

Russian National Holidays in the Context of the Mass Media Discourse of Tatarstan

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Abstract: *The paper presents an analysis of the popularity of Russian national holidays in Russia, as well as the nature of their coverage in the regional mass - media in Tatarstan. In our work, we proceed from the idea of the cultural core which includes norms, a system of values, and representations of a particular community. We noted popularization of folk festivals and celebrations, as indicated by the results of the nationwide survey of public opinion shown in the paper. At the centre of many Russian folk holidays is the cult of the Sun, as most of the Russians surveyed know about. Researchers who have studied the cultures of individual nations living in Russia also note the veneration of this cult among different ethnic groups. The paper notes that the interweaving of pre-Christian and Christian traditions, the popularization of public holidays testify to the roots of the latter in the cultural core and historical memory of the people. The Republic of Tatarstan is an example of tolerant coexistence of representatives of different nationalities. An analysis of the mass - media discourse of the region revealed that Russian folk holidays (Maslenitsa and Karavon) are presented as a way of uniting various ethnic groups. The rhetoric of the mass media in question fit into the official discourse of interethnic harmony in the region.*

Keywords: *Russian folk holidays, Russian folk faith, cult of the Sun, Republic of Tatarstan, culture core, mass media discourse.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Tatarstan as a subject of the Russian Federation is multiethnic and multicultural in its composition. According to the national census in 2010, the region is home for more than 170 nationalities, the biggest of them are the Tatars (53.2%) and Russians (37.9%) [1]. The ethnic groups mostly do not live compactly, but interacting with each other in everyday life, and sharing cultural patterns and norms. Their cultures do not exist in isolation, but, on the contrary, individual samples of ethnic cultures receive mass character. [2] Thus, our earlier analysis of the printed press of Tatarstan revealed that one of the main media images of the Tatar national holiday, Sabantuy, is an event uniting representatives of different nations. [3]

Research interest in this topic is caused by the popularization of nationality culture, including nationality beliefs. Large Russian sociological centres, conducting surveys about which holidays are celebrated by people, indicate to a greater extent the popularity of national and Orthodox holidays. Within the framework of this paper, we will focus on Russian national holidays, their popularity

among Russians, and also touch upon the issue of their representation in regional media.

II. METHODS

In our study, we will build on the concept of the culture “core”. The term “central culture core” was introduced and used by Western scholars E. Schils [4] and S. Eisenstadt [5]. Within the framework of this work, we rely on the idea of isolating the culture core and its protective field, proposed by Russian researcher A. Rakitov. He wrote that the culture core includes “norms, standards, references and rules of activity, as well as a system of values developed in the real history of a given ethnic, professional or religious-cultural” community. [6] The culture core is realized with the help of certain structures, such as mythology, folklore, ethnic and social customs, traditions, rituals, language elements, etc. The successful functioning of these mechanisms contributes to the maintenance of community identity. The culture core is relatively stable, but it can still change slightly under the influence of time and external circumstances.

The empirical part of the study includes (1) secondary analysis of the results of a mass survey of Russians about the popularity of Russian nationality holidays, (2) discourse analysis of the messages issued by the regional press of Tatarstan devoted to Russian nationality holidays. (1) The paper uses the results of an all-Russian public opinion poll on the topic “Attitude of the population to Russian nationality culture”. The survey was conducted by the Autonomous Non-Commercial Organization Independent Research Centre in February 2017, 1,500 respondents were interviewed in 54 regions of Russia, the survey is representative. [7] (2) The following top-rated publications and Internet resources of Tatarstan were selected for analysis: a news agency Tatar-inform, Internet publications: Business Online, Realnoe Vremya, Vechernyaya Kazan, “In Kazan”, “Kazan first”, “Kazansky reporter”, the newspaper “Chelminskiye Izvestia”. When determining the sample, the Tatarstan media rating for 2018 prepared by Medialogia was taken into account. [8] The official newspaper of the region “Respublika Tatarstan” was added to the sample, this allowed us to take into account the rhetoric of officials. The period under review is the first six months of 2019. At this time, two important Russian nationality holidays, Maslenitsa and Karavon, have taken place. The total number of articles in the sample is 100. The main tasks of analysing the discourse of the mass media are: 1) to identify the main characteristics of the holidays in question, the general and distinctive features of the broadcast images; 2) determine the presented status of these holidays; 3) determine whether the replicated status contribute holidays keeping the developed in the region the idea of

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good-neighbourly relations between the nationalities.

