Remembering the Homeland War and the Construction of Croatian National Identity 1995-2015
記住國土戰爭和克羅地亞民族認同的建構 1995-2015

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Abstract:

Croatia’s “Victory and Homeland Thanksgiving Day” (VHTD) is a state-sponsored event that commemorates the 1995 reclaiming of Croatian territories and the end of the Yugoslav war in Croatia. During this live-broadcast spectacle, Croatian people are encouraged to symbolically participate in the holiday and to identify with the story it tells. Dayan and Katz describe media events like these as ‘occasions of the state’. They “are televised as they take place and transfix a nation or the world”. Such events are used to disseminate a dominant state ideology along with specific ideas regarding the nation’s history and its place in the geopolitical map. Using Media Events Theory and combining it with Jeffrey C. Alexander’s work in Social Performance, this thesis argues that VHTD imprints selective war memories into the collective consciousness and that such memories rely on anti-Serb sentiments and distortion of Croatia’s role in the WWII. Semiotic analysis of the footage from VHTD celebrations (1995-2015) along with interviews with Croatia’s two presidents, indicates that VHTD supports ultra-nationalistic ideas that have strengthened the hegemonic influence of the right-wing parties and the Catholic Church. The thesis also argues that VHTD, in its current format, perpetuates the animosity towards neighboring Serbia and creates a ground for future conflicts rather than reconciliation or healing of the cultural trauma caused by the homeland war.

Keywords: media events, Croatia, ideology, commemoration, cultural pragmatics, memory, nationalism, cultural trauma