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The “Russian World”: The Birth of a Mythologeme

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The expression *Russkii mir*, or “Russian World”, has played a key role in Kremlin propaganda since the late 2000s. It is usually seen as a rhetorical or ideological instrument. There is nothing new about this concept: it was constructed already in the mid-19th century, primarily but not exclusively by Slavophiles under the influence of European nation-building ideologies and Romanticism. The article traces this concept’s origins and demonstrates that it can be best described as a mythologeme which eventually became central for Russia’s civil religion.

Ideology, Mythology and Civil Religion

If we try to find a short expression that would designate the epicenter of the Kremlin’s primary ideology over the past decade, the expression *Russkii mir*, the “Russian World” (RW) will likely take first place. It defines the Kremlin’s attitude towards other countries, especially those that had been Soviet republics in the past, and also the expectations which the regime has for Russian citizens. Since 2007, the Russian World Foundation¹ has been in operation, and a magazine bearing the same name has been published². This name is also used in numerous other projects.

This ideology (before 2022) has been described in detail, first of all, by David Lewis, Bo Petersson and Brian Taylor³. Several publications have already described how the RW concept has been used as an ideological and political tool, especially in the diplomatic sphere. Among the most important authors, we may list Valentina Feklyunina, Aliaksei Kazharski, Marcin Kosienkowski, Marlene Laruelle and Mikhail Suslov⁴; a recent update was proposed by Sean Griffin⁵. Still, global scholarship usually regards it as a recent invention which is not true. The very concept, as will be demonstrated below, was widely used already in the middle 19th century and for a good reason.

The RW concept can of course be understood as a propagandistic cliché. But propaganda seeks to justify the actions of the government, while RW ideology appears to be more religious than logical, something of the kind that drove the Crusaders. One of the main promoters of the RW has been Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill. The complete list of his sermons and other texts dedicated to this concept is too long to give here; suffice it to say that a collection of his works entitled “Seven Sermons on the Russian World”⁶ was published in 2015, when the Ukrainian crisis had already begun, and the next year was awarded a Russian literary prize “for the best book of the year”.

The RW is often linked with the concept of “Moscow as the Third Rome” (this will be discussed in greater detail below) but these two are clearly not identical concepts. In an article published on the official site of the Moscow Patriarchate, Pavel Kuzenkov suggests: “the Third Rome is a mystical image of the ‘last country’ of world history, the rulers of which would bear a lofty moral responsibility for the destinies of all humankind and who ought not to place their hope in the transient riches, power and glory of this age”, but solely in God”⁷.

Thus, the Third Rome concept is labeled as something imaginary and even suspicious, which is very different from how representatives of the Russian Orthodox church speak about the RW.

The present article aims at tracing the origins of the RW concept in Russian culture and its relation to the concept of "Moscow as the Third Rome". What distinguishes these expressions from other ones like "Holy Russia" is that they are not just sentimental epithets, they were regularly used as concrete ideologemes with a certain content. My hypothesis is that the RW can be described best as a mythologeme deeply rooted in the "collective unconscious" (to borrow Carl Jung's term) while the "Third Rome" indeed belongs to a more superficial level, that of political propaganda and rhetorical flattery.

Many state ideologies can be described as "civil religion". This term was coined by Rousseau in his book *The Social Contract* (1762) and was introduced to modern scholarship by R.N. Bellah, who examined the state ideology of the USA as an example⁸. Since then, this term has been used to refer to a nation's set of ultimate values, as expressed through its public rituals, symbols, ceremonies and sacred places. Explanatory narratives can be found behind all of these; for example, on monuments to national heroes depicting their achievements that changed the life of the nation and set an example to follow. Such narratives can be called myths; this does not necessarily mean that they are factually inaccurate (although they sometimes are) but rather focuses on the role they play in the life and belief structure of a society. The Jungian term "collective unconscious" can be used here to stress that a human society usually shares certain beliefs that strongly influence people's behavior even when they do not realize it; these beliefs need to be uncovered first if we want to understand how they work.

The basic core element, motif or theme of a such a myth is called its *mythologeme* (also spelled *mythologem*). One could call these simply "myths" of course, but a myth is a rather long narrative consisting of many elements and inseparably connected to other narratives of the same kind, so if we need to single out a specific idea or motif, "mythologeme" is a more useful term.

