

ARTICLE

SOCIAL MEMORY AS REGIONAL IMAGE DEVELOPMENT FACTOR (ON EXAMPLE OF REPUBLIC TATARSTAN)

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ABSTRACT

The regional past is a significant source of the region image, as well as the population ideas about their own identity. The article discusses the relationship of social memory and the image of the region on the example of social memory case of the Volga Bulgaria in Tatarstan. This case is interesting as it manifests itself in many forms (the creation of monuments, musical works, events, museums, etc.) both at the institutional and interpersonal levels. As a theoretical framework, a constructivist approach to social memory understanding is chosen. Attention is focused on the features of a regional identity development through a common memory of the historical past. The empirical basis of this text is the author's sociological study of the sphere of memory about the Bulgarian version of the Republic of Tatarstan past. The analysis of the obtained data led the author to the conclusion that the representation and broadcast of a certain image of the past based on an appeal to the ancient history of the region becomes both a source of ideas about one's own identity and the basis for creation of many symbolic cultural objects. Turning to the ancient history of the region allows to develop the ethnopolitical myth of a strong ancestor with a developed culture and economy and to present the positive characteristics of the ancestor to modern residents of the region and their identity.

INTRODUCTION

The current state of society and the vectors of its development in the future are largely determined by social memory. Representations of the past can become the legitimization basis for a number of political and cultural processes and practices, or can block them. Knowing how social memory is able to change society as a whole, as well as the interactions of individual groups and individuals, allows us to understand the multidimensional social reality, the specifics of interethnic and interfaith relations in the multicultural and multinational social space of the Russian Federation. Constructivist discourse presents social memory and the past not as an objective "history", but as a narrative, multiple versions and representations of history. Each society produces and reproduces such social constructions (through textbooks, films, television programs, and so on). Social memory in this case exists in the form of tests, "places of memory" [1] and the practice of common memories (for example, national holidays, memorial processions, etc.).

The object of analysis in this article is the social memory of the regional past. Attention is focused on the development of regional identity through a common memory of the historical past. The empirical case is the social memory of the Bulgarian period in the history of Tatarstan. The Republic of Tatarstan creates the image of one of the leading regions of the Russian Federation, largely due to its positioning as a source of peaceful Islam in Russia and a center for successful interethnic and interfaith interaction. In many ways, this positioning is based on a specific memory policy, which consists in attention to the historical past of the region in the field of religion, tourism, and culture.

The policy of memory can be explained as a process in which various social actors (state, public organizations and movements, cultural and art workers, scientists, etc.) who have material or symbolic resources design and promote to a wide circle of residents of the republic some representations of the historical past, to achieve their goals. These goals can be the changes in interethnic and interfaith relations, the strengthening of old or the formation of new identities. Moreover, in the framework of one case (in this case, the memory of the Volga Bulgaria), various authors offer their interpretations of the historical past, which may contradict each other. Despite the ongoing debate among public figures, historians and journalists about the historical roots of modern Tatarstan, the Bulgarian version finds political support (although it is not the only recognized version of the region past) and is expressed in many forms, which makes it an interesting case for study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The empirical base of the study: regional documents (about the creation of organizations (museums, research units) associated with the Volga Bulgaria, included monitoring of events related to the historical past of the Republic of Tatarstan, the publications of regional media and the data from official regional Internet portals, as well as expert interviews (N = 36) with experts (historians, museum staff, archaeologists, guides, history teachers, representatives of the republic Ministry of Culture and Tourism, etc.). Data collection period: September 2014 - March 2019.

KEY WORDS

social institution, social memory, image of a region, cultural memory, communicative memory, region, Tatarstan

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RESULTS

To analyze how the "Bulgarian" elements of regional identity are constructed, the ideas by E. Hobsbaum and the metaphor of "Inventions of Traditions" are used [2]. The production and reproduction of the regional past image is associated with the process of clarifying the identity of the ethnic group of the Tatars (since the ancient Bulgars are attributed primarily to their ancestors), as well as with the search for a basis to make the region more attractive in the field of culture and tourism (constructing the significance of the Bulgarian heritage in Tatarstan and including it as the part of the region brand).

When we talk about the impact of social memory on the identity of groups, it is important to note that each group creates its own memory of its own past - the memory that emphasizes its features and distinguishes it from others [3]. This integrates the group, and, which is no less significant, not only determines the attitude to the past, but also affects the ways the members of the group see their future. This is "the expression of collective experience: social memory identifies a group, gives meaning to its past and determines its hopes for the future" [4].

