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**MEDIA COVERAGE OF TURKIC AND ALTAIC STUDIES IN
RUSSIA, KAZAKHSTAN, MONGOLIA, KYRGYZSTAN**

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Abstract

“The Greater Altai”, Scientific and Educational Center of Altai State University, conducted a mass media study in a number of countries (Altai region of Russia, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Mongolia), which are part of the Turco-Mongol world of the Eurasian continent. A uniform historical background shared by Turco-Mongol ethnic groups in a historical flashback can be clearly traced in linguistic, archaeological and ethnographic documents and artifacts. Learning from the richest historical and cultural legacy is not an end in itself for the project “The Turco-Mongol World of the Greater Altai: Continuity and Diversity in History and Modernity”. The object of study is media resources available in the four states constituting the Turco-Mongol world, and the subject is endeavors of the Internet and conventional mass media to reach out to Turkic and Altai studies. Text and visual materials on Turkic and Altaic studies were collected from October 1, 2019 to October 1, 2020. The study relied on content analysis, “Medialogia” automatic monitoring and analysis system for data processing. The findings showed a great demand for materials on Turkic studies, which were posted in the online media and news agencies. Such information channels as radio, television and magazines did not cover the issues of Turkic studies. Materials on Altai studies are more often covered by Russian and Kazakh Internet media. Conventional information channels show no interest in Altai studies. Most of the entries fall within categories including science, politics, miscellaneous, culture and art, social topics.

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Keywords: Altaic studies, mass media, media space, Turkic studies, The Greater Altai



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1. Introduction

In foreign science, modern civilizational processes are delineated through the prism of “break” and “collision”. In this regard, sustainability of local civilizational models raises particular concerns. The Turco-Mongol world is viewed in this vein as the coexistence of features inherent in European and Asian societies, since it has become an enabling environment to support interactions between three world religions (Christianity, Buddhism and Islam) and at least two systems of organizing economic and social life (nomadic and sedentary). The late 20th–early 21st century is characterized by dynamic ethnic processes and emerging forms of identities, which brought about the increased visibility of archaic social institutions geared to shape identities. It is particularly specific in digital conditions. The Internet, social networks and various electronic and digital gadgets have blurred geographic, temporal, cultural and socio-political constraints that should be sustained in establishing Internet communities.

In a globalizing world, many dimensions of human life are increasingly unified. With the advent of blogosphere enabling to express different points of view on multiple issues, digital information resources, communication in social networks lead to the formation of an environment where global and local knowledge is produced, exchanged and disseminated (Oksyuta, 2017). The media sector is an open social system that is formed during communications between mass media (MM) audiences, content producers, transmission channels, content and the mass media at large (Musykant & Musykant, 2014). Such communications generally result in social interactions with a social platform to be subsequently created to ensure the convergence of differing sociocultural practices.

A growing number of new media causes quantitative changes that call for a qualitative reformatting of ways for content delivery, infrastructural modifications in transmission channels rather than the content of entries alone.

Modern mass media are in crisis due to a consumer interest in online media dominating over professional tasks of journalism. In the digital era, competition prevails in the media space, in which a creative and research component to promote media content is not always eagerly sought and easily understood by mass media consumers (Morozova, 2013). Conventional and electronic media, being an integral part of the social sector, are an effective tool for regulating the activities of community members within social relations of various societal strata, meeting their needs. Social integration of consumers in the media space creates ideas about the sustainability of social life, facilitates the socialization in human society (Ilchenko, 2017).

The most informative, high-speed way of generating and transmitting a text expresses the memory of world culture. There is a “textual history of the world that stores multiple geolinguocultural images-archetypes of human consciousness and creates new cultural ciphers” (Belyatskaya, 2014, p. 108). There are two trends currently evolving in the information and communication environment of modern society, namely, dynamic exchanges of short, stereotypical, entertaining texts and advances towards personal creative linguistic, cultural, historical, political and other abilities.

Today, researchers have drawn attention to a human addiction to modern electronic gadgets. Improving the living conditions of an individual and society, ICT innovations do not yet give an impetus to human spiritual development, unless a person has an internal need for self-development. Modern

gadgets contribute to the expansion of ICT, destroy the privacy zone. The relationship between an individual and electronic means tends to be ambivalent. On the one hand, the individual has become a user and subscriber, on the other hand, ICT are becoming crucial in fostering global socio-cultural transformations. Media information about the world is even more critical than the world itself. Modern media space does not have the linchpin, it is multiple, fragmentary. Media technologies and practices are reformatting historically-tailored, proven life models and forms of human interaction. They negatively affect a spiritual component of modern society and destroy the field of culture (Zapesotsky, 2013).

