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**THE DESTRUCTION OF CULTURAL MONUMENTS IN THE  
FOCUS OF MEDIA TEXT**

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***Abstract***

The article explores the representation of the sociocultural practice of the destructing artistic values in a media text. The practice of destruction is considered in the diachronic aspect. The research is conducted in an interdisciplinary aspect: the linguistic analysis itself is carried out based on the cultural approach. The work uses the methods of historical and diachronic analysis, the context analysis method, the semantic analysis, the comparative method. Based on the analysis of historical information about iconoclasm, its causes and types, the main trends in the field of destruction practice are identified, in particular, the strengthening of the demonstration dominant, the integration of the ideological component in the studied cultural practice by means of tendentious choice of the object of destruction and anonymity refusal of the subject of destruction. The research analyzes modern forms of destruction of artistic values based on national, religious, political conflicts. The revealed methods and techniques of influence, namely nominative complexes, euphemisms, allusions, etc., are used by the authors of media texts to form a tendentious, ideologically marked representation of destruction, which assumes the justification or condemnation of destructive actions. Conclusions of a comparative nature regarding texts from various media in Russia and Europe determine the possibilities of describing a consistent publication policy in covering conflict topics. Comparative analysis allowed the formation of an assessment scale for the verbal representation of the destruction of monuments of both purely artistic value and monuments and monuments with emphasized historical and ideological component.

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**Keywords:** Media text, destruction, demolition of monuments.



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## **1. Introduction**

It is commonly known that in modern media practices the fact becomes less significant than the modality of its coverage, the pragmatism of conflict and provocation becomes a factor in promoting news, and objectivity ceases to be an essential property of the information flow. In this context, studies of media texts on events with a tendentious political background are becoming of particular importance. The examples of such events are destructive practices, namely the demolitions of monuments that have not only historical, but also artistic value. Such an approach to the phenomenon of the monument suggests the possibility, and moreover, the need for its interdisciplinary study. In a narrow sense, a monument is characterized by the following features: it is created for presenting in a public place for a long time in order to remind the public of certain personalities, events, as well as phenomena of symbolic nature. A broader idea of the monument is based on the thesis that artifacts of a certain nature have the ability to serve as “clusters” of cultural meanings in a certain historical era and are significant in the artistic, historical and scientific sense. In this regard, the concept of protection of cultural monuments becomes relevant. Thus, cultural monuments are understood to mean objects or works that were created as a result of creative or intellectual activity and have artistic and historical value. Recognition of such value, as well as public interest, allows preserving cultural monuments, which is a necessary condition for maintaining cultural traditions and preserving the cultural and national identity of a nation.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The issue of preserving the cultural heritage is regulated both at the cultural level (the adoption of moral obligations in relation to previous and subsequent generations) and at the level of state policy. At the same time, each state determines the types of cultural monuments to be protected. The analysis of the lists of protected objects of some German federal states in comparison with the legislation of the Russian Federation revealed some universal and specific elements. Thus, the universals for such lists are buildings and architectural complexes, natural and man-made landscapes, as well as archaeological sites. Regardless of typological diversity, the dominant basis for including objects in those lists is their cultural relationship: we are talking about objects that are evidence of eras and civilizations, genuine sources of information on the origin and development of culture.

## **3. Research Questions**

The monument as a sculpture or structure aims at perpetuating any particular person or event. Many architectural monuments are today an important part of the cultural heritage of a state, people or nation. Monuments that have the greatest value for a person are called monuments-symbols. These are such objects of cultural heritage that are considered to be a reflection of the collective memory of the community, therefore they are especially exposed to the risk in the context of modern conflicts, during which the cultural heritage of the enemy should be damaged or destroyed to the full (Bol'shakov, 2016). It can be said that in the history of culture there are some structured sets of rational activity patterns that can be called practices (Zotov & Lysenko, 2010). We define the destruction of monuments as the practice of destruction of artistic or historical value, the implementation of the interdisciplinary category of

destructiveness. In the broad sense, destructivity is understood as a form of attitude towards the world characterized by the destruction of existing objects and systems and is inextricably linked with aggression (Fedorova & Nikolaeva, 2018).

