

Ambiguous Identities and Nation-state Building in the Southeastern Europe

1.1. The patterns of symbolic discourse and ideological mythology in the case of nation-building process in the Republic of Moldova

Virgiliu Bîrlădeanu, dr.

Chief of Sector History of Culture
Institute of History, State and Law
Academy of Sciences from Moldova
Republic of Moldova

The research project is elaborated for a period of two years and will include two study compartments:

Part I: The patterns of symbolic discourse and social practice; creation of symbolic boundaries of the nation vis-à-vis others.

Part II: Nation-building ideological mythology and collective perception of national identity; discrepancies between prescribed identities and socio-cultural practices.

The project aims to study the power's project of nation-building in the Pruto-Dniestrian space (1944-2005) and to understand the consequences of this project reflected in the collective conscience. In this way, we propose to deconstruct the ideological discourse in order to detect origins, continuity and metamorphoses of political discourse on the nation-building process in the Republic of Moldova and to emphasize the discrepancies and contradictions of the actual power's nation-building project and thus to prefigure the directions of its future evolution.

My previous investigations were focused on the investigation of ideological nature of nation building process in the Republic of Moldova. The symbolic structure and the mythological scheme of the power discourse denote valences inherited from the imperial political project that generated, after the territorial annexation in 1812, the concept of "Moldavian nation" in concordance with imperial plan of extension in the South-eastern Europe. Collective conscience, opposite to the power discourse, has elaborated from a period to another its own identity dimension, preserving in the deeps of popular culture constants of Romanian ethnic tradition (language, popular custom and art), and in the social practice – an evident local identity, reticent to the challenges of imperial messianism, but distanced to the processes of edification the Romanian state. Thus, the periods 1944-1991 and 1991-2005 are evident as periods with intensive dialog between the collective identities at the level of ordinary people, as well as with activation of ideological conflicts that existed before or/and emerged new conflicts. Two of ideological mega-narratives – national and imperial – have trenced in the own texts symbolical borders between 'We' and 'Others', constituting their own mythologies about history, space, time, in a direct correlation with their millenarist projects.

The methodological & theoretical frame

The project will apply the method of participant observation, as well as oral history interviews, relying on the methodology and theoretical works signed by A. D. Smith, B. Anderson etc. The main *sources* will be literary and historical texts, official documents and discourses, and empiric materials (oral histories, interviews).

The study will be developed from twofold perspective:

- political mythology and symbols in the official discourse
- the study of the collective imaginary of ordinary people.

The results of this research project will be two articles concerning the part I (“The patterns of symbolic discourse and social practice; creation of symbolic boundaries of the nation vis-à-vis others”) and the part II (“Nation-building ideological mythology and collective perception of national identity; discrepancies between prescribed identities and socio-cultural practices”).

Selective Bibliography:

Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn (London: Verso).

Boia, L. (1998) *Jocul cu trecutul. Istoria între adevăr și ficțiune* (București: Ed. Humanitas).

Cohen, A. P. (1985) *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Tavistock).

Fruntașu, I. (2002) *O istorie etnopolitică a Basarabiei 1812-2002* (Chișinău: Cartier).

Gellner, E. (1983) *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press)

Girardet, R. (1996) *Mythes et mythologies politiques* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil).

Guibernau M. and Hutchinson J. (2004) *History and national destiny: ethnosymbolism and its critics* (Oxford; Malden, MA: Blackwell).

Hearn, J. (2006) *Rethinking Nationalism, A Critical Introduction* (New York: Palgrave MacMilan).

Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger T., eds, (1983) *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press).

Hroch, H. (2000) *The Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (New York: Columbia University Press).

King, Ch. (2000) *The Moldovans. Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford University: Hoover Institution Press,).

Meurs, W. van (1996) *Istoriografia comunistă despre problema basarabeană* (Chișinău: Arc).

Nicoară, S. (2002) *Națiunea modernă. Mituri, simboluri, ideologii* (Cluj-Napoca: Accent).

Smith, A. (1992) *Ethnicity and nationalism* (New York: E. J. Brill).

Tishkov, V. (1997) *Ethnicity, nationalism and conflict in and after the Soviet Union: the mind aflame*, (London: SAGE Publication Ltd).

The project will be developed in the Republic of Moldova, in the frame of two institutions:

1. Laboratory Cultural Anthropology, Institute of History and Political Sciences, Free International University from Moldova;

str. Vlaicu Pîrcălab, 52, of. 705a,

MD-2012, Chişinău,

Republica Moldova,

Tel.: (373 22) 22-73-65

Fax: (373 22) 59-40-61

<http://iisp.ulim.md/>

2. Institute of History, State and Law, Academy of Sciences from Moldova

str. 31 August 1989, 82,

MD-2012, Chişinău,

Republica Moldova,

Tel.: (373 22) 23 32 07

Fax: (373 22) 23 31 74

<http://www.asm.md/>