

<https://doi.org/10.37816/2073-9567-2021-59-96-108>

УДК 008

ББК 71.4



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CULTURE FORMING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MIDDLE AGES: BRITAIN VS RUSSIA

Abstract: Any historico-cultural type creates its own model of the world which is formed by universal for the society ideas and thoughts. The Middle ages are one of the most complicated, very many-sided and contradictory epochs. It was built by several large and active strata. Such subdivision was manifested in mosaicism of cultural heritage, where different phenomena can be viewed as a pattern of separate culture, though coherent in sociocultural characteristics. The dualism of the epoch reflects on the one hand in cultural globalism for whole Europe, one the other hand in variations within. Aesthetic views were mostly manifested at court, accumulated and shown as a signs. Aristocracy partly artificially synthesized its culture, shaping in the most attractive form. It was structuralized in common European context, having absorbed local cultures, primary so called Anglo-Saxon. Though any 3–5 centuries the territory of the British Isles was being marched through by a new wave of invaders, changed the culture. So it is possible to examine the unique cultures of these peoples and their impact to British one. Although the history of Russia exists in another context, it is the history of not consequent main cultures but the history of one nation. Certainly, as the multiethnic state Russia includes many cultures of many peoples but the central and cementing one, made the country as it stands, is Russian.

Keywords: aristocracy, gothic, dety boyarskie, hierarchy, historico-cultural, contrast, religiousness, ritualistic forms, symbolism, syncretism, sociocultural, knight, feudalism.

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Received: November 18, 2020

Date of publication: March 28, 2021

For citation: Sklizkova E. V. Culture forming characteristics of the Middle ages: Britain vs Russia. *Vestnik slavianskikh kul'tur*, 2021, vol. 59, pp. 96–108. (In Russian) <https://doi.org/10.37816/2073-9567-2021-59-96-108>

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г. Москва, Россия

КУЛЬТУРООБРАЗУЮЩИЕ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ СРЕДНИХ ВЕКОВ: БРИТАНИЯ — РОССИЯ

Аннотация: Каждый историко-культурный пласт создает свою модель мира, которую формируют универсальные для данного общества идеи и воззрения в самых разных областях. Средние века — одна из самых сложных эпох, крайне многогранная и противоречивая. Она представлена несколькими крупными и активными культурными пластами. Дробность проявляется в мозаичности культурного наследия, где отдельные образования можно рассматривать в качестве примера самостоятельных культур, хотя и объединенных некоторыми социокультурными характеристиками. В этом отражается дуализм эпохи, с одной стороны, культурные события имеют глобальный характер для всей Европы — с другой, внутри культуры присутствуют многочисленные вариации. Эстетические воззрения наиболее полно отражались при дворе. Здесь они аккумулировались и проявлялись в концентрированной форме. Аристократия во многом искусственно синтезировала свою культуру, придавая ей наиболее привлекательную форму. В Англии она формировалась в общеевропейском контексте, впитав особенности местной культуры, прежде всего, мы имеем в виду так называемую англосаксонскую. Однако каждые 3–5 веков на территорию Британских островов приходила новая волна завоеваний, сменяя народы и культуру. В связи с этим можно говорить о культурах этих народов и их вкладе в культуру и язык Великобритании. История России обладает другим контекстом — это история не сменяющих друг друга главенствующих культур, а история одного народа. Конечно, как многонациональное государство Россия включает многие культуры многих народов, но центральной цементирующей культурой, сформировавшей страну такой, какая она есть, является русская культура.

Ключевые слова: аристократический, готика, дети боярские, иерархичность, историко-культурный контекст, контраст, религиозность, ритуализированные формы, символизм, синкретичность, социо-культурный, рыцарь, феодализм.

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Дата поступления статьи: 18.11.2020

Дата публикации: 28.03.2021

Для цитирования: Склизкова Е. В. Культурообразующие характеристики Средних веков: Британия — Россия // Вестник славянских культур. 2021. Т. 59. С. 96–108. <https://doi.org/10.37816/2073-9567-2021-59-96-108>

Any historico-cultural stratum creates its own model of the world which is formed by universal for the society ideas and thoughts in different spheres. “Apparently regarding the

Middle ages the notion of culture itself should be interpreted much wider than it is traditionally done studying the culture of the New age. Medieval culture embraces not only aesthetical or philosophical categories, is not limited by literature, art, music. To understand determinative principals of this culture, you have to go beyond the bounds of these spheres and then it turns out to be that in laws, economy, property and many other things in the base of all creative practical activity of humans some unity can be discovered, out of which each of these spheres is not quite clear. All of them are culturally coloured” [2, p. 13].

