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SYMBOLIC TRANSFORMATION OF THE WIDOW'S IMAGE IN BIBLICAL CULTURAL TRADITION: SEMANTICS, ANALOGIES, UNIVERSAL FEATURES

The purpose of the work is to analyze the specific features of a widow's image and status on the Bible pages, to consider semantic contexts of an image, to follow the parallels between the images of an orphan and a widow, to conceive a loneliness phenomenon and orphans' and widows' protection in Biblical tradition. Axiological variety and poly vector spiritual and semantic representation of Biblical women's images are the main focuses of the issue. **Methodologically** the issue is based on the original source of the Bible. The work is based on methodical description of the women's images, who are selected from the Old and New Testament in order to highlight valued features of each image. Moreover, the methods of semantic analysis and hermeneutics are applied to consider semantic differences. The principles of comparative analysis are applied in order to reveal the traits of a widow's image in the blocks of historical texts and compare Ukrainian context of widows' existence with biblical one. **Scientific novelty** is in the poly semantic analysis of the women's Biblical context and widows' images separation with further analysis of their fates, valued statuses, which allowed them to embody the problems of motherhood and marriage, future children birth and solitude, the problem of divine protection in different ways. The issue is devoted to the consideration of symbolic and axiological poly vector transformations of the mentioned problems. **Conclusions.** The social polarity and spiritual separation of a widow's place and role in ancient tradition, and poly vector semantics of a widow's Biblical context are conceived. The attention is drawn to the varied contexts of solitude, selectiveness, devoted life, vocation, divine protection of a widow. A widow's image is compared with orphans' statuses, levites, foreigners, etc. A widow's figure is shown as a symbolic one. The ideas of selectiveness, God blessing, obedience, and humility, a miracle of sacred and virgin life are embodied in a person, whose name is translated as "tears of sea". Virgin Mary is a crown of a widow's image understanding in Biblical tradition.

Key words: widow, cultured tradition, value, history of an image, axiology, orphan, symbolic, semantic, solitude, exclusivity, protection, separation, intercession.

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Символічна трансформація образу вдови в Біблійній культурній традиції: семантика, аналогії, універсалії

Мета статті. Стаття присвячена проблемі символічних контекстів осмислення місця, статусу, обсягу захищеності і вразливості, обсягу самотності і задіяності вдови (і побічно – сироти) в просторі Біблійної традиції. Аксіологічна полівекторність та

різноплановий духовно-семантичний зріз репрезентації Біблійних жіночих образів є стрижневим фокусом уваги даної роботи. **Методологічно** публікація втілює переважно роботу виключно з першоджерелом. Робота побудована на методичному описі тих чи інших жіночих образів, виокремлених на сторінках Старого та Нового Заповіту з ціннісною акцентацією символічної специфіки подачі кожного образу як такого. Задля потрактування стійких смислових констант задіяні методи семиотичного аналізу та герменевтики. В рамках компаративного аналізу даної проблеми, насамкінець пропонується невеликий історичний екскурс в національний простір репрезентації даної теми і акцентується український контекст духовно-семантичного пласту розуміння образу жінки-вдови. **Наукова новизна** – полягає в полісемантичному виокремленні серед Біблійних жіночих персоналій саме образу вдови - жінок, доля і ціннісний статус яких дещо по-іншому втілює і проблему материнства і шлюбу, і проблему вірності, і проблему можливості - чи- неможливості дітонародження, і проблему самотності, і феномен беззахисності і захищеності одночасно. Константації символічної трансформації та аксіологічної полівекторності цих апіорних проблем і присвячена дана публікація. **Висновки.** Константовано певну суспільну полярність та духовну окремішність місця і ролі вдови в давній буттєвій традиції та полівекторну семантику Біблійного контексту трактування постаті вдови. Акцентовано різнопланові контексти самотності, обраності, посвяченості життя, покликання, полишеності і захищеності одночасно, Небесного заступництва, порівняння вдови зі статусом сиріт, левитів, подорожників-чужоземців тощо. Виокремлено апіорну символічність постаті вдови в цілому. Ідею обраності, благословенності, послуху, смирення, утаємниченого життя і, насамкінець, чуда непорочного зачаття втілює та, чие ім'я перекладається як «Сльози Моря». Резюмується - Діва Марія є вінцем осмислення образу вдови в Біблійній традиції.

