
Rediscovering History, Rediscovering Ultimate Truth

History, Textbooks, Identity and Politics in Moldova

Stefan Ihrig

The Republic of Moldova – a multiple case study

Among the post-Soviet independent states, the Republic of Moldova (RM) seems to be one especially ridden by ethnic conflict and the paramount question of national identity. Two narratives of the nation – Moldovanism and Romanianism – have been competing for the hearts and minds of the citizens of the RM since the early Nineties. If we are to characterize the situation in the last ten years in regard to the identity question, we seem to be able to diagnosticize a “deadlock”. In the early Nineties political Romanianism had the upper hand, yet since 1994 political Moldovanism is at the helm of Moldovan politics. The corresponding historiographical currents have experienced a different biography: Within the Soviet Union it was Moldovanism (in its Soviet form) that was the dominant historiographical discourse, while it is historiographical Romanianism that has been at the forefront since the Nineties.

The situation in the Republic of Moldova (RM) is a very peculiar case in many respects, for example for nationalism theory.¹ In following the RM, however, is proposed as a case study illustrating the interplay between the following three fields: (academic) history, politics and history teaching. The conflict between Moldovanism and Romanianism has resulted in a perfect deadlock in many societal spheres. It has hindered finding solutions to such problematic issues like an inclusive discourse of identity and/or the textbook situation, which is oddly out of tune with the social realities of the RM. This deadlock situation cannot be accounted for by a mere reading of what the two nationalisms claim or understanding what substantial issues they seem to be fighting over. Both identity projects represent two versions of “historical truth”, which rule out any compromise. The atmosphere of “one and only truth possible” is cause and effect for both –isms and will be discussed here in relation to its societal environment. Thus the following relationships will be focused on: the one between history and politics, that between academic history and history teaching as well as the one between history teaching and politics:

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. history ↔ politicsb. academic history ↔ history teachingc. history teaching ↔ politics |
|---|

¹ Cf. Article by the same author in this volume; also for more literature on the topic.

One of the questions that will be discussed here briefly is the question of which historical region Moldova is attributed to by its historians. While we can indeed find clear positioning of the RM in space, there is a plurality of positioning – depending on the narrative which is accepted. Thus the first question is that of whether it is historiographical Romanianism or Moldovanism which we turn to for answers. And then there is everyday politics, which as will be discussed further complicates the matter.

From an academic distance we can attribute Moldova to the post-Soviet space as well as to the wider concept of Southeastern Europe. How exemplary Moldova is for the Southeast-European or the post-Soviet region will be left to the reader. It will be argued here that the Moldovan case per se amounts to strong plea for multiperspectivity in history writing (both in academia and for textbooks) as well as in history teaching. Perhaps also its geographical place already amounts a plea for a multiperspective approach to the history and the identity question there. Other reasons for an overall multiperspective approach will be exposed in the following. However we may want to read the Moldovan case, it does exemplify the dilemmas, which may arise in an atmosphere dominated by the search for ultimate truth circumstances and especially when the relationship between the above mentioned three fields is sought to be too close by social actors.

Moldovanism and Romanianism – the outer conflict

The Republic of Moldova (RM) represents in many ways a unique case of post-socialist transition. The talk of a possible reunification with Romania in the early Nineties spurred the pro-independence movements in Gagauzia and Transnistria. While in the beginning reunification seemed for some time like “the natural course” of things for the Romanian-speaking two thirds of the population (according to the 1989 census) of the Moldovan republic, this changed rapidly after 1994. Since then there have been parties in power whose agenda is to preserve a Moldovan republic independent of Romania. Further on do the elections since 1993 and the various opinion polls suggest that there exists no wish in the population to (re-) unite with Romania at all.