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The concept of “rhetoric of the monument”, which was actively developed by P. Springer, seems interesting to us. Indeed, the reminder is only one of the first steps in realizing the cultural function of the monument. The description of the rhetorical potential of the monument can be quite voluminous: the monument can compensate the discrimination of an object (community, person, event) by exalting it, draw analogies, assert the dominance of the ruler, establish ethical maxims, blame and convict, etc. It becomes obvious that the monument is embedded in a certain model of communication as a code carrier that must be read by the addressee.

Of all the types and genres of art the sculptural monument, perhaps, has the closest ties with politics, according to Springer (2017). The political context in which the parties of the conflict are recognized as right or wrong depending on the given situation leaves its mark on the historical and axiological function of the monument: it is not always able to represent truly eternal values. It must be understood that the monument was originally an object of an archaic cult, giving it a historical or aesthetic meaning is a civilizational innovation. The destruction of the monument is the destruction of the idol, the revival of the archaic cult tradition, the overcoming of civilization.

As a special case of destruction of the secondary plan one can consider facts known in the history of art, when a destroyed monument or its absence where it was originally becomes a secondary text, expressing a new meaning with the connotation “value of the lost”. This happens particularly effectively when a fact turns into an action, a sculpture becomes a performance. The recognition of the productive, creative and performative potential of destruction (in the form of decomposition, damage, deformation) is becoming one of the key points of contemporary art (Fleckner, Steinkamp, & Ziegler, 2011). Let us cite an example of the fact of incomplete destruction and renovation, when a part of the destroyed monument becomes a symbol of the destruction of ideology that the monument originally represented. Therefore, the boots of I. Stalin, first remaining on the site of the demolished monument in Budapest, were subsequently turned into a monument reminiscent of the 1956.

#### **5. Research Methods**

Research methods are methods of historical and diachronic analysis, the context analysis method, the semantic analysis, the comparative method. Based on the analysis of historical information about iconoclasm, its causes and types, the main trends in the field of destruction practice are identified, in particular, the strengthening of the demonstration dominant, the integration of the ideological component in the studied cultural practice by means of tendentious choice of the object of destruction and anonymity refusal of the subject of destruction.

## 6. Findings

Thus, in the course of the development of human civilization objects of material cultural heritage were in danger of destruction or extinction. The reasons for this are both natural (natural disasters: earthquakes, fires, weather elements) and anthropogenic factors (purposeful human activities: economic and scientific activities, vandalism).

Following Nagornaya and Erokhina (2016) we note the following anthropogenic factors of the destruction of material cultural values that are relevant to recent history:

- armed conflicts: for example, during the war in Iraq (2003-2011), the Baghdad Museum was plundered, thereby damaging the country's cultural and historical heritage. During the war in Syria, many historical values of the world heritage were destroyed or seriously damaged, including the ancient Al Omar mosque and Palmyra - one of the richest cities of ancient antiquity.

- revolution and the change of political regimes: after the revolution that took place in Libya, almost all major Sufi monuments were wiped off the face of the earth. 70 percent of Afghanistan National Museum collection was plundered or destroyed.

- ineffective work of security authorities, as a result of which the destruction or damage of cultural monuments occurs.

- vandalism: Afghanistan was the first to suffer from radical vandalism in the new millennium. In 2001, contrary to the protests of the world community, including Islamic countries, the Taliban terrorist organization destroyed two giant Buddha statues in the Bamiyan Valley. In April 2016 the two-thousand-year-old monument of architecture "The Gate of God" near Mosul was destroyed (The legacy we lost, 2016).

