

# ***The Domostroy as an Educational Narrative in the Medieval and Modern Russian Pedagogical Paradigm***

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**Abstract.** *The objective of this paper was to analyze the original texts of Domostroy, the 16th-century Russian set of household rules, to find its core value and obligation areas. The texts are analyzed from the point of view of the history of mentality, the experiences from structural-functional analysis are also considered, and the general educational norms that helped to develop the idea of an archaic Russian perfect human being are emphasized. As a result, this study divides the texts of Domostroy into six core value and key obligation areas as the general education norms: (1) The Religious and Ethical Aspects; (2) The Reflection of the Ritual and Etiquette, (3) Emphasising Gender Roles; (4) The Family Model, (5) The Woman, (6) The Food Table as a Ritual and Etiquette. Although the results and the groupings of the texts are preliminary, they are important for the educators of cultural history, because the influences of the Domostroy in general education norms can still be found in the modern Russian society.*

**Key words:** *education for living, religion and ethics, function of women, ritual, etiquette.*

## **Introduction**

To achieve a better level of communication and understanding with other human beings, we would need to look into the roots of their national culture. Many misunderstandings and miscommunications are caused by people not appreciating the manners by which the behaviour is regulated and often based. All nations have formed their own unique teaching of manners which included all areas of life and people according to their class, sex, and age. Several books refer to traditions, man-

ners and common laws in cultural history, such as Erasmus' Treatise on Manners, "The Book of the Courtier" by Castiglione, etc. (Castiglione, 1994; Elias, 2001) In Russia, the teachings were represented in *the Domostroy* – an 'education for living' for every Orthodox Russian from peasants up to boyars and the Tzar.

## **The background of Domostroy**

*The Domostroy* is a historical domestic conduct book containing a collection of advice on various topics related to domestic man-

agement. According to Johnston Pouncey, although *Domostroy* was a unique in sixteenth-century Moscow, it bears a close resemblance to thousands of domestic handbooks published in Europe between 1475 and 1700 (Johnston Pouncey, 1987). It prescribes ethical and religious aspects, rituals and everyday life etiquette, as well as the family model and gender roles. The sections of the *Domostroy* draw heavily on Biblical models. Pouncey (1987) argues that *the Domostroy* is neither a practical discussion of the requirements of family life nor an original, comprehensive, or literary work; neither is it an accurate description of the way in which sixteenth-century Muscovites lived. It is both didactic and rambling, but it does tell us what at least some Russians of that time thought of domestic relationships. The basic text contains sixty-three chapters ranging in size from a paragraph to ten pages or more. According to Pouncey, the chapters can be roughly divided into three categories: advice on living a good life; advice on relationships among family members, including servants and guests; and advice on practical matters such as how to organize a banquet, etc. (Johnston Pouncey, 1987, p. 358).

*The Domostroy* is not a normative document in the literal sense, it did not define juridical norms but the moral norm of life, explained practical reasons and proved that leading a 'correct' lifestyle pleases God and other human beings. *The Domostroy* formed the system of manners, and the individual was taught to obey and adjust in medieval society. *The Domostroy* reflects the 16th-century way of thinking, listing its activities, objects and arrangements in a practical, dignified and thorough manner. *The Domostroy* is considered to be

the main construct of the Medieval and Modern Russian pedagogical paradigm, a didactic document that captured all spheres of life. These were mandatory rules of decent behaviour for the whole community to observe and fulfil passed down orally through the generations and first recorded in text in the 16th century.

Different writers have been researching the *Domostroy* from the point of view of literature (Murai, 1958; Karlinsky, 1965), gender roles (Evans, 2012), manuscript history (Johnston Pouncey, 1987), history (Khorikhin, 2001; Kolesov, 2001; Ramusino 2007), rules of households (Perrie, 1995; Naidenova, 2000; Goldfrank, 1996), and early lexican references (Muller, 2002). In educational theories, the educational narrative has been investigated in several ways. As the *Domostroy* is one of the bases of the Russian Orthodoxy education (Tilk, 2004), there was a need for the further research of the effect of *the Domostroy* on the educational paradigm. The research has concentrated on the analysis of *the Domostroy* texts and as a result provides the most relevant examples of *the Domostroy* instructions.

This article analyses *the Domostroy* as an educational narrative based on life philosophy, religion and family values, including both the external (etiquette) and internal (ritual) aspects. The writer explains the forming of *the Domostroy*, the background of the *Domostroy* as an educational narrative, and brings out six main themes of the core values and the key obligation areas of its texts.

## Methodology

In the study of history, there is a set system of principles and scientific methods

which the paradigm of scientific knowledge (the model of raising a question and its answer) is dependent on. Among these principles, the principle of civilization, firstly introduced by the German scientist G. Rikkert, is distinguished. The main idea of his principle involves the coexistence of parallel cultural formations which all have whole characteristics: geographical, ethnographic, socio-economic, and cultural (Rikkert, 2013). The contemporary followers of the Theory of Civilization, who (se) aim is the integral approach to being, believe that the centre of civilization is the human being, and the study of the past has to be based on humane dimensions. The Structural-Functional theories (T. Parsons, R. Merton) are also popular in modern historical science. In their study of society, the formative structure is based on common norms which make the human being fulfil the functional demands of the prevailing social system (Wearne, 2013; Cole, 1966).

In the study of cultural history, the theory of Structuralism (C. Levi-Stross) is widely used (Levi-Stross, 2010). They emphasise the fundamental meaning of linguistic signs. Brockmeier and Harre evaluate the narrative as the most general category of linguistic products. They believe that the term should be primarily used for expressing instructions and norms in several communication practices, regulations, meanings of experiences, developing knowledge, procedures of excuses and justifications, etc. Though the narrative seems to have set the linguistic and cognitive characteristics, it should be considered as an array of condensed rules which involve everything that is well coordinated and effective in a given culture (Brockmeier, Harre, 2000, p.37).

