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CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE POST-SOVIET REGIONAL PRINT MEDIA

КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ АСПЕКТЫ ПОСТСОВЕТСКОЙ РЕГИОНАЛЬНОЙ ПЕЧАТНОЙ СМИ

Abstract:

Media, as a cultural and social text, defines the technological, economic, spatial and cultural criteria of the information society. Culture, as a discourse, creates the public mood and shapes its taste through specific types of communication. Media, like culture, demonstrates its goals through the use of verbal, acoustic and visual icons / images. Thus, culture is like a performance. It is inspiration for the media in the ongoing process of the world development.

The object of the research is the cultural narrative of the Georgian media in the late 1980s and early 1990s. More specifically, the article deals with the transformation of the existing trends in the Adjara region and the process of formation of a new reality. The focus is on the factor of social change - trauma (Shtompka, 2004), inasmuch as the difficulties of the post-Soviet period entered the Georgian media agenda with particularly painful events.

As we see, the media of that time actively used literary texts, poetry and prose rubrics. Reiteration of certain fragments and emphasis on certain facts aimed at uniting the society

around common challenges and recurring tragedies. The cultural codes accumulated in the Georgian society clearly fitted into cultural meanings. The new trend established in the regional media, combined different types of journalistic material reflecting current processes and objective reality. This trend, like critical realism, aimed to lustrate the vicious sides of society for the reader. It should be noted that each style and sub-style of journalistic work had an informative, analytical and artistic-publicist direction, more precisely - genres.

Analysis of the regional papers of 1980-1990s showed the role of the media in Adjara region - how it tried to transform the reality and form a new reality in Post-Soviet Georgia. We have observed the importance of literary texts and publicist letters in the process of rethinking new data. The regional governmental publication "Soviet Adjara," published in 1980-1990, clearly reflected the content of the regional official print media policy, public sentiments, the disintegration of the common fabric of values and the beginning of inevitable changes. Regardless of the format of the print editions, they still reflect certain cultural aspects and the combination of the media texts is a cultural characteristic of the given epoch.

Keyword: media, culture, region, texts, narrative

Аннотация:

Медиа как культурный и социальный текст определяет технологические, экономические, пространственные и культурные критерии информационного общества. Культура, как дискурс, направляет общественное настроение и в то же время формирует его вкусы с помощью специфических коммуникаций. Медиа, как и культура, демонстрирует свои цели с использованием вербальных, акустических, визуальных образов, и поэтому культура как перформанс рассматривается как движущая сила непрерывного развития.

Цель исследования – культурный нарратив грузинских СМИ конца 80-х - начала 90-х годов XX века, конкретно трансформация существующих тенденций и процесс формирования новой реальности в Аджарии; В центре внимания находится фактор социальных изменений - травма (Штомпка, 2004), поскольку трудности постсоветского периода болезненными событиями вошли в повестку дня грузинских СМИ.

СМИ того времени активно использовали художественные тексты, литературные произведения, поэзию, прозаические рубрики и медиатекст, чтобы постоянно объединять аудиторию, напоминая и подчеркивая актуальные фрагменты общих проблем и повторяющихся трагедий. В грузинском обществе накапливались культурные коды, которые часто выражались в эмоциях, четко соответствующих культурным смыслам.

Интересна новая тенденция, сложившаяся в региональных СМИ, сочетающая в себе разнотипные журналистские материалы, отражающие текущие процессы и объективную действительность. Это течение, как и течение критического реализма, стремится осветить перед читателем порочные стороны общества. Следует отметить, что каждый стиль и подстиль журналистской работы имеет информативную, аналитическую и художественно-публицистическую направленность, точнее даже-жанровую.

Культурный контекст СМИ, отраженный в газетах региональной прессы 1980-х и 1990-х годов, показал роль СМИ Аджарского региона в процессе трансформации и формирования новой реальности в постсоветской Грузии прошлого века. Региональное правительственное издание «Советская Аджария», выходившее в 1980-90-х годах, хотя и аффилировано с различными учреждениями, но четко отражает содержание региональной политики официальных печатных изданий, общественные настроения, распад общей ткани ценностей и начало неизбежные изменения.

