because his employees were also migrants. However, he could not prevent different gangs from fighting with each other or harassing his customers.

The involvement of such diverse Kazakh forces in control of the place created tensions and conflict between Kazakhs themselves, which were resolved either by negotiation or the use of force. The most obvious tension was the frequent fights between different Kazakh gangs. Beside this, the Kazakhs who owned the kiosks and the owner of the shashlyk bar blamed both Kazakh state officials and Kazakh Mafioso for milking them. But one of them, who had a good contact in GSK, did not care about either the police or the Mafioso. An important example of the contest between Kazakhs was the eviction of one Kazakh from the cafe against his will and the leasing of it to another Kazakh. Both the evicted man and the Kazakh who passed the news to me first, were of the opinion that the new owner had contacts with more influential people.

The last group who exerted their dominance over the place were ordinary migrant Kazakhs, from the auls or the South. Although these Kazakhs were in a sub-ordinate position to those mentioned above and feared them, they bullied people from other ethnic backgrounds in the illegal street market. The shashlyk man whom Kolia obeyed and Saber and his friend, who kicked Kolia, were all such ordinary migrants.

The relations between the migrants and non-Kazakhs took often unfriendly and some times antagonistic forms around the Shashlyk-bar and the neighbourhood's illegal market. In both places a clear cut division existed between the urban population and the migrants. In the cafe-bar this division is illustrated by the drinking circles. Southern and rural Kazakhs drank strictly together and did not admit others. The urban people did not try to join them. While the drinking circles of urban men were open to all ethnic groups, they never invited migrants. Nicolaevich, a Russian, and Serek, an urban Kazakh, both were of the opinion that drinking with rural Kazakhs could lead to conflict because of the assumed improper behaviour of the latter. I personally drank with all of them. However, the rural Kazakhs did not like me to drink with Russians. On one occasion I was drinking with a group of Russians. A Kazakh former miner, who sold beer in the street in the first half of the day and worked as a bar man in the shashlyk place the second half approached me. He took my hand and said: " You are drinking with Russians; you have forgotten your Muslim brothers", and tried to pull me away from the group. I

excused myself by saying that I was interviewing Russians. On another occasion, I drank first with migrants, in the early evening, because they had invited me to photograph the birthday of a daughter of a migrant family, which was celebrated in the cafe. Later in the evening Nicolaevich and his company arrived and began to drink. Nicolaevich asked me join them for a moment. Knowing the migrants might be offended, I spoke to Saber, and asked his permission to go to the Russians' table. He agreed. Coming, back to the table one of the migrants was so angry that he was nearly about to pick a fight with me. Fortunately Saber stopped him.

In the illegal market the networks of migrants were separate from the networks of the urban street traders, and the two networks were in conflict with each other for places. Always there was always a pretext for conflict; somebody had taken somebody else's plastic bag, or stolen his/her customers, or was selling in a place which somebody else claimed belonged to him/her. The migrants usually told the non-Kazakhs to go to their own countries and trade there. The urban sellers were women from all ethnic backgrounds and had their own networks. They defended themselves by saying that they had a right to the market, because they had lived in the neighbourhood for a long time and the migrants were newcomers. However, they were very afraid of migrants, because there were a good number of men among the migrants, they had a stronger solidarity and they reacted collectively. Actually, the urban Kazakh women were included in the networks of the urban women who traded in the street. Khaledeh, a women, who was a respected figure among the urban traders blamed the migrants for swearing (*obozvat*,') at other people in Kazakh, taking other's places, and making the street untidy by not cleaning up after themselves in the evenings.

The antagonism between urban women and migrant Kazakh traders was seen differently by each of these two groups. The former, including urban Kazakhs, considered it part of a wider conflict between the Russian speakers and the Kazakh speakers, or between the city dwellers (*gorodskie liudi*) and migrants (*priezzhie*). The migrants considered it as a conflict between Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs, mainly Russians. For them the city represents Russians and the *aul* Kazakhs.

The urban population lumped street traders and hooligans together as southern Kazakhs (*Iuzhnye Kazakhi*) or aul Kazakhs (*aul'nye Kazakhi*), whom they blamed for crimes. On the other hand, the Kazakh street traders, although subordinate to the violent Kazakh gangs, saw the latter as their ally against the Russian speaking population. The gangs were usually migrants as well, and their presence in the place provided de facto support for migrants against non- Kazakhs. Saber afterwards told me latter that he joined the hooligans in abusing Kolia

because Kolia had insulted a brother Kazakh.

The fear of migrant Kazakhs, particularly violent gangs, is a universal phenomena in Almaty. But their actual presence in a particular place and the extent of their influence vary depending on the type of place, the involvement of the state officials in the place and the involvement of organised Mafia in the place.

In the industrial work places, where the majority of workers are Russians both inter-ethnic violence and Kazakh dominance are absent on the shop floors. In the factory where I did field work, although younger male workers had experience of fights with Kazakhs outside the factory they told me these kind of things did not exist in the factory. Workers from other factories with whom I talked in the neighbourhood, confirmed that hooliganism did not exist in their factories. The absence of such phenomena was explained differently by younger and older workers. Younger workers often argued, that Russians, unlike Kazakhs were a peaceful people. The older workers said that they had no cause to fight, that all of them belonged to the same powerless people (*bednye liudi*). This difference probably arises because that the ethnic oriented fights outside the factory were a matter for younger men.

In places like universities, where Kazakhs constituted the absolute majority among both staff and students, Kazakh dominance is achieved through official channels rather than through force. As the people who are in charge of such places are influential Kazakhs and well-connected to the police and other authorities, they are able to eliminate hooligans. The director of the institute with which I was associated was one such well-connected Kazakh. However, in spite of this there are networks of Kazakh young men who bully other students, extract tribute from them and fight with each other. In my university I became aware of them through the leader of one of them. Let us have a look at his case:

Anurbek was a 21 year old Kazakh man, a student at the university where I taught. He came from Shymkent in the south and belonged to the Konrad tribe from the Middle Zhuz (*Orta Zhuz*). I met him first in the canteen of the university, where he greeted me in a very friendly way and asked whether I was Arab. He was polite, clever and very proud of Kazakh culture and language. Unlike my students, he spoke Kazakh at the school with his friends, and rather associated Kazakhs with the East and Muslims than with the West and Russia. In spite of his youth he had a deep interest in, and profound knowledge of, Kazakh "traditions". Once I asked him about his genealogy, and he mentioned in one breath generations of his ancestors back to

Konrad, the founder of the tribe. He had an impressive knowledge of his kin. As he was really sincere and honest, I admired him very much. However, there was a murky side to his life. He was the leader of a gang of eight young men who studied at the same university and who regularly extracted tributes from a good number of other students when the scholarships were paid.

Once, I was interviewing him on a day when the scholarships were paid for the last three months. His lieutenants, who were collecting the money, interrupted us several times by handing the money to him and mentioning the names of the givers. While receiving the money he put a cross in the front of the name of the giver in the list of names in his notebook. The amount of money each person paid per month varied between 30 and 50 Tenge, depending on whether the student received 900 Tenge or 1200 Tenge as a scholarship<sup>8</sup>. He told me the money was protection fees, paid by weak people under their protection.

I asked him, "who are these weak people." He made two circles around his eyes with the thumbs and forefingers and said: for example, those who wear spectacles. He explained that there were bullies (*Khuligany*) at the school who took the money of weak students by force. He and his friend offered protection to such weak students and received the protection fees. He told me that if somebody bothered their clients (*klienty*), first they warned the offender, and if he would not listen then they would hit him. They had no problem with individual bullies, but had conflicts with two other similar groups. According to him, the second group, like themselves, consisted only of Kazakhs, while the third group included two Chechens.

The groups tried to expand their spheres of influence by troubling the clients of the other groups. In such cases the conflicts were settled in a sophisticated way. First they tried to solve the problem by negotiation. When negotiations failed they fought. But the fighting took place in a ritualised way. The actual fighting would not occur between all members of the two groups but between two individuals who represented the groups. The fighting usually took place in late afternoon in a detached place around the school. While the two groups stand in front of each other, the two individuals come to the middle and start fighting. They punch, kick, butt each other and wrestle; biting is forbidden. The person who throws his rival on the

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<sup>8</sup> Students whose performance was excellent received 1200 Tenge for scholarship each month and the rest 900 Tenge.

ground first is the winner. After this the fight is over and the client belongs to the winners. The fight often finishes in this way, but sometimes evolves into brutal fights between the two groups.

All the boys under his command were junior to him. They mostly came from the south with exception of two, one from Almaty and one from Ust'kamenogorsk. The only principle which linked them together was their love for the Kazakh language and their contempt for Russified Kazakhs (*chala Kazakhi*). They had no interest in each others tribes or Zhuz.

The boys went together to clubs, and trained together at boxing, body building and wrestling. Their networks extended to other universities and the clubs in Almaty and Shymkent. At least once a month they had a fight with other similar Kazakh groups or with Russians and "chala" Kazakhs. The fights outside the university usually happened over girls. When, the opposite group was forceful, they received help from a group of Chechens whose leader Anurbek had met them in a military training camp in Afghanistan.<sup>9</sup> He told me proudly: "Chechens are our brothers. We help them and they help us."

The money collected was usually used to pay for the rent of an apartment they had hired together, go to clubs, pay the expenses of the parties when they invited girls to the apartment, and entertain guests who arrived from Shymkent.

However, the sphere of influence of the groups was limited. Many students did not know there were such groups who taxed students. Some male students said that if somebody asked them for such money, they would not pay and if necessary fight back, while the women said they would report it to the authorities or their parents. Anurbek was afraid of the rector and the other Kazakhs in charge at the university. He pleaded with me: " Please do not speak with the members of the department about this, they are women, they will panic and call the police." In addition, the male Russian students were not afraid of them. A group of Almatian students, whose senior member was a Russian sportsman, told me they could fix people like Anurbek and his gang in two minutes.

In contrast to the university, in our neighbourhood people were very afraid of the hooligans. In the neighbourhoods, I was told, there were two major sources of

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<sup>9</sup> He was sent at the age of 16 to Pakistan to study Islam. Then the Pakistanis put him and other volunteers from Soviet Muslims in an Afghan military camp and taught them how to fight "the enemies of Islam. "

hooliganism: migrant Kazakhs who lived in the neighbourhoods and those who made raids into neighbourhoods from outside. The importance of each of these sources varies depending on the presence of Kazakh migrants in a given neighbourhood on the one hand, and the distance from the centre, on the other. The elite neighbourhoods such as, Samal, around the presidential palace, are usually free from hooliganism. In my neighbourhood, both sources operated. An example of the first source was Maghsood a man who lived in the same house in which I lived, and bullied Russians in the house with the support of a gang of Kazakh men from outside the neighbourhood. Let us look at his case.

One day in the middle of May I was standing by my door speaking to a neighbour, an old Russian woman, who was standing also at her door. Suddenly a Russian colonel dressed in a Khaki uniform followed two yards behind by an older bearded Russian man in civilian dress came up the stairs. Both men were happily intoxicated from alcohol. This happiness was more obvious in the older man, who had a smile on his lips and rosy cheeks, from the combined effects of alcohol and the warmth of the May weather. I felt that the two men had emerged from the pages of some Russian classic novel in the nineteenth century which I could not remember. The allegorical association made me smile unintentionally. The two men were on their way to visit a woman Russian neighbour, who was classified by some neighbours as a prostitute and alcoholic, and of whom the colonel was a lover. Realising that my smile was somehow related to them, the colonel tipped back his military hat on his head and looked at me aggressively but without speaking.

I was confused as how to react. The old woman began to explain to the colonel that I was teaching at the university and that I was an ethnographer (*etnograf*). The colonel, who had perhaps found the woman's explanation irrelevant, still quiet, continued to stare at me with his threatening look. I looked back at him coolly, but not challengingly. Suddenly, the silence in which our looks were locked into each other was broken by the patronising voice of a Kazakh man, coming down the stairs: "Comrade colonel (*tovarishch polkovnik*), he is our neighbour!" Realising that the Kazakh man was supporting me, the colonel gave up without a word, rang the bell and then went into the apartment.

