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MACEDONIA AND MOLDOVA: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH
TOWARDS THE STUDY OF THE POLITICAL FUNCTION OF FOLKLORE
IN THE NATION-BUILDING PROCESSES

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Macedonia and Moldova: A Comparative Approach towards the Study of the Political Function of Folklore in the Nation-Building Processes¹

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Although at first glance the comparison between the nation-building processes of two countries so far apart such as Moldova and Macedonia might seem inappropriate – even if they are both geographically located within the region of Southeastern Europe – from a historical, political, ideological and cultural perspective, both of these countries attracted the world's attention when they apparently *out of nowhere* declared their respective independence in 1991.

From then on it has become clear that the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc has instigated a series of processes through which historians, anthropologists, sociologists, or ethnologists could observe, *real-time*, the phenomena related to the creation of new states – processes which had begun some time in early history, in the background of the crucial world events, and which, despite the declared independence, are still taking place, attempting to keep up with the challenges of the new historical/political reality.

One of the most controversial processes – the post-1991 nation-building process in Macedonia and Moldova – has been progressing according to the more or less familiar 19th-century concepts of creating nations in Western Europe, only in this case with a large number of abstract as well as concrete variables, starting from the social and political systems, the ideology, and the economy, which have led to ambiguous processes of identification, as well as to economic anomalies.

¹ I would hereby like to thank Ljudmila Cojocari and Virgiliu Birdeleanu for their help with literature and interviews on the subject during my 2008 stay in Kisinau.

The reasons for these states should be found in the historical processes of self-awareness within which the search for national identity had begun, gathering momentum for both countries in the early 20th century, during the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Some of their elements might shed some light on the operating mechanisms of the centres of power, under the influence of which the new states had been created.

This context seems to have given birth to the controversy that for over a century has linked the name of Krste Petkov Misirkov to both Moldova and Macedonia, concerning his role in the emancipation of the national awareness not only of Macedonians as a people and a nation with its own language and a culture, but also of the Moldavians as a separate people.

His role in the nation-building processes of Moldova and Macedonia has become even more controversial considering his ethnically and historically ambiguous identity, resulting in his labelling as Bulgarian by Bulgarian historiography and as Macedonian by the Macedonian one.

For instance, while Bulgarians consider a proof of his ethnic affiliation, among others, the fact that in the early 20th century establishment of the Moldovan state, Misirkov was a representative of the Bulgarian minority in the Moldovan parliament Sfatul Tarii, that is, State Council², which in 1918 declared independence with the intention of merging with Romania, Macedonians regard him the first great advocate of Macedonism due to his sincere views on the Macedonian issue documented in his 1903 book *Za makedonckite raboti (On Macedonian Matters)*, which promoted the distinction of the Macedonian nation, with a separate language, culture and folklore.

This short remark might be used as a potential introduction to a more systematic comparative analysis regarding the nation-building processes in both states, and the politization of certain cultural processes as the foundation of building the national identity, which are more or less the same not only in Macedonia and Moldova, but the other postcolonial states created following the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc.

² Sfatul Tarii was the parliament of the Russian province of Bessarabia until 1917, and after the declaration of the independent Democratic Republic of Moldova in 1918, it was the legislative body of the republic which united with the Kingdom of Romania the very same year.

However, unlike other countries-successors of the former USSR or SFR Yugoslavia, only these countries have provoked clear controversies mainly relating the notions of *artificial nations* created from Russia and Yugoslavia and nations which have created their national identity due to their inability to realize their rights while subjected to long colonization processes.

Despite the fact that, within these federations, the two countries began to consolidate their respective nations and identities, but were challenged by their neighbouring countries, that is, the states bordering the federations, claiming that said republics were populated by their occupied minorities.