Ключевые слова: Медиа, культура, регион, текст, нарратив.

Introduction

Media, as a cultural and social text, defines the technological, economic, spatial and cultural criteria of the information society. Culture, as a discourse, creates the public mood and shapes its taste through specific types of communication. Media, like culture, demonstrates its goals through the use of verbal, acoustic and visual icons / images. Thus, culture is like a performance. It is inspiration for the media in the ongoing process of the world development.

The object of the research is the cultural narrative of the Georgian media in the late 1980s and early 1990s. More specifically, the article deals with the transformation of the existing trends in the Adjara region and the process of formation of a new reality. The focus is on the factor of social change - trauma (Shtompka, 2004), inasmuch as the difficulties of the post-Soviet period entered the Georgian media agenda with particularly painful events.

Literature Review

The National Liberation Movement, which intensified after the tragic events of April 9, 1989 (dispersal of peaceful protesters by the Soviet army in Tbilisi), turned the country back to the history, giving impetus to the representation, remembrance and rethinking of past tragedies and battles. After April 9, the contours of a new, non-Soviet future were revealed, the best result of which was April 9, 1991 (restoration of Georgia's independence). The events occurring in the country took the society into a new dimension. In the process of perceiving and rethinking April 9, old and new moods of the society were linked and shifted from the informal to the public space. From this point of view, Nugzar Japaridze's article "I Have Innumerable Possessions" ("Soviet Adjara" №103, 1989) is particularly interesting. The author of the article skillfully uses the method of collective memory (Halbwax, 1992) to support his views and tries to express regret by emphasizing representative forms, reminding the public of the problem by reproducing specific narratives and icons. In addition to the main topic (April 9), mass gatherings include a topic that is relevant to different types of society. In the speeches of individual speakers, the following narratives were heard: "Years and decades will pass, new generations will come and read the bloodstained history of the struggle for freedom. We will all remember April 9, 1989, the day when the Georgians woke up, united and turned themselves towards one flag" ("Soviet Adjara", №68, 1990). The theory of collective / cultural trauma can be used as a theoretical framework for the discussion of the article. According to J. Alexander, events and facts will acquire the effect of cultural trauma, only if trauma-bearing groups emerge. Trauma should have the form of a universal narrative. The narrative will be successful if attention is directed towards the nature of the pain and victim, connection the trauma victims to a wider audience, sharing responsibility. The narrative must show that the traumatic event affected not only one group, but the whole society. The narrative should reveal who is the culprit, who is responsible for what happened (Alexander, 2004). Reading Georgia's recent history in the light of protests is an important perspective that can make a significant contribution to understanding and evaluating recent history, even though the events of April 9 developed in Soviet Georgia.

April 9, 1989 is distinguished in terms of form, content or outcome, as it is motivated by an aroused sense of national identity. The symbols, banners, slogans, vocabulary of speakers, historical figures or religious symbols used at the rallies repeat the form and content of the protest rallies in Soviet Georgia. At the demonstrations, Kakutsa Cholokashvili was portrayed as a soldier fighting against the Soviet occupation. Flying of the Georgian national flag revived the memory of 1918 when the first democratic republic of Georgia was established. The cross, the symbol of the "redemption of the world" was also frequently used. According to American sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel, "Collective memory is common to families, ethnic groups, nations, and other mnemonic entities" (Zerubavel, 2004). Collective memory is not a mere collection of personal memories of members of any unity. It includes memories that are common to all members of a group. These techniques are often used in political rhetoric. Not only was the

