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THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN NORTH CAUCASUS

(Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia)

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Table of contents

Introduction 4
Social divisions. The support and control of “clans” 6
Legal regulations regarding women: customary law, religious law and state law 11
Relations between women and men 22
“Appropriate” and “inappropriate” female attire 24
Disciplining women “in the interest of the nation” 26
Situation of women versus re(Islamisation) of North Caucasus 29
Education, university studies 35
Women's jobs 38
Women and corruption 42
Marriage and family 43
Pregnancies, abortions, adoptions 48
Domestic violence. Institutional help 52
Rapes 55
Honour killings 57
Circumcision of girls 60
Abductions and marriage by abduction 62
Polygamy 65
Independent and divorced women 67
Conclusion 71
Bibliography 72
About Author 75

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the situation of women in North Caucasus, and in particular in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia, from the perspective of daily life. This will be an intersectional analysis, taking into account origin, clan membership, education, place of living and degree of religiousness. Such a perspective presents a reliable picture of the situation and helps understand certain restrictions for and methods of controlling women. Domestic violence, honour killings, the right to stay with children after the divorce do not apply to all women in North Caucasus in equal measure. The theoretical equality before the law does not mean equal treatment in daily life either.

In its depiction of the situation of women, the study considers their social and financial status, the clan, ethnic and religious divisions which influence their daily lives and the daily relations of power. It also briefly describes the issue of coexistence and intertwining of legal systems, i.e. federal law, common law and religious law, along with their significance for North Caucasian women. In North Caucasus, the state is neither the main arbitrator in dispute resolution, especially in family matters, nor a moral authority or an institution that protects the victims of violence. Considering how often representatives of the state break the law, people are reluctant to seek justice in secular courts, seeing them as corrupt and serving the political authorities. Women are also unwilling to turn to NGOs in times of crisis; mistrust in the state leads to mistrust in any types of formal structures.

Ordinary people often treat the kinship community and elements of Sharia as the main points of reference, especially with regard to family life. This study describes the relations between men and women, the issues of marriage, divorce, polygamy and gender-related aspects of the religious and economic life (especially in the context of female labour and corrupt practices) from the perspective of actual local practices, whether or not they comply with the federal law.

The study is based primarily on my own explorations and observations made during my research trips to North Caucasus, especially to Dagestan (between 2004 and 2019) and to Chechnya and Ingushetia (between 2009 and 2011 and in 2017). Ethnographic research provides a better and more in-depth insight in a particular community as well as greater understanding of its nuances and complex interdependencies. Long trips most certainly help explore a particular issue more profoundly; however, the nature of the research limits the visits to a few places and a few communities only. As a result, such places and communities become

the lens through which we perceive whole societies and their problems, in this case the situation of women. This method, albeit full of possibilities, has some notable limitations: the attempts to make the study as holistic as possible may have led to certain generalisations and simplifications. Plenty of information is based on estimates only and is not supported with figures – the latter will be provided as extra information but will not be the basis underlying the description. This is because there is a discord between official statistical data and facts, not only due to the accidental or deliberate misrepresentations they contain but also due to the sociopolitical reality. For instance, what statistics should be used to determine the percentage of people with actual higher education in Dagestan if many diplomas have been bought? Another problem is the falsification of data regarding population numbers in the census which is the source of the majority of statistical data. This happens because bigger population means higher subsidies from the budget, off which those republics live, especially their elites.

Social divisions. The support and control of "clans"

To fully comprehend the problems women in North Caucasus face in their daily lives and how far they can count on others (relatives and institutions) in their resolution, it is crucial to understand the division lines in those societies: who is included and who is excluded, who enjoys respect "by birth" and who has to work for it their whole life, often without any chances at a change. Presented below are the division lines to which I will be referring further in the text while analysing the situation of women.

I would like especially to draw attention to the division to "clans" (called differently in particular republics). From the Western perspective, such social units as clans or extended families are seen as a relic of the past or as characteristic of "traditional" societies. Clan is definitely a source of control over individuals; nonetheless, there are some broader aspects of clan membership to be borne in minds. Being a part of a wider kinship community gives one a feeling of safety and security in case of an emergency, such as disease, an accident or trouble with the justice system. Members of the same kinship group feel obligated to help one another – to find a job, a dwelling or to handle a matter with a government institution. Such support is often seen as corruption. Actual corrupt practices are undoubtedly more common in societies where primary loyalty lies with the clan, and the state and the law come second. Mistrust of the state and the government's disinterest in the peripheries of the Russian Federations ever since the dissolution of the USSR did not foster shaping civic identification; instead, all this strengthened clan and religious identification. Support of the clan may often resolve a number of problems which are handled by institutions in the Western world; being denied such support or being expelled from the clan many be disastrous for an individual, sometimes even forcing them to flee the country. A woman rejected by her clan (for reasons described in further chapters) is immediately at a disadvantage when in crisis (such as domestic violence, rape, abduction). Her life and health may be in danger, she can also easily lose her children (even if she leaves the republic) because it is easy to win a court case with money in North Caucasus. Strong clans may also easily find their relative in any place in the Russian Federation, even the former USSR – we must not forget that some members of local clans work for law enforcement agencies and have connections and access to broader information.

A separate organisation that structurally resembles a clan is the Kadyrovites (Kadyrovtsy); though not necessarily related, they support one another and their members and as a result,

having monopoly for violence, they enjoy impunity. I will elaborate on these issues further in the study.

Addressing the situation of women in the region requires taking into account the social and clan divisions described below. It must be remembered that different divisions and hierarchies matter when it comes to choosing a spouse than to handling an issue with the authorities, and different ones govern a religious community. There are also other divisions that become visible during moments of political, ethnic or religious mobilisation or other important family events. The dynamic political situation has also led to a series of changes in the social structures of particular Caucasian societies over the two decades following the dissolution of the USSR. Despite the similarities in the social divisions in all three republics, there are also essential differences.

Dagestan. Considering the multi-ethnicity of the Dagestani society, the most distinct division lines should be ethnic divisions. Membership in a specific ethnic group definitely matters but not more than coming from a specific village, an aul, which underlies the identity of many Dagestanis. When asked where he comes from, a Dagestani, even if born in Makhachkala or Khasavyurt, usually gives the name of his home village in the mountains, even if he has never been there. Dagestanis very often declare the desire to have their daughter or son marry someone from the same *jamia,* or even *tukkhum* (lineage). The word *jamia* means a community in Arabic.[1] A *jamia* is usually led by an imam.[2] The division to *jamias* is of greater significance in the non-urban part of Dagestan (although the divisions to *jamias* are also transferred to plateaus where settlements were and still are created for emigrants from a particular village). *Jamias* usually consist of several *tukkhums* – lineages. Members of *tukkhums* are usually connected through blood ties but there have also been cases where outsiders were accepted to a family or cases of transfers between *tukkhums*. It was assumed that *tukkhum* members

[1] The word *jamia* has several meanings. *Jamia* usually denotes a community that is either territory-based (a village may be a *jamia)* or ideology based (e.g. a group of Salafis gathered around a leader). *Jamia* is also a general assembly of a particular community that makes collective decisions regarding its religious and social life. The division into *jamias* has its roots in the history of Dagestan. Around the 15th century, *jamias* became the basic form organising the socioeconomic and political life in Dagestan.

[2] *Jamias* (sometimes *war jamias*) also mean armed groups of radical Muslims in Caucasus. The term *Jamia* (usually capitalised) is also used to designate an informal association of Muslims inhabiting a major territory (e.g. the *Kabardino-Balkaria Jamia*) and having one leader. *Jamia* in this context will not be further discussed in this study.

should live in one place. In this sense, it was a familial and territorial community.[3] The community inside *jamia* was also glued together by Islam. All male members had the same rights, except for slaves and guests. As time went by, slaves were allowed to create their own *tukkhums*; people still remember the origins of such families, calling them 'non-noble.' In addition to the "noble" ones (*uzdeni*), there are also intermediate *tukkhums*, called *rayats*. *Uzdeni* oppose marriages with people from lower *tukkhums*, especially from the "slave" *tukkhums*. Many people from the local establishment come from such *tukkhums* (communist authorities promoted such individuals to even up the former – often feudal – relations). Some of them had used money to marry into noble a *tukkhum*; however, in many cases *uzdeni* categorically opposed such marriages, even if the candidates were financially privileged. Men from a "noble" family where a daughter or son marries someone from a "slave" *tukkhum* become an object of gossip and jokes in the local community (even in cities); they also undermine the importance of their *tukkhum* for the generations to come. It would seem that such a personal matter as marriage would be left to the future spouses and their families but as we dig deeper into the divisions, it becomes clear why it is the business of the *tukkhum*. Understanding the significance of the divisions makes it easier to also understand where the conflicts come from whenever this "eternal" order is breached, for example through abduction for marital purposes.

Teips were usually considered as the basic social organisation division units in both **Chechnya and Ingushetia**.[4] After the dissolution of the USSR, local scientists created *teip*-based genealogies, gathered the histories and legends of particular *teips*, highlighted the *teip* division into lineages (*gar*), large patrimonial families (*nek*), and the latter into *ca* and *diozel* (parents together with children). The ethnic revival that took place all across the USSR undoubtedly made the role of *teips* grow (yet it was still smaller than before the 1944 exile); people took interest in their history, reunions were organised. Officially, the Chechen society is divided into *teips* and *tukkhums* (loose confederations of *teips* formed for defence against an enemy). There are nine *tukkhums* (as many as the stars in the Chechen emblem); these are: Äkkhiy, Chantiy, Cheberloy, Mälkhiy, Nokhchmakhkakhoy, Orstkhoy, Sharoy, Shotoy and Terloy. They include only the so called "pure" Chechen *teips*, i.e. ones where the ancestors were

[3] Every *tukkhum* was a part of a *jamia*. *Jamia* members lived in one village, built houses closes to one another (new houses were often built on the roofs of the previous ones) to create auls which resembled fortresses.

[4] Sokirianskaia, Ekaterina, Families and clans in Ingushetia and Chechnya. A fieldwork report, 2005, Central Asian Survey, 24:4, 453 — 467.

Chechens (and not e.g. Dagestanis or Georgians). *Teips* most likely emerged as territorial units uniting groups of neighbours who lived in the same territory and believed to come from the same ancestor. *Teips* usually had their origin story, common land, a graveyard, sometimes also a common *teip* mountain and a *teip* tower.[5] The function of a *teip* was for instance to defend the members against an invader. There are currently 150 or even 170 *teips*. *Teip* used to be the basic unit of the sociopolitical system: strangers who wanted to settle down in the Chechen land could receive permission to found a separate *teip* but people always remembered it was non-Chechen. Non-Chechen origin is still brought up to discredit someone. *Teips* no longer have the same importance today; a Russian *teip* researcher Ekaterina **Sokirianskaia** claims that the terms '*teip*' and 'clan' function in daily language and at the daily life level they tend to denote various types of groups, *teip* identification often being quite loose and declarative.

The daily identifications and divisions are shaped to a much greater degree by groups of close relatives (patrilineal, matrilineal and related by affinity) or religious groups (e.g. Sufi brotherhoods, communities gathered around Salafi leaders). In today's Vainakh communities, religious structures play a special part. In many Chechen and Ingush villages, imams have taken over the role of the council of elders as they give advice and help resolve disputes. Identifications connected with the place of origin as well as neighbourly bonds are highly significant.

In today's Chechnya, the division into supporters and opponents of president Ramzan Kadyrov is very important. Due to the state terror, people cannot openly express their disgruntlement with the authorities in Chechnya; negative opinions about the president are spoken quietly, in a narrow circle of trusted people. The atmosphere of fear and mutual mistrust between neighbours and sometimes even relatives makes this division very powerful albeit concealed. It is hard to say what percentage of Chechens support president Kadyrov; when asked officially or in the presence of more people, almost everyone declares their support. Kadyrov definitely has many supporters ready to turn a blind eye to his terror in the name of relative peace and the rebuilding republic. No one will also explicitly admit to sympathising with the (few now) militants or even the Salafis, who are considered by the authorities as terrorists. Ramzan Kadyrov promised to kill even those who support the

[5] Sokirianskaia, Ekaterina, Families and clans in Ingushetia and Chechnya. A fieldwork report, 2005, Central Asian Survey, 24:4, 453 — 467.

militants "mentally." Even a mere suspicion of ties to or affinity for Salafis may lead to arrest, detention, intimidation.

Ingush *teips* come from a common ancestor – the legendary hero Ga.[6] In Ingushetia names (family names) are more relevant than *teips*. This is because many members of the same *teip* tend to share the family name. Sometimes lineages separate from *teips* to create other families (sub-teips). It is hard to speak about any *teip* solidarity which would apply to the whole *teip*. Solidarity usually occurs at the level of lineage (*gar*) or even sub-lineage (*nek*). The lineage solidarity, sometimes referred to as *teip* solidarity, may manifest itself during a blood feud (to be discussed further in the document – both in Chechnya and in Ingushetia.

Just like in Dagestan and Chechnya, religious divisions are of tremendous significance in Ingushetia. Salafis have been growing in number recently as the majority of young people support the movement. Sufism-inspired Islam does not have as many supporters here as it does in Chechnya and Dagestan. The Batal Hajji brotherhood, known as *batlak*, inhabiting the areas of the Surkhokhi village, is an exception. A powerful criminal group operates inside this Sufi brotherhood, known in Chechnya as *wirdem*, also acting outside the territory of Ingushetia, e.g. in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, most likely engaged in gold and drug trafficking. The brotherhood members are famous for wealth, influence (they actively participate in the political life), they are a relatively closed group, called even a cult, they closely observe endogamy, and recently they have been cooperating with Ramzan Kadyrov, even if they do not support him. A conflict with that group may have tragic consequences for an individual (or the whole family) as the Batal Hajji brotherhood has its representatives all across Russia, and it is only a matter of time before they track a person from Ingushetia anywhere in Russia.

Below, for the sake of clarity, I will sometimes use the word '**clan**' to denote a Dagestani *tukkhum*, an Ingush family or a Chechen extended family; albeit a simplification, it is of no major significance when it comes to analysing the situation of women – what is meant is a group that may both support and control its members. I will use the term 'community' for a territorial and neighbourly community, usually consisting of both relatives and neighbours (distant relatives or not related at all).

[6] Sokirianskaia, Ekaterina, Families and clans in Ingushetia and Chechnya. A fieldwork report, 2005, Central Asian Survey, 24:4, 453 — 467.

Legal regulations regarding women: customary law, religious law and state law

Understanding the situation of women in North Caucasus requires understanding their legal situation. Knowing the legal code of the Russian Federation will not be of major help here because most issues regarding family and women are regulated by Sharia (Islamic law) or *adats* (customary law) or a unique mix of both. Federal law, despite being a point of reference, is often just one of the determinants of lawfulness. Judgments (delivered by participants of the same culture) are entered not only in relation to federal law but also under the influence of the thinking inspired by traditional or religious law; this applies especially to such situations as rapes, honour killings or domestic violence.

Customarily, religious and federal law intertwine in the daily and public life in Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia. Which one plays the biggest part depends on the context, the sociopolitical situation and the social group. As a simplification, we may assume that in family matters, such as weddings, divorces, division of property, references to Sharia are more common. In criminal matters, on the other hand, such as homicide or manslaughter, the inhabitants of North-East Caucasus more often follow the *adat*. I mean mainly the blood feud custom, the related consequences and the conciliation custom. There is obviously room for federal law in both cases; theoretically, it has priority but in practice it is just one of several legal orders significant in daily life.