Romania was involved in the Moldovan case, and Bulgaria in the Macedonian. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia (1989), both countries found themselves at a historical crossroad due to the aggressive pressure not only from the countries that remained more powerful after the dissolution, such as Russia or Serbia, but also due to the aggressive politics of appropriation by neighbouring countries, such as Romania and Ukraine, relating to Moldova, and Bulgaria and Greece, relating to Macedonia. Despite these, let us call them external, problems, there were similar problems from within the newly established states regarding the predominant minorities: the Albanians from Western Macedonia, and the Transnistrian Russians living in Eastern Moldova, nowadays at the Ukrainian border. Both minorities in the postcolonial period showed secessionist aspirations firmly supported by Albania and Russia respectively. In a contemporary theoretical context this problem is seen as one of the key factors for the conflict in the triad of *national minorities*, *nationalizing states* and *external motherlands* (Berg, Van Meurs 2002). As regards these events, there was an internal crisis in Moldova as early as 1991, followed by the civil war in Transnistria³, and in Macedonia a decade later, in 2001.

But while there are still tensions in Transnistria, both Macedonians and Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia after the 2001 conflict have managed, though the Ohrid

³ Transnistria Pridnestrovie is a disputed region in Southeastern Europe which declared its independence in 1990, followed by the war of 1992 led by the unrecognized government of the Pridniesterovian Moldovan Republic (PMR) and the Moldovan authorities. The modern Republic of Moldova does not recognize the Transnistrian independence and considers those territories as integral part of the republic. The war began in March of 1992 and ended with a truce among Moldova, Russia and PMR in July.

Agreement, find common ground in the processes of constituting the state, even though the problems still have not been completely overcome.

There are also certain facts that are more abstract than these real/political which Moldova and Macedonia encountered in history, and Macedonia is still facing them.

One such abstract fact is certainly the issue of the name, that is, the names of both countries, even though these abstractions have deep political roots. The Moldovan name problems appeared as early as 1917 when, on the eve of its independence from Russia, there were questions on whether it should be named Moldova or Bessarabia⁴. We again introduce Krste Misirkov who supported the idea of naming the country Bessarabia.

In the discussion on the Declaration project, elaborated by the committee led by Ioncu, there were talks regarding the name of the country. State Councilman K. Misirkov, member of the Bulgarian national minority, expressed his dissatisfaction: "Why should we proclaim the Republic of Moldova instead the Republic of Bessarabia?" He found that "historical facts show that only a part of Bessarabia has been called Moldova in the last four centuries, so that there is no historical justification for naming Bessarabia the Moldovan Republic but should be called Republic of Bessarabia. Later on, Misirkov, discontent with the declaration, addressed Moldavians, saying: "Why should only Moldavians have that privilege and be singled out... while the other nations are referred to as brother nations?" This represents the first sign of nationalism by the dominant nation⁵ (Stepaniuc 2005, 166).

⁴ This was the name Empirical Russia gave the eastern part of the Moldova principality, ceded to Russia by the Ottoman Empire following the 1806-1812 Russian-Turkish war. The western part of Moldova was annexed to Wallachia, and became the Kingdom of Romania in 1859. In 1918 Bessarabia declared its independence from Russia and united with Romania three months later. In 1940 Russia occupied Bessarabia (the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact). The annex was internationally recognized in 1947, and the region was recognized as the Moldovan Soviet Republic in which part of the former Moldova ASSR (Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic) represented the Ukrainian SSR between 1924 and 1940, including modern Transnistria (in Moldova nowadays) and certain territories belonging to Ukraine now.

⁵ The historical context in which Misirkov advocated the idea of naming Moldova Bessarabia is the one following the February revolution of 1917 when the cease of hostility between Russia and the Central Powers (Germany, Austro-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire) occurred and the talks of the future of the country and its independence began. That is why in Kishinev bodies such as the National Party of

These stands contributed to Misirkov's banishment from Moldova⁶.

The name of Moldova had been challenged until 1991 when Moldovan authorities, in order to distinguish their country from the region Moldavia, named the country Republic of Moldova. Before 1991 the term Moldavian referred to anything regarding the region of Moldavia, be it the part in Romania or the one in Russia. The problems, however, did not end here since a considerable number of Romanian nationalists considered that Moldova should not be called Moldova, since that was the name of the region in the northeastern part of Romania. The issues regarding the name of the Republic of Macedonia are quite similar for it has been challenged by Greece which, in a nationalist zeal, claims the legitimate rights on the use of the noun Macedonia – the name of a territory in northern Greece as well. This is the reason Republic of Macedonia has been included in international organizations under the name of FYROM.

