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MODELS OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE ANCIENT EAST

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The article is devoted to the historical investigation of the peculiarities of the ancient Eastern models of political leadership. The accent has been made on the specific features of political power in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, China and India. It has been concluded that any leadership model has its own social and cultural context and reflects the ideological and cultural specifics of the era. The common feature of ancient oriental models of leadership is bright mystical-religious character – the personality of the leader is deified and endowed with special, supernatural qualities which are often opposed to natural and social being. The personality of the ruler is always a kind of sacred authority that is worshiped and which guarantees the integrity and stability of the cosmic order.

Key words: Ancient East, Leader, Ruler, Power, Oriental History, Culture.

Political leadership is a universal social and cultural phenomenon that has developed historically. In the course of history, it has undergone various changes. In order to more fully and comprehensively approach the study of the issue of political leadership it is necessary to trace the evolution of this phenomenon and consider not only Western, but also Eastern models of leadership. Leadership is a phenomenon that has arisen historically in the era of primitiveness. The first leaders were the “big men” and “chief men” described in the anthropological and ethnographic

literature, and later – the leaders and priests (shamans) or persons who combined both of these roles. Moreover, any leadership model has its own social and cultural context and reflects the ideological and cultural specifics of the era. Therefore, any leadership model can be named a socio-cultural model. The thinkers of the Ancient East substantiated the right to leadership by high moral qualities, merit, and qualities of a “hero-leader” (meritocratic approach). In the context of this interpretation the leader appeared to be a kind of “titan” endowed with physical, intellectual and moral uniqueness. The ancient Eastern leadership models have had a strong influence on the development of modern political leadership in Eastern countries, so the question of the features of ancient Eastern leadership models deserves close attention of scientists.

The aim of this article is the investigation of the peculiarities of the ancient Eastern models of political leadership.

As for scientific works which are devoted to the problem of political leadership in the Ancient East the following authors should be mentioned: V. Yemelyanov [1], L. Vacin [2], V. Jacobson [3], A. Bolshakov [4], S. Dmitriev, S. Kuzmin [5], I. Dyakonov [6], V. Androsoy [7], and others.

The concept of “the Ancient East” covers civilizations that have evolved from the 6–4 millennia BC and existed before the beginning of our era in a vast territory from Egypt to China. This completely conditional term is customary to denote a set of regions that are very distant but geographically and economically, sedentary and nomadic peoples, societies that have not yet emerged from the state of primitiveness, and tribes and nationalities that are more advanced in their historical development, speaking dozens of languages. The ancient Eastern monarchy is the first form of government in the history of mankind. She had unique features inherent only to her. In the states of the East relations of the social system and patriarchal life played a significant role in public life.

Slavery was collective or family in nature and only state slaves were wholly owned by the monarch. Such an organization of state power in the countries of the Ancient East is usually called Eastern despotism.

The political organization of ancient Eastern societies has two main levels. The first level inherited from primitiveness is associated with the community and communal (communal-tribal) self-government. The existence of communities is the most important feature of the history of the Ancient East. The sustainable preservation of the communal organization, collective principles in everyday life and production is explained by the peculiarities of the archaic economy which made it extremely difficult to use non-collective forms of coexistence on earth, as well as by the interests of the state itself, which sometimes considered it more convenient to control the population precisely through the communities. In some cases, however, communities ceased to exist precisely under the onslaught of the state and private exploiters, who destroyed communal self-government and turned communesmen into incompetent people. Property and social differentiation was constantly taking place within communities; it was here that relations of private exploitation develop most intensively.

At the second, highest level of the political organization of ancient Eastern societies, the state is located, that is, the supreme power and its administrative apparatus. The essence of the state's activity in the Ancient East (as in any other society) is confronting the external enemies of society, ensuring the functioning of the social vertical (in particular, the established relations of exploitation) and the system of mutual obligations within it. The specificity of the ancient Eastern state lies in the implementation of direct economic management within a vast sector of the economy, including in the form of creating a system of artificial irrigation, as well as in state support of cultural institutions. In the person of the ancient Eastern ruler the state was considered the supreme owner and manager of all the land, collecting taxes

and imposing duties on the entire population, except for the privileged strata or cities. Another part of the land directly belonged to the ruler, the state and its institutions (including temples, which often tried to turn into independent subjects of power and economy).

In addition to the late primitive communal-tribal system and eastern despotism, marking the beginning and end of the ancient Eastern politogenesis in the Ancient East there were all sorts of intermediate political forms, for example, the nomadic (from the Greek. “*Nom*” – “a region”) monarchy limited by collective communal institutions communities and includes one large urban center with a district. Therefore, nominee states in science are often referred to as city-states. Another intermediate form was the oligarchic (aristocratic) republic. Even in large kingdoms the power of the king sometimes had to endure the influence of collective aristocratic and democratic bodies.

