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Modern Greek History - Historic Documentary About The Human Rights: The Case Of Pomaks

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Abstract

Pomaks are those whose mother language is Pomakika (name in Greek) Pomakci (name in their language); most linguists call that language Pomak and sometimes Bulgarian. The Pomakika language belongs to the linguistic family of the Southern Slavic languages. Pomaks live in the three departments of Western Thrace: they are the main component of the Muslim minority in the Greek area. Pomaks, along with Turks and Muslim Roma living in Thrace, are officially recognized as a religious Muslim minority, in accordance with the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) and formally enjoy the corresponding rights, though they have been treated as Turkish and not Pomakika speakers by the authorities. In the case of Pomaks we encounter the so called "historical minorities" issue which is spread in Europe. Nevertheless in the Balkan area, it has been noticed that various minority groups often share the common history with the majority of other ethnic groups. In a lot of cases like the one of Pomak people, the "minorities" or "nationalities" origins come from their historical past.

Introduction

The group of the Pomaks is of interest to us in terms of research because it includes multiple identities. In a documentaryⁱ produced by the director Kitsikoudis with the contribution of social anthropologists, historians (Vamvakidou, 2007), theologians but mainly with the attendance of the Pomaks from Greece and Bulgaria we can read some facts of modern history in the field of citizenship; we also analyse these identities in order to understand Pomaks' oral speech/message as well as their gaze to the camera, to the director/receiver, to us.

Being interested in discussing the concept of 'active citizenry' (Berg, 2006), which seems to be the most recent and prevalent consented objective that citizenship education is to achieve, a suggestion could be to teach citizenship to Greek University students in the context of the subject of history. The legally executive duties of citizenship vary depending on one's country, and may include practices such as: paying taxes (although tourists and illegal outlanders also pay some taxes such as sales taxes, etc), serving on a jury, voting, offering national service when asked and obeying the laws legislated by one's government, even while being abroad. Purely ethical and moral duties tend to include: demonstrating commitment and loyalty to the political community and state, constructively criticizing the conditions of political and civic life, participating to improve the quality of political and civic life, respecting the rights of others, defending one's own rights and the rights of others against those who would abuse themⁱⁱ. In a democracy, the source of all authority - the legitimate basis of all power - is the collective body of the people, the citizens of the polity. A citizen is a complete and equal member of a polity, such as a democratic nation-state (Mouffe 1995, 217).

In some states or countries, citizenship, the condition of being a citizen, is based on the place of a person's birth, which is known as "jus soli" citizenship. In other places, the status of citizen is based on the citizenship of one's parents, which is known as "jus sanguinis" citizenship. Some countries use both aspects for ascribing citizenship. Furthermore, most democratic states have established legal procedures by which people without a birthright to citizenship can become naturalized citizens. Equality before the law is a fundamental right of the citizen; other examples are political rights such as voting and participating in public interest groups. Constitutions may make a distinction between the rights of citizens and of inhabitants of the political community who are not citizens. The people of a democratic country or nation-state may have various and overlapping identities based on social factors as religion, race, ethnicity, social class, and gender. Nevertheless as Christine Roland-Levy (2006:416) explains "With the introduction of the Euro in many EU countries, a wider identity is more important than ever. These rapid changes mean that children's and young people's socialisation and their development of identity are on the contemporary social agenda. To adapt in today's society, young people's identity must be multi-faceted, and can be symbolised by the Euro: one side of the currency's coins picture Europe, the other side is specific to the country. Thus it represents national as well as European identity, and with the

intermingling of coins, one can observe the emergence of a European culture". It can be a tool to unite what seemed irreconcilable: fidelity to our country and our community as well as the creation of a united Europe and community. Nevertheless as Zygmunt Bauman claims "you pay a price for belonging to a community: without the community there is no insurance; but the construction of the community means also the loss of freedom" (newspaper Vmen, 2009: 22).

Historic context

Hugh Poulton writes that "The Bulgarian Muslims (i.e. the Pomaks) are a religious minority. They are Slavo-Bulgarians who use Bulgarian as their mother language but their religion and customs are Islamic" (Poulton, 1994:111)ⁱⁱⁱ. In Bulgaria, the Pomaks are one of the three largest minorities, the first two being the Bulgarian Turks and the Roma. In 1989 the Ministry of the Interior estimated the Bulgarian Muslim (Pomak) population of Bulgaria as 268.971, almost 3% of the whole population of the country at that time (Apostolov, 1996)^{iv}.

