MYTH IN THE STRUCTURE OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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ABSTRACT

In the context of globalization processes, the problem of nations and national self-consciousness has become one of the most widely discussed in the modern social sciences and humanities. Within the framework of globalization approaches, a nation is viewed as a transitional formation between traditional locality and planetary interdependence. According to modern theories, the model of a nation is built on the basis of Western European developmental patterns. From such viewpoint, the characterization of ethnicity is rejected, as a feature of "primitive", "pre-political" societies as marginal groups doomed to assimilation into the existing structures. The central problem of ethnical belonging is the issue of origin, the restoration of cultural and historical memory and the construction of the "appropriate past", which would assist in solving the problems of the present. The core of any national culture is national-ethnic self-consciousness which is the key factor in the national identity formation. It is pointed out that certain types of myths are inseparable from the ethnic identity. Today, researchers speak of the process of "remythologization". For Russia, which has always been a multiethnic state, the problem of scientific definition of nations, ethnic groups, national and ethnic consciousness has a special practical significance. In Russia and the post-Soviet space, the activation of mythological thinking has its own specifics.

Keywords: Nations, Ethnicity, National consciousness, Myth, Globalization

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern globalizing world, the problem of the role of myth in national consciousness has become one of the most disputable in the social sciences and humanities. This research is aimed at opening an inquiry into the role of myths in the consciousness of minority ethnic groups as myths profoundly influence the structure of national consciousness. In the article, these issues are viewed through the prism of revival of myths in the modern national consciousness, and the contradictions of globalization as reflected in the latter.

As many researchers emphasize, a nation is an ambiguous concept: on the one hand, it is associated with a centuries-old, often artificially "constructed" ethnic past; on the other hand, it is directed to the future in order to mobilize the masses towards collective autonomy and progress. Many interpretations of nations, characterizing them as mythical, reject the concepts of the nations' inseparable connection with ethnic entities. Some theorists believe that nations radically differ from ethnic groups, as the latter exist partially on the basis of kinship ties, are supported by the myth of common origin, the sense of common history and the specific culture. Nations, in their opinion, are predominantly "rational" political organizations, and, though they can selectively use ethnic symbols, this is done rather for "decorative" than for conceptual purposes. According to another point of view, the concept of "nation" sets the new type of historical community of people and the corresponding supra-ethnic identity.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

From the viewpoint of modernism, a nation is a product of modernization or rationalization that is formed in the process of emergence of bureaucratic states, industrial economy and secularized views on personal autonomy. The pre-modern world of heterogeneous political associations (empires, city-states, theocracies, etc.), legitimized through dynastic or religious principles, with acute linguistic or cultural diversity, divided by territorial boundaries and having a stable social class system, gives way to the world of national states. Such approaches focus on four main aspects of these associations:

(1) nations are political associations, imbued with the ideas of popular sovereignty (Gellner, Brulee, Anderson, Hobsbaum);

(2) the most prominent feature of a nation is the consolidated territories, the boundaries of which are regulated by a central government (Gellner, Hobsbaum);

(3) nations are culturally homogeneous amalgamations; their national consciousness is usually based on a single language and printed culture and provides the necessary basis for the

development of a mobile, extensive and socially differentiated industrial society (Gellner, Anderson, Calhoun);

(4) nations are the product of a linear process through which regions and social strata were firmly united into consolidated societies by means of state and market forces throughout the 19th century (Gellner, Hobsbaum).

Thus, the model of a nation, according to modern theories, arises on the basis of Western European developmental patterns, as an unintended by-product of the interaction between state strategies, trade development, and inevitable linguistic diversity since the late Middle Ages or early modernity. This process develops from the "dynastic cocoon" due to the American and French political revolutions, as well as the British industrial revolution, which provide the ideological basis for modern political associations. While Gellner believes that the spread of nations has come as a global result of universal modernization processes, other authors hold the view that nation-building was the result of forced Western European strategies derived from imperialist gains or their threat.

