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## GENDER STRATIFICATION IN POMOR TRADITIONAL CULTURE

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*The article is devoted to the historical investigation of the peculiarities of gender stratification in Pomor traditional culture. The methodological background of the research consists of the historical, systematic and dialectical approaches. It has been concluded that the models of male and female behavior of Pomors were formed in difficult natural and climatic conditions. The most characteristic features of the masculine model were: fearlessness, love of freedom, focus on individual success (due to the absence of state paternalism and seafaring), determination, inclination to take risks, and the ability to make extraordinary decisions. Pomor boys early became independent of the family. The social prestige of girls and women increased with the consolidation of the agrarian traditions of the life of the Pomors..*

*Key words: Pomors, Gender, Society, History, Culture, Russian North.*

Gender stratification is the process by which gender becomes the basis of social stratification and perceived differences between genders are systematically assessed. The formation of male and female models of behavior in the Pomor culture took place under the decisive influence of economic activity in difficult natural and climatic conditions. The priority of the male dimension and male values in the social and cultural life of the Pomors should be noted.

The aim of this article is the investigation of the peculiarities of gender stratification in Pomor traditional culture.

As for scientific works which are devoted to the problem of gender stratification in Pomor culture the following authors should be mentioned: E. Bazarova [1], T. Bernshtam [2], T. Butorina and S. Shshyokina [3; 13], V. Korotayev [4], V. Lyubimov [5], K. Merezhkovsky [6], N. Pushkaryova [7], Ye. Reznichenko [8], T. Troshina [11], A. Shrenk [12], and others. Despite the presence of a rather large number of works devoted to the Pomor culture and history the issue of gender stratification of the traditional Pomor society is still open.

In traditional Russian culture the construction of gender asymmetry was aimed at the formation of stereotypes of “masculinity” and “femininity” (on normative ideas about behavior) and at the consolidation of family and professional roles depending on gender. Using the example of a traditional Russian family it can be concluded that such education is directed at the formation of a conformal personality. It was this type of personality that was demanded in the agrarian culture [11, p. 100].

However, within the framework of Russian culture there were special groups of the population that differed from the “ideal type” by living conditions and forms of economic activity. For example, in the fishing areas a boy in the process of socialization aimed at striving for personal success at courageous and courageous behavior under any circumstances. At the same time the entry into the all-Russian cultural world left a special imprint on the formation of such a personality as a result of which a “borderline”, marginal culture arose. The specifics of the folding of the original everyday culture of the Far European North in the conditions of adaptation of the Russian population (cultural, agrarian, Orthodox) to unusual natural conditions is described in the collective monography “The Culture of Russian Pomors” [1, p. 29].

The Pomor is a type of Russian personality who developed without the negative influence of the Tatar-Mongol yoke and serfdom, whose entrepreneurial spirit was not deformed under the influence of excessive state paternalism; he was characterized by fearlessness and a kind of desperate courage which in the European tradition was a kind of prerogative, a distinctive character trait allowed only to representatives (and, moreover, young) of the upper strata of the population. Pomor is “not a man, but a prince”; Pomors are “real Russian people, tall, broad-shouldered, of iron health, fearless, accustomed to boldly face death” [1, p. 104].

According to the testimony of observers the Pomors are physically better developed, taller, healthier and more energetic in activity; “The population of the White Sea Territory is a healthy, tall and extremely robust people [1, p. 106]. Marine crafts from which the majority feed doom the Pomor from an early age to a difficult life full of dangers and hardships of various kinds developing in him an extraordinary entrepreneurial spirit combined with courage, amazing in the eyes of a person who grew up in a different life situation.

During the Soviet period the “ideal” image of the Pomor continued to attract attention as an example of opportunities for human development in the absence of serfdom. They preferred not to mention the fact that on the eve of the revolution in the Pomeranian environment the maximum property polarization of the population took place.

Consideration of the specifics of male and female upbringing in the Pomor culture should begin with a description of the climatic and social and cultural conditions in which this culture existed.

The concept “Pomorie” is a figurative historical and geographical construction. In the era of the early penetration of the Slavs-Novgorodians various trades related to the extraction of natural resources began to

develop here [11, p. 87].

Over time the fishing of sea animals appeared to whose rookeries people got along the edge of the ice which as a result of the cold snap approached the mainland at an accessible distance.

As long as the fishing of sea animals and fish was profitable and attracted the male population of areas remote from the coast, the concept of “Pomorie” included the territory beyond the boundaries of the Arkhangelsk province proper. Subsequently (from about the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) inhabitants of coastal sea settlements began to be called Pomors and this territory began to be called “Pomorie”. Gradually the number of people engaged in Pomor fishery decreased. The inhabitants of the Pomor villages now have alternative occupations – work at timber mills, barter (Siberian bread for fish) trade with Norway [1, p. 72]. However, the behavioral traits that had developed among the local population (“Pomor character”) continued to manifest themselves despite new types of activities and some changes in everyday life.