Leadership and power in the Ancient East have always had a mystical and religious character. For instance, the Emperor in China was a “son of Heaven”, the most sacred supreme being (*Huang Di* – “most holy ruler”) although at first the rulers were called simply kings (*wang*). The emperor in the minds of the ancient Chinese had a special blessed power (*Te*) which is passed on to descendants and helps to create an imperial dynasty. But the dynasties in China changed quite often. Hence, the idea of the cyclical nature of history (the theory of the Heavenly Mandate) based on the principle of alternating periods of prosperity and decline [5, p. 12].

In ancient Egypt the pharaoh was considered an incarnate deity, a special being, separate from the entire universe. Pharaoh had no predetermined destiny and therefore, was free. Pharaoh’s body remained incorrupt, and after death he was reborn in the world of Eternity. The complete and free-will pharaoh was contrasted in the ancient Egyptian worldview to a changeable and transitory world. This opposition of the

conditioned and changeable world and the eternal God later took root in all Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) [6, p. 104].

The main function of the ancient Egyptian state was to mobilize the forces of society to fulfill important economic, political or religious tasks (maintaining the irrigation system, organizing military campaigns, and building temples) which led to the emergence of a system of careful accounting and distribution of all labor and material resources. It was under the jurisdiction of a large and ramified state apparatus that carried out its activities at three levels – central, nominal and local.

The central administration was headed by a supreme dignitary (*chati*) who directed the activities of the executive and judicial institutions. At the same time the army was withdrawn from its sphere of competence. Various departments were subordinate to him: overseeing the irrigation system, livestock, and artisans, organizing public works and collecting taxes, “six great courtyard” (courts). Each of them was divided into two divisions – for Upper and for Lower Egypt. The nominee administration headed by nomarchs copied the structure of the central power. The councils (*dzhajat*, *kenbet*) that governed the community settlements were subordinate to it. They monitored local irrigation systems and judged.

During the reign of the third dynasty (28th century BC) founded by Pharaoh Djoser there was an increase in state centralization and strengthening of the royal power: a single irrigation system was created, the bureaucratic apparatus was expanded, an active foreign policy was carried out, and special cult of the pharaoh-god was established. The pharaohs sought to rise above the aristocracy and make it completely dependent. First of all, they tried to establish control over the nominee administration by eliminating the hereditary power of the nomarchs.

However, this can only be achieved by the fourth dynasty (28th–27th centuries BC) during which Pharaonic absolutism reached its peak,

especially during the reign of Sneferu, Khufu (Cheops), Djedefre, Khafre (Khafren) and Menkaure (Mikerin). The practice of appointing nomarchs by the central government and their constant movement from nome to nome was approved leading positions in the central apparatus were in the hands of representatives of the reigning house. The cult of the pharaoh became exceptional; huge labor and material resources were mobilized for the construction of giant pyramids. Aggressiveness was growing in foreign policy; finally determined its three main directions – Southern (Nubia), Northeastern (Sinai, Palestine) and Western (Libya). As a rule, the military campaigns were of a predatory nature (capture of prisoners and minerals). At the same time, Egypt sought to establish systematic control over a number of territories for their economic development (Sinai, Nubia). The construction of the pyramids and foreign policy expansion led to an overextension of the forces of Egyptian society and to a political crisis, as a result of which the fourth dynasty was replaced by the fifth one (26th – 15th centuries BC). Its founder was Pharaoh Userkaf. Its representatives reduced the scale of construction of pyramids and make concessions to the capital's nobility (the highest positions ceased to be the monopoly of the reigning house). In order to unite society the cult of the god Ra was given a nationwide character (the concept of the origin of the pharaohs from Ra was approved). The stabilization of the domestic political situation allowed the resumption of an active foreign policy.

Foreign policy aggression was continued by the first pharaohs of the sixth dynasty (25th – mid-23rd centuries BC) – Teti, Piopi I, Merenra, Piopi II. However, under them the power of the nome nobility increased, primarily in Upper Egypt; the positions of nomarchs again became hereditary; representatives of a number of nomarchic clans occupied high positions in the central administrative apparatus and enter into family relations with the ruling house (nomarchs of Tina). Nomarchs were no longer buried near the

royal tombs but in the nomes. Their tombs were becoming more luxurious. The central government was gradually weakening, its economic opportunities were dwindling: the practice of immunity grants was spreading, the nomarchs were gradually establishing control over the tsarist farms. Under the last pharaohs of the sixth dynasty the royal power fell into complete decline. The political crisis of the middle of the 23rd century BC led to its fall and the actual disintegration of the state into independent principalities.