One of most helpful definitions of myths as a way to explain the world was given, in my opinion, by Y. Meletinsky: "Myth is a way to conceptualize the world, both the one outside a person and the one inside. To a certain extent, it is a product of primeval thinking. The mentality of myth is connected with collective consciousness ... rather than personal experience. Primeval thinking is diffusive, syncretistic, inseparable from the emotional, affective and motor sphere. This is why myth anthropomorphizes nature; this is where universal personification, animism, and metaphorical identification of natural and man-made objects come from. The universal coincides with the concrete and sensual ... Myth identifies the form and the content, the symbol and the symbolized; there is often no distinction between a subject and an object, between a sign, a thing and a word, between an essence and its name, between an object and its attributes, between singular and plural, time and space, origins and qualities of an object. Mythological conceptualization is not void of logic, but this logic is clumsy"⁹.

One may also add that mythological thinking is something basic and inherent to human nature. This is why it is so often used by politicians, especially by dictatorial regimes. In fact, many ideological constructs can be described as mythologemes¹⁰. They are used not only for propaganda purposes; they propose fundamental answers to many crucial questions. The present article regards RW as a mythologeme and aims at investigating its origins in Russia in the 19th century.

The “Third Rome” and the “Russian World”

First of all, it must be said that in the modern Russian language, the word *mir* is homonymic and means both “world” and “peace”, a remarkable coincidence which was widely used in the Soviet propagandistic slogan *miru mir*, i.e. “peace for the world”. Before the orthographic reform of 1918 these homonyms were at least spelled differently: *миръ* “peace” and *миръ* “world”, but now they are homographs as well.

The second word *mir* “world” (the one formerly spelled *миръ*) is also frequently used in the sense of “community”, especially in the proverbial expression *vsem mirom*, “all together, unanimously” (lit. “by the entire world”). It was used, for instance, when a local rural community was building a church or something equally important for its members. So, the title of the famous saga by Tolstoy *Voyna i mir* is rightly translated into English as “War and Peace”, but for a Russian reader it immediately evokes special overtones unavailable for speakers of other languages: Tolstoy is also speaking about the ways in which the Napoleonic wars changed the entire world and reshaped Russian society.

If we take this homonymy as having a serious cognitive effect in the minds of native speakers of Russian, we see that the very expression *Russky mir* can be understood by Russians not only as “The Russian World” but also as “The Russian Peace”, and even “The Global Community of Russians”. It immediately evokes in Russian minds the concept of *Pax Romana*, “The Roman Peace” (established by the dominance of that empire over hundreds of small kingdoms and city states that had previously been engaged in constant wars between themselves). The benefits of such an order of things and its connection with the Christian faith is clearly expressed in an ecclesiastic chant which can be heard on Christmas Eve at the Orthodox Great Vespers of the Nativity: “When Augustus became supreme ruler of earth, the multiplicity of rule among men ceased. And when You became human from the spotless one, the worship of many heathen gods also ceased. Then the cities came under one worldly rule; and the nations believed in one divine supremacy. The nations were enrolled by an order of Caesar; but we believers were enrolled in the name of Your Divinity, O our incarnate God. Wherefore, great are Your mercies, glory to You”¹¹.

These allusions to the Roman Empire may at first glance seem irrelevant, but one should not forget that Muscovy, as well as the Russian Empire, regarded itself as the continuation of the Roman Empire. The famous doctrine “Moscow is the Third Rome” has been sufficiently studied by modern scholars; first and foremost should be mentioned Boris Uspensky who has build a conceptual framework for its study¹² and Nina Sinitsyna

who proposed the most detailed description¹³. The recent state of the discussion can be found in Jardar Østbø's book¹⁴.

The most important question of this discussion is the degree to which the whole idea was taken seriously and to which it was propagandistic. Perhaps like with many other ideas in history, it was a mixture of both, and proportions depended on context personalities. Here, just a few most important facts will be given.

The very phrase appeared for the first time in the Paschalia (calendar for the Easter and Lent cycles) composed by Metropolitan Zosimus in 1492. It calls Grand Duke Ivan III the "new Constantine" and his capital city of Moscow "the new Constantinople", although this may have been simply an exercise in flattering rhetoric.