In Greece since 1951 the Pomaks have been able to attend either Greek schools or Turkish schools. There have never been any Pomak schools, as for the Greek state, Pomakika is a language without a written form. Moreover, in the 1950s and 1960s, all minority schools and institutions were officially and statutorily called *Turkish rather than Muslim*; the opposite went into effect in the late 1960s, during the junta and has prevailed ever since (Tsioumis, 2006: 90-99). Greek authors (Theoharidis, 1995; Karahotza, 1995; Vakalios, 1998) consider Pomaks to be the descendants of ancient Thracian tribes which were in turn Hellenized, Latinized, Slavized, Christianized and finally Islamized. Bulgarian historians insist on the Pomakika language, which is a variant of Bulgarian, albeit with some specific characteristics: Pomak – Pomatški- Indo-European / Slavic / Southern / Eastern branch.

Methodology

The first cinematographic types that were developed after the war 1914-1918 in industrial countries were the "local news" and the "journalistic cinema". In this stage, the cinema is not faced as "cultural object", but as a means of recording. The filmmaker is not a member of hierarchy, but a "hunter of pictures", and apart from the production's company, is not reported (Ferro, 1984). The theorist of cinema Christian Metz points out the proportion between the cinematographic screen and the mirror: "via the identification with the look of photographic machine, the spectator of cinema acts the roles that the psychoanalyst theoretical Jacques Lacan named as the mirror stage" (Metz, 1991).

The documentary about the Pomaks (2007) is titled "*The more you speak...the more you cry*", it lasts 75mins, and received the second award for best documentary in the 48th festival of Thessalonica; the director is Dimitris Kitsikoudis, photography by Alkis Sotiriadi, Kostas Potamianos, Grigoris Theodoridis. The music that accompanies pictures belongs to Periklis Hilas. Among the scientific collaborators of the film are Efstathios Zegkinis, Fotini Tsimpiridou, Domna Mihail, Ifigenia Vamvakidou, Anastasia Mpalezdravou, Nikos Kokkas, Margarita Karamihova and Marina Thomopoulou.

We chose social semiotic analysis, because it has already been used for the analysis of communicative texts: a semiotic analysis focuses on the various signs thoroughly, trying to define the structure and locate possible meanings (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996). The example modes that we can describe include: language, narrative, writing style, speech, gesture, spatial arrangements, patterns, images, photographs, colour, layout, music, synchronized sounds. Most signs operate on several levels-iconic as well as symbolic and/or indexical, which suggest that visual semiotic analysis may be addressing a hierarchy of meaning in addition to categories and components of meaning. As Eco (1976) explains, "what is commonly called a message is in fact a *text* whose content is a multileveled *discourse*. We also use the methodology of Kress and van Leeuwen's strata which contains four levels: *discourse, design, production, distribution*. In order for a cinematographic work to constitute historical evidence, we as researchers should know if the recorded picture is genuine or counterfeited, so that it serves the political aims of each leader or simply the author/ producer. Ferro (2001) reports a line of criteria for the pictures that are presented in documentary to be judged genuine or no. In the case of the specific documentary, we locate the combination of moved picture and oral speech.

Social semiotic analysis

Since the beginning of film history, film-makers and film-theoreticians have tried to compare film with verbal language in a serious attempt to justify the film medium. The main difficulty lies in the use of the

term 'language' to describe words and images. It is very surprising that the concept of 'film language' has been around since the time of the earliest films (Bjerg, Jensen).

The theories and statements of *Christian Metz* to cinema is probably one of the most thorough and interesting of cinema theories: cinema may be a language of some kind but it is not a language system. As Metz puts it: "it is not because the cinema is a language that it can tell us such fine stories, but rather it has become a language because it has told such fine stories" (Metz, 1991). Metz argues that film is to cinema, what a novel is to literature. Moreover, Metz suggests that *denotation* is to be studied before *connotation*. According to him, the *denotation* is the basic form of cinematic material, because it presents, it doesn't interpret. *Denotation* is the images that make up a story.

Connotation has to come second, he says, because what the images connote is not directly presented by the basic material of the film and *connotation* is only partly indicated by the *denotation* (Braudy, & Marshall 1998: 92). Metz's point is that in literature you can imagine (the same happens in historic empathy, historic imagination), you can create your own visual images, whereas in cinema you can't, because the images have already been chosen for you.

Syntagmatic axis

One of Metz's theories is that film is made of a series of minimal sequences which he calls *syntagmas*. An example: a series of different views of Pomaks as images of gender, of age, of occupation might constitute what Metz calls a *descriptive syntagma*— showing what the Pomaks are alike and not presenting an event unfolding in time. In this way *syntagmas* can be identified on the basis of montage and how the montage is put together. Cinema expresses itself through five tracks: moving photographic image, recorded phonetic sound, recorded musical sound and writing. "Cinema is a language...an artistic language, a discourse or signifying practice characterised by specific *codifications* and ordering procedures" (Stam, 2000: 112).