In the given circumstances, the arch history has been analysed from the point of view of the history of mentality, the experiences from the structural-functional analysis are also considered, and the general educational norms that helped to develop the idea of the archaic Russian perfect human being are emphasised.

### **The Forming of the Domostroy**

*The Domostroy* was compiled in writing in the 15th–16th centuries. The collection itself is based on previously written sources. One of the firsts sources was the Slavic translation of the early Christian teachings of morality, which were especially popular in Novgorod (Семья, 1991, p. 98). It was here that the conditions favoured the peaceful relationship between the church and secular power and relationships with their subjects and followers. This is reflected in the texts of *the Domostroy* as well: the honest religion purifies and elevates the power. The human being's spiritual aspiration and purification are most important.

*The Domostroy* was not just a set of household rules, the “economy”, or “building your household”. It also emphasised moral relationships between people in the family, household, manor, town, and church. All these units are the 'Dom'. The document describes how everyday needs are fulfilled with churchly and Christian morals, the initiative of people is limited and their behaviour is subordinated to follow the recognised norms of common life (*Domostroy*, p. 18). The medieval “teachings”, the second source of *the Domostroy*, play an important part in the development of *the Domostroy*. During the 11th century, the “teachings from father to son” became

popular in Russia (Повести Древней Руси, 1983, p. 38). These teachings from a father to his children were the basis for learning morality and life in Ancient Russia. They were rewritten and known throughout the different layers of society – by boyars, clergymen and also among merchants (Латышина, 1998, p. 104). One of the most important teachings was that of Vladimir Monomakh (Литература Древней Руси, 1999, p.115). It was the education for living, which had religiousness as its most important merit: "...fear God in your hearts and give many alms. This is the basis of all good". "There are three things that will redeem you from your sins so that you can go to the Land of God: penitence, tears, and alms."

Monomakh's teachings were mostly as those of a ruler's teachings to his sons: you cannot forget righteousness when it comes to judging, and generosity when it is time for punishment. You have to take care of widowers and orphans, ill-fated and the sick. You have to respect guests and your work. The "Teaching" emphasises that a proper ruler (*gosudar* – the same term was used for landlords) watches over his household and does not go to extremes with food, drink, enjoyments, and vacation. In war, he may not only trust his voivodes (Old Slavic, literally "warlord") but also check everything himself: "*Do not disarm yourself before you have made sure that there is no danger. A credulous man could be easily killed*". "*In a foreign country, do not let the servants rob or harm your self and the stranger; not in villages nor fields not to be cursed*". Monomakh praises his own behaviour and has set it as an example. He proclaims he has fulfilled all God's commands and God saved him because of this.

His view on the proper behaviour is as follows: "*Go and visit the sick, say goodbye to the deceased, greet everyone, and have a kind word for everyone. Love your wife but don't have her to control you*".

He views the studying as follows: "*Do not forget useful knowledge, but what you don't know go and explore. My father knew five languages. He was respected in other countries because of that. Laziness is the mother of all evil: what you know you will forget, what you don't you will not learn. Do good but don't be lazy while doing good.*"

*The Domostroy* was influenced by three main kinds of documents. Firstly, there was the influence of teachings written by the rulers (Yaroslav I the Wise, Vladimir Monomakh), followed over time by teachings written by feudal lords, boyars, and wardlords. There was a change in the 15th century when more lower classes were given the rights of the 'father' for them to teach their 'sons' and introduce them to the teachings of morality.

The "Slovo o mōtarstvah" (A story about a wrong journey) from the 12th century shows exactly the impact of old paganism on Christian morality. The writing emphasises that the one who should be respected is not the one who fasts and prays but the one who has high moral standards in secular everyday life as well. Sin in the above-mentioned writing is defined as lie, slander, anger, violence, pride, theft, depravity, stinginess, and ruthlessness. The ideas of paganism remained for a long time after the acceptance of Christianity because they were ingrained in Ancient Russia through tradition and rituals (Развлекательная культура..., 2000, p.15).

The second source of *the Domostroy* was the autobiographies and teachings of saints, which were popular and much loved in Russia (Semya, 1991, 99). Initially, these had been translated materials; later, the originals in Russian were added. Around the 14th century, these autobiographies were gathered into moralising compilation, and most of them were added to the “Izmaragd”. Many parts of the “Izmaragd” were later added to *the Domostroy*.

Thirdly, *the Domostroy* was influenced by numerous and popular “obihodniks” – works about the way of life and laws, i.e. the monastic order. The ideal of the “Dom” was the monastic unit and its piety, moderation, and obedience.

### **The Domostory as an Educational Narrative**

*The Domostroy* is not a normative document in the literal sense, it did not define juridical norms but a moral norm of life, explained practical reasons and proved that leading a ‘correct’ lifestyle pleases God and other human beings. *The Domostroy* formed the system of manners, and an individual was taught to obey and adjust in medieval society. These manners were under constant social control. Their use was able to cause public disapproval or praise at any moment and therefore was a constant reminder for a person about which manners were correct and which were not.

*The Domostroy* reflects the 16th-century way of thinking. It lists activities, objects, and arrangements in a practical, dignified, and thorough manner. The texts are similar to the medieval written orders (*gramota*).

At the same time, the earthly, materialistic society and the spiritual, higher

church and religious world are distinguished. The finite and abstract characteristics can be found in every part of *the Domostroy*, and the earthly and “economic” parts are viewed through ethics. A human being lives in his precise, earthly world as a proper Christian. All this makes *the Domostroy* not only a historical but also a didactic document and source.

*The Domostroy* reflects the medieval citizen’s way of thinking, the organising of his way of life into specific cycles, the precise hierarchy between the members of the family and society, the link between cause and consequence. *The Domostroy* tried to make everything part of a detailed and elaborately organised and regulated system which was solemnised by God and had a set of hierarchy which defined the rights and duties of both the ruler and the head of a family. It also gave direct rules and regulations. One of the authors of the *Domostroy*, Sylvester, addresses *the Domostroy* to the ruler (gosudar), the ruler of a household and the landlord, he also speaks to the wife, servants and children. Certain manners are recommended to everyone, to all “right” people.