The main aim of the paper, based on both foreign and Russian researches, is to examine basic characteristics of the Middle Ages in Britain and Russia in mosaic aristocratic aspect that can be viewed as novelty. The Middle ages are one of the most complicated epoch, very many-sided and contradictory. It is built by several large and active strata, first of all by local barbaric culture of the Teutons and other peoples, secondly by heritage of antique culture and remains of Roman colonization, thirdly by growing influence of the Muslim East. It creates intricate multilevel cultural unity. It is possible to study all the qualifying elements together and separately, though all the medieval categories are interconnected and difficult to be viewed as self-contained. We would observe only the patterns brightly manifested in nobility.

One of the main elements of the Middle ages is hierarchy. All the visible is understood as a symbol of invisible innermost essence of God, all is subdued by complicated semiotic hierarchy, the lower levels of which symbolically reconstruct the upper ones. The world is strictly organized, all the elements are coherent. Hierarchy of the terrestrial life reflects heavenly hierarchy.

Also one of the reasons of the culture multilayer is the structure of the society of the time, built as a multistage pyramid. Social culture reveals itself as strict definite relations of firm social strata. It can be characterized as an amalgam of religious culture of monacal ideals of communal conduct, secular knight culture and culture of low strata. With all the differences they had a lot in common, such as a human was associated with the estate, mostly corresponded to not a social group but a profession or activity.

Such subdivision was manifested in mosaicism of cultural heritage, where different phenomena could be viewed as a pattern of separate culture, though united by some sociocultural characteristics. Here was a reflection of the dualism of the epoch. one the one hand cultural events had the global character for whole Europe, on the other hand there were a lot of variations within.

Hierarchy was reflected everywhere, starting from state structure and ending with colour of clothes. Colour symbolism being used in quite early epoch reached its peak in the Middle ages. The colours were the means of indication of society position. Mourning and birth, marriage and coronation gave vast opportunity of manifestation of luxury and hierarchical differences. The rules of courtesy possessed wide range of delicate shades of colours. The pure colours were in preference. In that epoch there was not such wide polite as it would be latter. Impact was made not by usage of light and shadow or semitones but bright combinability of pure simple colours. In “Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen” Johan Huizinga [9] gave a detailed description of many sociocultural phenomena of the period, e.g. usage of colour symbolism. Colour played an active role both semantic and aesthetical. All the colours had a range of meanings, semiosphere was full of semiotic consequences, and colour could be read as a book.

Symbolism penetrated all the levels of the Medieval culture. A symbol can not be aesthetically neutral, and hierarchy of symbols means the hierarchy of values. In symbols

everything was sophisticated and unambiguous for devoted but polysemantic for the culture in general. In the Middle ages interminable multitude of phenomena (objects, characteristics, events etc) was amalgamated within some "semantic field": jewelry and numbers, commandments, saints, cloth units, virtue etc. Such association is possible only when the property is essential. "The vision of white and red roses blooming among thorns at once calls up a symbolic assimilation in the Medieval mind: for example, that of virgins and martyrs, shining with glory, in the midst of their persecutors <...> the attributes are the same: the beauty, the tenderness, the purity, the colours of the roses, are also those of the virgins, their red colour that of the blood of the martyrs. But this similarity will only have a mystic meaning if the middle term connecting the two terms of the symbolic concept expresses an essentiality common to both; in other words, if redness and whiteness are something more than names for a physical difference based on quantity, if they are conceived as essences, as realities" [9, p. 205]. In that period an interest to any manifestations of physical world was shown.

Symbolic systems existed as well in ancient world world are reflected in all the spheres of human activity in our days but in no other historical epoch semiosphere was so universal and structuralized. For mentality it is intrinsic to express some idea in a form convenient for memorizing and transmission, and the process of communication leads to symbols exchange. Even if both communicants are of the same semantic sphere and know the code used in the structure of a symbol, the information ensued can be different from the primary one. With help of a code a communicant composes the message in the shape of symbol and passes it to interlocutor, and the last interprets it with help of the code. The codes are rare identical, here many aspects can be involved, such as phycological, gender, sociocultural, temporal etc.

