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Making Muslim Women Political: Imagining the Wartime Woman in the Russian Muslim Women's Journal Suyumbika

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Résumé

Français

Cette étude a utilisé le journal féminin Suymbika, publié à Kazan, afin de suivre la transformation de l’opinion des réformateurs musulmans sur la femme musulmane moderne. Bien que la majorité de la littérature scientifique analyse les réformes religieuses, culturelles et éducatives des communautés musulmanes de Russie ait considéré que l’évolution du rôle des femmes dans la société était un processus de plusieurs décennies, cet article tendant au contraire que la courte période de la Grande Guerre est fondamentale et essentielle dans ce processus de transformation dans la région Volga-Oural. Les articles de presse, les fiches historiques et les appels au service communautaire, produits par des écrivains masculins comme féminins, ont promu l’image d’une femme politique active, éduquée et sociale dans la presse. De cette façon, la Grande Guerre a servi de transition entre les périodes impériales et soviétiques. Cet article est basé, entre autres, sur des sources primaires publiées dans Suymbika entre 1914 et 1917 et sur des livres en langue tatare de la période pré-1917.

Abstrait

Cette étude a utilisé le journal féminin Suymbika, publié à Kazan, afin de suivre la transformation de l’opinion des réformateurs musulmans sur la femme musulmane moderne. Cet article tendant au contraire que la courte période de la Grande Guerre est considérée comme essentielle dans ce processus de transformation dans la région Volga-Oural. Les articles de presse, les fiches historiques et les appels au service communautaire, produits par des écrivains masculins comme féminins, ont promu l’image d’une femme politique active, éduquée et sociale dans la presse. De cette façon, la Grande Guerre a servi de transition entre les périodes impériales et soviétiques. Cet article est basé, entre autres, sur des sources primaires publiées dans Suymbika entre 1914 et 1917 et sur des livres en langue tatare de la période pré-1917.

Texte intégral

Introduction

En avril 1915, un journaliste kazakh, Akmataw, a publié un article dans le journal drapeau sur la Grande Guerre, intitulé “La Grande Guerre: les droits des femmes”. En effet, pendant cette période, les musulmans ont assisté à l’émergence de nouvelles formes d’activités masculines et féminines, qui ont été encouragées par les réformateurs. Cependant, la Grande Guerre a également eu des conséquences négatives pour les femmes, notamment en raison de la pénurie de main-d’œuvre masculine. En réponse à cette situation, les réformateurs ont encouragé les femmes à prendre des responsabilités dans la vie communautaire et à contribuer à la guerre. Cet article vise à explorer ces transformations et à comprendre les implications de la Grande Guerre pour les femmes musulmanes.

L’article se concentre sur les changements dans les rôles des femmes pendant la Grande Guerre, en particulier à Kazan. Il se base sur des sources primaires, dont les articles de presse de Suymbika, un journal musulman féminin publié à Kazan pendant la Grande Guerre. Les données sont également tirées de publications récentes sur les réformes religieuses et culturelles en Russie.

En conclusion, l’article souligne l’importance de la Grande Guerre pour les femmes musulmanes en Russie. Il montre comment les réformateurs ont encouragé les femmes à prendre des rôles plus actifs dans la vie communautaire et à contribuer à la guerre. Cependant, il souligne également les défis que les femmes musulmanes ont rencontrés pendant cette période, en raison de la pénurie de main-d’œuvre masculine et de la discrimination sexuelle.

Suyumba and its Audience

7 Founded in Kazan in 1913, the monthly journal Suyumba was the first Muslim women’s journal published in the Russian empire. The first women’s journal, Al-ɛm-i Nişur, had been founded in Crimea in 1906 by Shahīda Gasparska, daughter of well-known reformer, publisher, and founder of new phonetic method education (un-ɛd jədûl) Juma-i Gasparsk (1852–1914). However, Al-ɛm-i Nişur closed in 1910, making Suyumba the only Muslim women’s journal published in Russia during the war (Bennigson and...
husband's jobs. Rural women were to take their husbands' places in the fields. The author urged Muslim women to follow the course of their nomadic ancestors and their Russian neighbors. Wives of deployed shopkeepers and clerks were told to take on their husbands' responsibilities and ensure that family property was managed correctly when their men went away to fight. Women even assumed traditionally male work, such as guarding the family herds and moving them between seasonal grazing pastures.