The old woman retreated to her own apartment but left the door half open. Maghsood, the Kazakh man had a bottle of home

made sherry in his hand. Entering the old woman's apartment he asked me to drink with them. I accepted the invitation, but said to him that I would join them five minutes later. When I rang the bell, the old woman opened the door, surprised and asked me: "What do you want?" The Kazakh man shouted from inside: "I have invited him to drink with me." She said okay, and invited me inside. Then she brought two glasses to the table, while saying: "For God's sake don't give wine to my son." She sent her son to another room, and left us saying she wanted to watch the TV. From the woman's unfriendly reception, I understood immediately that not only was the Kazakh man an unwelcome guest, but also that he had invited me without the consent of our host. The woman had always been very friendly before, inviting me to tea. Embarrassed by this, I drank the glass of wine at a stroke, and said to Maghsood I must go because I have something urgent (*srochno*) to do. I rose. But Maghsood rose too, blocked my way and asked me to stay. I insisted on leaving but Maghsood took my hand and said one more glass. I agreed and sat down. While pouring the wine for me he said:

My door is always open for you. I am the master (*khozaiin*) here. I keep the neighbourhood in my hands (*Ia derzhu kavartala s rykakh*). If some body bothers you, just mention my name, they will let you go. If somebody tries to hit you just tell me.

I suspected that the man was patronising and threatening me simultaneously. I had experience of other Kazakhs who first befriended me with flattery and a display of hospitality, and then asked me for money, either by offering me protection or threatening me. To prevent such a development, I told to him very firmly: "Thank you very much for your kindness (*dobrota*), but I think nobody can hit me, I have my own contacts (*sviazi*)."

Then I told him goodbye and left the apartment.

In the evening I spoke with the old woman and apologised. She said: "I know you didn't know what kind of person he is, but he is such a person. He comes here, without being invited, drinks wine and eats food. What can we do? My two sons cannot confront him, he has a lot of hooligan Kazakh friends. If I do not receive (*ugoshchat'*) him, then he will hit my sons."

A week or two after this event, late one Sunday afternoon when I was returning from the mountains, I met Maghsood sitting with another Kazakh man on the pavement of the street besides our yard and drinking vodka. I greeted them, shook hands with

them and trying to go home. But Maghsood suddenly took my hand, and tried to pull me towards him, said with an imperative voice: "Come here!" Then he said: "You are Iranian." And his friend added: "With an open visa". Then Maghsood continued with a threatening voice: "You are alone here and you do not respect me." Pulling my hand very forcefully out of his, I told him firmly: "I respect everybody, I respect even children but I am not afraid of anybody, remember this." Then I went home, but before entering the house I turned back and saw that Maghsood's friend was pulling him back, perhaps stopping him from coming towards me.

Then, I went to my landlord, who like Magsood lived on the fifth floor of the same house where I lived. I told them the story. They told me that he was a kind of bully (*khuligan*), who usually threatened people he thought were defenceless (*bezzashchitnye*). The husband said: "Maghsood plays Mafioso for women and foreigners, but he is a real coward (*natoiashchitrus*). Even if a child rings on his bell, he checks first very carefully through the hole and then opens the door." The wife said that for a while he terrorised them almost every time he was drunk by knocking on their door and wanting to come in. Then she spoke with his sister, who is a lawyer, and the sister had spoken with him and since then he has not bothered them. Then she added: "He wants money from you. But let me speak with him and his sister, if he continues to bother you, you can ask people in the Institute for help. They spoke with him and his sister and Maghsood calmed down for two months.

Then I found out that Maghsood was known as a trouble maker among the neighbours. Everybody had a story to tell about him. The main complaint about him was that he invited himself into people's homes and usually asked them either to drink with him or lend him money. And when people did not let him in or said that they did not have the money, he became angry and threatened them. Russians told me that in such situations he usually told them "Russian go home" (*Russkie ubiraites' domoi*). Or he would say, "Russian pigs, leave Kazakhstan" (*Russkie chushki<sup>10</sup> ubiraites' s Kazakhstana*).

To get rid of him, people usually called his sister, whom they described as wise (*mudrye*) and educated. And the sister talked with him and he usually calmed down. The apartment where he was living belonged to his sister. Two years earlier, the

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<sup>10</sup> Chushka a Kazakh word for pig.



sister had moved to a new apartment, and the man's family had moved there. All the neighbours had a good opinion of his sister, her husband and their children. They even had a good opinion of Maghsood's wife and children, whom Maghsood abused physically. His daughter and son played with other children as friends in the yard. His daughter even went to a Russian school and most of her friends were Russians. He had taken his daughter earlier from the Russian school and enrolled her in a Kazakh school. But as the girl's overall performance got worse she had begun to cry, and the family were forced to put her back in the Russian school.

In the middle of August he began to trouble people again. Firstly, he came with a bottle of wine to another neighbour, a divorced middle age woman, and asked her to open the door and drink with him. When the woman did not open the door, he kicked the door and insulted the woman, calling her a Russian whore (*Russkiia suka*). Some days later he had bitter words with the colonel, mentioned earlier. As the colonel's hostess had a bad reputation in the neighbourhood, Maghsood said to him that he was the master (*khoziain*) of the neighbourhood and thus responsible for people's morality, so he would not let the colonel to visit the house anymore and engage in corrupt sexual activities. According to the Russian divorced woman, the colonel had told him, "Go to hell, I go where ever I want." She said that, Maghsood had said to the colonel: " If I see you next time here I'll hit you. I don't care that you are a colonel. My cousin is a general in the army."

When I heard these stories from the divorced woman I knew, that if I ran into him in the near future there would be trouble. My guess was correct. The next Sunday morning, I went out of the house to buy some food. I encountered Maghsood in the yard, outside our door, drinking vodka and repairing a car with two other men. Seeing me, he shouted: "Come here." I went there, but very alarmed. I greeted him, and shook hands with him. He pulled my hand and tried to throw me between him and the two other men. I managed to pull my hand out and said angrily: "What is the problem?" One of his friends, who was awfully drunk, asked me: "Are you Caucasian?" Then he told me: "This is not Caucasus, this is Kazakhstan." But Maghsood turned towards him and in an authoritarian voice told him: "Shut up (*molchi*). This is not your business ( *eta ne tvoe delo*)." The man really shut up. While I was going away Maghsood threatened me. This

time I got really worried, did not come back for two hours, and fortunately when I came back they had gone. But I was still worried. First I called a Kazakh woman colleague to find a mutual friend who was a police officer. Unfortunately, the policeman had travelled to another city. Then I called another person, an academic, who told me: "Come to the institution tomorrow, first we will report him to the police, and then I will call the police boss for the district. He was my class mate."

On Monday I went to the Institute and told the story to the deputy. She was shocked, and told me that I should have told them the first time he had offended me. Then she immediately wrote a report to the police district. Later, my friend came and said that he would ring his friend, the police boss. Then I returned home, wrote till 6 pm, then went out to the platform and talked to people and returned home at 10 pm. While moving in the darkness I saw Maghsood, who was very drunk, and his son, a nine year old boy, who was trying to help him home. I hastened to avoid him, but he recognised me in the darkness and shouted: "Ai, Turk (*Turek*) wait." I pretended I had not heard him and quickly went up to the third floor where I lived. But before I could open the door he caught up with me, running and breathing heavily. Behind him his son was crying and pleading: "Please come home." I knew the boy very well, because, in winter he usually gathered with other children on the stairs in front of my door, and when there was a celebration I usually invited them for sweets.

I got really mad from both fear and anger. I took my spectacles off, put them in my trousers, jumped towards him and shouted very loudly: "What do you want?" The man, who had not expected such a strong reaction from me became both afraid and bewildered, and did not answer. The young boy used the opportunity to take his hand, and dragged him towards the stairs, leading to the next floor up. At first, he followed the boy and I went to my door. But suddenly he changed his mind and came back towards me. He began to threaten me:

You stupid Turk (*Turek, durakov*), you do not understand, I am a Kazakh, I am khoziain here. I have friends here, this is my country, my brother is a general. Who are you? I will kill you (*Ia ub'iu tebia*). Nobody will help you.

I did not bother to tell him that I was not a Turk, but told him calmly: "Do what you want, but now think about your son and go

home please." He made his hands into fists, and took a boxing stance ready to attack me. I made a fist as well, took a guard position and told him angrily: "If you touch me, I will hit you here like a dog ." This time I really meant to hit him.

His son seeing both of us on the brink of a fight, crying loudly from fear, pleaded with me: "He is drunk."

Seeing his tears, I felt such a great shame inside that I could not continue to stand there. I told the boy: "Please take your father home." Then I ran downstairs towards the yard. I wandered streets aimlessly for an hour or two and then returned home. It was one of the worst experiences of my life. Since I became a political activist, at the age of the fifteen, I had never physically fought a person. The fact that I was on the brink of doing so, combined with confusion and fear left me exhausted and deeply disappointed. I regretted, for the first time, my presence in Kazakhstan. I slept very badly.

The next day I went to the Institute and told the story to the director. He was shocked and moved by the story. He went immediately to the police and spoke with the authorities there personally. On the evening of the same day they sent two officers, who came to my apartment first, asked about the matter and then went up to him. He was so afraid, that his wife said he did not live there. Then the officers came back to me and asked about his surname. As I did not know his surname they went to ask other people, and they were there for half an hour and then left. Maghsood became so frightened that he locked himself in his apartment for three days and did not go out. I knew this partly from the landlord and partly because each of his male friends called him from the yard but then suddenly became silent and went away. I guessed that he did not open the door for anybody, and because of that people called him from the yard. and then Maghsood's wife signalled them to go away.

After three days, coming back from a shop I encountered Maghsood accompanied by an elder Kazakh man, and his own son. Maghsood came towards me, kissed my hand, and asked me: "Why, brother, do you do this to me? Look at my son. If they put me in prison, who will look after him?" I explained to him that he was terrorising not only me but everybody else in the house. He excused himself for being drunk.

Then the old man, told me gently: "Let's make peace" (*davai zakliuchim mir*). He encouraged me to shake hands with Maghsood. I accepted the mediation of the old man and shook hands with

Maghsood but told him I could only take back my complaint (*zaiavlenie*) if he would stop bothering me or others in the house. He accepted, my conditions. I do not know whether the police sought him again, but he kept his promise as long I was living in the neighbourhood.

The ways Maghsood behaved and people's reactions towards him demonstrate the same logic of articulation of a dominant masculinity to the Kazakh dominant ethnicity. In his offences he resorted to a nationalist rhetoric, claiming that Kazakhstan was the land of Kazakhs and Russians must leave it. He justified his claim on dominance in the neighbourhood on the basis that Kazakhs should be dominant in Kazakhstan. He usually said to people: " I am a Kazakh, I am the master (*Khoziain*)". The fact that he was a Kazakh frightened others from standing against him. Firstly, as the old Russian woman mentioned, he was getting support from a gang of Kazakh men from outside of the neighbourhood. Secondly, his claims on having contacts with the police and the army frightened people. Although most people did not believe him they were of the opinion that in the case of conflict the police and judges would support him because he was a Kazakh. Most of them thought that the police's swift measures against him after my complaint was because the head of my Institution new influential people among the police officers. Otherwise, they believed, the police would not have listened to me. People's fears of the state officials is well illustrated by Maghsood's behaviour after the police officers came to see him. However, when the state official is a non-Kazakh he may not frighten a Kazakh. The encounters between the Russian colonel and Maghsood illustrate this. If the colonel had been a Kazakh Maghsood would never have had the nerve either to intervene on my behalf or to tell the colonel that he was not allowed to visit the neighbourhood. In their mutual challenge Maghsood's Kazakhness weighted heavier than the colonel's position in the army. However, the fact that the colonel was a state official played its role. If the colonel had been an ordinary Russian Maghsood would have beaten him without any warning.

In addition to the conflicts in the square and the illegal markets, yards and areas close to houses were raided by young Kazakh men from outside the neighbourhood. On one such occasion, when a group of young Kazakh men tried to kill a dog, which belonged to a Russian family, both Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs rushed out of their houses and chased away the intruders.

In the suburban areas the tension between Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs is much more visible than in my neighbourhood, due to the high presence of Kazakh migrants there.

