The Idea of World Domination in the Public Consciousness in Europe in the Early and Developed Middle Ages

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The article explores a public thought and public consciousness in the early and developed Middle Ages in Europe. It reveals the presence of the idea of world domination in the public mind of medieval Europe. The article also discusses the specificity of the idea of world hegemony in the public consciousness in the studied period. It explains the change of the idea of world domination in comparison to the previous period (Ancient World). There are numerous examples of people pretending to the world domination. The author used historical sources, as well as works of the famous Russian and foreign researchers.

Keywords: Early and developed Middle Ages, medieval Europe, world domination, world empire, world hegemony, world sovereignty, public thought, public consciousness, Crusades, Attila, Charlemagne, Otto I, Otto II, Otto III, Gregory VII, Henry II, Frederick I, Frederick II, Richard the Lionheart, Philip II.


Research area: theory and history of culture.

Introduction

The ideas that originated in ancient times continue to develop in the Middle Ages, has a strong impact on people’s minds, form a certain course of actions of the rulers and their subjects. In ancient times, a number of countries, including China (Kriuk, 2016), India (Kriuk, 2015), Egypt and the countries of Mesopotamia (Kriuk, 2014) carried out numerous attempts to establish global hegemony. Medieval Europe is just beginning the path of its development on the world stage, while Rome (Kriuk, 2015) has won many victories over the nations of the Ancient world, is trying to turn the idea of world domination into reality, to become the ruler of all nations. By the beginning of the Middle Ages the Western Roman empire will fall and the palm of victory will go into the hands of other countries. And the European states will be these countries that, in practice, based on the experience of the ancient states, will carry out
numerous attempts to usurp power in the whole world. The European States in the analyzed period were primarily agrarian, feudal relations were a frequent practice, subsistence farming dominated in that period, and commodity-money relations were poorly developed. The studied period, in contrast to the countries of the Ancient world, is characterized by an exceptionally strong role of the church and a high degree of ideologization of society. Christianity becomes a single religion and the basis for uniting Europeans and forming a single European civilization. By the middle of the Middle Ages the European states become the strongest in the known world, the process of European integration and the idea of the world hegeomy to spread along with cultural and religious customs begins. In today’s world, the European states are among the strongest in the world arena, most states try to get into the European Community, the processes unfolding in different regions of countries near and far abroad can directly affect safety of the peoples of the global space, which makes the world domination topic particularly relevant.

The purpose of this article is to explore a public thought and public consciousness of the Middle Ages relying primarily on written sources and literature and to identify the specifics of its existence in European countries in the present historical period.

Relevance of this problem is of scientific and practical significance.

The scientific significance lies in the fact that in modern literature there are almost no works, in which a public thought and public consciousness of the medieval Europe are analyzed in this context.

The scientific novelty of this work is to try to examine the studied issue as a complex taking into account its historical development in the light of the idea of world domination in the public consciousness.

The practical significance of this work lies in the possibility of using the work material to conduct training sessions on the selected topic.

Before we proceed to the analysis of literature on the subject let us reveal the meaning and content of the concept of public consciousness. Public consciousness determined the lives of people in many periods of time, and the era of the Middle Ages was not an exception.

A contemporary researcher Spirkin has defined and expressed the essence and content of public consciousness very precisely: “Public consciousness is the views of people on the phenomena of nature and social reality expressed in a natural or artificial language, works of spiritual culture, social norms and attitudes of social groups, people and humanity as a whole” (Spirkin, 2006).

Spirkin also defines the essence of public consciousness: “The essence of public consciousness is that it can make sense of social existence only under condition of the simultaneous active-creative transformation of it” (Spirkin, 2006).

It is noteworthy that the content of public consciousness includes “...a set of generalized concepts, ideas, theories, feelings, morals and traditions” (Spirkin, 2006), through the prism of which the idea of world domination came up.


The era of the Middle Ages inherited the ideas that emerged in the era of the Ancient world – one of these ideas is the idea of world
Andrei V. Zberovskii, Marina N. Kriuk. The Idea of World Domination in the Public Consciousness in Europe…

The imperial idea of Alexander the Great caused a positive response in the public consciousness of medieval Europe and found broad audience to turn it into reality, there is no dispute about the presence of the idea of world hegemony in the studied period.

Turning to the analysis of the studied literature on the subject it is logical to start with the question: who was the first to claim to sovereignty over the whole world?