*The Domostroy* developed in an oral culture with many traditions. It consisted of “speeches”, aphorisms and sentiments that taught about general wisdom (Русский народ..., 1980, p.156). The human being learnt about the rituals of social behaviour both in secular and sacred life. The Ethics Teaching was not divided into specific subsections. Politics, economy and other such areas were subordinated to the correct behaviour which was unified and explained by the written and oral past authority.

## The core values and obligations of the Domostroy

### 1. The Religious and Ethical Aspects

The Domostroy defines work not as a goal but as a tool in serving God. It was the obligation of people to pray and “build” (“сстроить”) their lives according to divine regulations and orders.

A good human being is a merciful and charitable Christian who loves peace, order, and his neighbour but is first and foremost a slave of God – “раб божий”. The link between ethics and economy is also revealed in the words “житие” – living, story, “жизнь” – life and “живот”, which back in those times did not mean a stomach but life, being alive (“У меня Боруса в животе нет...” – a document from the 12th century). The husband, the head of the family and the owner of the household, had to be an orthodox (a good Christian), he had to find a good confessor and a pastor, constantly consult with him and listen to his recommendations. He was not allowed to go into depravities. At the same time, he had to incontrovertibly obey the higher secular power and constantly think about the punishment to come – both secular and supernal. “*He, who in his insolence is not afraid of God and doesn't follow his will, does not obey the Christian law and the orders of fathers, does not think about church, chorals, laws of the monks, prayers and praising the Lord but instead eats and drinks constantly as a glutton and a drunk and does not obey the rules of the common life, does not fast on Sundays, Wednesdays, Fridays and during holidays, breaks the laws of fasting, leads a life that is not according to nature and laws, who is misconduct, Sodom-like, does all kinds*

*of indecent deeds: lechers, curses, swears, sings songs that please Satan, dances and skips, plays the pipe and other devilish instruments, who longs for bears, games and dogs, organises horseracing – all this is devilish and impudent. One has to pray, read the Scripture and hope for God's forgiveness”.*

The Domostroy tells that it is important for the man as the head of the household to decide how much he donates to a church or a monastery, he decides which icons to hang in which room, he is the one who demands purity and order. By praying, he sets an example to his family. “*All kinds of appraisal of God have to come from the heart, with bows, tears, cry and with a careful heart, confessing his sins and asking for forgiveness”.* (Domostroy, p. 124). He also has to watch over the prayers, chorals and cherishing of icons by his family members.

The icon was a domestic God for the Russian people, their personal fetish. When a stranger or a family member entered their house, then the first place they went was the red corner where the iconostasis or, if it was a less wealthy family, a single icon was located, crossed oneself and made a bow. Only after that he greeted the head of his household and the wife. This iconic god lived through the family's emotions, it felt, heard, and saw. When the couple made love, the icon was covered with a towel, so they wouldn't offend God with such an indecent act. In front of the icon, a candle or a lamp was lit. If it was possible to buy a wax candle, then it was bought mainly for the icon; often coins were pressed into the candle. Icons were an inseparable part of the Orthodox religion: in campaigns, on the road, in weddings and funerals. Icons

guarded gates, streets, roads and small chapels. Miraculous icons were said to have cried, sweated blood among other astonishing acts. People came to worship the famous icons from all over the world (Философия русского ..., 1993, p.185).

A good master and landlord had to invite monks and holy men to his house, he also had to donate to the poor, especially to pilgrims. He had to feed them and give them a place to stay.

What was demanded from women? According to the *Domostroy* and similarly to the head of the household, women had to be good Christians, worship and honour icons, clergymen, pilgrims. They had to go to church, fulfil all religious regulations; therefore, the woman was the person responsible for the fulfillment of all the rules to do with the fast. Everybody had to pray, but there was a further arrangement for women (Point 12): “*The wife has to pray for her own sins but also for her husband, children, fellows, relatives, and priests.*”

Women did not have to attend church, but at home they had to stand next to their husbands and set an example in prayer and behaviour pleasing God. She had to remind her husband of the watchful eye of God. An example of the power that women had in the household is given by the following order (Point 16): “*Every day and every night, after fulfilling spiritual duties and being woken up by the churchbells in the morning, after prayer, the wife has to consult her husband about the household chores. She gives out orders and decides what food to prepare for her family and guests .....*” (*The Domostroy*).

The bread of charity was allowed to be baked by women who had only been married once. Widowers who were only mar-

ried once were preferred. The rite of the Holy Communion was also accompanied with thorough confessions and control, women were not allowed to ignore the restrictions on the sexual life (Лещенко, 1999, p. 117).

According to *the Domostroy*, the main way to benefit is work, both physical and moral. The latter means a constant aspiration towards something higher, becoming a better person. This is based on the landlord serving the higher lord but also applied to the women’s chores in the household, the servant looking after his master’s household, raising children, and adoption of the teachings – work in the broadest sense. Family life and the household are observed in the context of higher Christian virtues. Most importantly, one should honour God.

According to Klyuchevsky the Russian Orthodox people cherish the love of their fellow men (Ключевский, 1988, p.79). In reality, it was more about caring for beggars. The aim of charity was not to achieve a good level of general well-being, but it was more about achieving moral health – it was more important for the giver than for the receiver. In Russia, it was said: “Sacred alms lead you to the Paradise. The beggar feeds on the wealthy, the wealthy save themselves through the prayer of the beggar” (Власов, 2001, p.12). That brought on the special treatment of the village fools (*yurodivōi*). They were thought to be “God’s people”, they were given alms, children were not allowed to make fun of them, and they were allowed to speak openly to anyone, because it was God speaking through them. One example is the crowning scene of the opera by Modest Mussorgsky “Boris Godunov” where the village fool reproaches the Tzar

about infanticide and the people present are shocked, but Boris responds to him by saying: “Pray for me!”