Such approaches are inextricably linked with the globalization approaches that view a nation as a transitional formation between traditional locality and planetary interdependence. From such positions, scholars reject the characterization of ethnicity as belonging to "simpler", "pre-political" societies or as marginal groups doomed to assimilation into the existing structures. They recognize the objective existence of tendencies towards the revival of modern ethnic communities, but these tendencies are characterized as temporary irrational reactions to destructive social changes, having no prospects for the future. With the increase of political, military, economic and cultural integration, as well as mass international migration, national sovereignty becomes a thing of the past, and the future is associated with such regional and global institutions as the European Union and the United Nations Organization.

3. RESULTS

For Russia, which has always been a multi-ethnic, poly-ethnic state, the issue of scientific definition of nations, ethnic groups, national and ethnic consciousness always had and currently has a special practical significance, which is reflected in numerous scientific discussions in this sphere. Until the 60s of the 20th century, the Russian science adhered to the Stalinist definition of a nation, its characteristics proclaimed to be the common language, territory, economic life and national culture. During the discussions of the 1960s−early 1970s, scholars came to the conclusion that the feature of national communities is the presence of a certain social structure and self-consciousness. It should be noted that it is in those years that

the creation of a "new historical community" – "the Soviet people" – was proclaimed in the Soviet Union, which determined the search for an answer to the question of whether the "Soviet people" should be considered a new historical community, a new "nation" or a new "ethnos" [1]. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, it became obvious that this problem had no real basis. By the mid-1990s, under the influence of foreign researches, the Russian social science developed such approaches as naturalistic, societal (attributive), subjective-symbolic and instrumental-constructivist, according to which two groups of concepts − "traditional" (naturalistic and sociological) and "modernist" − were singled out [1].

The central problem of ethnicity is the issue of origin, the restoration of cultural and historical memory and the "appropriate past", through which the problems of the present can be solved. The objective of ethnic movements is often to strengthen pre-modern institutions and values, in particular religious ones, while part of the project of such associations is the appeal to national movements and crisis situations. Although the modernist theories recognize regional and other forms of diversity, their focus on cultural homogenization leads them to ignoring the fact that many nations are subjected to internal dissidence due to profound cultural differences that generate opposing symbolic and political projects. These differences often break into recurring conflicts that can destroy the cultural heritage, languages, and social structures of modern nations. According to Daniel Bell, "today ethnicity is a means for disadvantaged groups to claim rights and privileges which the existing power structures have denied them" [2, p. 174].

In the context of the globalization processes development, the problem of preserving national cultures is becoming more and more acute, while the very logic of the globalization deployment, according to most of its researchers, increasingly leads to their leveling, the loss of their specifics. As is noted by J. Tomlison: "Globalization, so the story goes, has swept like a flood tide through the world's diverse cultures, destroying stable localities, displacing peoples, bringing a market-driven, 'branded' homogenization of cultural experience, thus obliterating the differences between locality-defined cultures which had constituted our identities" [3, p. 269] This naturally leads to processes aimed at resistance, conditioned by the desire to preserve cultural identity, while the ways of expressing this resistance can take various forms.

4. DISCUSSION

The core of any national culture is national-ethnic self-consciousness; it is the key factor in forming the national identity, which expresses the ethnos or nation awareness of its socio-

ethnic entity. As T. Zindoga notes: "It is the consciousness that forges the identity which in turn drives the spirit of the nation to national greatness. Consciousness binds us, welds us to the metaphysical and physical life of the nation and urges us to identify with the nation in all its travails because it is in its survival that we gain our survival" [4].

Under new realities, national-ethnic identity undergoes various transformations, which are a response to the challenges formed by globalization processes. It is the national consciousness of an ethnos that is the resource that can develop mechanisms to support the adaptation functions of a national identity.