2. Problem Statement

Relevant demands for the materials on the history, language, culture and traditions of the Turco-Mongol peoples in the media sector are attributed to the problem of preserving and increasing the cultural heritage, history, archeology and ethnography of the Turco-Mongol world; mobilizing scientific resources of the Eurasian states in the development of international cooperation and resisting attempts to distort historical events of common history and historical memory. The historical process proves that the civilizational potential does not develop in isolation and with no involvement of other socio-cultural communities. Permanent mutual enrichment of cultures, values and ideas is a prerequisite for a dialogue between nations (Melikov & Gezalov, 2014).

3. Research Questions

The number of research materials on the history, language and traditions of the Turco-Mongol peoples, posted in the media from October 1, 2019 to October 1, 2020, was counted using the “Medialogia” automatic monitoring and analysis system. In the era of ongoing digital society, unification of social life, a break with traditional forms of communication, it is necessary to define a range of active communication channels that transmit information in the areas of Altaic and Turkic studies. Modern aggregators responsible for collecting analytical material (Big Data technologies) employed in research practices seek to fashion new approaches geared to implement a “new research paradigm” (Zhuravleva, 2018).

1. How effective are traditional media and new media as information channels in publishing findings in Turkic and Altaic studies?
2. What countries, across what branches/sections, seek after materials on the history, language and traditions of the Turco-Mongol peoples (Turkic and Altaic studies)?

4. Purpose of the Study

Given the ambiguity and ambivalence of the modern media sphere, consumer preferences of traditional media readers and users of new media, it is necessary to fit into digital formats of information presentation. Turkic and Altaic studies as an integrative scientifically grounded component of the media space of the Turco-Mongol world are to meet current expectations of content consumers.

5. Research Methods

The study relied on content analysis and the “Medialogia” automatic system for online monitoring and analyzing mass media and social media. The data was collected based on automatic processing of more than 500 thousand entries in 59 thousand media outlets every day. Monitoring activities involved federal, regional (85 regions) and foreign (169 countries) mass media, including paywalls. Federal newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, Internet, as well as regional and industry media were surveyed against the keywords “Turkic studies”, “Altaic studies” and “The Greater Altai” (across all word forms in Russian, Kyrgyz and Kazakh) in the period from 01.10.2019 to 01.10.2020 in Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia. In total, over the target period, the topic of Turkic studies was mentioned 1,211 times across all media branches in all countries (the share of original entries – 52 %), Altaic studies – 799 times (original – 47 %), “The Greater Altai” – 998 times (original – only 38 %).

6. Findings

Subsequent upon the tasks set, the following results were obtained characterizing the media space of The Greater Altai:

1. The total number of entries. In total, over the target period, the topic of Turkic studies was mentioned 1,211 times across all media branches in all countries (the share of original entries – 52 %), Altaic studies – 799 times (original – 47 %), the Greater Altai – 998 times (original – only 38 %).
2. Mass Media branches. Materials on Altaic and Turkic studies are mainly published on the Internet (over 87 % of all entries). Among traditional media, this topic is relatively often (over 5 % of the total number of publications) mentioned by newspapers and news agencies. On television, radio and in magazines, the topic was hardly ever mentioned. A majority of publications on Turco-Mongol topics is produced by Russian regional news sites, aggregators of news and press releases, as well as news agencies. However, original content is mainly created by universities, official departments, and regional news sites and newspapers.
3. Geography of publications: materials were mostly published in the Russian media (83 %), in second place – the media of Kazakhstan (15 %). In Kyrgyzstan, the topic was mentioned only in 2 % of cases. The largest share of publications on the target topic makes it primarily to the Siberian and Central federal districts, and on the topic of Turkic studies – to the Volga region as well. Foreign sources publishing news on the topic are mainly found in Kazakhstan.
4. Moscow and St. Petersburg are the cities where the mass media publish the largest number of materials, since aggregators of news and press releases are located there, as well as Rossiyskaya Gazeta that publishes quite a lot of material on the topics of Altaic studies and the Greater Altai. The regional centers involve Kazan (especially on Turkic studies), Gorno-Altai (especially on Altaic studies), and Barnaul (mainly on the Greater Altai). Among foreign cities, Nur-Sultan, Almaty, Ust-Kamenogorsk and Bishkek stand out.
5. Authors of publications. Authors writing materials on the topics addressed are mainly employed by Russian universities (AltSU – Aleksey Kozherlyga, KFU – Rufina