## ***2. The Reflection of the Ritual and Etiquette***

The household was a separate unit. In practice, it was surrounded by a fence. The family members (*члены семьи*) a.k.a the house members (*домочадцы*) were living inside. They were all dependent on the head of the household because they were either minors, had some form of incapacity, were poor or in debt. The servants (*служу*) belonged also in this unit – they were defined as the “*челядь*”.

The form of public punishment was mockery. *The Domostroy* states that the biggest punishment after God’s punishment is the “public mockery and condemnation”. Therefore, people were dependent on the social environment and there was always something that was hidden, known only to the family.

According to the *Domostroy*, those outside the household must only see the best qualities of those within it – nice and clean clothing, correct behaviour. The household was evaluated not only by the behaviour of the landlord and the lady of the house, but also by the decent behaviour of the servants and children. All the disagreements and occurrences that happened within the household, therefore, should be kept within the household. This was not only a ban on slander and gossip but on all kinds of information. It was warned that arguments with neighbours could occur through jealousy and misconceptions. People were also warned about temptation coming from the “outside” world. They were only allowed to follow and practice

what was good and useful (especially in the teachings for women).

Dinner parties were held quite frequently to demonstrate oneself and allow others to form a positive opinion of one’s household. Among those typically invited were clergymen and people from higher classes, and these parties were held to show the family’s generosity. These were pleasant events, but the set of rules mostly emphasised the obligations of the master and his wife not to be humiliated in front of others.

The *Domostroy* says that in his own house, in his “country”, the landlord is the monarch, but his rights are not only to feed but also to educate his family in all fields of life. An important aspect is being a personal role-model.

Although boyars and the rich were arrogant towards peasants, amongst themselves they were very hospitable and polite. At a party, a guest would bow to the icons several times and then to the landlord and the lady of the house. The guests were honoured with a triple kiss, they were asked to take a seat and were offered home-made wine or honey-vodka. When a guest left, the respectable landlord would accompany him to the door. Most beloved guests were accompanied to the gates, and if the landlord wanted to show his deepest respect he would accompany the guest for a few steps outside the gates. Treating your guests in the most literal sense was very important, there had to be plenty of food on the table. This food wasn’t there for just the obvious reasons, although guests tasted, ate, tested and praised it. Food was a bragging tool, and it was often the centre of all conversations. This was a continuing trend, proved both by Pokhlyobkin in



“The History of Russian Culinary Culture” (Похлебкин, 1996; 1998) and Gilyarovskiy (Гиляровский, 1978), “Moscow and Muscovites”.

The seating arrangements for the guests were in their order of importance as perceived by the landlord. This was a serious challenge for the host and often offended the guests, causing trouble and grudges. Every boyar wanted to ensure that he was not seated in a “lower” place. The biggest problems occurred in the court – on one hand, social class was a very important aspect, but on the other hand, being favoured by the Tzar and his family was also important.

According to the *Domostroy*, another display of respect in the Russian society was visiting each other. To visit someone meant honouring the host. There were several mandatory visits to in-laws: son-in-laws had to visit their future mother-in-laws, members of a large family had to visit their older members, and there were also visits to see aunts, uncles, etc. This was always done during the festive seasons. Not visiting someone meant lack of respect towards their friendship. Peasants were also usually hospitable. They would happily accommodate merchants, wealthy peasants and the so-called “scholarly men”. Beggars were often not accommodated.

The peasant families in Russia held on to the old customs and traditions for a long time. Russian peasants were actually influenced by the *Domostroy* until the revolution of 1917. People living in villages remembered old stories and sayings, mournful songs, round dances, curses and blessings of the *Domostroy*. All the important events in one family were celebrated by

the whole village. Every family was supported and controlled by the community.

Families had a lot of authority in the community. Being single was only excused for two reasons - illness or the wish to join the monastery. A Russian proverb says: “Not married, not a human being”.

Peasant families lived as a patriarchal large family and had 15–20 members. Among those were at least three generations: the old parents and adult sons with their families. Cramped conditions were common. The most important person was the head of the family. He was in charge of organising farming and gave orders to his sons. He sat in the most honourable place at the table – “in the red corner”, under the icons. Everyone obeyed him and no one argued with him. The parent’s and in particular the father’s blessing was sacred, and his damnation was the worst possible punishment for a child.

The birth of a child was not a very important event. The health of the mother and of the infant was established, and if it was good, then God was thanked for a happy ending (and beginning). Much more important was the spiritual birth – baptising.

The child was usually baptised on the 40th day and was given the name of the saint according to the day who then became his patron. This was the cause for a great celebration in the family. On that day, the child also got his or her godparents. The patron saint was said to give his namesake help and strength, he was considered to be a guardian angel. In the Russian society, people were congratulated not on their real birthday but on their name day – when they were given a saint’s name at baptising. (*S dnyom angela!*) The name was always a saint’s name, otherwise the child didn’t

have a guardian angel. The child was given an icon of his saint to wear until his death. Several ancient spells and charms were added as a token of a good fortune for the child (Художественный...1982, p. 112).

### 3. *Emphasising Gender Roles*

As mentioned before, *the Domostroy* says that the head of the family is responsible for the whole family, and with that he made sure that his wife, children and servants were well behaving outside their home and that they would be mannerly, deeply religious, honest, and clean. It was the man who decided which guests to invite, whom to honour and admire. In his house, the man was the plenipotentiary and only master. He also acted as a ruler to the children. As long as the children were living in his house (when they were not married) they had to obey their father who also had the right to physically punish them. Adult sons also had to obey their father, and he had the right to physically punish them. The father had to watch over how his children were being brought up and continuously act as a dignified role-model.