Even though the origins might be sensed at the turn of the 20th century, the first real sign of nationalism by the dominant nation, referred to by Misirkov in Moldova, in Macedonia, in defense of panslavism, appeared after World War II, when, within Yugoslavia, the new national identity of Macedonians as the majority ethnic group of the Socialist Republic Macedonia was created. These movements seem to have found their strongest support in the cultural policies of the neighbouring countries, which in both cases struggled to annex the newly created republics: Romania and Russia in the case of Moldova, and Yugoslavia, that is, Serbia, and Bulgaria in the case of Macedonia.

Russian Moldova were created – a party which promoted the Moldovan autonomy. At that time, the National Assembly of Ukraine declared Bessarabia a part of Ukraine, which stirred the Russian government in Petersburg to protect the Moldavians. In 1917 the State Council which would declare the autonomy of Bessarabia was formed. Misirkov was a member of this parliament.

⁶ According to document No. 4548 dated 26th November 1918, there were 24 banished listed, among which five councilmen (Osmolovci, Krivorukov, **Misirkov**, Starenci), *Moldava Mare* nr.26 Marti, 2 Septembrie 2008, (http://www.patriot.md/Gazeta/archive/Moldavia_Mare_26.pdf).

Another document, La N80, contains the instructions “Continue following K. P. Misirkov of the State Council and report each move he makes against Romanian interests, so that appropriate and timely measures could be taken,” (http://www.patriot.md/Gazeta/archive/Moldavia_Mare_38.pdf).

This might mean that, according to Misirkov's declaration, *independence* was first discussed (Stepaniuc 2005, 184).

A key instance in the stage of creating both these nations, in which the two countries resemble the most, is the formulation of the problem of the identity of Moldavians and Macedonians. In the literature devoted to the identities of Macedonia and Moldova published so far, one of the starting points is the originality of the language, which ultimately defines a people or a nation. And precisely the language problem has caused the greatest (dis)agreements with the western science dealing with these issues.

Since Moldavians and Romanians share the language, the latter find that Moldavians could only be called Romanians and nothing else. Certain Moldovan circles deem that their language is in fact a dialect of Romanian, which gives them the right to call it Moldovan.

It is a fact, nevertheless, that between 1989 and 1994 the Moldovan language first denounced the Cyrillic alphabet and then entered the Constitution.

Charles King, one of the inevitable authors dealing with the Moldovan issue, in his book *Moldovenii, Romania, Rusia si politica culturala* objectively emphasizes the key problems regarding the creation of the Moldovan national identity through cultural policies. As part of his historical/anthropological research he offers a detailed analysis of the problems surrounding the creation of the separate Moldovan language from the early 20th century all the way to 1989, when, in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova, a law was passed declaring the Moldovan language as a “state language”, encouraging the transition from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet (King 2005, 124).

This resulted in a logic legalization of the language:

The language laws of 1989 were the first symbolic move toward independence from Moscow. They asserted the unity of Romanian and Moldovan, returning the latter to the Latin script. Subsequent nationalistic moves toward reunification with Romania and Romanianization of the russophone elites, when coupled with Moldovan independence in 1991, led to the creation of a russophone breakaway regime in Transnistria and a brief civil war in 1992. Pro-Romanian radicalism

also contributed to moderation among the vast majority of Moldovans, as reflected in the rejection of unification with Romania and the retreat to a nominally separate Moldovan language in the 1994 constitution. (Ciscel 2006: 576)

In the context of the geopolitical changes, as well as the changes of the centres of power, the Moldovan problems with constituting the Moldovan language have been identical to the language problems in Macedonia following the 1991 independence. The leading arguments for and against the Macedonian language come from Bulgaria, which considers it a dialect of Bulgarian, forcibly changed in Yugoslavian times in order to break the connection with Bulgaria. That is why radical non-institutional organizations in the early 1990s advocated the reintroduction in Macedonian of the dark vowels used in Russian and Bulgarian, as well as the elimination of Serbisms.

