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Cultural Heritage in the Information Society

Abstract: The author of the article analyzes the integrative processes of linguistic and cultural globalization, which, in an increasingly technologically advanced world, are eroding the linguistic and cultural distinctiveness of ethnic groups. Cultural heritage has been transmitted from generation to generation for centuries, but digital communications have accelerated the transformation of cultural paradigms. The younger generation already lives in a different environment, which complicates inter-generational dialogue. The preservation of material and spiritual values created by ancestors is an essential condition for maintaining national identity. In this article, using selected examples from Georgian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Russian, and Japanese cultures, we analyze different attitudes toward the ancestral cultural heritage, as manifested within the respective language and cultural policies of particular states: the preservation and protection of cultural heritage (often through armed resistance), the popularization of cultural customs and traditions, the “conservation” of cultural heritage as a result of policies of isolation, cultural diplomacy, and other approaches. In some cases, cultural heritage becomes an object of manipulation of public consciousness and a method of sociopolitical pressure. Cultural heritage is constructed or reconstructed through the creation and dissemination of ideological myths that produce an illusory reality. In today's multicultural information society, characterized by urbanization, the dominance of the English language, and the existence of a unified digital semiotic system, the preservation of national cultural heritage acquires particular importance for maintaining a unique ethnic cultural code. Our future depends on our attitude toward the past.

Keywords: cultural heritage; material and spiritual values; manipulation of public consciousness; linguistic markers of manipulation; ideological myths; cultural diplomacy.

Introduction

The global community is constantly evolving. The globalization of the economy and politics, the creation of a unified information network, and the development of shared knowledge have necessitated the existence of a common language, while the development of the Internet and mass media has led to the spread of popular culture and the internationalization of values. These processes, which are interdisciplinary

in nature, are studied by scholars from a wide range of fields: philosophers and sociologists, political scientists and psychologists, linguists and cultural scholars (Yoneji Masuda, Daniel Bell, Marshall McLuhan, etc. (Bell, 2004; Masuda, 1981; McLuhan & Fiore, 1968). In their works, the most important resources for the development of the modern information society include:

1. Knowledge and science;
2. Information and data;
3. Information and communication technologies;
4. The human factor.

Economic growth and social progress, as well as improvements in people's well-being, are based on scientific discoveries and their practical application in production. Electronic databases and accumulated bodies of information make it possible to find solutions to specific problems within a short period of time and to manage all spheres of life. The Internet and modern technologies ensure the collection, storage, timely processing, and transmission of the data obtained. And, of course, the human factor is of great importance: highly qualified IT specialists, scientists, professional personnel, as well as the ability of individuals to navigate a rapidly changing world. The information society continues to evolve, transforming information and knowledge into key assets that determine the future development of individuals and society as a whole.

All the processes mentioned above have intensified the issues of national identity and cultural heritage. Over the centuries, a nation's cultural code and the historical memory of its people are formed, ensuring continuity between generations. Each new generation renews this code to a certain extent while preserving its most important components, which determine the national mentality and emphasize the connection with ancestors and a distinctive culture. However, the age of high technologies, accompanied by urbanization and the dominance of several international languages, has transformed living conditions to such an extent that the younger generation already inhabits a transformed reality, a digital semiotic system with a common slang (emojis, memes, abbreviations, etc.) widespread throughout the world. Under these conditions, the preservation of ancestral cultural heritage becomes an urgent task, since the loss of the cultural code leads to the disappearance of the national language and to complete unification, as a result of which humanity loses unique knowledge about the natural environment and the cultures of individual ethnic groups.

In this article, using selected examples from Georgian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Russian, and Japanese cultures, we analyze different attitudes toward national heritage as manifested within the respective language and cultural policies.

Cultural Heritage and National Identity

Cultural heritage includes both tangible objects (architectural structures, churches, fortresses, bridges, paintings, sculptures, etc.) and spiritual values (the national language, folklore, folk traditions, holidays, national dances, songs, ancient crafts, etc.). The value of national cultural heritage and the need to document disappearing cultural phenomena have been recognized by many countries, as reflected in relevant documents regulating language and cultural policies. However, attitudes toward cultural heritage have differed considerably across countries and regions and throughout different historical periods.