Against this background, the existence of the subject of “History of the Romanians” (*Istoria Românilor*) in the curricula of the RM since the early Nineties (1991) remains a curiosity. Even more so since the textbooks for these courses have been developed and printed under the Moldovanist governments in power since 1994. The replacement of it with “Moldovan history” has been the focal point of the conflict of two sides of Moldovan society,² which can be called “Romanianists” and the “Moldovanists”. Romanianism as a political force and a historiographic current seeks unification with the so-called motherland Romania and prescribes this as the natural conclusion of the history of the “Romanian

2 However, since the language and history teaching conflicts of 1995 and 2001/2002, the government has been proposing to replace the two-tiered history teaching (“world history” and “history of the Romanians”) with a single integrated history. So far this has not been implemented, but new textbooks are in preparation now.

people” in Moldova. Moldovanism on the other hand stipulates the existence of a separate Moldovan people in history and present, its inherent quality and guiding principle being the strive for independence especially from other Romanian political units.

Although political Moldovanism has been the dominant force in politics since 1994, still today the school subject remains to be “History of the Romanians”, the textbooks being mostly written by outspoken Romanianist historians most of whom hold prominent posts at Moldovan universities. The Romanianised sector of society has been able to dominate the cultural and educational part of Moldovan life and is able in a way to use the state school system to propagate its vision of the nation and with it its political agenda in opposition to the various ruling Moldovanist parties since 1994.

Romanianism vs. Moldovanism – the inner conflict

The conflictual aspects of Romanianism and Moldovanism have been discussed and analysed elsewhere,³ suffice it to focus on the following aspects here: membership of the nation and external relations. As has been shown elsewhere, the identity construction in the Moldovan case centres around the question of denomination primarily. The ethnic Romanians⁴ making up two thirds (according to the 1989 census) of the RM are either claimed to be Romanians or Moldovans. This is exemplified by the search in historical documents of instances where the population of the territory is called by one of the two “national adjectives”. Some of the writings on the identity question highlight every instance where a cited text uses the ‘right’ appellation (cf. excerpts I and II)⁵.

-
- 3 Cf. the article in this volume by the same author: Ihrig: Attainment vs. maintainment nationalism. See also: Ihrig, Stefan: *Welche Nation in welcher Geschichte? Eigen- und Fremdbilder der nationalen Diskurse in der Historiographie und den Geschichtsschulbüchern in der Republik Moldova, 1991-2005*. Stuttgart/Hannover (forthcoming 2006). [Soviet and Post-Soviet Society and Politics]; Meurs, Wim P. van: History Textbooks in Moldova. Expert Report – Update for the Moldova Seminar of the Georg-Eckert-Institute for International Textbook Research, Braunschweig, June 26th – 27th, 2003.[unpublished report]; Meurs, Wim P. van: Moldova – nationale Identität als politisches Programm. *Südosteuropa-Mitteilungen* 4-5 (2003). pp. 31-43; Meurs, Wim P. van: Carving a Moldavian Identity out of History. *Nationalities Papers* 1 (1998). pp. 39-56.
- 4 The term „ethnic Romanians“ is used to designate those identified either as “Romanians” or “Moldovans” by the two discourses in question, their prime ethnic marker being the mother tongue closely related to the Romanian language spoken in Romania.
- 5 Excerpt I from: Stati, Vasile: *Istoria Moldovei*. Chişinău 2002, p. 50; excerpt II from: Ghimpu, Gheorghe: *Conştiinţa naţională a Românilor Moldoveni. Lucrare de sinteză cu texte antologice, ediţia a II-a, revăzută şi completată de autor*. Chişinău 2002, p. 116.

Excerpt I

"terminologia etnică și politico-geografică pentru realitatea spațiului est-carpatic" – **moldoveni, Moldova** "a intrat, în formele ei esențiale – în conștiința europeană" (A.Armbuster, 1980) în perioada constituirii Statutului Moldovenesc, în veacul XIV.