All these phenomena determine the tendency of the increased interest of the national community to its roots and traditions, the aspiration to revive its cultural and historical past. This focus on the origins of one's ethnos is an integral element of national self-consciousness, its viability in a multicultural world. This fact largely refutes many postulates of the postmodern theory, according to which such interest loses its grounds, and becomes essentially impossible at the current stage of capitalism development. The vitality of a national culture in the modern society is indeed becoming increasingly vulnerable, influenced by a whole range of factors, such as homogenization of cultures, detraditionalization, unification, in which the most important role belongs to mass culture, as well as consumerization, which has become an indispensable characteristic of the modern culture development. Under these conditions, a national culture is compelled to mobilize all those resources that are aimed at maintaining the national and cultural identity in order to preserve its ethnos as a substantial socio-cultural community, that is, resources that promote ethno mobilization. "Many societies, especially indigenous peoples, view culture as their richest heritage, without which they have no roots, history or soul. Its value is other than monetary. To commodify it is to destroy it", M. Barlow argues [5].

The peculiarity of the modern socio-cultural situation in the world is the "anthropological turn" in the humanities, which has given a new dimension to the issues of national identity. As a part of the matter under study, it logically leads to the problem of transformation of subjectivity in the multicultural world. Under modern conditions, the subject of a national culture is unthinkable without turning to the cultural memory of the people, national roots, historical images, mythological storylines, and the whole rich spiritual heritage of a national community. Thereby, a national narrative for the national consciousness is formed, which is a symbolic expression of the subject's national and cultural identity necessary to maintain ethnic boundaries. At the same time, systemic changes taking place in all societies lead to the fact that subjectivities come across multiple contradictions deeply penetrating all spheres of

the modern globalizing world. Therefore, the structure of subjectivity in a multicultural society is permeated with mismatches between the local and the global. This is manifested in the leveling of ethnic specificity, the emergence of tension between stability and variability, the deepening of intercultural conflicts, the marginalization of entire ethnic groups, the loss of connection with the past, the change of meanings, and the unification of the subject's "otherness" [6]. At the level of national consciousness analysis, these mismatches manifest themselves in the unique integration of postmodernist tendencies with the archaization of public consciousness as a whole, reflected in a mythological renaissance recognized by most social theorists and conditioned by a whole complex of ethnic, political, existential and anthropological determinants. It is no coincidence that philosophers point out that certain types of myths are inseparable from the ethnic identity per se (Yu. Chernyavskaya).

Today, scholars speak of another process of "remythologization", which is caused, among other things, by disappointment in positivistic values, as science "does not solve such common metaphysical problems as the meaning of life, the objective of history, the mystery of death, etc., and mythology claims their solution" [7]. In addition, according to the philosopher, the main purpose of myth is not cognition, but maintaining the harmony of personal, social, and natural, supporting and controlling the social and cosmic order [7]. This is especially true in the modern era of global change, in the society of "risk", when a person begins to perceive the world as a chaos, as a "global world disorder" (Bauman). As R. Barth states, "myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflection" [8].

As a historical phenomenon, myth has changed with the development of society, but it remains an important part of the collective consciousness. In today's society, which is inherently a mass one, this particularly clearly manifested since mass consciousness is mythological by nature, and today the political myths and the myths of mass culture come to the forefront. Myth has a relatively stable structure; it permeates all spheres of the cultural life of society, which allows some researchers to assume that myth is determined by the very nature of culture [9].

