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Mythologem of twins as a way to regenerate ethnic self-identification

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Abstract

The article investigates the interpretation and perception of twin mythologem in Old Russian literature comparative qualitative research methods. As a result, The mythologem of twins is one of important archetypal images. In this research, the twin mythologem is understood here as a regenerating agent for ethnic self-identification that becomes especially important during critical (bifurcation) periods in Russian history. In conclusion, the variants of twin mythologem discussed here combine the meanings of growth, regeneration, cultural heroes, the sacral upper part of the world, self-sacrifice.

Keywords: Ethnic, Self-Identification, Twins, Regeneration, Perception.

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Mitología de los gemelos como una forma de regenerar la autoidentificación étnica

Resumen

El artículo investiga la interpretación y la percepción de la mitologemia gemela en la literatura rusa antigua, en los métodos comparativos de investigación cualitativa. Como resultado, la mitologema de los gemelos es una de las imágenes atípicas importantes. En esta investigación, la mitologema gemela se entiende aquí como un agente regenerador para la autoidentificación étnica que se vuelve especialmente importante durante los períodos críticos (bifurcación) en la historia rusa. En conclusión, las variantes de la mitologema gemela discutidas aquí combinan los significados de crecimiento, regeneración, héroes culturales, la parte superior sacra del mundo, el sacrificio personal.

Palabras clave: Étnico, autoidentificación, gemelos, regeneración, percepción.

1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of the article requires a multidisciplinary approach as it covers broad range of issues and is open for discussion. A multidisciplinary approach may include literary works analysis based on semiotic interpretation of cultural archetype of twins as a symbol and as an agent determining representation and perception of ethnic self-identification that rises through author's artistic self-reflection and mindset. The topic has been studied carefully and thoroughly by linguists, culture researchers, philologists, and historians. Investigating

this issue is a continuing concern because mythologem of twins is universal. It is a mnemonic agent in Old Russian culture and other cultures where it has memory resident and representation significance.

Available research data shows that twins stand out against society and are considered both blessing and curse. This ambivalence resulting from indiscrete syncretic consciousness that explicates cultural forms of worldview demonstrates twins' archaic nature. Besides, twins are represented as cultural heroes or creators of tribes and nations, as patrons of warriors. In the latter case, they are in the likeness of horses that are in their turn associated with sacral upper part of the world, they are a significant part of sun myths and are patron-heroes and warriors. Furthermore, in a figurative sense horses were considered symbols of vegetative forces manifested by the world tree as one of universal complex signs modeling cultural reality. Through the world tree horses are associated with fertility that metaphorically represents the growth of historical path as a principle of changing generations.

Horses are often compared to deities worshipped by society (creatures from the sphere of light as the highest cosmic substance). This interpretation emerges from inseparable dialectic opposition and unity originating in the archaic syncretic conception of day and night, good and evil, heaven and earth gods (SHAKHBANOVA, 2013).

In psychoanalytical theory, the mythologem of twins is associated with their function as protectors of ego serving to save Self from being forgotten and destructed due to the apologetic construction of its copy. From historical and ethnographic perspective mythologem

of twins is related to genetic aspects of primitive society evolution. At a certain stage of its development homogeneous promiscuous unity gives rise to archetypal duality (dual clan structures) that supports social dynamics. According to TURNER (1977) it is proved by evidence from myths and folklore.

Presumably, initial chaos structuring and world order setting described in myths reflect parallel social processes of universal differentiation of promiscuity into dual clan organizations considered to be led by twins. It is thought that this genetic interpretation was followed by introduction of twins mythologem in literature where it acquired its culture-forming role (MALLORY & ADAMS, 1997). It is known that myth and literature are closely related. Consequently, the rise of dual characters is logically relevant division of mythological image into two. In the course of the division different names of one whole started to be associated with different people, first with twins and with different characters later. As a result, mythological images, motifs, traits, characteristics, and models are important in literature. They infinitely regenerate cultural event that finds its place in narration or system of images. It brings to mind mythological function of Eternal Recurrence (Nietzsche), initial time (WARD, 1970).

2. METHODOLOGY

1. Analysis of literature in the research area under question. A literature review is essential for synthesizing literature on the topic,

presenting what has been written on the subject in a concise and reader-friendly way, which at the same time aggregates all-important findings related to culture and history (FREID, 2017).

2. Analysis of literary works that involves a search for key mythologems in the texts of Old Russian literature (DUMÉZIL, 1974).

