

# **SACREDNESS OF THE FAMILY IN CULTURAL PRACTICES OF NORTHERN PREAZOV PEOPLES: HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL ASPECTS**

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**Abstract.** The article presents the materials based on the analysis of the family in cultural practices of Northern PreAzov peoples. There one can find description of cultural traditions, rituals and beliefs of the peoples of Northern PreAzov region. A special place is the description of ancient customs that are associated with the problems of family education of children of various nationalities.

*Keywords:* family in cultural practices, family traditions.

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Family traditions of the Ukrainian nation, which were formed over centuries, have always been a solid foundation and a key to a happy life of the future generations. However, the family life features of every nation are determined by a diversity of settlements' ethnic composition and geographic characteristics. In its broad sense the term "sacredness of the family" means

that the members of the family understand its spiritual values. The family unites people of different nationalities, religions, and backgrounds. Such units promote a harmonious preservation of both the elements of culture and traditions and other nation's family life. It has to be said that political, economic, social and cultural transformations have also contribute gradually to the development of the traditions. The family is a center of cultural foundations of education; it promotes the development of cooperation and communicative skills in a multicultural environment. The influence of various factors of Northern PreAzov peoples' life on the establishment and development of family forms of existence and development has made this article an actual and vital one.

The archival information proves that the territory of the former Northern PreAzov region included the lands between the Don and the Dnieper. That's why this territory is ethnically diverse. The following researches are focused on the historical conditions of the Northern PreAzov way of life. I. Ponomareva (2007) researched the national processes of the Azov Greeks' life, I. Kurenná' studied the culture and life of the Northern PreAzov Czechs, V. Romanchenko's analyzed the opinions of the Northern PreAzov Ukrainian peasants about the way of family life, T. Knyazeva (2007) paid a specific attention to a traditional culture of the PreAzov Greeks.

*The aim of the article* is to identify the values of the family in the life of the Northern PreAzov peoples and to show the impact of the historical experience on the modern interpretation of the family life. We are sure that the identification of general and specific peculiarities of the Northern PreAzov families' sacredness will help to understand the features of the development of modern peoples' ideas about the family, its forms and fulfillment of the main functions. Each family, moving into a new period of its existence, has the imprints of the past.

## **Presentation of the material**

The family stands for the first historical form of social relations. The research of family sacredness requires the immersion into the history of our people, to be more exact, into difficult times of resettlement and moving. At that time the processes of the identification and formation of spiritual and moral culture of the personality took place.

The relation to the family, family responsibilities and family way of life, starting from the primitive society and till the present day, is characterized by certain features. During the times of the primitive society everything was collective, there was no inequality and classes, people lived in public houses and brought up their children together. The children belonged to the entire genus. The families at that time were large, 20-30 people in each. Such family was called genus. Among various duties of the family the most important one was to bring up children. During Paleolithic period the basis of social order was matriarchy (in Latin mater (matris), which means mother and in Greek — ἄρχη - power). It was characterized by the domination of the matrilineal clan and equality with a man, and later by a leading position of a woman in the society, determined by its major role in the family. One more factor was people's economic life. At the last phase of the history of primitive society the matriarchy was replaced by patriarchy (in Greek – pater or in Latin – pater, which means father). This stage preceded the emergence of the state and stimulated the final transition from pair family to monogamous pair (in Greek monos - one and gamos - marriage). It means marriage with one person, in which the only one man is married to the only one woman. The researchers-ethnographers believe that in the primitive society the conditions of younger generation upbringing can be divided into two major stages. The initial stage (till the age of 10-12) took place mainly in the family. The main stage was mostly aimed at the male and female teenagers' upbringing. In a classless society all children were equally educated and involved into

activities, which were available for them. Together with elder family members and under their leadership the children and adolescents got essential life and employment skills and abilities. The boys and girls were educated differently. The boys together with men took part in hunting and fishing, they were taught fighting, archery, and horseback riding; girls helped women to cook, make clothes.

