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Family memory of the Polovtsovs family in the archival collections of Moscow and St.

Petersburg, 20th – Early 21st Centuries

Abstract

The paper aims to explore the source study potential of the Polovtsovs family's personal collections in representing social history, everyday life, and family history in Russia in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The article focuses on the study of family memory based on the extensive archival collection of the Polovtsovs family's personal collections. When working with autodocumentary sources, key methods are source study and discourse analysis, as well as genealogical analysis. It was established that the family members' personal collections have been preserved in the document repositories of the Russian State Historical Archive, the State Archives of the Russian Federation, the Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg, and the Manuscripts Department of the National Library of Russia. Despite the rich archival collection (the collections contain 4,519 files from 1762 to 1942), the materials in the collections have remained poorly studied and utilized in scholarly discourse. The uniqueness of this archival complex lies in its rich epistolary heritage, a multitude of diary entries, notes, and memoirs that allow us to represent the daily life of Russian families over more than a century and a half, as well as the transformation of parenting culture. The authors have classified these self-documentary sources and grouped them into distinct categories: children's and adolescent diaries, «parental diaries», and «mother's texts». The family members' entries are distinguished by their regularity and consistency. The Polovtsovs family's rich archival materials provide vivid evidence of the formation of a distinctive Russian tradition of family life, characterized by family members' immersion in the upbringing process, child-centeredness, and conscious parenting. Women's self-documentary writing, particularly mother's texts, attest to the emergence of conscious parenting and the legitimization of pregnancy and childbirth practices. Parental diaries characterize a new culture of educated parenting, characterized by parental involvement in the educational process and the incorporation of expert systems (medicine, pedagogy) into caregiving and parenting practices. Fathers' records of their own children's development attest to the emergence of a culture of conscious fatherhood. A significant number of children's diaries demonstrate new practices of autobiographical writing, in which children's everyday experiences became significant. Women's and children's self-documentary writing allows for the reconstruction of family events as subjective, personally experienced, and personalized anthropological experiences.

Keywords

Family memory, Polovtsovs, everyday history, «parental diary», conscious motherhood, family history, history of motherhood, history of childhood.

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