

## SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY



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### Russian Monarchy: Nature, Character, and Stages of Development

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#### Abstract

**Introduction.** The current stage of political history is characterized by the fact that Russia is increasingly aware of itself as the core of another, not Western, Eurasian civilization. In this regard, an in-depth study of our country's identity, the specifics of its political culture and related political traditions that have a centuries-old history seems relevant.

**Materials and Methods.** The research material is historical information regarding the development of Russian statehood and its political institutions. Psychoanalytic, cultural anthropological, comparative-historical methods are used.

**Results.** Archetypes as content of the collective unconscious are the psychic imprints of centuries-old historical experience. The core role in the Russian political culture was played by the manifestation of the archetype of the father (Father the Tsar). This archetype became the basis of the myth of the “good tsar”. The myth, in turn, became the basis of the Russian monarchy as a political tradition. The Russian monarchy, at the beginning of its history, was characterized by patrimonial dynasticism, which was later replaced by family dynasticism involving the transfer of power from father to son. A characteristic feature of the autocracy was the presence of an advisory body under the tsar. Most often, the Boyar Duma acted as such a body. Periodically, the Boyar Duma was replenished with new members and, thus, transformed into the Zemsky Sobor. The transformation of autocratic power into the imperial power of an absolute monarch made it possible to build a large-scale multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state.

**Discussion and Conclusion.** Reliance on psychoanalytic and anthropological methods in the process of studying political traditions presupposes a deep comprehension of their essence. The archetype of the father of the people (Father the Tsar) expresses itself in the myth, with which the existence of a monarchical form of government is associated, as a tradition that was of great importance for the political history of Russia. The Russian monarchy was the most important element of statehood, which largely determined its character. Deliberation and practical use of historical experience can play a positive role in solving the problems facing the modern Russian state.

**Keywords:** collective unconscious, archetype, myth, political tradition, traditional society, autocracy, absolutism

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*Оригинальное теоретическое исследование*

### Российская монархия: природа, характер, этапы развития

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#### Аннотация

**Введение.** Современный этап политической истории характеризуется тем, что Россия всё более осознаёт себя ядром иной, не западной, евразийской цивилизации. В этой связи представляется актуальным глубокое исследование идентичности нашей страны, специфики её политической культуры и связанных с ней политических традиций, имеющих многовековую историю.

**Материалы и методы.** Материалом исследования являются исторические сведения, касающиеся развития российской государственности и её политических институтов. Применяются психоаналитический, культурно-антропологический, сравнительно-исторический методы.

**Результаты исследования.** Архетипы как содержание коллективного бессознательного являются психическими отпечатками многовекового исторического опыта. Центральную роль в русской политической культуре играло проявление архетипа отца (царя-батюшки). Этот архетип стал основой мифа о «добром царе», миф в свою очередь – основой российской монархии как политической традиции. Российской монархии в начале её истории была присуща родовая династичность, которая позднее была заменена на семейную династичность предполагающую передачу власти от отца к сыну. Характерной чертой самодержавия было наличие при царе совещательного органа. Чаще всего в качестве такого органа выступала Боярская дума. Периодически Боярской дума пополнялась новыми членами и таким образом трансформировалась в Земский собор. Превращение самодержавной власти в имперскую власть абсолютного монарха сделало возможным строительство масштабного полиэтнического и поликонфессионального государства.

**Обсуждение и заключение.** Опора на психоаналитический и антропологический методы в процессе исследования политических традиций предполагает глубокое постижение их сущности. Архетип отца народа (царя-батюшки) выражает себя в мифе, с которым связано существование монархической формы правления как традиции, имевшей огромное значение для политической истории России. Российская монархия была важнейшим элементом государственности, во многом определившим её характер. Тщательное осмысление и использование на практике исторического опыта может сыграть положительную роль в деле решения задач, стоящих перед современным российским государством.