In the Middle Paleolithic period, when a group marriage was the most widespread one, a father of a child, as a rule, was unknown, and family ties were determined from the mother's side. It were mothers who educated 5-6 year olds. Later the girls stayed with their mothers, but the boys were settled into special accommodations for men and stayed with them. The youngest members of the family were brought up by elder children and elderly people. The girls were taught to carry out women's duties. Men-mentors taught the adolescent boys to hunt, make weapons, tools, and involved them into feasible work. Even in those ancient times our ancestors realized that the formation of male and female stereotypes of behavior largely depended on the environment in which a child was brought up. Thus, a personal example of the parents and the transfer of social experience to the children were inseparable parts of child's education. Nowadays this issue remains very vital one.

Within the framework of our research the features of the Northern PreAzov region family life, in which the attitude towards marital duties and functions of the family was ambiguous, should have been studied carefully.

Family life fosters moral and spiritual values associated with the following basic terms – family, relatives, family tree, family studies, people. The family contributes to a natural way of each child's development. The most important educational factors in the family up-bringing are humane family relationships, lifestyle, high moral status of mother and father, respect for the ancestors and religious traditions. Sacredness of the family is realized through family values that are the deepest and most important ones. They

deeply cultivate humane traits in a child, ennoble the heart and soul, give strength and energy in dealing with life difficulties. The Northern PreAzov region is a territory of major historical events related to the migration and settlement of many peoples of the Russian Empire (Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, etc.) and of other countries (Germans, Bulgarians, Czechs, etc.). A characteristic feature of each ethnic community is the development of its own understanding of family life through the support of national consciousness. The Northern PreAzov region of the late 19th century is a territory of three counties: Mariupol, Berdyansk and Melitopol (nowadays it is a part of Donetsk and Zaporizhia regions of Ukraine). Together with the formation of ethnic composition the interethnic integration processes took place, as a result of it, the peoples of the PreAzov region became close to each other. Thus, researching the family life culture of the North PreAzov peoples, we've focused the attention on the traditions, related to the family birth. Great emphasis has been done on the family life, especially on the family birth, as a family was considered a source of well-being and prosperity. People believed that the stronger family was, the easier its members overcame various life difficulties. The birth of the family started with the marriage. In the very wedding ceremony the moral, ethical norms and world outlook ideas were preserved.

Traditional Ukrainian wedding ceremony has been based on the sale-purchase of the bride. Ukrainian wedding differed from other peoples' weddings by a great number of guests, who performed definite ceremonial roles. Steward (matchmaker) was appointed a master of wedding ceremony, other duties were fulfilled by the so-called wreath-makers, festive bread makers, hudaks (musicians), coppersmiths and others. Wedding authorities had some marks of distinction: the most respected ones have been tied with wedding embroidered towels. For centuries the wedding tradition had three cycles: pre-wedding, wedding and after-wedding. Each cycle was

characterized by certain traditions and rituals. Matchmaking of the Ukrainians took place in the free field work time. The young man together with a matchmaker, chosen out of the relatives, came to make a wedding bargain. After the girl's approval the matchmakers were tied with wedding embroidered towels. The young man was handed a handmade shawl on a plate. In case of negative response the matchmaker was returned the festive bread or was given a pumpkin. And after the successful bargain, the wedding engagement was arranged two weeks before the wedding ceremony. In case if the wedding was canceled after the engagement (this fact was considered to be a dishonor), the compensation of the material costs and the payment for "offense" were done [1, p. 94].

