

SOCIO-NORMATIVE CULTURE AS AN EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY (THE CASE OF AJARA)

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Abstract. One of the significant factors in the formation of personality is socio-normative culture, which encompasses the social practices developed across generations, etiquette, and a broad spectrum of human behavior, ranging from customs and traditions to folk law. As a form of the society's "collective morality," it exerts a considerable influence on personality formation and functions as a particular paradigm of upbringing. Personality formation takes place within a specific socio-cultural context (environment). Every society develops particular sociocultural norms through which it influences and socializes its members.

In Adjara, important social institutions such as the family and the wider social milieu (lineage, village, community, etc.) are actively involved at all stages of the upbringing process. Sociocultural norms play a crucial role in this process, including **adet/adat** (folk law)—traditional customary rules inherited from ancestors, unwritten yet widely recognized as obligatory; folk ethics—the way of life developed by traditional society over centuries, including moral customs and behavioral norms based on popular conceptions of morality; and traditions, which reflect and preserve the cultural values characteristic of this ethnic group.

It is generally considered that traditional Georgian society is characterized by an authoritarian style of upbringing, an orientation toward obedience, strong family and intergenerational attachment, interpersonal interdependence, and the development of the individual within a framework closely tied to family members. In other words, this represents a cultural model in which society exercises comprehensive control over life situations.

Although the model of upbringing in Georgian society is largely well-defined and systematized, the ethnographic life of various regions of Georgia—including Ajara—has preserved rather flexible and contextually adaptive methods of upbringing. Alongside social control, these methods gradually and smoothly support the development of adolescents, cultivate essential life skills, and facilitate their progressive incorporation into the life of the community, ultimately shaping them into bearers and continuers of the traditional values of their society.

Keywords: upbringing, sociocultural norms, family, society, personality formation.

Introduction. The process of upbringing has always been at the center of humanity's attention, as it represents a necessary condition for the preservation of cultural heritage and its transmission between generations. Interest in upbringing has existed at every stage of social development; however, attitudes toward upbringing differ in "traditional" and "industrial" societies. All traditional societies are interested in preserving a way of life formed over centuries, and one of the main means of achieving this goal is the formation of individuals who internalize the norms, customs, values, and ideals of that society and are prepared to fulfill specific social roles within it.

The full integration of the individual into society is achieved through the transmission of values, cultural codes, and behavioral norms between generations. In such societies these values are often understood as sacred, strictly formalized, and socially controlled. Therefore, every member of such a society is obliged to respect and strictly follow the existing rules and regulations (Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre, 1997).

One of the powerful factors in personality formation is socio-normative culture, since socio-cultural norms reflected a certain "collective morality" in traditional societies and constituted a structure that influenced the formation of the younger generation. Personality formation is determined by social relations and cultural achievements. Therefore, upbringing and development should be considered within a socio-cultural context, since the formation of personality takes place within a specific socio-cultural environment, and the child reflects the culture in which they grow up (Vygotsky, 2022).

The socio-normative system includes social habits developed by generations, etiquette, and a wide range of human activities—from customs to concepts of justice. Essentially, socio-cultural norms are behavioral standards that are widely integrated into the everyday life of society and are considered appropriate within that community. To a certain extent, socio-cultural norms represent collective expectations regarding behavior within a social group, reinforced by shared values, beliefs, and often implicit assumptions about the world. They are not merely descriptive statistics of common behavior but prescriptive guidelines carrying normative weight that influence judgments about conformity, morality, and even common sense.

Socio-cultural norms represent implicit rules or standards of behavior within a society or group that determine what is considered "normal," appropriate, or desirable. Social norms are generally oriented toward expected behavior within a group, while cultural norms represent broader, deeply rooted values, traditions, and beliefs. These norms are mostly unwritten but widely accepted in society; they are learned empirically through observation and imitation and often have a greater influence on personality formation than formal norms such as laws and official regulations.

Methods. In every society, upbringing represents a necessary condition for the intergenerational transmission of cultural heritage, and the study of its characteristics in different societies has become a subject of interest across various academic disciplines. Given the multidimensional nature of the research subject, multiple methodological approaches have been employed. The issue is examined in light of key theoretical concepts developed in previous studies.

Since the research focuses on a single cultural space—Adjara—it draws both on the extensive scholarly literature concerning the sociocultural characteristics of this region and on the results of field research conducted in specific localities, as well as archival materials from different years and oral histories. Accordingly, the study employs methods of ethnographic field research, including direct and participant observation, as well as interviewing techniques (semi-structured, unstructured, and in-depth interviews, along with biographical and focused interviews) and the analysis of ethnographic materials.

Discussion. Every culture possesses specific forms, methods, and institutions of upbringing that provide the knowledge and skills necessary for everyday life. According to the cultural classification model developed by Margaret Mead (postfigurative, cofigurative, and prefigurative cultures), Georgian ethnocultural belongs to the postfigurative type, a culture in which children learn primarily from their ancestors and the past of adults becomes the future for each new generation (Mead, 1963). In such cultures, children mainly learn through personal experience under the supervision of elders.

As a “traditional” society, Georgian culture is characterized by an authoritarian style of upbringing, orientation toward obedience, strong family and intergenerational attachment, interpersonal dependency, and personality development closely linked to family relations. In such a cultural model, society largely controls the major aspects of life.

Although the ideals, content, and means of upbringing in traditional Georgian society were strictly defined, structured, and systematized, different regions of Georgia—including Adjara—demonstrate various methods and attitudes toward personality formation. In Adjara, the main carriers of socio-normative culture involved in personality formation are key social institutions: the **family** and the **community (sodium)**.

