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BIBLICAL MOTIVES IN THE MYTH CONSTRUCTION ABOUT
THE HEROIC DEFENSE OF SEVASTOPOL

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Abstract

The paper is devoted to the analysis of military-publicistic discourse of the second half of the 19th century in which the heroes' pantheon of Sevastopol defense was created. We are interested in commemorative practices or ways in which the memory of the past including the processes of fragmentation and stereotyping of outlived experience is fixed, preserved, and transmitted in society. The research subject is the expressive means of language at all levels (nomadic plots, symbols and special vocabulary) in publications of magazines, memoirs of participants in the events and brochures intended for the patriotic education of "lower ranks", children and nation. The paper shows the criteria and methods for the selection of specific persons for the illustration to descendants and inclusion in the list that we have called the heroic canon of the Crimean War. Given the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church on public and private life of that era, Christian archetypal motives and images were in the focus of research. Extensive borrowings from nomadic gospel stories which, contributed to the glorification of selected representatives of social groups who stood up to defend the city, are shown in the paper. The research methodology is based on the principles of an interdisciplinary approach to the studied phenomena with the inclusion of elements of discourse analysis, content analysis, and narrative analysis. The result of the study is the comprehension of archetypal attitudes of national consciousness and the implementation of these attitudes in mass literature and journalism describing military exploits and sacrifices.

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1. Introduction

The phenomena of myth and archetype associated with the basic attitudes of human behavior are the starting point for comprehending the processes of mass communication and politics. This phenomenon seems to be insufficiently explored despite its obvious significance. The concept is complicated by many interpretations and methodological approaches ranging from psychoanalysis presented by Carl Jung, the concept founder, and ending with literary criticism, narrative analysis and even marketing which introduces archetypes into the images of advertising characters. The term “archetype” can mean a symbol, a mythical or fabulous structure, an eternal plot roaming the works of literature of all times and peoples. At the same time, the concept of archetype contains the idea of deep and constant types of human experience. We define an archetype as a universal concept, experienced and reflected by many generations of experience, and recorded in the genetic memory of a nation.

The images of national consciousness and the Russian cultural archetype were studied by Domnikov (2008), Kasianova (1994), Lubskii (1995), Liubavin (2002), Pivneva (2003), Seriakov (2018), Fedotova (2012), Shomova (2016), Shchepanovskaia (2011), Shcherbinina (1998), and other domestic researchers. Comprehension of the publications of the named authors expands our understanding of the archetypal attitudes of national consciousness and their implementation in verbal creativity. However, the topic is largely debatable since the concept of archetypal imagery, adopted by the academic community, has not been developed yet. Our research is aimed at clarifying the commemorative practices with the help of which the images of military heroics crystallize and the heroic canon itself enters the collective memory.

The relevance of the problem of archetypal images and heroic mythology is due to the exacerbation of a deep crisis of national identity taking place on a global scale. The predictions of the philosophical thought classics Pitirim Sorokin and Nikolai Berdiaev, foreshadowing the decline of traditional culture and the onset of a spiritless civilization as a society without heroes becomes reality at the beginning of the 21st century. An analysis of deep foundations of national culture becomes essential as a search for our identity and originality in conditions of artificial, virtual and groundless aggression.

The project novelty is owing to gaps in the source base of historians of the first defense of Sevastopol. Generally, researchers cite the fundamental work of E.V. Tarle “Crimean War”, quote other monographs, and refer to “Sevastopol Tales” by L.N. Tolstoi or other works of fiction. We consider it significant to introduce a number of sources that are classified as mass literature into scientific circulation, namely, popular publications specifically prepared for children (learning in schools) and the people (“lower ranks”, as indicated in some subtitles). These illustrated brochures were printed in large print runs for that era, and often in a third edition. Their influence on the mass consciousness can hardly be overestimated, and the patterns of that fragmentation and stereotyping of history which we presented as our research object are revealed for researchers of the adaptation mechanisms of complex historical content for an unprepared audience.

2. Problem Statement

This is the problem of the cultural myth formation about the 349-day defense of Sevastopol in the Crimean War of 1854–1855 and the role of heroic mythology in the constructions of national identity. We would like to find out in what historical periods this myth was formed, by what means it was created, and who made the greatest contribution to the heroic canon creation of Sevastopol defenders. We comprehend the myth as a special type of reflection and processing of the experience in the narrative. Within the framework of the scientific article, we highlight the problems of religious consciousness which rather perceives universal concepts and motives borrowed in hagiographic texts and liturgical books of Orthodoxy as the main research interest. These insufficiently explored issues, placed in a broader context, shed light on the archetypal attitudes of national consciousness and commemorative practices that hold the community together through collective memory.

3. Research Questions

Our study of the historical narrative that has developed in the military publicistic discourse within 50 years after the end of the Crimean War is in search for the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the patterns of glorification and sacralization of the chosen defenders of Sevastopol in the Crimean War and the very place of defense?
2. What plots and archetypes from biblical literature were used in the mass literature of the 19th century to form military heroics and the myth of moral victory in the Crimean War?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to comprehend the biblical motives and substantive features of the archetypal image of a military hero in mass literature and periodicals of the 19th century.