- Gimaletdinova), by regional newspapers and Internet sites, or work as reporters for major federal publishing companies (Rossiyskaya Gazeta and Rossiyskaya Gazeta. SFR, IA REX).
6. Share of original publications. 48 % of all published news on the topic of Turkic studies, on average, turned out to be reprints of original materials. The largest share of reprints was in the months when the most hard-hitting newsbreaks were circulating – September 2020 (62 % of reprints), May 2020 (59 %), January and February 2020 (56 % each), October 2019 (52 %). On average, 53 % of all news published during the target period was reprints of original materials. Upwards of several months straight, including those when there were no hot-button newsbreaks, were marked by an increased share of reprints – September 2020 (70 %), January 2020 (68 %), May 2020 (65 %) and March 2020 (60 %).
 7. Visibility of publications. The greatest visibility and engagement of the audience in social networks is achieved by publications on regional news portals, customer-oriented sites (travel, environmental organizations), as well as large federal news sites.
 8. Frequency of publications release. Visibility of the topics on Turkic studies, Altai studies and The Greater Altai during the target period is characterized by uneven progress. In fact, October 2019, the first months (January and February) and September 2020 stand out.
 9. Subject matter of publications. Scientific and educational news related to conferences, scientific projects, activities of existing research divisions dealing with the topic under account constitute the majority of entries on Altai and Turkic studies. Thus, the main content of publications on this topic during the target period was: news of science and education (64 % in the totality of publications), issues of power and politics (24 % in the totality of), and other topics (16 %). In addition to basic sections (science and education, power), significant media exposure (number of entries and visibility) is provided by cultural events occasioned with holding exhibitions or recognizing the contribution of significant cultural men, as well as environmental actions. Publications on this topic often attract a great deal of social media audience (a large number of likes and reposts of news materials). The topic of The Greater Altai is much more often mentioned under regional and interregional economic cooperation, the development of the economic and tourist capacity of the territories that make up the macroregion.
 10. Common newsbreaks. The largest number of publications on Turkic studies in October 2019 (total number of publications was 180) was provoked by the newsbreak saying that “Ana Tele” online school was recognized as the best multimedia project based on the results of the “Keyword” award (42 publications). In February 2020, a surge in interest (the total number of publications was 159) was ensured by a strategic session held at Altai State University and aimed at the cooperation of Russian and Asian universities (28 publications). In September 2020 (total number of publications was 199), the greater number of entries was generated on the presentation of “The Greater Altai” scientific and educational center for Turkic and Altaic studies at Altai State University (22 publications) and discussion of its timeline until 2022 (22 publications).

In February 2020, the largest number of publications on the topic of Altaic studies (the total number of publications was 136) was generated by an informational event occasioned with a strategic session held at Altai State University and aimed at the cooperation of Russian and Asian partner universities (28 entries). The same session became the leading informational event in January (total number of publications was 114), when it was announced that the organized strategic session would be held on 4 tracks (25 entries). In September 2020 (total number of publications was 101), a key newsbreak was the presentation of “The Greater Altai” scientific and educational center for Turkic and Altaic studies at Altai State University (22 entries).

7. Conclusion

1. The majority of materials on Turkic and Altaic studies are produced by Russian regional news sites, aggregators of news and press releases, as well as news agencies, original content is mainly created by universities, official departments, as well as regional news sites and newspapers. The material is published mainly on the Internet.
2. A survey of media trends characteristic of The Greater Altai media space showed that the majority of publications on Turkic and Altaic studies embrace scientific and educational news related to conferences, scientific projects, activities of existing research units dealing with the topic under account, as well as issues of power and politics.
3. Publications covering the historical and cultural legacy of the peoples of the Turco-Mongol world, its preservation and awareness raising, the historical and cultural continuity of the peoples of Russia and the countries of Central Asia take an insignificant place in the media space of the Greater Altai. Nevertheless, it is the media space that is referred to as “repository” of history, culture, traditions of the Turkic peoples, while the media are responsible for its cultural reproduction in modern society.
4. In connection with the above, the urgency of creating a unique media content is determined, the purpose of which is to raise awareness and promote the idea of preserving and popularizing the historical and cultural legacy of the peoples of the Turco-Mongol world among wider public of The Greater Altai. “The Greater Altai” SEC for Turkic and Altaic studies can act as a generator of such content.

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