
Kazakhs

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ALTERNATIVE NAMES

Kazakhs are also known as Kazak (alternative spelling) and as Kirgiz and Kirgiz-Kaisak (alternative names used by Russians until the 1920s).

LOCATION

Kazakhs can be found in Kazakhstan, a country that became an independent nation-state in 1991 when the Soviet Union dissolved. Kazakhstan is located in Central Asia, and shares borders with Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Significant populations of Kazakhs also live in Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkey.

CULTURAL OVERVIEW

The Kazakhs descend from nomadic Turkic and Mongol tribes who formerly occupied the Eurasian steppes. According to most sources, the Kazakhs emerged as a distinct ethnic group in the mid-15th century when a number of clans broke away from the Uzbek khanate. Over the centuries, Kazakh culture has been shaped by a nomadic pastoral economy, a tribal social structure, customary laws, a blend of Islamic and shamanic religious beliefs, and Russian and Soviet colonization.

The Kazakh economy was traditionally based on nomadic pastoralism, the seasonal migration of livestock herds to known pastures and water sources. The typical household had a herd that included sheep, horses, camels, cows, and goats. The nomadic economy influenced a gendered division of labor, where men were expected to care for the livestock and defend the territory while women cooked, cleaned, took care of children, served guests, and prepared textiles (Bacon, 1966).

The Kazakhs have a patrilineal tribal social structure. They are divided into three "hordes" (*zhuz*), which are further subdivided into a number of "tribes" or

"clans" (*taipa* or *ru*), which are further segmented into tribal lineages (*ata* or *ru*).

Tribal leaders (*khans* and *bais*) had authority over families who lived within their territory and managed relations between tribal groups. Traditionally, conflicts over land, livestock, family, and kinship were resolved through either customary law (*adat*) or Islamic shar'ia law (Martin, 1996).

Islam was first brought to the territory that is now Kazakhstan by Arab conquerors in the 8th century, where archeological evidence shows that it took root among some of the sedentary peoples of the region. But it was much later, in the 15th and 16th centuries, that Sufi dervishes traveled across the steppes and converted many of the Kazakhs to Islam. Since many of the pre-Islamic practices remained predominant, Catherine the Great encouraged Tatar mullahs to provide Islamic education to the nomads, in the hope that it would "civilize" them. Although the Kazakhs have a Muslim identity, many of the characteristics associated with Muslim culture never took hold in Kazakhstan. For example, Kazakh women never wore veils that covered their faces and they do not practice seclusion. Further, a number of Islamic practices and beliefs have blended with pre-Islamic shamanic practices and beliefs (Michaels, 1997).

Russian influence over Kazakh culture begins with the 18th century when a military alliance was formed between a Kazakh khan and the Russian czar. The northern part of the Kazakh steppe increasingly came under Russian influence as the Russians established military outposts in the 19th century, and Russian peasants migrated there in the early 20th century. In 1920, Bolshevik revolutionaries gained control of the land and established administrative control over the region that is now known as Kazakhstan. From 1920 to 1991, the Soviet rulers attempted to transform many aspects of Kazakh culture in ways that conformed with communist ideology. Traditional gender relations, tribal structure, and the Islamic faith were all targets of social change (Bacon, 1966; Massell, 1974; Olcott, 1991).

In 1991, the Kazakh republic of the Soviet Union became an independent nation-state. The newly

independent Republic of Kazakhstan is a multiethnic state, with sizable minority populations, including Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Uzbeks, Koreans, and Uighurs. Since independence, the revival of Kazakh traditional culture has been accompanied by less public and government support for measures that improve the status of women in society. Simultaneously, increased exposure to Western cultures has brought new fashions and attitudes that express a greater openness toward sexuality (Akiner, 1997; Bauer, Boschmann, & Green, 1997; Michaels, 1998).

CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

The Kazakh culture recognizes male and female gender categories. There is a rigid distinction between male and female categories in terms of socialization, division of labor, and dress. Men and women dress differently. Men typically wear Western-style pants and shirts. Women typically wear modest dresses and skirts, but new modern fashions include feminine pants and pantsuits for urban women, and jeans and shorts for girls and younger women. The color red, associated with youth, is only worn by girls and young unmarried women. In rural regions of Kazakhstan, married women may wear a kerchief to symbolize their marital status.