Evident, etnonimul **moldoveni**, ca și numele **Moldova**, au o vechime mai mare decât Statul Moldovenesc constituit la 1359. Am reprodus mai sus doar mențiunile documentare certe scrise. O caracteristică a etnonimelor (denumirilor de popoare) este că, la data atestării, au o îndelungată perioadă de existență "nedocumentată". Nu poate fi nici o îndoială că etnonimul **moldovan (moldoveni)**, **numele Moldova** au existat înainte de a avea norocul să nimerească în documente. Cele mai convingătoare dovezi în această privință ne oferă creația populară moldovenească.

Se știe că folclorul oglindește istoria unei comunități, păstrată și transmisă altor generații, exprimând "*păreră proprie a poporului*" despre evenimente și figuri însemnate. "*Datinile, poveștile, muzica și poezia sînt arhivele poporului. Cu ele se poate oricînd reconstitui trecutul întunecat*". (A.Russo, 1866). Constatarea se referă, într-o măsură și mai mare la baladele și legendele istorice. Luînd "naștere spre sfîrșitul perioadei de trecere la feudalism sau în cea a feudalismului timpuriu" (sec.XII-XIII), "*Balada Miorița* este un cîntec endoetnic, adică este creația unei comunități etnice", reflectînd conștiința de sine a acesteia. În toate cele cîteva sute de variante ale *Mioriței*, culese "*la poalele munților moldovenești*" (M.Sadoveanu), este vorba de soarta moldovanului, care era mai "ortoman", avea "oi multe, multe și cornute" și de aceea era pizmut de ciobanul ungurean și de cel vrîncean, străini și hapsîni". Considerînd că la răsărit de Carpați "paralel cu Statul Moldovenesc au existat și alte formațiuni statale, de pildă, statul Vrancea", istoricul P.Parasca subliniază că "**balada populară Miorița redă deosebirea clară dintre ciobanul vrîncean, ciobanul moldovan și cel ungurean**"; În **balada Miorița "ciobanii pomeniți se deosebesc după apartenența politică și etnică"**. În continuarea acestei constatări același istoric conchide: "Locuitorii voievodatului Moldova au fost primii care au fost numiți sau care ei înșiși s-au numit **moldoveni**". (P.Parasca, 1993). Pornind de la aceste adevăruri neîndoielnice, vom conchide că **balada norodnică Miorița (sec.XII-XIII) este certificatul de intrare în istorie a etnonimului moldovan:**

Pe-un plicior de plai,
Pe-o gură de rai,
Iată vîn în cale,
Se cobor la vale,
Trei turme de miei
Cu trei ciobănei
Unu-l moldovan....

Așadar, mărturiile și concluziile de mai sus ne dau tot temeiul să conchidem că etnonimul (autodenumirea poporului) **moldovan** apare în creația populară cu mult înainte de fixarea în scris a toponimului *Moldova*, înainte de închegarea

50

Both page excerpts clearly show the stress on the search for the truth in history. Highlighted are the 'national adjective' Moldovan or Romanian – depending on the author's point of view on the identity issue. Thus in excerpt I from Stati's *Istoria Moldovei* we find a Moldovanist highlighting exercise, while excerpt II from a monograph by Ghimpu exhibits a Romanianist focus.

Excerpt II

Gheorghe Ghîmpu

Basarabiei", dar că această numire n-a fost recunoscută de Turcia și de Patriarhia Țarigradului¹⁹⁶. De asemenea și activitatea lui Iosif Ananiescu, care a fost în fruntea Mitropoliei Moldovei 27 de ani (1875-1902), este apreciată pozitiv de Arsenie. El apreciază că tot ce a făcut Ananiescu sunt „monumente ale activității lui”. Unul dintre aceste monumente este mărețul catedrală din Iași cu numele de Mitropolie, construcția căreia a fost începută încă la 1838 de cel mai mare Mitropolit al Moldovei, Veniamin Costachi. Iosif Ananiescu a hotărât să realizeze ideea premergătorului său de a crea un templu care să însemne un „monument al măreției naționale a poporului român” (*subl. n.*) („памятник национального величия румынского народа”)¹⁹⁷. Lucrările de construcție au fost începute în 1881 și au durat șapte ani.

