

OPPOSITION OF «ONE'S OWN – ALIEN» IN IMAGOLOGICAL CONTEXT (ON MATERIAL OF «JAPANESE» PAGES OF «FRIGATE “PALLAS”» BY I.A. GONCHAROV)

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Abstract

This article discusses the issue associated with the specifics of “one's own” and “alien” image functioning in the travel book by I.A. Goncharov "Frigate Pallas". Japan was defined as an object of relations, which the writer visited during the world expedition of 1853–1855. The authors of the article believe that not only I.A. Goncharov's thoughts and feelings as a Russian person were embodied in the "Japanese" pages of the work (his lifetime criticism wrote about his “Russian impressions” from visiting a distant country), but also the knowledge gathered from the sources published at the time of the trip, which also had a direct, lively look of a keen outside observer endowed with the gift of writing. Japan in the middle of the XIXth century was a closed state. This explained its technical backwardness, which was fixed by I.A. Goncharov, the supporter of the adoption of progressive industrial innovations coming from Western Europe. The writer was struck by the “savagery”, “uncultured” Japanese nature, and the “strangeness” of the Japanese appearance, and this contributed to their somewhat ironic portrayal in travel notes. In addition, this fixation reflected a certain “overlook” of the writer, who believed that belonging to Christian culture provides the basis for a negative assessment of those civilizations that are supposedly at the “pagan” stage of their development, according to the spirit of colonial ideas (Shintoism is a traditional Japanese faith, in which, as in Chinese Taoism, the concept of God as an absolute person was absent). Japan is “the kingdom of the Dream” for I.A. Goncharov, as well as Russia, by the way (hence, there is the place for “Oblomovschina” in Japanese life). At the same time, the writer notes that the Western countries did not do the necessary, due to which their image would have positive features in Japanese perception: the closed nature of island Japan was caused by the desire to preserve national identity, not to lose ethnic identity under the pressure of aggressive alien influences. Thus, Japan by I.A. Goncharov is not only the reflection of exotic eastern realities, but also a special “reality” in which one recognizes “one's own”, “alien”, and “distant” and “close” in a complex inner interweaving.

Keywords: Russian literature, I.A. Goncharov, “Frigate Pallas”, Russia, Japan, cultural reception, “one's own – alien”.

1. INTRODUCTION

E.A. Krasnoshchekova, a prominent scholar of Goncharov's work, drew attention to the fact that the Japanese chapters of the future "Frigate Pallas" appeared in 1855 as a separate book under the title: "Russians in Japan during late 1853 and early 1854. From travel notes by I.A. Goncharov", which testified to the special significance of these pages of the "journey". She did not agree with the long-standing statement of the critic A.V. Druzhinin, that "Russian pictures and Russian impressions" dominate in these chapters. E.A. Krasnoshchekova reasonably believed that "the text itself indisputably indicates that the second part of the title ("Russians in Japan ...") was important for Goncharov" [1, p. 182]. However, in our opinion, we must understand that, comprehending the world of the Japanese, the narrator kept in mind, first of all, Russia.

The author, before meeting in person, had a certain idea, which was then refined and filled with new life impressions. This first idea about the Japanese was based on the study of many domestic and foreign sources. Seeing the Japanese lands, the traveler exclaims: "The goal of ten months of sailing is achieved here. Here is this locked casket, with a lost key, the country into which they have looked so far with futile efforts, to conquer both by gold, and weapons, and cunning politics. Here is a large bunch of people ... who deftly flees from civilization, daring to live their own minds ... who stubbornly reject the friendship, religion and trade of strangers, laughs at our attempts to enlighten them ..." [2, p. 8].

This idea of the Japanese world as a "locked box", a closed, self-isolated country, will be preserved throughout the whole narrative. It is typical that the narrator entered the Nagasaki raid "with the heavy feeling with one enters the prison" [2, p. 9].

The Japanese researcher Yoshikazu Nakamura confirms the impression of a Russian traveler, saying that the arrival of the Russian embassy caused a stir in Japan: "The policy of closed doors has been held here for more than two centuries, only the Chinese and Dutch were allowed to conduct insignificant trade in the port of Nagasaki, the westernmost city of the country. Under the threat of the death penalty, all Japanese were prohibited from traveling abroad" [3, p. 412].

Spatial isolation led to the stop of time. The Japanese seemed like children. The narrator comes to the conclusion: "This is what it means to shut yourself off from everyone: you will quietly fall into childhood" [2, p. 39]. This impression was not with him alone. One of the naval officers who participated in the expedition, after another naive trick of the Japanese, also exclaims: "They are the children, stupid children!" [4, p. 14].

This secrecy was determined by the political system of Japan, when the council could not do anything without a shogun, and the shogun without the council, and both could do nothing without princes. The Japanese leadership protected its people from communication with foreigners. So, Japanese ships that left the country were forbidden to return. Any unauthorized gift could lead to serious consequences, which sometimes gave rise to comic situations when, for example, the translators brought an empty bottle, donated by the Russian sailor to the Japanese. Einosuke convincingly asked: "Let me send it back, otherwise it will be bad for those who accepted the gift. - "Throw in the water." - "It is impossible: we will bring it back, and you throw it yourself, please" [2, p. 166]. But the policy of "closed doors" also caused the technical backwardness of the Japanese...