Discourse analysis makes it possible, interpreting a holistic meaning, to consider media reports as a single narrative. [9] The discourse analysis is based on the semiotic approach developed by the Swiss linguist F. de Saussure, with the help of which the text of the message can be decomposed into constituent elements - signs that have independent meaning. [10] As part of the discourse analysis, we relied on the theory of the ideology of the English sociologist J. Thompson, according to which symbolic phenomena (text, images, graphics, music, etc.) become ideological when they contribute to maintaining or overthrowing relations of dominance in society. [11] This allowed us to identify not only how to create images of the holidays, but also the hidden techniques of maintaining the existing regional dominance relations, based on, inclusively, on the ideas of tolerant coexistence of different ethnic groups and cultures.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Modern culture includes various cultural patterns, including mass and traditional culture. Investigators note that it is an ethnic culture that is at the centre of the culture of any society. [12] Common values and ideas that are specific to different nations are formed on its basis. Ethnic culture includes the rules of functioning of any society.

An important element of the cultural core is religious beliefs. A number of researchers speaking about the interaction of pre-Christ and Orthodoxy in Russia note that the new Christian faith has long coexisted with pre-Christian knowledge. Christian beliefs, as it were, were built on earlier ones, forming the so-called "dual faith". [13] Pre-Christ beliefs were of a communal nature, they are sometimes called the "natural communal domestic religion." [14] Rites and holidays were associated with important dates: the days of the solstices, equinoxes, harvest holidays, etc. That is, they performed an important household function.

In the post-Soviet period, there has been an increase in interest in Russian nationality culture and faith. The results of the All-Russian public opinion poll conducted by the Autonomous Non-Profit Organization Independent Research Centre indicate that the majority of respondents (61.4%) know that in Russia there was a developed culture and high morality before the adoption of Christianity. Half of the respondents (54.4%) respect the Russian nationality culture in which the Sun is revered. At the same time, 28.2% said they also revered the Sun. They have a positive attitude to Russian national holidays and 58.4% of respondents regularly celebrate them. A third of respondents is sympathetic to them and, if possible, would take part in them (34.3%). There are slightly fewer of those who believe that the Russian popular faith is the veneration of the Sun and Russian gods should become the official religion (27.3%). And 22.9% of respondents are ready to profess the Russian nationality faith if it will be officially recognized. [7]

The growing interest in Russian nationality culture and faith is probably due to the fact that traditional values are contained in the core of ethnic culture and are embedded in the historical memory of the people. One can trace the similarity of individual elements of culture among different ethnic groups. The cult of the Sun, which is characteristic of Russian nationality culture, can be found among other peoples. So, the holiday Nauruz among the Turkic peoples means the

beginning of spring according to the astronomical solar calendar. The cult of the Sun was found by the researchers at Buryats in Cisbaikalia, which consider female deity Umay as their culture ancestress, which originally meant the Sun. [15] We selected two cases as part of the analysis of the mass media discourse in the Republic of Tatarstan: the presentation of the national holidays Maslenitsa and Karavon. Although both of these holidays are regarded as public in society, there are some differences in their status. Maslenitsa (Mardi Gras or rather Shrovetide) is treated more as a national-Christian holiday as it is celebrated in the week before Orthodox Lent. In national tradition, Maslenitsa is winter farewell ceremony that in a greater degree is associated with the day of the solar equinox, although is celebrated a little earlier. The dual nature of the holiday, in our opinion, is connected precisely with the practices of "double faith", the imposition of Christian traditions on pre-Christian ones. Karavon is a local tradition, a festival of Russian folklore, which has all-Russian significance. The festival took place in 27 times in the village of Nikolskoye in the Republic of Tatarstan, in the region, this holiday has the public status.

Journalists noted that Karavon has a long history, but in modern Russia, it was revived already by enthusiasts. One of the main images of the holiday is a festival uniting the values of Russian nationality tradition, "this is a traditional holiday of Russian culture; it is a folklore". It was reported that "320 masters of arts and crafts from 17 regions of Russia" came to the festival, "folklore groups came from Udmurtia, Bashkortostan, Nizhny Novgorod, Saratov, Samara and Ulyanovsk Regions - 144 ensembles and 1.6 thousand participants." [16]