Traditionally, history of the Middle Ages begins with 476, with the fall of the Western Roman Empire, but we believe that it is appropriate to start with the Great Migration in the context of the studied problem. At the beginning of history of medieval Europe the Great Migration takes place. Attila (434-453) – the ruler of the Huns created a huge power that stretched from the Volga to the Rhine. The image of the leader formed the basis of “The Song of the Nibelungs”, and it has traditionally been considered that the personality of Attila is embodied in the image of Etzel – one of the heroes of this work. The might of Etzel is unlimited: in the Song Etzel is called “powerful” (Admoni, Zhirmunskii, Korneev, Sigal, 1972) and “lord” (Admoni, Zhirmunskii, Korneev, Sigal, 1972). Military superiority of Etzel is obvious: “the lord of the Huns had a huge amount of battlers” (Admoni, Zhirmunskii, Korneev, Sigal, 1972) and had three dozen states.

And if you deign to wed my noble lord,

The power of twelve great crowns is your reward,

And you are free to rule three dozen countries that he conquered.

(Admoni, Zhirmunskii, Korneev, Sigal, 1972)

One of the first states founded in medieval Europe is the Frankish kingdom. The most important source on history of the Frankish State is the Salic law. We have analyzed the document, which drew us to the following conclusion: there is no mention of world domination, and the praise of the people of the Germanic tribes is very modest. “The Frankish people is nice, created by god, strong in arms, steadfast in a peace treaty, wise in advice, noble in body, undamaged in purity, excellent in posture, brave, quick and restless, converted to the Catholic faith, free from heresy” (Gratsianskii, 1950).

Most researchers agree that the first person to attempt to conquer the world was Charles the Great (768-814). A. Khriakov analyzed numerous materials on the life of Charlemagne and drew attention to the following fact: “Eastern policy of Charles the Great, like all his undertakings, was rooted in the Christian imperial idea” (Khriakov, 2014). D’iakonov and Antonetti believe that Charles the Great tried to recreate the Western Roman Empire, but Balakin adheres to a completely opposite point of view considering that the state created by Charlemagne is neither reflection nor continuation of the Western Roman Empire.

After analyzing literature on the subject we can conclude the following: Charlemagne was not the first person who started to carry out imperial
Andrei V. Zberovskii, Marina N. Kriuk. The Idea of World Domination in the Public Consciousness in Europe…

policy in medieval Europe, although there are numerous references in historical sources about his desire to take over the world.

In the early Middle Ages, Otto I (936-973) founded the Holy Roman Empire in order to create a world state. “The empire created by Otto I was perceived by contemporaries as the fulfilment of hopes associated with the imperial idea, which continued to live after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire” (Balakin, 2004).

Otto II (961-983) and Otto III (983-1002) continue to follow and implement the imperial policy of their predecessor, and examples of its implementation will become paradigmatic. Otto III sought to revive the Roman Empire in the past greatness, dreamed of creating a single world Christian power with the centre in Rome and Aachen, and probably in Constantinople. The era of the Crusades that lasted from the late 11th to the last third of the 13th century became the quintessence of the idea of world domination.

Describing the era of the Crusades it is impossible not to note the work by M. Zaborov “Crusaders in the East”, in which the scientist describes the reality of the 11th century, highlights the chronological framework and the motives of the Crusades, lists persons seeking to create a “universal monarchy”.

M. Zaborov notes the following motives:
- desire to buy luxury goods in the East;
- “the landless” and “the poor” sought to improve their position outside the sea, and at the same time to atone for the sins committed at home;
- persistent desire of feudal lords to acquire land;
- dominance at sea.

The above-mentioned motives are quite traditional for military marches both for the era of the Ancient world and the Middle Ages, but along with these motives Zaborov adds another motive – claim to supremacy over the whole world – “A desire of Gregory VII (1073-1085) to implement a theocratic program “to create a universal monarchy headed by the papacy and to force the Christian kings to oath to the apostolic throne” (Zaborov, 1980).

In the 12th-13th centuries, Crusades were supported by the Church, moreover, they were approved by it and surrounded by the halo of the holy martyrdom, and the secular authorities also contributed to the Crusades. G. Brunel-Lobrichon and C. Duhamel-Amado in their study (Everyday life in the time of troubadours. The 12th-13th centuries) analyze the life of poets paying attention to the following fact: “When taking service of the lord, troubadours have to support their patrons in all their feuds” (Brunel-Lobrichon and Duhamel-Amado, 2003), which becomes an unwritten duty of a vassal to his lord.