The father also had to set an example by being hospitable. *The Domostroy* emphasised the dignified and polite hosting of guests, especially clergymen and upper class guests. Furthermore, the head of the house had to set an example by being merciful, he had to give alms, had to send bread to prisons and hospitals during the festive seasons and at other appropriate times. *The Domostroy* also told a man how to live in harmony with his wife, how to control and punish her but also how to listen to her advice, especially in respect of all things to do with the household, saving money, and supplies.

*The Domostroy* gives a perfect overview of an ideal woman. *The Domostroy* doesn't show any negativity towards women, but medieval Russian society saw women completely obeying their husbands. The woman was defined as either her father's daughter, her husband's wife, her brother's sister or a mother to her son. In all of those cases, she had to obey the male. The woman didn't choose her husband after her own heart, she didn't express her opinions, she had to submit and obey.

In general, medieval Russian society was depicted as violent towards women. In reality, this was not the case. We are used to the stereotypical idea of husbands beating their wives and how this type of physical punishment was common in archaic Russian society. However, morality demanded women be respected so she herself could fulfil all the morality norms expected of her. She was given freedom in many areas. She was trusted.

The Russian historian Schulgin evaluated the woman's social role as follows: "*The woman, no matter how humiliated, is more powerful than men and even if the circumstances are limited, she will have a strong influence on society. This power and influence come from the inconsumable source of men's passions and desires. It also comes from raising the younger generation, because during this time when moral and ethic norms are taught, youngsters are strongly influenced by women and their mothers. The woman influences society in her unique and feminine way. She represents morality, love, shyness and spontaneous emotion and rules the family and society adding more morality, sentiment, love, shyness, grace, and beauty*" (Шульгин, 1850, p.138).

The woman had to be the lady of the house. When her husband was away, she was solely responsible for the household. The man gave orders, and the woman followed these orders. The man spent money, but the woman learnt through saving. The man worked the whole day among strangers to relax at home. The woman checked and gave orders to people working in her home. The man fed his family, the woman clothed her family. The man was responsible for prosperity, he had to get the necessary funds for his family. The woman had to spend carefully and give any remaining funds to the poor. The man worked for society, he wanted his family to be content, the woman was responsible for the household so the man would be pleased with his family outside his home. The man was in charge of the woman's mind, he gave household orders. The woman influenced the man's heart, suggesting behaviour according to social morals.

The mother's task was to teach her daughters. They needed to be taught handicraft, household chores, saving, cooking, tidyness and most importantly subservience. When the daughter dared to oppose her father (this was a serious violation), the mother was blamed. It was the mother who taught her children religion. Many clergymen speak respectfully of the mother who first teaches the basis of morality, speaks about the fear of God and teaches first religious gestures and prayers.

The 23rd chapter from *the Domostroy* is titled "In Praise of the Married Man", but is mainly about the ideal woman, meaning that the man who had such a wife was praised here.

*"When God gives someone a good wife, it is more precious than a jewel. It*

*would be a sin to change such a wife even for the greatest of benefits: it is she who gives the man a happy life."*

Having gathered all the necessary wool and linen, the woman makes everything with her own hands, she is like a cargo boat: gathering riches from everywhere. She gets up in the middle of the night and serves food for her household and gives chores for the servants. She increases her wealth with her own hands. Having engirdled her hips, she starts with her work. She teaches her children and her maids, and her oil lamp is lit throughout the whole night: she reaches out for some more work and is keen to use the spindle."

The 39rd chapter: *"How the wife has to consult her husband on a daily basis and ask the following advice: how to behave when visiting someone, how to host guests, and what to talk about with guests."*

*"Every day the wife has to ask her husband's advice and consult about everything to do with the household and let him know what they need. She must visit, host or give something only to people that her husband approves. When hosting the guests or while visiting someone, she is only allowed to wear her best dress and never drink ale. A drunk man is not a pleasant sight, but a drunk woman is an affront to the world. The topics to discuss with guests are handicraft, household chores, how to manage one's household, what chores to do and how."* According to the *Domostroy*, the woman's biggest sins are laziness, drinking, gossiping, and chattering.

*The Domostroy* gives a detailed overview of a woman's tasks, i.e. how she has to teach her servants, take care of the household, how to save and on what. The

woman of that time was obliged to feed her family well but frugally, store food and check the supplies. She was also responsible for how her family was dressed (Суслина, 2003, p. 98). She was responsible for her husband's work and festive clothings and those of her children and of course of herself. The whole world would see the garments, and she had to maintain the family's good reputation. The woman was not allowed to secretly eat or drink, give gifts or receive them (*The Domostroy*, Article 40).

*"The daily dresses and shirts are to be worn with care, not to smear them, pour liquids on them, not to step into or put them on a wet patch; every item of clothing that is taken off has to be carefully folded and kept. The servants also had to be taught this."*

It is emphasised in the father's teaching to his son how he should treat his wife:

*"...You also have to love your wife and live with her according to the law and God's commandments: on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays and during religious holidays and the Great Fast you must not be physically intimate, you have to lead a charitable life, fast, pray, and live in penitence in honour of God and in the name of the eternal kingdom. The worthless and lustful will be punished by God. What you do yourself teach your wife to do. Teach her to fear God, love knowledge and handicraft, all domestic chores and regulations: for she would know how to bake, boil, and would be familiar with all the household chores, for she would be able to do handicraft; if she knows and is able to do all that, then she can later teach that to her children and servants. Your wife is not allowed to drink any ale, she musn't*

*allow the children drink, either. She is not allowed to sit around and do nothing, only if she is ill.*

*...If she doesn't understand this, then punish her severely. Save her through fear but don't be angry at her so as she won't be angry at you. Punish her in private, after punishing her calm her down, have mercy on her, and be nice to her..."*

Another document from the 17th century is the "Teachings regarding angry women from a father to his son" (Рождественский, 1996)

This text lists all negative qualities of a woman: the lazy wife who pretends to be ill and abandons her chores. The thief who steals and hides common property from her husband. The vain wife who sits on the window and stares out after her husband has left, but flatters and pretends in front of her husband. The shrewish woman who constantly argues with her husband. The list of the bad qualities is preceded by a description of a good wife. The good wife has none of those qualities.

