

# Egalitarian Utopias and Conservative Politics

Veche as a Societal Ideal within Rodnoverie Movement

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*Rodnoverie is a religion that seeks to revive pre-Christian Slavic spirituality. As the majority of contemporary Pagan religions, Rodnoverie is characterized by the antiauthoritarian spirit and avoidance of dogmatism. Similar vernacular and individualistic ideals can also be seen in the societal views of Rodnoverie. Rodnovers often present the veche, the ancient Slavic popular assembly, to be an ideal model of governance. Nevertheless, the representations of the veche may considerably vary. On the one hand, veche is employed to promote grass-root democracy. On the other hand, the ideal of the veche has also been used by Rodnovers who are reflecting democracy highly critically. The aim of this paper is to examine these contradictory Rodnoverie representations of the veche and Rodnoverie societal ideals in general. As a case study of vernacular political visioning, Rodnoverie provides an interesting outlook both on the recent resurrection of Slavophil political tradition in Russia and on the attempts to establish native roots for democratic values.*

## ***Rodnoverie, contemporary Paganism***

Rodnoverie is a part of the international religious movement of contemporary Paganisms. However, the majority of the believers reject the word 'paganism' as derogatory.<sup>1</sup> Within the movement, the most widely accepted term is 'Rodnoverie', which derives from the words 'rodnaya vera', native faith (Kavykin, 2007).

As most forms of contemporary Paganisms, Rodnoverie values freedom of conscience and avoids hierarchic and authoritarian structures. In consequence, the movement is extremely heterogeneous and difficult to demarcate. These features also make the approximation of the number of adherents difficult. On the basis of available information, I estimate that there are at least 10 000 Rodnovers in Russia,<sup>2</sup> but I expect this number to be an underestimation. Although there are no extensive demographic statistics on Rodnovers, most of the studies on the subject agree that there is more men than women involved in the movement and that majority of the adherents are relatively young and educated above the average (Gaidukov, 2000; Prokof'ev et. al., 2006).

Liberal political and societal views have been noticed to predominate within Western contemporary Pagans (Berger, Leach & Shaffer,

2003). In Eastern Europe, however, the most prominent feature of the movement is nationalism. Some parts of the Rodnoverie movement even have close links with ultra-nationalist, racist and anti-Semitic politics (Shnirelman, 1998; Pribylovsky, 1999). These connections have significantly influenced the public image of Rodnoverie, but there are also groups that have taken a negative stand towards national-chauvinism (Koskello, 2005; Kavykin, 2007). Furthermore, the Rodnoverie nationalism has numerous nuances: While part of the movement is committed to very tangible political aims, some Rodnoverie groups focus more on the revival of the 'native culture'.<sup>3</sup>

Rodnovers, as well as Pagans in general, often link their societal views with their religiosity. This is not surprising bearing in mind that Paganism is characteristically a this-worldly religion. It is not so interested in the transcendence, but focuses on life here and now. Pagans usually subscribe to a pantheist worldview; Pagan gods are often seen as manifesting in nature, and the natural realm is perceived as inhabited by various spirits. This outlook has led many contemporary Pagans to engage in various environmental activities. Pagans' political outlooks have also been informed by the ideals of communality and equality. These values have, however, inspired

most diverging societal projects. The same 'Pagan ideals' or 'Pagan values' can be found in such radically different societal utopias as in the writings of a famous American pacifist, feminist and a witch, Starhawk, and ultra rightist, racist Odinism. Societal concerns are indeed prominent in many forms of contemporary Paganism and consequently, some previous studies have focused on examining Pagan religiosity as a domain of societal and moral explorations (Pike, 2001; Salomonsen, 2002).

The *raison d'être* of Rodnoverie is to revive pre-Christian Slavic spirituality. In their societal explorations, Rodnovers also often seek models from history. Nevertheless, the majority of Rodnovers are not aiming at to restore the Iron Age societal order as such any more than they think that Paganism as a religion could be the same in the modern world as it was centuries ago. In fact, many Rodnovers pride themselves on the fact that Paganism as non-dogmatic religion is so apt to adjust to the changing world and stress that they are merely honouring and reviving the *spirit* of pre-Christian spirituality. The pre-Christian societal order is, however, often presented as a possible source for inspiration in the modern world. One of the most tangible and prominent of these models is the *veche*.