Ключові слова: вдова, культурна традиція, цінність, історія образу, символ, аксіологія, сирота, символічність, семантика, самотність, обраність, захищеність, окремішність, заступництво.

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Символическая трансформация образа вдовы в Библейской культурной традиции: семантика, аналогии, универсалии

Цель статьи. Статья посвящена проблеме символических контекстов анализа места, статуса, объема защищенности и уязвимости, объема одиночества и задействованности вдовы (и побочно - сироты) в мире Библейской культурной традиции. Аксиологическая поливекторность и многоплановый духовно-семантический срез освещения Библейской женских образов является стержневым фокусом внимания в данной работе. **Методологически** публикация воплощает преимущественно работу исключительно с первоисточником. Работа построена на методическом осмыслении тех или других женских образов, выделенных на страницах Старого и Нового Заветов с ценностной акцентацией символической специфики подачи каждого из них. Для трактовки стойких смысловых констатаций задействованы методы семиотического анализа и герменевтики. В рамках компаративного анализа данной проблемы в заключительной части предлагается небольшой экскурс в национальное пространство репрезентации данной темы и акцентируется именно украинский контекст духовно-семантической плоскости понимания и трактовки образа женщины-вдовы. **Научная новизна** воплощает полисемантическое выделение среди Библейских женских персоналий именно образ вдовы – женщин, судьба и ценностный статус которых несколько иначе воплощает и проблему материнства и брака, и проблему верности, и проблему возможности – или – невозможности деторождения, и проблему одиночества, и феномен беззащитности и защищенности одновременно. Константації символічної трансформації та аксіологічної полівекторності вище поданих апіорних проблем і присвячена дана публікація. **Выводы.** Константировано определенную общественную полярность и духовную отделенность места и роли вдовы в древней культурной традиции и поливекторную семантику Библейского контекста трактовки образа вдовы как такого. Акцентированы разноплановые контексты одиночества, избранности, посвяченности жизни, призвания, оставленности и защищенности одновременно, Небесного заступничества, сравнения вдовы со статусом сирот, левитов, путешественников-чужеземцев и т.п. Выделена апіорная символічність образу вдови в цілому. Ідею избранности, благословенности, послушания, смирения, таинственности жизни и, напоследок, чуда непорочного зачатия воплощает та, чье имя переводится как «Слезы Моря». Резюмируется – Дева Мария является венцом осмысления образа вдовы в Библейской традиции.

Ключевые слова: вдова, культурная традиция, ценность, история образа, символ, аксіологія, сирота, символічність, семантика, одиночество, избранность, защищенность.

The significance of the issue. A girl – woman (wife) – mother, all the statuses are included into a threefold issue, which has been a crucial point for any nation's worldview. Almost each cultural tradition has in a historic memory the following statement: a woman with a newborn is a universal symbol of life. A symbol of a woman was glorified by the Christian cultural tradition – An image of Virgin Mary with a little Christ was a symbol of hope, saving, forgiveness and eternal life. The issue of motherhood literally and symbolically goes through every man's fate and through the Scriptures as a red line. A woman's image has always embodied an idea of motherhood, an idea of life, an idea of bloodline assurance, etc. The magic of sensuality and participation in a mystery of birth has led to careful and confidential attitude to a woman.

Nevertheless, in this "festival of life" an image of another women category has been highlighted. It is a woman-widow, who has obtained a special attitude, special status attributes, and special rites' functions, occupied an ambiguous place in social conscience of any nation.

The consideration of a symbolic spiritual widow's status has some difficulties and superstitions. Namely, a true ancient understanding of a widow's image has been lost in repeated translations of the Bible texts. Semiotics is a subtle phenomenon. However, it can be stated that the key ideas, which are the grounds of a widow's image in the Bible have remained untouched. For instance, a typical attribute is a constant parallel coherence of a widow and an orphan protection on the Bible's pages. The language of the Bible is symbolic with different layers. A widow's figure in the biblical semantic world is not an exception.

The priorities are to provide cultural and philosophical considerations of a widow's image sacral context in the Bible tradition and to find out a poly-context symbolic of a widow's pray spiritual status.

