

# Everyday Life of the Orenburg Cossacks of XIX century as the Factor of Russian Positions Strengthening in Multinational Orenburg Region

Elena Godovova<sup>+</sup>

The Orenburg branch of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (Orenburg, Russia)

**Abstract.** The review of the everyday life of the Orenburg Cossacks – the closed and original estate, who played a greater role in the development and the progress of the Orenburg region, is presented in the article. The fact of existence of the Orenburg Cossacks to Russian traditions in the everyday life fastened all Orenburg region to its fidelity and it made its integration into structure of Russian empire durable.

**Keywords:** Cossacks, Orenburg Cossacks, Everyday Life of the Cossacks

## 1. Introduction

The revival of the Cossacks in Russia, taking place presently, has made studying of its history actual. Special interest is given to the everyday life of the Orenburg Cossacks – the closed and original estate, who has played a great role in development and progress of the Orenburg region.

The family is a sociocultural unit based on consanguinity or marriage. Members of family are connected by a generality of a life, mutual aid and moral responsibility. The family always played a major part in a life of a society and the state, in education of new generations, maintenance of public stability. By virtue of backwardness of an education system in XIX century the centre of gravity of education and socialization of rising generation in all class groups has laid down on family.

## 2. Family Relationships of the Orenburg Cossacks

Families of the Orenburg Cossacks were great, the head of family usually was the senior person, it does not matter whether it was a man or a woman. In comparison with ordinary women, Cossack-women had greater freedom and greater rights. It is explained by the fact that during wars, and in peace women, children and old men were the only labor hands.

Cossack always married before the service in the age of 17 – 20 years old. “Marriages were often made between representatives of the Cossack estate” [1]

The Orenburg Cossacks usually celebrated weddings in winter or in the fall. Prosperous Cossacks allowed themselves to get married in spring and in summer.

The young Cossack married that girl who was chosen for him by his parents even if he liked another girl. At a choice of the bride the greater attention is not paid on her appearance, and on a financial position of her relatives (it should be approximately the same, as the groom’s parents had). The preference was given to the girl who was older, economic and hard-working which should become the irreplaceable assistant of the mother-in-law.

## 3. Parenting in the Cossack Families

In families of the Orenburg Cossacks where the military discipline reigned, children were in full submission at parents, since early childhood they helped them to keep the house. The care of health of children was laid on mother who followed if they were in shoes, if they were dressed and fed. The father was engaged by giving them moral-religious education.

---

<sup>+</sup> Corresponding author. Tel.: + 7-903-36-76-272; fax: +7 (3532)77-04-03.  
*E-mail address:* godovova@mail.ru.

In 1819 special schools had been created. The Cossack youth received knowledge and the skills necessary for military service for the blessing of fatherland, and for “successful conducting their own facilities and participation in a public life of army estate under close attention of the school instructors” [2].

Education of the girls was under other construction than boys’ one. The opinion which was widely spread in the first half of the 19 century was expressed by one of correspondents of Russian geographical society: “Parents in general think, that there is nothing to give to the girl ....Her business is to keep the house” [3]. P.P. Zhakmon, the son of the chief of the Orenburg maiden school of the second category, described girls who studied there in his memoirs: forty schoolgirls almost of them were rough, ill-bred, who spoke by "o" and who often used indecent words in conversation. Many of them didn’t even know any pray, but they also were not able to cross fingers for the pray.

Huge efforts had been undertaken by teachers of school, and the first release which had taken place in 1854, showed, what they had reached: «postgraduate girls had been dressed in light white dresses, and their exterior had changed for the better, that it was impossible to see former rough Orenburg and Ural Cossack-girls. They were able to support saloon conversation in French, to read French and German books, to draw, play the piano, read poems, etc. ».

#### **4. The Material Culture of the Orenburg Cossacks**

The analysis of material Cossack culture allows to allocate specific features of the organization of a life and economic activities of this social group. The material culture besides a standard of work and production of goods and cultures of a life includes also culture of the topes, i.e. residences (dwellings, houses, villages, cities).

The average sizes of the Cossack villages much more surpassed the sizes of country villages. Houses of the Orenburg Cossacks were basically wooden. For construction of a body of a building they used pine and birch logs; from pine, deciduous boards and lathing (chipped pine plates for a roof) they laid floors, did ceilings and roofs; of the burnt brick they made furnaces; a moss and a tow they laid between logs, and a wild stone was used for the base. All this material was bought in Bashkiria or at Russian foresters and in army pine forests.