Bars, cafes, discos, restaurants, streets, parks and markets are the main places of the contest because they are places where two “objects” of struggle, women and money, circulate. In the entertainment places, which according to the locals are protected by the Mafia, Kazakh gangs’ trouble keeps a low profile. The market places, both legal and illegal, where a considerable number of migrant Kazakhs sell goods alongside others, are one of the main fields of contest. In such places migrants who are not members of the gangs support the dominance of the gangs and benefit from it. Saber and his friend, both street traders and migrants from the South, kicked Kolia alongside the hooligans for such reasons.

The reasons for the hostilities between the urban population and migrants are described differently by migrants, non-Kazakhs and urban Kazakhs. Migrants find Almaty an alienating and hostile place dominated by Russian culture and language, the bearers of which look down to them and their culture. They interpret the clash between themselves and the Russian speaking people as an ethnic conflict between Kazakhs and Russians, because for them the aul represents Kazakhs and the city Russians. Secondly, as the biographies of the three sex workers in chapter 4 and Saber in Chapter 5 suggest, they have very precarious lives, which make them jealous of the urban people. In addition to the competition for legal and illegal markets, their hostility towards urban non-Kazakhs is motivated by their lack of apartments. And they criticised the urban people for exploiting them by extracting high rents. Saber complained that he paid half of his income to a “Russian drunk” (*Russkii alkash*) who did not work.

Non-Kazakhs argued that the reason for the conflict was the rise of Kazakh nationalism. However, they distinguished between two types of Kazakh nationalism: official nationalism (*ofitsial'nyi natsionalism*) and street nationalism (*bytovoi natsionalism*). The official nationalism was ascribed to state officials and their supposed discrimination against non-Kazakhs over places in Universities and posts in state institutions. Street nationalism was ascribed by both urban Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs to Kazakh speaking Kazakhs, who were assumed to come from the South and auls. However, they linked these two types of nationalism by claiming that the judges and polices who were assumed to be Kazakhs, supported hooligans and migrants in their conflicts with non-Kazakhs. The urban Kazakhs I spoke with rejected the street nationalism. This makes a unified Kazakh identity problematic . In the following section I explore this in some detail.

### ***The problems of a unified Kazakh Identity***

Usually Russians and other non-Kazakhs distinguished between the urban

Kazakhs ( Gorodskie Kazakhi) and rural Kazakhs (aul'nye Kazakhi, cel'skie Kazakhi), and also between Almatian Kazakhs (*Almaatinskie Kazakhi*) and Southern Kazakhs (*iuzhnye Kazakhi*). Urban Kazakhs or Almatian Kazakhs were those who had lived in Almaty for a long time, and the latter were migrants from the South and auls. The urban Kazakhs were seen by non-Kazakhs as peaceful (mirnye), civilised (*tsivilizovannye*) and educated (*obrozovannye*). Moreover, all urban people, including urban Kazakhs, and the Kazakh migrants were suspicious of each other.

Actually, words like *Izhanin* (male southerner), *Iuzhanka* (female southerner) Southerner, *menbet* (male), *menbetka* (female) have strong derogatory connotations and are used to denote Kazakhs from the south. I heard the word *Iuzhanin*, when I discussed the question of marriage with a group of students from mixed gender and ethnic backgrounds . A woman Kazakh said she wanted to marry a Kazakh but not a *Iuzhanin*. Then we began to discuss *iuzhanin*, and I was surprised by the degree of consensus over the concept. They saw *Iuzhanin*, as religious, traditional (*traditsionnye*), backward (*nerazvityi*), Rich (*bogatye*), cunning (*Khitrye*), Mafioso, violent and patriarchal. They argued that, while *Iuzhanin* were closer in their culture and manners to Uzbeks, Almatian Kazakhs and Kazakhs from the north (*severnnye Kazakhi*) were closer to Russians, who were described in positive terms. I found later that the concept was universally used among urban population. A Kazakh colleague of mine who came from the north and had spent some of his teenage years in Shymkent told me that *Iuzhanin* denotes one of the darkest aspects of Kazakh culture. He described *Iuzhanin* as dishonest, corrupt and bigoted, characteristics which are often ascribed by the urban Kazakhs to Uzbeks. He said that they were cowards in a fight; several of them fight with one person, and they continue to beat the person, even when he is on the floor. *Menbet* and *Menbetka*, which mean stupid and backward Kazakh from aul, were originally coined by Russians to insult Kazakhs, I was told by a Kazakh friend. However, during my stay in Almaty, I never heard Russians using such expressions. They were afraid of being punished by the Kazakhs. On the other hand the urban Kazakhs used the words frequently to describe the assumed stupidity and backwardness of migrants from the aul. In response to such attitudes, the southerners and migrants considered the Urban Kazakhs as *mankurts* (ignorant of one's own history and culture) and *chala* Kazakhs (hybrid). The southerners who were fluent in the Kazakh language and had kept and reinvented the Kazakh "traditions" considered urban Kazakhs to be Russians in soul and Kazakhs in appearance. *Chala*, which was used historically for the children of

marriages between Tatars and Kazakhs, today is used to by migrants to denote the urban Kazakhs' assumed spurious and unauthentic culture. The migrants have two derogatory words for Russians: "Ivashka" for males and "Russachka" for females. Ivashka, I was told, means more or less a stupid Russian (*Russkii durak*). And Russachka, I was told, means a rude (*neskromnaia*), superficial (*legkomyslennaia*) and sexually loose (*rasputnaia*) Russian woman.

While Kazakhs' negative stereotyping of each other makes problematic a unifying Kazakh identity, both urban and migrant Kazakhs have claims to be "original Kazakhs" (*nastoiashchie Kazakhi*). The urban Kazakhs usually affiliate aul Kazakhs with Uzbeks and thereby deligitimise their claim to an authentic identity. The latter associate the former with Russians. However, aul Kazakhs are more consistent in their rhetoric, because the Kazakh language, aul, yurt and the other symbols of the Kazakh ethnic identity are closely related to their daily cultural practices. The urban Kazakhs have contradictory and complex attitudes towards such symbols. In their contest with migrants and southern Kazakhs such symbols are denounced as the sign of backwardness, while in some other occasions they are used as symbols of the national identity and assets of cultural capital. Such contradictory attitudes was displayed by some of the urban Kazakh members of the department (Kafedra) of which I was also a member. As they knew I had no taste for exoticism, they usually affiliated themselves with Russian culture, which they considered European and progressive, and disassociated themselves in different ways from the aul's assumed traditional life. In the regular celebration of the birthdays of the members of staff, they did not display anything particularly Kazakh. The only element which represented Kazakh culture was the horse meat (*kazy*), which was consumed without any commentary. Then two Belgians came as guest lecturers on behalf of a Tacis program for a week. The goal of the program was to select members of staff for a number of scholarships in the UK and Belgium. They tried to entertain the Belgians in the best possible way. They were invited by a high official in the Ministry of Education, a parent of one of students, invited to a yurt outside Almaty, where they were served a lamb, in a Kazakh traditional way. At the university, elements of so called Kazakh traditional culture were displayed only on ceremonial occasions like the Eighth of March, Norooz, the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth Zhambyl<sup>11</sup>, or when they had foreign honoured guests (Indian, German or American Ambassadors).

In short the attitudes of urban Kazakhs towards the symbols of the Kazakh traditions are ambivalent. They often dismiss them as the symbols of

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<sup>11</sup> A famous Kazakh poet in the Soviet era.

backwardness but display them in particular situations as symbols of national identity and make cultural capital of them.

The same ambivalence existed towards the aul Kazakhs. As most urban Kazakhs are first, second or third generation migrants, they still have relatives in auls. Given the strong obligations between kin among Kazakhs, their kinship networks transcend the division between the city and aul. For example, many urban Kazakh women, involved in the street trade, had ties with kinfolk in auls and were involved in reciprocal exchange with them. The same was true of my women colleagues at the university. Moreover, while the urban Kazakhs support the rest of Russian speaking population against the migrant Kazakhs, they distinguished themselves from them by claiming to have a separate Kazakh identity. Such claims were often used for justifying their privileged access to the posts in the state institutions. In the following section I will deal with such claims.

### ***The predicaments of the urban Kazakhs' claims on Kazakh identity***

Urban Kazakhs usually, distinguished themselves from other Russian speakers by saying that they had a distinct “national character” (*natsional'naia cherta*), which they had inherited from their ancestors. A male Kazakh teacher explained the differences between Kazakh and Russian “national character” : “Kazakhs are more secretive and smart (*khitrye*), while Russians are more plain (*prostye*). Russians tell you what they have in their heart, but Kazakhs never speak their minds, unless to close relatives.” Khaledeh, a street trader who had a very good relations with Russians, told me that she would not allow her son to marry a Russian girl. Russians, she said, had a different national psychology (*natsional'naia psikhologiya*). Their brides did not respect their mothers-in-laws and the rest of the husbands' relatives. They did respect their elders and did not care about their relatives. She said: “Look around all beggars and homeless are Russians, Tadjik women or Gypsies. You cannot find Kazakhs among them. It is a shame (*styd*) for us Kazakhs to let relatives ask other people for help.” Another category which urban Kazakhs use to distinguish themselves from Russians is the adjective Muslim. Muslim in their usage did not have to do with faith, Islamic rituals or the Koran. Muslim is a negative category for them, it just implies non-Russian. It is an attribute which they think links them to their ancestors. Although Kazakhs distinguish themselves from Russians by ascribing to themselves a Muslim identity, they distinguish themselves from most of the other Muslim groups by claiming that they are not fanatics like them.

Firstly, they argue that historically Kazakhs were less religious. A Kazakh friend, an



ethnographer, told me proudly that in the aul where he did fieldwork the Mullah drank vodka after each sermon. On another occasion, a Kazakh colleague said to a Pakistani man who did not drink alcohol: "Our Mofti once said on the TV that it is not reprehensible to drink wine. We eat grapes. Then, why is it wrong to drink wine which is of the same substance?" They particularly consider Uzbeks, Turks, Azarbaiejanis, Tadjiks and Turkemans bigots and anti-woman.

Secondly they associate themselves with Russian culture, which is depicted as progressive and woman-friendly.

The tension between tendencies of the Urban Kazakhs to identify themselves with Muslims, on the one hand, and Russians, on the other, is highly gendered. This is evident from the answers that a number of Kazakh students provided to the following question:

"If you had to choose your spouse from only Russians and Uzbeks which nationality will you prefer?"

I constructed the question in this way for two reasons. First, I knew from a previous question that these students considered marriage an institution for the reproduction of ethnicity. Secondly, Kazakhs themselves usually considered Uzbeks and Russians as two contrasting poles of identification.

The answers were as follows<sup>12</sup> :

a) "Nationality is not important I will look at the person." ( 31 women + 2 men= 33 people).

b) "Uzbek" ( 16 women+14 men = 30 people)

c) "Russian" ( 29 woman + 12 women = 41 people)

The reasons which were given for the choice of Uzbeks or Russians were as follows:

Women's reasons for choosing Uzbeks: "Uzbeks are Muslim."

Men's reasons for choosing Uzbeks:

"I like Uzbek culture, I do not like Russians, Uzbeks are Muslim, Uzbeks are closer to Kazakhs, Uzbeks are more hospitable, Uzbeks are Asians, their traditions are closer to Kazakh traditions, their language is closer to Kazakh, Uzbek national character is closer to us, Uzbek women respect their husbands,

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<sup>12</sup> This question was from what ethnicity do you want to choose you spouse? An absolute majority answered Kazakh. When asked for the reason, most of them answered to ensure the reproduction of ethnicity (*prelalzhanie roda*).

Uzbek women are more obedient (*Uzbekhki bolee poslushhye*).”