Deliberations on which legal order is more important must account for the political setting and the historical context, including the USSR era, which had a tremendous impact on the observance of Sharia, the *adat* and state law in daily life. When considered from the perspective of history, the North Caucasian republic with the longest Sharia tradition is Dagestan as it was the first one to undergo Islamisation. In Chechnya and Ingushetia, where Islam became rooted much later (for more on Islamisation see the chapter on religion), standards of conduct regulated by the *adats* have prevailed. As far as the USSR times are concerned, we can clearly see how much the exile of the Chechen and Ingush people to Kazakhstan in 1944 influenced the functioning of selected norms of Sharia. Even though religious law appeared in Chechnya well before, it was not until the exile that the Chechen society started to practice polygamy, which was a strange concept to the Vainakh people. In contrast, analysis of the situation following the dissolution of the USSR, including the war in Chechnya, shows that certain norms of religious and social life underwent in-depth

transformations and revaluations in that period: some rights were revived, some became legitimised in daily life, while other became forgotten. From today's perspective, the policy of each republic regarding the elements of religious law in the sociopolitical life is very important. The most "aggressive" policy in relation to tradition and religion is pursued in Chechnya, where traditional law often becomes more important than federal law, even at national level (especially in places and at times as it suits the government).

Federal law. The division of North Caucasian societies into a secular part and a religious part partially reflects the attitude to federal and religious law. Individuals who desire a secular democratic country or who see an ideal in an empire resembling a secular state emphasise the significance of state law, complaining about it not being observed in Caucasus. They are also concerned about the norms of Sharia entering the daily life, they are afraid of their legitimisation. Being a minority in the present societies in North-East Caucasus, such individuals emphasise that they "want to live by a constitution" (and not Sharia) – for them this means primarily living in a secular country with secular laws.

On the other hand, many religious people lobby for the introduction of Sharia norms to, as they believe, help "cure the society." They do not see a problem in the fact that some of those norms contradict the federal law because they see Muslim law as superior. This discord is becoming increasingly visible in the daily life of North Caucasian republics.

An example that shows a typical attitude to federal law at local political level can be found in words spoken by Ramzan Kadyrov. On the one hand, he emphasises the importance and meaning of the observance of state law, the law of the Russian Federation to which Chechnya belongs (which membership the president emphasises and praises every step of the way). On the other hand, when addressing the importance of Islam and Chechen traditions, Kadyrov stresses that he is first and foremost a Muslim and a Chechen. This is not just pure populism. Local *adats*, such as the blood feud custom and the responsibility of parents for deeds of their (adult) children, are put in practice. Kadyrov officially declared that houses of family members of the militants will be burnt down, and this happened. A more common practice nowadays is to banish a family from a particular village or town or for a family to renounce its members in public (before cameras, with videos of such renunciation to be seen on Chechen TV and on YouTube, becoming a propaganda tool of the local regime). This way the parents and next of kin of the alleged militants are held accountable, often seeing no other option than to flee or publicly admit the guilt of their family member.

Other practices that contradict the federal law are the restrictions connected with "inappropriate" attire. Even though the requirement for women to wear headscarves and skirts in public utility buildings does not have an official legal status, disobedience is punished; the punishment for absence of a headscarf is denied entry to a building, while for absence of skirts or for "indecent" clothing it is a reprimand from the "guardians of morality" or even splashing with paint from a paintball gun. There is of course no evidence that those were not mere acts of vandalism but the matter of the fact is that at the level of declarations, Kadyrov excuses such deeds and most likely even supports them. The Chechen Republic, albeit formally a part of the Russian Federation, in fact remains outside of the Russian legal order, especially in areas related to family and women. Ingush and Dagestani politicians are less bold when addressing legal issues but this does not mean that the federal law is respected in those republics.

So it is hard to speak about clear legal orders and direct application of written law in social life in North Caucasus. One could even risk saying that law is not a value or a goal in itself in North Caucasus; it is rather a means in the struggle for power, a means to an end.[7]

An example of such a legal solution is the introduction of an Anti-Terrorist Operation Zone (KTO), defined in Russian legislation in 1998 in an anti-terrorist resolution. Although the war in Chechnya definitely qualified for a state of emergency, the warfare taking place there since 1999 (Second Chechen War) was termed, in order to avoid international consequences and certain procedures, an "anti-terrorist operation," understood as any possible means and methods that may help apprehend terrorists, avoid attacks and minimise the threat to civilians. The operation zone was the territory where the activities took place. During the Second Chechen War, the whole Chechnya became an anti-terrorist operation zone and the status was kept until 2009. In Dagestan and Ingushetia, the introduction of the regime has been taking place in various places and at different moments in time. Areas outside the law were created where missions to capture terrorists lasted for several hours, days or even months (and for Chechnya – years). Inhabitants of the KTOs had difficult access to their own village (or dwelling), they were subjected to multiple security checks, searches or forced to give bribes.

[7] Raubisko I. Life in a Negative - Positive Space: Moral Transformations in Post-war Chechnya, 2012, https://books.google.pl/books/about/Life_in_a_Negative_Positive_Space.html?id=H_2KrgEACAAJ&redir_esc=y

A KTO can be seen as a zone of legal void unlimited in time and capacity, where any method can be introduced and put in practice.[8]

Justice system. In North Caucasian republics, the justice system is represented by republican and federal courts of law. I will not discuss the details regarding the division of judicial bodies into constitutional courts, arbitration courts or arbitral tribunals (there are certain differences in the organisation of the justice system in each of the republics but this is irrelevant for this study), focusing instead on the social reception of the justice system and on the practices and strategies the inhabitants adopt (or do not adopt) in relation thereto.

Courts are not believed to be independent or apolitical in Caucasus. From the perspective of an ordinary citizen, claiming one's rights in court is pointless and requires a lot of money for the bribes to be given to public prosecutors and judges, a lot of time etc. It seems that in the case of any problems, including problems of legal nature, an average citizen will first try to handle a matter through connections and bribes. In post-war Chechnya ordinary people more often (than in Dagestan and Ingushetia) turned to courts because they knew that if the republican and federal courts failed to resolve a case, people could apply to Strasbourg after some time, and news about the court in Strasbourg giving a positive decision on an application travelled fast. Unfortunately, the authorities quickly put an end to such practices by intimidating potential applicants. And while until a few years ago while various NGOs (such as Memorial) helped with legal procedures, today such help is practically impossible due to the persecution by the authorities. It is also estimated that the majority of cases of torture and intimidation are not reported due to fear of the consequences. Mistrustful of the state, the inhabitants of North Caucasus are also reluctant to trust NGOs, seen as formal structures (unlike kinship structures – the only ones that are trustworthy in the situation of state terror or persecution by the authorities). The practice of tortures is also often concealed for cultural reasons – being tortured (and especially raped) is a “disgrace” to a man. A tortured man may even see a doctor but he will try to hide this fact from his neighbours (doctors are aware that giving an opinion on injuries resulting from tortures may affect their career so they are cautious and reluctant to issue such statements). To regain self-esteem, plenty of men (who have been through the hell of tortures and did not manage to flee the country) usually attempt to take revenge on their torturers: some so called terrorist attacks or assassins of law enforcement

[8] Raubisko I. Life in a Negative - Positive Space: Moral Transformations in Post-war Chechnya, 2012, https://books.google.pl/books/about/Life_in_a_Negative_Positive_Space.html?id=H_2KrgEACAAJ&redir_esc=y

leaders were inspired by the desire for revenge rather than an international "jihad." Some of the families where someone was abducted take matters in their own hand and look for the detainees/abductees on their own before turning to court or at least to an organisation like Memorial. They usually first use any connections they may have in law enforcement, the FSB. It sometimes happens that money, or more often a phone call from some high up, results in the release of the detainee. It is hard to estimate the number of such individuals, especially in Chechnya, where people intimidated by the terror of Kadyrov do not report their loved ones as missing, seeing this as pointless and fearing further consequences for the rest of the family. They also often "sacrifice" their next of kin for the rest of the clan, well aware that there is no point accusing representatives of the authorities of anything as this will end with intimidation at best, while in the worst-case scenario – with more abductions/arrests.

People in Dagestan do not believe in claiming their rights in courts either, especially in cases where the defendant is not a private individual but a representative of the authorities. I know families who did not sue representatives of the authorities responsible for death from tortures due to lack of skill and lack of faith that this might work. Instead of taking formal actions, they nurtured an internal desire for revenge.

Abductions, tortures and even homicides are often not investigated at all or the investigations end quite quickly "due to lack of witnesses and evidence." A person who is tortured relatively heavily "confesses to the crime" and the case is closed. It is hard to beck this with any statistics; this is based on field experience and on accounts of those whose loved ones were killed during tortures or who were tortured themselves. Many people fail to seek assistance from any organisation, not even knowing their names; they also hardly believe that such organisations may help, putting their only hope in the clan if the clan has a substantial social and financial capital.

People from "weak" clans are unable and do not know how to seek justice so they often make do with a promise of revenge, nurtured among male family members. A situation similar to those from weak clans applies to Salafis, who reject their ethnic and clan origin and do not stay in touch with their friends/family working for the authorities. They sometimes count on such organisations as Memorial (whose possibilities are limited) or they try to seek justice in courts, sadly unsuccessfully in most cases. For example, one of the families I know from the south of Dagestan suddenly lost two sons in 2018, soon after they returned from university studies in Egypt and started their own families. They were abducted in front of their homes by representatives of law enforcement. The father instantly hired an attorney and he turned to

Memorial but his sons have been detained for over a year without any specific charges. The parents are afraid that one day the men will break under the tortures and will sign a false confession; if they do, if they are released by any chance, they will have to flee anyway because, as individuals suspected of "terrorism," they will be unable to live in peace, whether in the republic or elsewhere. The decimation of the Islamic underground and the reduced number of assaults on representatives of enforcement do not change the fact that abductions finalised with fabrication of documents "in the name of the law" are still quite common.

Customary law. The word *adat* comes from Arabic and it means 'customary law,' 'unwritten custom.' It is used to denote any customary laws, as opposed to Sharia – the Muslim law. The norms of *adat* differed from region to region; every *tukkhum* or even *teip* had its own *adats*.[9] *Adats* were orders regulating the life of a particular community, something like an orally passed moral code defining the standards of conduct and the etiquettes; they guarded the common interests. *Adat*s were first based on precedent and later on the codes of customary law. *Adats* were adjusted on a regular basis to reflect the current reality, they were based on decisions of the court of the village or the whole *jamia*. Conciliations between the parties, known as *maslihat* were also quite common.

At the beginning, the inhabitants of Caucasus adapted Sharia to their *adats*, i.e. they left out those Sharia laws that were strange to them.[10] In highland areas of Chechnya, *adats* were more important than in the lowlands, where Sharia became rooted sooner. Nowadays, the element of customary law that is mentioned the most often and is associated the most with "customary law" is the custom of blood feud and the related *maslihat*, i.e. reconciliation. Until the Soviet control was established, the most popular *adats* included for instance: "eternal banishment from the village," killing a woman for bringing shame on the tukkhum and the still alive custom of abducting fiancées. Soviet authorities fought those practices (often successfully) but after the dissolution of the USSR, a number of traditional practices were revived, albeit in a different form. For example, abductions of fiancées became a plague after the war in Chechnya; it is quite a common practice in Dagestan and Ingushetia as well (see the chapter on abductions).

Blood feud involves the collective responsibility of the whole family / *teip* for a murder. According to the custom, relatives from the victim's family may kill the murderer or, if he is

[9] Raubisko, I. Transformations of Chechen Identity, 2005, University of Oxford.
[10] Based on unpublished materials for the doctoral dissertation of Karolina Podrucka.

dead or has fled, someone from his closest family. Blood feud is said to be the biggest burden to fall on a family, regardless of the side of the conflict and of whether it is actually executed. The mere stigma of living in a community without conciliation with the other side of the conflict is hard to bear. Blood feud is executed irrespective of court judgments, which definitely undermines the authority of the state and the court of law. On the other hand, it seems that in many cases the custom comes down to *maslihat* – a concept of bringing together feuding families. It is estimated that even 99% of manslaughters in North Caucasus, such as death in a car accident, accidents resulting from mishandle of guns, are forgiven in a ceremony of conciliation (which is why charges are dropped or changed in court disproportionately often when compared to other members of the Russian Federation; this is usually a sign that the families have reconciled or "reached an agreement"). In this sense, blood feud, albeit a custom treated by outsiders as almost barbaric, gains a very important social dimension that cannot be achieved through a judgment delivered under federal law. Although *maslihat* has a highly positive meaning in the social aspect, it definitely undermines the authority of the state, which loses the role of the supreme arbitrator in such cases. Blood feud is a custom deeply rooted in local traditions; it even survived the Soviet era. It is especially popular with Chechens and the Ingush people. Dagestan has it too but it puts more emphasis on the individual accountability connected with Sharia.

Dagestan used to have a moral code called the **Namus** – one of the first unwritten sources of law. It was a "set of moral and ethical laws, rules and provisions regulating the behaviour, preferences and manners"[11] in the daily life of Dagestanis. The word 'Namus' comes from Arabic, which means 'virtue' and 'honour.' The meaning of this word may be also translated as 'the law of nature.' The Namus was the moral compass for every highlander in Dagestan, who used it as guidance for their conduct. Breaking the Namus was a dishonour so it meant spiritual death, death in the society, which was considered as worse than physical death. The Namus shaped the character.[12] Nowadays, Dagestani rarely rely on the Namus; still, a number of principles, especially the issues of honour and virtue, are very important and are emphasised in the Dagestani society. References to the Namus are often made to discipline someone. Asking another man: "Do you even have the Namus?" makes him think about the moral side of his conduct. At the daily life level, there are also many local *adats*, which are so merged with the everyday reality that no one wonders about their origin, no one analyses whether this or

[11] Based on unpublished materials for the doctoral dissertation of Karolina Podrucka.
[12] Based on unpublished materials for the doctoral dissertation of Karolina Podrucka.

that standard or conduct comes from an *adat* or from Sharia. Still, Sharia is spreading so quickly that some former norms or *adats* are being contested, replaced with new equivalents, usually of Muslim origin.

Muslim law. The word 'Sharia' means simply 'Muslim law.' The Quran is one of the four sources of Sharia. In addition to the Quran, other sources of Sharia are: *sunnah, qiyas* – analogical reasoning (it is used where no answers can be found in the Quran or in *sunnah*), *ijma* – a unanimous ruling of the scholars or the whole community regarding a specific matter for which there is no solution in the three first sources of the law.[13] Historically, Sharia is the most rooted in Dagestan (this of course did not mean complete abandonment of local *adats*). Its certain norms survived the Soviet era and, even if not called explicitly religious law, they functioned in the daily life of the communities. The "renaissance" of Sharia in North Caucasus coincided with the religious revival in the 1990s, the war in Chechnya and the increasing influence of the reform-oriented Islam. In the present day we can already say that Sharia has become (re-)rooted in North-East Caucasus to a certain degree. The norms of Sharia are becoming increasingly popular as legal and moral guidance for the inhabitants of Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia. The details of Muslim law are discussed both in mosques and on the Internet.

The authorities of particular republics exhibit different attitudes to Sharia. The president of Chechnya, who calls himself "a Muslim first," supports and partially introduces Sharia, although he interprets it in a way that suits his idea of power and control. In Ingushetia, there were certain norms of Sharia (such as polygamy) that functioned during the presidency of Ruslan Aushev. There are currently Sharia courts in Ingushetia, which issue opinions for example on family life cases. People turn to those courts mainly in the case of fights, quarrels, divorces or post-divorce divisions of land but only to seek recommendation. Until recently, the authorities of Dagestan rejected any possibility of introducing religious norms into the legislation of the republic, claiming that religion is everyone's private business. But gradually, pressured by the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Dagestan and the general social pressure, Muslim religious holidays are being proclaimed as public holidays and many religious programmes appear in the media of the republic. The government is also trying to take advantage of the authority of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Dagestan; for example the Ministry of Health asked the Board in 2018 to speak well about vaccinations because Dagestan

[13] Based on: Danecki J. "Podstawowe wiadomości o Islamie", Vol. I and II, 2002, Warsaw.

was at a risk of an epidemic of measles. The Board refused, explaining that certain vaccines contain gelatin of pork origin and such information would contradict the teachings of Islam. Dagestani politicians are most likely aware that grassroot Islamisation is a process so advanced that the only way to regain the lost social authority is to start dialogue with the religious part of the society.

