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**GENDER SYSTEMS IN THE INFORMATION SHIFTS CONTEXT**  
**IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS SOCIETY**

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### Abstract

The study attempts to identify several stages in the development of substrate gender activity. At the first stage of the functioning of gender systems, the patriarchal ethnic consciousness of the peoples of the North Caucasus gave rise to latent forms of female social activity. At the second stage (the first quarter of the 20th century), in the context of the North Caucasus annexation to the Russian Empire, a certain transition to a new stage of development was observed. At this stage, the identity was manifested both by gender and by ethnicity, since the sign of ethnic authenticity in the field of gender was excluded from the field of ideology. The third stage had lasted from the 1920s to the 1990s. The 20th century can be described as transitional. Traditional gender roles had been adjusted, primarily in terms of economics, since from this viewpoint, the role of women began to increase. The fourth stage is radical-ethnic. It is characterized by a certain loss of ethnic identity function and continuity of generations by gender systems in the new socio-political and economic realities at the present stage. The gender systems began to concentrate more on the development of adaptive mechanisms, thereby compensating for the loss of their significant function in the tier of ethnic identification. It has been concluded that in the conditions of a traditional society, which is today in a state of transition, women's social activity is in a poor shape, and it is extremely difficult to predict its further development.

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## **1. Introduction**

The processes of Russian society transformation are accompanied by changes in gender relations. Their development is one of the indicators of globalization and sustainable development and, as a consequence, the mandatory further path of human society development. However, any civilizational system cannot ensure the long-term existence of complex social constructs, since there is no clear coordination in their development. This is due to the fact that the Western culture, being a dispersed model gets superimposed by objective components of the common goals of unity, culture, ideology, mentality, etc. In this sense, the ongoing changes in modern Russian society have a significant impact on the culture and mentality of the peoples of the North Caucasus, where gender relations still have a relatively high degree of attractiveness and stability.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Modern processes associated with the transformation of society reveal the deep mechanisms of its interaction with various social strata, which are carriers of various types of consciousness. They, in turn, form and determine the degree of expression of the ethnic, ethno-confessional and ethno-political segment in the sphere of identity. These processes also affect the role of women in society. But, it must be emphasized that gender systems, especially in the conditions of the North Caucasus, are very conservative and orthodox. They lay certain moral complexes in the general system of the emerging ethnic and cultural identity.

In this regard, traditional gender institutions and basic gender complexes can be considered as a mechanism that affects almost all vectors of the evolution of an individual's functioning in society. First of all, these include ethnic and confessional imperatives. Therefore, at the present stage of society development, such a component of women's socio-political activity as the optimization of mostly undesirable political consequences of a transforming society is of particular importance. As for the existence of gender systems, even today they are trying to develop their own adaptive mechanisms that would allow them to correlate muscular and feminine structures that do not come into apparent conflict with each other.

## **3. Research Questions**

The research subject is represented with the evolution of gender institutions in the process of Russian society transformation.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to analyze the development of gender systems determining the main vectors of further evolution in the personality structure and the patterns of an individual's functioning in society.

## 5. Research Methods

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study is represented with the principles of socio-political analysis of the evolution of traditional gender institutions in the context of political and social modernization. The ideas of gender identity (Butler, 2002), the psychology of gender relations (Bedans, 2006), and female subjectivity (Braidotti, 2000) are of particular importance in the development of research methodology. The present research is also based on the works of Russian researchers devoted to the political theory of feminism (Pushkareva et al., 2018; Zhrebkina, 1997 and others). A comparative analysis of gender problems is presented in the works of Shvedova (2002).

The analysis of women's status in the traditional North Caucasian society, peculiarities of the mentality and ethno-cultural traditions, which are still one of the key ones today, are covered in the works of Butaeva (2012), Dumanov (1990), Maremsaova (1999), Sabanchieva (2005), Tekueva (2006).

While considering the role of gender institutions in traditional ethnic communities, we adhered to the system-analytical, institutional and civilizational approaches. In the conditions of the total paternalism, these methods allowed us to trace the crisis of gender stereotypes and behavioral norms.

## 6. Findings

The evolution of gender relations in the North Caucasus is determined by specifics of the main vector of development within the national traditional communities. In this regard, the structure of substratum manifestations of the gender includes imperatives relating to moral values and cultural stereotypes. From the standpoint of destructive changes, adaptive mechanisms are key in the development of gender systems, and over the past decades they have not changed basic gender relations and have retained national marking in gender consciousness.

Substratum gender activity acquires special significance in such an important social sector as intergenerational communication and gender and ethnic identification. In this sense, the designated concepts are formed under the influence of cultural traditions, gender stereotypes and national education systems.