**Ключевые слова:** коллективное бессознательное, архетип, миф, политическая традиция, традиционное общество, самодержавие, абсолютизм

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**Introduction.** The modern stage of political history is characterized by the final collapse of illusions about the possibility of Russia to integrate into Western civilization on equal terms with the countries of Western Europe and North America. The point here is not only that Russia is the core of another, not Western, Eurasian civilization, but also that the West, due to its inherent racism, is able to treat the rest of the world only from the standpoint of colonial policy. In this regard, a deep study of the civilizational identity of Russia, the specifics of its political culture and related political traditions with a centuries-old history seems relevant.

**Materials and Methods.** The research material is historical information regarding the development of Russian statehood and its political institutions. The following methods are used: psychoanalytic (C.G. Jung), cultural and anthropological (M. Eliade, B. Malinovsky), comparative historical.

**Results.** The founder of analytical psychology C.G. Jung put forward the idea of the existence of a deep layer of the human psyche, which has a collective character. This collective unconscious, in his opinion, consists of three levels: ethnic, racial and universal. As a deep mental system, the existence of which is not realized, it consists of the so-called “archetypes”. According to Jung, archetypes are the psychic imprints of centuries-old historical experience. They form the foundation of cultures, and returning peoples to the original, give meaning to modernity [1, p. 37]. In his works, Jung wrote about a special variety of archetypes, which he called “persona” [2, pp. 63–65]. This type of archetype, according to the researcher, is a collection of social roles. It is of particular interest for us due to the fact that it is the basic element of political myths.

In our opinion, the core role in the Russian political culture was played by the manifestation of the archetype of the father (Father the Tsar). The monarchical worldview of the Russian ethnic group has been forming for many centuries. Even after the liquidation of the monarchy, state power continued to maintain a personified character, which was greatly facilitated by the cult of Bolshevik leaders.

In the history of peoples, archetypes often manifest themselves as a basic element of myth. According to prominent Western anthropologists B. Malinovsky and M. Eliade, the myth is a sacred legend about the distant past. For a person of traditional society, myth as a sacred tradition performs the function of legitimizing any vital elements of culture, including political institutions [3, p. 27].

The historically established Russian political mythology carries, in our opinion, three fundamental myths. Firstly, it is the myth of the supreme, transcendent “kingdom”, the tsar of which is the Creator. It is the prototype of the earthly fatherland. It is considered as a “heavenly homeland”, in which good and the Truth triumph. Secondly, the myth of Holy Russia, the guardian of the religious truth. Thirdly, the myth of the “good tsar”, the defender of the Russian land, faith and guardian of the ideal of the Truth. The “good tsar”, in the popular consciousness, was regarded as the executor of the divine will, as the bearer of the highest Truth, that is, the truth given by God, the truth being the ethical basis of national existence.

The monarch appears to be not only a political or religious figure but also an important element of the universe in general (“one sun is shining in the sky, and the tsar is on the Russian land”). As a sacred figure, he has a special connection with the past. The tsar acts as the heir to the heroes of the past and fulfills their mission in the present, which is symbolized by special attributes (scepter, orb, crown of Monomakh).

Archetypes inherited from ancestors, as the content of the collective unconscious, manifest themselves in mythology. Mythology, on the other hand, becomes the ideological basis and means of legitimizing the tradition of the people. Myth in traditional society has a significant impact on people’s lives. It defines not only cult actions but also behavior, as well as activities in other areas of life, including in politics. The myth of the “good tsar”, the defender of the Russian land, faith and guardian of the ideal of the Truth, has become, in our opinion, the cultural basis of the Russian monarchy as a political tradition.

According to E. Shils, activity in line with tradition is actually improvisation on a topic inherited from ancestors. The interpretation of tradition always depends on its carriers. It is not something static due to the fact that its carriers strive to improve it [4, p. 27].

Tradition can be defined as an experience fixed in collective stereotypes, which is concentrated and repeated in human communities. A complex society that includes a number of subsystems can be considered as a system of traditions. The central, system-forming link of such a complex is a set of worldview attitudes regarding the fundamental problems of human existence, cultural and social order. Such a link determines the significance of various aspects of human existence and their role in the cultural and political identification of society. In agrarian societies, tradition acts as the main social connection between people. Production here is primitive and undeveloped. This is why tradition is decisive for all spheres of life. This is how traditionalism, a specific worldview and the corresponding way of life, arises.