The analyses of recent studies and publications. Robert Strand applies to the problem of a widow's status in his works [4, 5]. Namely, he has conceived a special attitude to a widow through analyses of women' images in the Old and New Testament. A special style narration about the Biblical women should be noticed. That style can be conditionally named as a Midrash. The word has its roots in the verbs "to research", "to find out", "to discover". The Midrashes were the result of Hebrew scientists' work, who looked for a true

meaning of holy texts and their applications in modern world. The most of modern Midrashes have appeared on the base of synagogues' sermons in order to fill the blank places in holy texts [5, 7]. The Bible histories of women are extremely short in the author's vision of Robert Strand. The author has an original idea to narrate in the first person to give an opportunity for us to hear the women's voices [5, 8]. The ground based analysis of Judith widow's image [Jud. 9:4-5, 10:3] has been given by English researcher Makrina Scott [6]. The accents of power, greatness, loneliness, and almost king's authority have been put in a close parallel with an acknowledgement of a widow's protection of Heaven. The comparative analysis of a widow's image in Ukrainian and Biblical traditions is in a focus of S. Khripko paper [7]. A widow is a universal symbol of loneliness. The issues of a modern Ukrainian scientist M. Movchan are devoted to such poly vectored phenomenon [8]. The literature sources about images of Biblical women in Hebrew and Apostolic traditions are varied. However, a widow's image, her symbol and status are beyond the scientists' interest [12-16].

By contrast to the works in which a widow's image (and peripherally an orphan's one) are considered in context, we fundamentally raise an issue of a widow's status and image in the Biblical tradition.

The main purpose of the work is to analyze the specific and symbolic features of a widow's image and status on the Bible pages, to consider semantic contexts of an image, to follow the parallels between the images of an orphan and a widow, to conceive a loneliness phenomenon and orphans' and widows' protection on the holy texts' pages.

A Widow's Image on the Bible Pages. A word "a widow" could be noticed more than 20 times on the Bible Pages. The canonical book of Nehemiah and non-canonical book of Judith are aimed to represent a widow's image in cultural and symbolic light. A "widow" according to Biblical norms and Judaic moral principles is a woman who all her time has devoted to a child and God after her husband's death, for this reason she is not searching another man or wasting time on friends, entertainments, or on herself.

We would like to underscore that the issues of a widow and an orphan on the Bible pages semantically are complicated ones and thereby are central. Both the Old and New Testament are riddled with the idea of widows' and orphans' God protection, who (according to the prophetic words or direct speech of Jesus) are guaranteed immediate defense. This theme is mentioned with diverge valued and symbolic accents, notably they are: 1-A semantic way of misfortune fruition and plight, 2-An issue of warning about punishment, 3-A question about status, 4- God-devoted life theme, 5-A warranty of Heaven's protection [7].

Consequently, in the Old Testament, particularly in Exodus the tough and adamant prohibition of offending the most defenseless human in that society – a widow, can be met (thereby, deliberately or unintentionally is not important): "Do not mistreat any widow or orphan. If you do, I, the Lord, will answer them when they cry out to me for help," [Exo. 22:22-23]. In this part we can follow the idea of divine punishment for a foreigner's, widow's or orphan's offend or oppression with shifting their social status: "I will become angry and kill you in war. Your wives will become widows, and your children will be fatherless" [Exo. 22:24].

The highlighted issue of God defense glory and punishment for mistreat of a widow and her rights distortion are mentioned many times in Deuteronomy: "The Lord your God is supreme over all gods and over all powers. He is great and mighty, and he is to be obeyed. He does not show partiality, and he does not accept bribes. He makes sure that orphans and widows are treated fairly; he loves the foreigners, who live with our people, and gives them food and clothes..." [Deu. 10:17-18; 11:29; 16:11; 24:17; 25:5-10; 27:19].

In such context a famous cry of righteous Job to God is significant: "I have never refused to help the poor; never have I let widows live in despair" [Job 31:16].

