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Group essay contest

“Unity in Diversity: Russia & the English-Speaking World”

Research work (essay)

“Legendary relics of Russia and Western Europe: a comparative aspect”

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Theses

Every country has relics that its people preserve and value. The main relics of Russia and England are crowns which symbolize spiritual enlightenment and immortality. We can read symbols in every part of these relics.

In Russia the Great Imperial Crown was created in 1762 for Catherine II. Its creators are the Swiss jeweler George Friedrich Eckhart and the diamond craftsman Hieronymus Posyer. This relic was worn by 8 monarchs from the Romanov dynasty. It is made of gold, silver and adorned with diamonds, pearls and a spinel. The crown could not be altered by the empress special decree. Its hemispheres represent West and East, and the laurel branches, entwining them, symbolize power. The central garland of large diamonds on the sides is adorned with oak leaves and acorn, a symbol of the immutability of royal power.

The predecessor of the Great Imperial Crown was Monomakh's cap. This is a golden cap, adorned with jewels and sable edging. There are many versions and mysteries of this relic's origin. For the first time Monomakh's cap was mentioned in Ivan Kalita's will in 1339. Ivan III's grandson Dmitry was crowned with the Monomakh's cap in 1498. In Russia this hemispheric cap symbolizes the sky and the sun. This relic adorned the heads of Russian rulers for 178 years.

English precious relic, the Crown of St. Edward is housed in the Tower of London. Only once in a lifetime England's precious relic, the Crown of St. Edward, is placed on the head of a monarch. Like the Russian crown, the English one is made of gold and silver and adorned with diamonds, pearls, sapphires, emeralds and rubies. The English crown underwent numerous changes: it was altered for the coronation of each monarch. Its stones are symbolic and have their own names.

Relics help us appreciate the connection between past and present and that we should be grateful to those people and events that have given us the lives we lead.

Legendary relics of Russia and Western Europe: a comparative aspect

Heavy is the head that wears the crown.

English proverb

Every country has relics that its people preserve and value. Often, they are related to historical events of the past. Relics are greatly appreciated. They require a careful and reverent attitude.

In our essay we would like to write about some important relics of Russia and England which evoke admiration, shrouded in legends and stories. These are crowns. A crown is a majestic symbol of supreme temporal and sacred power, evocation of dignity, glory and victory. In all world religions “a crown symbolizes spiritual enlightenment and immortality”¹.

“If you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday”². So, now we are going to move back in time to 15th century when these splendid relics decorated the heads of the greatest monarchs.

Fyodor Dostoevsky said of Russia «...its culture and history are unique and have no analogues in the world»³. The uniqueness of Russia is also seen in the history of imperial crowns. After all, only Russian monarchs were crowned in a golden cap, adorned with jewels and sable edging. It was only much later, in 1762, that the Great Imperial Crown was created for Catherine II, after the pattern of the monarchs of England and France. But let's go back to the 15th century. In this earlier period of Russian history, in 1498, Ivan III's grandson Dmitry was crowned with the Monomakh's cap (Picture 1).

There are many versions of this relic's origin. One of them suggests that it was presented to the Moscow princes by Uzbek, the Golden Horde khan. In another

¹ Tressider J. Dictionary of symbols. Moscow: FAIR-press, 1999. C. 221.

² Pearl S. Buck. All Pearl S. Buck quotes | Pearl S. Buck Books.

³ Dostoevsky F. Articles about Russian literature. Saint-Petersburg: Nauka, 1993, vol. 11, pp. 12-47.

version it was a gift from Konstantine Monomakh. According to the third legend, Byzantine emperors sent an expedition to Babylon. It was then that Monomakh's cap was discovered among other treasures. There is also a theory that this is not a men's cap, but a Tatar women's headdress. Under the fur, fastenings for temple decorations are still visible.

For the first time Monomakh's cap was mentioned in Ivan Kalita's will in 1339 (Picture 2): "...And from my clothes to my son Semyon a red pearl coat, a golden cap..."⁴ According to researchers, the matter concerns specifically Monomakh's cap.

The weight of Monomakh's cap is 966 grams. Not so heavy, is it? So, why did Alexander Pushkin wrote: "You are heavy, Monomakh's cap"⁵ in his work "Boris Godunov"? (Picture 3) Tsar Boris said it after the news about the appearance of the man who claimed to be Ivan the Terrible's son. This expression is used metaphorically and means that a person burdened with power carries a huge responsibility. This relic adorned the heads of Russian rulers for 178 years.

Monomakh's cap is kept in the Armory Chamber of the Moscow Kremlin. Its material value cannot be estimated. However, in the Inventory of the Moscow Armory Chamber at the end of the 19th century, almost all exhibits were valued, and Monomakh's cap was valued at 1992 rubles.

