

## POLITICAL SCIENCE

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### Political Ritual as a Practical Implementation of the Symbolic Content of Political Traditions

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the theoretical aspects of the study of political rituals. The essence, specificity and structure of political traditions are described. Such socio-cultural element as a ritual that penetrate into modern social awareness and play a key role in the social and political interaction are investigated in the article. The author comes to the conclusion that the tendencies of mythologization and theatricalization are inherent in modern political communication. The political ritual is an implementation mechanism of political mythology into the mass consciousness. The ritual is one of the main symbolic tools of politics. The ritual, serving the function of political socialization, draws the place of the individual within a certain political worldview, determines its behavior, role and the specific form of its activity.

**Keywords:** political tradition, political myth, symbol, political ritual

Political traditions, on the one hand, accumulate and remain in some forms of meaningful social and political experience of the nation that forms a constitutive basis of political culture, and on the other hand it is the mechanism of transmission, reproduction and further development of experience. From a content point of view, the political tradition is comprised of stable images of political reality and power, embodied in symbols, myths and stereotypes, as well as value-normative guidance of political consciousness and political behaviour of the samples, which are stored and played during the social and political transformations. They are the result of the development of society and reflect the historically developed social and political experience, which is passed from generation to generation.

Ritual is a practical implementation of the symbolic content of political traditions as a special model of political action. The ritual is a standardized set of cultural and symbolic content action undertaken in situations prescribed traditions. The coronation of the monarch, the inauguration of the president, parades, participating in social activities are the examples of political rituals. They are an important manifestation of political involvement or rather dissatisfaction. Thus, mass ceremony accompanying the rise to power of a new leader – a means of strengthening the legitimacy in terms of the involvement of the masses in politics, when the population of the state symbolically shared the glory and power of the leader.

Politics, as a particular sphere of society, can't exist without mythological grounding and ritualized expression. Rituality is a natural characteristic of policy. The political rituals carry on important functions. With their help one can justify and legitimize the usurpation of power, create public sense of the person's significance and belonging to the realization of country's political life, neutralize social conflicts and dissatisfaction with the government. The politics and the power are phenomena that do not fit into the frameworks of rational considerations, because they lean on and get their strength from people's emotions, education and life experience. The study of political rituals allows to see political and power phenomena in terms of emotions, symbols and their impact.

The ritual in the primitive society is the real existence of the myth. A gesture, a ritual, a performance are genet-

ically original forms of myth existence, quite different from its later existence forms as a mythological story. An archaic man actualizes the myth ritually, lights its existence through the reproduction of ritual structures. The political mythology is the result of a particular activity on the creation and distribution of inherent myths, ideologemes and other ideas of the policy that can significantly affect the state administration's object. The mythology creates the illusion of political events and processes, as the myth is convenient because it builds the arguments on ethic standards. The mythology transforms abstract social and political ideals into the certain images that can influence the subject.

The political ritual is an implementation mechanism of political mythology into the mass consciousness. The government certainly forms the mythological and ritual plan in which the mythological identifications realize. A certain political ritual can make such identifications positive as well as negative.

The ritual is one of the most important methods of the implementation of "mystical legitimation" into life. The myth actualizes through the ritual and the ritual is supported and provided by the myth. Most holidays in the totalitarian societies of the XXth century arise from the episodes of the glorious past of leaders and heroes. The ritual, as in the ancient times, was necessary for the reproduction of the sacred event's spirit. American sociologist D. Kertzer pointed the particular significance of ritual actions for political communication. He believes that people communicate through symbols, and the rituals are one of the important forms that combine symbolic meanings. D. Kertzer wrote that through the rituals "people develop their ideas of political institutions and the qualities of political leaders". The political understanding is performed by the mean of symbols and rituals, and the ritual, as an act by which symbolic is expressed, is a powerful weapon of the designing the political reality by ourselves" [1, p.75]. The ritual as an integral part of the political communication, is a standardized repeating of politically significant actions, ideologically (mythologically) authorized and dramatically staged with the aim of regularly confirmation and strengthening of the social and political order. Any rituals, including political, have three-member structure: they envisage the separation of the ritual participants from the everyday life, placing them in the extreme condi-

tions and, finally, the return to everyday life, but as a "sanctified". Such structure of the ritual is performed by the mean of procedural symbols that transport the nature of the collective actions into the minds of the ritual participants.