### ***Veche***

The *veche* was a popular assembly that has been documented to function in Russia and Eastern Europe from the 10<sup>th</sup> into the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Especially famous is the Novgorodian *veche* which was dismantled in the year 1478. The roots of the *veche* lie in the Iron Age tribal society, and the early *veches* probably resembled the Scandinavian *ting*. However, it is arguable how much common do the various Iron Age assemblies have with the more urban, medieval *veches*. Although the *veche* has traditionally been associated with vernacular politics, the democratic nature of the late *veche* institution has also been disputed. In the study of the *veche*, one of the problems is that the subject matter has often entangled with delicate issues of politics and of national self-understanding. The

*veche* has frequently been displayed as an exemplum of anti-hierarchic and democratic tradition in Russian history, both by 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century intellectuals, and by Soviet scholars and ideologists (Granberg, 2004) On the other hand, the counter-argumentation may have been aggravated by an urge to denounce the rigid Marxist interpretations of the *veche* as 'pre-capitalist democracy'.<sup>4</sup> The aim of this article is not to assess the validity of these interpretations – a task that I neither have competence for. Nevertheless, in order to understand the Rodnoverie interpretation of the *veche* it is vital to outline some features of the cultural context which they draw to.

Although Soviet science naturally did not limit itself to the teachings of Engels and Marx and these thinkers were often interpreted rather selectively, some Marxist conceptions managed to establish themselves in Russia quite effectively. For example, the theory of Engels on the original communism and the link between the emergence of private property, inequality, state and religion significantly shaped the general understanding about history in Russia.<sup>5</sup> The film portrays Slavs as happy and honest people, who have an egalitarian society and live in harmony with nature. The villains of the movie are the aggressive invading nomads and Byzantines, who are leading a corrupted and artificial life of decadence. Although the cinema ends happily as the Slavs reject the impending threats, the scene implies that the later Christening of Russia will mark the victory of Byzantine and the imposition of slavery and unequal societal structure upon the free and 'democratic' Russians. For the way paganism is seen by many Rodnovers this is the narrative and the image that has been the compelling one.

While the *veche* is in Russian discourse often associated with democracy, it also bears some nationalistic liaisons. In looking at the issue in the framework of the classic Russian division between Zapadniks and Slavophiles, the *veche* falls more naturally into the domain of the latter one. For example, in Soviet times, the famous samizdat journal *Veche* (1971 – 1974) functioned, in accordance with its name, as an

open forum for most various viewpoints and was at the same time firmly anchored to the Russian spiritual tradition (Hammer, 1984). Within nationalistic circles, the concept of *Veche* is not, however, embraced only by the democratically oriented quarters, as is attested by the name of the contemporary ultranationalist newspaper the '*Russian Veche*'.

### ***Veche in Rodnoverie***

Several Rodnoverie communities call their organisational structures *Veche*. The word is used on international level, as in the Veche of 'Slavic Native Faith' (*Rodnaja vera*), which gathers adherents from Poland, Ukraine, Belorussia and Russia every summer); on national level by such umbrella organisations as the Circle of Pagan Tradition (CPT, Krug Yazycheskoi Traditsii), the Union of Slavic Communities of the Slavic Native Faith (USC SNF, Soyuz Slavyanskikh Obshchin Slavyanskoi Rodnoi Very) and The Ancient Russian Ingliistic Church of Orthodox Old Believers-Ingling (ARICOOBI, Drevnerusskaya Ingliisticheskaya tserkov' Prvoslavnykh Staroverov-Inglingov); and on the level of individual communities. On Rodnoverie Internet sites the forum for general discussion may also be labelled as *veche*. The general Rodnoverie interpretation of *veche* is defined, for example, in the Kolomonskoe obrashchenie as a principle of 'from below and to the top' (*s nizu i do verkhu*)<sup>6</sup> (Nagovitsyn, 2005) model that could have relevance in the modern world. The traditional, vernacular forms of community are, however, evoked by other terms as well. Rodnoverie groups are usually called '*obshchina*'s as were called Russian peasant communities. Occasionally such concepts as '*skhod*', '*sobor*' or '*mir*' are used either as terms for meetings, or referred to in more general discussions about communality in Russian tradition. The idea of '*artel*' is evoked by Andreev in his psychologically oriented exploration of the Russian tradition (Andreev, 2000). Even though all these ideals share some common basic assumptions, the perceptions on *veche* and vernacular form of governance may also violently

diverge. Next I will discuss four themes that occur in the interpretations of the *veche*: Patriarchal order, the solidarity of homogeneity, particularistic criticism of democracy and the democratic criticism of democracy.