Despite these efforts, the fate of the new war hinged upon Muslim women taking an active role on the home front and claiming the rights that their society had denied them. While Millat Press published patriotic propaganda, the Temporary Muslim Committee for Aid to Soldiers and their Families published pamphlets endorsing women's education, it can also be read as a means of setting the audience at ease: women's education would not overturn the existing balance of power and society. In the Galiasgar Kamal's 1907 play "The Unfortunate Youth," Gaisha, a seventeen-year-old gymnasium student, converses with the twenty-year-old student Akhmat about assignments of responsibilities between the genders. Similar ambiguity women's agency and independence is evident in Fatikh Amirkhan's novel, which can be read as an allegory of a woman's journey and her spiritual quest. In "The Unfortunate Youth," the author portrays the complexity of Muslim women's experiences and challenges faced by them.

At the height of its popularity, Suyumbika was issued once a month with a print-run of 1,300 copies, making it the second largest of the Tatar journals published in Kazan (Makhmutova, 2006: 45). Its regular contributors also wrote for the Tatar literary journal Suyumbika, the youth satirical journal Suyumbika, the youth satirical journal Suyumbika, and Suyumbika. Its articles were meant to instruct readers and provide didactic material for village teachers and reformist clergy to instruct their pupils and laypeople.

The Jadid Discourse on Women before 1914

Russian and Tatar-language studies of the Muslim women's movement in the Volga-Ural region have focused primarily on the evolution of women's education from the late 1800s to 1914. Their often apologetic or celebratory account of Arab and Islamic "honor" and the public sphere of Muslim women's political and cultural "flourishing" has progressively eroded from Russian realism to Islamic anarcho-feminism. Bubi, and Fakhr al-banat Sulaimaniyya to characterize the Jadids' core views on women's education, marriage, and family life. In contrast to Makhmutova and Bitkintimirova, both Khalid and Kamp note the limits of the Jadids' definition of women's liberation. Khalid argues that the basic unit of the future modern society promoted by the Jadids was the nuclear family (Khalid, 1998: 230-236). Their efforts to "save" Muslim women focused upon the strengthening of the family unit through the elimination of practices "harmful" to the physical and mental health of children, intellectual development, and economic wellbeing of its members. By opposing child marriage, forced marriage, polygamy, oppression, conviction, confinement to the home, and ignoring basic education for both men and women, the Jadids aimed to create families capable of raising and educating healthy, productive members of the nation (Khalid, 1998: 230-236).

In Kamp's analysis of the writings of Fakhr al-Banat and Suyumbika, the focus on the Jadi women's agency and independence is evident in Fatih Amirkhan's novel, Khanum. The novel follows the romantic adventures of a young educated Muslim girl seeking a husband. In the end, she manages to marry her ideal partner, a handsome, wealthy, reformist merchant. However, she is not the one to find him. Rather, her parents listen to their daughter's concerns, support her with a man perfectly suited to her, and arrange her marriage (Amirkhan, 1914). As "The Unfortunate Youth," Khanum's novel highlights the contradictions and complexities faced by Muslim women in their quest for education and independence.

Marriages were to be entered by the free will of both spouses and to be based on affection and mutual respect. However, marriage remained the ideal, if not the only, path for women, who were often brokers became to their husbands' wives (Kamp, 1998: 40).