In the David's psalms undoubtedly mentioned who is supported by God on life road: "He protects the strangers who live in our land; he helps widows and orphans, but takes the wicked to their ruin" [Psa. 146:9]. The idea is followed in Proverbs: "The Lord will destroy the homes of arrogant men, but he will protect a widow's property" [Pro. 15:25]. Therefore, a widow's house is guarded by God himself. The widows' protection is guaranteed due to the word of Isaiah prophet: "and learn to do right. See that justice is done—help those who are oppressed, give orphans their rights, and defend widows" [Isa. 1:17]. A strict ban of widows and orphan oppression is put into the speeches of prophets Jeremiah and Zechariah [Jer. 7:6; 22:3], [Zec. 7:10]. The same tendencies of the God's judgement are in the words of prophet Malachi: "I will appear among you to judge, and I will testify at once against those, who practice magic, against adulterers, against those, who give false testimony, those, who cheat employees out of their wages, and those, who take advantage of widows, orphans, and foreigners—against all, who do not respect me" [Mal. 3:5].

A widow's image is a complex one, in literally interpretation and symbolic allusions in the Old and New Testaments. In the words of the *deuterocanonical* book of the Old Testament – a book of Baruch according to the leading biblical researchers, a widow's image had been posited in general as an embodiment of typical case of misfortune that a man or society could come across in the case of separation with God. Hence, due to God eternal laws violations, Jerusalem had obtained the marks of widow's fate. Particularly, about the Jerusalem cry we are reading: "Let no one take pleasure in my suffering now that I am a widow and so many of my children have been taken from me. (...) the Eternal God ... carried off my beloved sons and took away my daughters, and I was left a widow, completely alone" [Bar. 4:12-16]. Such context of a punishment through reducing the social status to a widow's position that has been given for old people disrespect is traced also in prophet Isaiah book.

Moreover, in "Judgement on Babylon" we are finding: "You thought that you would never be a widow or suffer the loss of your children. But in a moment, in a single day, both of these things will happen. In spite of all the magic you use, you will lose your husband and children" [Isa. 47:7-9].

The significant issue in the Bible is a semantic meaning of "widow's clothes" [Jud. 8:4-6] as a sample of grief. On the one hand the idea of defenselessness demonstrated, on the other hand the lack of hope to give a birth (especially for the first-born child in the case when she remained unmarried) that in the old times supposed to be a great God blessing [Gen. 38:11-14; 38:19]. Thus Judah sent his daughter-in-law Tamar in the house of her father with the words: "Return to your father's house and remain a widow". "She changed from the widow's clothes she had been wearing" only in that moment when an hour came her to be a promised wife and a mother of the first-born son. When she had solved the problem she "took off her veil, and put her widow's clothes back on". The idea of widow's clothes as the clothes of pray and grief is expounded in the *deuterocanonical* book of Judith [Jud. 9:4-5; 10:3]. After desperate appeal to God: "O my God, listen to my prayer, the prayer of a widow". Judith "took off the sackcloth and her widow's clothes, ... and dressed herself in the fine clothes she used to wear on joyful occasions when her husband (...) was still alive."

The image of a widow Judith is extremely interesting from cultural and historical view, especially due to the fact of its presence exceptionally on the pages of Deuterocanonical books and according to the contexts of Judith life [Jud. 15:11-13, 16:18-23]. 1- She was an embodiment of a classical widow, as she stayed unmarried and had a fairly solitary life. 2- Having made a distance of active social life, she immediately returned to it when she had realized her necessity. 3- She had defied local authority who, as she considered, abused power. 4- The authorities had come to her (a woman and a widow) with a request for assistance. 5- She had personally solved a problem of mortal danger for her nation with the help of pray and protection of Heaven. 6- She worked in a close cooperation with her servant (slave), whom had been given a personal freedom. 7- She was an embodiment of greatness and power of a woman. Moreover, she was a bright example of marital fidelity and first love loyalty [6, 223-232].

Furthermore, we would like to draw reader's attention to a problematic context of widow's tears phenomenon. Widow's tears owing to the Biblical accents are considered to be taken into account as a crucial measure at the God's judgement combining the reasons of deeds and the consequences. In *Deuterocanonical* book of Sirach we are finding: "The Lord is fair and does not show partiality... When orphans and widows pour out their prayers, he does not ignore them. The tears running down a widow's cheek cry out in accusation against the one who has caused her distress" [Sir. 35:14-15].

Tears of a mother-widow who had lost a son-breadwinner were noticed by Jesus in public. Jesus as Elijah [1Ki 17:17-24] returned a widow her only son after a servant of Roman officer had been healed by one word and in the same way with a single word a son was gave back to a mother-widow [Luk. 7:11-15].