### ***Patriarchal order***

As in the case of the ancient Greek democracy, the *veche* did not follow the ideal of universal suffrage, but the right to vote was reserved to the free men. In contemporary Rodnoverie, patriarchal tendencies are especially evident in the Church of Ingling, which sees the *veche* as an assembly of the heads of households, of 'fathers'. The societal model that the Church promotes does indeed base on hierarchical structure of family and gender. According to Ingling, women are so tied to their natural task of reproduction that they cannot, for example, obtain the highest level of spirituality which is reserved to men only (Trekhebov, 2004, 227). Consequently, the church regards men to be naturally more competent for political assignment and public life in general.

The Church of Ingling is in many ways an exceptional case within Rodnoverie and majority of other Rodnoverie groups do not acknowledge the church.<sup>7</sup> Some patriarchal features can, however, be easily found in the societal thinking of other Rodnoverie groups as well. For example, although the majority of Rodnovers claim their religion to challenge the denigration of femininity in Western culture, there are some philosophical premises that cause gendered discrimination especially in the matters of political decision making. Very few Rodnoverie communities restrict women's participation in public events or in decision making. In fact, several Rodnoverie leaders declare women to be spiritually more gifted. Next to wizards (*volkhi*) and priests (*zhrets*), Rodnoverie communities usually also have priestesses (*zhritsa*) or witches (*vedun'ya*). There are some influential women leaders and writers within Rodnoverie, such as, for example, the figurehead of Ukrainian Ridna Vira, Halyna Lozko, but they are in minority even remembering the disproportionate number of

men within the movement. Paganism is often understood as a nature religion that celebrates life and fertility. Emancipation from the feelings of guilt attached to sexuality is done by the praise of gendered bodies. At the same time, Rodnovers often appropriate conservative and essentialist gender roles.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, very often women are primarily seen - and extolled - as mothers and home-makers.<sup>9</sup>

The patriarchal and conservative interpretation of the *veche* may also conflict the ideal of democracy and equality. According to Inglings, universal suffrage inevitably leads into unwise decisions because the majority of people are not 'the wisest'. Nevertheless, an interesting point is, and a very emblematic of Paganism, that even such an anti-democratic Rodnoverie organisation as the Church of Inglings feels the need to bolster their claims by drawing to democratic argumentation. In its political rhetoric and especially, in its understanding of political concepts, the Church of Inglings is extremely creative and unconventional. They claim that the ancient '*samoderzhavie*' meant 'people ruling themselves', and was thus expressing the highest form of the 'true will of people', even though this 'will' was in practice exercised by the just ruler. Inglings argue that modern democracies are forced to settle in the dictation of the 'biggest minority', whereas the ancient *veches* and *mirs* based on consensual decision-making. (Trekhebov, 2004: 229 – 255)

Such patently elitist and conservative claims as made by the Church of Inglings, are not commonly supported by Rodnovers. However, also the other bigger *veches* function in a similar principle, gathering the 'eldest' of the community. For example, the international *Veche* has strict policy on who can have the status of a participant and who has the right to vote (Slava!, 2005). Also the political philosophy of Rodnoverie may include some elements of elitism. A common argumentation of conservative Rodnovers goes: 'the opinion of a prostitute cannot have the same weight as the opinion of a professor'.

The elitism of Rodnoverie perceptions can, however, also be explained by the stress on individual responsibility. Pagan philosophy does

not have the concepts of sin and absolution. Instead, they argue that all acts have both negative and positive outcomes, which should be carefully reflected. As Western Pagans say, quoting Ursula LeGuin, 'to light a candle is to cast a shadow'. The point is that people must live with the consequences of their actions. Consequently, the idea of responsibility is also one of the corner stones of the ecological thinking within Paganism. Nevertheless, the demands of responsibility may also lead into undemocratic societal views, which limit the right to exercise power onto those who have 'deserved it'.

### ***Solidarity of homogeneity***

In many sense, Rodnoverie is a vernacular project. On the religious level, it seeks to dissolve hierarchic structures of authority and encourage direct, personal connection with sacred. On the societal level, the movement strives at the concrete feelings of communality. On the political level Rodnovers claim that they are challenging the corrupted, alienated governance. They are often highly suspicious about centralised power, a position that reflects the history of Russia; the autocratic monarchy and the totalitarian communist power. Rodnovers may subscribe to various political projects, but the main political ideals of Rodnoverie usually are the demands of societal solidarity and responsibility.