It seems, however, that in the Macedonian case the identity of the language initiated in Misikrov's thoughts and defined in the grammars by Kepeski, and later by Koneski, is much more homogenous considering the diversity of the central Macedonian dialects from Bulgarian or Serbian.

As we have noted, despite the ambiguous problems with the names of the states and the identities of their respective nations, Moldova and Macedonia have been facing challenges regarding the identities of their languages.

The name of the state, the nation and the language are contemporary controversies around which the identities of Moldova and Macedonia have been created, occurring as attempts of the old as well as the newly founded centres of power to influence the nation building of the countries, as well as the identities of the nations, according to their ideologies and political interests. The colonizers have undertaken various activities, the mildest of which have been the cultural, in order to accomplish their agendas. In Macedonia, for instance, Serbs sanctioned those with Bulgarian affinities, in Moldova

Russians sanctioned those with Romanian affinities and vice versa, while somewhere in the middle there have always been certain intellectuals who would more or less advocate independent nation, language and culture.

These transformations of identities depending on the political circumstances might also be found on their way from the local towards the national. Such phenomena are not only characteristic for Macedonia and Moldova but the wider Southeast-European region. In Montenegro, for instance, part of the population declares itself Serbian and does not recognize the existence of a separate Montenegrin people or a separate language, claiming that they share the language, as well as the religion and ethnic affiliation. The Montenegrin argument, however, is the existence of a Montenegrin state in the past.

The transformation of local into national identities is mainly founded on the local existence of a separate nation and a separate language in Montenegro, Macedonia and Moldova. We could therefore freely assert a certain tension in the public opinion, at least as regards the national identity.

Public opinion is thus split between a “pro-unification” group (with Romania in Moldavia, with Serbia in Montenegro, with Bulgaria in Macedonia) and a “pro-independence” group (which in these three cases won the majority). (Watson, 1997)

There is a myriad of factors that we might consider complementary in the nation-building processes of Moldova and Macedonia and that were generally absolved by the world academic public in previous years, as shown by the extensive bibliography devoted particularly to the problems regarding the independence of the two countries in question.

The remainder of the text shall underscore the role of the folklore and its manifestations in the nation-building processes of the two countries, a problem either

marginalized or merely touched upon in the analyses of anthropologists who researched the national cultures of these two countries, separately.

It seems that, for whatever reason, the problem regarding the role of folklore and its institutionalization in the nation-building processes is seldom taken seriously, even though it has been indicated that, as in the European countries in the 19th century, in the countries of Southeastern Europe too, one of the crucial factors of distinguishing one's own tradition and culture from another has been founded on folklore and the *folklorization of identity*.

One of the reasons is certainly the fact that this relatively new discipline is still marginalized in the anthropological, ethnological and cultural debates on the cultural identity of a given nation. However, any meticulous researcher of the creation of national cultures and their identity shall inevitably note that folklore is the fundamental element in creating the nationalist movements which later on, in milder forms, have infiltrated in the national.

Yet the existing literature on the role of folklore in constituting the national identity indicates that this thesis indeed has a great number of supporters, especially in Europe, the 19th-century history of which suggests the enormous influence this phenomenon had exerted on constituting the nations – a phenomenon that clearly has not had its final word.

Classic researchers of nations and nationalisms, such as Gellner, Herzfeld, Hobsbawm, Ranger, or Smith, mainly portrayed the role of folklore in 19th-century Europe in the context of creating nationalisms. But, contemporary folkloristics also has a number of researchers dealing with this issue.

Olaf Löfgren's article *The Nationalization of Culture* (Löfgren 1989), analyzing this phenomenon in the Nordic countries, offers various examples of the role of folklore in nation building, one of which is Finland, the research on folklore of which contributed to the definite shaping of the Finnish national movement, which in turn helped the country free itself from Russian domination after 1908. A considerable contributor to the research of this phenomenon was Finnish folklorist Lauri Honko (Honko 1955, 1988). Proof that this phenomenon was not restricted to Southeastern Europe are the examples

analyzed by the Hungarian folklorist Tomas Hofer, who has devoted important papers on folklore culture used as national symbolism, or even as “state symbolism” during Stalin’s reign; or Herzfeld, who examined the mechanisms of constructing the Greek identity with the help of folklore following the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

Löfgren suggests that in comparative studies of two countries attention be paid to several factors, such as: a. the international cultural grammar of nationalities where the symbols of the state, that is, the nation – *flag, anthem, holy scripts* – would be researched; b. the ideas of cultural heritage where *national history and literature* and *national folk culture* would be researched, and c. certain features of the nation, such as virtues and values (Löfgren 1989).