Women's reasons for choosing Russian:

“Russians are more civilised, Uzbeks are cheaters, the children of mixed races are more beautiful, Russians respect women, Russians are freer, Russians are more human (*bolee chelovechnie*), Russians are smarter, Russians are not despotic, Russians do not consider women as objects, Russians help their wives with the house-work (*domashnee khoziaistvo*), I know Russian culture better, Russians have a high culture (*vysokaia kul'tura*), Uzbeks have bad customs (*obychai*), Uzbeks impose the head-scarf (*platok*) on their women, Uzbek women have no rights, Uzbeks are strict (*strogie*), I do not like Uzbek culture, Uzbek men do not respect their wives, For Uzbeks a wife is a domestic object (*kak domashniaia veshch*), Uzbeks are horrible (*strashnye*) and strict (*strogie*), Russians are closer to us in their souls, my upbringing (*vospitanie*) is closer to Russians.

Men's' reasons for choosing Russians:

We have no Uzbeks here, I speak Russian and know their culture, I grew up among Russians, I know Russians better than Uzbeks, Russians are Europeans.

Let us compare these attitudes. The total number of both genders who chose Russians is higher than those who chose Uzbeks. The number of women who chose Uzbeks is approximately half of the number of those who chose Russians (16, 29). In contrast, slightly more men chose Uzbeks than Russians. This corresponds to differences in the ways women and men stereotype Uzbeks and Russians in the reasons given. Women who chose Uzbeks stereotyped them positively as Muslims without stereotyping Russians negatively. But women who chose Russians, stereotyped Russians and Uzbeks with very strong positive or negative attributes. Among the men who chose Uzbeks, only one said “I do not like Russians and the rest stereotyped Uzbeks positively without stereotyping Russians negatively. Those who chose Russians, stereotyped them positively without stereotyping Uzbeks negatively. The men's' positive attitudes and women's negative attitudes to Uzbeks are related to the same issues: culture, tradition, gender relations, and “national character”. From this we may conclude that a majority

of urban Kazakhs identify themselves with Russians rather than with any other Muslim group, except for urban Kirghiz<sup>13</sup> and Volga Tatars. Moreover, women

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<sup>13</sup> Urban Kazakhs frequently reminded me that Kirghiz and Tatars, like themselves, were distinct from the rest of Soviet Muslims in terms of their religious tolerance and cultural openness.

tend strongly towards Russians and men tend slightly towards Uzbeks. In practice the dominance of the tendency towards Russians was much stronger at the university than this survey shows. In the discussions which I arranged in different classes around the theme of the Russian and the Muslim “cultures”, the adherents of “Russian culture” represented it assertively as progressive and criticised the “Muslim culture” as despotic, patriarchal, and traditional, while the defenders of “Islamic culture” often kept quiet or were apologetic and defensive. They usually talked with me outside class. This was partly because the majority of both the staff and students were women who sympathised with the Russian culture, which they conceived as more woman-friendly than the Kazakh and other Muslim cultures.

In spite of a Russian-oriented tendency among Urban Kazakh women, many distinguished themselves from the Russian women and considered them rivals. The following two examples are typical. Jamila, mentioned in chapter 4, in spite of her cosmopolitan orientation said: “I cannot forgive the first Kazakh cosmonaut for marrying a Russian woman. Why didn’t he marry a Kazakh woman? Couldn’t he find an intelligent and beautiful woman among Kazakhs?” A young female Kazakh, a colleague of mine said: “I am not racist but when I see our Muslim men walking with Russian women on the streets I get angry. “Such ambivalence towards Russian and Muslim “cultures” among Kazakh women must be situated in the current ethnic and gender tensions. While Kazakh women emphasise their Muslimness to distinguish themselves from the Russian women, their association with Russian culture is a form of resistance against the new masculinism which has emerged under the cover of Islam as a part of the ethnic revival (*vozhrozhdenie*).

In contrast to urban Kazakhs the migrant street traders identified themselves with Muslims and it was self-evident for them that they will prefer Muslims to Russians as spouse. However such identification was problematised by the contest between migrants and other non-Kazakh Muslims over the urban space, to which I now turn.

### ***The struggle for urban space and the fragmentation Islamic identity***

*“A Soviet Muslim and a Muslim from abroad feel completely at home with each other in whatever country they meet. Both belong to the same “Milet” (nation), to the same Dar Ul-Islam, and share the same spiritual background which rules their everyday life.” (Bennigsen 1980:2)*

The statement above by one of the leading Central Asianists is an example of the standard way the majority of Western scholars invented and essentialised an

Islamic Identity in Central Asia, not innocently, but often for political purposes related to the cold war. Many of those who write today about Central Asia follow the same pattern. They continue to represent Islam as an over-arching identity. One of the early findings of my research in Kazakhstan was that notions of an umbrella Islamic Identity are an illusion. I discovered very soon that although different Muslim groups were conscious of being Muslim, identification with Islam was subordinate to the contest over hegemony. Not only urban Russian speaking Muslims usually identified themselves with Russians but most importantly, the more religious Muslims among Turks, Azaris, Uigurs, Uzbeks and Tadjiks often had positive stereotypes of Russians, while attributing negative attributes to aul Kazakhs and Southern Kazakhs. On the other hand, Russians' attitudes were more negative to Kazakhs, Chechens apart, than any other Muslim group. The three following cases illustrate such attitudes.

In the first neighbourhood I lived, there was a restaurant and a shashlyk bar run by Azaris. All their staff were Azaris and Russians. After a while I asked one of the shareholders, "Why you do not employ Kazakhs, who are Muslims, instead of Russians ?" He answered:

What Muslim ? They are thieves (*zhuliki*) and lazy (*lenivye*). The only thing they know is how to take(*brat*). If I employ a Kazakh then his friends and relatives will come here to eat free of charge, he will take my money. If I sack him, he will collect his friends and relatives and attack me. I cannot do anything, the police are on their side. We have no problem with Russians, they are honest (*chectnye*) and hard-working (*trydoliubivye liudi*).

The second case is of a young Russian worker in the factory where I did field-work. He was the one who received me most warmly, and befriended me quickly, lunching with me, playing chess with me, introducing me to other workers, asking questions about my projects, and telling me generously about whatever I asked him. He was so good natured that everybody loved him. But there was something strange about him, from the very beginning. He had drawn a great swastika with a pen on the arm of his jacket. As he was so nice to me and often joked in a gentle and friendly way often with two Uigurs, who worked on the same shop floor, I was sure that he was not a Nazi. One day I asked him: "What is this Vas'ka?" He answered: "You don't know?! This is the emblem of fascists! I am fascist!" I asked him: "What does it mean?" "It, means", he answered, "that we fight against Kazakhs." Then he explained to me that they were a network of friends, who called themselves fascists and fought together against Kazakhs, whenever the latter attacked them. Then he told me several stories about their fights with Kazakhs. According to Vasillii, most of the members of his "fascist" network were of Slavic origin, however they also had Armenians, Tatars and Uigurs among them. I asked

him: "Are you against all Muslims or only against Kazakhs?" Vasilii said: "Why all Muslims?" Then he added that he had been living with his mother in an Uigur neighbourhood in an Almaty suburb for a long time, and that Uigurs are generous (*shchedrye*) and hospitable (*gostepriimnye*). They invite him and his mother to food and drink whenever they have a ceremony, and at the Sacrifice Feast (*Korbanat*) the neighbours give a lot of meat to his mother. He said that his best friends are Uigurs and they fought Kazakhs together. The Kazakhs he blamed and fought were young men of his age who had migrated recently from China and Mongolia and who had been housed in the village close to their neighbourhood by the Kazakh government. According to Vasilii, they move in groups and if they find you alone they attack you.

On another occasion, a Tadjik man, who described Russians as naghz (pure), called Kazakhs animals. This man was a war refugee, who with the help of a second wife, a Chechen war refugee, and his brother prepared and served shashlyk in the complex where Mira the Waitress worked (chapter 4). He complained that Kazakhs continuously shouted at him, swore and bullied him and his brother. He had to keep quiet or he would be beaten. He admired Russians as human (*Ensan*).

The mutual empathy of non-Muslim Kazakhs and Russians and their common negative feelings for aul Kazakhs depend on the current ethnically oriented tensions over resources, particularly social space. This was evident in the neighbourhood illegal Market. The rural Kazakhs harassed Turks and Tartars occasionally and did not allow Tadjiks and Uzbeks to sell in the illegal market. The following example illustrates this.

Once two Kazakh men who sold fruit and vegetables ordered a Turk to move to another place. He refused to obey them and they scattered his tomatoes and cucumbers on the ground. The Turk had no choice but to pack his things and find a new place. I helped him to collect the vegetables and went off with him. He said that the Kazakhs were jealous, because most of the customers bought from him. He sold cheaper and fresher vegetables which he bought from his relatives in Kaskelen. Then he said:

Kazakhs are always like these, they fight for any reason. If five drunk Russians ask me for a lift I will give them the lift, but I will never stop the car for a single Kazakh. I am less afraid of five drunk Russians than a single Kazakh. When I see a Kazakh in the distance I turn away on purpose not to encounter him. They come here from the aul, and then tell you, 'I am a Kazakh you are not. Here is my country, I have nothing. Why do you have a car, why have you got an apartment. Why?' They do not think that I have worked the whole of my life for the car and the apartment. If you say something to them, they will beat you. You cannot complain to the police and courts, because

they are Kazakhs, they never prosecute Kazakhs for non-Kazakhs.

Tadjiks and Uzbeks were not only openly harassed by the rural Kazakhs, but by the police as well. The aul Kazakhs, both street traders and customers took fruit and vegetables from them without paying. Police treated them more harshly and the migrant Kazakhs chased them away from the illegal markets. Migrant Kazakhs justified their hostility towards Uzbeks and Tadjiks, by claiming that the Uzbeks had chased them away from Tashkent's markets after independence. In fact, I met in Almaty legal market Kazakhs from Uzbekistan whose families lived still in Uzbekistan. They told me they have to trade in Almaty, because Uzbeks do not let them trade in Tashkent. As result Tadjiks and Uzbeks were forced to hire places in legal markets and pay much higher fees than the usual 30 Tenge , each street trader paid to police. Even then they were continuously harassed. I met two Tadjiks on my arrival in the neighbourhood who were forced to go to Tastak, a market in Almaty. I kept contact with them until my departure. In that market and the somewhat the larger market of *Zelenyi Bazaar*, considerable numbers of Tadjiks and Uzbeks sell vegetables, fruit, rice, and dried fruit, which they bring to Almaty from Tadjikistan and Uzbekistan. They are systematically harassed in both Tastak and the *Zelenyi Bazar*. According to the Tadjik I knew, each day the police officers take from them a considerable amount of fruits and vegetable free of charge. In Tastak bazaar the police robbed Tadjiks regularly. Most of the Tadjiks who sold fruit there came from the Kurgan Tappeh area in Tadjikistan.

Police officers robbed them two or three times a week. Once the market was closed during the evening and Tadjiks were going home as usual, the police stopped some Tadjik and asked for his papers. Although he had the *propiska* (residential permission), they forced him into the police car, took him to a lonely place, and then took his money and left him there. Often, they abused the victim verbally and physically. On one occasion they beat the victim so harshly that he got a big ball on his head. I tried to convince them to complain to the human rights organisations. They were afraid, but finally the brother of the beaten man, whom I had known longer told me: "Brother we are powerless (*bichareh*) and strangers (*ghareeb*) here. If you will help us, we will complain." I promised to help them. I went to the European Union Office, beside Panfilov Park. I talked with a Belgian man who was in charge of the office. He referred me to a Kazakh woman, who was working on the question of democracy for the EU office. The woman became enthusiastic to help them. She told me that they must give the number of a car, or say from which district the police came, then she would call their bosses or some

whereelse. She made an appointment and suggested I should bring the Tadjiks who had been harassed, and she would make a full inquiry and report it to both the authorities and human rights organisations. I went back to the Tadjiks and told the story. But none of them was ready to come with me to the EU office. They were afraid. One of them told me you have an Austrian passport, your government will help you. We have nobody. You go away, we remain here. If the police know that we have reported them, they will treat us even more harshly<sup>14</sup> .

In addition to the police, the young Kazakh army conscripts from the other parts of Kazakhstan, took fruit regularly from Tadjiks and Uzbeks. Once, when I was visiting a Tadjik around six o'clock in the Zelenyi Bazaar, he showed me two Kazakh conscripts in military uniform, and said: "Look, they are waiting for there to be fewer people here, and then they will take money from somebody."