political space saturated with this pathos, but the creative area as well: literary works, publicist materials and the periodical press. The newspaper "Soviet Adjara" was no exception. Authors of the articles reflected objective reality, retold real stories and presented journalistic products saturated with elements of artefacts and mythology. Based on the analysis of newspaper publications of this period, it can be assumed that the events of the 1990s can clearly be placed within the narrative of Shtompka's "Victory Trauma." The events depicted in the articles have all the features of cultural trauma. According to Shtompka "only traumatic, sudden, fundamental and unexpected events can be considered as traumatic" (Shtompka, 2004: 157-158). In the materials of the newspaper "Soviet Adjara" (1989-1991), emotions like joy, sorrow and mourning were mingled. Here we can distinguish the method of turning the trauma into a triumph" (Volkan, 2007). On April 9, 1991, at a special session of the Supreme Council of the first convocation, the President read the results of the "Independence Referendum" held on March 31 and said that Georgia would restore state independence and occupy a worthy place within the world community. The final sentence of this historical statement echoes the prevailing sentiment in the society, which turned the "trauma into a triumph" (Volkan, 2007). The process of replacing the tools of ideological domination of the Georgian media freed from Soviet censorship was connected to the publicist texts having literary content. "The media may not dictate people what to think, but it can dictate the audience" (Cohen, 1995). During epochal changes, the media helps the public, as it becomes a cursor to timely describe events in a language understandable to the masses and deliver the right messages to its customers during the giant transformations. However, the unique ability of the media to create specific environment and give a media event a subjective character is an even more important part of the process that is caused by a unified influence of the media.

When dominant values repeat the views of a common discourse or position in different ways, they are given natural undertones through the media. In such cases, the media has a dominant role - to reach public consensus (Hall, 1980). Umberto Eco's words "Signs of the postmodernist vision are peculiar to all eras in times of spiritual crisis" (Eco, 2012) reflect the message of the national narrative. In the 1990s, there was formation of different attitudes, events were perceived in a different way, there was propaganda of non-Soviet rules. These aimed at accelerating the process of formation of new thought systems in order to overcome the collapse of the Soviet ideology. The influx of information and media introduced a tendency to expel reality from the public life. The policy of publications of this period corresponded exactly to all the main signs of the postmodern era and was formed as: deconstruction, uncertainty, ambiguity, fragmentation, the death of the author, author's mask, creation of a new type of reader, intertextuality... There was a need of rethinking Postmodern sensitivity and understanding the Universe as a universal text. Literary reflections voiced in the media in the early 1990s gave way to existential fear. Media narratives of public condemnation united the Georgian society around the idea of freedom. The literary narrative related to the political discourse focused on a new era, new dates and cultural-literary tendencies: Representation of new names, faces, events and dates led to a subconscious path that demanded the return of the new or well-forgotten old names and facts, revival of symbols, etc. Newspaper portraits, essays published in "Adjara" brought to life the names of the national heroes and historical figures. Together with the names of Iakob Gogebashvili, Akaki Tsereteli, Iliia Chavchavadze, the names of Adjara liberators were frequently mentioned. Articles and literary texts published in "Adjara" described the political and cultural life of the Georgian Democratic Republic. The recollection of past events and personalities formed the basis for the creation of a new narrative. For this purpose, the bridge was built between the present and the Democratic Republic of Georgia. May 26, 1918 - the Independence Day of Georgia was evaluated as the glorious achievement of the Georgian people.

After April 1989, emotions like pain, anger, grief, mourning “reigned” in the society. These were the first reactions of the public that created the collective memory of the Georgian society. Vygotsky (1981, 1987), Bakhtin (1986) and Taylor (1985) focused on how individuals interact with each other in the process of giving meaning to facts and events, how they use the "cultural tools" that equip them with their own social and cultural environment. In the study of history and memory issues, it is language and narratives that attract particular attention. In Georgia, as in other counties of the Soviet Union, in the post-1989 period, the wave of "active oblivion" of the Soviet past (Assman, 2011) started with the disappearance of monuments and memorials. This process was characterized by agitated mood, which became an integral part of the collective memory of the people and took on the character of Nora's "revenge." These events were memorable with equally relevant and spectacular elements for all parts of the country, especially the regions where civic positioning captured the public attention with loud activities. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the escalation of nationalist sentiments pushed many citizens and politicians towards destruction of Soviet art. Most often the targets of the demolition were the monuments of Lenin and Stalin. In this regard, one of the best examples is M. Chokharadze's short story "Monument" ("Adjara", №75, 1991) printed on the pages of the newspaper "Adjara." The short story tells the story of demolition of Lenin monument in one of the villages of Georgia. The story clearly shows the protagonist's attitude towards the past, thus showing the result of the interaction of history and memory. According to Pierre Nora's conceptual framework, the main purpose of such a process is to stop time, embody the intangible, and combat the process of forgetting (Nora, 1989). A place of memory can be any place where people search for the meaning of history or try to relate their own family history to some idea of national or global scale. It is noteworthy to recollect the author's (M. Chokharadze) own words: "Someone cursed him (Lenin) in his childhood not to be buried after death. He is already dead but no one intends to bury him." This sentence reminds us a famous Georgian film "Repentance" (T. Abuladze, 1986) and draws the reader's attention to the fact that the personalities that dominate modern Georgia no longer rule, and it is the mission of young people to convey this information to the public ("Adjara", №75, 1991). This artificially constructed reception was stemmed from a specific socio-political context; the breakdown of broad narratives in the new information age led many nations to reconstruct nature and content of former leaders, prominent figures and symbols (names of cities, streets, institutions).