This concept was explained in more detail in a private letter of relatively low importance: around the year 1523, a monk named Filofey from the Pskov region wrote a letter to a Muscovite official staying in Pskov named Misur-Munekhin. Filofey's letter was noticed and elaborated into an official appeal presented to Grand Duke Vasily III. The message was clear: after the first Rome in Italy became heretical and the second Rome, Constantinople, fell to the Turks, Moscow became the capital of the only state on earth that keeps the true faith, which lays a special responsibility upon its rulers. The final appeal to the Grand Duke had three practical suggestions: 1) to control the way people perform the sign of the cross while praying (anticipating the great dispute of the Russian *Raskol* of the 17th century); 2) to make sure there is no lack of bishops in the country (anticipating the role usurped by the tsars, starting with Peter the Great, as the supreme authority in the church); and 3) to purge the land of what Filofey calls "sodomy". We may note that centuries later the last point has become one of the key topics in Kremlin propaganda; somehow, male homosexuality is repeatedly regarded as the worst possible sin by admirers of the strong hand in Russia, but the reasons for this lie beyond the scope of our present study.

The Third Rome doctrine gradually became an integral part of Russian state ideology, especially after the reforms of Peter the Great, who transformed the essence of Russian statehood, even if it changed considerably in appearance, first of all, geographically¹⁵. The first Russian emperor, dissatisfied with the city of Moscow, built a new city and named it after St. Peter, the patron saint of Rome. He eagerly accepted Roman titles (*imperator*, *pater patriae*, etc.) and gave Latin and, less often, Greek names to new power structures (Senate, Synod, collegium etc.). Finally, he assumed a Messianic role, which was clearly recognized and accepted by his followers¹⁶. In doing this, Peter was relying on a lengthy tradition going back to the Byzantine era, and even Biblical theology, as I have already discussed in another paper¹⁷.

It has been argued by Marshall Poe¹⁸ that the doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome played a relatively insignificant role in the official discourse of Muscovite and Russian rulers until the latter 19th century, when it was revived by the Slavophiles. Then, as Daniel Rowland has demonstrated¹⁹, the rulers of Moscow in the 16th and 17th centuries spoke of this city rather as the new Jerusalem than as the Third Rome. In fact, both

designations meant more or less the same: now Moscow was The City, the political and religious center for the Orthodox world (that is, the Russian world).

What is characteristic for a mythologeme is that it does not necessarily need to be explicitly retold, demonstrated and proven every time it is mentioned; rather, it is taken for granted and needs no arguments at all, an accepted presupposition. For instance, when Ivan the Terrible was corresponding with Johan III of Sweden (his first letter, written on January 6, 1573)²⁰, the first and the most important thing for him was that he was a direct descendant of, and heir to, the Roman emperors (a fictional lineage of course), while the Swedish king was of common descent. This claim is based entirely on the Third Rome doctrine; there are simply no other supporting facts or arguments. As the tsar was talking politics, he was speaking about Rome, while in religious discourse he repeatedly referred to his domain as the new Israel, and so did his main opponent, Andrei Kurbsky, when he used biblical quotations to criticize the tsar's tyrannical rule²¹. They strongly disagreed about the personality of the tsar but they completely agreed about the sacred status of his tsardom.

All of this, of course, was not yet the mythologeme of the RW, but we may notice certain components that were later used by the creators of this mythologeme, namely:

1. There can and must be just one state in the world which holds, defends and propagates the true faith.
2. Such states were (in turn) the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire and Muscovy, the third and final.
3. Such a state can be called a "new Rome" when talking politics and a "new Jerusalem" in a religious context, but these alternate titles denote essentially the same thing.
4. The role played by the monarch of such a state is unique and very important not only for the state itself, but for all of humankind. In a way, it has messianic and eschatological aspects.

One can add that such political messianism is not unheard of among other nations of the Judeo-Christian tradition, especially in the 19th century with its Romanticism and nation-building. One calls to mind, e.g., how Adam Mickiewicz in 1832 (after another Polish revolt was crushed by the Russian army) called Poland "the Christ of nations" in his epic poem *Dziady* "Forefathers' Eve" (part III, scene 5) and this had a great impact on the history of Polish thinking, even up to the present day²². Poland, however, was one out of many Catholic nations while the Russian tsardom and later empire was proud to be the only stronghold of the true Orthodox faith on Earth which made the messianic claims yet stronger.