In their search for the main obstacles for the solidarity or, for the roots of the political shortcomings, Rodnovers may end up with very different conclusions. The psychological maturation of both citizens and authorities is, for example, the remedy provided by an influential wizard Velimir in his analysis of the Russian thunder myth. According to the myth, Perun, the god of thunder, military and rulers slashes the snake that is guilty of theft. The snake has traditionally been identified as Veles, the god of cattle, poetry and the people. What Velimir is suggesting is that the relationship of these gods is actually linked to the change in natural cycles and thereby is more balanced and not so antagonistic as in the later image. Velimir claims

that by reinterpreting or 'restoring' the myth it is possible to examine and process the very deep sociopsychological undercurrents of Russian society. The aim of his societal project is to remind the rulers of their role as the servants of people, which would, according to him, restore peoples' loyalty and respect to the authority and by that, respect of law (Velimir, 1999).<sup>10</sup>

Instead of this kind of internal processing, many ultra-nationalist Rodnovers find the cause of the problems of Russia from outside of it. According to a softer version of this narrative, the modern multiculturalism prevents solidarity that can only be sustained if people have at least some shared values. The more radical approach targets aliens as non-Russian people who are promoting their interests in the expense of Russians. The point of reference here is immigrants, other ethnic groups and especially, Jews. Many Rodnovers believe in the existence of conspiratorial 'Zionist Occupation Government' and consider Russia to be an 'occupied country'. Occasionally, Rodnoverie societal ideals seem rather unrealistic utopianism; 'if only Russians could solve things by themselves there would be no problems'.

In Rodnoverie societal outlooks, one of the most outstanding controversies occur between the ideals of solidarity and individualism. Furthermore, both of these are considered as characteristically Pagan values. Pagans denounce commands and prohibitions set by some outside authority by claiming that only personally reflected morality can be truly internalized. In consequence, the idealised '*rodo-vaya obshchina*' consists of free, independent individuals that are able to function as a community because of their shared moral commitment to the society.

The Rodnoverie conception of the *veche* as 'ethnic democracy' is by no means a novel or original concept. Similar ideas have been presented, for example, within the French Nouvelle Droite as well (Benoist de, 1996) In the case of the French *Nouvelle Droite*, this combination of 'democratic values', the ideal of multiculturalism and ethno-nationalistic or racist politics has confused several commentators. (Bar-On, 2001) In its reliance on individual

morality, Rodnoverie societal philosophy may also converge anarchism, though 'anarchism' as such is usually rejected.<sup>11</sup> The same strange marriage between anarchism and ultra rightist ideology has also been noticed by Gardell in his study of racist Odinists in America (Gardell, 2003).

The radical conservative rejection of the state as an institution finds support from the Manichean vision attached to the idea of ZOG, the romantic idealization of the image of a lonely warrior and a social-Darwinist creed of the 'survival of the fittest'.<sup>12</sup> In Rodnoverie narratives, the state is occasionally doomed as 'evil', but a closer reading reveals that the rejection may be grounded in ultra rightist, ultra leftist or ecological conviction. Although these seem, and occasionally are, quite exclusive, they may also be entangled in the most varying ways.

Some Rodnovers declare democracy to be a sham form of 'people's power', because people are innately unequal and thus have unequal ability to make judgments. Thus democracy is, according to this line of argumentation, destined to either execute the primitive desires of the masses or to work as a tool in the hands of the ruthless elite. Nevertheless, the criticism of democracy may also draw to Slavophile particularistic rhetoric by questioning the applicability of Western models in Russia.

According to the Slavophil tradition, one of the most fundamental differences between Russia and the West lies in the perceptions of freedom and authority. Russians regard Western freedom to be external by nature and thereby superfluous and dependant on defined liberties. Russian freedom, however, is claimed to be more of a state of mind and thus more limitless and genuine. Consequently, it is argued that while Westerners need laws to keep up the order, the Russian society can, and should be based on inner morality. In similar spirit, democracy is regarded as, to quote McDaniel, something 'petty' and 'mean-spirited' (McDaniel, 1996: 45 – 51). These perceptions are deeply rooted in Russian intellectual tradition. It should be remembered, for example, that even among the dissident critics of the Soviet Union there was a

strong nationalistic wing that was very suspicious about democracy as well (Horvath, 2005: 176 – 177).