While individual preferences vary regarding hair color, eye color, and other physical features, Kazakhs generally consider tall strong men to be more attractive than short weak men. Kazakhs generally consider women to be attractive if they are of average height with pale skin and long hair. Although robust women were preferred in the past, younger Kazakhs today are more likely to consider thin women to be beautiful.

Sexual preferences are not associated with visual clues. Most homosexuals try to conceal their sexual preferences, including through marriage to a person of the opposite sex.

GENDER OVER THE LIFE CYCLE

In the Kazakh language, there are general terms that refer to a "boy" (*ul bala*) and a "girl" (*qyz bala*), and there are more specific terms for several life stages. Kazakh infants of both sexes are known as *bope* until they are approximately 3 years old, at which point they become known as

toddlers, or *nares*. Around the age of 6, boys are referred to by the general term for boy (*ul bala* or simply *bala*), while girls are known by the general term for girl (*qyz*). By the time a girl becomes a *qyz*, she is expected to help with housework. Kazakhs believe that children reach puberty around the age of 14, at which point a boy is called a *zhigit* and a girl may be called a *boi zhetken*. The next life stage is marked by marriage, rather than the attainment of a certain age. Upon marriage, a girl is referred to as a young bride (*kelinshek*) and a boy becomes a young groom (*er zhigit*). A girl who does not marry by the age of 25 becomes known as an "older girl" (*qary qyz*). Around the age of 30, a married man is known as an *er kisi* and a married woman is known as an *aiyel*. Around the age of 60, a man becomes an old man (*kariya* or *shal*) and a woman becomes an old woman (*kariya* or *kampir*).

The transition from unmarried youth to married adult is the only transition that is publicly marked. A large wedding feast (*uilenu toi*) is held at the boy's house and, in some cases, a farewell feast for the girl (*qyz uzatu toi*) might also be held at the girl's house. The bride and groom are seated at a central stage at both events, where they are expected to stand up repeatedly as they are toasted by each of the wedding guests.

There are two other events that are publicly marked and represent important transitions, yet do not represent the transition from one named life stage to another. First, when a child takes his or her first step, the event is marked with a small family ritual known as the *tusau keser*, where a small rope symbolizing the cradle rope is connected to each of the child's legs and then ritually cut by a respected adult. Second, young boys are circumcised at the age of 3, 5, or 7. This event marks the moment a boy becomes a Muslim. A small ceremony is held on the day of the circumcision, and a large feast (*sundet toi*) is held as early as a month later.

Socialization of Boys and Girls

Kazakhs express a general preference for boy children, because boys have the cultural obligation to help their parents after they marry and boys pass on the family line. This cultural preference is illustrated by several Kazakh girl names, such as *Ulbolsyn* ("Let it be a boy") and *Ulzhan* ("boy's soul"), which indicate a sex preference for the following child. Although Kazakh families strongly desire at least one boy child, there is a preference

to have a mix of boy and girl children, as girls are needed to help their mother with household chores.

Kazakh children do not have a single set of caretakers. Parents and grandparents play an important role in socialization, but in extended family households, aunts, uncles, older cousins, and older siblings may also help to socialize a child. According to Kazakh custom, a couple's first child is given to the man's parents to raise. Although this custom is not followed by all families, it is very common to encounter Kazakh children, especially first-born children, who have been primarily raised by their grandparents, not their parents.

As infants, boys and girls are both traditionally swaddled and placed in a rocking cradle (*besik*), which makes it easy for older children to help care for them. Not all families use the cradle in contemporary Kazakhstan. Families who use the cradle may keep an infant in it for over a year. By the time an infant leaves the cradle, gender socialization becomes more noticeable. To begin, boys and girls play differently. Boys are allowed to run, chase, and wrestle each other, and they are taught to prefer masculine toys, such as cars and trucks. Girls are expected to play more quietly with toys and dolls.

Around the age of 5, boy children are circumcised and the occasion is celebrated by a large feast (*sundet toi*). From the Kazakh perspective, this occasion marks the moment a boy becomes a Muslim. In the Soviet period, the state advocated atheism and did not approve of circumcision, which was viewed as an unnecessary Muslim tradition. In practice, parents with strong affiliations to the Communist Party were less likely to circumcize their children, while other parents were likely to circumcize their sons secretly and hold a small family gathering to mark the occasion. Among Kazakhs, girl children are not circumcized and there is no comparable rite of passage.