In the cultural aspect considering the demolition of monuments reveals some trends. Thus, it is noted in historical and art works that the destruction of monuments (demolition of sculptures, burning of books, destruction of pictorial images, including paintings), as a rule, became a carefully planned action carried out with the support of the power elite. Explanatory models of "vandalism" and "barbarism" are no longer applicable to actions of this kind; their initiators, even at the time of the reformist bilderstürms, were not representatives of the lower strata of the population. In recent history the monuments demolition is carried out at the initiative of governments, for example, it is known that in 2017 a law on decommunization was adopted in Poland, in the framework of which the municipalities were given the right to demolish monuments to Soviet soldiers and suspend the maintenance of preserved monuments. As part of this trend there can also be observed the established tradition of mentioning the demolition initiators ("The mayor of Seattle suggested demolishing the monument to Lenin"), and forming the sample of the national identification of the demolition initiator ("Poland, the Baltic States and Ukraine are at war with Soviet monuments again"). Due to the fact that these campaigns are an informational occasion favorable for news promotion, demonstration techniques are becoming increasingly important. Therefore, during the demolition of the monument to S. Hussein in 2010 by American soldiers, the head of the dictator was wrapped with the US flag and the visual representation of this event had high performance potential. The headline analysis of news feeds since 2008 suggests that the ideological component of these campaigns is manifested primarily in the selection of demolition facilities.

It should be noted that artistic destruction has become not only the subject of scientific research, but also the content of journalistic materials, as well as the discourse of business communication. One of the most interesting studies of the textual representation of destructive practices is the lecture of Verweyen (2000) on the campaigns of the books destruction in Germany in 1933. The author compares the materials of public appeals for participation in campaigns against the non-German spirit and the letter of rebuff and reveals the ideological potential of rhetorical means in these texts. Manipulative techniques, such as appealing to petty-bourgeois ideals through operating the socially determined metaphors, exalting the idea of a nation through spelling techniques, building the image of a political enemy through personifying and depersonifying metaphors and epithets, play a significant role in representing destructive practices on behalf of their initiators.

The presented perspective is obviously of a cultural character, but it also forms the basis for research in the field of medialogistics. The subject of our study is representation of the facts of artifacts destruction in the media text. The basic concept for this study was the concept of media text, which we consider as materials of all modern mass media: report, TV spot, article, radio broadcast (Bilandzic, Schramm, & Matthes, 2015).

Media materials on the practice under consideration and posted in online versions of German and Russian-language media, as well as on information and analytical websites, are news reports and analytical articles. Thematically it is possible to differentiate these texts in the categories of “Demolition of monuments in the framework of political and ideological conflicts”, “Destruction of monuments in the framework of national religious wars” and “Vandalism in local situations” (Schäfer, 2018).

Coverage of events in the framework of the first of these categories is tendentious. The position of the author of the material, which certainly represents the point of view of the publication, as a rule, is clearly positioned on the rating scale “approval-condemnation”. Let us consider some discursive ways to implement this kind of position, using the example of analytical and news materials on the demolition campaigns as part of the implementation of the decommunization strategy in Eastern Europe (Olsen, 2017; Rasmussen, 2014).

The very notion of “decommunization” became a neologism that quickly spread in the media after the introduction of relevant laws in Poland, Ukraine and other countries of Eastern Europe. As part of this process, the neologisms “national memory”, “Lenin fall”, “revolution of dignity” and others have also developed (all examples are given in translation – authors note). As markers of materials with one or another appraisal position can be considered the designation of objects and subjects of monuments demolition, the name of the process of monuments destruction, as well as comments on the described actions. An analysis of the materials allows to state the following fact: the campaigns aimed at the destruction of monuments to Soviet soldiers, as well as the aggressive nature of the actions of the initiators of the actions, are condemned (<https://deutsch.rt.com/inland/40223-dekommunisierung-auf-deutsch-cdu-politiker/>).

The opposite opinion is presented in materials that cover the demolition of monuments to the figures of the Soviet era. At the same time, it is common to emphasize that only monuments that have no artistic value are subject to demolition, and in some cases they are preserved for museums. Let us compare the nomination of objects of destruction in the considered groups of texts: nominative complexes

“monuments of art”, “historical monuments”, “obelisks to Soviet soldiers”, “memorial included in the lists of cultural heritage” are used in materials that clearly condemn the demolition of sculptures and memorial complexes.