In conservative, nationalistically oriented Rodnoverie discussions, democracy is occasionally condemned in the true spirit of obscurantism as the 'rule of demons'. Although Rodnoverie suspicions about democracy thus can be explained as undemocratic conservatism, they also reflect problems in contemporary Russian politics. At the beginning of the nineties, the collapse of Soviet communism launched a widespread interest in Western models. Very soon, however, this enthusiasm met a nationalistic counter reaction which was partially caused by unreflective and uncritical ways that the new models were occasionally adopted. The corrupted way of privatization, *prikhvatizatsiya*, the economic hardships of the early nineties and the corruption in politics have severely damaged the image of democracy among ordinary Russians. In consequence, such words as democracy or liberalism often have a very different meaning in Russia than in the West. The criticism, according to which democracy is only a façade that the elite is using to legitimise their power, is very common and nationalist, anti-democratic rhetoric has wide resonance in Russian society. In their international value-survey Norris and Inglehart note, for example, that while there are very little difference between the West and Islamic world on how much support democratic values find, Russia and Eastern Europe form a distinctive case in this matter. That is, democracy is distinctively unpopular in this area (Norris & Inglehart, 2004: 154).

To sum up, in Rodnoverie texts democracy is either claimed to be unsuitable for Russia, or representative democracy as such is condemned to be unjust or dysfunctional. The following question is, what kind of governance would be just and functional? As a solution, some Rodnoverie groups, such as the Church of Inglings, present the traditional Russian model of autocracy, depicting an organic connection between the just monarch and the true will of the people. Quite a different kind of solutions are

proposed by those Rodnovers who seek to dissolve the centralised power in favour of smaller, local governing bodies.

### ***Democratic criticism of democracy***

The Rodnoverie criticism of democracy may also draw to the principle of the democracy itself. The main problem of Russian democracy is, according to many Rodnovers, that it is too distant to observe the concerns of ordinary people and thereby also fails to accommodate dissent. As an antidote, Rodnovers promote the dismantling of the decision making. According to them, smaller units are able exercise consensual decision making which is seen as less discriminative to minority views. Furthermore, the demands of more democratic democracy may also be connected to ecological viewpoints.

A good example of Rodnoverie societal visioning can be found in an article written by Zobnina, one of the leaders of the community *Slaviya*. Although Zobnina does not use the concept of *veche*, she refers to 'traditional', pre-Christian society as an example of grass-root governance. In her analysis of historical development, Zobnina detects four stages: (1) a traditional society; (2) the highest point of stratification; (3) the progressive project; (4) a revised traditional society (Zobnina, 2002). The last one of these is Zobnina's optimistic visioning of the future of Russia. She argues that the new impending ecological crises are one of the factors that support or even compel the shift into the local, traditional form of governance. According to Zobnina, the local governance is regularly more responsible and better informed in the environmental consequences of the political decision making. In her vision, the local governance is, however, balanced by international treaties that guarantee that the democratic rules are honoured at local levels as well.

### ***Conclusions***

In her insightful article on Rodnoveire attitudes towards globalization, Koskello notes that the

societal views of Rodnovers are gravitated into the extreme ends of political spectrum. Instead, the political 'centre' has much fewer supporters within the movement (Koskello, 2005). The perceptions of the *veche* also reflect such a division. *Veche* can be taken literally as an assembly of free, Slavic men, and thereby connected to patriarchal, nationalist and even elitist political ideology. Nevertheless, the egalitarian utopianism attached to the idea of the *veche* may also invoke demands of strengthening the grass roots politics. The criticism of democracy that is so often attached to Rodnoverie ideals of the *veche* may denounce the democratic form of governance altogether, but it may also base more on cynicism towards the contemporary Russian political system. In these cases, the criticism is often more about the lack of democracy. The *Veche* can be understood as an emblem of democracy and, at the same time, used as an argument in particularistic and nationalist rhetoric. The rejection of modern, centralized national governance has resonance both within ultra rightist ethnic nationalists and within modern liberals seeking to combine local and global levels in their activity. Both of these are, however, championing more concrete and more transparent forms of decision making with the emblem of the *veche*.