Notwithstanding the position of the authorities, some elements of Sharia that were and are introduced at a local level. Examples include religious courts, which formally do not exist yet they operate and are bodies where people in the mountain auls seek justice much more than in republican courts. What is often mentioned as a historical example of the introduction of Sharia in North Caucasus is the Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi enclaves in the Buynaksk District of Dagestan, crushed in 1999.[14] Local Salafis proclaimed the formation of a "free Islamic territory" in 1998 to control paramilitary groups (there were even posts set up on roads to decide who may enter and who may not). The example of those enclaves is of course an extreme case, whose existence came to an end as the Second Chechen War began. Still, there are many enclaves in Dagestan that actually live by Sharia. The introduction of elements of Sharia in Dagestani *jamias* (communities) and in Chechen and Ingush villages is a wide-spread phenomenon. They include primarily a ban on sale (and often on consumption) of alcohol and cigarettes and on gambling, prostitution, sometimes a requirement for women to wear headscarves. The decision on introducing Sharia (or, to be more precise, certain norms of Muslim law), is usually made by the *jamia* or the village. This is not only due to the desire to live by the rules of Islam but also, or perhaps mostly, it is the answer of the local community to the ineptitude of the state, which is unable to prevent the spreading crime, drug addiction and other social problems.[15] The "alternative stabilisation project," termed so by Dmitry Makarov,[16] is an attempt to organise social life in a way that would give its participants a sense of security and order. "Sharia communities" additionally represent an attempt to build social space with clear rules of community life, where social control would be strong enough to at least partially prevent young people from engaging in the spreading undesired social

[14] For more see: Kaliszewska I., Za Putina i za szariat. Dagestańscy muzułmanie o Rosji i państwie islamskim, 2016, Warsaw.
[15] For more see: Kaliszewska I., Za Putina i za szariat. Dagestańscy muzułmanie o Rosji i państwie islamskim, 2016, Warsaw.
[16] For more see: D. W. Makarov, Opyt vvedenya szarjata na mikro-urovne: primer dagestanskogo selenya Korovaul, 2004, Islam i pravo v Rossiji.

behaviours (such as drug addiction or "promiscuity" of girls). Makarov believes that the Sharia structures partially replaced the former party committees (the so called 'partcoms').

The norms of Islamic law are introduced both in communities classified as traditional and in Wahhabi communities (however legitimised at the level of public discourse, such a division becomes completely pointless in daily life because many auls have supporters of both movements, who are often friends and pray together in one mosque). "Pure" Islam believers (as Salafis like to call themselves) prefer not to flaunt their views before strangers in fear of their own and their family's life and safety. Unfortunately, abductions and arrests of such people by law enforcement are not a rarity. The inhabitants of Sharia auls have no separatist claims, they do not impose their beliefs on their neighbours. They live in a safe world they have created. Sharia auls do not pose an immediate threat to the government of Dagestan but they show that its authority has fallen.[17]

The norms of the Muslim law are gradually implemented without any major social conflicts as they enjoy substantial social support, not only from religious people. Many non-religious inhabitants approve the ban on alcohol, cigarettes or gambling, and even the requirement to wear headscarves. Such bans and requirements come primarily from the older generation, who sees them as a chance to avoid the "moral decline" of young people. In practice though, those bans and requirements have the greatest impact on the older and middle-aged generation because young people leave smaller villages as they start secondary education. The disciplining of women has a completely different, much more local and voluntary dimension than in Chechnya – punishments for failure to abide by local rules are purely conventional, such as payment of alms to a mosque for organisation of a "too" big wedding with alcohol or for partying with alcohol despite having promised to refrain from drunkedness. A refusal to wear headscarves is usually met with a reprimand from an Imam but I have never encountered (which does not mean it does not happen) systemic punishment for refusal to put on a headscarf. Actually, the communities in the villages I have visited were much more willing to discipline men who drank alcohol. Alcohol addiction was never welcome in Caucasus but the struggle for the "moral renewal" has led to a situation where men's addictions, which used to be accepted in 1980s and 1990s, became strongly ostracised (smoking was rarely stigmatised as much). A drinking man has more trouble finding a husband

[17] For more see: Kaliszewska I., Za Putina i za szariat. Dagestańscy muzułmanie o Rosji i państwie islamskim, 2016, Warsaw.

for his daughter and if he does, the husband is usually from a family with a lower social status or a family with similar problems.

The concurrently functioning legal orders perfectly show the discord between the law applied in daily life and the formal legal order. The intertwining of legal orders also proves that the federal law is not the only paradigm to look through while considering the legal order in Caucasus. It also seems that the Kremlin is unable to enforce respect for the federal law from the local authorities, who despite formally being representatives of entities from the Russian Federation, do not respect the federal law in many aspects or even, like the president of Chechnya, openly negate it by introducing their own norms and orders which are inconsistent with the Constitution of the Russian Federation. This, combined with the grassroot Islamisation described in the chapter on religious life, makes the republics in question drift further away from the rest of the federation and function according to their "own laws," in spite of declaring the formal supremacy of the law of the Russian Federation.

Relations between women and men

The relations between women and men in North Caucasus have been undergoing turbulent changes over the past two decades. It is also hard to speak about one model of those relations, even within particular nations. Competitive visions and norms of conduct, drawing both from local *adats*, Sharia and norms promoted during the USSR era, result in a complex framework of laws where some people function well while others look for simple and clear guidance, such as that provided by Sharia.

The patriarchal structure of the societies, all the prohibitions and requirements applicable to both sexes, make us often look at women from those areas as completely subordinated to their spouses, having no control over their lives. Such perception is additionally deepened by the clothing: a headscarf or a hijab are often mistaken for a sign of submission. In the meantime, although it is hard to deny the existence of many patriarchal practices rooted in local traditions, the relatively recent re(Islamisation) of those societies (especially the grassroot process, which took place in Dagestan and Ingushetia) often turns out to be the source of emancipation. The rules that a woman must follow in Islam, albeit different than in Christianity, give women more rights than those rooted in North Caucasian societies; through Islam, local women are often able to secure more independence for themselves.

As we examine the situation of women, it is hard to separate religion from tradition: over the centuries of the clashing influences of Islam, Christianity (mainly during the time of prosperity of Georgia in the 12th century) and pagan beliefs, religious patterns have mixed with the locally developed models of conduct. Additionally, the Soviet modernisation and the relayed Soviet emancipation, plus the increased participation of women in the public sphere, had a tremendous impact on the current relations between sexes in North Caucasus and in the whole former USSR. Despite the partial discrediting of the former regime (although lesser than we could expect looking from the Polish perspective), the models it promoted and practised are still a point of reference for representatives of the middle-aged generation. The Soviet Union era may have led to erosion of the former traditional systems but it built such a huge platform for cooperation, common goals and ideals that they still influence not only the sociopolitical but also the family life, even though it has been almost 30 years since the dissolution of the USSR. It is impossible to consider the contemporary North Caucasian societies without any regard for the modernisation processes in the USSR and the period that

directly followed. Every republic has experienced a return to its "ancient traditions;" in most cases, the process lost it significance after about ten years, the old traditions becoming just an element of folklore, an addition, a curiosity or, for some, a way of life. It must be emphasised that many Chechens have only recently learnt what is meant today by "old Vainakh traditions" – either from the few ethnographic studies prepared by Soviet ethnographers[18] or from TV broadcasts prepares based on those studies.

The system of norms applicable in particular Caucasian societies is undoubtedly highly diverse and it often differs from what Europeans think of it. I will present several norms and rules which are of significance from the perspective of the daily life in contemporary Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia. However, it must be noted that the Dagestani society, which is divided into tens of ethnic groups, has not developed any common norms other than those stemming from religion, the exception being the relatively ethnically homogeneous Vainakh communities, which are consistent at least in their declarations. Other norms, which are based on local traditions rather than religion, differ between ethnic groups and sometimes even *tukkhums*.

[18] Czesnow Jan, Czeczencem byt trudno. Tejpy, ich rol w proszłom i nastajasziem, "Niezawisimaja gazieta," 22.09.1994.

"Appropriate" and "inappropriate" female attire

In all three republics, tremendous importance is attached to clothing – both male and female. Clothes and decorations are an element of social status in Caucasus; expensive and elegant (although the elegance differs from ours) dresses or suits build prestige. A visitor dressed in "ordinary" clothes bewilders and shocks. There are questions: is he poor? Does he make so little money that he cannot afford more expensive clothes? Women spend a lot of money on clothes. Dresses for an equivalent of PLN 400-600 are not rare cases, even with low salaries. The increasingly common use of Ali-Express mail-order services allows women, especially those from cities, to wear smart clothes but spend much less on them than if they shopped in local boutiques.

Shoes also matter in North Caucasus; despite the dust or mud in the streets, Caucasian women try to keep their shoes clean by washing and wiping them whenever they can. In Chechnya there is even a custom of cleaning the shoes of your guest. Sometimes casual outfits do not differ too much from those worn at weddings or other celebrations but this is not as common as it used to be 10-15 years ago. Younger women increasingly often opt for simpler clothes, popular with young people. High heels, so widespread a decade ago, are still trendy but they are not longer a must for a casual outfit – young women tend to choose trainers or other comfortable shoes. Both female and male fashion is dominated by black (especially in Chechnya) and white. Jewellery is important; men generously give it to women (especially before the wedding); Chechens value in particular gold and other expensive jewellery as a symbol of social status.

You can often meet a woman wearing trousers in Dagestani cities, they are also popular with female students and teenagers in Makhachkala; in contrast, In Chechnya it is actually a top-down though informal order and it is indeed hard to meet a women wearing trousers. The female dress code (a skirt of an appropriate length and a headscarf – tied Chechen-style, i.e. loosely, to the back, without the need to cover all the hair) also applies in schools, universities and public institutions. Without a headscarf, a woman can be denied entry to an institution or a university. A headscarf has also become a standard in Ingushetia as well, while in Dagestani cities it is much more voluntary – if there is a requirement it is usually imposed by the family or the *tukkhum* rather than the authorities or representatives of the Spiritual Board of Muslims. In the recent years, headscarves have been gradually replaced by hijabs, especially in the case of younger people. Hijabs are treated by elder people as a sign of "Arabisation," which is

especially the case for black hijabs. For young people, hijab is not just a visual manifestation of their religious beliefs but also a sign of being “with the times,” being modern, in opposition to a headscarf, which is associated in the city with the countryside, “backwardness” or simply the older generation. I have encountered niqabs only a few times and only in Dagestan. Due to the persecutions of Wahhabis, such clothes are considered dangerous and are basically absent in the cities or villages in the lowlands. With the gradual “Dubaisation” of Islam (i.e. drawing inspiration from the Arab countries seen as roles models in every sphere of life), the number of women choosing hijab has grown over the years, both in Dagestan and in Ingushetia. Young womean unmarried women n care about their appearance a lot. They try to look as good as possible, they devote great attention to both clothes and make-up. In the recent years, plastic surgeries have also been gaining popularity: women’s own income is often spent on facelift, lip augmentation or nose reduction (modelling). Various types of medical procedures expected to “restore” youth or vitality, such as leech therapy, wet cupping (hijama), honey massage, herb drinking, are popular too. They are also used by men, especially if they have health problems or fertility problems.

Disciplining women "in the interest of the nation"

Unlike in Dagestan and Ingushetia, the requirement to wear a headscarf and appropriate attire in Chechnya is not just an internal matter of families or communities but it comes from the top. There are "guards of morality" in the streets, usually coming from the Spiritual Board of Muslims, who approach those women they considered as dressed inappropriately to talk to them and persuade them. They emphasise the value of appropriate attire, decency, they encourage them to pray and follow the principles of faith. Women dressed "inappropriately" have been objects of harassment and insulting comments. In 2009 and 2010 there were cases of attackers splashing women with paint (fired from a paintball gun) after they were considered as dressed indecently.[19] Many women, especially those who do not support the policies of Ramzan, feel threatened and humiliated by those practices. The policy of terror and the absence of any public debate about such problems leave many women feeling intimidated, afraid of expressing their opinions not only in public but in general, in front of anyone other than the closest circle of trusted people. As a result, regardless of their religious views and whether they like it or not, the majority of women at least carry a headscarf in their bag. It must also be added that although the disciplining practices are applied mostly to women as the ones expected (especially in Chechnya) to look "appropriately, men wearing "inappropriate" clothes, for example shorts (even knee-long) also become an object of insults or, at the very least, they are told off. I have encountered cases where foreigners visiting Chechnya were forced to immediately change to long trousers.

The new dress code introduced by the president of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov is one of the elements of "disciplining women" in the interest of the nation.[20] And so is the depiction of a Chechen woman as a mother and wife responsible for the welfare of the whole nation, helping Chechens preserve their traditions. The loss of tradition is especially highlighted: it was destroyed by the two wars between Chechnya and Russia and it now lives within "moral" Chechen women. So in a sense women have become the first victims of the "return" to

[19] Sofia Kishkovsky, Chechnya prinizhdaet zhenschin nosit „pravilnuyu" odezhdu, 2010, http://www.inosmi.ru/social/20100928/163245424.html

[20] Falkowski M., Kaliszewska I., Matrioszka w hidżabie. Reportaże z Dagestanu i Czeczenii, Warszawa 2010.

Chechen traditions[21] – it looks so from our perspective. In the meantime, many people, women included, support such a policy of the authorities, seeing positive values in president Ramzan and his activities. Chechen channels often air broadcasts about what a woman can and cannot do, what are her functions and purposes. Though I do not have the statistics, my daily observations of the life in Chechnya show that many people do not just watch those broadcasts but they identify with the values they promote. Broadcasts, posters, a new Chechen Women's Day – all this makes women feel appreciated but also disciplined.

Women in Chechnya and all across Caucasus are under social pressure to be good wives and mothers. It is noticeable that the majority of women working for NGOs or pursuing careers are single – either divorcees or widows. I have also encountered a situation where a husband left his wife and said that the reason was that she did not sufficiently take care of the home. The return to tradition in Chechnya includes also *nokhchalla*. *Nokhchalla* comes from the word 'Nokhchi,' which means Chechen; it is a term that includes both the characteristics considered as inseparable for a Chechen character and standards of conduct. It is a kind of code of honour – honour of a man, a knight, a defender of the family, a gentleman and a guardian. *Nokhchalla* also means respect for a woman, friendship and hospitality. The word 'Nokhchi' already carries a huge emotional weight. If someone behaves inappropriately, Chechens reprimand them by saying: "Are you a Chechen or not?" Such elements of tradition show not only the desire to discipline the nation but also help people believe that despite the general opinion, despite the dissolution of tradition and the demoralisation of the society because of the war, everything can change for the better; both religion and tradition include some guidance on how to live your life.

All across North Caucasus use of substance by women is met with definitive social criticism, both from women and from men. People believe that a woman as a future (or current) mother cannot have additions and a woman or girl who smokes is seen as one of loose morals; if her male peers know about her addiction, this puts her at a risk of harassment or even rape. So even if women smoke, they do it in hiding, at home, in the balcony, never in public spaces. If an unmarried woman is caught by someone from a family, she may face serious problems, at best resulting in restrictions as to leaving the house, additional "guards" and threats to "solve the problem." Usually only the closest girlfriends or sisters know about the smoking

[21] Frederik Lavoie, Tikhaya Islamizatya Chechni, 2010, http://www.inosmi.ru/social/20100915/162954361.html

habit. Whether a married woman can smoke or drink alcohol (moderately) usually depends on their husbands; still such practices are kept secret from a broader community.