For the first time a comprehensive analysis of the ritual's socio-political functions was performed by E. Durkheim. His detailed rituals classification was based on the opposition "sacred" – "profane" and it became a starting point of the forming the concepts of the ritual in the functionalist's paradigms (E. Hofman, M. Douglas, B. Malinowski and A. Radcliffe-Brown, W. Warner and others) and psychoanalysis (S. Freud, E. Fromm, C.G. Jung and others). The structuralist interpretations of the ritual are also very important for the disclosure of the ritual's nature. According to this approach, a ritual is a structure that contains certain information that has to be decoded (A. Genep, K. Levi-Stross, E. Leach, V. Turner and others). Thus, V. Turner defines a ritual as a language, the elementary structures of which are symbols. Along with the works of sociologists and anthropologists the notion of ritual is included into a range of researches subject of philosophy, cultural studies, semiotics (A. Bayburin, I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, M. Eliade, R. Zhirar, G. Zimmel, L. Ionin, E. Cassirer, C. Kuhn, V. Toporov, E. Chepl and others). As a part of the political process, the ritual is studied at the works of B. Dubin, A. Karmadonova, Yu. Levada, K. Mannheim, T. Meyer, D. Misyunova, L. Morina, M. Moss, S. Potseluyev, H. Pocheptsov and others. The category of ritual is considered in the context of the issues of state protocol and ceremonial in the theory and history of public administration (H. Atamanchuk, P. Liadov, R. Uortman and others).

The ritual in the political context (from Lat. *ritualis* – ceremonial, *ritus* – a ceremony, a cult rite) can be defined as a standardized repetition of politically significant, ideologically sanctioned and dramatically staged actions with the aim of regular confirmation and strengthening of the social and political order.

In its original sense the ritual, as a phenomenon that was one of the originators of the sociogenesis, is an order of sacral actions, a ceremonial connected with the social ordering establishment or maintenance. The semantics of lingual definitions of the ritual, points on the immanent focus and indicates the proximity of the concepts of "sacred action" and "order".

Without establishing the goals of profound disclosure of the existing concepts of the ritual, we will only note its general features as the component of political life. The impact on the collective consciousness is the most important and the oldest purpose of the ritual. The social meaning of the latter is based on the group cohesion strengthening (B. Malinowski, E. Durkheim) and harmonization of the group psychological climate (C. G. Jung). The treatment to procedural symbols is in the base of the mechanism of the ritual influence. With the help of these symbols the meanings of collective acts are transported. The ritual can be defined as a sacred action based on the empowerment of the things by the specific (symbolic) characteristics, based on the structure of ritual action, that includes the following steps: a) the separation of the ritual participants from the everyday profane life; b) their transporting in the extreme conditions, c) their return in everyday life, but as a "sanctified", "initiated". The rituals are

performed within the frameworks of the symbolic systems (world view, myth, religion, ideology) that regulate the world perception and behavior of a human or a group. Moreover, the ritual is a constant semiotic structure that has the status of canon and has the meaning and the value in itself.

All abovementioned fully characterize the political ritual.

The first, the nature of the political ritual is in the multifold strengthening of the collective cohesion of the participants through the usage of ideological mythologems and procedural symbols (election program, election strategy visualization, action in the support of the candidate (party), voting procedure, etc.).

The second, the ritual, as a mean of social and political order legitimization, represents a role structure of the society in the policy. As a result, the participants of the ritual, revealing their social and political roles (elite – mass, women – men, "East" – "West", etc.) in the typed ceremonial situations, avoid individualization and responsibility for their own actions. On the other hand, the mechanism of social structuring inherent in ritual, transforms it into a management instrument of socio-political processes.

