

Cultural Identity and Sexual Tolerance

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The article draws attention to the issue of sexual tolerance as reflected in the language. The approach is based on the assumption that every phenomenon must be verbally expressed and registered by any language. If the vocabulary does not include the words reflecting this or other phenomenon, then one should state that the phenomenon was not topical or present in the life of the society. Special attention is paid to the understanding of the term 'tolerance' in different societies, for example, in Western and Russian civilizations as well as to the approaches to the implicit meanings of the term. The focus is on diachronic plane and the sexual tolerance is investigated as the result of the impact of different substrates.

Keywords: *cultural identity, sexual tolerance, lenience, political correctness, the Viking age, Roman Empire, Byzantine, Slavic heritage, Genghis Khan, penalties.*

Cultural identity determines how the society is organized, treats its members, and develops its economy, political and social life. It means the feeling of belonging to a group and also reflects how a person feels as being related to ethnical, religious, social and territorial groups of people sharing the same cultural identity (Ennaji 2005). Cultural identifiers integrate results of various conditions, such as race, location, history, nationality, sexuality, religious beliefs, education and up-bringing, economic environment, aesthetics and some others. All these identifiers find their expression in linguistic units. This is how we learn about the way of life in the society, customs and traditions, the way of thinking and exploring the world.

When there are no artifacts and deciphered language texts, it is impossible to reconstruct historical facts and culture of the past. Linguistic units are puzzles of a big historical picture of any nation or/and state. A number of aspects of a person's cultural identity can be changed through personal development and external influence during one's lifetime; the cultural identity of an ethnic community is also considerably influenced by external cultures and geopolitical environment throughout its history. The above mentioned factors can change cultural traditions and the type of the country's development. In this situation, language remains the main component of cultural identity, thoroughly recording all the changes. Language as a huge but very compact computer gives answers to many questions, concerning the past, present and to a great extent, the future of an ethnicity. The phenomena that had no reflections in the language most likely did not. Thus, it appears worth studying the language units that reflect the tolerance aspect in languages. It is especially relevant today, when the society requires from its members to be tolerant in the matters of race, sex and religion.

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Tolerance becomes increasingly important in modern society and greatly focuses on individual welfare and human rights.

Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace (Declaration 1995: 9).

One should emphasize that the lexemes chosen in the passage above (*e.g.*, fostered, duty, and requirement) show that to a great extent tolerance is associated with obligations, social, constitutional and moral laws. The British legal philosopher Baron P. Devlin emphasized the role of the criminal law in enforcing moral standards (Devlin 1949). Nevertheless, in different societies the issue of tolerance is either closer to 'political correctness, political and legal requirement' or to 'lenience, leniency, liberality'. The latter is more typical of the Russian perception of tolerance when more and more peoples with their own customs and traditions were integrated into the country.

Nowadays, sexual tolerance receives great attention, becoming a crucial factor during election campaigns. During the 2016 US presidential elections nine in ten LGB voters (89 per cent) gave the Republican presidential nominee a rating of cold on a 'feeling thermometer' that ranges from 0 (the coldest, most negative rating) to 100 (the warmest, most positive rating). About eight in ten (82 per cent) rated Trump very cold, including more than half (54 per cent) who give him a score of 0. Just 9 per cent of the LGB voters rated Trump warm. By contrast, Hillary Clinton was viewed generally positively: 61 per cent of the LGB voters rated her warm, including 36 per cent who rated her very warm. About three in ten (31 per cent) give her a cold rating, including 24 per cent who have a very cold view of the Democratic nominee.

Numerous campaigns in Poland, the Baltic States, Ukraine, and the UK involve the participation of sexual minorities, which is touted as the culmination of democracy. The fact that sexual tolerance has become such a 'hot issue' in different cultures and various identities requires special attention and academic focus. It is advisable to look into the matter from the point of view of how the cultures appreciated the issue throughout their history and how it was recorded by 'the linguistic computers' of different languages.