Situation of women versus re(Islamisation) of North Caucasus

There is a belief that the progressing Islamisation of North Caucasus will cause the situation of women to deteriorate. In the meantime, sometimes (though not always) it is the other way round. The conviction comes both from stereotypes regarding Islam and from observations of the situation in Chechnya. In the reality, the situation is quite unique as it is influenced the most by the policy pursued by Ramzan Kadyrov, who uses (specifically understood) Islam and Chechen traditions to legitimise his power. Re(Islamisation) of North Caucasus, especially Dagestan Chechnya and Ingushetia, is a fact; in Dagestan it was more of a grassroot process, while in Chechnya grassroot Islamisation was concurrent with top-down imposition of certain elements of Sharia, in the form of written or unwritten laws and recommendations of the group holding power.

The progressing re(Islamisation) has contributed to quite a strong division into non-religious and religious people.[22] A number of older people, who were raised and educated in the USSR era, consider religion as a private business of every man and oppose the interference of religious authorities in public matters. They do not accept general (re)Islamisation and they state with certain superiority or even condescension that another person from their circle has converted (there is even a contemptuous term for it: *udaritsja w religiju*) and if she is a woman – has put on hijab. Sometimes a family does not accept a girl's conversion and tries to marry her off as soon as possible (usually by finding her an appropriate non-religious candidate) to get religion out of her head or sends her abroad to study or work. Still, there are quite a lot of people who are no practising believers but see the turn of young people towards religion as a resolution to a series the problems of their generation – especially to alcoholism.

For the almost two past decades, we have been observing a number of distinct signs of grassroot Islamisation of North Caucasian societies. These are: increased religiousness among teenagers (one can even say that Islam is “trending now”), gradual conversion of the middle-aged generation, growing popularity of Islamic education (there are 16 Islamic universities in Dagestan only[23]), substantial popularity of audiovisual materials about Islam.

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22 For more see: Kaliszewska I, Za Putina i za szariat. Dagestańscy muzułmanie o Rosji i państwie islamskim, 2016, Warsaw.

23 According to data from Shamil Shikhaliyev from the Dagestani Academy of Sciences.

Young people are trying more and more to live by the principles of Islam. More of them regularly go to mosque and encourage others to do the same. They declare abstinence from alcohol and cigarettes, they refuse to give bribes. Islam has become their way of life, a new moral code, often differing from the guidance offered by parents. There are various reasons for young people turning to religion. Few of them were taught religious zeal at home.[24] Some of my interviewees converted because of their peers, who had encouraged them to pray, while others visited mosques and attended Quran lessons out of curiosity. There are also those who were seeking the meaning of life in religion following a tragic event in life (persecution by the authorities or death of a loved one). Some felt members of the Muslim community after they left their home and went to central Russia, seeing Islam as the main element of their own identity. The most important sources of knowledge about Islam for young people are: audiovisual materials, YouTube videos, Instagram memes. Young believers openly admit that they rarely reach for books. The materials in circulation do not have a distinct Salafi or Sufi character (aside from materials of the ideologists fighting with Wahhabism or sermons of particular sheikhs), and neither do many Islamic shops and websites. In cities, people who are clearly oriented ideologically (e.g. members of Sufi brotherhoods) divides shops into "Wahhabi" and "ours" but for outsiders the difference is not that obvious. Plenty, or perhaps even the majority, of shop customers are people who are searching, who know little about religion and they come to shops to buy cosmetics, the recently popular "Islamic" mediations, "good luck charms" for drivers, calendars with Mecca, rosaries to hang at the car mirror. Such people are rarely aware the ideological differences between Salafi and "traditionalist." It does not matter to them anyway because they need faith to find answers to certain questions, a way of life in difficult times; they have little interest in the divisions and alliances at the level of religious structures and authorities. So the materials are mainly textbooks or helpbooks translated from Arabic: "How to Pray", "How to be a Good Wife?", pirate copies of records such as "Getting to Know Allah with Reason", "The Wonders of the Quran" etc.

The religiousness of young people takes different forms – from zealous and increasingly aware involvement in religious practices, alcohol abstinence, to wearing Islamic clothes on a daily basis, using medications and cosmetics from Islamic shops. For some young people, Islam is becoming a way of life; it answers the question of how to live in the globalising world. For others, it is simply an element of identity, which – for now – does not

[24] Although Islam has survived the USSR era and clandestine education was delivered throughout that whole time, it covered only a small percentage of the society.

entail a clear change of lifestyle. In many cases, the growing religious devotion of young people causes conflicts with parents brought up during the USSR era, who do not understand the motivation that guides their children and are worried that they might join the Wahhabis. Yet the increasingly noticeable presence of Islam in the media and in daily life earns the young people the respect of the older and middle-aged generation, thus contributing to the gradual Islamisation of the latter. Islamic lifestyle is partially a response to the mistrust of and lack of support from the state, lack of perspectives in a world dominated by corruption and connections, the need for guidance in life in a reality that is seen as unfair and immoral.

How does grassroot (re)Islamisation of North Caucasus influence the situation of women in this region? The "Islamic trend" applies to women and men to a similar extent though they often gain knowledge on Islam from different sources. Young men learn during sermons in mosques (women rarely go to mosques, praying at home instead), while women convert inspired by their next of kin, female friends and online materials. Being a pious, modest woman is a welcome quality while looking for a husband. For example, some families send their daughters to madrasas or Islamic universities, seeing this as not only a chance for them to gain education but also to marry well. There is a quite common belief that a girl who attended a madrasa or an Islamic university will be a good modest wife. In the meantime, since local traditions are generally mistaken for the rules of Sharia, women with religious knowledge tend to refer to Sharia while negotiating their obligations and privileges in marriage, and especially the rules that the money earned by a woman is hers only and she does not have to share it with her husband and children, whole the man must support financially both the woman and the children. So paradoxically (looking from a West-centric perspective), women's growing knowledge about Islam may help their emancipation (more in the chapter on polygamy). A question remains of how female atheists function surrounded by the "Islamic trend." If they marry a believer, are the forced to convert or at least wear a hijab in public places? The "secular zone" is definitely shrinking in all the republics and open anti-Islamic declarations may result in social ostracism and in problems with the authorities, especially in Chechnya. In Dagestan and Ingushetia, the authorities do not interfere in the lives of the inhabitants to such an extent so non-religious people may function in the society without any major problems, and if they face any pressure, it is mainly from their (religious) relatives or peers. However, public declarations against Islamic practices may result in problems from authorities (in case of Chechnya) or individuals (in case of Dagestan, Ingushetia) who see such statements as "attacks on Islam" – I came across situations when female activists who opposed certain

Islamic (or traditional) practices received (from anonymous sources) letters or e-mail with threats.

People (including women) who are "overly religious" have a bigger problem – especially if they are the supporters of Salafism. In daily life, where Islam is becoming more of a lifestyle than an identity choice, the division into Salafis and supporters of Sufism-inspired Islam is losing its significance (especially in Dagestan and Ingushetia). Sadly, things are not the same at the state level – the division is still highly politicised, especially in Chechnya. True, there has been a certain drop in violent actions on the part of both the state structures and the decimated Islamic underground, but this does not change the fact that Salafis (both women and men) are often a group that the authorities are trying to control and intimidate. "Excessive" manifestation of one's religious affiliation, such as wearing a beard without a moustache by men or wearing rolled-up trousers (those two aspects are considered by representatives of the authorities as typical of Wahhabis), may lead to harassment and arrests in the whole family, usually of men or young boys. Women are under an indirect threat – as next of kin of the "suspects."

Things are the hardest for families whose members have been blacklisted at some point or have been arrested/imprisoned for "supporting terrorism/being involved with armed underground." Representatives of law enforcement do not discriminate between those who have actually taken part in armed fights and those who were forced to sign false confessions through torture. The harassment of the families of the alleged militants or their alleged supporters may last for years. The only way out is either to emigrate abroad or to pay a huge bribe for being deleted from the blacklist. The latter option is used by many families who are aware that having a record (being "*na ucziotie*") even for a crime of minor social danger (e.g. minor theft) may end with arrest/abduction. The family is trying to gather the money from the relatives and pay the bribe – this is relatively the simplest in Dagestan, where the clan-related and ethnic interdependencies make it incredibly hard to control corrupt practices and almost every family may find contact to someone from the police.

Women are especially at a risk of persecution from the authorities if they put on black hijabs or niquabs – they may face searches and persecution even in the more religiously liberal Dagestan and Ingushetia. I have met cases where young women inspired by Salafi ideas were thrown out of their homes or given an ultimatum: "you either take off the hijab or you are no longer our daughter." The situation is particularly tough in Chechnya, whose authorities consider Islam inspired by the practices of the Qadiriyya Sufi brotherhood as the only

legitimate religion of the republic. Openly admitting to practising Salafi Islam may end in persecutions. Since women pray more often at home than in mosques, men are at a greater risk of being "recognised" and qualified as potential terrorists; however, in Ramzan Kadyrov's Chechnya a family is held collectively accountable for its member, which is why the persecutions of Salafis extend to their families too. Things are similar for members of Hizb at-Tahrir, who are few in Caucasus (although it is hard to estimate their number as the organisation does not flaunt its activity). It is a common strategy of North Caucasian Muslims to try to disassociate themselves from the divisions and to refer to themselves and their families simply as Muslims. This does not always have to be a conscious strategy – people often indeed do not identify with any movement. The number of those "simply Muslims," "new Muslims" is definitely growing.

Women who have returned from Syria form quite a unique (and very small) category of people in North Caucasian societies. There were few supporters of the Islamic State in North Caucasus; still, it is hard to deny the existence of groups who indeed supported the Islamic State or the fact that some people left the country to join the troops of ISIS. According to estimations, about 1200[25] people from Dagestan, 600 from Chechnya, 100 from Ingushetia, 175 from Kabardino-Balkaria and about 50 Kists from the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia (who geographically inhabit South Caucasus but they maintain close relations with the Chechens over the border) went to Syria, and so have a number of people from the North Caucasian diaspora in the European Union.[26] The authorities of the Russian Federation and the authorities of the republics did nothing to stop the departures. I am even aware of cases where families were trying to report their sons or daughters to the FSB but the latter were not detained unless the family had additional connections in government structures to actually prevent the departure. Families that left did not stay in touch with their relatives or the contacts were very sporadic; the relatives were informed that the person or family went to Turkey to run a business – the explanation was so common that soon afterwards even if a family actually went to Turkey, it became suspicious.

It is hard to estimate how many inhabitants of North Caucasus survived and how many returned or will return to North Caucasus instead of remaining in Iraq or Syria. Russian sources

[25] Approximate figures come from the website https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/, the most common source cited for approximate calculations of how many people joined ISIS.

[26] Anna Arutunyan, ISIS Returnees Bring Both Hope and Fear to Chechnya, 2018, https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/chechnya-russia/isis-returnees-bring-both-hope-and-fear-chechnya

mention a total of several hundred people who have returned, mainly women and children. Dagestani authorities report 108 people, Chechen 93 women and children who came back in 2017 when Kadyrov declared creating a "safe corridor" for them. Until March 2018, Chechen authorities mentioned the return of a total of 150 people.[27] It is hard to say what the "safe corridor" meant in practice and if the family members of such a woman will not be prosecuted by the authorities.[28] In Dagestan the few men who decided to come back were imprisoned, while women are usually under strict surveillance (unless the family has connections in law enforcement – in such a case the person is left in peace), just like their teenage children, especially boys. In the official version women declare that they were only passive companions during the trips to Syria, which were initiated by their husbands; in practice, it was sometimes the opposite; I know cases where the women was the main initiators of the departure. Families of Dagestani citizens fighting alongside the Islamic State often return on their own through Turkey or South Caucasus so it is hard to estimate their actual numbers. The local communities where they return also have no interest in informing the authorities about this because they know that this way they may stir up trouble not only for such individuals but for the whole community. I have not heard about any individual returns not noticed by the authorities; it cannot be ruled out that such situations are incredibly rare with the existing surveillance and state terror.

[27] Huseyn Aliev, Families of ISIS Fighters Return to North Caucasus, 2018, https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13519-families-of-isis-fighters-return-to-north-caucasus.html

[28] Anna Arutunyan, ISIS Returnees Bring Both Hope and Fear to Chechnya, 2018, https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/chechnya-russia/isis-returnees-bring-both-hope-and-fear-chechnya

Education, university studies

The best educated generation is the generation of the current (2019) “grandmas” and “grandpas,” today in their sixties and seventies, educated during the Soviet times. The poorest education characterises people who are now in their thirties or forties and grew up in years after the dissolution of the USSR, and in Chechnya during the war. Women from that generation were married off quite quickly, without being given the opportunity to gain education, and they rarely travelled outside the republic (except, obviously, for Chechen refugees).

Lack of funds and the general corruption in universities also resulted in a situation where a family could afford to provide education to only some of the children, and boys were given priority. The overall lack of prospects, despite the education, and the popular practice of buying diplomas also led to devaluation of education. The low level or lack of education is not reflected in the statistics because many people from this generation have university diplomas. The practice of buying diplomas is especially popular in Dagestan. I am familiar with cases of handing a diploma “in the dowry.” As a result, diplomas (even those actually earned) of Dagestani universities were not recognised in other parts of Russia and they were often disregarded in hiring decisions. Those who actually wanted to learn went to other cities of the Russian Federation or, if they wanted Islamic education, to Arab countries. Such trips abroad were practised mainly be men; young girls are less often allowed to leave the republic on their own so if they study at all, they pursue education in their own republics.

Still, due to the growing prosperity of the North Caucasian societies and the drop in unemployment, young women from cities and from villages/towns in the plateau are more often sent to universities and they are not married off until they graduate. Although young women from cities usually get permission from their parents to enrol on a university, the situation of girls from the countryside is much harder – the family needs to have relatives in the city who are willing to take the girl in and keep an eye on her. In addition to studying, girls help their relatives with housework and children, which is why families often agree take them in. No relatives in the city often means no chances at university enrolment. Studying in smaller towns, closer to the place of living, is a way out in this case. For example, girls living in the plateau villages of Dagestan usually commute to the cities or towns where they study. Sometimes the family agrees to a dormitory or allows the daughter to live with her female friends. Islamic education is also becoming increasingly popular (both for women and men).

Students choose both madrasas and universities, with the Islamic University in Makhachkala having the accreditation and status of a state university.

Sometimes the family of a girl makes an arrangement with the future husband that he will agree for his wife to graduate in a part-time programme. Those plans are of course often complicated by childbirth and household duties. If the newlyweds live in the countryside or in the plateau, studying is additionally limited by commuting. While 10 years ago buying a diploma for a girl was almost just as good and was treated primarily as useful in finding a husband and a low-paid job after raising children, families currently encourage their daughters to gain qualifications which can be monetised. It is increasingly common (especially in poorer families) to send daughters to medical colleges to become nurses, midwives or doctor's assistants.