From all that has been said above, the question of our article arises: in what light did Goncharov describe the country that chose the isolationist path of existence? How did it relate to the “alien” that needed to be known and the “familiar” well known from the details that he saw and knew at home in Russia?

2. METHODS

The fundamental research method was the system-integrated approach. It combines several methods. The following three methods have the greatest value: 1) historical and literary, 2) structural and semantic, 3) hermeneutic.

The content of the first method is that the study of a literary composition involves understanding of a specific historical era. As for the second method, its essence is reduced to taking into account the whole palette of intra-text relations. The text within its borders is conceived as a system of signs, a special model of reality. The third method is based on the art of meaning interpretation. The starting point of literary hermeneutics is the process of understanding the “alien” word and “alien” thought. Understanding is not limited to rational sphere and logical operations. It allows the participation of intuitive aspects of consciousness. In any text many meanings, explicit and hidden, are on the surface and hidden between the lines. The meaning of the statement is not only the meaning embedded in it by the author, but also what the interpreter was able to extract from it, that is, the researcher in our case.

We point out that the article takes into account the results of modern research that used methodological developments close to us (see: [5; 6; 7; 8]), as well as the classical works of Western Slavic literary scholars on the themes of I.A. Goncharov's works (see: [9; 10; 11; 12; 13]).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We emphasize the fact that the lifestyle of the Japanese unpleasantly impressed Goncharov, and this was reflected in the pages of the "Frigate Pallas". After all, a closed lifestyle determined the regularity, ceremoniality of Japanese life, and, in particular, the special nature of Japanese reverence.

Yoshikazu Nakamura, the researcher already mentioned by us, wrote that the meeting of the Russian embassy was the meeting of two different cultures, each of which was based on its own worldview system and its own way of life. The author of "Frigate Pallas", who a priori recognized the superiority of Christian culture, nevertheless, during the meeting with the Japanese world, saw, of course, not an equal culture, but, in any case, self-sufficient one. In addition to the independence of Japanese civilization, the author felt its exoticism. This, perhaps, explains the presence of a considerable number of ironic sketches of Japanese life. E.N. Krasnoshchekova believed that Goncharov's enthusiasm for the comic description of the oddities of the Japanese, in addition to explaining the nature of the writer's talent, is motivated aesthetically: “the subject is presented in an unusual perspective to attract increased attention to it” [1, p. 185]. G. Chkhartishvili pointed out that “the Japanese seem to be comic to Russian writers mainly during that era when it has not yet been found out that these short, incessantly bowing and smiling Asians can be feared. Goncharov described many hilarious episodes involving "natives" in the spirit of European colonial prose of the nineteenth century” [14, p. 194].

The narrator reports in the "Frigate Pallas" on the appearance of the Japanese: "One face is thick, fleshy, the other is long, thin, avian; eyebrows are archy, and a look that itself reports on the stupidity of the head; the third is pockmarked ... can't hide the upper teeth in any way ... They stand awkwardly, dropping down on their knees with the body, and for the most part look sleepily, listlessly: it's clear that they don't care, that this mass of people has no constant idea and purpose, what should be in the thinking crowd. They eat, sleep and do nothing else" [2, pp. 29–30]. The narrator does not yet suggest that these sleepy and listless people will show so much perseverance, energy, cunning in order to make it difficult for guests to take every step on Japanese soil, and then carry them away as soon as possible. Yoshikazu Nakamura reported that the impassive face of the Japanese was due to the ethics of the feudal period, which forbade to show any feelings on the face [3, p. 413].

The narrator at the beginning does not try to conceal that the Japanese are unpleasant in appearance: "long-faced and chubby, the swarthiest, and yellow, and lighter, blind-eyed and with bulging eyes And what jaws, what teeth! And all this climbed, climbed onto the deck" [2, p. 40]. Here, almost every word expresses the alienness of the "alien". And in the last sentence, the Japanese almost not regarded as people and become inanimate creatures ("everything"). In the same spirit, the traveler talks about Japanese soldiers: "it's hard to look at these figures without laughter, in skirts, with pigtails, and bare knees" [2, p. 44]. The pronoun "these" is very characteristic here. Linguists drew attention to the fact that "in texts describing some culture that is alien to ... the author, the attitude to it is formed lexically ... using demonstrative and indefinite pronouns "that", "some" before a nationally specific element" [15, p. 147]. Researchers at the same time noted the universal nature of such a reception of the "alien". It is known that L.N. Tolstoy wrote in his diary: "The Japanese sang - we could not help laughing". True, he immediately added: "If we sang with the Japanese, they would laugh" [16, p. 112].