The issue draws attention of some Western scholars. The works of Gunnora Hallakarva (2017) are among the most interesting ones, since they give information about sexual relations and tolerance in the West European society which was heavily influenced by the Vikings. Research into homosexuality in the Viking Age demonstrates that the Vikings had words denoting the same-sex activities. They could not appear without mental constructs though there were no fixed instances of homosexual or lesbian couples at that time. The thing is that each member of the society had to marry and have children, notwithstanding their sexual preferences. The very lifestyle made it a 'must' because the agricultural economy required reproduction to work at the farm and provide support to children and aging parents.

Nevertheless, the vocabulary shows that there were two terms that denoted sexual peculiarities which were penalized in law. They implied homosexual 'fuðflogi' and lesbian inclinations 'flannfluga'. 'Fuðflogi' was used to define a man who flees normal sex (the female sex organ) (Jochens 1995 [1946]) while a 'flannfluga' meant that the woman tried to avoid marriage as she fled the male sex organ. Besides, there were some words – 'níð, ergi or regi and argr or ragr' – to imply the concepts which all have connotations of passive male homosexuality. The word 'níð' demonstrates high grammar flexibility as it could be a noun, a verb, and an adjective, which means that it was widely used: níðvisur ('insulting verses'), níðstöng ('scorn-pole'), níða ('to perform níð poetry'), tungunið ('verbal níð') and some others. 'Níð' was the core of a group of concepts which had connotations of passive male homosexuality: nouns 'ergi' or 'regi' and adjectives 'argr' or 'ragr' and 'ðinn' (ergjask, rassragr, stroðinn, sansorðinn ...). What is more, the vocabulary even registered some words that were used to denote a man who was taking care of himself in a womanish way: 'seiðmaðr', the one who practices women's magic, and 'seiðskratti' (Sørensen 1983: 63) to make it clear that the man is a homosexual. Later, these words started to imply man's cowardice and unmanly behavior.

Homosexuality was prohibited by the Christian Church and one of the sermons of the Old Icelandic Homily Book listed penances of nine to ten years both for lesbian and homosexual relations. As for Scandinavians (especially at pagan times), they disapproved passive homosexuality. They believed that a man who subjected himself to another in sexual affairs was a follower, not a leader and would allow others to do his thinking or fighting for him and must be despised. This inability to stand for oneself was against the Nordic ethic of self-reliance (*Ibid.*). The only excuse was an old age or injuries which led to 'impotence'. There was a special word to denote 'induced homosexuality' – 'kottrinn inn blauði' with the meaning 'a soft cat'.

In the ninth and tenth centuries, homosexual raping of conquered population on the territory of Great Britain became so frequent that Alfred the Great, the king of Wessex (UK), after a decisive victory in the Battle of Edington issued some laws, regulating criminal activity in the Danelaw and possibility of death revenge of the abused. There were three terms to bring a serious suit against a man and worthy to outlaw him and 'there were words which were considered terms of abuse. Item one: if a man says of another man that he has borne a child. Item two: if a man says of another man that he has been homosexually used. Item three: if a man compares another man to a mare, or call him a bitch or a harlot, or compare him to any animal which bears young'. Also 'if a man calls a man unmanly [effeminate], or homosexual, or demonstrably homosexually used by another man, he shall proceed to prosecute as with other terms of abuse, and indeed a man has the right to avenge with combat for these terms of abuse' (Sørensen 1983: 63). It is clear that the laws were directed against the spread of homosexuality in the 'Danelag' territories. And, nevertheless, 'active homosexuality' was not much detested in the society as even the Vikings' Gods, such as Loki, Grettir, Njörðr, Freyr and Óðinn himself, were bisexual (Dumézil 1970). There are some other evidences of the acceptance of homosexuality, for example, the word 'argaskattr' which had the meaning 'a fixed rate to an argr man for his sexual service', *i.e.* homosexual prostitution.