Still, the doctrine of the Third Rome was not sufficient for nation building. It concerned the tsar and his tsardom while having very little to do with ordinary people and their daily life. A new idea, or a new mythologeme was badly needed, and it appeared in the mid-19th century. It was linked to the Third Rome but in no way limited to it.

The “Russian World” in the Russian Empire

The expression “Russian World” (*Rustii mir*, spelled *Русиѣ мѣръ* in Old Russian) occurs in ancient Russian sources sporadically, with the first known occurrence in a sermon from the 11th century, “A Word on the Renovation of the Church of the Tithes” (the first stone church in Kiev built by order of Grand Prince Vladimir)²³. There, it appears as a synonym for the expression “Russian land” (i.e. Kievan Rus). Anyway, at first this expression was used rather rarely and was obviously not yet a self-standing concept.

The National Corpus of the Russian Language²⁴ allows us to see how a certain word or a phrase was used in Russian texts in different eras. There are no occurrences of the expression *Russky mir* in modern Russian texts before the 1830s²⁵. Afterwards, in the 1830s to 1850s, this phrase appears in a rather broad and even nostalgic sense; it is occasionally used when speaking about something distinctly and characteristically Russian, sometimes in opposition to other Western nations, and sometimes in reference to the idealized past.

Thus, in his memoirs, a high-ranking official named Modest Korf calls Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev “a relic of the Russian world and a true monk”²⁶. Literary critic Aleksander Besstuzhev-Marlinsky claims that in St. Petersburg, crowded by foreigners, one could meet “neither the Russian world, nor a single word in Russian”²⁷. In contrast to that, writer Mikhail Zagoskin reports that Moscow “is not just a city or a capital, but the entire Russian world”²⁸ because here you can meet all the strata of Russian society and see all the aspects of their life. When writer Ivan Goncharov was describing an expedition on a Russian military ship around Africa and Eurasia, the very first thing he called this ship was “a little Russian world with four hundred inhabitants”²⁹. And literary critic Valerian Maikov calls the peasant poet Alexey Koltsov “a painter of the Russian world”³⁰.

All of these examples date back the mid-19th century, and the National Corpus provides us with quite a few more of the same kind. They seem to be characteristic of the romantic European nationalisms of that period when people within the same nation state (or longing for such a state, as was the case in Germany) started to look for a common identity based on ethnicity and culture. Similar concepts can be found in other languages, like *Deutschheit* in German or *Hispanidad* in Spanish.

As demonstrated by sociologist Dmitry Travin³¹, such sentiments in Russia were largely influenced by the same type of ideology as 19th century Germany’s, known as *Sonderweg*, “a special way”. Cyril Hovorun has applied this observation to the concept of the RW³². This was offered as an alternative explanation for why Germany in many ways was behind the mighty empires built by the British and the French: we are not any worse, we are just different. Needless to say, the Russian Empire, which appeared on the European stage only in the 18th century, badly needed some kind of similar justification for its position among the great nations. So, in 1856 literary critic Aleksandr Druzhinin, while discussing the European (primarily French) influence on Russian literature, called for the Russian world to exhibit greater intellectual independence³³.

A particularly remarkable quotation comes from another literary critic, Pavel Annenkov, who in 1857 described the Russian author Nikolay Gogol's sojourn in Rome: "By then, he was generally convinced that the Russian world is a separate sphere with its own laws, completely unknown in Europe"³⁴. This was, as Annenkov reports, Gogol's answer to an anonymous proposal to convert serfs in Russia into independent farmers, as had been done in Germany. We must not confuse Annenkov's memoirs with Gogol's own position, but as far as we can judge from Gogol's own letters, this was not a distortion. Here, the RW is an explanation for why Russia is different and unchangeable, always equal only to itself. It is also important that for Annenkov, the RW presumably included Ukraine, which Gogol, being Ukrainian himself, loved so much and often described in his prose.