Such a statement indicates that when we learn to understand cinema, we automatically learn to *decode* the visual images, as well. In the specific documentary that we present as an historic interpretation we focus on the bilingual/trilingual speech of Pomaks, who speak in Greek-Turkish-Pomakika, in Bulgarian-Turkish-Pomakika and they themselves are making comments on this situation comparing their speech to *Russian salad*. We notice that the speakers while giving/acting the interview to the main director/narrator connote their language with the characteristics and the operations of a coded/concealed language, something that is encouraged by a lot of factors, as is different phonetic and mainly the lexicon structure, the absence of written and systematic learning. As it happens also with other coded languages, Pomakika acquires the operation of concealed language, when speakers that do not know the language are present in the communication. In the specific documentary we notice that Pomaks (in Greece and in Bulgaria) use their mother language in a dynamic dialectic with the majority's language (Greek, Bulgarian) as well as in the level of an argot. That is to say their mother language is used as a concealed language when other speakers are listening but as Pierre Guiraud supports "the snobbery is the substance of these coded languages that is to say the sense of superiority of the group and the scorn of other" (Guiraud, 1989: 98).

In this documentary the mother language of Pomakika is elected as sovereign; nevertheless both the director and the production's team are Greeks and Bulgarians. The scientists/speakers in the film are also speaking in Greek-English, Bulgarian-English according to the national and the academic context of their discourse. The main narrator in the film (an actor) speaks in Greek using a poetic code versus the scientific formal code; both codes seem to be versus the simple language of Pomaks. The songs in the film are in Pomakika, in Bulgarian; nevertheless the music itself as a sound is a folk music, a familiar sound beyond the words to all of us who live in the Balkan area. That's the reason why the landscape in the film is also appeared as a unit, without borders between Greece-Bulgaria, between the villages of Pomaks that have been separated in the 2nd world War. Nevertheless the nature, the mountains, the rivers, the birds and the sound can't be separated. It seems that the oral tradition, the material culture of Pomaks in spite of the Greek, Bulgaria's and Turkey's "empire" exists and the inter-action with the Greek, Bulgarian and the Islamic religion constructs another/new complex identity.

In the film we notice that *denotation* and *connotation* can't exist without one another. Connotation and denotation are often described in terms of *levels of representation* or *levels of meaning*. Roland Barthes adopted from Louis Hjelmslev the notion that there are different *orders of signification* (Barthes, 1974). This is the mechanism by which signs may seem to signify one thing but are loaded with multiple

meanings. In the historical documentary the representation of Pomaks as human bodies, as occupations, as gender, as different social subjects from the majority as regards to language, religion, education, habitus can be read as denotations, as actions, as facts that happen without inter-mediation. Nevertheless there are also connotations: we can notice that the Pomaks in the documentary at the same time they show up themselves and they act, they play in a film looking at the director/at the spectators. We can also locate on the actions, the play, the gaze, the interpretations of the narrator/director and the academic speech of scientists, who try to explain the life and the identity of Pomaks into the history according to their ethnic and European education.

We can distinguish in the documentary the three types of importance as Semantics claim: a) relative, which is reported in reality and describes objects, persons or situations of things, b) social, who give us information on social status, c) sentimental, that arises from the sentiments of speaker for the object of discussion. The first category is characterized by “objectivity”, that is product multiple and chronic conventions of linguistic community, binding for all her members, while the second and third category is characterized by “subjectivity”, because concern social subjects.

In the specific documentary we can't find the construction of this myth because the director chooses the difference between the empirical / historical / mythological narration.

We observe that in Kitsikoudis' documentary the empiric narration of history as opposed to the mythological narration since the film is based *on facts and not on imaginary elements*; although the narrator/director and the scientists may construct an official ideological discourse, *the Pomaks themselves deconstruct this discourse by presenting their lives, their music, their weddings, their options of history's events in the past as well as in nowadays*. They declare their specific/complicated identity in a sense of material mentality “we need to speak our Pomakika language, but we also need education and work”; as well as in a sense of humour “we can call ourselves Eskimos for an identity because we like snow”. They show up the contradictions of their life as well as of their history versus the ethnic majority's ideology.

They determine themselves as Greeks, Bulgarians, Muslim and mainly European. We have to remark that the children of Pomaks speak their mother language in their homes but when they go to the school they suffer a linguistic castration by the Muslim school teacher who teaches them Turkish and by the Christian teacher who teaches them Greek, as well as English.