On another occasion I was talking with a Tadjik from Uzbekistan at midday in the Zelenyi Bazaar. He was telling me that in the Soviet time there was greater freedom (*azadi* ). To prove this he took his passport out of his pocket, and said: "Look at this passport. My nationality is registered as an Uzbek, while I am a Tadjik. In the Soviet time my nationality in my passport was Tadjik. Today in Uzbekistan, I cannot say I am a Tadjik without being troubled..." While we were talking, a drunk Kazakh man took an orange from an Uzbek seller beside us. The Uzbek tried to resist but this provoked the aggression of the man and his two comrades, another Kazakh and a Russian, who began to shout at him. The Uzbek became intimidated and let the orange go. The other two men, encouraged by the concession took two more oranges and some bananas and went away. Uzbeks and Tadjik were the only people subjected to such mistreatment. I asked the local Korean and Turkish women who sold Korean food, vegetables and fruit in the same market, whether they were mistreated in the same way. They answered that they, Uzbeks and Tadjiks were, migrants (*priezzhie*). They were locals (*mestnye*), and, because of that, no body bothered them.

On another occasion, I went to another Tadjik whose stall was fifty yards from the first Tadjik. When I approached his desk, an old Kazakh women was shouting at my acquaintance angrily in Kazakh. He was quiet and afraid. I told the woman to be quiet (*tikho*). Thinking I was a Tadjik, she began to shout at me as well. Then I shouted out at her angrily: "go away (*idi ot siuda*)." The woman, confronted with my decided manner and the fact that I was well dressed, became silent and then went away. Then I asked him why the old woman was shouting at

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<sup>14</sup> The harassment of other nationalities by the police is a universal phenomena in the Post-Soviet republics. Kazakhs are hounded in Uzbekistan. Central Asians, Caucasians and even Provincial Russians are harassed in Moscow and St Petersburg and Russians are harassed in the Baltic republics.

him. He answered that the woman was mad (*devaneh*) and wanted money. He added that each day Tadjiks confront many such Kazakhs. He said:

I always keep quiet and pretend that I don't hear them. If I get involved, half-a-dozen Kazakhs will come here, beat me up and take my money. You can imagine how bad our situation is in Tadjikistan, that we tolerate such a miserable life here in Kazakhstan. You saw with your own eyes, an old poor woman insulted me and I kept quiet. Each day several such mad Kazakhs insult (*doshnam midan*) and trouble me and other Tadjiks and we cannot do anything.

I told him about the human rights organisations and tried to convince him to go there with his friends and make a complaint. With a disappointed tone he said: "They will not do anything for us. Then, with the same tone, he continued; "we have no real president, our present president is a shit (*gohh*). If we had a real president nobody could mistreat us like this."

Kazakhs justified their claims of hegemony over non-Kazakhs through claiming that Kazakhstan was their historical homeland.

### ***Historical homeland***

As mentioned above Kazakhs justify their privileged claims on the newly independent state and its territory and resources by a primordial claim on the territory. For an example let us look at the following story.

The reader might remember Memet the Turk from the third chapter who let Russian Aleksander fish in the lake. One summer day when Aleksander and I were visiting Memet, we sat under the shadow of a tree and drank local beers which Aleksander and I had brought with us from Almaty. While we were talking a Lada turned off the main road on the small road to Memet's house. When the car stopped, an old Kazakh man with a lot of Soviet medals on his chest approached us accompanied by three other young Kazakh men. Memet greeted them, they greeted him back. Memet invited them to tea but he refused and instead said to Memet with an authoritarian voice: "I have told you that you should leave here but you have not done it yet." Memet answered very firmly: "I have papers which show that this house belongs to me and I am the guard (*okhranik*) here. You have no legal authority to evict me from this house. You have no right to this place." The old man became indignant at Memet's answer and said: "I am a

veteran. This is our land (*nasha zemlia*). Your homeland (*rodina*) is Caucasus, go back there." Memet answered:



Neither your ancestors (*predki*) nor mine have planted these trees here. Ivan has planted them. (We all laughed with the exception of the old man.) I will not go back to Caucasus, my homeland is here. I was born here, I have grown up here, my parents are buried here, my relatives live here, I have nobody in the Caucasus. I will not leave Kazakhstan unless Nazarbaev gives an order that all Turks must leave Kazakhstan.

"I don't want to see you here next time'', the old man said, and turned back to the car with his companions. While they were leaving, Memet said: "He wants to intimidate me by his medals. He says that he is a veteran. All veterans have already died. I have my own contacts. I have a relative in the Army who has promised to support me." Two weeks later, Memet told me, the Veteran sent the young men to intimidate him in a diplomatic way by telling him that the Veteran has good connections with the higher authorities. They had said Memet could not stand against the Veteran, that it was better for him to give up peacefully. But Memet was not about to give up. Through his relative's contacts, a half-Turk half- Kazakh army officer, he managed to persuade the Veteran to stay away from him and his house. Memet said that the Veteran had received a 3000,000 Tenge credit from banks and could build his own house but he just wanted to receive a house which was ready. Actually, both the house and the lake belonged to the state. Before Memet moved in, a Russian family, acquaintance of Memet, lived there and were in charge of the lake. When Memet heard that they were migrating to Russia he managed through his Russian friend to become the guard there.

This story reveals two of the most important ways people evoke the notion of homeland. Firstly, it is clearly connected to the competition for resources. Secondly, while Kazakhs construct it by resorting to primordial rights, non-Kazakhs construct it by a constructionist discourse. As I have already discussed the first issue, I will consider the second here.

The self-evidency of the Kazakhs' primordial understanding of the homeland is problematised by the non-Kazakhs' constructionist approach. Memet's counter-argument against the Kazakh veteran catches the ear. He dismisses the veteran's primordial claims on homeland, and as result to the property in dispute, by saying, "Neither your ancestors nor mine have planted these trees here. Ivan has planted them." Memet suggests that Russians have built the country ( among the locals Ivan is a stereotypical name for Russians ). Then he justifies his own claim

by relating his and his relatives' personal lives and death to the country : "I will not go back to Caucasus, my homeland is here. I am born here, I have grown here up, my parents are buried here, my relatives live here, I have nobody in Caucasus." Bringing Russians into the dispute was not accidental. Memet, like many Russians, was a second generation migrant. His parents, like many other Turks, were sent into exile in Kazakhstan in the 1940s from the Caucasus. Most non-Kazakhs, particularly Russians, resort to a similar argument to justify their claims. Aleksander, to show me how Russians had built Kazakhstan, mentioned proudly some of the famous buildings which he claimed he and his colleagues had furnished with doors and windows. He had a strong attachment to the places he had grown up with, he knew well and loved the landscape and lakes in which he had been hunted and fished for so many years. In spite of the fact that a sister and two of his brothers were living in Russia, and that his son had recently migrated to Russia, he did not want to leave Kazakhstan. When we visited his parents' graves, he said:

Here is my land (*zdes' moia zemlia*). What have I to do with Moldova? No relatives are left there. I do not know the language. My grand parents came here in the 1930s. My father worked the whole of his life in this Kolkhoz, his boss was a Kazakh. Today they tell us, you are colonialists. It is difficult, but I will not leave here. I want die here and be buried besides my parents.

Russians and other ethnic groups argued that they have built the republic together and claimed that it should belong to all. People of Slavic origin particularly insisted that they had been instrumental in the development of agriculture, urbanisation, industrialisation and education. In an evolutionist manner, Russians claim that their contributions to the spheres mentioned above have helped Kazakhs develop themselves from a backward (*nerazvityi*) and illiterate (*neobrazovonny*) tribal people to an industrialised, urbanised and educated one . Russians particularly emphasise the role of the scientific intelligentsia, who were moved to Kazakhstan from Western parts of the USSR after the advance of Nazi troops. They particularly mention the role they think the Russian scientist played in establishing the academy of science in Kazakhstan.

The different ways Kazakhs and Russians imagine their ethnic identities is in tune with the different ways they construct the concept of homeland. The Kazakhs' concept of ethnicity is genealogical, while Russians concept is constructionist. A Kazakh would usually say, I am a Kazakh because my ancestors (*predki*) are Kazakhs. A Russian would say because I speak Russian and my culture is Russian. In fact, most Slavic people and half-Russians I met in Almaty conceived themselves to be Russians. The Aleksander family in the neighbourhood is one example. Another example is an old couple, who genealogically were Ukrainian but introduced themselves as Russians.

Kazakhs have a great interest in their genealogies while Russians do not pay particular attention to their genealogies. For example, once I brought a map to the illegal street market which had combined the Kazakh Zhuz, tribes and clans into one big genealogical tree, and showed it to Saber. Then suddenly it became crowded around us; each Kazakh was interested to trace his descent back to the level of one of the Zhuz. The interest was so high that even the Kazakh customers and passers-by stopped to look at the map, trace their own genealogies and correct with satisfaction some of the mistakes in the map. It took three days before all the Kazakhs managed to look at it. Even after tracing their genealogies, some were still interested in the map and tried to buy it from me.

Kazakh interest in descent has traditionally been articulated through the rules of marriage and their concept of kinship. According to Kazakh custom, a Kazakh is not allowed to marry another Kazakh with whom he shares a male ancestor up to seven generations back. Thus Kazakhs, theoretically, must know their ancestors seven generations back. Although most Kazakhs I asked to name their ancestors of seven generation could not go beyond four generations, they told me that their father, or an uncle or grandfather had their recorded genealogy back to their Zhuz .

Kazakh responses to the constructionist argument of non-Kazakhs are contradictory. Kazakhs admit the Russians' claims of having played a pivotal role in developing of Kazakhstan and express gratitude but they accuse Russians of being intruders and colonialists. Kazakhs are particularly thankful for the Russians' contribution to the establishment of universal education. With the exception of a few sympathisers of Alash Orda, a banned Kazakh nationalist organisation, most of the Kazakhs I encountered expressed these mixed feelings of gratitude and discontent. However, different individuals emphasise one attitude and play down the other in a complex way depending on the linguistic category to which the person belongs, and the situation involved. Most of the Russian speaking Kazakhs have very positive attitudes towards the Russian presence in Kazakhstan, and are proud of their Russian friends and their Russian "culture." They did not usually spontaneously associate Russians with colonialism, unless I reminded them that Russians and other ethnic groups blamed them for nepotism and corruption. To justify their privileged position they mentioned that Kazakhstan was their land and that others had come there without their permission.

On the other hand, the Kazakh speaking Kazakhs, mainly migrants from the south, expressed hostility towards the presence of non-Kazakhs, particularly Russians, in Almaty, and considered such a presence the result of the colonial

policies in the past. They hoped that the emigration of Russian speaking people from Kazakhstan would make apartments available to them and facilitate Kazakhification of the urban space.