Apart from the Vikings, the European civilization was highly influenced by the Roman way of life and morals, and indirectly, by the Greek way of life. In Ancient Greece it was usual for a man to take an adolescent boy under his wing as a student and lover, which was regarded as part of the boy's education. In Rome this custom was also quite popular, though taking the passive role was seen as demeaning, so a Roman citizen often had a male slave, a young actor or a prostitute as a slave. The further in its development, the more and more the Roman Empire became morally corrupt and the number of abnormal relations increased rapidly. Together with new types of perverted relations there appeared a large number of words, denoting such actions.

First of all, the linguistic computer registered the word 'infames' to denote boy-slaves used by the Romans. Sometimes they were also called 'pueri' to mean their passive partner role (Glossarium 1885: 327). A special item denotes Roman male relations in a military setting: 'puis, pietas'. Besides, bisexuality had a special term 'cinaedus', the one who likes sex with men and women (Williams 2010).

The Romans demonstrate the attitude similar to the Vikings' towards homosexual relations: passive role – social outlaws, active role – normal. The number of words that characterize the relations is numerous: cinaedus, pathicus, exoletus, concubines (male concubine), pullus, mollis, delicatus, sprintria, pusio, tener, debilis, catamite, effeminatus, morbosus, and discinctus. It is worth mentioning that some of the words meant 'homosexual' and 'sick' at the same time, for example 'debilis, morbosus'. Besides, there were words, implying gender-deviant behavior: 'cinaedus', 'impudicitia', 'infamia', 'androgyny'.

The Roman laws did not recognize marriage between males, but there were some references to such facts, the earliest being a marriage between males in 'the Philippics' of Cicero (1903), who insulted Mark Antony for being a slut in his youth, hinting that he could have worn 'a stola', the traditional dress of a married woman.

Lesbian relations were also practiced in Ancient Roman Empire; however, the vocabulary fixed not original Latin, but mainly Greek borrowings. This suggests that this type of relations was not widely spread in Rome. This group of related words includes the following entries: hetairistris (courtesan, heraira), tribas, lesbian, fricatrix, and virago. Among other weirdness there were references to a beautifully dressed woman but with a beard, which was termed 'Aphroditos'.

The most important component of the Russian civilization is the Slavic heritage. The Slavic laws were quite lenient in many respects, including homosexual relations. This opinion is voiced by many Russian and Western scholars (Wiesner-Hanks 2000; Veselovsky 2006; Petrov 2003; Toporkov 1997; Shveikovskaya 2002). The Slavic laws regarded homosexuality as no worse than adultery and as a minor transgression. Secular governments in the Slavic territories did not outlaw homosexuality as some Western governments did. But homosexuals were treated as people violating the church laws. The Western scholars believe that the Slavic attitude to homosexual relations was not based on freedom in sexual matters but on an extremely negative attitude towards all sexual relations. Their point of view is motivated by some radical Orthodox tracts that consider all sexual relations as unnatural and as a desire coming from the Devil. According to them, the Orthodox Church viewed sex as a sin and in Russia the best marriage was an un-consummation marriage. It led to the popular idea that Jesus was born out of Mary's ear (Wiesner-Hanks

2000: 48–51) which is clearly an exaggeration. The Western authors give their opinion without concrete examples, giving general views and opinions.

Russian scholars also emphasize high tolerance of the Russian and Slavic people to all variations of religion, sex relations, culture, customs and traditions, but they highlight the fact that homosexual acts were detested by Slavic population. The fact that there were no special words to denote the phenomenon also contributes to the issue that the phenomenon was alien to the Slavic community (in our case – Russian community). Nevertheless, there are words that point to some abnormal acts at the time, one of them being ‘malakia’ (self-satisfaction). Some Western scholars and even members of the Russian homosexual society examine legends and ballads and come to the conclusion that the words ‘I greatly love you, I adore you’ imply homosexual relations, which seems ridiculous. Nowadays, some Western researchers and representatives of the Russian homosexual societies insist that Ivan the Terrible was bisexual. These rumors are based on the presence of a large number of young boys in women's dresses at his court. He, supposedly, called them ‘Kat’kas’ and was once pictured with ‘mufta’. ‘Mufta’ as a feminine garment was perceived as a token of belonging to the homosexual society. However, one should take into account the fact that the word ‘Mouw’ was a Dutch borrowing that appeared in the eighteenth century. As for the word ‘Kat’ka’, it was registered at the end of the seventeenth century which also contradicts the facts as the time of Ivan IV refers to the middle of the seventeenth century.