Beauty perceived was an embodiment of God conception and integral part of this world. In the Middle ages beauty was of special importance, and a special attention was paid to aesthetic research. Proportions, colours, quantity, form of figures should be taken into consideration and be attractive. Beauty of a woman was also examined, some ideal was formed reflected in all the spheres of art from verbal to monumental. All the heroines were slim, tall, blond, blue-eyed. "I tell you truly that the hair of the blonde Iseut did not shine so fair that she could stand comparison with her. Her brow and face were more pure and white than the lily. Her features were tinted with a fresh rosy hue wondrously painted by Nature upon the whiteness. Her eyes shone with such radiance that they seemed like two stars" [5, p. 6].

"The horn-beam wicket presently
Was opened by a dame of air
Most gracious, and of beauty rare;
Her flesh as tender chicken's was;
Her blond locks bright as bowl of brass;
Radiant her brow; of arching due
Her eyebrows; and well spaced the two;
Neither too small, nor yet too great
Her nose, but straight and delicate.
No falcon, I would boldly swear,
Hath eyes that could with hers compare.
Her breath was sweet as breeze, thyme fed;
Her cheeks, commingled white and red;
Her mouth a rosebud, and her chin

Well rounded, with sweet cleft therein.
Her tower-like neck, of measure meet,
The purest lily well might beat
For fairness, free of spot or wem.
'Twixt this and far Jerusalem
I trow were found none other such,
So fair to sight, so soft to touch.
Her bosom would outshine the snow
New-fallen, ere it soil doth show;
And all her body formed and knit
So well, as nought might equal it.
Much doubt I, if since Time had birth,
A fairer dame hath trod dull earth”.

[11, pp. 18–19]

Partly such an image can be seen in Antiquity and the Renaissance.

For a noble culture some romantic view or even “Baironism” was typical. Melancholy, disillusion, boredom of life, pessimism to future, idealistic view to past could be associated with that period. The category of future at that time (as all the other) was the very indefinite and frightening category.

Love and friendship were the cultural quality, highly cultivated. Companions were very popular. Elevation of relations was connected on the one hand with attraction to beauty, physical also, on the other hand, with the negative attitude of the Church to corporeal questions. Love became some elevated aim, possible to be gained only by lacking, deeds and spiritual purification. Suffering was a door to approaching the ideal and aim. Strict borders became the system of the organization of relations which was determined in biological, social and cultural way.

The image of a knight in shining armour was a product of a male conscience rather than a female. Protector, rescuer, noble knight suffered for the beloved sake was an image a man wanted to see himself. Attention was paid to woman only through the male perception, mostly sensual, romantic and aesthetic. Her real problems were not of any interest.

Contrast was also a Medieval feature manifested everywhere from every day level to religion. A person took an intermediate position between moderation forced and inevitable, and wildness, impossibility to control oneself. Life was hard and unsettled, much knowledge was lost. That provoked the desire of beauty, developed imagination and belief in supernatural. Huge contradiction between an ideal of the Medieval conscience and reality could be observed.

Attitude to life and death could be inserted in all the points already mentioned. On one hand the life was full of romantic longing for beauty, on the other — life was very complicated and fleeting, death was a form of existence but transcendent and fearing.

Unclearness of attribution of authorship and dull identification with truth or fantasy makes studying of the Medieval recourses quite complicated. Contrast between anonymity and wish to distinguish oneself was very typical for that period.

Anthropomorphism inherited from ancient times was kept in concern to objects. Names were given to castles, houses, swords, ships. Echo of that could be seen in names of houses in Germany, in usage of feminine pronoun for ship (of the neuter gender), masculine and feminine pronouns for cars (also of the neuter gender) possessed by a woman and a man consequently in English etc.

