

I. Ambiguous Identities and Nation-state Building in Southeastern Europe
I.1. Appropriation and representation of public symbols in private spaces after 1945
I.1.1. Metamorphoses of National Identity in the Republic of Moldova: Between Imperialism of Power Discourse and Constructs of Collective Memory

Ludmila Cojocari, dr.

Laboratory of Cultural Anthropology and Ethno-Political Studies
Department of History and International Relations
Free International University of Moldova
Republic of Moldova

I. The project's aim is to explore the metamorphoses of National Identity in Moldova after the period of Soviet Union collapse and proclamation of a new independent state – the Republic of Moldova. The events that anticipated the birth of a post-soviet state in the frame of the so-called ‘period of national renaissance’ (1987-1990), as well as the events happened after the proclamation of its Independence (1991-till present) generated a lot of debates around the issue of collective identities: national, ethno-cultural, religious, local and/or regional.

In the case of post-soviet states, the society was abruptly transitioned from the forged soviet identity ‘soviet people’ or ‘homo sovieticus’, based on homogenized class identity to the ethnic homogenizing order of the nation-state. Additionally, Moldovan society crossed the ‘passage from one civilization to another’ (Halecki, 1950) for a number of times (1812, 1918, 1940, 1944, 1991, 2000) and each of these transitions reconstructed, changed, or reinvented new memories and identity adequate to the power discourse and often not corresponding to the collective memory practices. This context opens two mirroring questions: To what extent the soviet past could influence the identity structures and representations of a post-soviet society and to what extent the governments, following each other at the wheel of the Republic of Moldova after the collapse of the Soviet Union, will manipulate with the heritage of collective memory and on what purposes do they do that?

As the identity of any ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1991) represents a communicative process that includes many voices and varying degrees of understanding and, importantly, misunderstanding (Bodnar, 1992), *the project will study the discrepancies between (1)the process of national identity re/construction from the perspective of collective memory constructs and (2)the projects of national identity re/construction elaborated by the discourse of political elites. The research will focus to identify, on one hand, which public symbols are significant for the identity feeling reflected in the vernacular memory (ordinary people) and, on other hand - in the official memory reflected by power discourse.*

The metamorphose of power discourse from the concept ‘one nation - two countries’ to the concept of ‘two countries – two nations’ attested the crisis of power legitimation as well as a crisis of social-cultural values and perception of collective identity on behalf of Moldovan society. The ordinary people perceptions of ethno-cultural identity (Romanians) or/and regional identity (Moldovans) were faced by the political elite discourse about ‘Moldavian identity’ – all of them appealing to the mechanisms of memory and amnesia. The most recognizable references constitute the case of public symbols - monuments and the ceremonies of commemorations from the perspective of ‘realms of memory’ (Nora, 1996). In a public monument a community is forced to

agree upon a set of symbols that embody what they are trying to express. Monuments are designed to last for centuries and therefore an effective monument is an important expression of the deep levels of a collective identity. The symbolic ceremonies are extremely powerful as they tend to create an almost direct connection with past events; rituals are not just further instances of humanity's now much touted propensity to explain the world to itself by telling stories. It is more than a story told and reflected on; it is a cult enacted. (Gillis, 1994)

During the period of 1987-2006, the use and abuse of places of memory are oriented to the reviving of certain dimensions of collective identity, becoming ambiguous symbols and arena for symbolic fights (Assmann, 1999).

II. My previous investigations concerning collective memory and identity in the Republic of Moldova during the transitory epochs, as well as the perpetuation of collective identity in the context of memory and tradition of nuptial practices proves that the ordinary people elaborated toward the political and ideological changes an immunity complex of identity structures. They are constituted by ancestral values: Christianity, the family, everyday work, which are indifferent to political changes and official discourse. In this context, the religion and traditions, alongside language and history, represent in the Republic of Moldova a struggle of memory against forced forgetting.

III. The main methods and methodological & theoretical frames guiding the research for this project will involve ethnological fieldwork in the certain communities, applying the method of participant observation, as well as oral history interviews, relying on the theoretical works signed by M. Halbwachs, P. Nora, M. Agulhon, J. Gillis, A. D. Smith, B. Anderson etc.

The main *sources* for my research will be empiric materials (oral histories, interviews), direct/participative observation, ethnographic studies, archive date, community records, government documents, as well as professional publications, and other specialized publications. *How is perpetuated the collective identity in the memory of ordinary people and what are their attitudes to the identity ascriptions by the power discourse? How people accommodate the identity constructs and practices of collective memory to the identity politics of power?* - will be the main points and questions in the frames of fieldwork research and interviews.

The main *methods* of analysis will be ethnographic, conversational/narrative analysis from the *approach* of critical discourse analysis.

The project will study how peoples translate identity's power policies and practices into their world view (practices of collective memory and everyday life); examine the different frames in which power and ordinary people interactions take place (rural and urban, sacred and quotidian) illustrated by the acceptance or rejection of official meaning of monuments, participation or not-participation of different groups, the presence of officially invited guests or of the unofficial speakers at the ceremonies.

The collective memory is an elaborate network of social mores, values, and ideals that marks out the dimensions of our imaginations according to the attitudes of the social groups to which we relate. It is through the interconnections among these shared images that the social frameworks (*cadres sociaux*) of our collective memory are formed, and it is within such settings that individual memories must be sustained if they are to survive (Hutton, 1993).

