

# THE WORLD OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH IN RUSSIAN NOBLE FAMILIES OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY IN THE CONTEXT OF STRATIFICATION APPROACH

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The world of childhood and youth is deeply historical, socially accented, associated with certain life and national traditions. Hence, it is one of the criteria for evolutionary or revolutionary changes in a particular society, accentuating the culture of everyday life and the connection of generations. In a rigidly structured estate society, such as the population of the Russian Empire, the world of childhood and youth developed in the context of social traditionalism, adopted in one or another estate community.

**Methodology:** The basis of the study is based on the principles of historicism, objectivity, and science. To prove these theses, comparative-historical, problem-chronological, logical-analytical methods were used, which made it possible to reliably reconstruct the world of childhood and youth in noble families of Russia of the first half of the nineteenth century.

**Result:** The most detailed system of socialization of children and adolescents was developed in an environment of a noble family, distinguished by more strict and complex etiquette, where pride in belonging to a noble class was inculcated at an early age. But the feeling of belonging to the upper class among the young nobles was different and mediated by many factors, first of all, the ancient lineage, the level of the material wealth of the family, education, upbringing, and culture. That is, the variability of the socialization of children and adolescents was extensive.

**Applications:** This research can be used for universities, teachers, and students.

**Novelty/Originality:** In this research, the model of The World of Childhood and Youth in Russian Noble Families of the First Half of the Nineteenth Century in the Context of Stratification Approach is presented in a comprehensive and complete manner.

**Keywords:** *Childhood, Youth, Nobility, Elite, Upbringing, Education, Traditionalism.*

## INTRODUCTION

Socialization of noble children and teenagers of the first half of the nineteenth century proceeded in the context of stratification traditions of the gentlefolk. It was very different among the aristocracy, gentlefolk, nobility, and gentry. This is emphasized in the works by V. A. Veremenko, A. V. Belova, I. V. Istomina and a number of other Russian scholars (Belova, 2009- Istomina, 2016). The insurmountable sociopsychological abyss in matters of educating the younger generation between members of the upper and lower strata of the noble class is particularly pointed out. The latter, in their views and social expectations, differed little from the middle peasants. Various scenes in the specified context are considered in the writings by Brauer, Elnett, Rensel, Kaiser (Brower, 1990; Ransel, 1988).

A significant moment in the issue under consideration has a gender aspect, taking into account not only stratification features but also regional differences. The gender component at the present stage of historiography occupies a special place in the study of the noble world of childhood and youth (Pushkareva, 1997; Belova, 2009).

Among the narrow circle of aristocratic and large-noble families, the socialization of children and adolescents with their families was abroad for a considerable period of time, which left an imprint on the evolution of their worldview. Certain specificity of educational cycles depended on the season. In the summer, the wealthy noble family moved to the rural homestead, in the winter – to the city. A prominent place in every landlord family was played by the tradition of relations with base estate, which also determined the view of the noblemen.

All the above together determined the individual specifics of the child and adolescent world of each noble family.

## METHODS

The basis of the study is based on the principles of historicism, objectivity, and science. To prove these theses, comparative-historical, problem-chronological, logical-analytical methods were used, which made it possible to reliably reconstruct the world of childhood and youth in noble families of Russia of the first half of the nineteenth century.

## RESULTS AND ITS DISCUSSION

The care of adults for the future generation of noble offspring began before the birth of a child. In rich noble families, a pregnant wife, if she lived in the city, was sent to a rural estate. The woman lived in the countryside, fed on health

products, was alienated from the bustle of the city. Moreover, she, in fact, was completely excluded from the economic sphere. In the lower subgroups of the gentry, who had up to 10 desiatinas of land or 1-3 serfs, the passing of pregnancy in landowners hardly differed from the course of pregnancy in the middle-class serfs: both of them were engaged in farming ([Shapovalov, 2014](#)).

The borderline that existed between parents and children in noble families separated the world of children into an independent whole, within which the children arranged their independent lives, as far as they could. If there was family discord among parents, this borderline became more and more impenetrable, introducing psychological discomfort in the life of a child ([Ardov, 1895](#)). This was especially evident in those families where one of the parents lived abroad or in the capital, the second one lived at his own discretion, spending little time with children. ([Saltykov-Shchedri, 1956](#)).

The nanny was the closest person to a child in wealthy noble families. The nanny turned out to be a person with whom the noble children spent most of the time it was she who was the personification of everyday kindness and care for the child. Although it was and vice versa in some cases ([Onoprienko, 2010](#)).

The thought that noble children belonged to the upper class was instilled in them from the first years of their lives, regardless of the stratum. Consequently, everyone must obey them and their families in the estate without question. This thought was also instilled in the children of the gentry, although it was not uncommon for their family to live under the same roof with the serfs in a small hut consisting of 1-2 rooms. ([Ryansky, 2009](#)). But the estate of minor landowners was in contradiction with their, in fact, peasant daily life. For representatives of all strata of the nobility, the word “nobleman” automatically denoted nobility. This was the basis of the linguistic plan when the French language in the circles of the Russian nobility was the basic one. French-Russian dictionaries translate the French word “La noblesse” both as «дворянство», «дворяне», and as «благородство», and the words “noble” - both as «дворянский», and «благородный» ([Schmidt, 2002](#)).