The author's reception of the Japanese in the "Frigate Pallas" undergoes evolution. More than once the motif of "fox and crane" is repeated in the "Japanese" chapters of the book. For example, Russians and Japanese alternately keep from laughing, watching how the invited guests eat. It is noteworthy that here, on the shores of Japan, the traveler identifies himself as a European, updating the opposition "Europe – Asia" ("West – East"). If at first the traveler, lamenting, exclaimed: "Already this extreme East: for now, except for extreme boredom, there is no sense!" [2, p. 25], then, having got acquainted with the Japanese closer, he comes to a different conclusion: "in dealing with the Japanese, we must partly temporarily renounce European logic and remember that this is the extreme East" [2, p. 56]. In the "Japanese" pages the narrator notes the fundamental impossibility of comprehending an alien ethnos. The traveler admits that he is forced to change the assessment of certain aspects of the Japanese character. It is significant that the American oriental scientist Alan Watts, speaking about the Far Eastern world in the middle of the twentieth century, drew attention to the fact that the method of thinking of Asians differs from the European one, but this is just what is most interesting. "The challenge is to feel the difference in the way we understand things, which we least value. Our interpretation of Chinese philosophy turns out to be nothing more than a projection of European ideas, clothed in Chinese terms" [17, p. 245], which is fundamentally wrong, because it complicates a genuine dialogue of cultures.

It is characteristic that the traveler finds handsome that Japanese whose "face ... was European" [2, p. 30]. And the rest "do not have a lively look, a bold expression ... –

everything that a European so consciously owns" [2, p. 30]. The narrator, noting the European features of the face of this Japanese, suggests that he seems to be shy of his Japanese origin. In the eyes of young educated Japanese, the narrator feels the envy with which they look "at us and at everything European" [2, p. 71]. These Japanese, according to the narrator, are aware that their system has become obsolete, and that they are the future of the country.

The "Japanese" chapters show not only confrontation along the line of "one's own - alien", but also the universal principle. This is the figure of the charming old man Tsutsui, who led the Japanese delegation. "The old man charmed us the first time: such old people are everywhere, among all nations" [2, p. 154]. The motive for the unity of human nature is developing in depicting the image of Kawaji, an opponent in the Russian-Japanese negotiations. The narrator noted his unusual mind: "The mind is the same everywhere: smart people have common signs, like all fools, despite the difference in nations ... Why is he not a European?" [2, pp. 178-179].

The traveler is sure that the Japanese islands need a European vaccination, that only Christian civilization can change the country for the better. It is significant that Europeans and Japanese have different approaches to the problem of nature cultivation. There is a cult of work in Western culture, and it is important for a person to see the fruits of labor. "Life was lived in vain if a person did not leave behind more than before" [18, p. 71]. And the traveler in "Frigate Pallas" wishes, in the spirit of Faust, the following: the nature of Japan must be subordinated to the needs of a man.

Otherwise, the Japanese. They have moral activity in which "adding a thing to being, does not violate his connections, does not take away from him, does not interfere, but, on the contrary, considers himself to be one of its elements" [18, p. 70]. The narrator in the "Frigate Pallas" perceives Japanese landscapes through the filter of Civilization and Progress, and they annoy him because they don't look touched by the hand of a person. It is no coincidence that the traveler dreams of the day when the word of God will penetrate into Japan and the cross will be lifted up [2, p. 146].

4. SUMMARY

Thus, there is a "split" of Goncharov's consciousness. On the one hand, he gradually comes to the universal human nature of people, and on the other, he wants to "raise a cross" in Japan. However, this contradiction is apparent. The traveler is sincerely convinced of the need to "civilize" Japan, because he does not want to recognize the significance of the national identity of non-European ethnic groups. The Japanese show all the best features in spite of the European way of life. Although, of course, Goncharov was convinced that a universal future can be reached through the development of a national one. But, firstly, he said this in relation to his native, Russian people, and secondly, he was sure that deep ethnic traits could not be neutralized. It turned out that even with the triumph of European civilization in Japan, the national identity of the islanders will still not be lost, and only then they can contribute to the treasury of humanity.

However, a new conflict arose here. The existence of the development of various ethnic groups was admitted by Goncharov, but he considered it inexpedient to have other civilizations, besides European-Christian, as incapable of Progress. Ethnic groups could get a new life within the framework of European civilization. Nevertheless, the artist's paintings of the distinctive life of various civilizations, by their very diversity,

represented the natural picture of the world. Thus, contrary to Goncharov's intentions, who raised the cult of Civilization and Progress, the evidence of the significance and value of each ethnic group and culture is scattered in the artistic framework of the "Frigate Pallas".

5. CONCLUSIONS

Feudal, bureaucratic, closed Japan was voluntarily or involuntarily correlated with Russia in recent years of the Nikolay regime. The narrator felt the technical backwardness of Russia on the ship: The Anglo-Saxon powers entered the era of steam engines, about which Goncharov, the fan of comfort, wrote with admiration. There was its own "Oblomovshchina" in Japanese life. Nevertheless, Russia has made a longer way from Dream to Awakening than Japan. Therefore, in the "Japanese" chapters there are colonial sentiments that lead to thoughts of a special, Russian way of "civilizing" territories and peoples; these thoughts were most clearly and consistently manifested in the "Siberian" chapters of the travel book.

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