Although the migrant Kazakhs usually consider both the Tsarist and the Soviet eras of influx of non-Kazakhs into Kazakhstan unwelcome, they evaluate them in different ways. The opinions of Kazakhs on the Tsarist era's influx of Russians are relatively homogeneous. The following statement by a former miner, a migrant from the south, who illegally sold goods in the neighbourhood market is typical: "When Abul'khir signed the treaty with Katherine, he hoped the Russians would defend us against our enemies and treat us as their brothers. But they enslaved us, they became our new enemies." Thus they consider the Russians historical intrusion unjust and the appropriation of Kazakh land and resources by Russians illegal.<sup>15</sup>

The migrants feelings about the Soviet era influx of non-Kazakhs are much more complex, ambiguous, diversified and distributive. These complexities and ambiguities stem from tensions between such Kazakhs tendencies toward ethnic nationalism on the one hand and their feelings of sharing a common Soviet identity with others, on the other. As mentioned in the chapter 4, migrant Kazakhs have the strongest nostalgia for the Soviet era, and are the most ardent Soviet patriots. While they share such Soviet patriotism with Russian working people, they constitute the most anti-Russian group among Kazakhs. They blame Russians for occupying their land and destroying their language and culture. In other words they disconnect the Soviet past from the Russian policies. The attitudes of the three sex-workers narrated in the chapter 4 are typical of this: nostalgia for the Soviet era and hatred for Russians. How can we explain this? Actually, both the love for the Soviet Union and the hatred for Russians are motivated by the same reason: the disintegration of their kolkhozes and the consequent migration to Almaty as a result of the post-Soviet economic policies. Migrants who had lived economically secure lives in almost ethnically homogeneous Kazakh communities in the Soviet time, now live insecure and anomic lives in Almaty. On the one hand, they miss their secure lives in the *auls* which they identify with the Soviet era. On the other hand they feel alienated by the Russofied urban milieu, and envy the urban population for having apartments. As they see Russians as the representatives of the urban

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<sup>15</sup>In spite of this judgment there were those who believed that Russians had protected the Kazakhs against Dungans, Chinese and Uzbeks. This latter statement, regardless of whether it is historically correct, stems from Kazakhs' present fears of China. Actually, there is a widely shared opinion in Kazakhstan that if it was not for Russia, China would annex Kazakhstan.

cultural environment they express very strong feelings against them. However, such feelings diverge radically from the articulated nationalist discourses represented by some elements of the Kazakh intelligentsia, for whom the anti-Russian and anti-Soviet are identical. Migrants have access to such discourses, but they do not assimilate the anti-Soviet element because the post-Soviet change has degraded their social positions. To be sure, some migrants in the neighbourhood were influenced by the nationalist discourse. In our neighbourhood, I met two people who connected the Soviet past with Russian dominance. The first one, Saken , a poor Kazakh student from the south who worked as a seller for another Kazakh in a kiosk, told me :

They prevented Kazakhs from establishing their own independent state in the 1920s. They blocked the development of Kazakh culture and literature by killing the Kazakh intelligentsia in 1930s. They killed Saken Sifullin, the Kazakh poet after whom my father called me Saken. They intentionally prevented the development of the Kazakh language. Today many Kazakhs cannot speak their own language, it is a tragedy. In Russia people speak Russian, in Iran they speak Persian, in England they speak English, but here in our capital people speak Russian, this is a tragedy . During the collectivisation of 1930s many Kazakhs died from hunger and many left Kazakhstan for China, Iran, and Turkey. They industrialised here but Russians were always in charge of industry. They never let Kazakhs learn how to manage the army and industry. Because of that we are dependent today on Russian expertise.

Roslan, another Kazakh from the South who owned a kiosk at the neighbourhood and was a member of the drinking circle described in chapter 3 expressed similar feelings:

We are the periphery of Russia. We always imitate Moscow. For example the kiosks began to work in Moscow then we imitated Moscow and established kiosks here as well. We always imitate Moscow. For example a new dress fashion which is designed in Germany comes after one year to Moscow and after a year and a half through Moscow to Almaty. The foreign exchange centres (*obmennyyi Punkty*) began to work first in Moscow and then here. This is true of politics as well, we are afraid of them. When the dollar exchange rate rises in Moscow, it rises here in Almaty as well. When it falls there, it falls here as well. We have no weapons factory in Kazakhstan, we import all our weapons from Russia. The socialist division of labour was in the interest of the Russian federation. Only the Russian Federation developed in all the branches. As a result today they produce all their goods. But the other republics including Kazakhstan were developed to be dependent on Russia. Russia wants to impose this unequal division of labour on CIS. We are dependent on Russia regardless of our will. [...] Officially no colonialism existed, but Russians were real colonialists. I have very strong negative memories from my school time. It was a nightmare (*koshmar*). There were 30 Russians, two Kazakhs and one Uigur in the class. The older children abused the younger ones, but this was worse for Kazakhs. They hit me at least ten times. They usually put their fingers around their eyes and showed us that we had almond-shaped eyes. They treated us the way whites treat blacks in America. When glasnost began we Kazakhs began to struggle for our rights . I worked in a construction office, I had a Russian woman colleague. She told me that these are Russians birch fields (*Russskaia bereza pole*), we have brought these trees

from Russia and have planted them here. I answered her, we have plenty of these trees in our mountains.

When we have a dispute with Russians, even now, they tell us ' we taught you the Russian language, we taught you culture but you are not grateful (*neblagodarnye*).' We did not speak Kazakh, because, if you spoke Kazakh in a bus or another public place everybody turned and started to stare at you, you got intimidated and began to speak Russian again. Many Kazakhs began to engage with boxing and wrestling, not because of national character (*natsional'naia cherta*) but because of the need to defend themselves against Russians. My older brother became the boxing champion in Almaty. I send my children swimming so their bodies can become strong and they will be able to defend themselves. I do so because of the conflicts with Russians.[..]

Kazakh involvement in crimes and violence is not because of Kazakh national character(*natsional'naia chertakharaktera*) but poverty. Nicolaevich often uses the word *Menbet* . I have told him that he should not use the word, but he forgets and continues to use the word. He forgets about Russians. The former name of Almaty was verna. Its population consisted of Cossacks, bandits, thieves (*sbrod*) and criminals ( *prestupniki* ). They sent all who were not wanted in Russia or could not give anything positive here to Kazakhstan.

Roslan often mentioned the environmental damages inflicted in the Soviet era with regret.

Once I lived close to the Soviet air base in Baikonyr. Each day the Soviet aircraft flew to different destinations. Every day they sent rockets into space. It was a load of noise day and night. I was proud of all of these. I was proud of living in a great empire (*Velikaia Imperia*). But now I realise the result. I have an allergy and I am looking for medicine, but they cannot produce the medicine here in Kazakhstan. If they had used our resources in a proper way we would not be so poor today. He even supported the Chechen independence movement. I was with him in his kiosk when the radio broadcast the news that the Chechen leader Dudaev had been shot by a Russian missile. He burst in tears, saying he was a new Shamil', the Chechen people will not forget him, he has become a hero of people (*narodnyi geroi*).

Opposed to this type of nationalist discourse was an alternative discourse which credited the Soviet era for helping Kazakhs to achieve autonomy. Serek, a friend of Roslan, another member of the drinking circle and a highly intelligent linguist, who made a living through inter-city trade, represented it in the following way:

In the time of Tsarism Russians were colonialists, but Russian relations with us were completely different from those between white Americans and blacks. They brought blacks as slaves to America, and then racism became a permanent element of the white ideology. Our relations with Russians were different. Russians themselves were governed by Tatars and Mongols for a long time. Then they began to dominate us. First they occupied Tatarstan and then Kazakhstan. Of course they were colonialist, but they considered Tatarstan and Kazakhstan as the gates of Asia. Russians never tried to enslave us or commit genocide like whites did in Australia and America.

Tsardom enslaved first the Russian peasants (*Russkii krest'iane*). With us they followed the policy of Russification. They wanted to dominate us through the creation of an elite with Kazakh appearance and a Russian soul. If the October revolution had not occurred, the Russians could have succeeded in their policies and now (smiling and pointing with two fingers to his eyes) I, in spite of my almond-shaped eyes, would have been a Russian. And my name instead of being Serek would probably have been Sergei. The October revolution changed everything. It created soviet and autonomous republics, promoted the national consciousness (*natsional'noe samosoznanie*), national languages and national cultures. If the October revolution had not happened and the Soviet regime had not been established, we would not have had these post-Soviet republics today. The revolution created these republics, then their weight and importance grew in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and finally they became independent. You cannot compare our Soviet Union with the West. There, the white people think of themselves of being superior to Asians and Africans, here we were all equal. German and English people consider themselves to be a better race, and they are probably more intelligent than Asians and Africans. But Russians (smiling), like ourselves are a stupid race. Slavs are not an intelligent race. We are like each other, for this reason we had no racial discrimination.

Unlike Roslan, Serek has no sympathy either for Chechens or Tadjiks. He shares with Volodia, a Russian Veteran from Afghanistan who works for Roslan, the opinion that both wars are staged jointly by the high ranking officers of the Russian Army and the leaders of rebels in both Tadjikistan and Chechenia to make money through drug trafficking and selling of weapons.

These two types of discourses which represent the two opposed poles of Kazakhs' opinion on the relation between the Soviet Union and the Kazakh homeland influence their attitudes on non-Kazakhs' claims on Kazakhstan as their home land. The first view states that the non-Kazakhs, particularly Russians, have damaged their culture, language and ecology. On contrary, the second view states that non-Kazakhs have been pivotal in the construction of the modern Kazakhstan. The first opinion has an ethnic notion of the identity of the independent Kazakhstan and consider it only the homeland of Kazakhs. The second approach has a civic notion of such a identity and as a result consider Kazakhstan the homeland of all its inhabitants.

However, unlike Roslan and Serek, most Kazakhs lack clear cut opinion on such issues. Their opinions constitute a spectrum between these two poles which are constructed situationally. The same Kazakh may resort to the ethnic identity in one situation and the civic Soviet identity in another depending on context.

### **The responses of non-Kazakhs**

The resistance of non-Kazakhs against Kazakhs is very complex and varies from one ethnic group to another and within different strata of each ethnic group. However, such resistance has some common features. Because of limitation of

space neither I can explore in detail the complex and varied responses of non-Kazakhs, nor I present my full ethnographic evidence.<sup>16</sup> So, in the following I will briefly and schematically outline first the common responses of non-Kazakhs and then the particular responses of some particular ethnic groups.

The non-Kazakhs express a common resentment against the Kazakhification of the state and domination of Kazakhs in urban space by accusing Kazakhs of being nationalists. They describe Kazakhification as the official nationalism (*ofitsial'nyi natsionalizm*) and hooliganism as street nationalism (*bytovoï natsionalizm*).

Although non-Kazakhs thought that the street nationalism caused a lot of immediate troubles and dangers, they were far more concerned with the official nationalism. They thought that the state's discriminatory policies against non-Kazakhs would in the long term relegate them to an under-class position. They complained particularly about the admission policies in higher education which significantly privileges Kazakhs against non-Kazakhs.

This is a very strong accusation because in the local usages nationalism has only negative connotations. It is associated with nepotism, parochialism and hatred for people other than one's own co-ethnics. On the other hand concerns for one's own ethnicity, culture and language is evaluated positively but not considered as nationalism. The lawlessness, corruption, and the current chaos are associated with Kazakh nationalism.

The non-Kazakhs complaints about Kazakh nationalism are an important form of their resistance against Kazakh nationalism. It harnesses the Kazakh ethnic nationalism by reminding Kazakhs that non-Kazakhs are resentful against the discriminatory policies of the state officials against them and that they may resort to common action. Given the widespread hooliganism and the fact that Kazakhs dominate the police force non-Kazakhs are very careful not to provoke violent conflicts. However, they continuously argue that Kazakhstan is the homeland of all Kazakhstanis and they must have equal right to its resources regardless of their ethnic membership.

Such resistance is bolstered by the Russian newspapers' exposes of the corruption of state officials. It is noteworthy that a considerable part of the Kazakh urban population are against the current forms of Kazakh nationalism. This trend is politically represented by Kazakh personalities such as Murat Auieзов and N. Masanov. They play leading roles in the cross-ethnic political coalition, Azamat (constitution) which demands the elimination of ethnic nationalism and building of the state on the civic basis. Political parties led by Russians are other important

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<sup>16</sup> I am planning a monograph on ethnicity in Kazakhstan, and will give a detailed account of these responses in this work.



members of the coalition. The constituency for the this civic movement is the so called Russian speaking-population (*Russkoe iazychnoe naselenie*). Russian speaking people is a post-Soviet political category defined with reference to language. Unlike People (*narod*) and ethnicity (*natsional'nost'*) it has no organic connotation but refers to situationally shared political interests.

In addition to this common resistance different non-Kazakh ethnic groups have chosen specific ways of responding to Kazakh nationalism depending on their national and transnational resources.

First, they try to carve new niches of economic activity in the newly created private sector. In so doing each ethnic group draw on both their national and transnational resources. The national resources depend on the position of each group in the ethnic division of labour, ethnic networks and dispositions. Russians, Jews and Tatars have occupied some key positions in the private sector because of their language skills and knowledge. Koreans are involved in casinos and Uigurs are involved in bazaars.

All of these groups benefit from transnational contacts. Russians, Tatars and Jews have good contacts with their co-ethnics in the Russian federation. Jews in addition to this benefit from the new links with Israel. Koreans have established business links with south Korea and benefit from the presence of South Korean Companies in Kazakhstan. Uigurs are involved in the suitcase trade between Kazakhstan and China with help of the Chinese Uigurs.