In Georgia, the influence of the family on personality formation has traditionally been very strong, as the family represents a micro-society in which the younger generation inherits spiritual and material values and assimilates accumulated socio-historical experience. Traditional upbringing practices in Georgia reveal certain methods based on gender norms and expectations regarding the behavior of boys and girls. In Adjara as well, family upbringing was always differentiated by age and gender.

Boys were prepared for traditionally masculine tasks, while girls were taught handicrafts and household management. They were encouraged to develop masculine and feminine traits respectively, considering that they would assume different social functions in the future. According to traditional perceptions, the man was the head of the family, the provider responsible for external relations, whereas the woman was the guardian of the household, the caregiver, and the manager of domestic affairs.

In early childhood, the responsibility for raising the child was primarily assigned to the mother, and shortcomings in a child’s behavior were often attributed to her. Later, the methods of upbringing diverged according to gender. From approximately six years of age, the father assumed responsibility for preparing the boy for life. Fathers taught boys horseback riding, shooting, hunting, herding livestock, chopping wood, and other activities. Girls, on the other hand, were mainly raised under the influence of their mothers, grandmothers, and female relatives.

Children participated in the everyday life of the extended household. During the distribution of labor, the head of the household assigned tasks to children according to their age and gender, gradually involving them in family work and developing their work habits. Adolescents also attended discussions of family matters—legal, social, economic, and household issues—which allowed them to gradually acquire practical life skills and develop independence.

The incorporation of adolescents into economic activity also differed by gender. Boys were guided by their fathers and gradually entrusted with responsibilities such as herding animals, agricultural labor, and participation in communal work. By the age of 16–17, a boy could be formally invited to participate in collective labor gatherings, marking his transition into the community of adult men.

Girls were trained by female members of the family in domestic activities such as processing dairy products, washing dishes, cleaning the household, and various forms of handicraft. From a young age they were taught sewing, weaving, embroidery, and other skills necessary for household management.

Beyond the family, the **community** played a crucial role in upbringing. Traditional Georgian society was largely characterized by a collective way of life, and the formation of personality was considered a concern

not only of the family but of the entire community. The ethnosocium viewed a person not only as an individual but also as a member of society whose identity combined personal and collective interests.

Therefore, the community actively participated in the upbringing process at all stages, striving to instill corporate values and traditions in individuals. The care for a child began immediately after birth. From the ritual of cutting the newborn's umbilical cord onward, children became the central object of social attention. The birth of a new life was regarded as an important event not only for the family but for the entire village or kin group.

In Adjara, numerous customs and taboos existed to protect both the newborn and the nursing mother, aiming to safeguard them from negative influences and ensure the upbringing of a healthy generation. For example, pregnant women were not allowed to attend funerals or wear black clothing; if unavoidable, colorful fabric would be wrapped around the abdomen to symbolically protect the unborn child.

Traditional or customary law—known in Adjara as **adat**—also played a significant role in upbringing. The term originates from Arabic and refers to unwritten customary rules distinct from Islamic Sharia law. These norms formed the basis of social regulation and decision-making in community life.

In addition to regulating legal and social relations, customary law also protected the rights of minors, particularly orphans. Guardianship arrangements ensured that orphaned children were raised within the kinship network, and respected community elders supervised guardians to ensure that they fulfilled their responsibilities honestly.

Another essential socio-cultural norm involved in upbringing was **folk ethics**—the moral code developed over centuries in traditional society. This code encompassed behavioral norms and moral ideals such as love for the homeland, loyalty to family, respect for elders, care for younger members of society, politeness, and solidarity. These values were transmitted not only through discipline and instruction but also through everyday interactions and the example set by elders.

Tradition itself functioned as a key regulator of behavior and a mechanism of socialization. By participating in rituals and customary practices, children internalized the cultural values of the community and gradually incorporated them into their own consciousness.

Children were also involved in communal events such as weddings, funerals, and agricultural work, where they assisted adults and learned the social norms governing community life. Through participation in rituals, adolescents absorbed archetypal beliefs and sacred knowledge about the world, internalizing the mental frameworks characteristic of their society.

Play also served as an important educational tool in traditional society. Through play, children absorbed accumulated knowledge, developed physical and cognitive abilities, and prepared for independent life. Folk games, storytelling, proverbs, riddles, and other forms of oral tradition transmitted the moral and intellectual foundations of society.

Finally, folk aesthetics—manifested in architecture, clothing, interior design, cuisine, and the surrounding environment—also played a role in shaping personality and cultural identity.

Conclusion - Thus, the folk traditions of upbringing in Adjara demonstrate that education and socialization represent one of the most important social functions of society. In traditional societies, upbringing is understood as the transmission of knowledge, skills, and cultural experience accumulated by generations through social communication and interaction with knowledgeable and experienced members of the community.

The ethnosocium seeks stability, and one of the guarantees of this stability is the upbringing of individuals who embody traditional values. Societies employ different methods and factors to achieve this goal, among which socio-normative culture occupies a central place.

Socio-cultural norms encompass various domains such as folk ethics, customary law, aesthetics, oral tradition, and ritual practices. Although traditional societies often rely on authoritarian forms of upbringing oriented toward obedience, the traditional life of Adjara also demonstrates relatively flexible practices of personality formation.

In this context, the community influenced children not through coercion but through a combination of supervision, care, and social participation. By gradually integrating children into communal life and transmitting values through everyday practice rather than force, society ensured the preservation of emotional attachment to the group and continuity of cultural traditions.

In this way, individuals became carriers of both the past and the present of their community, ensuring the preservation of social unity within traditional society.

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