Considering these Löfgren’s notes, in favour of the comparative study regarding the role of folklore and its politization, that is, its utilization in national and identity goals in Macedonia and Moldova, the emphasis shall nevertheless fall on the manner in which folklore, before becoming a dominant national category, goes through a phase of nationalist expression.

This results from the historical, social and geopolitical circumstances in both countries following their 1991 independence, in which creating their own respective nations meant more than a mere legal decree of adopting the state symbols, such as a flag, anthem, or constitution.

Instead of the features of nationalism examined by anthropology, folkloristics mainly focuses on studying the forms of nationalism, that is, the components centering on folklore – the popular culture or culture of the people – as the pivotal element.

These pivotal elements are: a. *Romanticism* and its reincarnation in the nationalisms of Southeastern Europe in a form of a. *Neoromanticism*; b. *exclusionism*, and c. *patriotism* (Broonen, 2006).

These three components, seen in the context of the Moldovan and Macedonian culture and politics, might result in the conclusion that regardless whether the nationalism founded on folklore is being supported or criticized by domestic or foreign scientific

public, from the very beginning of its conscious existence, folklore has been utilized in political and ideological purposes.

A sort of a Neoromanticism, closely linked to 19th-century Romanticism, appeared in the newly created states of Southeastern Europe immediately after their independence, that is, the fall of the Eastern Bloc. At that time the new countries instantly felt the need to establish a spiritual bond with their ancestors and their own primitive cultures in order to demonstrate a certain ethnic, but also identity, continuity in the cultural existence in a new modern constellation.

In this context folklore has remained the inevitable category retopicalizing the myths and epics of the past. In this manner old myths, epics, stories and songs are re-evaluated in a new historiographic context⁷. If it is not under control, it might take extreme forms, as witnessed in the European diplomats' argument regarding Macedonia's aspirations towards NATO and the EU that despite the name issue, the excessive use of the myth of Alexander the Great for topographic and geographic purposes is also an obstacle, due to the Greek claim to an exclusive right on it. This mass folklorization of ancient myths has not only been supported, but even encouraged by the authorities in the Republic of Macedonia. We find a similar example in Moldova as well:

Here is an example of the confrontation of symbols and declarations between the two states and the press in the two countries. The 2nd of July 2004 was the anniversary of 500 years since the death of Saint Stefan the Great, important historical figure of the medieval kingdom of Moldova canonised saint at the beginning of the 90s. Both Romania and the Republic of Moldova had declared 2004 as the Year Stefan the Great. Saint Stefan the Great was celebrated with great pomp at a gathering of hundred of thousands of people at the Putna Monastery, in Romania, where the king is buried. Moldovan Opposition newspapers announced that the president of Moldova conditioned his presence at Putna in Romania, where he had been invited by the Romanian president, to the recognition of the difference between Romanian and Moldovan language. The Romanian president denied that there has been such a discussion and stated that

⁷ Cf. Klosto, Pol (ed.), *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe*, 2005.

their relations with the Moldovan president were good. The Romanian press was indifferent to the matter. The Moldovan president Vladimir Voronin organized a counter celebration of Stefan the Great in Chisinau on the same date. The presidential discourse insisted that history has rewarded Stefan with the preserve of his (Moldovan) state, language and people. His party newspaper, the Communist (2nd July 2004), published on its front page a poem with clear territorial allusions, supported on the second page by an article entitled 'For a Unique Moldova', thus advocating the incorporation of Romanian Moldova into the Republic of Moldova. (Heintz 2005: 9).