In addition to the transnational economic links, some groups are supported politically and culturally by the states of their so called historical homelands (*istoricheskaia Rodina*) and may migrate to these homelands.<sup>17</sup> Russia, Germany, Israel, Turkey and South Korea lobby the Kazakh state officials on the behalf of their co-ethnics. In addition to this the last four states or their citizens are involved in cultural politics through opening and supporting language, cultural and religious centres.

Some non-Kazakhs have responded through mass migration to their historical homelands. I have cited earlier the relevant figures on Russians, Ukrainians and Germans. It is important to emphasises that Kazakh nationalism is one reason behind migration; others are mainly of economic nature. People migrate in the hope of improving their economic life. Different ethnic groups conceive their migrations differently. Russians and Ukrainians who consider Kazakhstan as their main homeland and have rather stronger feelings for

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<sup>17</sup> The historical homeland is the country or a territory with which a particular ethnic group is associated. For example the historical homeland of Russians is Russia and of Germans Germany. So non-Kazakhs have two simultaneous homelands; Kazakhstan and the historical homeland.

Kazakhstan than Russia and Ukraine; and consider their migration as a forced migration (Pilkington 1998). I met many Russians whose relatives had migrated to Russia or who had done so themselves. All of them said that migrants found themselves alienated in the Russian social and cultural environment. They complained that the Russian authorities and the local population are hostile towards them. Moreover, they emphasised that they strongly missed Almaty and relatives and friends there. Indeed two families had returned back to Almaty. Answering my question, “do you feel culturally closer to Kazakhs in Kazakhstan or Russians in Russia” most of them said Kazakhs in Kazakhstan. They had much more positive views of Kazakhs in Kazakhstan than of Russians in Russia. Most of them said that they had much stronger feelings for Kazakhstan than Russia. The reason most of them gave for migration was concerns for the future of the children. They thought their children had better chances to enter universities and get jobs in Russia than in Kazakhstan. Although they consider Kazakh hooliganism a major problem it was not mentioned as an important reason for migration. Most of them said that hooliganism existed in Russia as well.

Koreans who cannot migrate to South Korea, because of the migration laws considered Kazakhstan as their main homeland. But they tried to create an ethnic solidarity through involvement in cultural activities with help of the Koreans from South Korea.

In contrast, Jews and Germans expressed strong nostalgia for their ethnic homelands and had stronger loyalties to these homelands than Kazakhstan. They considered their migration not forced but voluntary.

It seems to me that different attitudes on homeland depends on the ways each of these states treat migrants. Germany and Israel support their migrants much more generously than Russia and Ukraine.

Uigurs who lack a state of their own try to create a stronger ethnic community through involvement in cultural politics. The Uigurs were involved much more than any other ethnic groups in cultural revival. This to some extent is a result of the Uigur national movement in neighbouring China. But the most of Uigurs I talked with told me that they had no state to support them, so they must help each other.

### **Summary and conclusions**

In Almaty, while ethnic competitions and tensions take many forms, they are mainly focused on two main resources: the state institutions and urban space. The reason for this is that the social transactions with immediate and in some cases high

economic returns are related to these two spheres. The ethnic tensions on the labour market for industrial jobs, which are occupied traditionally by Russians, is very marginal. It is not attractive for Kazakhs, because wages are reduced dramatically, paid irregularly or in kind.

The monopolising of higher positions in the bureaucracy and places in higher education by Kazakhs has provoked a strong dissatisfaction among non-Kazakhs. On the other hand this has created a tension between the Russian Speaking Kazakhs and Kazakh speaking Kazakhs, because the state language policy promotes the interests of the latter in the long run.

The tensions over urban space are caused by the massive migration of Kazakhs to the cities. These tensions are between migrants who speak Kazakh and the urban population who speak Russian. In these tensions the Russian speaking Kazakhs side with non-Kazakhs against migrants. Hooliganism and the use of violence, which are important means of control of urban space, articulate the domination of Kazakh ethnicity to the dominant masculinities among Kazakhs. The gangs of Kazakh men justify their use of violence for control over particular places by claiming that Kazakhstan is their ancestral land. Urban Kazakhs' solidarity with other Russian speaking people make the picture much more complex. While urban Kazakhs consider Kazakhstan to be their historical homeland they are mostly against hooliganism and the ethno-linguistic nationalism of the state officials. They support non-Kazakhs against hooliganism.

Ethnic hooliganism is a result of the current crisis of hegemony and a by-product of the chaotic mode of domination discussed in chapter 1. While the economic crisis and massive dislocation of rural Kazakhs have created a wide Kazakh lumpen proletariat, the chaotic mode of domination provides a space for this group to engage in hooliganism. Such hooliganism is an important element of the chaos. Non-Kazakhs are of the opinion that the state officials who are mainly Kazakhs support hooligans against non - Kazakhs.

An important dimension of the ethnic struggle for the urban space is the use of violence by Kazakhs against non-Kazakhs and each other. So violence as an important element of chaos, described in chapter 2, relates ethnicity to gender. Urban space is controlled by violent Kazakh men. The ethnic dominance of Kazakhs is equal to the dominance of the strong Kazakh men. In short the hegemonic masculinity and the hegemonic ethnicity enforce each other. The subjects of violence are not only other men but generally women from any ethnic backgrounds.

Another interesting aspect of these tensions is that they usually transcend, Muslim/ Christian and Slav/ Turk divisions. The very dominance of Kazakhs has created feelings of solidarity between non-Muslim and non-Turkic ethnic groups on the one hand and non-Kazakh Muslim and non-Kazakh Turkic ethnic groups on the other. Another significant observation is that ethnic tensions in Kazakhstan are not determined by so called historically given cultural differences but are dimensions of social struggles for particular resources in the context of the current political and economic chaos. Nor have these conflicts among the dispossessed yet developed into the articulated forms of ethnic nationalism represented by some groups of intellectuals. In spite of the ethnic tensions between them, dispossessed among Kazakhs, Russians and other ethnic groups consider themselves to be subdivisions of the same Soviet people. Most people considered ethnic conflicts a result of the expansion of wild capitalism.

### **Conclusions: Whose transition?**

I have summarised each chapter and made relevant conclusions in the end of each chapter. So, I do not summarise the thesis here again; the reader is advised to read the summaries of previous chapters in order before reading these final conclusions.

Chaos, described in the previous chapters, is depicted by the dispossessed as the intrusion of global wild capitalism into the territory of Kazakhstan and the effects of such an intrusion. In other words, chaos is the particular form of globalisation in Kazakhstan. Such globalisation is not only marked by the presence of multi-nationals, Americanism and transnational connections of the elite, but the fact that the IMF, the World Bank, the USA and the EU are systematically cultivating capitalist values and supervising the transformation to capitalism. The dispossession of millions of people from their basic economic and cultural rights, the emergence of the chaotic mode of domination, the growth of violence and poverty, the monetisation of life worlds and the emergence and expansion of the sex industry are the most important aspects of this process.

In contrast to the celebratory and glorious images of globalisation, produced by many trendy scholars, for the dispossessed in Almaty, globalisation is a story of wild capitalism, chaos, dispossession, loss, tears, horror, violence and fear. Indeed, all of these are the direct result of the dissolution of the welfare state and the emergence of wild capitalism.

The very fact that in Soviet society people enjoyed numerous economic rights, make the transformation to a market economy an immense tragedy. The depth of such tragedy is not understandable unless we agree with the dispossessed that Soviet society had some advantages for them.

The idea that Soviet society had some benefits is to provoke the scorn of mainstream academic and journalistic circles in the West. They will rush to remind you of Stalinist terror, purges, concentration camps, lack of political liberties and so forth. Yet, millions of dispossessed, who themselves had been subjected to such terror, are emphasising nostalgically that the creation of the welfare-state has been a major achievement of Soviet types of societies. The success of the reformed communist parties in elections is a good indicator of such a nostalgia. However, those who are nostalgic for the welfare state do not associate it with the political regime of Stalinism and do not wish to see the revival of such a regime.

Indeed, the economic rights of Soviet citizens were not offered to people by Stalinism on a golden tray but the people imposed them on the regime. The

Stalinist political regime and the welfare state were two contradictory but not complementary features of Soviet Society. This contradiction has its roots in the fact that the Soviet system emerged as a result of the unacknowledged defeat of the October Revolution by Stalinist contra revolution. Stalinists buried the revolution in the name of revolution itself. But they also had to pay a price.

While massively purging and killing genuine revolutionaries they claimed cynically to be the genuine heirs of the revolution and ruled the country in the name of the working class in the following decades. The Stalinists were not able to officially denounce the revolution and the working class because of the relative power and influence of the latter. As a result of the balance of forces a historical compromise was established between the Stalinist elite and the working class. While the working class conceded the hegemonic political and economic powers to the new Stalinist ruling group the latter made a concession, historically without precedent, to the workers in the sphere of welfare.

From its emergence in the 1930s until the mid 1980s, in one sense the short history of the system could be described as that of the rise, expansion and disintegration of the most far-reaching welfare state world history has ever witnessed. Life time employment, free access to education, cheap access to housing, electricity, central heating, gas, telephone, transport, health care, sport, books, theatre and numerous other welfare services expanded continuously from the 1930s onwards, the war period excepted (Corrigan & Ramsay & Sayer 1981: 16-18).<sup>1</sup>

These welfare reforms were closely linked to the form of state ownership of the means of production. This form of ownership also bears the imprint of the paradox mentioned above: while officially it was declared a form of socialist ownership in practice the surplus products were appropriated and administered by the elite (Tictin 1992). In other words, workers were alienated from the means of production and products. However, the very collectivist guise of property relations was a concession to the working class. This showed itself not only in the various welfare services which were provided by enterprises for their staff but also in the workers relations to the means of production and products on the one hand and the labour process on the other. As Alexander, a Russian worker, describes in chapter 3 Soviet workers could to a limited extent use instruments of production and products for private ends. More importantly, their control over the labour-process was much higher than that of the workers in the capitalist world (Tictin 1992) .

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<sup>1</sup> I read this article first in 1983. Then, I denounced it as a revisionist opinion. To the credit of its authors and my humiliation most of the post-Soviet dispossessed, particularly workers, have realistically a similar understanding of the achievements of Soviet Society. In my opinion the article still represents one of the most sophisticated understandings of Soviet Society.

Another aspect of the social contract between Stalinism and the working class was the limits such a contract imposed on the elite's privileges. Although the elite had privileges, such privileges were limited in comparison with those of propertied classes in the capitalist world in three ways: 1) Their wealth comprised a lesser proportion of the total national wealth; 2) Their privileges were unstable because changes in one's political position inevitably entailed changes in one's privileges; 3) Privileges were not transferable through inheritance, although the children of the elite benefited from the privileges in general.

Through the post-soviet reforms the elite broke this historical contract at the expense of the labouring masses. In this sense market reforms are rather a continuation of Stalinism in a new guise rather than being a break with it. They finished the unfinished Stalinist counter-revolution. Thus it is no surprise that a majority of today's heroes of the market economy are erstwhile Stalinists.

Once the system sank into a deep crisis in the early 1980s, the renegotiation of the historical compromise between the elite and working class became inevitable. Now radical workers and radical socialists not only wanted to keep the welfare state but wanted go beyond it. They demanded workers' control over production and the revival of early Soviet democracy (Kagarlitsky 1988).