More and more often mothers who were unable to gain education or had education on paper only encourage their daughters to learn, wanting them to make their own money rather than expecting to be dependent on their husbands. Their own life situations or the experience of their relatives and neighbours (divorces, death of the spouse, migration, polygamy) have made them want more financial independence, which can be achieved through skills (which can be monetised) or disability pension. The growing investment in daughters is also the outcome of the drop in the number of children per family recorded in the 1990s (though still the highest in the whole Russian Federation) versus the previous generation. Besides, a number of collages that offered practical education easy to monetise (unlike the university education which is hard to monetise) opened between 2000 and 2010. Colleges offering medical and food industry education are especially popular with women. In addition to college education, recent years have also witnessed substantial development of professional courses and webinars. The quite common Internet access considerably improved the situation of women: women who are raising children and take care of the house have a chance at YouTube-based self-learning; they may also advertise their products (e.g. customised cakes, hand-made children's clothes, toys) on Instagram and in other social media. In big cities, baking, florist and cooking courses are highly popular. Due to the great importance attached to weddings, the appearance of the cake, the food and the ballroom, such skills are high in demand. The inhabitants of North Caucasus, except for Salafis, spend a lot on weddings, often taking out loans to be able to throw a wedding for their son or daughter that will be long remembered by the relatives. A wedding reception where something ran out, something was ugly or not fresh or much worse that at the wedding of another relative becomes an object of gossip for weeks.

The majority of children in the republics of North Caucasus graduate from primary schools. In families representing Salafi Islam there have been cases where daughters were taken from schools after the fifth or sixth grade. Still such situations were not common, although considering the general corruption they were not impossible to execute, nor were they stopped, as the number of schoolchildren does not seem to be monitored. It is quite a common practice to register "placeholder names" in schools in the highland areas of Dagestan – for example of children who have lived outside the republic for a long time. It is hard to estimate right now the actual scale of the phenomenon of taking children away from school before the legally permissible date. More and more children (both girls and boys) receive religious education – both smaller and bigger villages and towns open madrasas to teach young people. Islamic Universities, especially those with the official university status, are highly popular too.

Women's jobs

There are plenty of jobs that are strongly connected with sex; some jobs do not befit women, other are ill-advised for men. At present, a “perfect” job for a woman is a position in the public sector: as a school teacher, a kindergarten teacher, a post office clerk, possibly a doctor/nurse (although opinions are divided here because a woman should not have contacts with strange men, including patients). If a husband is able to provide for his family on his own, he would usually prefer his wife not to work but to take care of the house and the children instead. Due to low income in the public sector, this “perfect” job for a woman (dating back to the USSR era) is slowly changing (to be discussed in a moment).

Women, especially young ones, should not pursue for instance any “travelling jobs” or jobs connected with travelling, such as *prowadnica* (someone in charge of the train carriage and the passengers), a waitress, because of too much contact with men, a casino worker (casinos have been recently banned) or a club employee. They are perceived as easy and “accessible.” Female artists, especially singers, are seen in a similar way. On the one hand, they are idolised and adored, they have plenty of admirers, on the other hand, they are rarely considered as wife candidates, unless we are talking about second wives. A lot has changed since the USSR era: during that time, parents or grandparents had nothing against their daughter becoming a singer while today no one particularly encourages girls to pursue this career path (unless it is outside the republic), often not due to religious beliefs but in fear that it would be hard for the daughter to marry well.

The number of working women has also changed since the dissolution of the USSR. People raised and accultured during the times of the USSR, today in their sixties or seventies, usually had job experience, often connected with travelling to various parts of the country, while currently many young girls stay at home after getting married, rarely moving around the country or even the republic. Many of them do not have any actual profession or skills other than those learnt at home. So a number of women, having no better options than a low-paid (or very hard) job, choose to stay at home, especially since this is appreciated by the society. A problem arises only when a women is left alone due to divorce or death of her husband. She is initially supported by her family but in time she is forced to find a job. Usually, since she lacks qualifications, the job would be hard and not prestigious.

There are also “unmasculine” or not prestigious jobs in North Caucasus that do not befit men or are only performed if the person is forced to do them. For example, men rarely work at bazaars. The Azeris from the south of Dagestan who engage in trade as a part of their culture are an exception (Mountain Jews used to trade too but most of them went to Israel). During the crisis connected with the dissolution of the USSR, women in the Caucasus (just like in many other places worldwide during the time of crisis) were the first ones to work at bazaars, they went to the neighbouring Azerbaijan and traded. Working at a bazaar is considered as not prestigious and hard (especially working as someone’s employee). Men also rarely work in shops, exceptions being shops with audiovisual equipment, mobile phones and car dealers. Working on a construction site is also considered as not prestigious in Dagestan. This has a source in local traditions. Construction works were usually performed by hired hands or, a long time ago, by slaves. It was unbecoming for people from self-respecting families (*uzdeni*) to take such jobs (with the exception of building one's own house). If they are unable to find another job, they try to find jobs as construction workers in the neighbouring regions or outside the republic.

In Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia renovation works inside the house, such as wall whitening, moulding, are often performed by women (usually those from “weaker” families). The work is considered as light and women as more trustworthy. Men relatively often work as taxi drivers, delivery men, truck drivers going to Russia, minibus drivers. Working for the police was not considered a prestigious job in North Caucasus. Although the pays of police officers are the same all across Russia, some of the income does not go to the policemen but to their superiors. As a result, staff selection in the police is negative – everyone tries to find (or buy) a different position for themselves. In the recent years, after the pay rises, the prestige of the job improved slightly. The family may still object to marrying a police officer due to the “morally dubious” nature of the work (especially in units that directly participate in “anti-terrorist” activities). but the higher pay makes the stability of earnings more important than the opinions about the place of work. Unlike working in the police, military service is usually met with a positive social reception – it is believed to turn a boy into a man, teach him to shoot and gain new experience.

Men have more freedom in choosing their profession but it is their obligation to provide for their family. Due to the high social requirements regarding the standard of living, furnishing of the flat, a car or a mobile phone, men are required to make a lot of money, often more than they are able to. Taking care of children, even adult ones, the desire for them to get married or

to send them to a university, build a house for them – those are yet another areas where substantial funds are needed Young people in academic professions are in a tough spot as the salary of a PhD or a professor is too low to support a Caucasian family so many people take on two or three jobs. Young men from poor families have no chances to get married if they are unable to guarantee the wife a proper financial status, whether on their own or with the support of their relatives. This generates a number of social problems. In Caucasus, survival is not a problem as it is relatively easy to find a low-paid job. The problem lies in the requirement to maintain a certain standard of living, to "show off." Although the situation in North Caucasus cannot be explained away with strictly economic factors, the argument is justified because the economic requirements in this part of Russia are much higher than elsewhere. Salafis are trying to change this situation by mocking and contesting local wedding or funeral traditions which require huge spending on the part of the families. They are becoming local "protestants," who replace expensive ostentatious life with focus on work (mainly in business) and on family.

Religious women have been increasingly setting up their own businesses recently. According to Islam, a woman's income is her property only; in practice this is not always so but spouses often have separate accounts and women indeed spend the money they have made on themselves only – on upskilling courses, cosmetic treatments etc. Men, on the other hand, are responsible for providing for the whole family. Women in cities more and more often have a driving licence and drive a car. Many men still consider this a purely male sphere and are reluctant to accept their wives behind the wheel but women tend to negotiate driving their own car by quoting the Islamic rule that staying in the same space with men is not advised (though not prohibited). Cities may offer taxis for women only but these are more expensive and less available, which is why a woman behind the wheel is an increasingly common view now. Driving licences are usually bought, by both men and women.

Women are much less common as executives but this does not mean that they do not manage "from the second row." For example, women form a very powerful and highly influential group on Spiritual Boards of Muslims, especially in Dagestan, although the institution is formally managed by men. The share of women in those institutions in Chechnya and Ingushetia is lower but the situation here is dynamic. Educated women are often hired by various companies to manage accounting; welcome attributes include having no children or adult/teenage children or proper support (from the family) that allows the woman to devote herself to work. Still, the considerable inequality remains a fact: men are bosses and managers,

while women are their assistants, accountants or secretaries at the most, and additionally wives, mothers and housewives.

Although women in the republic are usually at a lower risk of persecution by the state than men, this does not apply to female activists, journalists, employees of NGOs, in all three republics (in Chechnya to the greatest degree). Defence of the rights of detainees, those serving their sentences in prison, disclosure of such practices as tortures, coercion into false testimonies or simply exposure of corruption scandals are subjects that require tremendous courage on the part of journalists and social activists. Due to the dangers involved in such activities, families often discourage women from taking such jobs; I have encountered situations where women were even forced to give up their work as a journalist or in an NGO (under the threat of ostracism from the clan). The arguments families used to persuade their loved ones to quit a dangerous job were mainly that they had children or older parents, As a result, such jobs were suitable only for women who did not have any commitments to children or parents (for example because they had lots of siblings or their parents have died early) or women of ethnic origin other than North Caucasian, i.e. for instance Russians not entangled in any local clan relations. A series of assassins of journalists in various republics of North Caucasus has led not only women but also many men to quit their jobs as journalists or for NGOs dealing with human rights or to decide to investigate “harmless” topics. Others went abroad.

A woman having a job outside the republic is often met with more acceptance than a woman working in a republic of North Caucasus. There are different reasons for that: women who run a household, take care of children and receive numerous guests have basically no chances at gainful employment until the children at least go to school – the household of a specific family is not entirely comparable to a household in Western Europe or even in other parts of Russia. Relatives visit one another almost every day (local hostesses usually prepare more than enough for dinner in case unannounced guests arrive); there is also nothing weird in dropping a child off to one’s sister or niece for a week or two if she is staying at home. So the most common reason why women do not start a job is not because the male family members prohibit it (although such situations happen too) but because women are overburdened with duties which men are unwilling to share with them. It is usually easier for a woman to start a job if a family member helps her take care of the kids.

Women and corruption

Just like religion, corruption is a subject described mainly by men from a male perspective. As far as the corruption of the elites is concerned, the male perspective is relatively justified – a large percentage of people in office are men. However, involvement in corrupt practices at a lower level is not a purely male attribute. Women, both middle-aged and relatively young ones, often spin an intricate network of connections with officials and doctors: connections which may prove indispensable for them and their family at some point. It is an especially popular practice to buy disability pensions, i.e. pensions for complete or partial inability to function unassisted. Pensions are bought approximately for the equivalent of the proceeds on that account (though prices differ depending on the level of control on the part of the superiors).

Aside from those who are actually eligible for such a pension, the majority of the individuals who receive it are relatively healthy and they treat it as income "just in case," for instance in case of health issues or their own divorce or the divorce of their daughter. Disability pension is also a major advantage in marring off daughters. "No one will take them here without disability," a young women from a village high in the mountains in the Dakhadayevski District remarked. All young women and one men in the village had such pensions. Buying disability pensions for sons is much less common and it happens almost only where a boy has actually has some health problems (though this may be for example a squint, limb paralysis or simply poor health); parents rarely choose such a solution for healthy boys, aware that disability papers may stand in the way of the young man's future career in the military or wherever a confirmation of physical health is required. Pension buying by women, though it may seem reprehensible from a moral standpoint, is often the only way to ensure independent income for a daughter, which may prove incredibly important in the case of marital conflicts. So it may be a slight exaggeration to state that women's engagement in corrupt practices, mostly in disability pension buying, has emancipatory effects. It must also be remembered that involvement in corrupt practices in North Caucasus is so common that buying a permit, a driving licence or a pension is treated like a transaction conducted through an intermediary rather than a bribe given in circumvention of the law. Those practices are perceived from a financial rather than moral perspective.

Marriage and family

Girls are married off quite early, the earliest in Chechnya, where cases of 15- or 16-year-olds getting married are no rarity. But the most common age for a girl to get married in North Caucasus is twenty. Girls over the age of 25 are usually under strong pressure from their family to marry soon. In Dagestan, families try to marry a girl or boy off to someone from the same village or at least region and ethnolinguistic group. Consequently, there is relatively strong endogamy, especially in villages, with some cases of marriages between first cousins, and quite common marriages between second cousins. In Chechnya and Ingushetia it is the opposite – marriages with members of your own family are not welcome; even in-*teip* marriages are ill-advised, though this principle is not observed in large *teips* (this is also because *teip* has lost its significance as the basic unit of social division). Arranged marriages are very common. Parents and relatives search their family (in Dagestan) or friends for a person with the right social and financial status.[29] Wedding receptions and all types of celebrations are also opportunities to meet a future husband or wife. Meeting a future spouse online is becoming increasingly popular too – young people correspond with each other, talk over the phone, send pictures. Sometimes their parents take over this role. This is also a way to arrange marriages between people working in different cities of Russia or abroad and local people. After a while, online friends decide to meet, usually accompanied by friends. As the next step, they tell their families, and then the meetings take place in the presence of relatives and friends. But before the boy visits the girl's family, his friends or relatives ask the neighbours or teachers around about the character of the girl, about her "morals." The girl's family also tries to learn as much about the potential future husband as possible if they do not know his family. The future spouses meet several times before the wedding (also to discuss the wedding and financial matters), and if they are from different parts of Russia, they may see each other only once before they get married.

Arranged marriages are definitely not the only way to find a spouse – people often marry their classmates or schoolmates or fellow university students. Individuals from the so called "worse" families have in a sense more freedom – their family would not oppose a marriage with someone from a better family or a family with a similar social or financial

[29] For more about marriage, weddings and receptions in Dagestan, see the master's thesis of Karolina Rzemieniuk (Dulęba), 2007, the archives of the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Warsaw.

status, while those "better" born usually have problems with their family, for whom agreeing to a marriage with someone from a "worse" family entails a risk of losing the social status. It is also increasingly common to marry a daughter off to a "good Muslim." It is a general belief that he will devote his time to making money and to his family instead of "venishing with his friends and drinking." Such an approach is more and more respected in the society; families are often ready to marry their daughters off even to Salafi Islam followers, known for quite restrictive observance of the rules of Islam (especially in Dagestan), which puts them at the risk of ostracism from their own family/*tukkhum*, and in Chechnya – persecution by the state. A practice that attracts young people to Salafi communities is their emphasis on the equality of all people; spouses in such communities are not chosen based on family membership and the divisions between families from "noble" and "slave" *tukkhums* are blurring – the only thing that matters is that the spouse is a good Muslim (this is especially attractive to those from "weaker" or poorer families or people from the city who do not have strong support from their kinship group).

Certain ethnolinguistic groups in Dagestan (e.g. among some Dargins) still practice cradle matchmaking/engagement (Russian: *lulochnove svatostvo*), where families (usually from the same *tukkhum* or community) make an arrangement regarding the future of their children while they are still young (even when one of them has just been born), not always in infancy but before any interest in the opposite sex comes into play. I have encountered this practice in relation to people who are now in their twenties or thirties and who were matched in their childhood. I also know cases where the engagement promise was broken; they are rare because this brings both financial losses (the requirement to make amends to the other person/family) and social ostracism on the family who breaks the word. After an engagement is broken off, the families involved often avoid each other for years. Although "cradle matchmaking" is considered by many inhabitants of Caucasus as a gradually vanishing practice, arranged marriages seem to be no less popular. European may see them as limitation of the freedom of choice but things look different from the perspective of women in North Caucasus. A number of my female interviewees regarded a search for a loved one which they knew from films as a waste of time. They found the thought of needing to find a spouse at school, university or work scary – "what if you don't succeed?". So the majority of young people did not object to the idea of their family introducing candidates to them but they emphasised that they must find the person charming, attractive. Many young girls believed that it was normal to fall in love with your husband after the wedding or after the engagement and they did not see the need to fall in love earlier. The trust in parents or relatives was also important

as their authority was often accepted. “They know better, they know the family.” This is yet again thinking from the perspective of the whole family rather than from an individual perspective. There is also a common belief that a person from a good family will build a good family. Any addictions, genetic diseases or knowledge of domestic violence in the family may lead to rejection of the candidate. Having disabled siblings, especially in the city, is also a factor that reduces the chances of “marrying well” (this factor is not as important in families with many children because after the parents die, the siblings usually take turns looking after their sister/brother).

Weddings are usually organised when the family can afford it; it is not until then that they actually start looking for a candidate. After all, a wedding entails huge spending as it is usually organised for 500-700 people. Large banquet rooms are rented for that purpose. This custom continues especially in Dagestan (this is also where alcohol is served at wedding receptions more often than in the other republics). In post-war Chechnya weddings are smaller (though there are also some flashy receptions for the whole family and village), they are held at home more often than in Dagestan and alcohol is a rarity.