3. Culturological interpretation that is a method of understanding how mythologem of twins is reflected and what sense it acquires in the cultural context of this or that epoch (KOPTEV, 2013).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Twins images genetically originate from mythoritual unity with its semantics of vegetation, set a starting point in new social development and shape relevant reception of it. The concept is frequently used in literary works with a pretentious aim to glorify the time described. It is explicated in the plot through the author's perception as the latter is shaped in the text of literary work targeted toward cultivating spiritual and moral tradition, memory of it which are established by myth and human experience (ZOLOTARYOV, 1964).

Multimethodology described above leads to a hypothesis that mythologem of twins with its many meanings among which the idea of growth and development leading to regeneration dominates is reflected in the historical and social sphere in the form of patriotism. It facilitates modernization of society and triggers response to this

process as regeneration of ethnic self-identification. The latter is understood as a stable system of mentally represented entities of ethnic reality. It dwells in the eternally permanent paradigm of human culture (SHTERNBERG, 1936).

Old Russian nation-building becomes civilizational as written language appears. Slavonic writing was invented by Bulgarian brothers, educators Cyril and Methodius (860-s). They may rightfully be considered a mythologem of twins whose function places them close to cultural heroes. In their native country, their images are merged into one whole, as it often happens with twins: В България култовете на Кирил и Методий преживяват важна трансформация – те се сливат и се появява един общ култ. Their image returns to memory especially when there is a need to convey identity through regenerating ethnic self-identification. For example, during the civil unrest in Bulgarian state in 1186, there was transformation in the cult of saint brothers resulting in their change from Slavs to Bulgarians (ZHILYAKOV, 2018).

The ethnic history of Kievan Rus starts with the Varangians Dir and Askold who reigned in Kiev after the death of its legendary founders Kiy, Shchek and Khoriv: И отправились по Днепру, и, проходя мимо, увидели на горе городок (They thus sailed down the Dnieper, and in the course of their journey they saw a small city on a hill (The Russian Primary Chronicle. Translated and edited by Samuel Hazzard Cross)). The Russian Primary Chronicle (Povest vremennykh let) says: Было три брата: Кий, Щек и Хорив, которые построили городок этот и погибли, а мы, их потомки, сидим здесь и платим

дань хазарам. Аскольд же и Дир остались в этом городе, собрали около себя много варягов и стали управлять землей полян. (…three brothers, Kiy, Shchek, and Khoriv, had once built the city, but that since their deaths, their descendants were living there as tributaries of the Khazars. Askold and Dir remained in the city, and after gathering together many Varangians, they established their dominion over the country of the Polyanians… (The Russian Primary Chronicle. Translated and edited by Samuel Hazzard Cross)) (LOTMAN & MINTS, 1986).

The next episode tells us about Oleg who dethroned Dir and Askold. He belonged to the kin of Rurik and for this reason, was a warden of young Igor: И пришли к горам Киевским, и узнал Олег, что княжат здесь Аскольд и Дир… Когда же Аскольд и Дир пришли, воины выскочили из ладей, и сказал Олег Аскольду и Диру: Вы не князья и не княжеского рода, я же княжеского рода. И вынесли Игоря: А это сын Рюрико. И убили Аскольда и Дира, и отнесли на гору, и погребл. (He then came to the hills of Kiev, and saw how Askold and Dir reigned there… Askold and Dir straightway came forth. Then all the soldiery jumped out of the boats, and Oleg said to Askold and Dir, you are not princes nor even of princely stock, but I am of princely birth. Igor' was then brought forward, and Oleg announced that he was the son of Rurik. They killed Askold and Dir, and after carrying them to the hill, they buried them there… (The Russian Primary Chronicle. Translated and edited by Samuel Hazzard Cross)) (PROKHOROV, 2003).

Similar to a rivalry between two twin pairs in the ancient world (Castor and Pollux, Idas and Lynceus) this story shows situation motivated by legitimation of power or, more precisely, restoration of legal rights to the realm (inherited by Novgorod) as well as foundation of Rurik Dynasty. Accordingly, with their death Askold and Dir laid the foundation (foundation sacrifice) for the beginning of Kievan Rus (RYBAKOV, 2016).

The mythologem of twins is also implicit in the situation when Grand Prince Vladimir sacrificed two Varangians, Theodore (Feodor) and his son John (Ioann), 12 July, 983. The mythologem makes us believe that the date of 12 July is not accidental. This is the date when the Kostroma holiday that is associated with fertility is celebrated. In this perspective, the image of twins (Christian martyrs), who were sainted later, represents, in the context of agricultural calendar, ritual regeneration of the society in Kievan Rus disposing it to regeneration of ethnic self-identification.