Pentru episcopul de Pskov, moldoveanul Miron Costin este cronicar român („румынский хронистъ”)¹⁹⁸, iar Alexandru Ioan Cuza – principe moldovlah („молдовлахийским княземъ”)¹⁹⁹.

În decembrie 1769, două delegații ale „ambelor Principate Românești – Moldova și Valahia” au plecat la Petersburg să se întâlnească cu împărăteasa Ecaterina a II-a, cu Sinodul Rosienesc și cu contele Rumeanțev. Autorul studiului despre istoria Bisericii Moldovenești, episcopul Pskovului Arsenie, scrie că „ambelc deputății – moldavă și valahă” – erau „deputății românești” și că „la sfârșitul audienței, împărăteasa a anunțat delegațiile românești, prin vicecancelarul său, că „primește sub stăpânirea sa ambele Principate Românești” („въ конце аудиенции Государынею объявила через вице-канцлера, что принимать подъ свое владычество оба Румынскія Княжества”)²⁰⁰.

Episcopul Arsenie mai afirmă că la începutul sec. al XVIII-lea stânga Nistrului (or. Dubăsari) era populată de asemenea de români. Relatând despre neînțelegerile iscate în 1716 între Orest, episcopul Hușilor, și Ioanichie, Mitropolitul Brăilei, asupra arilor de extindere a eparhiilor de Huși și de Brăila, episcopul Arsenie constată că ele au apărut din cauza orașelului Dubăsari, care, deși era în afara hotarelor Moldovei, era „populat de români” („были населены румынами”)²⁰¹. Acest motiv, precum și rugămintele locuitorilor orașelului Dubăsari și alte argumente făceau ca fiecare din cele două eparhii să se lupte pentru includerea localității în zona sa de influență. Am mai menționat că, în viziunea episcopului de Pskov, ceea ce se

The identity construction is in both cases ethnically exclusive. Thus the minority populations, the 'internal others' are not and cannot be part of the stipulated nation. While historiographical Moldovanism uses more positive attributions when describing the minorities, the Romanianists use stereotypes and convey the message that the minorities living in the RM are the enemies of the ethnic Romanian people. They are viewed as representatives of foreign powers, who like Russia had wanted to 'colonize' Bessarabia and the Bessarabians. Accordingly the minorities are called colonizers. Another aspect is the description of the 'external others' – those countries and peoples surrounding the RM. Both narratives paint a similar picture of the 'external others', which could be summarized like this: surrounded by enemies and one friend. In the case of Romanianism, all surrounding peoples and powers want to prevent the unification of all Romanians in one state. The natural friend of the ethnic Romanians in the RM is Romania. The narrative of Moldovanism mirrors this by characterizing all surrounding peoples as hostile, because they want to subjugate Moldova – especially Romania. Here it is only Russia, which has been exhibiting a friendly and supportive attitude towards the Moldovans.

Consequences of discourse

There are mainly two direct consequences of discourse. One relates to the inner make-up of the Republic and thus to concepts of democracy and civicness. The other deals with the foreign policy orientations of the nation. Both fields are closely linked. The foreign policy ramifications of both discourses are obvious: while historiographical Romanianism calls for the union with mother Romania in its last consequence⁶ and closer collaboration as a first step, historiographical Moldovanism is oriented towards Moscow. The latter's advocacy of a pro-Russian foreign policy also sits well with the mostly Russophone minority groups in the RM and appeases their fears of union with Romania. Conversely, Romanianism's pro-Romanian foreign policy is in line with the general interpretation of the history of the region as presented by its and Romania's historiography. In the Romanianist's perspective, it seems, the fulfilment of the destiny of the ethnic Romanians is not to be hindered by an inclusive, civic concept of the constituent nation. In relation to both discourses the question that remains to be asked is: What is the political consequence of the narrative exclusion of the minority groups?