The third, the place and the role of political ritual in the society's life are defined by the model of its socio-political organization and the type of political regime that have emerged at a certain historical stage of its development. Thus, the systems of ritualized behavior by the providing the permanent reproduction of sacred world order, are the core of its social and political system in the traditional society. With the formation of the industrial society's principles, in the result of the democratization processes, the scenario of power significantly simplified, and the ritualization of political conflict occurs. The massive theatrical rituals (holiday demonstrations, military parades, march of athletes, etc.) become an inherent part of the totalitarian lifestyle in ideocracies of the XXth century, increasing the homogeneity, monumentality and collectivism of the society (K. Mannheim). On the current stage, political rituals remain a powerful tool of political technologies in the situation of dominancy of utilitarian oriented actions of an autonomous individual. The potential of latter one is based primarily on the aesthetic resource of the mass media (design of the election campaign, theatricalization of political events, etc.).

The fourth, the functions of political ritual are integration, structuring, social mobilization and maintenance of its integrity. After gaining the experience in intense group interaction and mutual understanding by the participants of political ritual, the consolidation of the society around a common value system occurs. That promotes stress relief, social conflicts resolving, social and power relations harmonization.

In addition, there are a number of classifications of political rituals in the politic theory. Thus, all the rituals are divided into positive and negative, including the political ones (E. Hofman, E. Durkheim). The first type of conflicts is essentially a metaphor of the closing of a participant to the sphere of sacred (for example, the ritual of floral offerings to the memorial of the Unknown Soldier, the individual act of voting). The second type is based on the system of prohibitions designed to separate the sacred and the vulgar (for example, a ban on the desecration of national symbols).

Rituals division on crisis and calendar is rather widespread (A. Bayburin, E. Durkheim). Thus, the crisis rituals (the President's address to the population when a disaster) have always been and remain the most efficient and the only possible ways of individual and collective experience of extreme situations. The calendar rituals are firmly tied to the particular dates and their regular, yearly repetition and are, in the essence, the reinforcement of a sense of inviolability of social and political order (New Year's Eve, regular election campaign).

A. Bayburin notes that the decomposition of time through the ritual envisages that the world stays the same as it was noted by the last ritual, despite the natural changes [2, p. 123].

Besides this, the rituals can be classified according to the massiveness and the structuring degree; according to the sequence of elements of amorphousness and structuring level; according to the characteristics of the group that performs a ritual for the sake of which it was created (L. Ionin). The rituals of transition or the rituals of initiation (E. Durkheim) or the ceremonies of transition (A. Genep) play an important role in social and political life. They are aimed at the establishing of new individual or collective identity, fixing the personal or the group status and integration of major status groups (the receiving of the citizen passport, the ritual of oath of newly elected government etc.).

The ceremonies of the intensification compose a separate group (E. Chepl and Ch. Kuhn) and are a set of rituals of different types that are produced to withstand the destruction of collective life balance, to intensify the cooperation among the community members, to increase the degree of group cohesion (constitutional assembly, referendum, elections).

Despite the desecralization and deritualization of modern life that greatly affects the "symbols desolation" [3, p. 257], the reducing of the rituals' role. The latter one continues to function, filling the corrected "modernized" forms with new content. Moreover, the common (on a national scale) understanding and interpretation of conventional filling of ritual components is a necessary condition of its effectiveness in the political sphere.

Speaking about the political rituals, one should understand more the ritualized behaviour rather than the ritual as the sacred event in its classical interpretation. According to the observation of L. Morina [4, p. 82], if the symbolic function has a big importance in the ritual, it is not expressed so clearly in the ritual behaviour. However the structuring of the ritualized forms allows them to function in a mode of semiosis and as a result of it the sign and the significance become almost indistinguishable.

The political ritual allows to objectify the organizational forms of interaction, to regulate the relationship between the different parts of the organization (society, group) to support the internal hierarchy, allows each member to identify himself with the organization (the community group), its leader and symbols. Through the ritual, each member of the political organization gains access to the corporate identification codes, signs, symbols of belonging to the organization, which in its turn, means the access to the certain privileges and benefits. The ritual, serving the function of political socialization, marks the individual within a certain political worldview,

determines its political behaviour and political role and also the specific form of its political activity. The nature of the ritual is archaic. This is expressed in the frequency of universal subjects, scenarios, models of social and political behaviour.

Political ritual is cyclic, and develops according to the stages of establishing the social groups, community, contains the universal scheme and behaviour models, which are necessary for the given stage of group development. For example, any of the New Years in modern Ukraine doesn't take place without the official greeting of the first person of the country. It is understood by most people as something familiar and necessary, as a part of the ritual.