The integration of mythological elements into the consciousness of modern people is characterized simultaneously by the inherently human need for this historical form of the world outlook, on the one hand, and the complexity of its integration into modern consciousness, on the other. Yu. M. Lotman and B. A. Uspensky wrote: "The ontogenetically conditioned layer of consciousness is fixed in the mind (and in the language), making it heterogeneous and ultimately creating tension between the poles of mythological and non-mythological perception... Heterogeneity is the primordial property of human consciousness,

the mechanism of which requires the presence of at least two systems that cannot be fully translated into each other" [10]. In this sense, one can assert that myth is an inseparable element of language and thinking, or, essentially, a language model of reality. All researchers of myth agree that myth is universal, it does not substitute science, ideology, or philosophy, but coexists with them; moreover, it is organically present in them. The reason why mythological thinking does not formally exclude any content (be it religious, scientific, or philosophical one) is that all these forms of social consciousness have a common basis and this basis is a language (Losev). It is the rootedness of myth in a language that determines its existential significance for people at all times and, ultimately, presents a response to the existential human need. It is not accidental that the elements of mythological thinking are revealed in everyday speech communication between people in the modern society. In general, the new paradigm of myth, which resulted from the "ontological turn" in philosophy and considers myth as a "form of human existence" (Losev), allows us to state the process of remythologization of the modern consciousness, including national consciousness.

A Russian philosopher M. K. Mamardashvili, viewing myth as a special form of meaningful existence, characterized this phenomenon as "one of the first human-forming machines dating from the beginning of mankind", which is aimed at creating a single "anthropogenic space" that is the ground for the emergence of the human in a human being. Considering the ontological foundations of mythmaking, the philosopher stressed that the everyday life of a person is temporary, while existence is timeless, since it includes both the past and the future. And it is myth that makes a person involved not only into the present, but also into the past, and the future [11, pp. 11-12]. Thus, we can state the historicity of myth, because it connects the past with the present, and through it – with the future. People's strive to determine their identity is impossible without turning to the past; and speaking of the ethnic identity, it is the national consciousness as a subjective factor in the identity formation that reflects, first of all, the desire of the ethnic community to be a single cultural and national community. The implementation of this strive unfolds through a variety of symbolic forms, among which the mythological one is the most important. Myth as an element of national consciousness allows maintaining the historical memory of a nation, its language, thereby creating mechanisms for the construction of ethnic identity, based primarily on the ethnic uniqueness of an ethnos.

National consciousness can be considered in both horizontal and vertical aspects. The horizontal aspect of national consciousness can be represented as follows. Its "most important component is national self-consciousness, in which the priority is placed at the nation's recognition of itself, its interests and goals, which allows comparing one's self with other

communities, at the same time developing a cognitive attitude to the set of conditions of one's being. Comprising the cognitive, emotional-value and regulatory aspects, the national self-consciousness acts as a complex structural and functional system in which many elements interact, such as conceptualization of the typical features of the community − autostereotypes, ideas about the people's common historical past (social memory); awareness of the importance of national territory as the most important factor of the people's existence, the integrity of its internal and external communication" [12].

However, it is equally important to take into account another aspect of the study of national consciousness, which is its vertical aspect. It allows identifying the phylogenetic tendencies within the phenomenon, in order to trace the underlying foundations of the national, taken in its historical, psychological, culturological relations. Nowadays, a growing number of people of the "late modern", "liquid modern" era look backwards "not only to the mythical moments in a nation's history but also to more recent moments of a purported golden age of not very long ago" [13].

It is these components, first and foremost, that allow us to design, reconstruct and maintain the national and ethnic identity. Analyzing the complexity of the modern cultural situation, T. Eagleton wrote: "Culturally speaking, however, belonging to one nation rather than another is so vitally important that people are quite often prepared to kill or die over the question. If politics is what unifies, culture is what differentiates*" [14, p. 90].

In this respect, it is the myth that is one of the most important ways of transmitting the cultural archetypes that promote the development of the adaptive mechanisms, so much needed by an ethnos under the total fragmentation of the entire social life.

Ya. E. Golosovker, one of the authoritative Russian researchers of myth, believes that the main cognitive ability that created myth was imagination. Considering the genetic interrelationships between myth and imagination, he highlights the following principles:

(1) imagination is the main feature of the mythological consciousness;

(2) imagination is irreducible to mental state only, it is the highest cognitive ability of mind, hence, myth functions as a special type of knowledge;

(3) imagination, therefore, is both creative and cognitive activity at the same time.