Gradually due to the change in circumstances the type of Pomor itself has changed. His entrepreneurial spirit engendered by the constant search for new forms of activity to obtain food began to weaken with the ordering of labor. The “love of freedom” manifested in a disdainful attitude towards any representatives of the authorities was most likely the result of isolated living and a long period of lack of interest on the part of the state in the local and small groups of the Pomor population; subsequently this “love of freedom” was transformed not into a civic position but into disorderly conduct which since the 20<sup>th</sup> century was recorded by observers in the young male population.

A distinctive feature of the Pomors was their intellectual and physical development. The lifestyle of the Pomor population contributed to the broadening of horizons, and a varied diet, intense physical activity and good

rest had a positive effect on health, both physical and mental. That is why the “Pomor is bolder and more decisive than the inhabitant of central or southern Russia”; and the influence of the gloomy nature contributed to the fact that “some seriousness, concentration is visible in all features” of the Pomor [2, p. 105]. All observers noted the risky nature of the Pomors. For example, the catching the beast was a rather adventurous event from the point of view of a modern person: the artel (usually seven people) went fishing on a small undecked boat which was attached with a special hook to a floating ice floe; the calculation was that the ice floe would bring the fishermen to the seal rookery [1, p. 105]. Sometimes such a fishery ended in death or long – for several seasons – wintering on deserted islands.

There were also such types of crafts which are used by the most desperate people, all people who usually do not have a home or family, and are not tied to their existence in any way.

A common cause of premature death for Pomors judging by records in police uniforms was “drowned in the sea”. Numerous widows, orphaned children and families, old fathers and old mothers left to the mercy of fate were evidence of the hard work that takes lives in the prime of life. The reason lays in the courage or rather in the carelessness, lack of foresight of the Pomors.

The less the return for such hard work became the bolder and more risky the Pomors were [4, p. 121]. Until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century they had no other means of obtaining food, but despite the mortal danger this trade continued to attract thousands of people. Teenage boys could join the fishermen’s artel as “zooiki” (assistants); therefore, from the age of 10–12 “the boy turns into a real “man”, and the “upper room” available in most Pomor houses is given to him [5, p. 253].

They had the right to participate in the entertainment of adult men. The return from the crafts (and later from the city earnings) was marked by

grandiose drunkenness in which even boys take part [12, p. 42]. They wander through the streets hugging each other, singing obscene songs to the accompaniment of a “talianka”. This behavior was not forbidden for boys and in the absence of adults [8, p. 28]. The boy breaks away from his family early and leads a company with similar “zuyki” – fishing, arranging “descents” of toy boats.

The value of girls increased with the reduction of the fishing base and the simultaneous consolidation of the population on the land which contributed to the development of the agricultural industry. Even at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was considered a woman’s business while the welfare of the family increasingly depended on agriculture.

Under these conditions women were needed “any”, and there were no strict requirements for their upbringing. On the other hand, a man must be brave, to some extent even reckless. Such conditions of life and work required special methods of socialization of new generations of men. The transformation of a boy into a man among the Pomors required special tough tests similar to the initiation rite. Even in a time close to us there was a clear gradation in the Pomor villages: Pomors and not Pomors; the latter were engaged in agriculture and latrine activities, and the attitude towards them was disdainful [6, p. 125]. Over time such activities provided a more reliable income for the family, and society began to treat the “non-Pomors” more tolerantly but their behavior continued to show signs of “negative identity”.

Pomor boys from childhood left with their fathers on the hunt where they were considered not as children but as representatives of the age group who had to go through a kind of “rite of passage” sometimes quite cruel before becoming full-fledged members of the male organization.

Until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was not accepted to take women to the trades. At that time boys performed women's work related to cooking, washing dishes and washing clothes.

Geographic and climatic factors affect not only the culture of the people as a whole but also the psychology and behavior of individual groups including gender (men and women). It seems that men due to their inherent qualities (aggressiveness, rudeness, strength, energy) should dominate in societies with an appropriating economy where active economic activities associated with great stress are the main ones, for example, hunting sea animals, fishing in high seas, fraught with dangers. However, quite often in such societies there are quite tolerant inter-sex relations and the social status of women is quite high.