Both boys and girls receive 11 years of coeducational public schooling. Families that can afford the additional expense send both boy and girl children to the university.

Although boys and girls may receive the same level of schooling, they are disciplined differently at home. Boys are disciplined or scolded less frequently than girls, who are often scolded for not behaving in a modest way and not helping with household work. While parents want their sons to be hard workers and to help around the house, they expect more help from their daughters. Kazakh parents believe that it is important for a young

girl to learn how to help with all household chores and to behave modestly. Such qualities are necessary for a girl to find a good spouse and to have a successful marriage. Girls are expected to help with household work to such an extent that they are perceived negatively if they frequently leave the home for leisure activities, such as visiting friends. These expectations, which relate to a girl's honor and reputation, are much stronger in rural and southern regions of Kazakhstan, where traditional gender ideals have not changed as much as in urban and northern regions of Kazakhstan. In urban and northern regions of Kazakhstan, young girls have become more interested in personal appearance and leisure activities and less interested in household chores and sexual modesty (Michaels, 1998).

Boys and girls are introduced to sexuality in informal ways through friends and relatives, and more recently through global television programs and local print media. Boys often learn about sex by listening to older brothers and cousins talk about such things. Girls are less likely to learn about sex through conversation, and less likely to express an interest in sexuality owing to the cultural emphasis on female sexual modesty. On a girl's wedding day, the girl's sisters-in-law and married friends will take her aside and tell her about sex.

Puberty and Adolescence

At puberty, the general pattern of socialization continues, and the division between the sexes becomes even stronger. Boys, on the one hand, are allowed even greater social freedoms than before, though they are expected to help out with household labor. Girls, on the other hand, are more strictly disciplined than before, as parents are increasingly worried about their daughter's reputation within the community. (As will be discussed further in the "Sexuality" section, unmarried women are not supposed to have sex before marriage.) Girls are expected to help out with household chores and to behave modestly.

Attainment of Adulthood

Men and women are considered to be adults upon marriage. This is linguistically accentuated for women as the word for "girl" (*qyz*) is the same as the word for "virgin," and the word for "woman" (*aiyel*) is the same as the general word for "wife." A girl who does not marry by the age of 25 becomes known as an "older girl" (*qary qyz*).

Older girls work and socialize as adults, but they receive a hard time about their single status. Unmarried men (*boidaq zhigit*) also receive pressure to marry by the time they reach the age of 30.

Upon marriage, a woman takes on several new social roles. In addition to becoming a wife and an eventual mother, a married woman becomes a daughter-in-law (*kelin*). A good *kelin* is expected to respect her in-laws by providing unpaid household services for them. The expectations for daughters-in-law are higher if they are "in hand" (i.e., living in the same household). Nevertheless, expectations exist whether or not the young couple lives with the groom's parents. Further, the English term "daughter-in-law" is somewhat misleading as the social role of a *kelin* is not limited to a woman's relationship with her husband's parents. In other words, the services of a *kelin* can be requested by other relatives on her husband's side. For example, an older woman may invite any younger *kelin* married into her husband's patrilineal clan to come and help her prepare food for guests or to perform other tasks (Werner, in press a).

Married men and women are not expected to be physically or economically independent of the husband's parent's household. Some young couples live with the husband's parents, and almost all couples have some economic ties with their parents. At first, the economic ties might benefit the younger couple, but eventually the younger couple are expected to support the elderly couple.

Middle Age and Old Age

As men and women reach middle age, they become more economically independent. Instead of depending on others, they have several dependents, including children and elderly parents. In connection with this relative economic independence, middle-aged couples tend to have very active social lives. Compared with younger and older couples, middle-aged couples attend and host more feasts and dinner parties. This is one way that they maintain the strong social networks which are critical for household survival (Werner, 1998b). Middle-aged women increase their status when their sons marry and have children, and when their mother-in-law dies.