There was a strict connection between reality and symbols. Symbols were not dull but quite active in every day life. In some way there was coherent semiotic system. Although any of its symbols was used in different contexts and different meaning. “A Medieval symbol expressed invisible and intelligible through visual and material. Visual world was in a harmony with its archetype — the world of lofty substances <...> it was possible to find besides the direct comprehension of any event some symbolic or mystic interpretation, revealed the enigma of belief. The system of symbolic interpretation and allegorical assimilation served as means of universal classification of various objects and events and their correlation with eternity” [2, p. 55].

The world was nonsegmented, any object of reality was connected with the other by some associations. “Medieval man really lived in the world inhabited by secret senses, parables, transferred meanings and divine omens, consisted in the objects around it. The world around always spoke to him in the heraldic language...” [6, p. 69].

Due to comprehension of objects mostly through their mystical features sometimes it was complicated to identify the direct or symbolic meaning of some image.

Redundancy of external side of culture turned to constant playing in all aspects of life. It reflected in general theatricality, ceremonial side of life. Any action or event, even insignificant, was elevated to the rank of theatrical act, which external side was thoroughly elaborated. Mode of life was interpreted in the form of mystery. Accessories of ancient mysteries were kept in ceremonies of marriage, birth, death. They obtained unprecedented scope and splendour.

Code and ritual were elaborated in details that affected all the aspects of culture. Any type of behavior was dictated by strict etiquette. All the activities were conducted in quite structuralized way. Sometimes ritual politeness turned to absurd when in entrance to some room hierarchical sequence was followed. Persons of the same stratum could quarrel for hours, who worth more entering first giving way to the opponent.

“...all things in life were of a proud or cruel publicity. Lepers sounded their rattles and went about in processions, beggars exhibited their deformity and their misery in churches. Every order and estate, every rank and professions was distinguished by its costume. The great lords never moved about without a glorious display of arms and liveries exciting fear and envy. Executions and other public acts of justice, hawking, marriages and funerals, were all announced by cries and processions, songs and music. The lover wore the. The lover wore the colours of his lady; companions the emblem of their confraternity; parties and servants the badges or blazon of their lords” [9, p. 9].

Religiousness could be viewed as the next feature. It was the period of flourishing of church and its power. “Medieval thought in general was saturated in every part with the conceptions of the Christian faith. <...> those who lived in the circles of court or castle were impregnated with the idea of chivalry” [9, p. 67]. As Archangel Michael seemed some kind of an ancestor of knighthood, his battle deed was viewed as the first display of knight valour, and the knighthood was a reflection of heavenly host.

The other side of it was constant war between the church and masters of temporal power. Knighthood was the support of both of them. Syncretism of religious and secular spheres was typical, observed in such phenomena as mixture of terms, secular music and religious songs, the church as the place of meetings, important events, “fashion shows”. Ideas of the Middle ages were penetrated by religion though pagan beliefs manifested themselves everywhere. In art, literature, every day life dual-belief, magic, spirits and ghosts, magicians, giants, heroes acted.

“Medieval masters, writers, painters, having ignored visual shapes of surrounding world, gazed at the beyond” [2, p. 8]. It can be said that people of that time did not distinguish perceptible and preternatural worlds, apprehended them simultaneously. The church tried to gain jurisdiction over the trends of the Medieval culture, condemned many of them for excessive visuality, materiality, withdrawal from religious and spiritual ideals.

Among main features of that culture traditionalism could be mentioned (the older the truer). It is reflected e.g. in heraldry (quarters law — prove of noble origin in 5 generations). Besides there can be referred to - addiction to canon, didactic and encyclopedic aspects, sternness, beauty in all its reflections, it was the time of town strengthening and university foundation.

The Middle ages are associated with gothic. And one of the most prominent artifacts was cathedral. “...a vast stone symphony; colossal creation of a person and nation; coherent and complicated as “Iliades” and “Romanseros”, which it related to; fascinating result of combinability of all the forces of the epoch, where from any stone in hundreds of forms a fantasy of a workman, guided by the genius of an artist, gushed forth; so it is a creature of human hands, mighty and abundant, as the divine creation, from which it adopted binary character: variety and eternity...” [8, p. 105].