In addition to all the respect that the good lady of the house and the assiduous, frugal and humble matron traditionally had, clergymen thought that "women are ruled by satan".

#### **4. The Family Model**

Children, both sons and daughters, were ruled by the father until they got married. They had to follow all the Christian rules of behaviour, and respecting their parents was especially important. Children had to accept their father's punishment with gratitude and mercy, never criticise their parents and show them respect and obedience in front of everyone, especially in front of strangers. It was common to address parents formally.

*“Children, study God’s commandments: love your father and your mother, listen to them, obey them and respect their age. Feel for their weakness and bearings, and you will lead a blissful and a long life. For this, your sins will be forgiven, God will have mercy on you, you will become decent human beings. Your house will have a happy future, your sons will inherit the honourable reputation of their fathers, and you will have a dignified old age.*

*But if someone criticises, insults, curses or abuses their parents, they will be sinners in front of God and cursed by older people and their parents. Who dares to hit their father or mother will be put under the oath of church and have to die a horrible death at a public execution, because it is said: “The father’s curse dries, the mother’s curse will uproot”. A son or a daughter who doesn’t obey their parents will mislead themselves or will not live a long life if they upset their father or will not obey their mother’s will.”*

Children are reminded that taking care of their parents is such a fundamental part of life that it is a sin to brag of it. Children can never make up for their parent’s worry, trouble, and care. Only God sees that and righteously repays. The father’s and mother’s blessing when children were getting married, starting school or another activity, was extremely important.

The head of the household was obliged to read the autobiographies of clergymen and saints, so it is fair to say that medieval literature was focused on praising and developing the family model. Children obeying their parents and having discipline were related to their wish to learn, be more active in life, and have more initiative. Children always placed mercy and

good deeds on a higher rank than material benefits. They also had to be forbearing, patient, and loving.

The Russian historian V. O. Klyuchevsky wrote: *“Children were educated not only with lessons at school but more through the moral atmosphere that they experienced. This was not a five-hour activity but something that happened every minute and through what the child absorbed all information, views, emotions, and habits. No matter how difficult the child’s personality was, the constant drip-feeding of moral influence was able to bore all pedagogical obstacles. The arrangement of household activities was based on this. It was an environment full of manners and rituals which had been built over centuries and had now become a dignified and massive construct. Everything in it was tried and tested, every object placed in its right place, every word logically defined and morally observed, every move as clear as a dance move, every kind of behaviour predicted and prompt, every feeling or education was based on a forbidding or an encouraging quote from a scripture or proverb. All these steps, intentions and feelings were divided according to the church calendar, and the individual human-being with a will and thoughts and with a moral cognition followed this church-based stereotyped path as an automated mannequin.”*

At the same time, the historian grasped the negative side of the old Russian family pedagogics as well: *“With these general directions and based on the educational background, the spirit was easily won by the tradition. Orders were changed into common habits and this helped to create an automatic conscience and a moral emotion which acts on memory and habits, and*

*which is known to have set rules of behaviour – how people knew how to behave before they even gave it a longer thought”* (Ключевский, 1988, p. 226). Sexual life was controlled by the church. In addition to fasting and praying, people were reminded of the several taboos in their sexual lives – sexual activity was not allowed on certain days (especially on Saturdays), on church holidays, during the fast, and on other occasions too. With all those restrictions, sexual relations for married couples were restricted to 5 or 6 days a month. The clergymen affirmed that a child conceived outside these days carried the sign of sin. During regular confessions, the clergyman always asked whether the married parties were trying different sexual positions. This was considered a serious sin. Sexual relationships were only meant for conceiving and not for enjoyment, that is why all contraceptive means and aborting of pregnancy were completely forbidden, and the guilty received a church ban (Кох, 1997, p. 27). We have also to remember that checking the moral norms in the community was carried through on a daily basis. The peasant community was able to punish and reprimand the “lost sheep” and sometimes proved to be even more severe than a punishment from the church.

### **5. The Woman**

According to “Byt i nrawy”, the wives and daughters of noblemen were the most hidden, and the master (i.e the husband and the father) only showed them when he thought it was necessary, usually to impress important guests. During those occasions, the wife had to obey the tradition of ritual kissing. The hosting lady of the house had to give every special guest a goblet of vodka

or a honey drink and exchange ritual kisses in front of everyone. This was the biggest display of respect (*Быт и нравы...*, p. 174). Daughters were shown on rare occasions, and it was common that the first time they saw their future husband during the wedding ceremony. The most traditional quote in every social group was the saying: “Sterpitsa, slyubitsa”, translated as “you’ll love him when you get used to him.” The woman had to suffer, that was how it had to be. The suffering woman was the stereotype in Russia. In Russian folklore, the mother is always the sufferer (Rancour-Laferriere, 1996, p. 144). The Mother of God was mostly the sufferer and a support for the sufferings of the Russians. Russia had the same problem as Byzantium – very young people were forced to marry. Already in the 13th century (“Kormtsaya kniga”) the age limit of 13 years for the girls and 15 years for the boys was set. The “Stoglav”, published in the 16th century, permitted marriage when the girl was 12 and the boy 15 years old (Рябцев, 2003, p. 235). In Russia, they also had a ban on the sixth generation relatives getting married, marriages between godparents and their godchildren, children of sister-in-laws and brother-in-laws and also between people of different faiths. One was not allowed to get married more than three times. The second marriage was already considered sinful, the couple were not wed until they had gone through a punishing, purification and the Holy Communion was forbidden for them for two years. If it was a third marriage, then the Holy Communion was banned for five years. The “Stoglav” reflects the following ideas: “The first marriage is the law, the second one – forgiveness, the third

– against the law, and the fourth one – dishonesty and living like a pig.” One can imagine how people felt about the marriages of Ivan Grozny (officially, he was married eight times) or how he, knowing the customs, had lived with his sins during times of remorse.