The most widespread type of the house in XIX – the beginning of XX centuries was two-and three-chambered houses (a log hut – Seni, a log hut – Seni – a log hut) in Don, Tersk, Uralsk, Kuban, Astrakhan, Orenburg and other armies. The internal plan of a log hut is presented by different versions, more often the Russian furnace was in back to angle – at the left or to the right of an input, the mouth is turned to a lateral long wall (in the Orenburg army it was also turned to a forward wall of the house). The average sizes of the Cossack villages much more surpassed the sizes of country villages. The Orenburg Cossacks houses were basically wooden.

In houses of the Orenburg Cossacks there was from one up to five rooms, but the majority consisted of two rooms divided by cold Seni. “Such houses have received the name "communication". One of rooms referred to a log hut (kitchen), and another – a room (a pure room)” [4].

It is necessary to note, that houses of the Orenburg Cossacks differed from country dwellings that were stronger and irrespective of a prosperity of the Cossack they were kept clean and in order.

Speaking about features of an everyday life of the Orenburg Cossacks it is necessary to pay attention of their traditional clothes.

The official (uniform) clothes of Cossacks existed only as holiday, therefore it was used only several times a year. “However in some villages Cossacks from the moment of training at school up to the end of a life wore only uniform, and in civil uniform they performed only draft work” [5].

Orenburg girls’ clothes were of great interest. And in the villages located closer to cities, the city fashion influenced styles of clothes. For example, the holiday suit of the girl living in suburb looked in this way: the print, woolen or silk dress densely fitting a waist, with the white starched collaret and cuffs. The most widespread, and in some villages even unique type of lady's wear was a jacket and a skirt. Jackets were always worn out, not inside skirts. New styles of clothes gradually came to change traditional ones:

sundresses, a coat, and jackets. But, undoubtedly, the status of its owner, in particular, the form, boots, a peak-cap is traced in the Cossack clothes.

## 5. Conclusion

So, the Orenburg Cossacks from the end XVIII – the beginnings of XIX century is made up a separate social group with special psychology which formation has influenced birth, a multi-nationality, and confessional of the given community.

Comparing culture of the Orenburg Cossacks and peasants living in the Orenburg province, we find much in common since the Cossack population in its population was the specific category of peasantry. But the character of Cossacks service influenced all the sides of their life greatly. It is traced in clothes, construction and furniture of houses, subject matters of household use and it testifies the certain status and a specific character of social psychology of their owners.

It is necessary to note, that the local administration gave much attention to moral side of Cossacks, namely: it followed their moral and physical condition, it paid attention on their appearance; it assisted patriotic education of youth, trying to support that image of the Cossack which would conform to the representative of the military service estate. Fidelity to Russian traditions assisted in an everyday life of the Orenburg Cossacks to embedding the Orenburg region in Russian empire.

## 6. Acknowledgements

The research is executed with financial support of the Russian humanitarian scientific fund within the RGNF research project ««The Orenburg region as a cross-border and multi-cultural region of the Russian Empire»: the scientific (academic) collection of documents about history of Orenburg region during the pre-revolutionary period», project No. 12-31-01281/a2.

## 7. References

- [1] A. Zavjalov. Svadebnye obrjady kazakov *Cheljabinskogo uezda* //Orenburgskij kraj. 1894. №220.
- [2] E.V. Godovova. Pedagogicheskij sostav kazach'ih shkol *Orenburgskogo kazach'ego vojska v HIIH – nachale HH vv.* // Problemy istorii Orenburgskogo kraja XVIII – XX vekov. Sbornik statej / Otv. red. Ju.P.Zlobin. OGPU, Orenburg. 2004.
- [3] P.P. Zhakmon. *Iz vospominanij Orenburgskogo starozhila* // Gostinyj dvor. № 4.
- [4] F.M. Starikov. *Kratkij istoricheskij ocherk Orenburgskogo kazach'ego vojska s prilozheniem stat'i o sovremennom byte orenburgskih kazakov i karty.* Tipografija B.Breslina, Orenburg, 1890.
- [5] O.V. Novikova. Tradicionnaja odezhda orenburgskogo kazachestva v konce XIX – nachale XX veka // *Orenburgskoe kazach'e vojsko: Kul'tura. Byt. Obychai.* Sb. nauch. tr. / Pod red. A.P.Abramovskogo. Cheljab. gos. un-t, Cheljabinsk, 1996.