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Miniatures from «The Tale of the Battle of Kulikovo» on the spiritual prerequisites for victory in battle

Abstract

The miniatures of the Kiprianov edition of «The Tale of the Battle of Kulikovo» have not been fully studied. D. S. Likhachev noted the need for further study of this version of the source, emphasizing its importance in elucidating the worldview and spiritual world of man. The aim of this study is to examine the miniatures of "The Tale of the Battle of Kulikovo" as a historical source that testifies to the spiritual prerequisites for victory. This problem is explored by identifying the meaning of the image and its connection to the main idea of the work. The miniatures of «The Tale of the Battle of Kulikovo» belong to the pictorial type of historical sources. They are an artifact of dual nature – symbolic and factually similar forms of illustration of material and spiritual objects. By visualizing the material aspect of events and by visualizing spiritual phenomena, the miniatures reliably convey their moral meaning. The author of the drawings, in chronological order, recorded the stages of spiritual preparation for victory. He «materialized» the Metropolitan's arrival in Moscow, «objectified» Cyprian's biblical logic of existence, and expressed the meaning of events. The Metropolitan cited the Gospel of Matthew, recalling the wisdom of the serpent and the prostrate of the dove. He saw the essence of the serpent's wisdom as being to surrender its body when struck, but preserve its head. Similarly, according to him, a "persecuted" Christian must surrender everything, but preserve his head, which is the Christian faith, at all costs. Religious symbolism, affirming the Russian army's spiritual path to victory, permeates the miniatures depicting the Grand Duke's meeting with Sergius, their conversation, their return to Moscow, and their departure for battle. The images present the cross as a symbol of the Way of the Cross and other symbols: the «blessing» of the «pectoral» or «hand» cross, the cross of Christ on the schemas of Peresvet and Oslyabya, the cross on church domes; bread as a symbol of spiritual nourishment; and a cup as the chalice of salvation. The miniature doubled the content of the story. It introduced the reader to the world of medieval culture, concretized the material side of events, objectified its ideal content, brought word and image closer together, and influenced the evaluation of the text. The image as a source reproduced an ideal model of the situation and was connected to the «world» with «etiquette authenticity». However, the author of the miniatures retransmitted the contemporary religious worldview of Cyprian, the princes, and the army, presented the direction and forms of the spiritual path to victory, and embodied in the miniatures authentic details of everyday life, including rituals, icons, and architecture.

Keywords

Cyprian, Grand Duke Dmitry Ivanovich, Sergius of Radonezh, miniature, worldview, symbol, image, authenticity.

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