Kamp and Khalid both focus on the writings of a particular generation of Jadid reformers. Born in the 1800s or the early 1870s, the Jadids, Suyumbika, and Bitkintimirova were educated in the madrasas or, in Suyumbika's case, by a father who taught in a madrassa. They were well-versed in Arabic language and Islamic law. One might argue that their emphasis on family, marriage, and the nuclear family, and the authority of the father over women's work was a result of their working within the limits of Islamic scriptural and legal. However, younger socialists-leaning women of the early 1910s, some of whom attended the newly-established Jadid madrasas, exhibited a similarly limited view of women's roles and prerogatives in a modern Muslim society. In the Galisinger Kamal's 1917 play "The Unfortunate Youth," Gaisha, a seven-year-old gymnasium student converses with the twenty-year-old student Khanum about women's education. Khanum's answer to her mother is decisive: "In your opinion, if there is to be true equality, then women should work at the house while men stay at home to tend and look after the children." Khanum clarifies that she only thinks that women have a right to an education (Kamal, 1917: 28-29). While one might read this exchange as Kamal's endorsement of women's education, it is a means of setting the boundaries for women's education would not overturn the existing balance of power and assignment of responsibilities between the genders. Similar ambiguity women's agency and independence is evident in Fatih Amirkhan's novel, Khanum. The novel follows the dramatic adventures of a young educated Muslim girl seeking a husband. In the end, she manages to marry her ideal partner, a handsome, wealthy, reformist merchant. However, she is not the one to find him. Rather, her parents listen to their daughter's concerns, support her with a man perfectly suited to her, and arrange her marriage (Amirkhan, 1914).

In "The Unfortunate Youth," Khanum, providing education and freedom to women is portrayed as re-enforcing marriage and domestic life, rather than encouraging women to take on new, non-traditional roles.

Mobilizing Muslim Women

The outreach of the new war placed new demands on women and challenged the Jadids' vision of educated mothers and housewives. The departure of men to the front forced some women into the roles of soldiers' wives, mothers, and daughters. At the same time, wartime propaganda promoted patriotism as the duty of all Russian subjects. This new propaganda campaign was carried out in the Volga-Ural region under the title of "State of War," a ballad written by a Kazan Muslim woman, Bibi-khadima Sharifaddin-qızı and published through Millat Press. "State of War" was modeled on the soldier's ballad (soldat buqeti), a literary form traditionally produced by Muslim men serving in the Russian army (Ross, 2014: 94-95). However, Sharifaddin-qızı used this form to describe the war's impact on women and families:

One of them [the soldiers] cries "Mama!"

Another cry, "My child!"

Their voices cry even more.

"I've been left all alone!" they say.

It is said: one must honor Friday,

Everyone eats the food from the stove.

The men come at five o'clock.

Who will eat that food now? (Sharifaddin-qızı, 1914: 43)

The tone of the ballad quickly turns from shock and despair to resignation:

Whatever state a woman may be in,

It is not wise to cry, [...] .

The woman asks:

When will my soldier return?

No matter where your dear one are, they say:

"It will be good if he returns."

Some [of the men] are without hope,

They say, "While we need food."

Their wives pack their skirts and trousers. (Sharifaddin-qızı, 1914: 4-5)

By the end of the poem, resignation has turned to resolve:

I'll give my wealth as alms

And my soul in sacrifice for my merciful one, the emperor (Sharifaddin-qızı, 1914: 14).

"State of War" was one of the first in a series of Tatar-language propaganda pamphlets that Millat Press released in the course of the war. All of these pamphlets called upon Muslims to endorse hardship and remain steadfast in their support of the Russian Empire. However, while most of these pamphlets addressed men's experiences in the trenches or as prisoners of war, "State of War" focused on women's experience with the war and embracing new roles as soldiers' wives and loyal subjects, and it depicted these processes part of women's contribution to the war effort. While Millat Press published patriotic propaganda, the Temporary Muslim Committee for Aid to Soldiers and their Families published other language brochures outlining the stipends and food allowances owed to the wives and minor children of mobilized soldiers and how those allowances could be obtained.