In ancient India the king was one of the seven elements of the monarchical state which also included ministers, the army, the village, fortifications, the treasury, and allies. The kshatriyas (military) most often became kings. In the religious aspect the king in the ancient Indian state was the sacred center of the world. The ceremony of consecration to the kingdom lasted for over a year and reflected the process of transition from chaos to order (*rita*). At the same time the king had to listen to the opinion of the people, and the people in some cases could remove him from power.

One of the most important sources that help to compose an authentic representation of both the personality and values of leadership in Daytime India is the treatise of Nagarjuna “Ratna-avali raja-parikatha” (“Precious verses of instruction to the king”) [7]. This treatise was addressed to the upper strata of ancient Indian society. He played an important role in the spread of Mahayana Buddhism and its support from those in power. The main goal of the author of Ratna-avali was to convince the addressee of the truth of the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism and its advantages, and the emphasis is primarily on the concepts of Great Love, Compassion and Service: “The king is a tree whose magnificent flowers – reverence, abundant fruits – donations, the shadow of a tree – tolerance, but it serves birds – subjects ...” [7, p. 135]. “Ratna-avali” in fact is a set of rules governing the moral character of the ancient Indian ruler, as well as his

rights and duties. The treatise repeatedly emphasizes that a truly great ruler should treat his people as children who need to be instructed and protected: “Guided by the desire to re-educate unworthy sons and out of compassion for them, it is necessary to resort to punishment, and not to curses or persecution” [7, p. 119]. The treatise expresses the general Buddhist idea of non-violence and the priority of moral purity and wisdom over brute force. Thus, the author says to the king: “The right of the strong is not for you. Only then the reign will be correct... and the Buddha Law will be established” [7, p. 211].

The modern Russian orientalist V. Emelyanov speaking about the anthropological turn in the modern sciences of the East focuses on the fact that the problem of personality inevitably raises the problem of biography. For the Ancient East, only biographies of rulers are possible which always express only what is due, and not what is, and the task of the source researcher is to consider the model of the ideal ruler of the real life path of the individual [1, p. 139]. The ancient East as a cultural space was charismatic (from the Greek *charisma* “God’s gift”). Society, natural and cultural reality were perceived there through the prism of faith and mystical views. This influenced the formation of the idea of the divine nature of power, as well as the sociocentricity of the Eastern worldview. “We” always subordinates the “Self”, unless it is the “Self” of the ruler, emperor, pharaoh, etc. It is no coincidence that in the East the dominant form of government was despotism. The absolute power of the political leader was combined with the vertical nature of social ties. The communal way of life and caste stratification were cultivated in every possible way.

On the one hand, the Ancient East gave rise to a socially passive personality type, not oriented towards leadership and individualism, towards manifesting one’s personal will. This was also facilitated by the retrospectiveness of the ancient Eastern worldview with its attitude “the

future exists in order to become the past". It is no coincidence that all revolutions in the Ancient East ended with a return to the previous way of life.

On the other hand, modern Orientalist studies indicate that the desire for power, leadership and self-affirmation of their Ego were not alien to representatives of ancient Eastern cultures [2, p. 126]. If a person of the modern globalized world is multicultural and builds his worldview, relying on the achievements of various cultural and historical traditions, striving to choose the best for himself from them, then in ancient times he could draw resources to describe his life and activity only from what was part of himself. Ancient Eastern human was included in the general order of things and events, his sense of self sought harmony between society, natural being and his Self. V. Emelyanov defines the Self as a "socially oriented Ego", citing as an example the Ego of a resident of ancient Mesopotamia, which, according to the researcher, was not passive at all but, on the contrary, was whole and "stroved for primacy, power, subordination and organization of other people" [1, p. 143].

In modern studies of the Ancient East, the emphasis is increasingly shifted from social laws to the individual and his inner world. It is impossible to fully comprehend the patterns of sociocultural development since the very unpredictability of human nature interferes with this. Any cultural tradition is rooted in the individual mental and creative characteristics of a particular person. Therefore, today the study of the history and culture of the ancient states of the East is being carried out more and more with reliance on the individual. And the most accessible research material in this case is material dedicated to the personalities of ancient Eastern leaders. For example, the Czech orientalist L. Vatsin devoted his research to the king of the Mesopotamian city of Ura Shulgi [2]. Russian historian V. Jacobson also investigated the personalities of the rulers of Ancient

Mesopotamia [3]. A. Bolshakov devoted his monograph to the study of the multi-component personality in the worldview of the ancient Egyptians, namely to such an element as the Twin (*Ka*) [4].

Therefore, models of leadership in the countries of the Ancient East are becoming an increasingly relevant object of research for historians, anthropologists and linguists. Their common feature is a pronounced mystical-religious character – the personality of the leader is deified and endowed with special, supernatural qualities which are often opposed to natural and social being. The personality of the ruler is always a kind of sacred authority that is worshiped and which guarantees the integrity and stability of the cosmic order.

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