However, attention in this work is focused on the policy of memory about the Volga Bulgaria, due to which the creation and broadcasting of images of the historical past of the Republic of Tatarstan and the ethnic group of the Tatars allows to create an attractive cultural and economic image of the region. This memory policy exists within the framework of cultural memory (created texts, events, places of memory, etc.), at another communicative level (the level of transmission of ideas about the past through direct interaction), the content of memory is largely determined by the images of the past from cultural memory.

Cultural memory feature is that it requires a special institution and artificial formation, often the creation of special institutions for the creation, storage and translation of images of the past [5]. Thus, the policy of memory about the Bulgarian ancestors of the Tatars is transmitted through cultural works on the history of the region, republican Internet portals about the Volga Bulgaria, special chapters in history textbooks, archaeological work, the creation of tourist routes in the "Bulgarian places", museums. Following the logic by E. Hobsbaum, invented "traditions" one can also consider the policy of the elites of Tatarstan aimed at the creation of images and meanings in Bulgaria, as political manipulation of the images of the past in accordance with current political realities and needs [2].

However, with such a formulation of the issue, it is not clear what is the reaction to the politics of memory of the Volga Bulgaria by ordinary members of the group, as well as various groups of professionals and experts (the latter themselves can also conduct their own memory policies), so D. Olik notes that the content of the collective memory is struggled in different fields [6].

Is there always a representation of an image of the past of Tatarstan, how exactly a successful Bulgarian past is the reflection of a political "order" or, on the contrary, the result of free creativity and work of historians, musicians, and other actors? How much do these groups influence each other? Many researchers, such as M. Foucault and B. Schwartz emphasize that the manipulation possibilities concerning the images of the past are often structurally limited, any version of history proposed by the elites may encounter "counter-memory" - the alternative versions of historical events [7].

CONCLUSION

The increase in the regional image attractiveness in connection with the historical heritage correlates directly with the image of the ancestor fixed in social memory of region inhabitants. The works of archaeologists indicate that the traces of Slavic, Finno-Ugric, Turkic and other cultures were found on the territory of the modern Republic of Tatarstan, each of which left its mark [8]. However, officially, the most ancient history of the modern territory of Tatarstan is associated with three periods - the Volga Bulgaria, the Golden Horde and the Kazan Khanate [9]. Although the disputes about the origin and ancestors of modern Tatars are still relevant, this is a normal situation for social memory. For example, V. Schrireilmann introduced the concept of "ethno political myths" about the origin of ethnic groups in which he notes the possibility of several myths about ancestors even for one ethnic group [10].

In general, at the beginning of the XXI-st century, the goal of "search" for the ancestor of the Tatars ethnic group changes: if the Bulgarian heritage was used as a source of political ideas at the end of the XX-th century, today it is used to a greater extent to confirm the special situation of Tatarstan, as a center of Islamic culture and peaceful coexistence for traditions of different cultures. In addition, the historical past becomes the source of the tourist attractiveness development of the region. The policy of memory in this case is a kind of advertising of those monuments and events that are associated with the period of the Volga Bulgaria. It is also interesting that despite the existence of Bulgarian monuments in other regions of modern Russia (for example, in the Samara region, the Republic of Chuvashia), the memory policy in Tatarstan shows this heritage mainly as its own.

The policy of memory is expressed not only in the creation of narratives, but also in practices: around the "Bulgarian" monuments, infrastructure and tourist activities are developing actively, songs are written and so on. The space of social memory of the Volga Bulgaria is becoming more complicated, new meanings and interpretations of the meanings of this period appear.

SUMMARY

Presentation of the past of the Tatars as the Bulgarian past, as well as the statement and proof of its high value for the Tatars, Tatarstan people and the whole world, takes place through several channels, for example, public statements and interviews of politicians, textbooks, excursion programs, museums and monuments, information sites and portals, media, culture and national music.

It is the many forms of ways for the Bulgarian past of Tatarstan actualization, which are associated with the formation of ethnic, religious and regional identities of the region inhabitants, as well as the institutionalization of practices in culture, science, and tourism that make the memory of the Volga Bulgaria in Tatarstan an example that illustrates the mechanism of memory policy through the practices of various social agents, and the ways to actualize the regional past in connection with the tourism economy, regional politics and culture.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

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