5. Research Methods

Methods of historical and cultural analysis, typologization as well as elements of methods of narrative analysis, discourse analysis, and content analysis are used as the fundamental ones. The reference to these techniques is associated with popular texts, highly fictionalized, and saturated with rhetorical figures that have become our sources. Content analysis allows us to find the required fragments in text arrays and use machine processing of texts with the selection of such counting units as God, Savior, Prayer, Easter, Sacrifice, and etc.

6. Findings

Analysis of works in popular literature reveals an unambiguous religious context of the Crimean War. Orthodoxy in that era determined both the way of life and the idea of a person about what should be. People who survived the Crimean War and defended Sevastopol reflected their military experience in the

categories of the Orthodox faith. The prerequisite for the geopolitical conflict that eventually resulted in the Crimean War was the dispute over Palestinian shrines. The war was immediately set as righteous as intercession for the Orthodox oppressed by the Basurmans. The Georgians, Armenians, Greeks and other brothers in faith had to be saved from the Turkish yoke. Messianic motives are in almost all the sources of mass literature selected for analysis. For example, Belavenets (1902) describes the miraculous salvation of an icon that came from nowhere during a naval battle: "...and took out an icon which was enthusiastically received by the ranks of the ship as a shrine sent down by the Lord God during a bloody battle with the enemies of Christianity for the oppressed brothers" (p. 54).

The cultural myth, formed in the 50th anniversary after the war, is that the battle for Sevastopol was lost and the city was left to the enemy, but a moral victory was won and Russia was saved by this. It was impossible to admit that the alliance of several Western powers with the Turks gained superiority over Russian weapons since the war was interpreted by the authorities as a battle for faith. Therefore, the transformation of assessments and the substitution of concepts occurred in the military-publicistic discourse after a short period of euphoria (the Battle of Sinop with the Turkish fleet sinking), and a longer period of disappointment (unsuccessful battles at Alma, in Inkerman, etc.). The semantic emphasis was transferred to military heroism, sacrifice and accomplished feats. "Traits of Courage and Selflessness of the Russian Troops" is the title of one of the collections of "stories from the modern war with the Anglo-French and Turks", published in 1855 in Moscow. The cult of those killed during the defense was reflected not only in mass literature but also in the organization of mass graves, the construction of a necropolis, and churches in memory of the perished martyrs. Sevastopol has become a memorial city.

The identified mechanisms of adaptation of historical content for unprepared and inexperienced readers are mainly allusions to well-known gospel stories, and saturation of the text with Christian symbols (images, actions or gestures of faith). The second edition of the popular brochure (Golokhvastov, 1895) reads: "Father Anik (that is, Hieromonk Ioannikii Savinov) is still walking forward, straight to the enemy, raising a gilded cross high in the moonlight... He is followed by a dense crowd of the encouraged soldiers, to whom, at the sight of the sacred image of the Savior crucified on him, vigor and mighty all-crushing power returned again." Since the authors of popular literature strove for a simplified story of military events, stereotypical representations and speech clichés appeared in their texts, as well as a well-known schematism that exposed literary methods of producing heroics. Moreover, the descriptions demonstrate how the official version of the Crimean War course solidified which competed with the version of "Sevastopol Tales" by L.N. Tolstoi, and other authors who showed, primarily, the war horrors.

The leading motive of mass literature is the Christian motive of sacrifice. Even the actions of the army and navy, conditioned by the military strategy, were canonically explained. For instance, the forced sinking of ships in the mouth of the Sevastopol bay was interpreted in the spirit of a Christian sacrifice in order to get rid of great losses. "Like an innocent victim dying in the dark shaking chains" (Crimean War, 1873). Likewise, the surrender of the city southern part was interpreted in the symbols of Easter with cross torments, death, and resurrection. The sacrifice motives of the city defenders are strong in many works of publicism and in the memoirs of the participants.

The main locus of the military-publicistic discourse about the Crimean War is the Malakhov Kurgan. Despite the fact that there were many theaters of military operations in the Eastern War, as it was

called abroad, gradually all public attention was drawn to Sevastopol by the forces of publicists and writers, to its bastions and redoubts among which a special role was assigned to the Malakhov Kurgan – the place of death of Admiral Kornilov, Admiral Istomin, and Admiral Nakhimov. The image of the Holy Mountain that accepts sacrifice and atonement is archetypal for various branches of Christian culture. Thus, the Malakhov Kurgan in Sevastopol received the most enemy shells and became the main place of martyrdom for the city defenders. “To be on the Malakhov Kurgan means to be on Calvary! The bones and blood of the ascetics consecrated these clay mounds” (Alabin, 1892, p. 54).