The blessing of parents as a sign of good fortune and happy family life is an integral part of the whole procedure. In Ukrainian families a woman always took care of the children and a father was only involved in the process in case if the child needed to be punished. The role of a father was realized through formidable and punishing authority. If father happened to be sensitive and gentle and took care of the children, he was referred to a "female type" of a man. Historical sources indicate that Ukrainian family was referred to a matriarchal type. As a mother permanently stays with a child, in most cases, the children tend to identify themselves more with the mother. Therefore, the norms of behaviour and values reflect the system of norms and values, which are typical for women. It should be said that such character traits as gentleness, kindness, tenderness, heartness were highly valued in Ukrainian families. This fact explains the tendency of the Ukrainian people to live in small groups. Thus, analyzing the mentality of Ukrainian peasants of the Northern PreAzov region in the context of family life, V. Romanchenko emphasizes the patriarchal mode of the family that made a woman dependent on a man. Regarding the distribution of the duties about the house, they were shared as "male" and "female" ones. The children were also taught to work

from an early age. One of the most important functions of the family is the children's birth and bringing-up. The mother has inculcated the human virtues from an early age. The family and community watched the child so that he didn't take other people's properties. Moreover the child had to tell the truth, to respect not only his parents but also the other elder people, to be honest, kind, friendly to people. In the boys' education special attention was paid to the development of such traits as courage, ingenuity, and in the girls' education – modesty and chastity (Anosov, 2005). [1, p. 91].

Analyzing the culture of the family life of the Northern PreAzov region's Korean ethnos, we'd like to mention that they have nearly never been married by love. The future husband and wife got acquainted with each by other mediators (professional matchmakers or friends). In present days the choice of marriage partner has become more loyal, the young people start to take the initiative in the marriage. The Korean families both in the past and in modern life are characterized by a preservation of strong family ties. Traditionally, parents have to live with the eldest son. Children's financial assistance to parents is compulsory even in the situation when they live separately, which shows a deep respect for the parents (Encyclopedia, 2003-2013). [6].

Family traditions and love, education of the children by both parents were considered a guarantee of the happy family life of the German settlements in the territory of the Northern PreAzov region. The parents were an internal normative model for their children. The Germans were characterized as the residents who brought up their children and spent plenty of time teaching them to work hard. Each German family at all times tried to create its own microclimate, the inner world of the family (Yakovleva et al., 1995). [11].

Russian settlers of the Northern PreAzov region were characterized by the preservice of a large patriarchal family with the power of a man as a

head of the family while a woman had to obey fully to his parents. They were the Russians who desired to have a "gratuitous worker" in the house. That's why they married their sons so early (the nubility of the sons was 19-18 years, their wives were 16-18 year old girls). Wedding ceremony had the same cycles as the Ukrainian one.

The peculiarity of the Bulgarian wedding is that the main role belongs not to the parents but to the godfathers ("pobashyna" and "pomay chyna"). Many rituals are associated with the manufacture of the wedding flag – bayrak. Bulgarian wedding had to last for a week. The Northern PreAzov Bulgarians were characterised by strong family ties between relatives. In Bulgarian families the position of a family head, a woman, a mother has been constant for centuries. The same is true for the mandatory participation of all family members in the important family life events. That's why the families with the same name prevail in the Bulgarian villages.

The issue of the Greeks' family life was researched by various scholars: Y. Ivanov, I. Ponomarev, M. Aradzhioni and others. Ethnopsychological aspects of the Greeks' family life of the Northern PreAzov region in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were researched by T. Knyazeva. In the paper "Traditional culture of the PreAzov Greeks" the features of the Greeks' marital and family relationships were highlighted in detail. T. Knyazeva (2007) wrote that the Greeks' outlook was based on an understanding of the ternary connection between the generations of the dead, the living and the unborn ones. The concept of the family and genus was crucial for each Greek. The man was considered a link to the ancestry; he had to feel his own responsibility for the compliance of the tribal culture norms by all members of society. A set of child rituals and customs played a major role in the spiritual culture of the Northern PreAzov Greeks. This set contributed to the formation of one of the family rituals major cycles. The new representative was equally admitted to the family, community group, and