Big weddings, especially with alcohol and music, are opposed by Salafis, who see them as customs breaching the standards of Islam. Representatives of that movement rarely take part in such events and they organise their own weddings “Islam-style,” without music (only religious songs are recited/sung – *nasheed*), without alcohol. Appropriate attire is also required – women must wear skirts or high-neck dresses and headscarves. On the one hand, such changes in the local wedding traditions cause a series of tensions in a family, who would want a “regular” wedding for their children and, mostly, for relatives, who did not imagine a reception without vodka or dancing. On the other hand, for many young people (especially from cities) flashy traditional weddings are not longer as important; the “Islamic” option tends to be chosen by people with moderate religious beliefs if they do not want to spend so much on the reception.

Many weddings in North Caucasus are not registered with the ZAGSs (Registry Offices), taking place only in the presence of an imam and witnesses. This is connected with the growing significance of Islam in North Caucasian societies, the downfall of the authority of the state, lack of pressure, reluctance to change documents (this usually requires bribes and hassle). It is the wedding reception and not the ceremony or the document that is an important ritual for the community. It is the reception that sanctions a relationship in the community. Even if a marriage is registered with ZAGS, the practice is treated as a formality. Marriage is

solemnised by the local imam (sometimes he is invited to the wedding along with the registrar), with only two witnesses usually present. A ceremony in the ZAGS is also treated as an additional problem in the case of divorces, which are relatively frequent. I have also encountered situations (in cities) where people uncertain of whether they would get a long or those who simply wanted to see if they could make things work between them decided to have an Islamic wedding even if they were not religious but they considered themselves Muslims "by origin" (so called ethnic Muslims). This way they sanctioned their relationship in front of relatives but had no formality-related problems if they decided to part.

Young married couples outside the city rarely live without their parents; it is a frequent option to stay with the husband's parents, at least for some time (until they build a house). Newly wedded women have plenty of new duties, both towards the husband and (or perhaps primarily) towards his family. Young women in North Caucasus have complained on numerous occasions about their husbands treating them as servants. They must follow their orders without a word, as well as the orders of their mothers-in law. It is not common for husbands to stand up for their wives. The youngest son often stays with his parents for good, while elder brothers try to build their own houses (sometimes on an adjacent piece of land). As a result, the majority of housework is the duty of young wives and women in general. Men basically do not help in the household at all, even if they are unemployed. For a man to engage in housework is seen as "unmasculine" or beneath him. A man seen washing the dishes or vacuuming would become the laughing stock of his friends. Especially such works as bringing the water or taking out the trash are considered as reserved typically for women. The custom is so rooted that men who live on their own take out the trash in the evening so that nobody can see it. Shopping is also done by women, men just take them to the bazaar.

The same is with cooking: it is a typically "feminine" area which men do not explore until they emigrate and have to learn to cook in a male company, at least the simplest meals. However, they do not use those new skills after returning to Caucasus.

Unemployed men (not a big group), unless they find a seasonal job, sit at home watching TV or play the game of nard, a type of checkers popular in Caucasus; if they have a car, they usually give lifts to their family or friends. They sometimes take care of the kids but they do not participate in such activities as changing nappies or bathing. It is also against Chechen custom for a man to hug his children in the presence of other people. Women also take care of elderly people; if the youngest son does not live with his parents or if they require too much care, the siblings usually take turns: for example, the senior stays for three months

with one daughter or son and then for three months with the next one. This way the burden of care is not carried by only one family.

Pregnancies, abortions, adoptions

A woman is expected to get pregnant immediately after the wedding or at least within a year. If she does not, people keep asking her why she is not pregnant yet and she is given plenty of advice what to do. The pressure to quickly give birth is very strong. Young married couples visit specialists, fortune tellers, sometimes (both women and men) undergo exorcisms. Until recently it was assumed that the problem to conceive lies only with the woman but today people openly talk that the man needs to have tests too. Couples often opt for in-vitro fertilisation, which can be done either in the capital cities of the republics or in other cities of Russia (which is considered more effective); however, they have to either finance or co-finance the procedure and not everyone can afford it. Surrogacy, which is even more expensive, is available only to the richest and usually takes place outside the republic (e.g. Georgia, earlier the Ukraine). I have also encountered arrangements where a woman, in return for a specific amount, has intercourses with a man leading to a pregnancy resulting in a child, which it will later give up to the man, who will rise it together with his wife.

Sex-selective abortions are relatively rare (much more rare than in Armenia or Georgia) because having a lot of children is still considered a gift. With the growing standard of living, the dropping unemployment rate and the so called “maternity capital” (the money that the family receives after giving birth, which can be spent for example to buy land, a house or university tuition for the child), first giving birth to one, two or even three girls despite the desire to have a boy is not seen as a problem. This is why sex-selective abortions happen basically only in the third or fourth pregnancy. Sometimes also a man (for whom having a male offspring is usually more important than for the woman) forces the wife to have abortion or insists that she give him at least one boy; if this happens, a women overburdened with the number of children may herself decide to terminate a female foetus. Still, sex-selective abortions are not a standard; they are not welcome by the society and if they happen, they are kept secret, hence the difficulty estimating their scale. Abortions happen more often inside than outside marriages. This is because contraception is not common in marriages (although this is changing) and if a woman decides to have an IUD after reaching a limit of children, she is likely to have an abortion. An IUD is a popular birth control method recommended by mature women. It is also generally available. Abortions are usually performed in clinics, their cost is not high so poorer people may also afford them. I have not encountered pregnancy terminations using home methods or requiring travel to another republic. Older women remember herbs that

helped terminate the foetus but they do not have such experience themselves because abortion was already available during the early USSR era so the past "home" methods have become almost forgotten. There is usually no need to hide an abortion in marriage from relatives; women speak about it quite openly to other women, unafraid of social stigmatisation. Highly religious people and Salafis usually take issue with abortion; however, unlike flashy weddings or alcoholism, which are criticised, abortions are not an issue that is discussed often and it seems that the declarations are often far from practice.

Things are different for premarital pregnancies; they are not common because women are aware of the consequences of premarital sex and their relatives keep an eye on them. Still, if such pregnancy happens, abortion becomes the most common solution because if the woman's family and community learns about an extramarital pregnancy, the woman may suffer serious consequences (for more see the chapter on honour killings). Although little is said at school about sexuality-related topics, young girls who join the circle of married women quite quickly gain knowledge on sex, on fertile and infertile days as well as birth control. I have met women who did not know about fertile and infertile days and regarded hormonal contraception as unhealthy (or one that will "make them grow a moustache"); but currently, along with general internet access, the knowledge on birth control has improved too. In North Caucasian societies, sex is not a taboo provided that women discuss it with women and men with men. Women speak quite openly to one another about sexuality-related problems, such as lack of desire for the husband, the husband's impotence, getting pregnant too often, being forced to have sex.

Young women usually gain this knowledge not directly from their mothers but from more distant relatives (e.g. aunts), neighbours or peers. They also often listen in on meetings with relatives and neighbours. Men usually learn about sex from their peers (and they often have premarital sex); sometimes they gain the knowledge from such people as imams in the mosque.

The knowledge about sexuality is visibly growing as the number of unwanted pregnancies is substantially dropping. There are also fewer children given up for adoption by unmarried women (who wanted to hide this from their family). Such children were often "in great demand." Marriages that could not have their own children were very willing to adopt newborns; this usually happened in a transaction where a woman received money for giving birth to the child but the birth certificate was issued for the adoptive mother and so the adoptive parents on paper became biological parents. Another way was the adoptive father

formally admitting biological paternity, with the woman waiving her parental rights and leaving the baby to him. In such situations, money was given not only to the biological mother but also to the medical staff who participated in the falsification of documents. Although from the perspective of the law such transactions are close to child trafficking, from the local standpoint they were often a better solution than formal adoption because the child was raised by the new family from the first day of its life without being required to first wait in an orphanage or a care centre for formal finalisation of the adoption (which as also supported by corrupt practices so from a moral point of view there is hardly any difference). Such transactions are rare nowadays but not because the state has any control over it but because women who would give birth to a child and give it up for adoption instead of having an abortion are hard to find.[30]

The number of children for adoption in North Caucasus dropped significantly – in Dagestan I have come across adoption of children from Russian orphanages. Such adoptions were also undertaken by independent women who did not want to (or were unable to) get married. Yet these situations are uncommon and they usually involve women or married couples who either live in cities or used to live outside North Caucasus for some time. Adoptions inside the family (although not called adoptions) are socially acceptable albeit much less common than they used to be because women now have better birth control possibilities. It was not uncommon for older generations to give up their child to a sister or sister-in-law to raise it if there were already a lot of children in the family. A child usually knew the identity of their biological parent but considered the house of the parents who raised it as its home (and the parents as its mum and dad). This may be quite rare in Europe but in North Caucasus children are raised by the whole family or even village or neighbourhood. You can leave your child can a grandmother, aunt or sister-in-law for a few months without any criticism from the community. Children are used since childhood to living in many places or to moving often between the houses of their relatives. Such practice, though it may seem strange to us, very often leads to de-escalation of emotional problems; if a couple has marital problems, or needs to leave for some time for job or health-related reasons, they may send their child to stay with relatives for some time. Children are used to their mother and father not being their only guardians. Just like children from a kinship group are in a way “shared,” so are objects or clothes owned by members of

[30] This information comes from people who were looking for a possibility to adopt children as described above.

the same household; there is nothing strange in using somebody else's clothes, toys or electronic equipment.

Having a child out of wedlock is still a problem. Only Russians living in the republic or women who have separated from their kinship groups and are financially independent can afford such "luxury." If an unmarried woman gets pregnant, she usually has an abortion because it unlikely that the father would want to marry her and raise the child. There is a common belief that she must be a women of loose morals: "if she lay with me, she can do it with someone else." Having a child out of wedlock will bring trouble not only to the woman but to the whole family; at best, the girl may go to Russia and be on her own, without the support of the clan; at worst, she will fall victim to violence from her relatives fearing for the family's reputation. So the most frequent solution is to have an abortion (before someone other than the immediate family finds out about the pregnancy) and then to quickly get married (so that the situation does not repeat itself). Extramarital pregnancy is treated as a problem of the girl; the boy usually vanishes without any sense of responsibility. Although by law if the child is born he is required to pay child maintenance, in practice I have not encountered a case of an unmarried woman claiming child maintenance in court – the shame of the whole family caused by the daughter's "promiscuity" is so powerful that prevents them from taking formal actions. If the girls does not have an abortion in time and her relatives and community (or even father or brother, from whom such matters are kept secret; usually the mother or the sisters help a girl "handle" the matter before anyone else finds out) learn about the pregnancy, the girl may be in danger. I am aware of cases of tough beatings or killings of pregnant women. Sometimes the only solution for a woman who is visibly pregnant is to flee not only the republic (as she will be easily tracked by her relatives through their connections in government structures) but the country, as it may be safer for her to hide her identity from the diaspora. "Disgracing" the clan with "promiscuity" is remembered for a long time – such a woman, along with her child, remains basically outside any support networks. If a financially independent divorcee gets pregnant, the situation is slightly less complicated; sometimes the father of the child is ready to marry the woman in an Islamic ceremony even if they both know that they women will raise the child on her own. If this is not the case, the woman may still claim that she had an Islamic marriage that ended with a quick divorce. But in the majority of cases women try to first formally secure themselves (through an Islamic wedding) and then get pregnant, fearing they may be rejected by the clan, even if they are financially independent. A "promiscuous" divorcee is a "disgrace" for a clan similar to a "promiscuous" maiden and as such she suffers similar restrictions and punishments; in the worst case scenario, she may fall victim to an honour

killing, just like a young girl. So divorcees with unplanned pregnancies usually follow the same rules of conduct as unmarried women.

Domestic violence. Institutional help

Domestic violence is unfortunately a quite common phenomenon. The reasons vary, as is the case everywhere. Rapes in marriage are also not infrequent. Young women increasingly often leave their husband if they are beaten but once they have children, they are afraid to lose them and decide to suffer through the insults and beatings. Reaching for external help is uncommon and often unsuccessful because it does not protect a woman from her own clan, especially if the clan is influential or rich.

It is hard to estimate the extent of the domestic violence phenomenon because women rarely use institutional help. No one also keeps statistics and if they did, the figures would not reveal the scale of the phenomenon because it is hard to expect families to share their problems with an anonymous pollster. Nonetheless, we cannot look at domestic violence in North Caucasus the same way as in Western Europe countries. First of all, the problem of violence is not seen as a problem of a specific family or the woman but as a problem of the whole extended family. Unlike in Western societies, physical violence rarely goes unnoticed in North Caucasus – it is hard to hide the signs of beatings if you are visited by neighbours or relatives almost on a daily basis. It is much harder to stay at home, hiding behind a fake disease; a person who is sick or is absent from community life for some reason (for example does not attend weddings or visit the family) must be visited even more and the visit can take place at any time and is unannounced. The situation is different in places where there is no large diaspora or even in Moscow, where the control of relatives is limited. In such a case, the relatives are less able to de-escalate the violence or resolve the problem otherwise – considerable distances, lack of time and greater isolation of families in big cities makes it harder for the next of kin to realise and counteract the situation. Although statistics are not available, observations of the life in those republics suggest that women living outside the republic, even if freer in other choices, are also less controlled and at more risk of violence from men. So controlling relatives (as much as they may be tiring on a daily basis by interfering with people's individual choices and plans) often seem helpful in preventing the escalation of domestic violence. In emigration it is easier for a man to maintain that the woman is "to blame" for the violence because no one knows what the situation actually looks like. I am familiar with a case of a woman from Dagestan who was beaten, intimidated and then killed in Moscow

because she wanted a divorce. Her family agreed to take her back along with her four children but she never left Moscow because she was brutally murdered. The killer wanted to defend himself by claiming honour killing but his relatives did not support him. Perhaps the situation could have been resolved in the home republic; it would also have been harder to intimidate the woman or cut her off her family. Outside North Caucasus, in big cities, there are theoretically more institutions supporting women but such institutions are unable to defend them from the influence of the clan – a woman can be found easily in any place in Russia, especially when the clan looking for her has connections in law enforcement. Being aware of that is enough for women to seek support primarily from their relatives and friends. I have met many women suffering violence (more or less severely) over the 15 years of my research into Caucasus but none of them has reached for institutional help: they all tried to solve that problem within their families, kinship groups, sometimes religious authorities. In the mountains or in the pre-mountain and plateau villages, women do not consider contacting an institution at all – they do not know anyone who has used such support and they do not believe it may be effective (the reasons also include mistrust of any kinds of institutions, both government organisations and NGOs.) This of course does not mean that they are always stuck with violence for good. First of all, there are local ways of solving problems in a family. Usually immediate families of both spouses are involved, or their respected relatives, e.g. grandparents. Initially, it is the man's family that is asked to "talk some sense into him." If this is unsuccessful, the woman's family may temporarily take her in to allow the man to think the situation through. If nothing changes, a woman may return to her family, provided that (and this is where a serious problem lies) her family is actually ready to take her back. Things are the hardest for women from poorer ("worse") families/clans who have married someone with a better social or financial capital; their families may be unwilling to take them in because they may be unable to provide for her and because they are aware that it will be most likely impossible to marry the daughter off again. In such situations, families often do not support the women and she does not know where to seek institutional help. Due to the upbringing within a family, *tukkhum* or extended family, trust is also directed inside: a family imposes duties but also provides support and if this support vanishes, women often do now know what to do and they stay in the abusive relationship, having no social or financial capital to stop this.