Materials and Methods

The paper focuses on the synthesis of media and national thought, as the relationship between the public and the media. Description of media texts from 1989-1991 are linked to the ongoing social, economic and political changes in the country. Research methodology is complex and includes: historical, functional, typological and structural methods. Content analysis and case study (April 9, 1989) have also been used. The newspaper “Soviet Adjara” (regional print publication of the 1980-1990) has been used as an empirical material.

The print media of 1980-1990 is varied. Ideological influences of the Soviet era are distinguished in the reports of the ALCC, SCCP congresses and speeches of the officials. Alongside with them we find analytical articles of an ideological nature, which clearly outline the consequences of current and ongoing trauma undertaken by the public. J. Alexander says that when the public or individual environment suddenly changes, it becomes more and more common for actors to talk about the trauma they have endured. The current social activities in Adjara region begin with the transformation of trauma into a social event. In this regard, the first sanctioned public speeches on the pages of the newspaper "Soviet Adjara" became the most effective and resonant platform for the self-expression of the members of the national movement at that time.

Results and Discussion

As we see, the media of the period under study actively used literary texts, poetry and prose rubrics. Repetition of certain fragments and emphasis on certain facts aimed at uniting the society around common challenges and recurring tragedies. The cultural codes accumulated in the Georgian society clearly fitted into cultural meanings. The new trend established in the regional media, combined different types of journalistic materials reflecting current processes and objective reality. This trend, like critical realism, aimed to lustrate the vicious sides of the society for the reader. It should be noted that each style and sub-style of journalistic work had an informative, analytical and artistic-publicist direction, more precisely - genres.

While talking about the printed media, a considerable attention should be paid to the study of the linguistic means and stylistic devices. Attention is drawn to the media expressions and language of the epoch, technological capabilities and the words, the meanings of which depend on where and when, in what context they were used. The media uses words that give power to verbal acts. No matter how understandable the discourse of the newspaper material is, the reader is still an active participant in constructing the meaning of the text. "The reader not only decodes characters and meanings, but searches for the codes needed to understand the discourse" (Hall, 1980). The reader examines the mythical meanings generated by the accents of the text. He/ she is not only the user of the coded meanings but is the creator of the default story in the text.

Along with reviews, sketches, portraits, feuilletons, we often find pieces of poetry saturated with ideological sentiments on the pages of the newspaper. Here we find worries about the consequences of the chaotic situation in the country, the change of people, the fragility of moral qualities.

Conclusion

Analysis of the regional papers of 1980-1990s showed the role of the media in Adjara region, how it tried to transform the reality and form a new reality in Post-Soviet Georgia. We have seen the importance of literary texts and publicist letters in the process of rethinking new data. The regional governmental publication "Soviet Adjara," published in 1980-1990, clearly reflected the content of the regional official print media policy, public sentiments, the disintegration of the common fabric of values and the beginning of inevitable changes. Regardless of the format of the print editions, they still reflect certain cultural aspects, and the combination of the media texts is a cultural characteristic of the given epoch.

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