Why does the cap have a name? At that time on the European continent, it was fashionable to give coronation regalia names of heroes or kings. Perhaps Ivan III and his descendants, who were in constant contact with the Holy Roman Empire, decided to do the same and named the cap after a distant famous ancestor, Vladimir Monomakh.

And now let's move from the Armory Chamber to the Diamond Fund of the Moscow Kremlin and admire another relic, the Great Imperial Crown (Picture 4).

⁴ Cherepnin L. Spiritual and conventional charters of great and appanage princes XIV–XVI centuries. Moscow - Saint-Petersburg: Academy of Science of the USSR, 1950.

⁵ Pushkin A. Collected works. Moscow: Fiction, 1975, vol. 4, p.219.

The future empress ordered a new attribute of state power from the Swiss jeweler George Friedrich Eckhart and the diamond craftsman Hieronymus Posyer. Catherine instructed her chamberlain Betskoy to break up outdated state jewelry and use them for the new crown. Besides stones, 1 pound of gold and 20 pounds of silver were allocated for making the crown. This relic was very heavy: it weighed 1993.8 grams (Picture 5).

It took master craftsman two and a half months to make the crown. On September 22 (October 3 according to the new style), Russian subjects saw this masterpiece at Catherine II's solemn coronation. Since 1991, it cannot be exported. Its evacuation is only possible in case of war.

Catherine II's Great Imperial Crown became a permanent attribute of coronation ceremonies. The son and heir of Catherine II, Paul I, equipped the crown with a special rim that could be adjusted to fit the head of the reigning ruler. It was worn by 8 monarchs from the Romanov dynasty: Catherine II, Peter III (posthumously crowned), Paul I, Alexander I, Nicholas I, Alexander II, Alexander III, and Nicholas II. The crown was last worn for its intended purpose in 1906 during the opening of the First State Duma in the George Hall of the Winter Palace.

The crown has endured much in its lifetime: after the revolution, there were attempts to secretly sell it, but this became known. By personal decree of Stalin, the sale of imperial treasures was stopped. To allow all people to admire this relic, a replica of the Great Imperial Crown was created. Another miniature copy of the crown is enclosed in a Fabergé Easter egg, which Alexander III ordered as a gift for his wife Maria Feodorovna in 1885.

The crown is adorned with over 5000 jewels with a total weight of 2858 carats, the largest of which is a red spinel weighing nearly 400 carats.

Now let's move back in time to 17th century England and witness the coronation of Charles II. This is a very solemn moment, as only once in a lifetime England's precious relic, the Crown of St. Edward, is placed on the head of a monarch. It

weighs slightly more than the Great Imperial Crown of Russia and is housed in the Tower of London. The predecessor of this crown, the Palatine Crown, created in 1370, can be seen in the Munich Treasury (Picture 6).

Like the Russian crown, the English one is made of gold and silver. Both are adorned with diamonds and pearls but on the Crown of St. Edward, we also see sapphires, emeralds, and rubies. On top of the Russian Imperial Crown there is a spinel. Unlike Catherine II's crown, that could not be altered by the empress special decree, the English crown underwent numerous changes: it was altered for the coronation of each monarch.

Both crowns are filled with symbols. In the Crown of St. Edward, the stones are symbolic and have their own names: St. Edward's Sapphire, Cullinan II Diamond, Stuart Sapphire, Black Prince's Ruby (Picture 7). On the Great Imperial Crown, the composition itself is symbolic: its hemispheres represent West and East, and the laurel branches, entwining them, symbolize power. The central garland of large diamonds on the sides is adorned with oak leaves and acorn, a symbol of the immutability of royal power.

In conclusion, one can say that relics help people understand that a country and its people's life is endless if descendants preserve their memory. Legendary relics of a country help us touch its history, feel our connection and involvement. Relics help us appreciate the connection between past and present and that we should be grateful to those people and events that have given us the lives we lead.

Annex

Pictures



Picture 1. The Monomakh's cap. It is kept in the Armory Chamber of the Moscow Kremlin.



Picture 2. Ivan Kalita's will, 1339. This will is housed in Russian State Archives of Ancient Statements.



Picture 3. "Boris Godunov" by Alexander Pushkin with the phrase: "*You are heavy, Monomakh's cap*".



Picture 4. The Great Imperial Crown. It is housed in the Diamond Fund of the Moscow Kremlin.



Picture 5. Catherine II's Great Imperial Crown became a permanent attribute of coronation ceremonies.



Picture 6. The Palatine Crown, created in 1370, can be seen in the Munich Treasury.



Picture 7. The Crown of St. Edward, England. It was altered for the coronation of each monarch.

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