Indeed, most of the dispossessed I talked with told me that both perestroika and glasnost had stimulated great expectations for the future. They expected that their living standards would be raised to match those of Western countries and to enjoy democracy. However, as the course of events showed very soon, the elite and their Western mentors contemplated something else. They wanted to abolish the welfare state. The failure of radical socialists, for reasons the examination of which is beyond the scope of this dissertation, to become a formidable political force (Kagarlitsky 1990) offered them the opportunity to do this. Thereby, they launched a brutal expropriation of people at a speed with no precedent in history. <sup>2</sup>

Low (1997: 403), with reference to the global context, argues that cities as the main interfaces between global processes and people's daily experiences are

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<sup>2</sup> Mainstream journalism and academics in the West have not hesitated to cover up one of the largest brutal expropriation of masses in history either by pouring scorn on the dispossessed's protests by associating them with the so called red-brown monsters, or by some superficial and marginal remarks on corruption of the post-Soviet elite. What these journalists and academics try to distort is that from the point of view of the dispossessed masses the corruption of the post-Soviet elite is not separable from the transition to the market economy. From this point of view opposing crony capitalism to a civilised and moralistic capitalism is a new form of charlatanism invented by of the defenders of capitalism. Indeed, the only morality capitalism knows is profit making. Plunder, murder, imperialism, wars and torture are just a few 'romantic' methods capitalists have not hesitated to use in order to secure profit. In Europe (both Eastern and Western) capitalist brutality was harnessed partially by the working class movements after the second world war. However, the so called flexible mechanisms of accumulations have offered capital the opportunity to return to its earlier forms of brutal and extreme exploitation with the implementation of monetarism.

also places of violence, abuse and marginalisation. She relates such brutal experiences to the ways these global processes polarise, gender and ethnicise the cities. Not only does the flexible accumulation of capital lead to the accumulation of wealth on the one hand and accumulation of poverty on the other, but related to this, creates ethnic ghettos and exposes women and migrants to poverty and violence.

In Almaty the polarisation of the population is marked by the disintegration of society as a moral community of welfare into networks of the new rich on the one hand and those of the poor on the other. The class positions of these two groups are ambiguous in terms of the relations of production, because, both of them acquire important parts of their material resources from outside production. This is partly due to current processes of deindustrialisation caused by the collapse of industry and agriculture. Although the sale of raw material and the privatisation of the means of production are important sources of the wealth of the new rich, they mainly acquire their wealth through speculation, bribery, extracting tributes and monopolisation of commerce. On the other hand the dispossessed do not survive only through their wages, the payment of which is often postponed by several months, but utilise a variety of methods such as cultivating allotments, hunting and gathering, involvement in small scale trade, illegal appropriation of small resources in their work places and, most importantly, reciprocal exchanges within their networks.

These two types of networks share the characteristic that both are based on marriage, kinship, and friendship relations which more or less acquire an ethnic character. Both appropriate resources illegally although on different scales. Moreover, they share a morality in which not only do the obligations to networks override other commitments but networks constitute the sole moral community for individuals. In other words society as a moral community of citizens does not exist. To paraphrase Margaret Thatcher, according to current networking mentality; 'society does not exist. We have only individuals and their networks'. People outside networks are not only not trusted and feared, but can be cheated and violated. This morality, combined with the arbitrariness of state officials, Mafia and street gangs, constitutes a strong element of chaos. Practically, what was once called society is disintegrated into a set of networks who negotiate their relations through the use of force and exchange of bribes and tributes.

In spite of sharing these characteristics, these two types differ in several respects. Firstly, while new rich glorify the the disintegration of society into networks as a step towards a promised capitalist paradise of freedom and prosperity, the



dispossessed view it with great regret. While they demand the revival of society as a moral community of welfare, they consider their own involvement in current networking practices a matter of expediency. Secondly, the networks of the new rich have monopolised the means of violence.

Thirdly, these two types of networks differ in their access to the means of transnational communication and in their cultural orientations as a result of and as an expression of what might be called an uneven globalisation. With uneven globalisation in Kazakhstan I mean a process whereby particular sectors of economic and cultural practices and the prosperous section of the population become part of the so called "global ecumene", while the rest, are not only excluded from it but dispossessed, marginalised, dominated and exploited by the globalisation process.

As result the new rich in Kazakhstan experience globalisation as an exciting journey from one metropolitan capital to the next, visiting expensive clubs and shopping centres and consuming luxurious goods and services. But the rest find it an evil and corrupt process. The dispossessed not only cannot afford these luxuries but their communication beyond Almaty has shrunk dramatically because of the simultaneous dramatic rise of the prices in travel fares, telephone and postage stamps on the one hand and the wage cuts on the other. Indeed, in this sense while the networks of the new rich have become truly global those of the new poor have spatially shrunk. Another important dimension of the transnationalisation of the networks of the new rich is their multiple contacts with representatives of multi-nationals, the IMF, the WB, Western governments, the international banking system and other agencies.

Of course the dispossessed are not fully immune from the influence of globalisation, through watching soap operas, experiencing the presence of foreigners, transnational sex industry, migration of neighbours, and through the travel of sex-workers and suit-case traders to other countries. However, they look on these, watching soap operas excepted, negatively.

A result of the disintegration of the society into these two types of networks is the perpetuation of the current crisis of hegemony. The elite has no moral and ideological authority over the dispossessed. In contrast, the dispossessed consider the elite as a bunch of thieves and criminals. However, from the point of view of the elite the disintegration of society into networks is a solution to the crisis of hegemony. The multiplicity and arbitrariness of the networks of influence create a great fear among the dispossessed, which pacifies them politically. Moreover, the government officials remind continuously the population that any social unrest will

exacerbate the current chaos. Indeed, Nazarbaev in any speech reminds people that stability (*stabilnost*) is the first priority of the republic. People buy this argument to a great extent. Given the ethnic nature of the networks of influence and hooliganism people are afraid that any civil unrest may exacerbate the chaos by instigating widespread ethnic violence. The tragic wars in Chechenia and Tadjikistan and the massive presence of refugees from these two places in Kazakhstan remind people of the possibilities of ethnic violence. In such a situation the dispossessed cope with the situation through the networks of survival. However, networking practices among the dispossessed contribute to nepotism and ethnic tensions which negatively affect their unification against the elite.

Castells (1997) argues that building communal movements is partly a response of the dispossessed to the exploitative aspects of globalisation. The responses of the dispossessed to uneven globalisation in Kazakhstan include both communal and civic elements. The communal elements are involved in the ways networking practices are related to ethnicity and the civic elements are expressed through construction of a soviet identity.

The relations of such networks to ethnicity is complex. Although networks acquire an ethnic character and the widespread network- oriented nepotism contributes to ethnic tensions people do not identify networking directly with ethnicity. Ethnicity colours networking mainly through the micro-processes of kinship, marriage and friendship where mutual trust is negotiated and established.

By the construction of an authentic soviet identity the dispossessed from all ethnic backgrounds resist rhetorically economic and cultural globalisation. Such an identity is created through demonising the main dimensions of globalisation as evil alien forces. The main elements of the alien in local constructions are the alien person, the alien culture and wild capitalism in general.

The alien persons are conceived to be male by gender, the agent of wild capitalism, rich and promiscuous, responsible for the destruction of the Soviet union and its culture, and the spreading of alien cultural manners such as prostitution and sexual diseases and consumerism.

The ways in which the alien person is sexualised and gendered reflects fears about the destabilisation and disintegration of family relations, which constitute the main nodes of networks of survival. The threats to family are imposed by a market-oriented liberalisation of sexuality, bolstered by the dispossession of women which is caused by the transformation to market economy.

In the Soviet era, the 1920s excepted, sexuality was officially a matter of taboo. Sex was absent not only from public, popular and intellectual discourses but

its practices were subjected to very strict moralistic discourses. One of the results of the Gorbachev reforms was an openness on sexuality. Now, sexuality was publicised through public debates in the media and the circulation of erotic and pornographic material on a huge scale. Moreover, such liberalisation is marked by the massive proliferation of different forms of extra-marital sex.

Under the current gendered economic conditions, liberalisation led to the creation of a huge sex industry not only through the production and sale of pornography but massive transformation of women's bodies into sex-commodities. The latter was facilitated by the ways post-Soviet wealth differentiation is gendered. As the new rich consist exclusively of men, the majority of women become dispossessed. The sex market offered young women among the dispossessed the opportunities to deploy sexual strategies of survival explored in chapter 4.

The tensions between wives and husbands among the dispossessed, caused by unemployment and poverty might encourage women to practice sexualised strategies. However, the images of women's bodies as a sex-commodity have provoked great abuse and violence against them. As in the case of any other commodity, in the post-Soviet chaotic and violent mafia-market, they are appropriated, sold and consumed, if not always but often through use of force. Secondly, such violence is legitimised by the public stigma inflicted on such women. They are considered as perverts and deviants who should be punished or at least do not deserve any moral support. So, in a much broader sense violence and stigma are the two main mechanisms through which the post-Soviet new rich discipline and distribute women's bodies along reproductive and profit-making functions.

The dispossessed link the monetisation of sexuality to another element of the evil alien, namely Western-oriented consumerist culture publicised through the merging of market and media. An interesting aspect of anti-consumerist rhetoric is the pride people take in consuming their own Soviet goods (goods produced in CIS). The anti-consumerist rhetoric of the dispossessed is not directed against the use value of the foreign goods or consumption as such. But the ways these goods and consumerism are used by the new rich as signs of distinction. Lavish and conspicuous consuming of luxurious goods is the main way through which the new rich declare their social existence. While opposing the consumerist culture of the new rich the dispossessed claim nostalgically that their ruined Soviet culture is based on higher humanitarian values. The sexual promiscuity and consumerism of the new rich and foreigners are considered to be elements of chaos (wild capitalism). The dispossessed were of the opinion that the prevalence of

prostitution was a part of the wider plot of conspiracy by the elite and foreigners to destroy Soviet Society.

Soviet nostalgia should not be considered as a demand for a full return to the Soviet past. Although people truly demand the revival of the welfare state, they also want democracy and they are critical of the shortage of particular goods in the Soviet time. Such nostalgia is primarily a criticism of wild capitalism and expresses demands for an egalitarian society. Another reason for the nostalgia for the Soviet era is that the dispossessed's coping strategies such as networking and sex work are considered to be constituent elements of the chaos rather than being solutions to it.

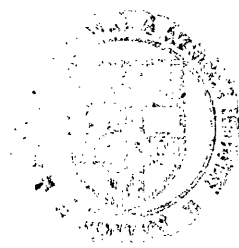
Through the negation of the alien the dispossessed imagine, in a very strong sense, a Soviet egalitarian community. But this sense of community is problematised by gender and ethnic tensions. On the gender level the use of sexualised strategies by young dispossessed women and their inclination towards consumerism question the notions of a Soviet sexual morality. On the other hand the notions of Soviet sexual morality are in the service of patriarchal gender relations and justify the use of violence against women who dare to break the puritanical sexual rules.

The feelings of belonging to an imagined Soviet community by the dispossessed has helped to contain the explosive expression of ethnic conflicts. The very fact that the dispossessed, regardless of ethnicity, keep the elite and the West responsible for their current miseries prevents them from scapegoating each other. However, in spite of this, the competition for resources between networks, the role of the state in this respect and Kazakhification of state and massive migration of Kazakhs to cities have given rise to ethnic tensions.

As a Russian woman eloquently pointed out to me: "The ethnic conflicts in Kazakhstan are burning but still not explosive". However, people see the emergence of ethnic conflicts as an element of chaos resulting from the disintegration of Soviet society and blame them on foreigners and the invasion of the Soviet territory by the capitalism. Their view is diametrically opposed to that of scholars who conceive the current ethnic tensions as result of confrontation between different cultures and religions.

In conclusion, let us return to the question I put rhetorically as the subtitle of this chapter: Whose transition? What the dispossessed call chaos is celebrated by the elite and the "West" as a transition to capitalism which is exalted as the natural order of life. This transition is the core element of the globalisation processes in Kazakhstan. Most of the Western discourses of globalisation while rightly pointing

to some of the profound technological, economic and cultural changes which have occurred in the post war period include a strong element of political rhetoric. On the level of cultural politics globalisation is celebrated as a way of diversifying of cultural experience and the creation of rainbow cultures. On the economic level it has been argued that we cannot resist capital because of so called flexible accumulation. Indeed, both of these rhetorics from the point of view of the dispossessed in Almaty reflect the positions and advantages of the new rich and their foreign allies and should be challenged. Globalisation for them is not a experience of rainbow culture or access to the internet, British Air ways, clubs in, or travels to, Paris, Rome, London but a hell of abuse, violence, poverty and ruthless exploitation. They call this chaos (*bardak* ). World capitalism is depicted as a global brothel! A forceful metaphor. This “global brothel” and its representative are condemned by the dispossessed as evil alien forces, responsible for their current social miseries.



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