became a member of a religious confession. Child's birth, its christening and naming was considered the most joyous event in the Greeks' life. Throughout the whole life a child is accompanied not only by the parents, but also by godparents who are spiritual and moral mentors. Researching Greek settlements of the Northern PreAzov region, V. Dmitrieva (2003) pointed out that the rural community was interested in the fact that each family had to have offspring, particularly sons – heirs and defenders. The very rituals of the child cycle played a major role in the family life. The Greeks spent a lot of energy fighting with childlessness which was considered a great misfortune. The main goal of the child's development was his acceptance as an equal member of the family, village community and religious confession. These processes occurred through the holidays on the occasion of the baby's birth – "Mother of God's Table" (a place for the presents). Grandparents from the mother's side gave ritual gifts to the baby. There was a tradition when women visited a woman in labor. The naming and christening rituals were also considered great holidays (Dmitrieva, 2003). [5].

Elements of birth and christening rituals of the Greeks of the Northern PreAzov region as well as Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars, Karaites, Turks, and Ossetians have many similarities. This fact was determined by narrow ethnic contacts and interaction of the ethnic groups in different historical periods (Ged'o, 1997). [2].

Analyzing the life of the Tatars of the Northern PreAzov region, we have identified similarities of the wedding ceremony, but there were certain characteristic features. Young Tatar couple met only on the third day of the wedding party. The first day of the wedding ceremony the guests of the newlyweds celebrated separately, listening to the music ensemble. The next day the fiancé's messengers with a Mullah visited the house of the bride. The redemption procedure took place without newlyweds. Parents decided everything. The third day of the wedding was the most important one. It was

full of different customs and traditions. The music accompaniment clearly expressed the wishes of a happy family life. As a rule the friends of a girl stayed at home. The brother of the bride had to carry her out on the hands and put her in a carriage with two boys – one was holding the Koran, and the other had a decorated candle in his hand (it was prepared by the friends of the girl on the second wedding day). There was a prayer in the mosque, and then, accompanied by the musicians all guests had to go to the groom's house. There was an old lady with a chicken in the carriage of the bride and according to the tradition she taught different parts of the girl's body by a chicken. It was done on purpose so that the bride lost her fear of family life. After these actions, the old lady took a big bowl of sweets and money and threw them to the children; that is a reminder of the beginning of the modern wedding. Then close relatives had to carry the girl on their hands to the house of the groom where the guests sat at the table. The next stage of the wedding ceremony was the last men's competition, followed by the last men's feast (konushma). The women came into the room of the bride in order to treat her. The wedding ceremony was finished by the giving wedding gifts and expressing preferences (Anosov et al., 1997). [10, p. 117].

The research of M. Kurinna (2009) has become very useful for our study. She researched the traditional culture and life of the Czechs of the Northern PreAzov region (based on the materials of the Novogorodkivka village of Melitopol district of Zaporizhya region) (Kurinna, 2009). [9]. With the appearance of the Czech colony, called Chekhograd, in Melitopol county of the Tavriya province (modern name – Novogorodkivka), M. Kurinna (2009) emphasized that new conditions of the Czechs living in the North PreAzov region – the close of Ukrainian, Russian, Bulgarian, and German settlements led to the formation of the local features (traditions, rituals, family customs) in the sphere of the spiritual and material culture of the settlers. Much of family holidays at the same time had common Slavik features. Some

features were borrowed from neighboring Ukrainian settlements. As for the local traditions of family life, formed in the Czech settlements of the Northern PreAzov region, there was a tradition to help each other to cook ritual dishes (birth, marriage, wake). Pre-wedding procedure was characterised by local features and it was continued by the traditional dance performance. New living conditions influenced the emergence of the first wedding tradition to drink the first glass "to the Earth."

### **Conclusions**

The research of peoples and their cultures showed that the family ritual complexes are not formed simultaneously. Each nation, each ethnos, ethnic group, depending on the religion, had its attitude to the family relationships, and to the features of the family traditions. Scientific and pedagogical sources, which we have analyzed, indicated the fact that today the peoples, living in the Northern PreAzov region, stick to different traditions and rituals, which are interconnected, because in these areas the connecting link was the sacredness of the family.

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