Another situation where local conflict resolution methods fail is where the woman is accused by the man (or his family, with whom a young married couple often lives) of infidelity. A man cheated on by his wife becomes a laughing stock of the whole community and his own family. This may even build up a desire to kill a woman who has committed a deed so

"dishonourable" from the perspective of the whole clan. "Infidelity" or "cheating" are understood quite uniquely, though; cheating in the way it is understood by Western Europeans rarely takes place. "Cheating" can mean online contact or specifically understood flirting with a strange man (for example a former school sweetheart), exchange of text messages or a meeting without any witnesses. In the best case scenario, such incidents may end in a talk with the family (and for example Internet access restrictions for the woman) or in a divorce but there are cases where this is followed by physical violence. What makes the situation even more difficult is that men and women from both kinship groups usually take the side of the man and rarely stand up for the woman. With even the tiniest suspicion of the woman's "fault," both her own and her husband's family is ready to treat the woman as to blame for the abuse. If she does not receive help from her family, she cannot count basically on anyone and sometimes the only way out is to flee the country or the territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States (where, just like in Russia, she is quite easy to find). To make matters worse, a woman who receives no assistance from her family may also lose her children if she does not escape abroad (see the chapter on divorced women).

Marital rape, forcing wives to sex are sadly quite frequent practices; young women, often married off to strange men (and not always ones whom they like at least physically), experience many problems connected with intercourse. A number of women complain that the spouse demands sex too often. I am familiar with cases where women wanted the man to take another wife to have a peace of mind in this area and share bed duties. Refusal to have intercourse was often a birth control method for women who did not want any more children; still, nowadays an IUD seems to be a more popular and more effective method. Women are also taught by older women that they should give in to the husband even if they do not feel like have an intercourse because otherwise he will find someone else or abandon his wife, who is usually financially dependent on him. Sexuality seems to be a sphere where primarily the man's needs are satisfied, which is why the kind of violence which would be regarded in Europe as 'marital rape' is often considered a practice a woman needs to give in to, possibly with facilitating techniques or medications (e.g. herbs).

Rapes

It is hard to estimate the number of rapes because there are few trials or convictions for rape. Essentially, from social perspective rape situations can be divided into two types (other than the martial rape described above): situations where the woman is considered to blame or situations where the man or men (because many rapes are gang rapes) are to blame. Even though speaking about woman's fault in the case of rape is inaccurate because it is the man who is the abuser and he is the one to blame, the social perception of such practices in North Caucasus is quite different. The most common rape victims are young women who are "promiscuous" (according to local standards), for example by meeting men face to face or having a boyfriend. If a man and a woman additionally have intercourse (even without penetration, which is a relatively frequent practice because girls want to stay "virgins" before getting married) and this is exposed because for instance the man boast his "success" (or, to make matters worse, records his sexual adventures), such a girl may be blackmailed into having sex with other men under the threat that otherwise the video will be presented to her family. Although divorced women have more freedom as to entering into relationships with men, they are also at a risk of being raped because just like unmarried women they are afraid of being exposed before the family.

I have heard of cases where a raped woman is portrayed as to blame (why did she dress like this, why did she go out with him or talk to him), as a "floozie" who was the main culprit of the incident because "the man was just being a man." With such social perception of rapes of women whose reputation has been tarnished (for example because her outfit is "too showing" or because she visited "inappropriate" places), their rapes are a frequent practice.

A raped woman has no chances of seeking justice in court or from relatives because in the best case scenario they will try to cover up the case and prevent gossip or send the woman to another city as soon as possible, especially to non-Caucasian Russia (though not every family can afford it). In the worst case scenario, a raped women additionally experiences violence from her relatives, especially if her "promiscuity" becomes an object of gossip; if this happens, they may even kill her to defend the "honour" of the family, who will see this as a solution to save its good name in the eyes of the community. Not infrequently, the only way out for a woman who has been raped and wants to escape further abuse from the men who threaten to spread the information (or already have) is to flee the country and take her children with her, if she has any. Families and clans are rarely willing to support a girl rumoured to have

been promiscuous. Even if the family will not go so far as to kill her, the woman will be left on her own (and she may fall easy prey to pimps or human traffickers); if she has children, she may lose them, even if she travels outside the republic, because it is not hard to win a trial in court with money, considering in the atmosphere of the general condemnation for allegedly "promiscuous" women.

If the raped girl is a minor with a good reputation, the family tries to find the perpetrators and turn them over to law enforcement and if this does not work, it resorts to lynching. The most famous case in this context is one where a group of young men raped a teenage girl and were not adequately punished (they were let off with a fine) because they had ties to the authorities of Khasavyurt. The family of the girl found them and set them on fire in the square in Khasavyurt. Although such spectacular lynchings are rare, they also show potential perpetrators that the revenge of a family/clan may reach further than the justice system, which can unfortunately be corrupted with enough money or connections. For such rapes, the family of the abuser sometimes pays sufficient compensation to the family of the victim to drop the charges. Such negotiations are not always immediate; the family of the victim often first presses charges and then suddenly drops them (there are plenty of cases with withdrawn charges in North Caucasus – this usually means that a financial agreement has been reached). Rapes of this type are much less frequent because potential perpetrators are aware of the consequences. They feel more impunity in the case of the rapes described in the first part of the chapter.

Honour killings

Honour killings may (but of course do not have to) happen in the cases described above. A woman suspected of promiscuity falls victim to gang rapes, which additionally consolidates that opinion of her in the community. The family feels obligated to take actions not only to put an end to the practice but also prove to the community that it holds her accountable. The key to understanding the motivation of potential killers of promiscuous women is the honour of the family – especially the honour of the men from the family (a board family). She does not necessarily have to be raped or suspected of prostitution. The inability to "keep an eye on" a young woman and control her is becoming a subject of gossip in the whole community and they usually criticise her brothers, fathers or cousins. A single gossip that comes from a single source can be easily denied but if there are several witnesses of a woman's promiscuity in the community, her family feels obligated to take actions. The most common solution is to limit her freedom by forcing her to quit university, return to the home village or, if they live in a city, limit her going out privileges or make her live with relatives who will control her every move. I have also met with Internet access restrictions. She is be controlled by both men and women. It is hard for a young person in this situation to find allies because the social perception is that the family is right to limit her freedom.

I have encountered situations where mothers stood up for their daughters by trying to arrange an out-of-town job or a quick wedding, usually with someone from outside the community or with a lower social status. There was a case of a mother who went into exile with her daughter to avoid bloodshed; they basically became homeless (they worked as milkmaids on farms, usually in return for shelter and food). Feeling stigmatised, they did not ask for institutional help; all they could count on was charity from other communities, who tried to provide as hoc support to the women, even if they suspected the reason for their exile. The homelessness caused by the exile also increased the risk of rape – a young woman was in no way "protected" and as such could be easily taken advantage of by young men, who would not have to worry about revenge from her relatives. "Getting rid" of someone who dishonours the family is more common that actual killings. Honour killings are elements of neither Sharia no local *adats*; still, the very existence of this concept may be used by various kinds of abusers. For the killing to actually happen, a number of factors must come together: local control and problem solving mechanisms must fail and there must be someone to commit the murder – someone for whom the desire to defend the honour of the family will be more important than

the consequences of the killing. The problem is that murderers not always face justice (for various reasons) because they explain the murder as an "honour killing." Some killings are staged as suicides; the police who investigates or classifies the case may be easily corrupted and we must not forget that police officers, coming from local communities, often share the opinions regarding "promiscuous" women, which makes it additionally easy to cover up such a murder. The neighbours and the local community leave such matters to the concerned families, even if they know the truth, and they often refuse to testify. The story of Mariam Magomedova gained substantial publicity due to the persistence of her mother. When she was 20, the girl was abducted by a man 14 years older than her. She divorced him quite quickly and went to Russia. Mariam's father heard rumours about the alleged promiscuity of the girl and about her text messages exchanged with a strange man. The family encouraged Mariam to come to Dagestan to her cousin's wedding. After the reception, Mariam was strangled by her own uncle and taken out to the woods. After some time, the perpetrator confessed, explaining that he had wanted to defend the honour of her family, which may have been tarnished by the allegedly inappropriate attire and loose morals of Mariam (to which he had no proof). The mother pressed charges (she refused to drop them despite the financial offers from the perpetrator's family) and a few years later he was sentenced to seven years in prison (minimum sentence for murder). The opinions of community where Mariam came from (the village Nechayevka, Dagestan) were divided: some of Mariam's relatives firmly took the side of her mother but others understood the motivation of the uncle caring about the "honour" of the family. Such social perception of murder and the narratives circulating in the communities about past killings are used to control and intimidate women but they also result in a situation where the opinions on such killings, if they happen, are divided, rarely in favour of the victim. The situation of Mariam was unique because her mother was definitely on her side (thus losing the support of at least some of the family), ready to fight for justice. Mariam did not have brothers or a father who would be ready to seek justice otherwise than through formal channels. It must be added that without the advocacy of Memorial and the publicity, the local justice system could have most likely let the perpetrator go.

Between 2008 and 2017, authors of the report "Killed By Gossip: "Honor killings" of women in the North Caucasus"[31] identified 39 homicides (36 women and 3 men) that could be

[31] Yu. A. Antonova, S.V. Siradzhudinova, Killed by gossip. „Honor killings" of women in the North Caucasus. Report on the results of a qualitative study in the republics of Dagestan, Ingushetia and Chechnya (Russian Federation), 2018, http://www.srji.org/upload/medialibrary/a3d/PPI-2018-12-18-Honor-killings-Eng-final.pdf

classified as honour killings. The victims were mainly unmarried women, although there were also divorcees and wives. The majority of them were related to the killer. The most honour killings took place in Dagestan (but let's not forget that this is the biggest republic and its inhabitants are much more willing than the people in Chechnya or even Ingushetia to share their problems. It is much hard to obtain credible information in the Chechen society, intimidated by the authorities). Religious leaders may play a positive role in honour killings because if they firmly condemn them, the practice may be dropped; after all, it violates Sharia and it is hard to recognise it as a local traditional law as it is more of a pathological practice stemming from deformed understanding of family honour.

Circumcision of girls

Girls were traditionally circumcised in some high-mountain regions of Dagestan (e.g. Tsumadinsky District, Tsuntinsky District, Tlyaratinsky District, Botlikhsky District). The practice is still present in those districts, while in other places of the republic it is basically non-existent. I have reached people in south Dagestan who told me about the circumcision of their grandmother and great grandmother but they still emphasised that this was not continued in the next generations. During my research in the Tsumadinsky District, I managed to reach mature women who were circumcised but they were in agreement that the practice was not repeated in the next generations. Still, it is hard to obtain credible information on such an intimate subject. The communities are aware that circumcision of girls was already considered as a relic to be eradicated in the Soviet era. Some people, especially those who lived for some time outside high-mountain villages, seem to be also aware of the substantial locality of those practices. The progressing migration to the plateau seems to foster abandonment of that custom. The inhabitants of a specific village may try to live close to one another even in the plateau but settling down in a town or in the plateau is often determined by the availability of land, which is why the friendships that form are often of neighbourly nature and this fosters disappearance of local traditions. Some women in the Tsumadinsky District mentioned that speaking about circumcision was an exaggeration, "it's not a big thing," a kind of "female initiation" (sometimes involving a small incision and letting several drops of blood without removing the clitoris). Authors of a report on circumcision in Dagestan reached women from the above-mentioned districts who believed that the tradition was and should be continued. Women explained circumcision with tradition, Islam or the need to control female sexuality.[32] Gynaecologists working in Makhachkala did not confirm the information about wide-spread female circumcision (although they admitted that they had met circumcised women from the above districts during their practice) but we should not forget that few women in Caucasus have regular appointments and most of them meet a gynaecologist only during pregnancy or right before giving birth. Female circumcision is usually conducted in home conditions, in the

[32] Yu.A. Antonova, S.V. Siradzhudinova. Female Genital Mutilation carried out on girls in the Republic of Dagestan, 2016, https://www.srji.org/upload/iblock/52c/fgm_dagestan_2016_eng_final_edited_2017.pdf ; Yu.A. Antonova, S.V. Siradzhudinova. Female Genital Mutilation carried out on girls in the republics of the North Caucasus, 2018, https://www.srji.org/upload/iblock/957/The_practice_of_female_genital_mutilation_in_Dagestan_strategies_for_its_eli mination_15.06.pdf

mountains (or by people who came from the mountains); medical clinics in the plateau do not offer such services. In the above report, gynaecologists also mentioned various types of circumcision, including the one spoken of the most openly – a slight incision.

The Spiritual Board of Muslims and a number of other imams and religious authorities emphasise in public that such practices are not mandatory according to the Quran. Some said that they were ill-advised or prohibited and others that the problem did not apply to Caucasus. Since the problem is in the end marginal (and since it only involves the depopulating high-mountain districts and refugees from those areas) considering the whole Dagestan, it was not widely discussed by Islamic scholars or in Islamic press or on Islamic TV. The opinions of Salafis and official religious authorities were similar, they also clearly knew little about those practices. The attempts by journalists to address the topic contributed mainly to the dissemination of the knowledge about circumcision in the above-listed districts because many inhabitants of the republic did not know that such practices were happening in the republic at all – they had never met anyone circumcised in their lives. I have never come across any cases of punishment for circumcision; besides, it is hard to imagine a situation where this could happen as this is a practice limited to the sphere of women (mother, grandmother, female relatives), practised at home, and the knowledge about it rarely leaves the village.

Abductions and marriage by abduction

Marriage by abduction usually happens in several situations. It relatively often takes place when the family of the woman or the man does not agree to the marriage they desire. There may be several reasons for lack of consent to the wedding: differences between the social and financial statuses (the former is often more important and cannot be compensated with the latter) of the girl and the boy. In such a case, the abduction is often staged. There are also situations where the girl is hesitating or is afraid of the reaction of her family (especially if she is the one from the "better" family) while the boy has nothing to lose (for instance because his family has given their approval). Another reason may be insufficient funds to organise the wedding; if this is the case, an abduction solves a major problem for the family. The wedding reception is organised "ad hoc;" after the abduction, it does not need to be as lavish as a wedding that is planned well in advance. The family of the groom may also insist on an abduction if it is in a worse financial situation or does not want to waste so much money on the wedding but at the same time is entangled in the local community and is afraid of being mocked for throwing a wedding that is not lavish enough. Easier ways out of a big wedding reception include *Mawlid* – a religious celebration that is usually accompanied by *Dhikr* (a kind of Sufi prayer); food is served but there is no alcohol, music or dancing.

"Arranged" abductions also happen where the age of the bride and the groom is very different, especially where the woman is older or is a divorcee – in such a situation the family of the woman rarely has anything against, while the family of the boy usually cuts ties with the future spouses, at least for some time. Families usually reconcile when grandchildren are born or when they realise that their son will not change his mind and will not get a divorce to marry an "appropriate" girl. There are also cases, not that uncommon, where a boy (and his family) cannot find a candidate for a wife (because for example he comes from a poor family, his father is an alcoholic, he does not have a father or brothers) or where he likes a girl but the girl ignores him or blatantly rejects him. If this is the case, the boy may, in an act of desperation, decide to abduct her against her will. The practice is especially popular in Chechnya and though statistics are hard to find it is not losing (or rather is gaining) popularity; the practice is much more common there than in the neighbouring republics. Chechens often explain this practice away with "tradition;" however, the tradition at this scale is relatively new as it emerged in this form after the dissolution of the USSR, and more precisely, after the Chechen Wars in the rebuilding Chechnya. Although present in this republic, its scale is much smaller. There

may be several reasons for that: greater breakdown of social bonds in the post-war Chechen society, emigration (there are more families without the father or brothers or where the father of brothers abuse alcohol and drugs), "disciplining" women by Ramzan Kadyrov, bringing them down to the role of mothers and wives (although they often took over the roles of breadwinners during the wars and they are not necessarily ready to agree to the new principles of community life imposed by the authorities).

