



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES Charles University

Evaluation of the Institution of Marriage in Armenia from Gender Perspective by Lidia Talalyan

Lidia Talalyan's work on marriage in Armenia as a source of patriarchal oppression is a quite good-written and an inspiring thesis that creatively combines various data which help elucidate the complexity of the given topic. As her supervisor I have to appreciate especially her thoroughness and dutifulness which she demonstrated during her hard work on collecting data and writing the thesis. However Lidia had some difficult time with acquiring the methods of analyze data as I will mention below.

The thesis is based on intends to investigate the manifestation of power and patriarchy among Armenian marriage and household traditions and customs which have their role in the process of marginalize women. Lidia's exposition of the main arguments in the introductory chapter is convincing. However the methodology chapter is quite problematic. The author integrated it after the introductory chapter which is quite confusing. The methodology is unfortunately the weakest part of the all thesis. Lidia said very little about her research methods, sample, design and strategy. She presented weak and vague reasons given for the methodological choices, shortcoming in the application on method and methodological choices are thoroughly justified. Quite informative is just part about her positionality but I can imagine some improvements of it as well.

The theoretical chapter is much more acceptable. Her introductory writing in effect establishes a suitable theoretical model that solidly frames her subsequent analytical study of the ethnographic data. Before the main analytical part that follows in chapters 2 and 3, Talalyan also offers a chapter Marriage as a Patriarchal Institution in Armenia from Historical and Religious Perspective that appropriately justifies her use of various theoretical approaches which enable the student to gain a big amount of suitable detail and complexity from her data from multiple perspectives and layers of meaning from her data as related to the topic of her work.

There is also some additional space in analysis part (as well as in conclusions), where Lidia could further examine some relevant issues as related to the limitations of her research. She actually investigates several of these limitations very successfully, but those remarks could be expanded further. And finally, in her conclusions, where she elaborates on further research, she could also say a few words about the aspect of heteronormativity as a relevant function of patriarchy. She, for instance, analyzes the issue of virginity as a cult in Armenian society, but it would be interesting to compare this also to other types societies and cultures.

In her main chapters, Lidia Talalyan then uses inductive approach to data analysis. She quite successfully scrutinizes her data in a way that brings out complexity and contradiction, but not multiplicity of perspectives. In terms of limitations of her work, I have some additional observations. In relation to theory, I would mention occasional lack of critical thinking in that regard. This is for example relevant in the following sections: "During the vows, the bride is asked three times by the priest if she will be obedient to her husband until her death and reversely the groom is asked again three times whether he is going to be the master of his wife until the death separates them." (page 21) Author interviewed the priest about this topic but she didn't consider a power of symbolism of this specific ritual.

Furthermore, Lidia should also provide some broader examination of the notion of resistance within Armenian young generation that in some way refuse dominant gender norms. For instance, she writes about avoidance of gender inequality through making some different decisions, but it would be sometimes more appropriate to frame such acts (also) as more active and critical responses to dominant gender discourse. In addition, it would be useful to provide at least some brief discussion of the notion of symbolic compensation, which is otherwise quite central in Lidia's work, also from the perspective of resistance.

But overall, I need to restate, the general impact of Lidia's work is very good.

Recommended grade: 2

Prague, 20th September

Iva Baslarová