Raising children, which was the next step after marriage, was again done according to traditions. In poor families, from the age of three, the child ate the same food as adults, only in wealthier families for the child a separate meal was cooked, which mostly consisted of milk and porridge. Until they were five, children wore a long linen shirt. A five-year-old boy was given a shirt and trousers to wear, the girl was given a shirt and a sarafan. At that age, children started to wear headscarves, hats with shades, and sometimes boots and jackets. Until they were five, the children were treated gently, but later punishing was common. Children were punished through nagging, verbal abuse, physical smacks, and for more serious trouble they would get a beating. This was especially common when a child had broken something and by that harmed the family. Three- and four-year-olds were taught to pray, five-year-olds were taken to church. People often took infants with them to the Holy Communion. Children were mostly frightened with stories about monsters, domestic pixies, forest pixies, bears or foxes.

The five-year-olds started working: they looked after animals, helped with carding and spooling wool, looked after geese, brought food to the fields, and did other chores. Eight-year-olds could sit on a horse, ten-year-olds harrowed fields, helped with haymaking and harvesting. In winter, the boys helped their fathers in

cutting timber and brought brushwood and timber home with the horses. A twelve-year-old was already a respectable help in the peasant’s household, the fifteen-year-old worked equal hours with the adults, and he was considered to be able to look after the family as well. The girls learnt from an early age to look after their younger brothers and sisters, it was common for the mother to leave household chores such as cooking and baking and looking after the younger children for an 8-year-old daughter to do.

Older children who had to look after the younger children behaved as adults. They forbade, ordered, punished, copied the language and manners, including verbal abuse, swearing, arguments and teaching of their parents.

In Russian society, becoming an adult was marked with the permission to take part in the gatherings of youngsters. In the beginning, the youngest were the ones with fewer rights, they sat in far corners, their opinion didn’t matter, they were teased and laughed at. Everything that was condemned, warned and mocked is reflected in the old Russian sayings, proverbs and riddles collected by V. I. Dal (Даль, 1999).

The ancient pagan-time tradition and folklore was always part of the culture. The church demanded praying, fasting, confession, threatened with devils and God’s punishments. At the same time, in the peasant’s hard and poor life, it was possible to take a break. A year included quite a few small holidays along with some bigger and extremely important holidays, too. All the village’s entertainment dated back to the pagan-times and remained popular alongside Christianity. Many of these customs are popular nowadays as well.

A party was a treat, and it brought a change from everyday life and people's appearance and character. They cleaned and scraped their hut, and in the corner for the icons only the most expensive and sacred icons were displayed, as layered altars were used by Catholics. People wore festive clothing and addressed each other respectfully, using both the first and the father's name. Conversations about household and common business were avoided. During these holidays, people didn't work (*denj svyat i dela nashi spyat* – the day is sacred and all doings must rest) (Поликарпов, 1995, p. 303). A party meant sitting down at the table with plentiful eating and drinking, hosting guests, visiting and also dancing and singing. People who didn't follow these unwritten rules were considered sinful. Stories about what happened to peasants who worked during certain holidays were very popular. It was common that men and women partied separately: guests were sitting in table groups, moving from house to house, sang their songs and danced their dances until stronger spirits and the party mood eventually resulted in a chaos.

Russian peasants appreciated strength, skills, fun, education, and wealth. An ordinary strong man was able to carry a five-pood weight, a woman had to manage a three-pood weight as long as the distance wasn't too far. Of all displays of wealth, a good and proper house, nice clothing, a good horse and a cattle were appreciated best. People mostly bragged with beautiful clothing, horses, and harnesses. For the latter, people were willing to give away their most important resources – forest and grain.

Russian peasants had their own class pride. They were certain that “without

our existence the other classes will die of hunger” and bragged of this with gusto. Laziness and beggars were not liked. A peasant appreciated good working skills and becoming wealthy through these, but they did not like the rich. Especially prestigious work was fieldwork and merchandising, and the most detestable were factory work and peat-bog work. Even a small business activity was highly appreciated, especially if it allowed one to be able to afford festive clothing. A common opinion was that if you can afford such clothing this means that you are witty, which shows an intellectual predominance. People's qualities were often evaluated by the skill to “earn a kopeck”. This showed that the person had wit, working skills and other values. Another idea that Russian society had was the “blessed money” (*blagoslovennaya deneznka*).

The peasant community valued dignity in communication. When people met, they bowed, took off their hat and addressed each other by their first and father's names. When a daughter-in-law joined the family, she had to address her husband's minor siblings by their first and father's names. Upholding this etiquette was very important. Helping with another person's work was considered a norm. It was not a tradition to give gifts. Adulating someone was also despised. Even the poorest person had dignity. Honesty was most valued in everyday communication. The huts didn't usually have locks, next to a dead animal from a hunt one could only leave a stick with the owner's initials, but the property of a stranger was not touched. Many peasants did seasonal work; the labor corps, collective responsibility, sharing wages and a living place demanded not only being



aware of traditional behavioural norms, but also living according to them.

The woman had to remember that she was the weakest, most foolish and had to obey. She had to respect her husband, bow before him, and was not allowed to cross the road in front of him (Лещенко, 1999, p. 306).

## ***6. The Food Table as Ritual and Etiquette***

*The Domostroy* demanded a pious life and forbade any kind of pagan fun which was damnable. Nevertheless, families were allowed to have some fun and did so through tasty and varied food – it wasn't a sin to enjoy it. The Russian cuisine was rich, tasty, and abundant. *The Domostroy* especially emphasises food, feeding, and all the related arrangements and customs. It may seem that people were gluttons, but in reality it just reflects the era where the right, paradise-like and happy life was measured through rich everyday meals. Bad crops happened every couple of years, and usually there was not enough bread for everyone. Constant wars, “the fist law” and other developments, not only in Russia but in the whole of the medieval Europe, led to a model of the perfect world in which first and foremost there was plenty of food. Devouring was luxury but, as a contrast to the ascetic church teaching, it remained to be one of the seven deadly sins.