In the historical field we notice that multiple or performative identity formation has been the only way for Pomaks to escape conflict with neighbouring ethnic groups and governmental as well as bilateral agreements between Greece and Turkey have led to their social and economic marginalization. There is a typical proverb as in connotative code Pomaks in the film say: “beware of the Turk's shot, the Bulgarian's beating and the Greek's pencil, because shooting and beating are forgotten, but the pencil does not forget”.

The poetic linguistic narration that the director chooses combines with the poetic photography; the landscape (the natural and the human) is given in a romantic, bucolic genre with emphasis in the material circumstances of everyday life in the mountain area. The rural identity of Pomaks as well as their artistic identity is showed in a poetical mode that construct the social and the sentimental typology of semantics. It's obvious that the director, the producer and the transmitter of the film experiences and feel the different life of Pomaks in the countryside and they also show empathy for the marginal mode of Pomaks' reality in modern Europe.

The main stereotype gaze in the film is the *offer* of some female Pomaks who are not allowed to show off versus the male Pomaks who naturally enjoy acting and interviewing in the film. We can notice that only the educated women, the girls who play; the singers and the one gifted woman *demand* to the viewers. Kress and van Leeuwen's strata also contain four levels: discourse, design, production, distribution. We use the term *discourse* to refer to semiotic elements of social practices. Discourse therefore includes language (written and spoken and in combination with other semiotics, for example, with music in singing), nonverbal communication (facial expressions, body movements, gestures, etc.) *and visual images (for instance, photographs, film)*. As discussed by Fairclough (1995) social semiotics may be located within the broader field of critical discourse analysis – which is likewise to be understood as a major research tradition of discourse analysis – as a domain specialised in unveiling the close relations among language, ideology and power in society. In the specific documentary we can analyse the visual data according to the colours, the contextualization, the abstraction and the image depth.

In the specific documentary we can locate the levels of the discourse, design, production, distribution: a) the subjects/ the Pomaks as the actors/ the states/the scientists/the producers/the director who produce discourses and construct ideologies b) the picture/ the sound/ the motion/ the gesture/ the montage in the

context of the material culture c) the different codes of the production/ the poetic/sentimental/romantic code, the narrative axes d) the choices of distribution to different audience/ in competitions, in festivals/to the Pomaks of Greece and Bulgaria. It becomes obvious that the specific documentary presents a question to the Pomaks from the West/European point of aspect. Thus from a western side the Pomaks in Greece and in Bulgaria try to escape from nationalism and fundamentalism. That is because the Pomaks themselves speak for the possession of Bulgarians, of Germans as well as for the fight of Greek rebels condemning the acts of violence at a level of distance.

From the other side we notice the different speech of scientists who still research the identities in the Balkan area into their national borders. However, the presenting of different speeches and actions dispute the policy the West/ East governments that followed as mechanisms of power and imposition of violence. The specific documentary focuses on the will and on the inventiveness of different subjects who try to escape from an unpleasant past. The language of picture as a code and as a political discourse in its use by the director and the production's team try to be objective with regard to the history and to the material culture of the particular population. The past is accomplished, however the representations and its management remains open. The management of the past is mainly the work of the powerful who develop conscious strategies, using components that manufacture the fantasy of past, adding with this way their own version in his already existing picture.

Nowadays self-determination seems to be an imprecise and ill-defined concept. In different cases, history preset seems to be that achieving self-determination through peaceful means is acceptable, but disrupting territorial integrity is not. At the same time, when self-determination has been achieved militarily, the international community has generally been reluctant to reverse the gain. The claim is also made that too much focus on self-determination can be dangerous. An over-generous acceptance of self-determination could lead to fragmentation and the rise of intolerance, because it would no longer be necessary to coexist peacefully. Despite these problems, however, it is clear that claims to the right of "self-determination" are not abating, and that the international community needs to develop better ways to address demands for prevention against destructive conflict and violence supporting citizenship.

People living in the Balkan area have to fight against the dissensions of nationalism, whose origins come from capitalism (Stokes, 1986). Cinema can shift in different directions and many teachers use documentary film in the classroom, but few use it to teach about historical interpretation. Our proposal is to engage directly the students in the work that historians do and help them develop skills that they will continue to use throughout their history coursework in order to create their own historical interpretations through the scripting of their own documentary films; and structuring instruction so students move back and forth between historical evidence and their interpretations of what that evidence means.

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ⁱⁱ Treaty of Rome (consolidated version), "National curriculum". British Government, Department for Children, Schools and Families. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/citizenship/>. Retrieved on 2009-02-02.

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^{iv} Official statistics list 330,000 in Bulgaria, mainly living in the Rhodope Mountains in the South. Some insist they are not Slavs, however, but Turkic people who settled in Bulgaria before the Slavs reached the Balkans in the 5th and 6th centuries.