Far from the classical image was childhood in a certain part of the middle nobility, which owned from 21 to 100 male souls. The children of the lower subgroups of this category of nobles often starved and had no opportunity to go to the gymnasium, as they had no suitable clothes and shoes ([Goltsev, 1905](#)).

A distinctive feature of the nobility was education, in fact, inaccessible in the pre-reform period to the representatives of other classes. It was a peculiar sign of nobility, which they tried to possess, were proud of it and constantly demonstrated it. Therefore, noble parents tried to give their children a good education in their childhood. But the concept of “good education” was interpreted differently in different groups of nobility. Within the upper class of nobility, in addition to the obligatory set of general educational disciplines, several foreign languages, music, dancing, fencing, horse riding, etc. were studied ([Yudin, 2012](#)). Children from the poorest small families were enough to know the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic. But many of them remained illiterate ([Potekhin, 1904](#)).

In the 1st half of the 19th century, young nobles had a wide choice where to receive good education: at home, in gymnasiums, lyceums, private school houses, institutes of noble maidens, universities and other specialized secondary schools and universities. The children of the class aristoi studied in closed boarding schools in which they were trained not only for service but also for public life, instilling in them good manners and an appropriate style of communication. First of all, for young men it was military schools. The military career seemed so natural for the offspring of noble families that the absence of military service was considered defective or required special explanations. Girls and young ladies received, basically, home education. The latter was common among young men, where, depending on the wealth of the family, Russian and foreign teachers and tutors were invited. ([Saltykov-Shchedri, 1956](#)).

Children of small landowners were trained, as a rule, at home. It was due to the lack of financial means. In addition, money for hiring home teachers was not always available, and older brothers, sisters, and other relatives were as the teachers since parents were completely immersed in housekeeping, often working in their own fields. Such training did not go beyond elementary literacy. Often this training was accompanied by cuffs, flicks ([From the Recent past, 1910](#)).

In general, the literacy rate among noble youth was not very high. Especially in the province. For example, in the Kursk province in 1857, out of 784 noble children in the age category from 10 to 19, only 256 (31.3%) were literate. But reading books was not very popular even with literate young nobles. Moreover, among the aristocratic families in the first decades of the 19th century, there was a conviction that reading books were harmful to “head health”. Even an enlightened grandee Count S.R. Vorontsov informed his relatives about his son from London: “He loves to read: meanwhile, all this doesn’t harm his health at all, because he is constantly in the open air and he rides every day, which strengthens his physique a lot” ([Ivchenko, 2008](#)).

A certain part of the young local nobles strove to the city, educational institutions, the overwhelming part of the young men saw themselves as officers, and the girls sought to break the circle of rural monotonous everyday life. But even when traveling abroad for long periods of time, periodic visits to the native estate were an indispensable ritual. Landlord traditionalism obliged to maintain this connection. M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, describing the life cycle of large local noblemen of the beginning of the post-reform period, noted: “Whether the owner is living happily in the capital or abroad for many, many months, he will have made two visits in summer with his family to the estate to see if everything is in its place, if the manager doesn’t act against his conscience and whether the garden is in order”. ([Potekhin, 1904](#)).

But, besides, there is another consideration: these visits remind children that they are Russian, the tutors and governesses, their circle that a kind of *Vie de chateau* (life in the castle) is possible in Russia. The children go to the villages and see the peasant children, about whom they are told: “They are the same as you!” ([Saltykov-Shchedri, 1956](#)).

## CONCLUSION

The functioning of the world of childhood and youth in Russian noble families of the first half of the nineteenth century was rigidly socially stratified depending on which category of nobles the particular family belonged to. Within this social stratification, the goals and objectives, methods of bringing up children and adolescents were different, although they all were inculcated a sense of belonging to a noble class. The noble system of training the younger generation was the most developed, and the noble offspring, in comparison with children from other classes, were more educated.

Children and teenagers from aristocratic and large noble families had a wide educational range: from top elite educational institutions to very high-quality home education and training. As the wealth of the noble family declined, the trajectories of the educational spectrum also shrank. Among the small landowners, especially in their lower subgroups, the education of children and adolescents was limited with the basics of reading, arithmetic, and writing. But there were a large number of illiterate among them. Nevertheless, the feeling of belonging to the upper class of the empire was inculcated in everyone. The noble children’s treatment of the serfs depended on the strata of the landlords, their level of culture and education. In rich noble families, children rarely, with the exception of courtyards, contacted the peasants. In the families of small landowners, children were included in the system of control over the life activity of the peasants, giving them various orders from their parents, keeping an eye on their work.

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