The characteristic for the ritual moment of repetition the standardized actions brings the comfort in mass consciousness, frees the individual from the burden of personal freedom and responsibility, especially in crisis times of social development. In totalitarian societies mass theatrical rituals (festive demonstrations, military parades, etc.) are in big demand, because they enhance the homogeneity, monumentality and collectivism of totalitarian lifestyle. The political rituals are in the arsenal of different, particularly, electoral, political technologies that widely use aesthetic possibilities of new media in modern democracies. As in the previous epochs, modern political rituals give the "legitimate" regulated character to the rebellious sentiment and political conflicts, reducing the level of elemental dissatisfaction, stabilizing the existing political system. The rallies, meetings, conferences, presentations, sports and recreational events involving the participation of political actors, party conventions, marches of protests, inauguration of president etc. are also included into rituals. The political parties often use the traditions, rituals and mythological schemes that exist in the mass consciousness to present their ideas in the form that is the most understandable to the audience.

Thus, the ritual is one of the main symbolic means of politics. Understanding the real political process involves clarifying the following issues: how the symbolic field is included in the policy, the characters of managing it and how politicians manipulate it means, argues that ritual is an integral part of the policy of modern industrial societies, not only is the expression of cultural traditionalism of backward countries. The ritual, serving as political socialization, draws position of the individual within a political world view, determines its behaviour, the role and specific method of work.

With political ritual people are constantly informed about who owns the government. Ritual is often used as an important mean of political communication in interstate relations. In terms of social function that performs a ritual in society, political ritual has a number of features. Social integration is of a prior concern. Political ritual acts being flexible in the ritual of achieving the goal of integration is repeatedly changing ritual rules. Besides political ritual can be directed to disintegration, break of social stratification, changing of management system in society, creating conflicts and conflict zones in the community. Most clearly seen in mass are political rituals. These include ritual power struggles, strikes and revolution rituals and others.

Creating the political reality expressed by symbols political ritual is aimed to promote certain political actions

and to form political consciousness. Political ritual may under some circumstances be the core of the whole ritual system of society. Political specialization in this case includes not only certain rituals (social, religious, etc.), but the mainstream of the ritual system. Rituals struggle for power and for holding power are closely related. Symbolic circuit that underlie in them complement each other in structural and functional terms, together they form a complete circuit deployment of transition ritual. In addition, rituals that are holding power can use ritual and symbolic patterns of behavior on the methods of struggle for power

and vice versa. Political ritual allow each member to identify with the organization, its leaders and symbols.

Nature of political ritual is archaic, as evidenced by recurrence is universal stories, scripts, models, social and political behaviour. Political ritual is cyclic, it unfolds according to the stages of social groups, communities, includes universal and necessary for this stage of group development schemes and behaviours. The political myth-making, with its arsenal of ideas, backed by symbols and rituals is integral to the realization of political life, including such aspects as the impact on electoral decisions, mind manipulation, holding power etc.

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#### Zaslavska O.O. Political Ritual as a Practical Implementation of the Symbolic Content of Political Traditions

The article is devoted to the theoretical aspects of the study of political rituals. The essence, specificity and structure of political traditions are described. Such socio-cultural element as a ritual that penetrate into modern social awareness and play a key role in the social and political interaction are investigated in the article. The author comes to the conclusion that the tendencies of mythologization and theatricalization are inherent in modern political communication. The political ritual is an implementation mechanism of political mythology into the mass consciousness. The ritual is one of the main symbolic tools of politics. The ritual, serving the function of political socialization, draws the place of the individual within a certain political worldview, determines its behavior, role and the specific form of its activity.

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#### Заславская О.А. Политический ритуал как практическое воплощение символического содержания политических традиций

Статья посвящена теоретическим аспектам исследования политических ритуалов. Раскрывается суть, специфика и структура политических традиций. Рассмотрен политический ритуал как одно из главных символических средств политики, которое пронизывает современное общественное сознание и играет значительную роль в социально-политическом взаимодействии. Определены основные признаки ритуала как составляющей политического бытия и проанализированы основные подходы к его типологизации.

*Ключевые слова: политическая традиция, политический миф, символ, политический ритуал*