The Russian North not being a single economic and cultural space provides examples of male types that are characteristic both for agrarian culture and for cultures with an appropriating economy. Male farmers are weak social types dependent on natural conditions (since the results of their labor do not always depend on their efforts and can be destroyed by unfavorable nature) and social circumstances (obedience to the law and its servants – officials; in areas with serfdom – landowners and their representatives). With such an addiction a man, no matter how strong physically he was, quite often could not fulfill the duty set by nature to protect his wife and children. This turned into cruel treatment of dependent family members when a man tried to recoup the weaker for his social failure, the development of drunkenness and other antisocial habits. The identification of masculinity with violence is psychologically typical not so much for strong men as for weak men. The family, its well-being was the most important concern of a man: the Pomor who perishes from scurvy in the New Zealand trades in his last letter to his wife instructs her: "Dear spouse, not letting her children around the world ask from the mercy of the

owner (trades), he will not leave you orphans, will give a piece of bread" [6, p. 154], – after which he calculates the fishing, indicating what part of the catch his orphaned family should rely on.

The features of traditional male behavior in the Russian North are also characteristics of the premarital behavior of young people. "Joint walks of boys and girls along the street are prohibited by the Pomor custom. At parties and conversations Pomor male youth are accommodated separately from female youth; general conversations are not allowed even during dances" [11, p. 101]. At the same time premarital and even extramarital affairs were not condemned; both parents and society were fully aware of the custom of "parties" when the dressed up girl was waiting for her boyfriend late in the evening. A Pomor girl in her ditties sings not about how she "walks" with a guy, but about how she "sat" with him [9, p. 86]. Among the Pomor youth the delicate treatment of girls was less common than in the southern provinces, where it was obviously borrowed from the nobles and townspeople who were even geographically closer to the peasant population there. On the other hand, in the middle lane there was rudeness towards wives. The Pomors were affectionate to their wives. This fact was explained by the higher social status and economic importance of the northern woman who carried out all agricultural work and over time even in the fishing regions agriculture became the main source of food [3, p. 23]. The reason is also that the men, who were cut off from their families by fishing and sea activities for many months, were simply bored and happy to meet their wives.

In agricultural areas the complete subordination of the son to the father and mother created a conformal personality capable of obeying not only parents but also authorities and public opinion. At the same time such upbringing formed a model of future behavior in a man when having become the father of a family he became a despot in the house while



remaining a completely obedient member of society. The man in the agricultural culture did not have the right to vote even in personal matters such as marriage. The need to get a free worker forced a peasant especially a poor one to marry his son as early as possible, without taking into account personal preferences [8, p. 21]. On the contrary in the non-agricultural Pomeranian regions a woman for a long time did not have great economic value, therefore, for most young people, marriage was possible by personal choice.

So, the predominantly fishing activity of the main male population of the Russian North made a person in demand aimed at individual success, at the ability to make extraordinary decisions. With socialization such a form came into conflict with the state “order” for a conformable person who knows how to live in a team and obey general requirements and rules [10, p. 74]. As a result, a duality of consciousness was formed which against the background of an identical process taking place in the country manifested itself in a sharp break in traditional social ties and cultural continuity. The early proletarianization of the Pomor population is explained by the ease of transition from fishing activities to “seasonal work” [13, p. 8]. The work of the Pomors and tradesmen was very hard and over time it also became unprofitable. This formed some disappointment, a desire to find another occupation, even physically more difficult but giving a quick and guaranteed income.

Today traditional methods of socialization in the new sociocultural reality have turned into men’s neglect of their social and family responsibilities. Under the influence of the processes of modernization and urbanization the constructed appearance of the Pomor changed a lot. It was like “two Pomors”: the ideal Russian personality represented in the literature, distinguished by passionary character traits, and the lumpenized

“semi-proletarian” personality incapable of independent activity in the sense of looking for new ways.

In general, with the dominance of male values and behavior models Pomor boys from childhood saw that a woman copes with the duties of the head of the family on an equal basis with men that all relatives respect and obey her. Thus, when they became men young Pomors treated their own wives with respect. The girls also understood that a lot depends on a woman and the young skirts behaved with great dignity. In the Pomor environment the Russian word “baba” which was considered humiliating and rude was not even used. Pomors called women and are still called “jonki”.

Therefore, the models of male and female behavior of Pomors were formed in difficult natural and climatic conditions. The most characteristic features of the masculine model were: fearlessness, love of freedom, focus on individual success (due to the absence of state paternalism and seafaring), determination, inclination to take risks, and the ability to make extraordinary decisions. Boys (“zooey”) early became independent of the family. The social prestige of girls and women increased with the consolidation of the agrarian traditions of the life of the Pomors. The requirements for raising boys were much stricter than those for raising girls and included a stage of complex initiation as preparation for future trials in a man’s life. In agricultural areas the son’s complete submission to his parents was accepted including in the matter of choosing a bride and his high conformity while in non-agricultural areas the social value of a woman was higher and the son’s freedom in the family was higher. At the same time it is necessary to note the deep respect for the woman in the Pomor family.

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