First of all, we would like to emphasize the role of cultural heritage in preserving national identity through the examples of Bulgarian and Georgian cultures. These peoples are characterized by a particularly deep respect for the cultural heritage of their ancestors, and it was precisely their determination to defend it against enemies and preserve their heritage for future generations that enabled them to maintain their national identity. The cultural heritage of many peoples exhibits certain similarities, which may be caused by genealogical relationships or long-standing relations between neighboring communities. However, Georgia and Bulgaria are closely connected neither by common origins nor by neighboring contacts. The affinity between the Georgian and Bulgarian languages is based on similarities in the historical destinies of these peoples: their prolonged incorporation into the Ottoman Empire (the Georgian region of Adjara for 300 years and Bulgaria for 500 years) left a distinctive imprint on both the languages and cultural traditions of these peoples. The desire to preserve the Christian heritage of their ancestors in a Muslim environment brought these peoples closer not only at the level of diplomatic relations but also through numerous joint research projects funded by the European Union (Knowledge Exchange and Academic Cultures in the Humanities: Europe and the Black Sea Region – KEAC-BSR (2017–2021), MSCA; FP7-PEOPLE-2011-IRSESPIRSES-GA-2011-295167, Politics of Memory and Memory Cultures of the Russian-Ottoman War 1877–1878: From Divergence to Dialogue – MEMORYROW (2012–2016)).

Attitudes toward the cultural heritage of ancestors during a particular historical period are largely determined by the sociopolitical situation of that period. The national liberation movements of Georgians and Bulgarians contributed significantly to bringing these peoples closer together. Interesting facts about Georgian volunteers who fought for the faith and freedom of the Bulgarian people are presented in the ethnolinguistic excursus by Marine Aroshidze and Tamaz Putkaradze (2013), *Bulgaria Through the Eyes of Georgians*. The book presents cultural parallels and analyzes markers of the cultural memory of the Georgian and Bulgarian peoples: similar phenomena in the Bulgarian and Georgian languages, features of everyday life and national cuisine, and the protection of Christian sacred sites.

From a linguistic perspective, the Ottoman legacy resulted in numerous Turkish loanwords that have been preserved in the Georgian and Bulgarian languages. This provides clear evidence of the well-known truth that language preserves the memory of all significant events in the life of a people. Bulgarian national cuisine has retained its distinctive characteristics through an original combination of Eastern and Western culinary traditions. The same applies to Georgian national cuisine, which, despite its distinctiveness, has “Georgianized” many foreign products and dishes.

Georgia's cultural heritage, formed at the intersection of European, Middle Eastern, and Caucasian traditions, includes, in addition to religious buildings, the cave cities of Vardzia and Uplistsikhe, the high-mountain region of Upper Svaneti with its unique medieval Svan towers and the settlement of Ushguli, and the Colchic forests and wetlands. The diversity of Georgia's intangible cultural heritage is striking: the unique style of polyphony represented by Georgian traditional polyphonic singing; centuries-old winemaking techniques and traditional clay vessels (*qvevri*); the unique Georgian writing systems (*Mtavruli*, *Nuskhuri*, and *Mkhedruli*); and the Georgian primer *Deda Ena* by Iakob Gogebashvili, national cuisine, and the traditions of the Georgian feast (*supra*). Literary monuments include Shota Rustaveli's poem *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* (12th century), the ancient text *The Martyrdom of the Holy Queen Shushanik*, and the chronicle collection *Kartlis Tskhovreba*.

Bulgaria's cultural heritage, formed under the influence of the Thracians, Slavs, ancient Greeks, Romans, Byzantium, and the Ottoman Empire, includes, in addition to religious buildings, the ancient museum town of Nessebar, the ancient Roman theatre in Plovdiv,

unique prehistoric cave paintings and monuments of Thracian art in Magura, the Thracian Tomb of Sveshtari, Pirin National Park, and the Varna Necropolis, where examples of the earliest gold craftsmanship (5th millennium BCE) were discovered. The rich spiritual heritage of the Bulgarians includes the Cyrillic script, the ancient ritual dance on burning embers known as Nestinarstvo, the traditional custom of Martenitsa, and the production of a distinctive essential oil from the Damask rose (rose oil).

However, what unites these two peoples is their special attitude toward Christian sacred sites. Although Christianity is the principal religion, some inhabitants of these countries profess Islam. Nevertheless, at certain points in their history, these peoples defended their Christian shrines, and the walls of Bulgarian and Georgian monasteries and churches are soaked with the blood of their defenders. In Georgia, these include, first and foremost, Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, Jvari Monastery, and Gelati Monastery; in Bulgaria, Rila Monastery, a spiritual center and masterpiece of Bulgarian architecture, Boyana Church, Rozhen Monastery, and Bachkovo Monastery, which houses a particularly sacred relic – the Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God with the Infant, brought to the monastery by its founders, the Bakur (Bakuriani) brothers. A golden covering bearing a large Georgian inscription dated 1311 was sent from Georgia.