The term “gothic” goes back to Goth, whose tents were seen in lancet arches of gothic cathedrals in the Renaissance. In the beginning the whole Medieval art viewed as Gothic. In the 19th century that notion was specialized to the art of 12–15th centuries. The main aspect of that style was architecture. Gothic cathedral was a reflection of the Universe as all the notions of micro- and macrocosm were manifested in cathedral. Abundance of tracery arches, fretwork and sculptures, mystical light of stained-glass windows, irreality of the whole ensemble plunged the idea of God's purpose. All the elements had symbolic meaning. The world was understood as sign hierarchy. West facade was dedicated to the theme of Doomsday. Side portals were dedicated to Virgin Mary (the right one) and the most honoured local saint (the left one).

As all the phenomena of the Middle ages gothic cathedral revealed itself as unity of phenomena of different functions. As a cult building it demonstrated God's purpose and aspiration of a human being to high ideals. As a public place it reflected social hierarchy and showed the position of person in the world. Events of high importance were announced in a church, given a form of a ritual. As a work of art it was strictly connected with painting, music, fashion etc. Cult view of a cathedral was united with its comprehension as a reflection of God's essence of the world and beauty, and its perception as a work of art.

Aesthetic views were mostly manifested at court, accumulated and shown in concentrated form. Aristocracy partly artificially synthesized its culture, given it the most attractive form. It was such an aspect of culture, which was under different impact and had possibility and will to combine separate elements at its own discretion. Aristocratic forms of the tenor of life influenced the society for a long time, even when nobility had lost its position. Burghers imitated whenever possible noble customs and habits. Nobility as separate class with genealogy, hereditary nicknames and arms, was developed within feudalism. Before the epoch of the Crusades there was nothing of that kind, though semblance of nobility based on sword skills and military service had existed earlier.

Many traditions integrated in the Middle ages and being one of the aspects of knight traditions began to be formed long before Medieval time and were connected with paganism, e.g. rituals of sword consecration, coronation etc. Firstly they were connected to each other. Secondly from ancient times attitude to weapon had a trace of personification, and relations

between a warrior and his sword was brought to level of sacred. Thirdly an act of giving the sword as far as coronation turned the youth to adult, gave the position in a society.

Talking about English or even British culture first of all so called Anglo-Saxon is meant as the basic. Though any 3–5 centuries the territory of the British Isles is being marched through by a new wave of invaders, changed the culture. So it is possible to examine the culture of these peoples and their impact to British culture.

The first settlers of the Isles left traces of sophisticated material culture but these prominent monuments of Neolithic period was not inbuilt in the unite tree of English culture and existed separately. So we can mainly talk about some temporal cultural unit on the British Isles. Here belongs Stonehenge and other hendges, the settlement Scara Brae on the Orkney Islands, some tombs, pottery, metal works etc.

Celtic traces are already quite identified in different spheres of British culture from literature to applied art. Medieval British tradition was formed mainly under the Celtic influence, their mythcreation. Arthurian legend cycle is mostly of Celtic origin, i.e. most part of heroes of Romances was connected with the Celts one way or another. Neopaganism inclined to druidism, quite popular in Britain, is also of Celtic nature. In the language sphere there is no much Celtic influence on the English language but there are some borrowings connected with toponymy or cult (Avon, London, druid, bard etc). Even now Celtic ornaments are very popular. So the Celtic influence is quite distinguished.

The Romans also changed the population outlook though, Rome weaken, influence reduced, keeping only traces in the language and material cultural monuments. It is possible to distinguish substantial percentage of loans and buildings as bath, temples (e.g. in Bath), villas (as Fishborn) and walls (Adrian and Antonine walls). Rome in large measure structuralized the culture of Britain (from architecture to religion) though it was not for good.

The Anglo-Saxons were already the basement of modern culture, political including, and the fact that they were quite close to the Vikings and Normans just intensified it. We are mostly interested in feudal period and knighthood, strictly connected with Normans coming.

It is impossible to proclaim feudalism introduced by William the Conqueror to England, as the society at both sides of the English Chanel was very close in traditions and style of life, still the Normans come, sociocultural conditions of Albion were structuralized. Despite some unity of culture many points completely changed. Juridical and social systems, system of taxes were reformed according to the time and its demands, though mostly were organized on the base of Anglo-Saxon traditions. It was the period of strengthening of king's power and formation of one of the most stable monarchies. The Bayeux Tapestry is amazing resource of information of Norman culture of the time.