Notwithstanding the reasons for the abduction, it usually ends in marriage. Aside from cases of arranged abduction, the abducted woman is usually forced to get married by her family; the family also often seeks the causes of the abduction in the attire of the women, in her inappropriate behaviour ("Why did you talk to him? Why did you flirt? Why did you put on a skirt that was not long enough?"). An abducted woman is no longer considered as "pure" and the family is aware that she may have trouble getting married; despite the girl's protests, her family may use coercion, especially if from a broader (family) perspective the marriage is reasonable (the financial and social status of the future husband is appropriate). Social stigmatisation of women (and their families, especially the men who were unsuccessful in "keeping an eye on them") who spent a night or even a few hours in the house of the kidnapper is so strong that women often decide to sacrifice themselves for the family and marry the kidnapper. Even fifteen- or sixteen-year-old girls are kidnapped, many of them having their own plans, wanting to continue education. Abductions and early marriages in general deprive them of the chance to learn a profession and graduate. Because of the large number of abductions (especially in Chechnya), families tend to limit the freedom of young girls: their brothers often pick them up from school and then the girls spend their whole time at home without socialising with their peers. I have encountered situations where a young girl was reprimanded by her brothers for going out with me into the street of her home village, after I asked her to, and showing me around. She also admitted that after she had graduated a few years ago she had been basically staying at home the whole time – on the one hand, she was used to that (her family stayed in Chechnya during both wars, she was born during the war and as a child she also hardly ever left the household); on the other hand she understood that it was not the same for all girls and that some of them enjoyed more freedom when it came to spending their free time.

It is not common but it is possible to take a girl away from the house of the kidnapper, the attitude of the woman's family being the most important here. If the family has a high social and financial status (for example, unlike the family of the kidnapper), it is easier for the girl to

return to her family home; I have encountered situations where she was left in peace and was able to pursue her plans (e.g. university studies); however, the family usually tries to marry the girls off as soon as possible, before the gossip about the abduction spreads too quickly and the chances at marriage become slimmer. In Dagestan, where the status of the family (in particular its origin, whether it is "noble" or not) is of tremendous significance, abductions are less frequent than in Chechnya because the potential kidnappers are aware of the punishment they may suffer from a clan that is higher up the social ladder (especially if the clan has connection in law enforcement). I have also encountered situations where the family took the girl back claiming Sharia (whereunder abductions are not allowed). Mosque imams have started to encourage young men to turn to them in order to find a wife, thus discouraging abductions, which are presented in their narratives as relics. In Dagestan, such a way of solving the problem of getting married indeed is starting to be considered as "out of style" and beneath a real man. The growing religious awareness of young people may thus be a factor reducing the number of abductions.

If a family decides to take the girl back, the kidnapper is sometimes punished. I have come across cases where relatives from the police/OMON were sent to "beat the idea of abductions out of the boy." Representatives of the state were involved in the punishing process informally because formally the police is engaged very rarely; formal charges are not common either because informal ways of solving conflicts are usually more effective. In Chechnya, the administration of Ramzan Kadyrov introduced a fine of 1 million roubles for abductions in 2010. It is hard to say whether this is a factor actually reducing the number of abductions, though, because the issues of abductions rarely travel outside the families, and families try not to turn to state structures in fear of attracting unnecessary attention (which is not insignificant in a society intimidated by the authorities). Problems also arise where one of the families has ties to the authorities; I am familiar with cases of using Kadyrovites to solve conflicts in a way that is blown out of proportion – the kidnapper is not prosecuted in court but he and his brothers may be accused of "supporting terrorist actions" and arrested. Relatives of state officials take advantage of this situation for their own purposes; this is the case not only for abductions but for any conflicts and usually has the most dramatic consequences in Chechnya, where representatives of the authorities enjoy the highest impunity.

Polygamy

Polygamy is not a common phenomenon in North Caucasus. Despite the early conversion to Islam in Dagestan, it was rare even there. It occurred at a greater scale among the Chechens and Ingush in exile – the clergymen allegedly encouraged men to take as many wives as possible to ensure the survival of the nation. The institution experienced another "revival" after the USSR was dissolved and the influence of Islam increased as its teachings clearly mention a possibility of having up to four wives, on condition that (this must be emphasised) the man treats them equally and is able to provide for them. Although polygamy is not met with general approval, especially by women, the social acceptance in this area is growing. In Ingushetia it was even briefly made legal by president Aushev; the president of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov also expresses positive opinions on polygamy. The fact that polygamy violates federal law is of little significance because, as I have mentioned in the previous paragraph, the relationships are not made official.

Polygamy initially became trendy among the rich, who could afford to provide for a few wives. Gradually, polygamy became a pretext to explain other extramarital relationships. Such arrangements rarely lasted long. They resembled regular extramarital relationships, especially popular with men who left their home towns and function for years in two relationships: the first one with the "real" wife and children and another "extra" wife in non-Caucasian Russia. Both usually know nothing about each other. It must also be added that cheating is not infrequently met with social acceptance, with men having the tacit approval of their wives (the situation is currently changed by the greater Islamisation of the society and by polygamy replacing cheating). Except for certain individual cases, taking another wife is often considered a "male whim" and the community rarely approves of such relationships, whether or not Islam accepts them.

The majority of polygamous "marriages" are covers for mistresses. There is also a group of men who have been trying to introduce polygamy in the recent years with all of its requirements and obligations – both wives must be treated equally not only in financial terms but also in terms of the time devoted to each of them. The second wife should also come from a circle with slimmer chances at getting married, i.e. be an orphan, a half-orphan or a divorcee (especially with children). Such polygamy is a rarity, though, even if this is exactly the kind that Imams promote in their sermons. Makhachkala has imams who are engaged in matchmaking and encourage men and women to polygamy. Women who would like to become second wives

come to imams. Imams announce this fact during the sermon, encouraging men who can afford it to take another wife. They also list the duties of the man in a polygamous marriage. Polygamy has the most chances at social legitimisation if the first wife cannot have children for a longer time. If this happens, she may be abandoned and if the second wife has children, especially sons, she takes over the role of the first wife. Although treated by most women as unsustainable in the long run, a polygamous relationship is approached by some women "strategically." Women who did not get married as young girls because they chose education and career over marriage or divorcees often would rather be second wives because this entails fewer duties. In North Caucasus, where polygamy was never too common, the first wife is traditionally treated by the relatives as the real one and as such she has the duty of receiving the family and guests, cooking for them, taking care of the seniors. In practice, this means a lot of work and makes it impossible to have a job. The first wife, especially the wife of a man who is the youngest son, is also under the obligation to help (or even serve) the husband's parents (this duty is enforced especially ardently in Chechnya and Ingushetia, where the son's wife is becoming almost a servant in the house of the husband's parents). In contrast, the second wife may enjoy more freedom and she can have children without social ostracism. This is important because women often decide to enter into a polygamous relationship because they want children. Not infrequently, second wives support themselves financially, with the man providing for the children, bringing presents, inviting to a restaurant, sometimes paying rent for the flat. Such an arrangement is not a result of Sharia or local tradition; it is a relatively new practice that allows women to maintain good relations with their families/clans while securing come independence for themselves. A trend has also emerged in recent years of "taking" a second wife from among independent educated divorcees, who often help the man run a business and who are good discussion partners and can be "shown off." This is often a suitable arrangement for women who want to have a child. If the man does not (which happens more and more often), the relationships fall apart quite quickly. In the recent years, men have noticeably started to use contraception (a decade ago it was considered "unmasculine" to wear condoms). Becoming a second wife is also an option chosen by women who already have older children from their previous relationships because by remarrying they become free from the control of their family, they may live on their own and share the duty to take care of her old parents with her siblings (a divorced/unmarried daughter living with her parents would bear the burden of care on her own).

Independent and divorced women

Divorces are relatively common in North Caucasus, especially among young people. There are no statistical data on this subject (many marriages are not registered and neither are divorces), but young divorcees, both women and men, are not a rarity. The reasons for divorces of course vary, the most typical and most often listed one being the mismatch of the partners, who got married after meeting two or three times. Divorces usually happen within a year or two after the wedding, before the woman gets pregnant. It is a little harder for a divorced girl to get married but if she is young and does not have children she will find another husband quite easily. Traditionally, divorced women are married off to men who are divorced too. A family will rarely agree for a boy who has never had a wife to marry a divorcee; such situations happen for example if the future husband is in some way "defective," he is ill or comes from a "weak" family. From our perspective, divorces six months or a year after the wedding seem startling; on the other hand, they are often in a way equivalent to our premarital relationships, which sometimes do not last long either. According to Islam, which is entering human lives more and more, all you need to do to get divorced is say "I'm divorcing you" three times. If the words are said in anger but the spouses want to stay together, Sharia requires them to marry someone else for at lest one day. Only then can they remarry their own husband/wife (having waited for 3 months to see if there will be no child from the new relationship). I have encountered the actual application of this rule only once; still the growing awareness of Sharia (and especially its aspects regulating family life) in North Caucasian societies may result in notions actually being put in practice. A woman may demand a divorce though she is often discouraged from this (if the reason is mismatch and not for instance abuse) by the relatives of her husband and her own; unlike in Western countries, a divorce is not a private business of the two people but a business of their families. The situation is especially tough if they both come from the same *tukkhum* (which is practised in Dagestan); a divorce means a conflict in the *tukkhum* so the families try to avoid it at all cost because a *tukkhum* gives individual substantial support in emergency situations. So people sometimes stay in a failed relationship without any prospects for the families. The only solution that seems socially acceptable in this case is for one spouse (usually the husband) to migrate and for the woman to run the household and raise children on her own. Sadly, in this scenario she is unable to remarry, while cheating or ordinary interest in the opposite sex may end in ostracism for the whole *tukkhum* (and in the worst case scenario – with an honour killing to "save the honour" and the good name of the *tukkhum*).

After the divorce, children usually stay with the mother in Dagestan and with the father in Chechnya and Ingushetia (if they are very young, they initially live with the mother and then the father takes them), the mother having the right to visit them. Unfortunately, if families are in conflict because of the divorce or for example cheating (or alleged cheating) of the woman, her right to see the children may be limited; this is of course unlawful, even considering the traditional law, but it is a common social practice. If the father does not take the children away instantly, he usually does when the woman decides to remarry. In Dagestan children usually stay with the mother but if she remarries, they live apart from the newlyweds for the first six months of the marriage (for example with the family of the woman or with the father); later, when the father of the child and the new husband (and usually his family) agree, the child is taken to the new family. However, the biological father of the child needs to agree to this because he may face social ostracism or have his "manhood" questioned for agreeing for his children (especially sons) to be raised by another man. In Chechnya and Ingushetia there are also situations where the husband agrees to leave the children with the mother while they are still very young and then takes them away (or even kidnaps them) when they reach a "less problematic" age of five or six. This is why women in Chechnya and Ingushetia sometimes decide to flee with their children not when they are infants but when they grow up a little because this is when the risk of the children being taken away by the father is the biggest. If a woman refuses to give up the children, abductions become quite a common solution; the husband's family believes that tradition gives it the right to take "its" children away (because children are treated as "property" or the man's family). Sometimes the man's family immediately takes the children away, even if they are still infants because the mother or sister of the husband (or everyone jointly) takes care of them.

If the woman wants the children to stay with her, she must secure permission from her husband and additionally assume that she would not remarry before the children grow up (or at least turn 13 or 14, when they are able to decide who they want to live with). It is not an easy decision because women from the post-war generation are rarely educated (unless they went abroad) so they have little chances at finding a well-paid job (the number of children and their age matter here). It is relatively easier for the mother to negotiate keeping a girl than a boy because common opinions are that a boy should not grow up without his biological father.

From our perspective, the custom of leaving the children with the father is strange; its cultural sense is that it is harder for a woman with children to remarry (which often determines her financial and social status). The problem hardly applies to the man because it is usually

his mother, sisters or wives of his brothers who look after the children. In Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia children are raised mainly by the mother and other women in the household; a man may be asked to take a child for a walk or look after it when the woman is preparing a dinner for guests. Such division of duties is slowly changing but women still carry the majority of household duties. In Chechnya and Ingushetia men traditionally do not show feelings to their own children though in practice this usually comes down to refraining from showing feelings in front of others or outside the house. Traditionally, the father also should by an authority figure, someone whom the child respects or even fears.

A divorced woman has a special status in North Caucasus. Although she often returns to her family home and shares many of the same prohibitions that apply to unmarried women, she enjoys much more latitude, especially in urban agglomerations. In fact, that status gives her more freedom also in the sexual sphere. She must still watch her reputation, though. Divorced women are of interest to very young men for whom gaining sexual experience is a matter of prestige before their peers. They are aware that few unmarried woman would agree to a casual relationship. They do not treat relationships with divorcees seriously, of which the latter are fully aware.

Adat, Sharia, the TV, models brought from Moscow – all this has an impact on the relationships between men and women. The progressing Islamisation could be expected to limit the rights and career prospects of women. On the one hand, the promoted model of a non-working mother and wife indeed leads women to assume that role. On the other hand, elements of Sharia may be an emancipation tool. As it turns out, some women deliberately convert to Islam to free themselves from the patriarchal roles prevailing in the North Caucasian societies. The rules that a woman must follow in Islam, though different from those in Christianity, give her more rights than those arising from the traditions of North Caucasian societies. For example, situations where divorced women live on their own (rather than traditionally with their families) or only with their children are becoming increasingly common. This is not approved by families, especially if the woman is under the age of 40 or does not reach an age (perceived through appearance) when she is seen as “unattractive.” Women who put on a hijab may live on their own or with their female friends without any major problems from their families or relatives. With hijab treated as a sign of modesty and “good morals,” the woman’s family does not have to explain her decision to the relatives.

Women who live alone must be very careful not to become an object of gossip. They keep their meetings with men secret (which is possible mainly in cities). Sometimes an

informal relationship with a man (usually met online) is a moment when a woman decides to become a second wife. Others prefer a casual relationship because a second wife means duties not only for the man but also for the woman and if she does not want to (or cannot) have children it is often much more convenient to pursue informal relations as they are easier for both partners to break off. While in Dagestan, and especially in urban agglomerations, such practices are not rare, it is harder to keep an informal relationship secret from relatives in the tiny Ingushetia and in Chechnya, where adult women living on their own are still controlled by brothers or even teenage sons and it is very hard for them to have an independent life, especially a sexual life (for more about the threats see the section on honour killings).

Conclusion

It is hard to provide a holistic description of the situation of women in the societies of North Caucasus as seen from the perspective of daily life. The religion, the family structure and, primarily, the fact of functioning within one state – all this make us see more similarities than differences because the latter are hidden deeper and they cannot be easily classified or explained. With the almost complete absence of cultural anthropology and sociology research (with some exceptions[33]) and the unreliable statistics, it is very hard to confront the field experience and the author's own research with the research of others. As a result, the explorations and observations presented above are by nature subjective, aside from the purely factographic data taken from books and scientific studies.

The description presented in this paper is based primarily on ethnography research and on observations. The qualitative research methodology on the one hand helps better penetrate the studied society and identify the rules it follows or learn about the actual and declarative social divisions and the attitude to the state. However, even long-term ethnographic field research permits describing only a piece of the reality – the one you have explored best. This may serve the basis for generalised conclusions but there is always a risk that a local particularism will be extrapolated to the whole region, which is so diverse after all.

[33] Ethnography research in Chechnya and Ingushetia has been conducted over the past 10 year for example by: Ieva Raubisko, Ekaterina Sokirianskaia. In Dagestan: Jurij Karpov, Ekaterina Kapustina and Akhmed Yarlykapov.

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