Gender institutions initially cover both gender and ethnic continuity of family and socio-historical order. They form and transmit both sexual and ethnic intergenerational and intragenerational identification features. This transmission usually takes place within the family.

The gender vector in the development of transmission mechanisms of ethnic identification and intergenerational definition is obvious. Basic gender complexes in a conformal environment are aimed at the development of a local level of national identity, which smoothly moves to the socio-cultural level of identity. Orthodox models of female normativity transfer the most significant properties of national identity to a generalized level.

However, from the viewpoint of their content, the objects of identity differ from each other in different education systems. Thus, in the conditions of the marginalization of an ethnos, the concepts of 'national' and 'social (cultural)' have fundamental differences in the definition of an object. In traditional gender complexes, there is no difference between culture and ethnos, since they do not feel the difference

between the national and cultural community in which national values are embedded. And these differences form conflict situations and contribute to the escalation of various social contradictions.

The axiological aspect of implicating gender basic complexes in the modern information space depends on those imperatives that are in most cases socio-economic, less often ethnic and confessional in nature.

In this regard, we can state that gender institutions have developed and continue to determine the socially adaptive vector of their existence. The basic concepts of 'ours' – 'alien' are formed on the basis of communication within the ethnic society and family groups. These concepts ensure the unity, integrity and stability of both ethnic groups and individuals in the process of their development. In these conditions the role of gender, the female one in particular, is of great importance for the formation and development of identification of a cultural, ethno-confessional, and socio-economic order.

In the North Caucasus, under the conditions of polyethnicism and the particular rigidity of gender basic complexes, latent forms of female activity in matters of intergenerational transmission of value-normative attitudes acquire special significance, since they are responsible for correcting inter-ethnic and inter-faith interactions. In this regard, we should note that if gender systems did not develop adaptive mechanisms in the context of information shifts that entail system-wide transformations, a region such as the North Caucasus would be a scene of endless ethnic and confessional conflicts.

In view of the foregoing, we will try to identify several stages in the development of substrate gender activity.

The first stage of the functioning and development of gender systems is associated with the patriarchal ethnic consciousness of the peoples of the North Caucasus. These were latent forms of social activity and only within the limits of women's competence, therefore, gender systems were deprived of the opportunity to form an identification of a person on the basis of the 'ours' – 'alien' dichotomy. Besides, the transmission of prescribed gender statuses and roles, supported at the social level and bearing the nature of the subconscious, reflects the ideal gender picture of the world constructed in traditional society (Shoranova, 2010).

At the second stage (the first quarter of the 20th century), when the territory of the North Caucasus was annexed to the Russian Empire, there was a certain transition to a new stage of development, where identity was manifested both by gender and by ethnicity. The parameters of ethnic identification played a special role in society. Since the 1920s–1930s, all the efforts of the state had been aimed at eliminating the gender-related sign of ethnic authenticity from the field of ideology.

Since the 1920s–1990s, at the third stage of the existence of gender systems, which can be confidently described as transitional, traditional gender roles had been adjusted, primarily in terms of economics, since from this viewpoint, the role of women began to increase. Women started to feel like independent personalities:

Strengthening of the economic role of a wife in an urban family is far from conflict-free. In the past, only husband was responsible for decisions in the family, and today he must consult with his wife. As for the public behaviour, everything remains the same: the husband is a leader, head of the family, and

the wife dutifully follows him. The change in family roles affects traditional family and marriage relations, as if eroding them from the inside... (Yurlova, 1999, p. 99).

The fourth stage in the development of gender systems can be characterized as a radical-ethnic one. Due to a certain loss of the ethnic identity function and continuity of generations by gender systems in the new socio-political and economic realities, they began to concentrate more on the development of adaptive mechanisms, thereby compensating for the loss of their significant function in the tier of ethnic identification. In our opinion, this is the most significant factor in determining the role of gender in the variable directions of social development.

In this regard, the transformation of Russian society provokes the spread of new forms of adaptation. Thus, in the context of the development of marginal patterns of behavior, purely rational motivations for behavior become the basic adaptive concepts. The loss of ethnic components by the system of basic gender complexes naturally leads to the absence of a 'moral' – 'non-moral' dichotomy. Therefore, the primacy of rationality is a key factor in the formation of marginality, in which gender systems play a key role.

Modern Russian society is devoid of any effective institutions of integration. The lack of harmony and unity continues to develop the trend of polarization in various social groups. This concerns the livelihoods of families, the level of education, professional prospects, access to information resources (especially for women), etc. In this regard, the most important mechanism contributing to the integration of society is seen in the system of education, which is designed to form value orientations of this kind.