The identification of the time categories in the discursive analysis of the mass literature texts shows that not chronological time (Sevastopol in May or Sevastopol in December, as in L.N. Tolstoi's "Sevastopol Tales"), but sacred time in accordance with the Christian concept of God's creation is essential for the authors of these descriptions. “The days of Holy Week came, and the long-suffering city sacredly served the days of suffering and the cross death of the Redeemer on” (Lukashevich, 1904, p. 74). Almost all selected brochures for the people intended for the analysis are imbued with Easter motives and images. In the notes of an artillery officer (Ershov, 1858), the author gives an example of such a message to the British who are Christians, although apostates: “Some daring guy painted a discharged two-pound bomb like an Easter egg while others were preparing to send this original shell to the enemy. It is necessary to exchange a triple kiss”, – “How, it is impossible.” “Here is a red egg to a friend,” said one sailor, “Smart fellow” – “Maybe the British will give his forehead,” answered another.

The inclusion of the Sevastopol defense heroes in the pantheon, in addition to admirals and representatives of the people, is predetermined by the comprehension of the war nature as a patriotic when everybody as one stand up to protect their shrines. In November 1854, a whole group of sisters of mercy from the Exaltation of the Holy Cross community, established by Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna, went to the theater of military operations. Nikolai Pirogov led this medical assault which included professional doctors. But a century later, in the feature film “Pirogov”, only the sailor's daughter Dasha helps the famous surgeon instead of St. Petersburg nurses. 17 out of 120 sisters who worked in besieged Sevastopol died in the line of duty; 68 sisters of mercy were awarded with the medal “For the Defense of Sevastopol,” and the most distinguished of them – with the St. George medal. However, only Dasha Sevastopolskaya falls into the pantheon of heroes of the Crimean War because it is her life that is best projected onto the archetypal model of behavior. Her biography does not contain “interfering details” in the form of documented facts and is malleable for the construction of an artistic image in the visual and screen arts. She is the personification of folk heroism in the defense of Sevastopol, overshadowing many other heroines.

The most famous and most popular character of the Crimean War is the sailor Koshka by the battle painter V. Timm and the author of the “Defense of Sevastopol” panorama by F. Rubo. Brochures for the people explain why Koshka Pyotr Markovich is the heroism personification of sailors and soldiers. The image of the sailor Koshka symbolizes the wealth of the Russian soul which in an incomprehensible way combines valiant prowess, recklessness, drunkenness, religious feeling, and devotion to the commander and love for the tsar. The sailor is prone to risk and plays with death like a child with a doll. Almost all stories about him tell how Koshka borrows money and valuables from the British (without return) sneaking into enemy dugouts at night. He carries out the corpse of a fellow soldier from a neutral strip

under fire at one of the nights in order to bury him in a Christian way. During the war, the sailor Koshka had competitors for the people's love. However, over time, a brighter and more intelligible image of the sailor Koshka overshadowed the heroism of I. Shevchenko and other defenders of Sevastopol who gave their lives in the war.

It is significant that the heroes' pantheon formation for the first time includes not only a simple sailor and a sister of mercy but also a child who takes the place of a murdered father. "Ten-year-old son Nikolka served the Commandor Timofey Pishchenko in the battery of the fifth bastion. The commander was killed on the day of the second bombing and Nikolka, having buried his father, remained in the battery. He once saw nine small mortars on the Schwartz redoubt. Having asked permission to shoot from the mortar, he did it very successfully and neatly, which allowed him to enter the mortar battery of the old sailor. And when the sailor was killed, Nikolka replaced him and did the best he could: he never fired a single shell for nothing. He was awarded with a medal and then, according to the general judgement, the St. George Cross" (Golokhvastov, 1895). Note that the pantheon of heroes is built almost according to the principle of sociological representativeness: all significant socio-demographic groups of the population are demonstrated in it but the number of representatives is relatively small so that they can be retained in memory as the play's heroes.

The most important and most honored by both the people and the state was Pavel Stepanovich Nakhimov from the entire heroic canon of the Sevastopol defense. Nakhimov has become a particularly revered figure in the people's memory. His biography includes several victories one of which is in the Battle of Sinop, and makes him "the soul of the Russian fleet." Nakhimov's early death became part of the stolen victory myth. "If not for this death of the hero, we would have defended the walled city. But with the death of Nakhimov, the soul of Sevastopol leaves this place and there is nothing to defend." For the masses, Nakhimov's exit symbolized the end of the struggle and the transition of his heroic image to the sacred plane.

7. Conclusion

Regularities of literary commemoration: filtration, fragmentation and stereotyping have been revealed in the analysis of mass literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Collective memory leaves few characters out of many heroes and many martyrs, and the characters' life stories are most consistent with the Christian ideals of ministry. The collective memory selects those events from the 349-day defense that fit into the religious model of asceticism and redemption. The authors of brochures for the people used borrowings from hagiographic texts to form the myth about moral victory in a tragic war. Christian ideas integrate with the ideas of military duty, service to God, the Tsar and the Fatherland forming the heroic canon of the Crimean War from the involved evangelical structural models and plots. The imposition of the Orthodox canon on military heroism creates the cult of the fallen defenders of Sevastopol which is required to justify the goals and results of the war.

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