According to V.P. Makarenko, it has the following characteristics:

- 1) The dominant form of worldview is religion. It performs a regulatory function (in parallel with secular law or independently).
- 2) The world in the traditionalist worldview is reflected as something homogeneous and undivided. Social order is a natural continuation of the divine world order.
- 3) The main property of the social order is its invariability.
- 4) There is no criticism of the social order, just as there is no individual freedom associated with the choice of activity’s type and behavior’s model.
- 5) The lifestyle of each generation is determined by patterns inherited from ancestors.

In such a society, the past is reflected in a multitude of traditions and sanctified. All traditions are considered to be equally important. This is why a change in any one of them is regarded as a threat to the entire social order. Power is considered a sacred matter, due to the fact that it maintains this order. Social control is carried out over all spheres of life. Conflicts are assessed as violations of the natural order. A return to the original state of society acts here as a means of resolving all possible contradictions.

This lifestyle is described in detail in writings by ethnographers and anthropologists of the 19th–20th centuries. The corresponding worldview is inherent in agrarian societies at different stages of their development. Traditionalist way of thinking can be inherent in both urban and rural populations. It is not recognized until an internal or external threat arises. A typical reaction of a representative of traditional society to the possibility of modernization is the following: “I must live as my fathers and grandfathers lived. We did not come up with this and not for us to cancel” [5, pp. 39–41]. The main political tradition of Russia, rooted in the depths of ethnic psychology and culture, in our opinion, is the monarchical form of government, which has undergone a long evolution but has retained its essence.

The principle of sole authority in domestic political culture began to form even under the tribal system, where elders acted as its bearers. Later, in the process of the centuries-old development of economic, political and religious institutions, oneman management is most fully embodied in the monarchy, partly in the activities of the heads of the Soviet state and the presidents of modern Russia.

In the distant past, the elders of the clans (some of them were even called princes) could not form a single and equidistant power from all clan communities. This is why it was decided to call the Rurikovich to reign. The important thing here is that the whole family received power. The contribution of the clan reign to the creation of autocracy was that it established the principle of the dynastic power, unusual for the consciousness of most people of that era. The family dynasty, in which power was transferred from older brother to younger, was later replaced by a family dynasty involving the transfer of power from father to son. Thus, the monarchy acquired an important quality: strong continuity, minimizing opportunities for political competition [6, pp. 206–209].

By the 15th century the authoritarian-monarchical way of organizing state power became dominant in the Russian principalities. It had an extremely important advantage in those days by making wars more successfully. This need was caused by the struggle with the remnants of the Golden Horde and had a serious impact on the development of the

Moscow kingdom. At the end of the 15th century, Moscow became the command center of a military camp based on the Russian North and operating on three “fronts”: western, southern and eastern [7, p. 116].

As a result of complex political processes associated with the cessation of competition among representatives of the Rurikovich clan, an autocratic form of monarchy was developed, the brightest embodiment of which was the reign of Ivan IV. Ivan the Terrible was the first to fully express the ideal of autocracy, which was developed by the Moscow princes after liberation from Horde dependence. The nature of royal power, in his opinion, is determined by the Christian idea of its divine origin. Such an idea involves unconditional obedience to the monarch, even if the tsar acts unfairly and cruelly. Ivan IV, comparing Russian autocracy with European monarchies, criticizes them for being to some extent carriers of the rudiments of democracy.

The most important thing here is the method of accession to the throne. The real monarchy, according to Ivan IV, should be hereditary, not elective [8, p. 107]. In addition, the power of the sovereign should be united and not even limited to the power of the holy. According to Grozny, the restriction of autocracy by the boyars is very dangerous, as they act as a source of rebellion and all kinds of political disasters. Subjects can refuse obedience in the only case, if the sovereign does anything against religion. At the same time, the tsar should not be responsible to anyone. The autocrat is responsible only to God.