The Christian faith united the Bulgarian and Georgian peoples and enabled them to defend their national identity.

At present, intensive research into national cultural heritage is being conducted in both Georgia and Bulgaria. The Department of Tourism of Adjara initiated an ethnolinguistic study of the region's cultural heritage, and a series of books has already been published in three languages – Georgian, English, and Russian: *A Culinary Journey Through Adjara*, *Folk Traditions and Rituals in Adjara*, *Traditional Crafts and Industries in Adjara*, and *Folk Games and Entertainment in Adjara*. Many years of fruitful cooperation have united Bulgarian and Georgian higher education institutions, state archives, cultural centers, and research institutions. In the spring of 2026, the Adjara Regional Center of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences signed a cooperation agreement with the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies and the Ethnographic Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, which also conduct intensive research into the national cultural heritage of the Bulgarian people. Numerous books and exhibition displays reveal the unique charm of Bulgarian national traditions.

The cultural heritage of every people is characterized by distinctiveness and unique originality. Therefore, the preservation and popularization of cultural traditions are of great importance for national identity. Only by understanding the experience of our ancestors and the collective memory of the past, while taking changing realities into account, can we respond adequately to the challenges of modernity.

Cultural Heritage as an Object of Manipulation

Cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible) is, first and foremost, a collection of historical facts. However, numerous studies by ethnographers, sociologists, cultural scholars, linguists, and other researchers have demonstrated that attitudes toward cultural heritage are largely shaped under the control of “those in power.” Cultural memory is a sociocultural construct that is transformed depending on specific sociopolitical conditions through various manipulative methods.

The manipulation of public consciousness is not merely a psychological phenomenon but a deliberate linguopragmatic strategy based on the appellative and persuasive power of words. The manipulation of public consciousness through cultural heritage is a widely used method of sociopolitical pressure on the masses. However, in the modern information society, digital technologies have enabled this manipulation to reach an unprecedented scale. Let us examine the principal means of manipulation using Russian culture as an example. In contemporary Russia, all the principal mechanisms of pressure on the masses are employed, foremost among them censorship and propaganda, which regulate the presentation of information in society (concealment or distortion of undesirable information, prohibition of the expression of personal opinions, an information vacuum, and the construction of false information through state-controlled mass media).

The World Wide Web offers numerous opportunities to obtain necessary information. Therefore, over the past several years, Russia has actively practiced shutting down mobile Internet services, allegedly to ensure the security of its airspace. These actions are regulated at the legislative level and are systematic in nature. The almost complete monopoly over the mass media and strict control over the film industry and television make it possible to shape public opinion in the desired direction.

In earlier publications, we have already examined the mechanism of manipulation of public consciousness and the linguistic aspect of manipulation (Aroshidze & Aroshidze, 2026). Language itself is the principal instrument of covert influence on public consciousness, behavior,

and perception in the contemporary digital and media environment. Strategically selected linguistic markers (“military operation,” the necessity of “defending Russia's territorial integrity” through a “preemptive” invasion of Ukrainian territory, etc.), which we have termed “Putinisms,” are capable of creating an illusory picture of the world for members of Russian society. The inhabitants of the Soviet Union existed behind the “Iron Curtain,” while the inhabitants of contemporary Russia live beneath an illusory dome.

A brief “linguistic” digression: consider the official names of Russia's federal services:

- Россельхознадзор (Rosselkhoznadzor) – Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance.
- Роспотребнадзор (Rospotrebnadzor) – Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing.
- Росздравнадзор (Roszdravnadzor) – Federal Service for Surveillance in Healthcare.
- Росприроднадзор (Rosprirodnadzor) – Federal Service for Supervision of Natural Resources.
- Ростехнадзор (Rostekhnadzor) – Federal Service for Environmental, Technological and Nuclear Supervision.
- Ространснадзор (Rostransnadzor) – Federal Service for Supervision of Transport. The culmination of this comprehensive system of supervision is represented by:
- Рособрнадзор (Rosobrnadzor) – Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science.
- Роскомнадзор (Roskomnadzor) – Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media.

In this article, we are interested in the manipulation of cultural heritage and the reinterpretation of historical events within the Russian cultural space of contemporary Russia. Therefore, we shall turn to the origins of the cultural heritage of the Eastern Slavs.

