



Village Mothers: Three Generations of Change in Russia and Tataria (Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian & East European Studies)

David L Ransel

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Village Mothers describes the reception of modern medical ideas and practices by three generations of Russian and Tatar village women in the 20th century. It first traces the entry of Western medical discourse on reproduction into Russia and its extension to the countryside during the Soviet period. Using the village mothers' own words, as captured in 100 oral interviews collected by the author and his collaborators in the early 1990s, David L. Ransel shows how the women mediated the inherited beliefs of their families and communities, the claims of the state to control reproduction, and their personal desires for a better life. The interviews tell of willing acceptance of some changes and selective acceptance of or outright resistance to others. The women interviewed were subject to powerful forces beyond their control, ranging from patriarchal tyranny to civil war, governmental coercion and violence, famine, and world war. Their testimonies, however, reveal the strategies by which they maintained a measure of personal control and choice that enabled them to build a sense of independence, endure hardship, and give meaning to their lives.

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