This was certainly the case also with Nikolay or Mykola Kostomarov, a historian of the 19th century who is now described as both Russian and Ukrainian (with alternate first names), and he would probably agree to such a twofold identity. He repeatedly spoke about the RW as a (potentially) united political body consisting of all the territories inhabited by eastern Slavs³⁵. The historical mission of Muscovite rulers was to unite them all in one state, of course including Ukraine. Kostomarov's respectful opinion about Ukrainians ("Southern Russians", in his terminology) is clearly summarized in the following statement: "It appears that there are two Russian nationalities, not one, and perhaps still more will be found, yet they are all Russian... The Southern Russian tribe in its previous history has proved its unreadiness for statehood. It rightly ought to have yielded to the Great Russians and joined them, since the common task of Russian history was to create a state. Now, the Russian state is formed, developed and strong. It will be natural now for a people of opposite foundation and character to begin its autonomous development while influencing the Great Russians."³⁶

As we can see, Kostomarov acknowledged the uniqueness of the Ukrainian people (and even left a potential place for Belarusians as well) and opted for their autonomy within the empire (perhaps the most liberal thought that was allowed to be expressed in Russia at that moment). In fact, Kostomarov's *Knyhy bytiia ukraiins'koho narodu* ("Books of Ukrainian People's Genesis") written in the middle of the 19th century became one of the first if not the very first manifesto of the emerging Ukrainian nationalism, but this is outside our focus now.

In the same period of time, a conservative journalist named Mikhail Katkov issued a different statement, which included all the ethnic groups of the Empire in the RW: "There is one dominant people in Russia, and one language, elaborated over the centuries in life and history. Still, there are also many tribes in Russia, each of them with its own language and special customs, there are entire countries with their own character and legends. But all these diverse tribes, all these heterogenous areas on the outskirts of the great Russian world — they are its integral parts and feel their unity with it because they are in a single state, under a single ruling authority, i.e. the Tsar, the living and ultimate representation of this unity"³⁷. This is a very clear political manifesto issued in 1863, and the first public proclamation of the RW doctrine as the core element of the civil religion of Imperial Russia.

Another characteristic depiction of this idyllic picture can be found in Konstantin Leontyev's 1869 description of what Moscow Slavophiles held as their ideal: "The Russian world as autocratic, with an advisory *Zemskaya Duma* and full freedom of action for the ruling authorities; Russian songs and Russian customs; fervent faith and Orthodoxy, graceful and beautiful; and purity in family life, full of internal freedom, happiness and love".³⁸ The mythologeme was now ready for use. However, there was no consensus about it even among conservatives such as Konstantin Leontyev, who did not choose to join the circle of Moscow Slavophiles that he was talking about. Needless to say, Slavophiles and other conservatives had only limited influence on the imperial government, as well as their opponents, the so-called Westernizers.

Starting in the 1860s, this concept of the RW became commonplace, even banal. From 1871 to 1880 a rightist daily newspaper entitled *Russkii mir* (Russian world) was published in St. Petersburg. In 1880 it merged with *Birzhevoi vestnik* (Stock Exchange Herald) under a new and rather neutral title *Birzhevye vedomosti* (Stock Exchange Records). In this newspaper, the RW was sometimes described in opposition to other countries and cultures (always European), but usually without any jingoism. Recently, Aleksandr Dolinin demonstrated how statements about the imminent death of the West and its pernicious influence on the RW in the 19th century became commonplace in Russian thought and hardly needed to be proven at all³⁹. If the West is going to perish anyway, why fight against it?

But as soon as the actual battle started in 1914, the concept of the RW was used to explain the endless sacrifices that the Russian people were called upon to make. Here is a quotation from philosopher and theologian Sergey Bulgakov in 1916 (he probably would not have repeated these sentiments a couple of decades later): "Some may consider it inappropriate to care about abstract things during an earthquake. We, to the contrary, regard focusing on the ultimate questions of religious thought as a sort of spiritual mobilization for waging warfare in the highest domain, the spiritual, the domain in which external events are prepared and sometimes even predestined. In particular, this collision between Germanism and the Orthodox Russian world has been brewing for a long time. It has become visible only now, but the spiritual war did not break out recently. For a long time, a hot, dry wind has blown in our direction from the Germanic West and carried desert sand with it to cover the Russian soul with a shroud of ashes and damage its normal growth"⁴⁰. Once again, if not for stylistic differences, this could easily be a quotation from propaganda on Russian TV today, only "Germans" would be replaced with "Anglo-Saxons".

Another important text in which the RW is called Orthodox appears in the Acts of the Council of the Russian Orthodox Church from 1917-18. Here the council itself was called "the hope which the Orthodox Russian world has kept alive for generations"⁴¹ (a phrase coined by archpriest Pavel Lakhostsky on August 16, 1917). Nevertheless, although this religious affiliation between Orthodoxy and the RW is factual, it is only part of the essence of the total RW concept.