Kievan Rus' was the first major medieval state of the Eastern Slavs, ruled by the princely Rurikid dynasty and centered in Kyiv. The Old Rus' community and the common Old East Slavic language became the shared cradle of three modern peoples – Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. The Russian historical tradition regards Kievan Rus' as a common ancient state whose center subsequently shifted northeastward

(to the Vladimir-Suzdal and Moscow principalities). The Ukrainian historical tradition, by contrast, emphasizes that Kievan Rus' was a direct proto-Ukrainian state formation whose center was located on the territory of present-day Ukraine. The disintegration of Kievan Rus' led to the formation of three East Slavic peoples – Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. On the basis of the Old East Slavic language, three closely related but independent languages emerged – Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian – and three distinct cultural spaces took shape. This period in the development of East Slavic statehood is described in detail in the scholarly monograph by Academician Boris Alexandrovich Rybakov (1982), *Kievan Rus' and the Russian Principalities of the 12th – 13th Centuries*).

The modern Ukrainian literary language took shape at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries through the works of Ivan Kotliarevsky, and its final standardization was completed by Taras Shevchenko, who succeeded in synthesizing colloquial speech, folklore, and elements of historical heritage in his works, thereby creating a unified nationwide linguistic system of the Ukrainian literary language. The formation of the Russian literary language followed a path from Old Rus' writing and Church Slavonic influence to the synthesis of popular speech and literary norms in the works of Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin in the early 19th century.

The collapse of the Russian Empire and the overthrow of the monarchy were marked by attempts to establish independent states (the Ukrainian People's Republic and the Belarusian People's Republic). However, after the bloody Civil War and the Soviet-Polish War, the East Slavic lands were divided: the greater part became incorporated into the USSR, established in 1922, while the western regions of Ukraine and Belarus were transferred to Poland.

Once again, the collapse of another empire (this time the Soviet empire) changed the destinies of the East Slavic peoples. On July 12, 2021, an article by Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin entitled *On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians* was published on the official Kremlin website. The article advances the concept of “one people” (a clear connection can be traced with the myth of the unity of the “Soviet people”) (Putin, 2021).

The author asserts that Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians are descendants of Ancient Rus' and constitute a single whole, that they are “one people,” part of a “single historical space.” Putin further claims that modern Ukraine was largely created at the expense of “historical

Russia” and is a “product of the Soviet era.” According to Putin's interpretation, the artificial division between these peoples arose as a result of the actions of foreign states and Ukrainian rulers who fell under Western influence and pursued anti-Russian policies. He is convinced that «подлинная суверенность Украины возможна именно в партнерстве с Россией» (“Ukraine's genuine sovereignty is possible precisely in partnership with Russia”) (Putin, 2021). And how skillfully the image of the enemy (the Ukrainian government) is constructed, how skillfully the verbal web is woven:

«квазигосударственные образования» (“quasi-state formations”); «радикалы и неонацисты» (“radicals and neo-Nazis”); «готовы продать мать родную, чтобы сохранить капиталы» (“ready to sell their own mother to preserve their capital”); «добровольным заложником чужой геополитической воли» (“a willing hostage to someone else's geopolitical will”); «новые семена раздора посеяны» (“new seeds of discord have been sown”) (Putin, 2021).

«Объективные факты говорят о том, что в Российской империи шёл активный процесс развития малороссийской культурной идентичности в рамках большой русской нации, соединявшей великороссов, малороссов и белорусов.»

“Objective facts indicate that, in the Russian Empire, there was an active process of development of Little Russian cultural identity within the framework of the greater Russian nation, which united Great Russians, Little Russians, and Belarusians.” (Putin, 2021)

The article concludes with the following assertion:

«Когда распался СССР, многие и в России, и на Украине всё же искренне верили, исходили из того, что наши тесные культурные, духовные, экономические связи безусловно сохранятся, как и общность народа, в основе своей всегда чувствовавшего себя единым».

“When the USSR collapsed, many people in both Russia and Ukraine nevertheless sincerely believed and proceeded from the assumption that our close cultural, spiritual, and economic ties would undoubtedly be preserved, as would the unity of a people who, fundamentally, had always felt themselves to be one.” (Putin, 2021)

The preceding examples are drawn from Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin's article *On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians* (2021).

What remarkable “emotional packaging”! Manipulative language bypasses rational logic, actively employing evaluative and emotionally charged vocabulary. By appealing to anxieties existing within society, feelings of pride, or historical grievances, the speaker elicits an immediate emotional response that suppresses critical thinking. Through the misinterpretation and reinterpretation of cultural heritage and historical narratives, the manipulator creates a “new reality.” Linguistic units are

used to construct a distorted picture of the world, and contemporary linguistic markers do not operate in isolation. In the information society, verbal manipulation is systematically synchronized with vivid, memorable visual images (outdoor political advertising, film and television productions). The ultimate objective of such manipulation is the construction of a parallel, artificial, illusory reality in the form of ideological myths.