But the transformational processes of modernity leveled traditional institutions, including gender, to a certain extent. In search for additional theoretical concepts that would reveal the essence and mechanisms of education in the new socio-cultural conditions, modern humanities shift the main focus of scientific interest to public education systems, ignoring the basic gender complexes. But, the gender systems are able to develop communication mechanisms that contribute to the consolidation of not only society, but also to the formation of a free and tolerant individual with skills in the legal, political and public spheres.

As we pointed out earlier, the gender systems have significant stability in relation to civilizational shifts and pressure. They resist and acquire adaptability in the form of orthodox forms of behavior with a socio-demographic and national color and a certain position and role in society. They form a fairly high level of attractive behavior. Ethnically unmarked gender systems give rise to such basic gender complexes that either include adaptive technologies, or, in the absence of moral and ethical structures, acquire a tinge of expediency, or form conflict behavior patterns. It is obvious that a shift in the value orientations of members of the gender groups in the conditions of increasing marginalization can lead to the most undesirable consequences (Zharkimbaeva, 2019).

Modern forms of substratum female activity have lost most of the function of ethnic identification and have developed socialization mechanisms that are more aimed at adaptation outside the family. Therefore, the basic gender complexes in the personality structure have such an orientation vector that corresponds to the social order and the spirit of the time. They are aimed at developing the individualization of the personality, its specificity and the fastest possible finding of an appropriate (if

possible, sufficiently high) social niche. All these trends gradually lead to diffusion of the traditional collective type of consciousness and its replacement with an individualized one, which no longer contains the basic axiological concepts of humanism and morality.

In the conditions of transformational processes at the turn of the 20th – beginning of the 21st centuries, the adaptive components of basic gender complexes come into apparent conflict with traditional moral, ethical and cultural constructs in the context of gender disintegration. The specificity of the current situation for a traditional Russian society lies in the fact that, due to natural conservatism and inertia, gender systems have not been able to develop an adequate response from a moral and ethical point of view. Marginalized gender complexes have created their own construct, which turned out to be conflictogenic. It is expressed in such concepts as 'ours' and 'alien' (this applies to both national and confessional aspects).

This is probably a natural and inevitable process of unification of traditional communities in the conditions of modern civilization, where the legal framework for the regulation of societies is dominant in relation to ethnic components. For the peoples of the North Caucasus with a rigid system of national ideas about social life, the situation turned into such shifts that led to the loss of emphasis on paternalism. It lost its former importance to a certain extent, and these trends, in turn, led to the reform of intra-family relations and basic gender complexes, which leveled the need for intra-family interaction (the older and younger generations).

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, at the first stage of functioning, in the conditions of the total domination of the paternalistic type of society, gender systems produce behavioral, moral, ethical, motivational concepts within the framework of matrimonial relations. This is due to the traditions, when women, as a rule, did not take part in the upbringing of boys, since there was such a social institute of military type as fosterage. The low cultural value of a woman, the perception of her as an Other, made it possible to control and manipulate her both at the micro- and macro-levels of everyday life. A different attitude would threaten the stability of the world order (Antonova, 2013).

At the second stage, the gender systems switched to a slightly different format due to the consolidation of the legal institutions of the Russian Empire and Soviet power in the North Caucasus. The basic gender complexes did not undergo any significant changes. However, the emerging marginalization of gender systems, associated with the representative forms of female social activity, had gradually been giving rise to latent female activity. This was revealed in the disproportion between the natural position of a woman and her new opportunities.

The third stage is associated with restructuring processes, when the role of women in the family became dominant in most cases due to the loss of the status of the main breadwinner by men in Caucasian families. Women were the main keepers and transmitters of not only family values, but also ethnic identity.

At the present stage of social development (the fourth stage), the gender systems give rise to a number of negative social phenomena. Firstly, the gender systems initiate and largely support the replacement of moral and ethnic constructs of basic gender complexes with adaptive ones that are formed

in the family and contribute to the speedy socialization of an individual. Secondly, the gender systems transmit these adaptive complexes into a common space, transforming the collective consciousness inherent in a traditional society. Thirdly, in the conditions of drastic social changes, the gender creates the conflict potential of society by constructing the model of 'ours' – 'alien'.

In the conditions of the marginalization of society, such a situation seems quite legitimate. The resources of the gender systems have been formed within the framework of the social, cultural and legal fields. However, in the conditions of a traditional society, which today is in a state of transition, women's social activity is in a deplorable state and it is extremely difficult to predict its further development. The reason lies in the fact that women find themselves in a situation of declining paternalism, in a narrow family circle, thus forming latent forms of the impact of gender systems on society. In other words, women's activity gradually begins to interfere in almost all spheres of society through the intra-family sphere, forming the so-called sectoral gender space.

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