From this perspective, the past is not *preserved* but is *socially constructed* through archives, museums, school curricula, monuments, and public displays (Anderson 1991; 1994;

Bodnar 1992; Gillis 1994; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Hutchinson 1987; Kammen 1991; Spillman 1997; Zelinsky 1989). National holidays, political extravaganzas, sporting events, and the rites-of-passage of the great, are all opportunities for the expression of a state-scripted national solidarity. Mass participation in such "high holidays of mass communication"—directly or vicariously through the press, radio, film—allowed societies to share a "collective heartbeat" and strengthen their collective memory (Dayan and Katz, 1992). But rather than the past being *preserved* as some objective record, it is always being *reconstructed* in the context of the present, and never disassociated from considerations of power (Halbwachs 1992). Indeed, Gillis has argued that a state "bureaucracy of memory" orchestrates a "sense of sameness over time and space" by advancing systems of remembering and forgetting that are socially constructed and which favour *elite* memory over *popular* memory (Gillis 1994). For Bodnar, the "dogmatic formalism" of *official* memory is advanced by elites who are committed to social unity, the continuity of particular institutions, and cultivation of loyalty to them; on the other hand, *vernacular memory* represents an array of diverse and ever-changing interests that threaten the attempted universality of the official expression of identity and memory (Bodnar 1994). In the production of these collective memories, national history is rendered as a mythic narrative acted out on, bounded by, and bonded with, particular places.

Thus, the project will be focused on the context of capital city and a traditional village community in order to compare the mechanisms of selecting, storage and recollection of collective memory structures. The last two years fieldwork materials concerning practices of commemorations in the context of Victory Day and Easter Memorial holiday (*Paștele Blajinilor*) attested in the rural communities a notorious tendency to accommodate the power discourse to the narrations, values and heroes of local identity and thus to avoid the narratives of power discourse symbolism. At the same time, in the capital city, the public spaces and ceremonies are reviving of certain dimensions of collective identity, becoming ambiguous symbols and arena for symbolic fights (Assmann, 1999). In certain cases of political elite' initiatives concerning identity building, individual actors often express their attitudes of disagreement in more subtle expressions of indifference or inventive historical constructions of their own. This is the case of ambiguous attitudes toward the 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm, 1983) as patriotic holydays, commemorations and monuments' erection during the soviet period (May 1, November 7, February 23, March 8) or from the recent history (August 27, August 31, October 14, Festival of Wine etc.).

The project will be fortified by the archive investigations in Moldova and Russia in order to understand the dynamics of memory and power discourses.

Studying 'Memory' and 'Identity' we will focus not on the question how accurately *Social Representations* describe an "objective" historical reality, or on the facts that are at the origins or these remembrance. We will study them as a part of Collective Memory (Imaginary), as remembrances, values, attitudes etc. This is not to say that the symbols of the public memory can only be used to promote the dominant national image. There were competing ideologies for control of the national soul and therefore the public memory. The most fascinating of these would be the period of transitions in terms of political systems/regimes, ideologies, cultural propaganda. Thus we are not seeking for the historical truths, but for the perceptions about this historical past. In other words, how have people been using their traditions, make sense of their existence. As Frederick Corney explains, to pit the constructed past against the supposed historical reality of the past "in order to expose falsification and political manipulation is to ignore the complex process involved in the efforts of any group or polity to construct a reality in which to exist." (CORNEY, 1997) Our focus of attention will be on how societies fashion and test the credibility of memories

in a certain way at a particular time, and the way tradition enables people to sustain their life-worlds and give their endeavors some sense of meaning.

The studying the metamorphoses of collective memory and identity in the Republic of Moldova, within the frame of module “Appropriation and representation of public symbols in private spaces after 1945” of international research project “*Ambiguous Identities and Nation-state Building in Southeastern Europe*” could be a great opportunity and an effective way of understanding the traumatizing soviet legacy and its role on the nation building process in this *interstitial* (Bhabha, 1990) society.

IV. Project activities & timetable: The completion of this project is planed for 36 months fellowship, including the following activities:

activities/time schedule	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
	2007											
Elaboration of research outlines and methodology plan	*	*										
Participation at the methodological workshop in Graz in order to discuss the methodological and theoretical frames of this project			*									
Revision of individual methodology plan				*								
Historical and ethnological research												
- research in Moldovan libraries and archives				*								
- preparation of interviews				*								
- ethnological fieldwork and interview taking (30)					*	*						
- gathering of biographic information					*	*						
Progress Report 1							*					
Historical and ethnological research								*	*			
- research in Moldovan libraries and archives								*	*			
- ethnological fieldwork and interview taking (20)												
Progress Report 2										*		
Research in the Russian Archives (in the case of additional funding)											*	
Archive research in the Library of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kiev, Ukraine (in the case of additional funding)												*

activities/time schedule	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
	2008											
Progress Report 3	*											
Historical and ethnological research		*	*	*	*							

- research in Moldovan libraries and archives - ethnological fieldwork and interview taking (10)													
Progress Report 4						*							
Historical and ethnological research - research in Moldovan libraries and archives - working with ethnological fieldwork and interviews materials							*	*					
Progress Report 5									*				
Empirical research & data evaluation - finishing empirical work - data evaluation and exchange										*	*		
Final report on empirical report (of all country teams & full time researchers)													*

activities/time schedule	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
	2009											
Writing up research results - elaboration of draft of monograph	*	*	*	*								
Presentation of individual research results (and drafts of monograph) at the International conference in Chisinau					*							
Reviewing of monograph						*	*					
Presentation of manuscript								*				

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