As men and women reach old age, there is a gradual shift toward economic and physical dependence on their grown children. The transition occurs as they retire and their health begins to fail. Although elderly men and women become more dependent on their children, they

are highly respected by all members of society. Elderly men (*aqsaqal*), in particular, are respected for their knowledge and advice. Upon reaching old age, Kazakh men and women are more likely to observe Islamic rites, such as the daily prayers and fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. Although a few Kazakhs adhere to these practices throughout their lives, most consider these Islamic practices to be impractical until they reach old age and have more free time.

PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES BY GENDER

Kazakh women are socialized to act in a nurturing way toward children, guests, and elderly relatives. Women are the ones to care for hurt children and ill parents. Compared with men, Kazakh women are much more social and talkative around friends and guests. At the same time, women may act shyly and modestly toward strangers. Kazakh men, in comparison, are generally very confident and independent when it comes to dealing with outsiders, yet they are not as communicative as women when it comes to dealing with personal relationships. Kazakh men are socialized to become the dominant spouse, the dominant parent, and eventually the dominant head of the household. They express this dominance by making important decisions and commanding others to fulfill their requests.

GENDER-RELATED SOCIAL GROUPS

As explained in the "Cultural Overview," Kazakh society has both patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent. Upon birth, individuals automatically become members of their father's tribal lineage, tribe, and horde. Upon marriage, a woman moves to a residence controlled by another tribal lineage and contributes labor to this new tribal lineage, though she remains a member of her father's lineage. The patrilineal tribes and lineages are loosely associated with territorial divisions and still have importance in contemporary Kazakh culture. A person in a position of power, for example, has some moral responsibility to help other members of the same tribe or tribal lineage. Therefore it is easier to live in a region where one's lineage is a dominant group (Werner, 1998a). Tribal

affiliation is also important when it comes to marriage. Kazakhs are not supposed to marry a relative on the father's side who is less than seven generations removed. In practice, Kazakhs marry outside their immediate tribal lineage to ensure that they do not marry a close patrilineal relative (Werner, in press b).

There are no important nonkin associations for males or females in Kazakh society.

GENDER ROLES IN ECONOMICS

Women's household chores include a number of daily tasks: caring for children, preparing meals, serving tea to guests, cleaning the house, washing clothes, and arranging the daily bedding. Many women also bake their own bread, prepare a variety of dairy products, and sew clothes for their family. Meanwhile, the men help with domestic work by buying groceries and helping with childcare. In rural areas, where there is more household work, women also milk the cows and horses and work in the household garden, and men also care for livestock and help with the garden work. Compared with men, Kazakh women have very little leisure time at home. In order to complete their household chores, many women rely on the help of their children and their daughters-in-law. For children, the boundaries between "female" and "male" household chores are much more flexible. With the exception of food preparation and clothes washing, boys are known to help out with household chores, especially in households that have a shortage of female labor. However, the expectations for boys' help are lower than those for girls' help (Werner, in press a).

Women also work hard to maintain household networks by serving guests, helping others serve guests, and preparing gifts for various occasions. With hospitality as one of the central elements of Kazakh culture, households frequently host dinner parties to socialize with friends and they occasionally sponsor large feasts to celebrate new marriages and male circumcision. These events are enjoyed by women, yet they also burden women with additional responsibilities. Gift exchange is another aspect of women's role in household networking. Different occasions call for different gifts, and women are responsible for selecting and presenting most gifts on behalf of their household (Werner, 1998b, in press a).

In traditional Kazakh society, craft specializations were strictly divided by gender. Women sewed clothing,

wove rugs, and made wool and other textiles. Men made ceramic objects, leather objects, and boots (Bacon, 1966).

In modern Kazakh society, there are also gendered patterns for occupational specializations. On the one hand, both men and women work as doctors, teachers, economists, and agricultural workers. On the other hand, women dominate certain occupations, such as day-care workers, shopkeepers, secretaries, nurses, and janitors. In urban centers, women are more likely to be employed as translators and administrative assistants for foreign businesses. There are a few positions that are rarely, if ever, filled by women: policemen, firemen, and military recruits. In addition, the chief positions in any business or government office are usually held by men (Bauer et al., 1997).