*The Domostroy* lists 135 separate foods and, while it doesn't emphasise abundance itself, it does talk about the means and opportunities to achieve and keep abundance with careful saving. Not a single bite is to be wasted, nothing should be spoilt, thrown away for no good reason or carelessly used. Every crumb, piece of

fabric, string of leather and hard waste were counted and had to be correctly used. This shows a true lady of the house. To compare *the Domostroy's* eating patterns with the ones from Rabelais' “Gargantua and Pantagruel”, the latter only mentions pleasant feasts, because there is plenty of food with the emphasises on eating food already prepared. *The Domostroy* emphasises the preparation, recipes, rules for eating, order of foods, and the orderly transition from foods eaten during the fast to ordinary foods. All that had a ritual and organising importance in the medieval Russian society and everyday life.

After a heavy meal, a nap was sometimes even mandatory. A pause was taken from work, shops and workrooms were closed. When the Fake-Dmitri came to Moscow, people reprimanded him and his Polish cortege for ignoring Russian traditions, because they never had a nap after lunch (Терещенко, 1997, p. 136).

We also have to consider another problem which was very important in the peasant community, namely the drinking. Russian society had already struggled with alcoholism for a very long time (Bakhus, 1994, p. 67). The well-known Russian culinary scientist and researcher of culinary history, V. V. Pokhlyobkin (Похлебкин, 1996), has written thoroughly about burning vodka and mixing and drinking different spirits.

An important obstacle for gluttony and alcoholism was the mandatory Orthodox fast. During fasting periods, one was not allowed to eat meat or fish. Within the weekdays, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday were also considered fasting days, sometimes even Saturday as well. The fasting order was not violated by either

tzars, boyars, merchants or peasants. An orthodox Russian didn't think highly of anyone not respecting the fast, who was condemned by the whole society.

In *the Domostroy*, the general teaching of regulations and manners is given through very strict guidelines. In addition to the teaching of cooking (making preserves, baking pies), it also gave guidelines on how to sit and act at the table (wash the dishes every night, wash your hands before eating, don't step into a wet or bloody patch, make sure your clothes are not dragging on the floor, distinguish between work and festive clothing, don't throw it away but wash or give to the poor, etc.).

It also emphasised the beauty of well-made items that one could enjoy, especially if they were hand-made. It praised household regulations and stated that the perfect home is a place which is paradise-like. A big source of joy was respecting your neighbours and "better people".

The teachings on behaviour also reflect the medieval wealthy Russian people who had their own household, servants and had something to guard, protect, preserve, and hand down. At the same time, the very same people were taught how to remain honest, wise and thrifty among all those assets.

## Conclusion

As a work of the medieval Russian literature, *the Domostroy* became the way of life in the Russian society, a vision for noblemen, clergymen and lower classes, ruled and controlled by the Russian Orthodox

religion followed by both men and women, the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated. Living according to *the Domostroy* was right and proper. A big part of Russian society was the approval or condemnation by the community, the above-mentioned "public laughter", as the community constantly controlled all spheres of life. Therefore, *the Domostroy* was one of the most powerful didactic collections of guidelines found among all different cultures.

This article analyzed the original texts of the *Domostroy* to find its core value and obligation areas. The writer found six core value and obligation areas: (1) The Religious and Ethical Aspects; (2) The Reflection of the Ritual and Etiquette, (3) Emphasising Gender Roles; (4) The Family Model, (5) The Woman, (6) The Food Table as Ritual and Etiquette. Although the results and the groupings of the texts are preliminary, they are important for the educators of cultural history, as signs of the influence of the *Domostroy* as the general educational norms can still be found in the modern Russian society.

According to Kolesov, assessing the content of the *Domostroy* is a task for contemporary history and culture. Kolesov also argues that the *Domostroy* was viewed as a model for the national roots of the Russian people. "This is what happens to symbols: they mean so many things. You can interpret them however you like. In such conditions, it is essential to return to the work itself, the actual text, and to keep in mind that the *Domostroi* represents the culture of its day" (Kolesov, 2001, p. 5).

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## „DOMOSTROI“ KAIP UGDOMASIS NARATYVAS VIDURAMŽIŲ IR MODERNIOSIOS RUSIJOS PEDAGOGINĖJE PARADIGMOJE

**Maria Tilk**

S a n t r a u k a

Pagrindinis šio straipsnio tikslas – išanalizuoti *Domostroi*, šešioliktojo amžiaus rusų namų ūkio taisyklių rinkinio, originalius tekstus ir išskirti esmines vertybes bei pareigų sritis. Šių tekstų analizei pasitelkta mentalitetų istorijos perspektyva. Struktūrinė-funkcinė analizė leido išskirti bendrąsias ugdymo normas, apibrėžiančias tobulo žmogaus idealą senovės Rusijoje. Remiantis tuo *Domostroi* tekstai suskirstyti į šešias pagrindines normas ir vertybes

apibrėžiančias sritis. Skiriami (1) religijos ir etikos aspektai; (2) etiketo ir ritualo atspindžiai; (3) lyčių vaidmenų akcentavimas; (4) šeimos modelis; (5) moters vaidmuo; (6) mitybos ypatybės kaip etiketo ir ritualų dalis. Nors toks tekstų grupavimas ir rezultatai yra tik preliminarūs, jie yra svarbūs ne tik kultūros istorijos tyrėjams, bet ir ugdytojams, nes *Domostroi* įtaka ugdymo normoms jaučiama ir moderniojoje rusų visuomenėje.

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*Priimta 2013 12 29*