The later history of Rus is closely connected with princes Boris and Gleb, Vladimir's sons. Prince-martyrs Boris and Gleb, who gave new understanding of Eastern Slavs' history, became patrons of the princely family due to their sacrificial death (in 1015) at the hands of their half-brother Svyatopolk. By all canons, it was voluntary religious and ritual self-sacrifice, imitation of Christ, following the rules according to which there is a priest, prayer to Christ, imitation of Christ through passive acceptance of suffering: Господи Иисусе Христе! Как этим образом явился на земле спасенья ради нашего, собственною волей позволив пригвоздить руки Свои на кресте, и

принял страдание за наши грехи, так и мне сподоби принять страдание. И принимаю это не от врагов, но от брата своего, не вмени ему это, Господи, в грех… И напали на него, как звери дикие из-за шатра, и воткнули в него копья и пронзили Бориса. (Lord Jesus Christ, who in this image hast appeared on earth for our salvation, and won, having voluntarily suffered thy hands to be nailed to the Cross, didst endure thy passion for our sins, so help me now to endure my passion. I accept it not from those who are my enemies, but from the hand of my own brother. Hold it not against him as a sin, oh Lord! … Then they fell upon him like wild beasts about the tent and pierced him with lances. (The Russian Primary Chronicle. Translated and edited by Samuel Hazzard Cross)). Gleb was killed in a similar way как безвинного ягненка (like an innocent lamb), who was принесен в жертву Богу… (a glorious offering). (The Russian Primary Chronicle. Translated and edited by Samuel Hazzard Cross)).

Since that time the history of Rus acquires sacral significance, it is considered the history of a Christian country. Boris and Gleb as the first Russian saints mark the beginning of this history, bless the country, become its patron saints. Between 1086 and 1088 the canon of divine worship of Saint Boris and Gleb is formed and they become the first officially recognized Russian Saints. Their murder became a model of Christian organization of society and power, which was based on rivalry between twin brothers similar to Cain and Abel in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Semiotic interpretation of the plot deserves attention. It supports the idea that blessed twinness of Boris and Gleb, formed due to their Christian death, stands against sinful

duality of Svyatopolk who was nicknamed the Accursed (in Russian Окаянный, which means similar to Cain).

The image of Boris and Gleb, similar to their twin prototypes, exercised a long-lasting influence on the development of the Russian civilization if we take into consideration the number of times they are mentioned in literary works.

In the landmark work, which describes the most grueling part of Mongol-Tatar Yoke, Tale of the Destruction of Ryazan by Batu (Povest o razorenii Ryazani Batyem), there is Prince Ingvar Ingorevich's lament for the dead Ryazan warriors and his invocation of Boris and Gleb for help against enemy: Великие страстотерпцы и сродники наши Борис и Глеб! Будьте мне, грешному, помощниками в битвах! (Grand passion bearers and Kinsmen Boris and Gleb! Be helpers in battles to me a sinner). In this case, the function of addressing the mythologem is an attempt to restore a sense of national identity that, in the future, fuels liberation struggle against Mongol-Tatar.

The whole number of twin mythologems is found in the text of The Tale of the Rout of Mamai, a landmark literary work of post-Mongol Rus that describes the end of Mongol-Tatar Yoke. Firstly, it is Dmitrii Donskoi's invocation (one of three) of the Saint Brothers: Владыко господи человеколюбец! Молитв ради святых мучеников Бориса и Глеба помоги мне… (O Master and Lord, Lover of Mankind! Through the prayers of saint martyrs Boris and Gleb help me…). Secondly, one of two brothers, the monk Alexandr Peresvet, takes part in the single combat before the Battle of Kulikovo

starts. The event also shows association with the mythologem of twins who die a sacrificial death in the Battle (Sergei of Radonezh blessed the brothers and sprinkled them with holy water on the day of Laurus and Florus, patrons of fertility) though in some editions of The Tale we find that Peresvet's brother Oslyabya escapes death.

4. CONCLUSION

The variants of twin mythologem discussed here combine the meanings of growth, regeneration, cultural heroes, the sacral upper part of the world, self-sacrifice. They symbolize phenomena producing the state of collective consciousness which reflects the idea of regeneration of initial (epic) time when the level of ethnic self-identification peaks. As a rule, the mythologem of twins representing symbolic interpretation of events in history becomes an agent of ethnic self-identification when it emerges on the wave of patriotic uplift caused by struggle for independence at the period of Rus's development as a Christian state (Boris and Gleb, their behavior imitating Christ), at the beginning and the end of Mongol-Tatar invasion of Rus. Accordingly, conceptual basis of the twin mythologem in the works studied goes along with the idea of reconstructing the past, actualizing it and making it recognizable by ethnic self-identification.

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