The language brought by the new invaders greatly influenced the English language. Mostly it is seen in phonetic, spelling and lexical aspects. That language was one of the idioms of Langue d'oïl, of Romanic origin, the result of the development of sermo vulgaris. Vikings came to the territory of further Normandy, took the local language but germanized it. Possibly it is the reason of so strong influence on the English language, the language also of Germanic origin. After the Norman Conquest of England Norman French became the language of elite, court, clerical work, trade, and at most culture. It served as international language of merchants and salors all over Europe, and the language of Crusades. Though it did not replace Anglo-Saxon dialects, still used mostly by pesants and low strata. Latin still dominated in church. Thus on the territory of England functioned three languages. That period gave the most percentage of loans. Part of them were the words for notions came with Normans, part were etymological doublets and synonyms, besides the loans kept more

refined meaning, or native and borrowed words shared the nuances of meaning or extruded the original. Though after two centuries reincarnation of the English language began, and now it is possible to view English with huge French influence, but not vice versa.

After the Norman Conquest nobility of England were of two nations: Norman and Anglo-Saxon. Normans as conquerors having factual advantage over Anglo-Saxons, had a lot of benefits. Saxon nobility formed the class of earls different from plane people. Though both nations had much in common in traditions and style of life.

Feudal system existed in England before the Norman Conquest. Saxon tans were the same manor owners, king vassals. Normans fixed that system. The number of manor owners increased greatly in the period of the Crusades. It prevented knighthood to be separated hereditary class. The title of master, *sir*, was the reflection of individual honour and obtained by military service. In the period of the Middle ages that title could belong also to the high clergy and persons of academic rank in universities. The owners of knight manor who had not passed initiation and so did not possess the knight status were called *esquires*. Legislative development of strata ended by the end of 15th century and was connected with the parliament formation.

It was the period of establishment of knighthood. Knight landownership did not give inborn title. But owners of such manors had stratum benefits to be representatives of counties. The highest families had an advantage.

In England three social groups were strictly distinguished: major vassals, minor vassals and subvassals and free and non-free landowners. The high stratum was formed by clerical and secular peers, among which the former had the seniority. Secular peers were divided into five ranges: duke, marquis, count, viscount, baron, having hereditary representation in parliament. Lower owners of knight manor stranded. «The title *ex more*» was a descending title of the older branch, when the elder son with father alive could have the lower title, e.g. a son of a duke could have the title of marquis, a grandson — of a count. As a rule women did not participate in that process but some titles could pass to a daughter. Thus she had «the title of lady by birth».

Benefits and lands, granted by a king for devoted service, became hereditary. Thus any owner of manor was noble, so with the development of feudalism some mark of noble birth except a manor became necessary. Such marks were family nicknames and arms. The former appeared earlier when feudal lords began to add the names of their territory or inherited feudal names. Owners of castles taking nicknames from their castles became vassals of major lords of the manor, which was important for hierarchical status. So nobility had appeared without grant of a king as it became later. Titles had strict hierarchy which was represented by forms of costumes. So titles were native English as lord and esquire, borrowed from Vikings but used for Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian nobility as earl, and borrowed after the Norman Conquest or later from French as viscount.

In the Middle ages law as it is known now began to be formed. Britain is characterized by cherishing attitude to law: “In England laws are nearly echo of traditions and customs. The traditions that created laws also created those who should obey them: so people comprehend laws as habitual home slippers. <...> Englishmen are sure that laws exist for common benefit and have the same power for everybody” [4, p. 283–284]. Such view differed from native Russian view of law as a tool of power giving ability to manipulate common people and law of morals and justice which is more productive to our mind.

All the features of the Middle ages were reflected in some way in all the spheres. European Medieval times were characterized by some globalization. Some unity of ideas

and their manifestations were presented in Antiquity as well but mostly it can be viewed in empires and societies of that kind. Christianity and Latin became at once strong cohesive principle among different peoples and cultures. Surely national peculiarities were manifested in different aspects of culture though there was a culture unity of the European Middle ages of which Rus fell out. Although the history of Russia is the history of not consequent major cultures but the history of one nation. Certainly as the multiethnic state Russia includes many cultures of many peoples, but the central and cementing one, made the country as it stands, is Russian culture.