Troubadours glorify their lords attributing many great deeds to them and mention of the aspirations of kings to dominion over the whole world.

If I were a mighty king,
The whole world would be yours.
But I will bring your name into repute,
Right to the Far East.

(Brunel-Lobrichon and Duhamel-Amado, 2003)

The researchers mentioned above point out numerous works of poetry of the troubadours that reflect the public consciousness of the 12th-13th centuries, where the presence of world domination in the minds of masses can be traced very clearly. Here is one of the examples:

The successor of Roland affairs
Was zealous
At war like an eagle,
Fearless in battle,
The whole world was brought
In amazement by giant
From the Nile to the countries,
Which border with ocean.
(Brunel-Lobrichon and Duhamel-Amado, 2003)

In his study Zaborov lists persons claiming
to the world domination, including Henry II
(1154-1189), Frederick I (1152-1190), Frederick II
(1197-1212), Richard the Lionheart (1189-1199),
Philip II (1179-1223) (Zaborov, 1980).

The Crusades continue in the 13th century,
one of the famous campaigns of the period is the
Albigensian Crusade initiated by Pope Innocent
III (1198-1223). “The Song of the Albigensian
Crusade” in this source still glorifies the church
power and the Pope.

His Holiness the Pope! You are a stronghold
keeping us from evil,
The Holy See gives you the great rights.
(Belavin, Morozova, 2011)

A famous Italian politician and a poet Dante
Alighieri (1265-1301) declares in favor of the idea
of a secular universal monarchy: “Italy would
have been a garden, Rome – a spiritual capital,
the Pope, the personification of one of the two
universal powers, would have taken care of the
spiritual salvation of mankind, and the Emperor
would have led it along the path of earthly
prosperity” (Antonetti, 2004).

The ideas that were put forward by Dante
Alighieri about arrangement of the world state
are considered in the monograph by Zh. Kembaev
who comes to the following conclusion: “for Dante
such arrangement certainly was a comprehensive
universal state, namely, the revived Roman
Empire” (Kembaev, 2012).

The idea of creating a universal monarchy
is haunted by thinkers of the next generation. A
successor of Dante, Pierre Dubois (1255 - 1323),
moves the centre of the world from Italy to
France: “for the world it would have been better
if it obeyed France, because the French are better
than any other nations, and they know how to
wisely handle the power” (Kembaev, 2012).

Italy will not be able to forget the glory that it
has been surrounded by in the era of the Ancient
world, and the Italians could feel this glory in full
putting into practice the idea of world domination
after the capture of Rome by the barbarians and
the destruction of the Western Roman Empire.
This idea will be in the minds of the Italians in
the subsequent generations, but this idea will
take a new guise. S. Kaspe in his study devoted
to the empire highlights its signs: “the empire
is characteristic of a desire for the unlimited
hegemony” (Kaspe, 1997). The researcher also
considers the issue of conditions of formation of
empires, and one of such conditions is a sacred
nature of power of the ruler. A functional analysis
of the imperial systems includes expansion that is
supported by “a claim to the imperial universal
sovereignty” (Kaspe, 1997). In the Ancient times,
nobody could doubt the sacred power of the
Roman emperor, his power was unlimited, but in
the Middle Ages the power of the pope has got
a sacred nature. Alexander VI from the Borgia
family takes up a post of the pope, and while
serving as pope (since 1492-1503) his power
is unlimited, and the people during a festive
procession will carry a banner saying “Rome
was ascended by Caesar, now it is greater under
the sceptre of Alexander, Caesar was a man, but
Alexander is a god” (Chastenet, 2004). Alexander
VI has had a huge impact on the entire course
of Italian history, moreover “to some extent he
considered himself the heir of Augustus and
dreamed of becoming a Master of the world”
(Chastenet, 2004).

The debate around the literary and political
heritage of the great Florentine, Niccolo
Machiavelli, continues for a long time. Reflections
of Machiavelli are most fully expressed in two
treatises “The Prince” and “Florentine Histories”.
We should not oppose these two works, in which
the author explores the forms and methods of
political organization of society. “The Prince” and
“Florentine Histories” complement each other
well, although it is not coincidental that “The
Prince” attracts the attention of the followers of
the Machiavelli’s creative work.