A characteristic feature of the autocracy was the presence of an advisory body under the tsar. Most often, the Boyar Duma acted as such a body. Its members were дума clerks, дума nobles, boyars. The tsar received the boyars daily. In some cases, he trusted the Boyar Duma to independently develop political decisions, which were necessarily provided to him for approval. The Duma was not a full-fledged authority in the modern sense of the word. It did not have a permanent composition and regular meetings. In addition, the Boyar Duma did not have a clearly defined field of activity. We can say that the Boyar Duma was an obedient tool of the tsarist government and at the same time it made it possible for the aristocracy to take part in the development of political decisions. Periodically, the Boyar Duma was replenished with new members, and thus, transformed into the Zemsky Sobor, in which all classes of the state participated.

In addition to the usual composition of the Boyar Duma, the Zemsky Sobors included the episcopate and other “advisers”. It was also attended by representatives of the local elected authorities, nobles and merchants from cities, towns and settlements, representatives of “inhabitants of an uyezd”, i. e. free peasants. Any issues of national importance could constitute the competence of the Zemsky Sobors. Issues of new territories’ accession, war and peace, etc. could be among them. The Sobors of 1593 and 1613 even elected tsars.

Under the Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, the most important decisions were made at Sobor meetings. In 1649, the Zemsky Sobor compiled the Zemsky Code, a set of laws that regulated state, administrative, civil and criminal law in Russia. In 1650, an uprising took place in Pskov. To decide what to do with the rebels, the tsar ordered: “Sobor would be at the Pskov thieves’ factory”. At the Zemsky Sobor in 1653, the decision was made to include Little Rus in Russia. Obviously, the competence of Sobors was very wide. At the same time, their decisions had only recommendatory significance, with the exception of interregnum situations, when the Zemsky Sobor became the bearer of supreme state power [6, pp. 247–250].

Absolute monarchy is different from autocratic. It has an extreme concentration of power in the hands of the supreme ruler. In world practice, absolutism, as a rule, arose in the process of transition from feudalism to capitalism. Its specific feature is the presence of a powerful bureaucratic apparatus in combination with the elimination of any estate-representative institutions. The transformation of the Russian autocracy into absolutism was accompanied by attempts by the state to control various sides of public and even private life. Absolutism carried out military expansion for the sake of expanding the territory and Russia’s access to the seas. In addition, there was a tightening of serfdom [9, pp. 83–84].

The formation of absolutism in Russia is usually associated with the era of Peter the Great. Quite fair is the opinion, according to which, the essence of Peter’s reforms is the transition of Russian statehood to absolutism [10, p. 433]. In 1721, after the victory of Russia in the Northern War, Peter I took the title of “Father of the Fatherland, Emperor of All-Russian”. Thus, Russia officially becomes an empire. After Russia established itself as an empire, i. e. a multi-ethnic state with a large territory, the Russian tsar ceases to be “only the Russian tsar”. He is equidistant from all the peoples of the empire, since it is impossible not to move away from his ethnic group to be the ruler of all the others. The emperor cannot identify himself only as a representative of the state-forming people [11, p. 109].

It can be said that the formation of the imperial power of the absolute monarch made it possible to build a large-scale multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state. In the future, such a state could no longer exist without an absolute monarchy and the unitary territorial structure associated with it.

**Discussion and Conclusion.** Reliance on psychoanalytic and anthropological, comparative historical methods in the process of studying the political traditions of Russia presupposes an understanding of their essence and cultural and historical features. Here it is important to keep in mind that one of the central archetypes of the collective unconscious, which has found expression in the Russian political culture, is the archetype of the father (Father the Tsar). This archetype found expression in the myth corresponding to it, with which, in turn, the existence of a monarchical form of government is associated, as a tradition that played a huge role in the political history of Russia.

The Russian monarchy has undergone a long evolution, closely related to the growth of the power of the state. In its process, there was a transition from the princely power of the first Rurikovich to the absolutist power of the last Romanovs. The main trend in the framework of such development was the gradual concentration of the maximum power in the hands of the tsar. An attempt to transition to constitutionalism at the beginning of the 20th century led to the collapse of the monarchical form of government.

The Russian monarchy as a tradition was the most important element of the country's political culture, which largely determined its features. Deliberation and practical use of the experience of this political institution can play a positive role in solving the problems facing the modern Russian state.

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