Moreover, the significant, for further consideration, is the fact that a widow had a guaranteed level of material support from the community and was equated with the priests – levites and orphans. In Deuteronomy where Church taxes, tithes are described and various variants their division, we are reading: "At the end of every third year bring the tithe of all your crops and store it in your towns. This food is for the Levites, since they own no property, and for the foreigners, orphans, and widows who live in your towns. They are to come and get all they need. Do this, and the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do" [Deu. 14:28-29].

To speak evil against widows and orphans was forbidden, and notably to take widow's clothes (a cloak) as a deposit was banned. In that time a cloak was more than clothes, it contained every meaning of clothes: a person wore it, slept on it, covered by it, and, actually, it was only one outer clothing that a person possessed: "Do not deprive foreigners and orphans of their rights; and do not take a widow's garment as security for a loan" [Deu. 24:17]. Mainly for them all leftovers of fruits, vegetables, and grapes were left after they had been harvested: "When you gather your crops and fail to bring in some of the grain that you have cut, do not go back for it; it is to be left for the foreigners, orphans, and widows, so that the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do. When you have picked your olives once, do not go back and get those that are left; they are for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. When you have gathered your grapes once, do not go back over the vines a second time; the grapes that are left are for the foreigners, orphans, and widows" [Deu. 24:19-21].

The issues of God paternity, protection, and revenge after widow's property or labor usage are in the Psalm words: "God, who lives in his sacred Temple, cares for orphans and protects widows" [Psa. 68:5]. About those people, who use opportunities to abuse power in order to distort widow's rights is written: "You are doomed! You make unjust laws that oppress my people. That is how you keep the poor from having their rights and from getting justice. That is how you take the property that belongs to widows and orphans" [Isa. 10:1-2].

The themes of God punishment for a dishonest pray "in the public's eyes" with a parallel disgrace of a widow are met in the Gospel of Mark: "Watch out for the teachers of the Law, who like to walk around in their long robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplace, who choose the reserved seats in the synagogues and the best places at feasts. They take advantage of widows and rob them of their homes, and then make a show of saying long prayers. Their punishment will be all the worse!" [Mar. 12:38-40].

The recognition of widowhood positive meaning is traced in the analysis of such images as Judith and Anna. Both of them had purposely chosen a widow's role and devoted their lives to pray and penance [Jud. 8:4-8; 16:21-23].

Furthermore, Jesus had chosen a widow as a heroine of his well-known parable about a judge and amount of faith [Luk. 18:1-8]. To continue the New Testament tradition, we would like to pay attention to the prohibition issue for widow's house destruction that is clearly highlighted in the Gospel [Mat. 23:14], [Mar. 12:40], [Luk. 20:47]. The theme of "the best deed before God's face" is in the letter of James: "What God the Father considers to be pure and genuine religion is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their suffering and to keep oneself from being corrupted by the world" [Jam. 1:27].

Returning to the parable about the widow and the judge, we would like to draw additional attention to the fact that when Jesus retold the unfair judge monologue the final reasoning phrase of the judge "If I don't, she will keep on coming and finally wear me out!" was a "soften" translation from Greek original that literally meant that the widow could put bruises under the judge's eyes, thus he would protect her to avoid physical damage. We would let ourselves to expound the author version of the phrase in a semantic light, it might be: "I will take her under my protection to prevent her showing off my unfair judgement (that can have consequences for me)".

The most well-known and vivid example of God's special attention to a defenseless woman is a story which is known as "two cents of a widow" [Mar. 12, 41-44; Luk.21, 1-4]. Due to Robert Strand "among all women in the Bible that woman is the most anonymous... The Bible exclusively mentioned a donation that had been left in the Temple [5, p.37]". The woman's story is a bright example how a person can trust to God, who has noticed the smallest gifts from the poorest people and their background [5, 39].

Undoubtedly "the core of Jesus sermon is parables" [10, P.193]. One of the cardinal parables is a parable about grain. According to Joseph Ratzinger, "a grain from its external side is something unnoticed. A grain of mustard, which is a symbol of God's kingdom, is the smallest one; nevertheless, it contains a whole tree. A grain is a promise of future. Future is hidden in a grain. It is a presence of a promise" [11, P. 199]. A widow's image is that hidden grain through which truth is embodied. For instance, the most famous woman in the history of humanity was Virgin Mary, who led solitary way of life and was a widow.