In the political treatise, Machiavelli
describes Florence complaining about the decline
in the country and the fact that the rulers do not
have the desire for true glory: “and so it happened
that in the whole world, especially in Italy, many
areas turned out to be deserted compared to the
Ancient times. And all this was and still is a
consequence of the fact that the rulers do not have
the desire for true glory, and the republics do not
have commendable orders” (Machiavelli, 1973).

A perfect image, but not the image of the
perfect ruler. Creating the image of the ruler,
Machiavelli sets himself two tasks – to set Italy
free from the foreign domination and then unite
it. The immediate objective of the Emperor is
liberation of Italy, while uniting the country is
more a dream, fulfilment of which Machiavelli
is afraid of and do not even dare to hope for
(Machiavelli, 2013).

In his work Niccolo Machiavelli creates
the best image of the ruler that, in his opinion,
modern Italy needs (Machiavelli, 2013). The ruler
does not aspire to world domination, he does not
claim to power over the world like Sargon of
Akkad (24th-23rd centuries BC) or Tuthmosis I
(1504-1492 BC). The Machiavelli’s Emperor is a
civilized hero destined to transform contemporary
Italy. Italy is united and indivisible. Machiavelli
accurately thought through the creation of the
new state, but it still remains a theory that failed
to be realized in practice, the 16th century could
not offer a worthy candidate. The attempts to
nominate world leaders also proved fruitless in
all the subsequent centuries. The 19th century
fulfilled Machiavelli’s dream, the world never
saw the ruler. The image of the ruler created by
the talent of Machiavelli is a mythical hero who
cannot find a place in the real world.

**Conclusion**

All of the above-said allows us to draw the
following conclusions:

The states of the early and developed Middle
Ages in practice show their unequal opportunities
of implementing the world domination ideas.

The idea of the world hegemony in
medieval Europe firmly entrenched in the
public consciousness and possessed the minds
of prominent public and political figures. By the
middle of the Middle Ages the European states
become the strongest in the known world, begin
the process of European integration, and follow
the idea of world hegemony to spread along
with cultural and religious customs. The idea
of world domination inherited from the Ancient
times gradually starts to evolve in the Middle
Ages – the Emperor (representative of the secular
power) will deal with claims of the papacy
(representatives of the ecclesiastical authority)
to rule in the established Christian world, since
Christianity in the analyzed period of time
becomes a universal religion capable of uniting
all humanity into a single Christian empire. The
idea of unity of the peoples in the Roman Empire
turned into the idea of uniting all mankind into
the Christian empire, Christianity will play a role
of the general connecting factor. Rome ceases
to be the only possible centre of the world, there
will be new cities pretending to become a global
centre. Apogee of the desire to create the world
states is reached at the end of the 12th – beginning
of the 13th centuries and is associated with the
era of the Crusades. The states more and more
specifically learn about the real dimensions of
the global space, become aware of the scale of
expansion required to fulfil this idea. The list of persons who claim to world dominance is growing, and the era of the Middle Ages does not end the attempts to turn the idea into reality, the policy of world hegemony is being implemented right up to the present day, only in other ways.

1 Under the public thought we understand the thought of leaders, well-known figures, scientists, philosophers, poets and researchers.
2 Under the public consciousness we understand the collective perceptions.
3 years in power

References


Andrei V. Zberovskii, Marina N. Kriuk. The Idea of World Domination in the Public Consciousness in Europe…


Идея мирового господства
в общественном сознании Европы
в раннем и развитом Средневековье

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В статье исследуется общественная мысль и общественное сознание эпохи раннего и развитого Средневековья в странах Европы. Выявлено наличие идеи мирового господства в общественном сознании Средневековой Европы. Показана специфика бытования идеи мировой гегемонии в общественном сознании в исследуемый период. В статье рассматривается изменение идеи мирового владычества по сравнению с предшествующим периодом (Древний мир). Приведены многочисленные примеры лиц, претендовавших на мировое господство. Автор при написании данной статьи использовал исторические источники, а также труды известных российских и зарубежных исследователей.

Ключевые слова: раннее и развитое Средневековье, средневековая Европа, мировое господство, мировая империя, мировая гегемония, мировое владычество, общественная мысль,
общественное сознание, крестовые походы, Аттила, Карл Великий, Оттон I, Оттон II, Оттон III, Григорий VII, Генрих II, Фридрих I, Фридрих II, Ричард Львиное Сердце, Филипп II.

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