Both men and women sell goods in local marketplaces. In the post-Soviet period, as unemployment increases and the availability of consumer goods increases, the number of market vendors has increased dramatically (Bauer et al., 1997). Women dominate the sale of cloth, clothing, and food products, while men are exclusively involved with the sale of livestock although they can also be found selling clothes and food products. Gender stereotypes suggest that women are better at market trade because they have the patience to sit in the bazaar, the skills to persuade others verbally, and the ability to resist friends and relatives who request cash loans. While many merchants buy and sell goods close to home, some merchants travel to distant marketplaces, sometimes in foreign countries, to buy and sell their wares. In some cases, male and female merchants live apart from their families for weeks or months (Werner, in press a).

According to the laws of Kazakhstan, both men and women can buy, sell, and own property, including livestock. In practice, property is more likely to be in the husband's name.

PARENTAL AND OTHER CARETAKER ROLES

A variety of individuals play a parenting role in the life of a child. Mothers are the primary nurturers. They spend the most time with the children, they socialize children to know what is right and wrong, they provide children with tender hugs and encouragement, and they care for children when they are ill. Fathers play a more distant parenting role. They pay less attention to the child on a daily basis, but their advice, admonitions, and praise

carry more authority from the child's perspective. Grandparents also play an important role in the socialization of a child. Grandparents are generally expected to indulge and spoil their grandchildren. In some cases, they take on a more serious role. According to Kazakh custom, the first child is given to the father's parents to be raised. This custom is followed by some families. In these cases, the grandparents tend to be more lenient than the parents toward the child. Aunts, uncles, and older siblings also play a parenting role by scolding younger relatives when they do something wrong and giving them orders to help with household chores.

LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC ARENAS

Traditionally, men always dominated leadership roles in Kazakh society. At all levels of tribal organization, only men served as leaders. Although tribal divisions do not have the same political importance as they did in the past, men still serve as informal tribal leaders.

Through Soviet affirmative action policies, Kazakh women started to take on leadership roles in the modern political system. As a general rule, women have successfully worked as middle-level managers, especially in the educational and welfare sectors of the government, but they have had more difficulty reaching upper-level positions. Though women can participate in the military, this is rare and female leadership in the military is practically nonexistent. The number of women occupying political positions of power has decreased in the post-Soviet period (Bauer et al., 1997). At the same time, however, women have become disproportionately represented in the growing number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), many of which receive funding from the international aid community. Women have also taken on leadership roles in business, establishing and operating their own businesses, and organizing through an association for businesswomen. Finally, a number of Kazakh women have served as leaders for the growing number of charitable funds.

GENDER AND RELIGION

The Kazakhs have a Muslim identity, though their religious beliefs and practices include pre-Islamic elements that involve shamanism and ancestor worship (Michaels, 1997). There are no gendered orders in

Kazakh society. Among Kazakhs, it is extremely rare for a woman to serve as mullah, or Islamic prayer leader. However, women frequently receive a calling to be a traditional healer (*tauyp* or *emshi*) (Privratsky, 2001).

Kazakhs believe that the spiritual world entails a three-tiered hierarchy. Allah, or God, is a male at the top of the hierarchy. The second level consists of good and evil spirits, which are primarily female. The third level consists of ancestor-spirits, which are both male and female.

LEISURE, RECREATION, AND THE ARTS

In general, men have more leisure time than women. Teenagers and youth of both sexes enjoy going to discos, bars, and cafés. There are more opportunities for those activities in urban areas. On occasion, they might enjoy nature by going to a park or a lake for a picnic. Grown men spend their leisure time in a variety of ways. In rural areas, they go to the livestock bazaar to socialize with other men, they visit other men's homes, and they play horse sports such as *kokpar* (a polo-like game played with a goat carcass). In urban areas, men play billiards, play sports (especially basketball and soccer), and go to the sauna. In comparison, women have almost no leisure time because there is always more housework to do. Women's leisurely pursuits include visiting other people's homes, going shopping, and taking the children to the park. Certain leisure activities, such as the livestock bazaar and the *kokpar* game, are for men only.

RELATIVE STATUS OF MEN AND WOMEN

Kazakh men have more status and authority than Kazakh women. At the household level, men make the most important decisions, such as whether to purchase an expensive item, whether to send a child to the university, and whether a child's suitor would make an acceptable spouse. Men also have the authority to make decisions regarding important household resources. However, all these decisions are usually discussed between husband and wife, so women do have an influence on major decisions. Control over individual income varies from one household to the next; in some households all income is pooled, while in others individuals retain control over some of their income.