Representatives of state authorities took part in the Karavon holiday: the chairman of the regional parliament F. Mukhametshin, the Minister of Culture of Tatarstan I. Ayupova, the head of the Laishevsky district of the Republic (where the festival is held) M. Afanasyev and other persons. In the rhetoric of statesmen, the festival is one of the ways to unite people of different nationalities; it is a way of maintaining stability and continuity in society. At the same time, the multiculturalism of the region was considered as its advantage. Thus, parliament speaker, F. Mukhametshin said: "Tatarstan and the Laishevsky district, in particular, are making a lot of efforts to preserve these traditions. Multinationality, multiculturalism, and multilingualism are the sources of the strength of our society. No laws will help to build a rule of law if there is no culture in a society that is based on traditions passed down from generation to generation. Holidays like Karavon unite our multinational people." [17] Here the use of the ideological strategy of symbolising unity is traced, when the holiday is considered as a way of uniting representatives of different cultures. In confirmation of the words said by the head of parliament, journalists are writing about how holiday united people of different ethnic groups: "It is a friendship without boundaries and conventions, when Tartar takes the accordion and begins to play a Russian dance tune, and Russian nationality group starts to sing a cheerful Tatar song". [17] The idea of uniting representatives of different ethnic cultures within the framework of this festival was also supported by photo reports

on the websites with publications that reflected elements of different ethnic cultures (mainly Russian and Tatar).

The festival was presented both as a contemporary event organised taking into account the latest technologies and trends: the use of an interactive format, conducting live broadcasting in social networks; the event was directed by a creative Bureau specially invited from Moscow. The head of the Laishevsky district of Tatarstan M. Afanasyev noted the significance of the festival as a brand event: "We want the Karavon holiday also to work as a brand event." [18-23]

Some articles also mentioned the connection of the festival with Orthodox traditions. Thus, national and religious traditions have imposed on each other: "Today in the village of Russkoye Nikolskoye in Laishevsky region of Tatarstan, a Russian culture festival Karavon was held dedicated to the worship by the Orthodox people of Summer St. Nicholas" [19-22]

When covering Maslenitsa, the connection with Orthodox traditions was also observed: "Maslenitsa is a holiday that lasts for a week: from meeting on Monday to Forgiveness Sunday. In the church calendar, it is marked as Cheese Week, which prepares a person for the main and most strict season according to the Law of the Orthodox Church - Lenten." [20-25] The Shrovetide was named on the list of Orthodox holidays in the newspaper "Respublika Tatarstan".

However, the main image of the Shrovetide holiday was nevertheless associated exactly with national traditions and festivities; this event is for people of different ages and different nationalities. The articles noted the mass character and ubiquity of the holiday: "From March 4 to 10 in all districts of Kazan about fifty celebrations will be held, organized on the basis of city palaces of culture, museums, and other public spaces." [21-24] Distinctive cult features of this holiday were emphasized in articles, photo and video reports: guests were treated to pancakes; they together burned a scarecrow of winter, and national games were arranged. One of the symbols for the community of people at the festival was the association of participants in round dances. Often images of the Sun were in the photographs as a symbol of the solstice and the coming of spring. It is noteworthy that an article about the Turkic holiday of Nauruz celebrated after the Shrovetide was included in the sample. Like Shrovetide, it was presented as a tradition for farewell to winter.

The results of the analysis of mass media messages showed that the images of the holidays had both common and distinctive features. Both events are displayed as national, although a connection with Orthodox traditions was traced. Festival Karavon was presented as a unique event, where creative teams from around the country have arrived. The presence of government officials confirmed to this status. A pancake week, on the contrary, was celebrated everywhere, which allowed attracting a wide circle of people to the festivities. And representatives of government agencies were no longer acting as participants but as organizers of the event. Despite some differences in the presentation of the holidays, both of them were presented as a special union of people of different ethnic groups and cultures.

IV. SUMMARY

The results of the analysis indicate the popularity of Russian national holidays among Russians. In multiethnic regions, this is reached largely due to the participation of a

wide range of people, including members of other ethnic cultures. The regional mass media actively covered such holidays as Maslenitsa and Karavon that we are considering. The uniqueness of the events (only happen once a year) is their massive participation, a colourful presentation, the attention of government officials, and union of representatives of different ethnic groups which are the circumstances contributing covering these events with materials from the pages of various titles. The holidays held and nature of their presentation in the mass - media are broadly consistent with the proclaimed idea of tolerant coexistence and interaction between representatives of different peoples in the territory of the multiethnic region.

V. CONCLUSION

Similar elements and traditions (in particular, the cult of the Sun) are manifested in the cultures of the peoples of Russia which probably can indicate the closeness of the values and ideas contained in the cores of ethnocultures. At the same time, public holidays are a way of interaction between representatives of different ethnic groups. The interweaving of pre-Christian and Christian traditions, the popularization of nationality holidays, in our opinion, testifies to the roots of the latter in the cultural core and historical memory of the people.

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