Rus was a strong country. Her literature, art, architecture, applied art, the tenor of life are world cultural heritage. In some way we can identify Antiquity, the Middle ages, the Renaissance and so in the land of Russia only as historical moments, using western chronology. It is possible to distinguish Rus in the period of Antiquity, but not Antique culture in Rus. Concerning sociocultural aspects it is inadequate. Thus Russian Middle ages are very different from European. It is separate type of culture. Russia developed her own way. Baptism surely introduced Rus to the family of Christian countries but Orthodox Church predetermined her sociocultural peculiarities.

Rus takes intermediate position between the East and West having the features of both of them and differs from both. "The Middle ages" in Rus have all the features of the Middle ages in general. Contrast and hierarchy, religious and symbolism, theatrical and didactic, traditions and canonical all these features belong in some way to Rus as well. Though in contrast to Europe being under the influence of Rome, Rus was under the influence of Byzantium. The difference in confession, language, writing inevitably impacted the culture.

In Rus there were neither religious wars and crusades nor fights between crown and priesthood in the way as it was in the West. In some way it seems that Europe was inclined to the Old Testament and Rus to the New one. Orthodox is not aggressive by essence. There was no knighthood, castles, gothic and all the aspects were very different from the West. Possibly it is one of the reasons of snobbish attitude of western lords to this country.

In comparison with Western Europe inclined to dark mystics and sepulchral, Rus presented bright and holiday variant of Christian culture. Russian cross-domed temples were mostly threenaved and fourposted, sometimes there were more posts. Among peculiar features of Russian architecture simplicity and balanced proportions and lines, space, gentle light, plurality of types of arches and decorations, refrains of domes and kokoshniks and other ornament can be named. Temples in spite of their majesty are brighter and warmer than European, closer to common people, even in form (Orthodox church has head, neck, shoulders). Though there are also dark gloomy churches. Architecture is always inbuilt in environment, position the sun, water, peculiarities of landscape. Monumental stone building began in 10th century though there was rich tradition of wooden building reflected then in stone.

As in Western Europe Russian cult architecture was full of symbolism. It is not our task to highlight all the details of these symbols so we touch only some. First of all temples as in Europe are a reflection of the kingdom of heaven. Unity of the church is manifested in cube, sanctity — in whiteness of walls and gold of domes, universality in hierarchical composition of a temple, subordinate to underdome space. The whole building was directed to strengthen the belief and protection of believers. Altar is the divine side of the world, middle part of a temple is a symbol of the Universe, renewed sacred part, vestibule is a symbol of sinful world. Bulbous form of a dome unlikely Byzantine close to the firmament, gothic aspired to heaven, is alike body of flame symbolized prayerful flame for unity with the Most High.

Norman theory that links statehood formation in Rus with Normans (people of the North) also connects our country with Britain. Though it causes many questions as manifests dependent native state structure state structure, and attaches, and attaches very structuralized model of society to Vikings who did not have such. Besides prominent Scandinavian influence on different aspects of culture (unlikely Britain) is not seen.

In Rus hierarchical pyramid was less multi-step. There was neither such multilevel feudatory, nor such number of strata as in Europe. Land and civil relations functioned partly in different spheres, though later a system of land granting for service appeared. In Russian culture there was no knighthood with all the aspects. The history of Russian aristocracy is long and vast and need separate research, here we highlight only some elements.

Russian aristocracy, besides loan titles, for a long time had its own, such as “knjaz”, “bojarin”, “dvorjanin”. The origin of the word “knjaz” (from old Germanic, close to Scandinavian “konung” and English “king”, along with “vitjaz” from Germanic “Viking”, Scandinavian “vikingr”) in this case serves the base of sociocultural level. The head of the state was a leader of military stratum capable in need to lead the army. It is surely primitive explanation of the role of a prince but mostly in that period functions of the head were very close to military leader. Knights in Europe and vitjazes in Rus seemed to be the privileged stratum, and their leaders were the owners of lands.

In Russia the epoch of nobility (since 17–18th centuries) demands to touch to touch its ancestor — the epoch of boyars.