This has not only been the case with Stephen the Great but also with other notables, as, for instance, the ambiguous identities of authors such as Eminescu, Crenaga, or Alexandri, born in Romanian Moldavia, but recognized as Moldovan national heroes. It is similar with the romantic figures appropriated by Macedonia and Bulgaria such as the brothers Miladinov, Marko Cepenkov, a folklorist and collector of folk creations, and K. Misirkov, who, unlike the Moldovans born in Romania, were actually born in Macedonia.

This romantic concept of remythicizing and folklorizing of old myths in political purposes has been criticized by certain intellectual figures outside Europe, but inside Macedonia as well.

External criticism focuses on attacking the exclusive claims of a certain people on the cultural and political symbols of a multicultural state, thereby automatically denying the role of the minorities in nation building. According to critics, this is sheer nationalism built on ancient myths and folklore in the newly created countries, founded on exceptionalism, that is, irrecognition of the other minorities and their culture and folklore. The problem is that nationalism brings about nationalism, and conflicts are never far behind. That is the case with minorities such as Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, Bulgarians and Roma in Moldova, or Albanians, Vlachs, Roma, Serbs and Turks in Macedonia.

This is why in Macedonia Albanian nationalism has developed alongside the Macedonian, with Skanderbeg, whose statue has already been erected in Skopje, as Alexander's counterpart.

Although exceptionalism in folklorist theory mainly concerns cultural policies in Australia and the USA, new nations claiming exclusive rights on the history of the continent as settlers, and the integrity of the nation has been culturally defined by the diversity of its tradition, or sometimes even accompanied by the view that national strength and unity depend on fostering a unique cultural feature; certain characteristics of exceptionalism certainly could be attributed to the nationalist movements in Moldova and Macedonia.

A dominant feature of nationalists, especially in Macedonia, is that they do not consider themselves nationalists, but patriots. It is, in fact, questionable whether, in the context of nation building and identity crises, these two could be distinguished as clearly.

Patriotism is linked to folklore when emotional expressions of loyalty to the nation regard cultural rituals involving familiar symbols. For instance, such are the manifestations involving the graves of unknown heroes, in America, for example, or the folklorization of the US flag. In his book *Who Are We*, Huntington notes that this sort of patriotism has especially gathered momentum after the 9/11 attacks, when the American people suddenly came together to pledge allegiance to a nation, and the American flag was displayed on all houses and cars.

In contemporary Moldova and Macedonia we have found numerous examples of folklore nationalism disguised as patriotic symbolism. Such an example is the Macedonian flag which, in its hundred-year history, has had several different stages and designs depending on the party, nation or group of people that use it.

To outside observers of Macedonian political field the term "national flags" could be a symbol of the replacement of the internationally contested flag bearing the "Vergina Star" with a new state flag. following the signing of the 1995 "Interim Accord" with Greece. To insiders, however, that same term might evoke a considerable number of flags: The Socialist Republic of Macedonia flag with the

red socialist pentacle, the "Krusevo Republik" one, mentioned in the national anthem Today above Macedonia, the red flag with the gold lion, subject of the force political debate, as well as the 4 flags of the former "nationalities" mostly perceived as national flags" by those who proudly wave them., (...) National flags in the Republic of Macedonia merely reflects the ambiguous use of the term national identity interpreted either as state or ethnic identity depending of the context. (Trajanovski, 2008)

In the context of Macedonian nation building, Macedonian flags were much more than symbols of a nation, they were carriers of nationalism, especially displayed during folk performances. Same connotation is found in the symbols of the nation in Moldova, especially in the context of political folklore and the symbols related to rituals surrounding the state holidays.

The idea of "Moldavian" patriotism was symbolically signaled by the ideological concept "Republic of Moldova – my motherland". Thereafter the authorities began to evoke the images of the past by large scale collective commemorative events that actively involved masses of citizens in rituals justifying the continuity of the Republic of Moldova "over centuries." (...) At the initiative of the communist –led government the "Year of Stefan Cel Mare (2004), was celebrated, as was the anniversary of "60 Years of Victory (2005). Monuments of the "Soviet Soldier Liberator" were renovated, the military glory complex and "Eternitate" Chisinau were fully reconstructed. (Cojocari 2007: 93)

Regardless whether these phenomena are found under terms such as international cultural grammar of nationalities, the ideas of cultural heritage, certain features of the nation such as virtues and values (Löfgren 1989), or whether they are included in the packaged terms such as Romanticism, exceptionalism or patriotism (Bronnen 2005), the fact remains that the core of all these manifestations is popular culture, that is, folklore as an indicator of the historical existence of peoples and nations.