The philosopher reveals the most important conceptual feature of mythological knowledge: it is its mysteriousness, ambiguity, which determines the inexhaustibility of its cognitive content and − as a consequence – its great creative power. At the same time, the logic of myth is determined by its task, which is a comprehensive disclosure of a meaning image in all its aspects [15]. The function of meaning formation, inherent to myth, allows considering it to be

the most important epistemological model of the modern society, therefore the issues related to the specifics of mythological thinking are relevant at all times. Myths, by virtue of their symbolic nature, cannot be literally interpreted; myth is a double system, possessing a derivative meaning. This idea was expressed by R. Bart: myth is 'a double system; it is kind of omnipresent – where the meaning ends, there immediately begins a myth... myth has a value nature, it does not obey the criterion of truth, therefore nothing prevents it from acting infinitely by the principle of an alibi; if the signifier is two-faced, then it always has some other side; meaning is present each time where there is a need for the meaning to be removed through that other side" [16, pp. 281−282]. Myth does not just make events meaningful; it creates the world, forming a synthesis of two fundamentally different models of mastering this world: the logic of cognition and the logic of creativity (Ya. Golosovker).

4. CONCLUSION

In Russia and the post-Soviet space, the activation of mythological thinking has its own specifics. First of all, it is a crisis state of society, the situation of instability, socio-psychological confusion, and uncertainty in the future. A significant part of the population of Russia grew up and was formed in the USSR, where, with all its shortcomings, there was a value system, clearly developed and accepted by the majority of the population (collectivism, social equality, brotherhood of peoples, the idea of building a fair communist society, etc.). People felt proud of the success of their country, they were confident in the future. With the collapse of the USSR, these values and ideals were rejected and the new ones were not worked out; an individual is forced to live in the situation of the absence of any value orientations, "this is a negative, rootless individual... in the situation of loss of norms and values (anomie)" [17, p.43].

In this situation, myth fulfills a "psychotherapeutic", compensatory function, helping the society to survive a serious crisis situation. According to some researchers, the vitality of mythological consciousness in the Russian society is determined, among other things, by the peculiarity of the Russian civilization, which remained peasant until the 20th century, and myth is the ideology of peasant civilization [18]. In Soviet society, too, ideology and mass consciousness also had a largely mythological character promoted, in no small measure, by the official historical science, and social science as a whole. In this respect, it seems quite logical to agree with O. Muñoz that "not only the historical narrative fulfills the functions of myth, but philosophy of history itself is a mythologizing action, by way of generating

proposals about the whole of historical thought, and by undertaking an investigation on the origins" [19, p.146].

A Russian historian Kvakin, exploring the modern Russian myth, distinguishes three levels in it. The first level is an archetypical one, including universal mythological representations; it has the least national character. The second level of myth is connected with the general historical regularities, and the third is the perception of the world by a specific generation. All these types of myths, according to the author, solve the same tasks (first of all, self-identification of the society and the nation), which are determined by the archetype that, according to Jung, is "mental therapy from the sufferings and agitations of all mankind" [18]. The significance of the national consciousness issue for the contemporary Russian society is determined, first of all, by the fact that it conditions the society consolidation.

The national consciousness of any ethnos is always oriented to the future, but such orientation always makes a start from the heritage of the past, reproduced by the historical memory of the people. It is this memory that gives meaning to the present through the construction of a narrative that connects the past of the nation with its future. By S. Steinberg, "the ultimate ethnic myth, perhaps, is the belief that the cultural symbols of the past can provide more than a comfortable illusion to shield us from present-day discontents" [20]. Thus myth, through its ability to combine the rational discourse with imagination creating meanings, accomplishes its most important existential and anthropological functions − to satisfy the universal human needs in stability and identification.

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