Besides the Slavic norms, Russian identity is based on the Byzantine heritage on the one hand and the Mongolian heritage, on the other. The Mongolian Empire was quite tolerant to different religions and ethnicities, but was not so tolerant to homosexual relations. Genghis Khan created a list of basic laws to govern the Mongolian people, among which was the law on sodomy ‘*Whoever is guilty of sodomy is also to be put to death*’. But being quite intolerant of homosexual acts, the Mongolians appreciated the possibility of such an orientation. Four items of Mongol law illustrate the character of the Mongolian society under Genghis Khan

Any person who eats in front of another without offering that person food must be executed. Anyone caught stealing anything of value may be freed after paying back nine times' its worth. Anyone guilty of hurting horse's eyes must be executed. And anyone found indulging in homosexual practices should be executed (Onon 2005: 11).

The Byzantines had a well-articulated attitude to homosexual relations: those guilty of ‘abominable crime’ [homosexuality?] shall be emasculated (Freshfield 1984 [1926]). In fact, the Byzantine culture has little legal tradition to explore, including a lot of monastic regulation, occasional comments in elite historiography on homosexual activity. The manuscripts provided the scholars with some quite useful vocabulary on homosexuality: ‘andromania, homoerotics, luminal, hey’. Besides, Byzantium supported a specific sexual category, that of the eunuchs. Their role in religious life and state administration was quite outstanding, though their actual sexual role in intimate life of the Byzantine emperors has little been investigated.

The Russian Empire was developing by trial and error method. Its way to tolerance was paved with mistakes and errors. This is true in the case of homosexual persecution

when under the influence of the Western approaches homosexuals were burnt at the stake. The first incident occurred in 1706 and this measure was applied only to the military, not to the civilian population. Ten years later it was substituted by corporal punishment or life exile and after Peter the Great's death homosexuals were sentenced to seven–eight and later four–five years of hard labor in Siberia.

Today one can find lots of vulgar words, denoting abnormal sexual relations in different languages. By examining some articles one can see lots of notions with homosexual meaning (Multi-Lingual Dictionary 2017). The dictionary includes 3,229 units distributed in the following way: English – 2,402; Japanese – 397; Swedish – 158; Bulgarian – 147; Polish – 125. The Russian language cannot boast of such a great number of terms defining abnormal relations, though their grammatical flexibility is really impressive.

As for homosexual relations themselves, they started to spread in the well-to-do circles after Russia 'had cut a window onto Europe'. In the nineteenth century the homosexual trend was reflected in the language as there appeared special words to denote the phenomenon: 'tetka' implying high interest to buying young men, 'Circus Ciniselli' the market of open homosexual love, 'the red tie' – passive homosexual prostitute, 'bugor' – sodomia (the Russian word 'bugor' sounds close the French one 'bougre', the latter meaning sodomite).

The above-mentioned information leads us to the following conclusions: 1) both the Viking society and the Roman one witnessed homosexual relations in substantial amounts which was reflected in the vocabulary; 2) passive homosexuality was perceived as weakness, sickness, impotence, due to old age or insult; 3) the spread of abnormal sex relations threatened the social life and values of the societies which resulted in appearance of very strict laws; 4) the Russian civilization resulted from the fusion of Genghis Khan Empire, Slavic heritage and Byzantine traditions which influenced its understanding of the 'sexual tolerance'; 5) the information of old texts about the life in Russia before it cut a window into Europe does not contain registered information about the words indicating homosexual relations; 6) the phenomenon of homosexual relations was registered in the Russian vocabulary at the end of the seventeenth – the eighteenth century and was not widely spread as the words naming them are not numerous.

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