Although the year 1918 is technically beyond the chronological limits of this paper, I would like to quote one more text written early this year. It does not mention the very expression "*Russkii mir*" but it nicely

summarizes the mixed feeling that many Russians have towards “the collective West”, including their striving for recognition and appreciation. Now, the Revolution gave them the opportunity to speak freely and to opt for a new turn of events. This is the famous poem “The Scythians” by Aleksandr Blok:

That Sphinx is Russia. Grieving and exulting, And weeping black and bloody tears enough, She stares at you, adoring and insulting, With love that turns to hate, and hate — to love. ... Come join us, then! Leave war and war’s alarms, And grasp the hand of peace and amity. While still there’s time, Comrades, lay down your arms! Let us unite in true fraternity! But if you spurn us, then we shall not mourn. We too can reckon perfidy no crime, And countless generations yet unborn Shall curse your memory till the end of time.⁴²

Conclusions

Now, we can summarize the principal characteristic features of the RW mythologeme as it appeared before the Communist Revolution of 1917, and was to an extent shared by all who were using this concept, starting from the years 1860s:

1. All Eastern Slavs, united by their common language and culture, belong to the RW, and the differences between their “tribes”, however noticeable, are only secondary.
2. An important role in the formation of the RW is played by the Orthodox Church, although the primary grounds for inclusion are not religious faith but ethnic and cultural communality.
3. The RW is predestined, eternal and unchangeable in its essence, any external influence can only aim at spoiling it.
4. The historical mission of the RW is to create and maintain a strong national state, including (but not limited to) all the territories inhabited by Eastern Slavs.
5. Other ethnic groups can be included in such a state if they are unable to build their own nation states of equal might and splendor. Within the RW, however, they are not expected to change their way of life.
6. Such a state can be governed by an autocrat only. Democracy is incompatible with the RW.
7. The RW is essentially different from the West but in no way inferior to it. The West can neither comprehend nor accept the RW as its equal, so the West repeatedly seeks to destroy it.
8. The fate of the RW is very important for the entire world (Messianic connotations). Repelling Western attacks on the RW is in the end salvific for the West itself.

After the Revolution, the very expression “*Russky mir*” became rare and seemingly obsolete. Poet Mikhail Kuzmin, e.g., wrote in his diary (Leningrad, 1934); “I’m afraid that the Russian world has turned into Crete and Mycenae: one can be fascinated by them, but not live there”⁴³. But the very idea of a messianic civilization opposed by the West did not disappear, it just acquired new external forms under the Bolshevik rule. This is the way mythological thinking works: core mythologemes are constantly reproduced and transferred from one generation to another in many ways, appearances may change but the essence remains.

Much has already been written on Soviet Messianism as the continuation of the Third Rome theory, such as the book by Peter Duncan⁴⁴ and many others; Alicja Curanović and Kevork Oskanian⁴⁵ have demonstrated how this messianic idea lies in the very center of Kremlin’s foreign policy. When in the years 2000 ideologists were looking for ideas, they did not have to invent anything; just to adapt the already existing mythologeme to their needs.

A final brief example to conclude this paper. In Russia, just as in the USSR, New Year’s Day is probably the most important feast of the year. The main TV event ushering in the New Year is a show called “The Blue Spark”. At the stroke of midnight, this show has Russian celebrities making toasts, congratulating their compatriots and making statements of a propagandistic nature. Practically, it is a civil rite, an essential element of Russia’s civil religion.

Thus, during the very first hour of 2023, Russian viewers watched stand-up comic Yevgeny Petrosyan start his toast with the following words: “In the outgoing year, the West kept trying to destroy Russia without considering the fact that Russia is the load-bearing structure of the entire world. Yes, gentlemen, whether it pleases you or not, Russia is expanding”⁴⁶.

Born in the middle of the 19th century, in the year 2023 the RW mythologeme is still as vivid and strong.

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25. In a private conversation, a colleague from Sumy (Ukraine), Vyacheslav Artiukh, suggested that this expression was used in Ukrainian ecclesiastical literature starting from the 17th century and was borrowed from those Ukrainian texts by Russian texts in the 19th century. But so far this remains a hypothesis which needs further investigation. [↵](#)
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