Rodnoverie explorations of the *veche* bear some flavor of 'invented tradition'. As Hobsbawm

notes, such inventing is especially active in the periods of political or societal upheavals (Hobsbawm, 1984: 4).<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the concept of 'tradition' should not perhaps be understood as something rigid and unchangeable. Instead, as Giddens notes, it is in the very nature of tradition to evolve (Giddens, 1999: 36 – 50). Revisiting and reinterpreting the tradition is one form of participating in societal negotiations. Correspondingly, a 'myth' can be understood not as an antithesis for truth but as a form of communication that is regularly used in societal and political thinking. As Wydra notes, myths can also be seen as 'ideology in narrative form' (Wydra, 2008). Pagans have effectively appropriated the idea of Lévi-Strauss, according to which myths are 'thinking' in us. Consequently, Pagans are actively and quite consciously creating new interpretations of old myths to open new avenues for thinking.

Quite often, Rodnoverie idealisation of the *veche* is a conservative project. The *veche* ideals can occasionally be very far from the democratic principles of human rights and equal opportunities. Nevertheless, the *veche* can also be employed to break the myth of perpetual Russian totalitarianism. In these days when it is all the more often asked whether democracy can be exported,<sup>14</sup> such native explorations are in my opinion highly interesting.

## Notes

- 1) The word 'paganism' is also problematic because of its ambiguity. Nevertheless, there are some Rodnovers that call themselves Pagans '*yazychnyk*' (Aitamurto, 2007).
- 2) This estimation bases on critical reflection of the number of adherents informed by the biggest Rodnoverie organizations and of the number of communities found in recent survey on Russian religiosity by Burdo and Filatov (2005, 2006). Nevertheless, this information is inevitably incomplete, because to reach all small, informal and often quite transient communities is impossible. For example, in spite of its thoroughness the survey by Burdo and Filatov omits some smaller Rodnoverie communities.
- 3) Elsewhere I have discussed Rodnoverie nationalism in more detailed. For example, such concepts as ethnic and civic, or cultural and political nationalism are rather problematic within Rodnoverie, because the various types of nationalism often entangle and switch quickly (Aitamurto, 2006).
- 4) A good summary on various viewpoints can be found in Lukin (2005).
- 5) The film bases on the novel by V. Ivanov and was directed by G. Vasil'ev in 1980. For example, in the Kupala festival of the community Krina, a 'living fire' is regularly lighted with a massive

wooden machine that is identical to the one used in the movie *Rus' Iznachal'naya*.

- 6) *Kolomenskoe obrashchenie* that was written in 2000, was an attempt to create unity within the movement and it was initiated by the more tolerant wing of the movement.
- 7) Many Rodnoverie communities consider the Church of Inglings to resemble too much New Age movement because of its syncretism and because of the church's demands to accept claims that strongly diverge from scientific consensus. The Church is, however, also an exceptional case within Rodnoverie because of its patriarchal conservatism and because of its authoritarianism.
- 8) The same contradiction between 'nature religion' embracing fertility and, on the other hand, sensitive acknowledgment of negotiable sex / gender roles has caused wide discussion within Western Pagans. The situation in the West is, however, markedly different because Western Paganism has rather intimate links with feminism.
- 9) Unambiguous, traditional gender roles have gained popularity in Russia partly because of the bad experiences with Soviet 'gender equality', which in practice usually meant a double burden to women: after work they were taking care of the household as well. Nevertheless, Palmer also notes that one-dimensional gender roles are very common in many new religious movements. According to her, especially young women struggling between conflicting expectations may find it comforting and rewarding to focus on just one role, whether it is of a mother, a lover or a sister (Palmer, 1994).
- 10) Velimir identifies the image of St. Georgi slaying a dragon, an image that illustrates the national coat of arms of Russia, as one version of this myth. A later, shortened version of the article by Velimir does not mention St. Georgi and gives a simpler account of the imagery of a snake in Russian tradition (Velimir, 2006).
- 11) In contemporary Russian discussions, 'anarchism' often has rather negative connotations and is equated with nihilism or chaos.
- 12) Within Rodnoverie, there are actually two quite diverging forms of ultra-nationalism. The first one continues older anti-materialist conservative tradition. This line of thinking presupposes that individual places the interests of community over personal the ones. The second one is closer to Western modern ultra-right and subscribes to capitalist and social-Darwinist views.
- 13) Rodnoverie interpretations of history can indeed be highly unorthodox and imaginative. Rodnoverie discussions can even be connected to the recent phenomenon of nationalistically oriented, unsubstantiated 'folk-history' that is mushrooming in Russian book-markets.
- 14) It should also be noted that this kind of discussion suggests that democracy is a European invention. In fact, democratic forms of governance can be found in the history of numerous countries and continents (Sen, 2007, 51 – 55).

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