The messages and articles of the other side refer to “monuments” and “idols”, while these nominations are included in ideologically labeled contexts, for example, a monument as a means of propaganda. Both sides of the political conflict mention monuments that are free of ideological connotations, but the demolition condemnation strategy combines all the monuments into one cultural heritage category, while the monuments with symbolic (politicized) meaning and “valuable art monuments” are opposed in the framework of the approval strategy (Krieger & Fritz, 2017).

Another contrasting factor is the initiators of the campaigns. In the media materials representing the strategy of condemnation, in addition to “nationalists”, “authorities”, “the mayor of the city”, the model of nomination of the metonymic type “Estonia”, “Lithuania”, etc., has become typical for such texts. At the same time, the opposition between the country and its citizens is repeatedly found: “In April 2007, Estonia dismantled the monument to the liberators of the republic from German invaders. Estonians reacted to this with massive protests”. The reaction of “diplomats”, “Lithuanian veterans”, “local residents”, “citizens” is always opposed to the actions of the authorities. In the reclamation materials the representatives of the authorities as the initiators are most often indicated of the actions and almost always there is a reference to the fact that the campaign is carried out as part of the “implementation of the law (on decommunization)”. In addition, in these media messages in some cases it is noted that the monuments are dismantled for the purpose of restoration and placement in museums, which in the opposite materials is always commented on as a euphemism for “allegedly sent for restoration”.

Another in our opinion important comparison factor is the choice of a verb or substantive designation of the demolition process itself. Messages with modality of conviction are quite clearly identified due to the lexical units “destroyed”, “annihilation”. One can also observe such descriptions as “... they cut out Zhukov’s bust from the military registration and enlistment office wall”, “the monument fell victim to change/ist den neuen Gesetzen zum Opfer gefallen”. In texts with opposite evaluations the “destroy” lexical unit is almost never found (with the exception of “the destruction of idols”), the “dismantle/abmontieren”, “remove/räumen”, “turn into museum exhibit/musealisieren” lexical units are active, including “leave in the past/in der Vergangenheit lassen” . Universal, and therefore neutral for this topic, is the lexical unit “demolish/abreißen” and its derivatives. In German language in texts without a pronounced tendentiousness the transitive verb *stürzen* is also active, which, on the one hand, appeals to the historical concept of *Denkmalsturz*, deducing the context from the actual situation, and on the other hand, can be interpreted as actualizing the seme of collapse, which, as it is known, sometimes happens by itself, without assuming the perpetrators.

In addition to the purely nominative components of the described contexts and strategies, it is worth highlighting some units of speech influence that directly or indirectly form the reader’s attitude to the described facts. Thus, texts with a modality of condemnation appeal to the emotions of the reader through the contextual personification - “The Bronze Soldier was Saved”, “But the monuments allegedly sent for restoration will never return”. Texts loyal to the demolition of political monuments use rational argumentation to a greater extent, explaining that these actions provide national unity and identity, “in no

case” being directed against culture. It seems that the modality of conviction can be unambiguously identified in the texts under consideration. At the same time, some of the described features of texts with opposite evaluations suggest that this is not a strategy of justification rather that approval.

## 7. Conclusion

Therefore, based on the analysis of historical information about iconoclasm, its causes and types, the main trends in the field of destruction practice are identified, in particular, the strengthening of the demonstration dominant, the integration of the ideological component in the studied cultural practice by means of a tendentious choice of the object of destruction and anonymity refusal of the subject of destruction. This research analyzed modern forms of destruction of artistic values based on national, religious and political conflict. The analysis of media texts in the Russian and foreign-language media made it possible to identify and describe the main methods of speech exposure, including verbal and non-verbal manipulative techniques that allows to control the audience’s estimated attitude to the described precedents of artistic destruction. The revealed methods and techniques of influence, namely nominative complexes, euphemisms, allusions, etc., are used by the authors of media texts to form a tendentious, ideologically marked representation of destruction, which assumes the justification or condemnation of destructive actions.

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