A Kazakh woman's sexuality is controlled by men. Before marriage, her father and brothers monitor her comings and goings to ensure that she does not engage in premarital sex and reprimand her if she does not behave in a sexually modest way. In traditional Kazakh society, fathers also decided who would marry their daughters. Kazakh women today have more influence over their marriage, but most marriages still involve final consent from the girl's parents. After marriage, a woman's husband controls her sexuality, as he has the right to demand sex from his wife. In contrast, men's sexuality is much less controlled. Men are not expected to be sexually modest, and they are not expected to fulfill the sexual demands of their wives. To a certain extent, though, their sexuality is controlled by their parents who still play an influential role in who a boy chooses to marry. Only rarely would a young man marry a girl without his parent's approval. Although girls generally marry with their parent's consent, they are more likely to marry without their father's consent, particularly if the bride is "kidnapped," with or without her consent, by the groom (Werner, in press b), as described below in the section on "Courtship and Marriage."

SEXUALITY

Kazakh men and women believe that sex is natural and healthy, in addition to being important for reproductive purposes. They believe that people who do not have regular sex may experience physical and psychological side effects, such as headaches, bad moods, and aggressive behavior. The only time that sex is considered to be dangerous is during the first 40 days after the birth of a child. Although sex is considered to be important, many Kazakh women are reluctant to discuss their sexual preferences with their husbands.

Attitudes towards premarital and extramarital sex differ for males and females. Women are expected to refrain from premarital sex, though not all do so in practice. Men do not experience any negative social consequences for having premarital sex. Extramarital sex is considered to be morally wrong for either sex, though there is less stigma attached to men who have extramarital affairs.

Sexual modesty is especially important for Kazakh women. There is a tension in Kazakh society between older generations, who believe sexual modesty is very

important, and younger generations who are influenced by Western images of sexuality. Teenage girls and unmarried women, especially in urban areas, often act and dress in ways that are considered to be "sexy."

Cross-dressing is a rare and surreptitious practice in Kazakh society. Similarly, Kazakh society does not look favorably toward male or female homosexuality, which is generally viewed as unnatural and dirty. Female homosexuality is considered to be more aberrant than male homosexuality. Nevertheless, some Kazakh men and women identify as "gay" and "lesbian" respectively, and gay bars can be found in large urban centers.

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Traditionally, Kazakh marriages were usually arranged by parents when the bride and groom were still young children. The bride and groom might not have met more than once or twice before the wedding (Argynbaev, 1978). Patterns of courtship and marriage changed dramatically in the Soviet period, in part due to the state's efforts to reduce gender inequality. Grown men and women receive lots of pressure to marry, and only a small minority of people never marry.

In the contemporary period, marriages are formed in a variety of ways that reflect both the pre-Soviet past and the Soviet legacy. Typically, young couples either meet in school or at university or they are introduced to each other through friends and relatives. Couples often date for several months before the topic of marriage comes up. Parents often influence who their children decide to marry by initiating certain introductions and offering their consent. The amount of influence that the parents have varies from one family to the next. Physical attraction and love are important considerations for the young couple, while parents are more likely to consider the status of the other family, the bride's ability to do housework, and the groom's ability to provide for the future. A Kazakh man is unlikely to marry a woman without his parent's consent.

There are three general paths to marriage in Kazakhstan. First, there is a modern version of the arranged marriage (*quda tusu*), where the bride and groom have as much, or more, input in the marriage decision as their parents. In addition to giving their consent, the parents are expected to deal with the formalities of "arranging" the marriage, which involves a series of

exchanges between the new in-laws. Second, some marriages are formed when the groom kidnaps the bride (*alyp qashu*). This path to marriage is very common in the southern regions of Kazakhstan, and almost nonexistent in the northern regions. The Kazakh word for bride kidnapping (*alyp qashu*, literally "to take and run") is a general term used to refer to both consensual and non-consensual bride kidnappings. Bride kidnapping varies from case to case in terms of the level of consent and the primary motive for kidnapping. Brides who are kidnapped without their consent generally choose to stay, rather than to return home with a tarnished reputation. The third alternative is for a couple to get married in a simpler fashion with an official yet simple ceremony at the civil registry and perhaps a small celebration at home (Werner, in press b).