Since 15th century such notion as dety boyarskie (noble offspring) had been developing. Boyar is understood as highest form of feudal nobility, self-contained stratum compiled by oldest prince families. The title of boyar was not hereditary and quite complicated to be taken. The quantity of boyars was very small (four under Vasili Vasiljevich, nineteen under Ivan III). Dety boyarskie were real sons of boyars in military service, and many of them not becoming boyar still kept the title.

Up to 15th century among Moscow boyars there were not more than 40 noble boyar families: Kokoshkiny, Morozovy, Buturliny, Goloviny [3]. As boyar at princes of 12th century, boyars of that time had the character of counselor and fellow under conditions.

Since the second part of the 15th the membership of Moscow boyars was completely changed. By the end of 16th century according to genealogical boyar lists there were about 200 noble families. It was titled prince families: Ririkovichy, Gedeminovichy, descendants of great and appanage princes. Hierarchy of boyars was quite complicated, here are some of its rules:

- 1 Descendant of the great prince is higher than descendant of appanage princes;
- 2 Descendant of appanage prince is higher than descendant of untitled boyar;
- 3 Descendant of Moscow great prince is higher than prince in service and boyar of appanage princes.

It is easily seen that sometimes they contradict each other. One of the reasons was that hierarchy was formed according to a position taken by a boyar by the moment of trespassing to the service of Moscow prince (e.g. descendant of a great prince could have the lower position then descendant of appanage prince, and so in Moscow hierarchy took the lower position).

Since 16th century dety boyarskie must have served as militaries and stand with their armies under the banner of a prince on demand. The epoch of boyar ended with the death of the last representative of the title, I. U. Trubezkoy, in 1750.

Nobility as in Europe was developing from semiindependent surrounding of a prince as at prince court servants (otrocs) served. For the first time, while Andrew Bogolubskiy, they took the name "dvorjane" (nobility). During the rule of Ivan IV that term was used for dety boyarskie as well. Later nobility became stronger though for a long time it was inhomogeneous.

While Peter I the stratum was generalized in some way, he proclaimed military service the main resource of "Shljahetstvo". That term originated from German "Geschlecht" through Polish substituted the term "dvorjanstvo". While Peter both terms were used, and while Catherine II "dvorjanstvo" replaced "shljahetstvo" [1]. Peter's "Table of Ranks", giving nobility to any served to chief officer and collegiate assessor at civil service, really blurred frames of aristocracy, changed completeness of boyar aristocracy. Although it created conditions for the new aristocracy which flourished in the epoch of Catherine II.

As in England noble titles were of mixed origin: part was native Russian, part was borrowed from Europe. The first Earl in Russia was Musin-Pushkin though that title was given by a foreign monarch in 1694 [1], or F. A. Golovin in 1701. B. P. Sheremetjev became the first pure Russian Earl in 1706, in 1707 A. D. Menshikov took the title of duke of Izhora and Highness prince, P. P. Shaphirov became the first baron in 1710. In the beginning of 18th century Peter granted titled to L. V. Brus, F. A. Golovin, P. M. Apraksin, P. L. Tolstoy etc.

In old pre-Romanov Russia fight for primacy at throne developed up to creation of constant institution dispensing positions in the civil service. Such forms were not known in western countries of the Middle ages and here was also jealousy in the questions of superiority.

An order of precedence or a system of appointment to civil and military position in accordance with grandeur of a kin, position of ancestor and personal merits, being created at Moscow Great prince then tzar court in 14th century, was fixed by the end of 15th century. Formally that hierarchy was manifested in a place at tzar table during council and meal: the higher position a boyar took the closer he sat to a tzar. Some special rank institution was created (something as a ministry) engaged by rules of order of precedence, compiled special rank books. Historians are quarreling about the time of its foundation, but in 1535 it already existed.

So certainly there are vast sphere of the manifestations of the Middle ages, and all of them separately and in coherence can be dedicated the studying. Here was an attempt to distinguish some vital elements which can serve in advance the basement to something else. The Middle ages possessed quite peculiar characteristics. It is a very complicated epoch, hierarchical, multileveled. Semiosphere of the time is syncretic and mosaic. And the brightest representation of it belonged to aristocratic culture, which was global, artificial, synthesized, sophisticated. All the features can be found in both Russia and Britain, though they are of quite different nature. Manifestations of the aspects are connected with the type of culture, which are diverse. Still all the features of the epoch were reflected in various aspects of social life.

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