Furthermore, returning to the Old Testament we would like to mention that the text of Song of Songs at the first glance (but only at the first glance) is weird and appeals to a girl, who is the only child and her mother due to the details in the text is supposed to be a widow. Applying even elementary "symbolic language" knowledge "the external erotic" may be interpreted in other way. In accordance with an old legend that text was put in the Bible only due to a famous rabbi authority, who banned to exclude Song of Songs from the Old Testament, as time would pass the right person would read it.

The Ukrainian context of a widow's image consideration is an issue of separate research. Religious and femininity are the main issues cored in all religious and spiritual acts of Ukrainian mentality. However, having established a parallel, we needed to notice that a widow's image was extremely complicated in spiritual culture and Ukrainian mentality [10]. Obtaining experience of married life, of a husband's death, understanding lost opportunity of having children, returning virginity – virgin life, all these factors formed social attitude to a powerful "widow's pray". Consequently, it had been included into the main rite traditions, namely ancestral traditions, defense practices, funeral ones. Overall, a function of pray was a crucial one if we were going to consider a widow's role in society [7].

Significant sustained tendency for Ukrainian and Russian folklore was to compare a widow with a cuckoo and with another prophetic bird – an owl. The roots of it were in the words' semantic meanings. In the first variant a cuckoo is equated with a single mother, due to the second one a theme of afterlife connection is followed. A night owl eternally was connected with mysteries, dangers; it was a harbinger of misfortunes, etc. Although, even having had sacral respect and powerful pray a widow's fate was extremely tough for any person. Nevertheless, a widow's life and fate were not easy in any national and cultural traditions.

The semantic context is followed in the sphere of Ukrainian anthroponomics. For instance, mental and historical memory have remained such well-spread, even nowadays, Ukrainian surnames, which embodied ancient tradition of name given, namely a widow's son, a person who is brought up by a widow. A vivid example is in the following surnames: Vdovin, Udovichenko, Nenchin, Materinchin, Vdovets, Vdovchuk, Vdovichenko, etc. However, it is a separate issue of research from a sphere of religious anthroponomics.

Conclusions, generalizations, analogues and perspectives. To sum up all presented material the following conclusions and generalizations can be made. There are some bases to highlight natural valued solitude of a widow, which has become a powerful marker of a widow's place determination in spiritual existence.

The attention should be drawn to valued and symbolic ambiguity of a widow's image understanding in the sphere of biblical tradition. Such attitude has been developed due to the various range of widows' behavior. Consequently, widows' participation in social events or their ignorance depended on their correspondence to the high standards, which were applied to an image of "pure (unmarried for second time) widow".

From ancient times a fear of widows' offence has been existed, as a punishment will be inevitable. Such idea has the deeper roots than Christian moral and the New Testament admonishments.

Biblical representation of a widow's image contains the following symbolic and valued priorities: in her solitude she has embodied a typical example of misfortune and grief; the semantic meaning of widow's clothes demonstrates double grief; a widow has obtained protection due to the law on the same base as an orphan or a foreigner; she has been guarded by God, who has always heard her claims and taken her under his control and can revenge; a widow is an embodiment of a guaranteed everyday support from the side of society and more from the Heaven; the best examples of a widow's images are embodied in Judith figure and Prophet Anna, who devoted their lives to God, pray and penance. This is the essence of a biblical ideal of a widow's image.

The semantic analysis of a Ukrainian word "widow" has shown various diminutive-hypocoristic patterns. The fact leads to a conclusion that a widow has obtained respect and a slight degree of fear in Ukrainian culture. An idea of woman's return to "unmarried, pure, lady life" can be assumed. A widow's symbolic can be met in Ukrainian anthroponomics' sphere. The fact has highlighted symbolic, historic and traditional norms and deep roots of a widow's problem in Ukrainian spiritual culture.

The apex of a widow's image presentation and glory of a woman's vocation is represented undoubtedly in Virgin Mary image. The ideas of being chosen, blessed, obedient, humble, providing sacred life and miracle of virgin birth are embodied in a person, whose name is translated as "sea tears". Virgin Mary is a crown of a widow's image embodiment in Biblical tradition.

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