Cultural Heritage as a Foundation of Cultural Diplomacy

Japan demonstrates an interesting attitude toward cultural heritage in the modern information society. More than two centuries of foreign-policy isolation (the Japanese policy of isolation known as *Sakoku*) led to the flourishing of a unique national culture: Kabuki theatre, haiku poetry, *ukiyo-e* prints, and tea ceremonies. In the second half of the 20th century, Japan began actively adopting Western technologies and military practices and gradually transformed into an economic superpower. Tokyo's aggressive foreign policy in the first half of the 20th century was replaced by cultural diplomacy. Its image as an aggressor on the international stage did not facilitate the establishment of diplomatic relations with other countries. A new method of interaction through culture began to spread in international practice, and a new term emerged – the so-called “soft power.” This concept was first introduced by the American political scientist Joseph S. Nye Jr. (2004). Strategies based on the concept of soft power include culture, sport, the national language, cuisine, etc. They can exert a considerable influence on society.

The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy (n.d.) defines this concept as a set of activities based on the exchange of ideas, values, traditions, and other aspects of culture, which are used to strengthen and expand cooperation and to promote national interests.

The Japanese government succeeded in revitalizing cultural, philosophical, and artistic traditions, which contributed to the establishment of new diplomatic relations with countries in Europe and Asia. This strategy bore fruit, and in the 21st century Japan acquired an image within the international community as a highly developed country possessing advanced technologies and a distinctive national culture. Japanese culture represents one of the unique worlds of Asian culture, in which proper etiquette and a standard of conduct are accorded great importance. The Land of the Rising Sun has captivated gourmets with such dishes of its national cuisine as sushi, wasabi, sashimi, rolls, and ramen soup. Japanese anime, manga, and video games have gained

worldwide recognition, while forms of contemporary popular culture coexist with traditional forms of Japanese art, such as ikebana and the tea ceremony.

As we have previously noted (Aroshidze & Bolkvadze, 2024), the situation in contemporary Europe once again indicates that cultural diplomacy should become a priority in the foreign policies of states. Every state should strive to make extensive use of such instruments as language, literature, music, folklore, television series and film productions, culinary culture, and fashion to achieve its cultural diplomacy objectives.

Conclusions

A brief overview of cultural heritage in the information society, based on Georgian, Bulgarian, Russian, and Japanese cultures, has demonstrated different attitudes toward the cultural heritage of ancestors within the framework of language and cultural policies, as well as the dependence of these attitudes on the foreign-policy orientation of a particular country.

Peoples who, due to historical circumstances, were compelled to defend their cultural heritage (Georgians and Bulgarians) managed to preserve their national identity through their careful treatment of national values. Similarities in their historical destinies unite these peoples through a particular form of spiritual kinship. Under the conditions of the information society, they are strengthening and expanding the means of popularizing their cultural traditions and achievements.

The genealogical relationship between Ukrainian and Russian cultures has made it possible to use cultural heritage as an object of manipulation of public consciousness and as a method of sociopolitical pressure on the masses. The creation and dissemination of ideological myths are based on the manipulation of information, through which a people's cultural heritage is manipulated and an illusory reality is created, within which real facts are skillfully mixed with fabrications and conjectures. With the availability of modern technologies, verbal manipulative tactics are reinforced by multimedia capabilities. Therefore, in order to counter these constantly evolving manipulative techniques, it is necessary to improve media literacy and skills in the critical analysis of sociopolitical discourse.

An extremely interesting example of a completely distinctive attitude toward cultural heritage is demonstrated by Japan's domestic and foreign policies. After a long period of self-isolation and the accumulation of scientific and economic power, Japan replaced its image as an

aggressor with cultural diplomacy. International practice has demonstrated a new method of interaction through culture – “soft power.” This form of soft power has proved highly effective, which is precisely why, in the modern information society, the Land of the Rising Sun is associated primarily with such cultural achievements as national cuisine (sushi, wasabi), anime, manga, and the film industry, combined with elements of traditional culture (the tea ceremony, ikebana, etc.).

The younger generation of the modern information society is becoming increasingly interconnected within a new digital reality, and the preservation of national cultural heritage is the key to maintaining cultural diversity, the loss of which would lead to the disappearance of the unique cultural experiences and languages of individual peoples. It is precisely for this reason that the activities of UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) aimed at preserving cultural diversity, protecting tangible, intangible, and documentary heritage, and supporting dialogue between cultures acquire particular significance for our future.

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