In contemporary Republic of Moldova and contemporary Republic of Macedonia, the process of folklorizing the identity has not stopped. Its intensity might be lower than in the golden age of "state folklore", but its politization is still evident.

Both countries have been through two stages of utilizing their own folklore:

- a. Utilizing the folklore according to a socialist model, and
- b. Utilizing the folklore according to a democratic model.

Both types of utilization are closely connected to the given political centres of power, and are used, in this context, mainly as political propaganda. The issue of authenticity or otherwise of a certain folklore manifestation becomes crucial in accepting or rejecting a certain ideology or politics by the representatives of folklore. The utilization is in fact so subtle that is almost imperceptible for the ordinary observer, whether it be a president's address during a celebration in a mandatory folklore ambience, or a mere government-funded folk festival. Particularly interesting are Jennifer Cash's notes on the politization of folklore in Moldova, reminiscent of such states in Macedonia as well.

As my informant explained, popular ensembles existed through the Soviet era, and were in fact, medium for dissemination Soviet ideologies and propaganda. From their perspective stylized folklore contained in the costumes, repertoires, and stage styles of popular ensembles is decidedly inauthentic because it is largely composed and designed to promote political messages about inter-ethnic friendship. (Cash 2004: 64)

In other words, it is as if this situation was copied from the states with the folk ensembles in former Yugoslavia.

But folklore could be a portent of certain changes, not only of ideological but also cultural nature, as seen in the example of the 1980s so-called folk movement in Moldova, in which the wane of Russian domination in Moldova was sensed. It above all consisted in the appearance of authentic Moldovan folklore which was in fact composed of completely Romanian elements (Cash 2002). A folk movement of the sort was noted in Macedonia as well, but was never defined as such. It concerned a gradual nationalization of folklore research at the Institute of Folklore – a nationalization which placed the national above all else. This phenomenon was especially strong towards the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s, when most employees at the Institute of Folklore were ethnic Macedonians and eighty percent of all research focused of ethnic Macedonian folklore. Thus, towards the end of the 20th century there was a large number of folk movements, in

the true sense, practiced by local folk groups which have popularized all sorts of Macedonian national folklore at various folk music festivals or youth folk parades (Lafazanovski 2002).

It is interesting that Moldovan institutions and individuals responsible for folklore consider the post-independence folklore a depoliticized cultural category. They explain this with the fact that the democratic processes have brought about new tendencies which helped them break free from the old imposed and ideologically performative features of their ensembles under Russian influence. The fact that they are now under Romanian influence is a completely different story. Needless to say that the same paradigms are true for the folk institutions in Macedonia after releasing the socialist political ideology in the repertoires, as well as the institutional research projects.

One fact, however, has been ignored, and that is the overemphasized process of ethnization of culture in Moldova and Macedonia alike, excluding the folklore of the minorities as common representatives in the multicultural countries.

Both in Cash's and in my field research on politization of folklore it is obvious that the predominant cultural policy makers in these countries are the ethnic representatives of the minorities (Moldavians and Macedonians), and in this sense there is no folklore which would in some way illustrate the real multiethnic nature of the state.

Thus in Macedonia, Macedonians, Albanians or Roma have their own separate folk manifestations, as is the case with the minorities in Moldova. This, of course, resembles western multiethnic states in which there is a guaranteed freedom of expressing one's own traditional feelings. The strong bond, however, between the ethnic national folklore of the majority as the only carrier of state traditional culture demonstrates that our two multiethnic and democratic countries still practice profound politization of folklore as the only indicator of traditional identity. This obviously means that that our identities shall need quite some time to express a different culture – multiethnic and bias-free – with which to equally compete at the common cultural field of Europe.

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