

# POISKI RUSI NEVIDIMOJ

Kitežskaja legenda v ruskoj kul'ture. 1843–1940

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## ABSTRACT

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This doctoral dissertation examines the legend of the invisible city of Kitezh, its development and the role that it played in Russian culture between the years 1843 and 1940. It was during this period that the original folk legend was discovered by the Russian intelligentsia and transformed into a new myth about Russia. The legend is widely known and is the subject of a large number of publications and scholarly works. However, no research had yet been undertaken that presents a holistic account, which is what this dissertation attempts to do.

In the examination, the legend is considered a myth, since it meets the criteria for this concept regarded as productive and selected as a point of departure. The adoption of a unified approach to both the legend itself, and its context, results in a better awareness of the period in question and the work of the individual writers that are discussed. The dissertation throws light on the content of the legends and the differences that can be discerned among its variant forms, as well as the perception of the legend during different phases of its development. In addition, attention is devoted to its apocalyptic meanings, which were an essential factor in the interest that it aroused among the Russian intelligentsia, as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth. There is also an analysis of the treatment of the legend in Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's opera from 1907, which proved to be the only work of the pre-revolutionary period to present the legend in a worthy artistic setting, while it also had an obvious impact on later representations.

The dissertation also highlights the articles and non-literary accounts that were written prior to the 1917 Revolution with regard to the journeys that were made to the cult place associated with the legend. It is shown that these writings contributed towards shaping the process of interpreting the myth and incorporating it into the literary canon. A chapter is devoted to Andrei Bely's relationship to the myth and the themes to which it relates. In addition, a comparative analysis is undertaken of the Kitezh myth and the Petersburg myth, which was the other pre-eminent literary myth of that epoch.

The dissertation concludes by examining the changed function of the Kitezh myth and its representation in poetry in post-revolutionary Russia. The myth now becomes an archetype and an etiological model that are applied to turbulent events in Russian history. In addition, the myth has acquired a great significance for the poets, as it is associated with the role of poetic language.

**Keywords:** Russian literature, the Kitezh legend, myth, Old Believers, N. Rimsky-Korsakov, symbolism, A. Bely, the Petersburg myth, the myth of Holy Russia, N. Kliuev.