Most marriages are celebrated with a series of feasts and events, the order of which varies from one marriage to the next. Both sets of in-laws hold a "matchmaker" or "in-law" party (*qudalyq*) in honor of their new relatives. These parties involve numerous exchanges of food and gifts between the immediate in-laws and their core relatives and friends. A "face-opening ceremony" (*betashar*) is held at the groom's house, as a formal introduction of the bride to the groom's family and social network. During the ceremony, the bride stands with her face veiled next to two other women who married into this kin group. A man playing the *domyra*, a guitar-like instrument with two strings, sings out each guest's name. When their name is called, each guest walks toward the bride and puts a small amount of money in a jar as the bride bows her head in greeting. At the end of the ceremony, the veil is removed and the bride begins her new life as a wife and daughter-in-law (Werner, in press b). The girl's farewell party (*qyz uzatu toi*) is an optional event that takes place at the bride's house. These ceremonies range from an intimate family dinner at home to a large feast with several hundred guests. At the end of a meal, the girl is escorted to the groom's house by the groom and other family members. It is customary for the farewell to be accompanied by ritual wailing.

The wedding feast (*uilenu toi*) is a large family feast sponsored by the groom's family. Several hundred guests are invited to the feast, including the bride's family and friends and the groom's family and friends. In rural regions, the wedding feast is usually held at home. In urban areas, the wedding feast may take place in a restaurant (Werner, 1998a, 1998b). The Islamic marriage

covenant (*neke qiyar*) is a small ceremony performed by a mullah at the groom's house. The mullah recites verses from the Qur'an, asks the couple to confess their faith, has the couple and the witnesses drink from a bowl of water (in which two coins have been placed), and then gives his blessing (Privratsky, 2001). A civil ceremony (*ZAGS registratsiya*) is held at a local administrative building or marriage hall. This brief ceremony, directed by a state official, ensures that the couple are legally married. After the ceremony, an entourage of young people travel in cars with wedding ribbons to nearby scenic locations and take numerous photographs.

Legally, divorce can be initiated by the man or the woman. In practice, however, divorce is usually initiated by the man because there are fewer consequences for a divorced man than for a divorced woman. There are a variety of acceptable reasons for a man to initiate a divorce: the wife is unable to bear children, she is a bad housekeeper, she does not get along well with her in-laws, he is in love with somebody else, or he suspects her of infidelity. Women are more likely to initiate divorce in situations where the husband drinks excessively, physically abuses her, or does not provide for the family. Before resorting to divorce, a Kazakh man must consider his parent's opinion and the personal difficulty of living without his children. If the woman is considered to be a good wife, mother, and daughter-in-law, his parents will encourage him to stay in the marriage. If she is considered to be a bad wife, mother, and daughter-in-law, his parents will likely support his decision to divorce. A Kazakh woman has additional things to consider before she divorces. She must consider where she will live after the divorce, how she will cover the expenses for herself and her child, and how she will remarry. Many women return to their parent's home after a divorce, but parents do not always welcome them with open arms. Children always stay with their mother, which makes it more difficult economically for women to seek a divorce. Remarriage is possible for both sexes, but there is much less stigma attached to divorced men and therefore remarriage is easier for them.

Widows and widowers can remarry. Young widows are much more likely to remarry than older widows. Widowers, on the other hand, are more likely to remarry regardless of their age, because Kazakhs believe men need a woman to help them with housework. Both widows and widowers are more likely to remarry somebody who was previously married.

HUSBAND–WIFE RELATIONSHIP

Ideally, Kazakh husbands and wives live together in a relationship characterized by mutual affection and respect. Kazakh husbands and wives eat together with other family members and any guests. Married couples always have their own private bedroom in which they sleep together. Infants may sleep in the same room. Couples spend a lot of time together, though men leave the house more often to socialize with friends. Couples vary in regard to whether they make decisions together or not.

Polygamy is illegal in Kazakhstan, though it did exist in the pre-Soviet past. Among the older generation, it is not uncommon to find an occasional polygamous marriage.

OTHER CROSS-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

Brothers and male cousins have a protective relationship with their sisters. In addition, a teasing relationship exist between a girl or woman and her sister's husband. Both sides in this relationship tease each other verbally.

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