The mobilization, the pro-war propaganda, and the new responsibilities thrust upon women pushed Suyumbika's writers to embrace a new view of women as active participants in the war effort. One female contributor, writing in August 1914, argued that, in times of war, Turko-Tatar women of past centuries had taken over the running of their households and family property when their men went away to fight; they even went so far as to assume traditionally male work, such as guarding the family herds and moving them between seasonal pastures. She contrasted this with the attitude of modern Tatars, who accrued women to the village and shop owners. To illustrate the presented the war as an opportunity for women to simultaneously demonstrate their love of their Russian homeland and win greater rights and autonomy for themselves. The author reminded readers of the illustrious Russo-Japanese War, when many Muslim men had served and perished, and Muslim women had remained in a state of "rightlessness and "ignorance." By implication, the fate of the new war hinged upon Muslim women taking an active role on the home front and claiming the rights that their society had denied them. The author urged Muslim women to follow the course of their nomic ancestors and their Russian neighbors. Wives of deployed shopkeepers and clerks were told to take on their husbands' jobs. Rural women were to take their husbands' places in the fields. If working women were greeted with accusations of being "infidel" and "sinners," they were told to answer back with: "You are a bigot! A curse upon you!"

Another female writer, Bibijamal Tirshiqawiyya, encouraged urban women to begin charitable societies to aid families left without breadwinners as well as the inevitable widows of soldiers. She urged women to follow the course of their nomadic ancestors and their Russian neighbors. Wives of deployed shopkeepers and clerks were told to take on their husbands' jobs. Rural women were to take their husbands' places in the fields. If working women were greeted with accusations of being "infidel" and "sinners," they were told to answer back with: "You are a bigot! A curse upon you!"

Rachel, the youth satirical journal, Suyumbika, and Suyumbika, was targeted primarily at a Volga-Ural Muslim audience. Its name was inspired by emerging Tatar national historical narratives: Suyumbika, the youth satirical journal, Suyumbika, and Suyumbika, was targeted primarily at a Volga-Ural Muslim audience.
Atrocious mobilization efforts, like those documented in February 1916, raised the issue of how fashion, modernity, and international politics intertwined. The male author identified precariousness with changing fashion as aspect of modernity, noting how recent technological advancements such as the automobile and the airplane had given rise to new styles of clothing. He also noted, however, that the cities could undermine the policies of their own governments through their clothing choices. He praised the example of the Russian-Japanese War in the battlefront, on the home front, civilians had happily purchased Japanese-inspired clothing, furniture, and home-decorating items, because, at the time, such items had been in fashion in Western Europe. The start of the Great War had cut off Russia's trade contacts with Paris. Europe's capital of women's fashion, and Germany and Austria were now rising to take its place. Fashion printing journals and new marketing clothing styles. The author explained that women would have to be able to put on a new style, even if it were to aid the war effort.

In the first months of the war, both male and female activists called upon Muslim women to take an active role in supporting the imperial war effort. This different from previous efforts at mobilizing and modernizing Muslim women in that it encouraged women to cross socially-accepted and religiously-prescribed gender boundaries, and to enter spaces that even the most radical reformers had previously declared closed to them. Also, the new campaign raised the stakes of women's participation in community life. If, before this, women's activism was limited to educational and cultural contexts, the role of the empire's Muslim women was fraught with even greater significance, for it represented the first time that Muslim women would be engaged in political actions. The female social activism that the journal had previously appealed to women as a back-up workforce and support network during men's wartime absence, it now courted women as potential voters. The Government's granting of universal suffrage altered the political landscape of Volga-Ural Muslim communities by conferring upon men and women the same political rights. If the rapidly changing political situation made it clear that the solution to the problem of women's participation in the war effort would not be found in pre-existing models, the need for a new approach - one that would allow the women the right to elect the leaders of their own state to war efforts.

Among those promoting a new wartime vision of Muslim women was female educator Fakhr al-basat Sulaimaniyya (b. 1875). Educated by her father in the same fields that taught the male students in his madrasa, Sulaimaniyya was well-versed in the Qur'an, hadith, and fiqh. She had studied law in Europe and the United States. She used her knowledge to write tracts on girls' education, family life, and the social harm wreaked by alcohol. She educated young girls in Nihal Nogrogod and, starting in 1915, served as the secretary for Sulaimaniyya (Makhtumkhan, 1915: 43–45). As discussed above, while she advocated female education before the war, she also had argued that Islam dictated that women should be married and not work outside their home.

In 1915, Sulaimaniyya began to publish a novel called A Daughter of the Quraysh. Appearing in serialized form from late 1915 to summer of 1917, it related the events of the First, a civil war in the early Islamic community that began after the assassination of Caliph Alighah. The events of the novel are viewed through the eyes of Ama, a beautiful, clever, brave young woman, whose family has been one of the most tragically divided in the history of Islam.

Though A Daughter of the Quraysh was set in the past, the theme of war permeated the war. The war had torn Ama's family apart. When she was two years old, her father was killed in battle during the First Civil War. Her mother was killed during the Second Civil War. After the Second Civil War, her father, the Sellam, married Yazi, a member of the powerful 'Umayyads. The marriage was executed by Yazi. Yazi wishes to marry Ama to another 'Umrayd, Marwan, but Marwan consents to the marriage only on the condition that the family first make a journey to Medina. Marwan, however, has other plans, and intends to use the journey not only to save her daughter from the marriage, but to deliver a message of vital importance to the 'Umrayyads. In this way, A Daughter of the Quraysh is about the conflict between what the family wants and what the family needs. The story runs through the work. Duty to family motivates Ama to put herself at risk by pretending to be a man. Later in the novel, after Ama's mother has died, she must choose between marrying Marwan and running for Caliph 'Uthman in order to take up residence in Caliph 'Uthman's palace. Despite her fear of the unknown, she does not choose either option. Instead, she chooses the latter course, out of consideration of her obligation to him and in hopes of serving as a positive influence on his troublesome wife. Marwan, who is rapidly emerging as an influential leader of the caliphate, Ama was not alone in seeing herself as serving a larger purpose. There is also the wife of Caliph 'Uthman, who disputes Marwan's political advice and tries to convince him to change his ways. She believes the caliphate to be testing on the brink of civil war, and repeatedly warns Marwan that he may have to bear personal responsibility for his destruction.

In A Daughter of the Quraysh, Sulaimaniyya imagined 8, both men and women play an active role in political and social life. The story, which was written in 1916 and published in 1917, but the political context within which women were told to apply them changed. The February Revolution was announced in the March 15 issue of Suyumbika and the journal's writers positioned Suyumbika as a press organ for educating women on Russia's rapidly changing political situation. In the wake of the February, the contributors to Suyumbika focused on the upcoming election to the Constituent Assembly. The Provisional Government's granting of universal suffrage altered the political landscape of Volga-Ural Muslim communities by conferring upon men and women the same political rights. The journal focused on the upcoming election to the Constituent Assembly. The Provisional Government's granting of universal suffrage altered the political landscape of Volga-Ural Muslim communities by conferring upon men and women the same political rights.
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**Conclusion**

Though pre-war reformers called for women's education and better treatment of wives and daughters, they did not envision women as political or economic actors on the international political stage. The war led Jadid writers to revise their views. With women facing the mobilization of their husbands and with propaganda calling upon all citizens, regardless of gender, to support the war, reformers' pre-war vision of the modern Muslim woman no longer corresponded with their society's realities. Rather than either remaining stable throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century or shifting suddenly in 1917, Jadid views on women’s roles and rights evolved and adapted over time. During the war years, they went through a period of particularly rapid change. In this way, the Great War served as an intermediate stage between the Jadid discourses of the early 1900s and those of the revolutionary period.

**Bibliography**


**Notes**


2 Ibid., 174.

3 Most Volga-Ural Muslims were peasants and women had worked in the fields beside their husbands before the war (Makhmutova, 2006: 9). However, the exhortation in the article was meant to signify the wife taking over her husband's duties while he was away.

4 Golizhar, “Sugik ham.”


9 Ibid., 9.

10 Ibid., 10.

11 One sphere not heavily discussed in Suyumbika was the factory. Though there was much manufacturing in the Volga-Ural region, Tatar women made up only 2.6% of the industrial workforce (just over 600 women) in the 1933-1938 period (Rizhenko, 1997: 106-107).


16 Ibid., 88-90.

17 Ibid., 88-90.


21 Tok, “Khatinnardan qurilgaiw,” Suyumbika, 10 (1917): 149-150.


23 Ibid., 150-157.


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