6 Notwithstanding the claim put forward by Igor Cașu that Romanianism does not imply the necessity of union, it is the obvious and only fulfilment of the nation's destiny as pre-structured and demanded by the historiographical narrative. Cf. Cașu, Igor: Some Considerations on Ethnic Identity and Nationalism in Bessarabia in the 19th – 20th Centuries. In: Tomulets, Valentin (ed.): *In memoriam professoris Mihail Muntean - Studii de istorie moderna*. Chisinau 2003, pp. 253-259.

Discrepancies

We can ascertain three different kinds of discrepancies. One arises out of the textbook situation, another from the ethnic make-up of Moldova and the last from the fact that the ruling Communist party has changed its geopolitical orientation in the last years. The conflict between Romanianism and Moldovanism is not restricted to the spheres of historiography or politics, but is one which is mirrored in the education situation. Here the curriculum as well as the textbooks prescribed the teaching of the ‘history of the Romanians’, which an analysis shows, is in stark opposition to the ideology of the ruling party. The opposition to the introduction of new history textbooks and curricula has so far proven that academic historians are able to rally sufficient numbers behind their version of truth and that a compromise seems to be ruled out – because of the rhetorics of truth. For each side the slightest change in the historical interpretation of the past amounts to betrayal and thus is not acceptable. The situation remains that in the RM we have textbooks distributed by the state calling for its abolition, which the parties in power for more than ten years have been elected with clear majorities on the agenda to maintain the state.

Furthermore do none of the two narratives reflect the ethnic make-up of Moldovan society. While this amounts clearly a problem in the field of history education, the problem goes beyond the confines of education policy. Both narratives seem unable to free themselves of the *ethnie*-centred national focus. Yet such ethnically exclusive narratives will neither foster a civic identity and a sentiment of allegiance to the RM within all segments of society nor will it enable an atmosphere of constructive dialogue necessary for a multi-ethnic society. The one-sided concentration on the ethnic Romanian core clearly does not reflect the social reality of the RM and especially not of political Moldovanism. Thus while the textbook case illustrates the disrupted relationship between politics and history teaching as well as the close inter-linkedness of academic history and history teaching and while the ethnic dimension shows how unearthed history writing is from actual social matters, the last discrepancy again illustrates the problems the attempts by academic history to pre-determine politics creates. While historiographical Romanianism’s foreign policy determination has in the past not been supported by economic relations with Romania, historiographical Moldovanism’s orientation towards Moscow and the CIS-space was well within its economic interest. However, in the last years political Moldovanism (i.e. the communist party) has moved towards a pro-European foreign policy. This creates a strong discrepancy with historiographic Moldovanism, which calls for some kind of Eastern integration and Eastern model of development. Especially in the case of Moldovanism, which has had few authors to write down its historiographic foundations in the past anyway, it seems unlikely that history writing will be able to keep up with the developments of the political process. Such a problem and the described discrepancy however only arise if the historian wants to pre-determine future policy. A less politically engaged history writing seems to be very advisable, if it is to gain greater credibility. While some of the discrepancies mentioned might be explained by over-eagerness and questions of strategy, the discrepancies between the political agenda of the

ruling parties since 1994 and the vision on nation and state disseminated by them through the state's educational structure are so blatant, that they seem to defy any rational, i.e. instrumentalist reading of politics.

Explanations?

A partial explanation might be offered by three aspects of the Moldovan situation: the rhetorics of truth, the legacy of contaminated histories and finally practical circumstances of history writing.

What is called here 'the rhetorics of truth' refers to a feature which is common in many post-Soviet and post-Socialist countries. In many of these societies the historian assumes and/or is attributed the role of the archaeologist of the nation.⁷ This means that society at large expects from the historian to uncover the historical truth, which has been buried under ideological rubble and is inaccessible to the ordinary citizen.⁸ Thus the historian becomes the archaeologist of *national truth*. An example from Moldova shall be given to illustrate this post-socialist feature.

In 2004 there arose a dispute about the Lenin statue, which once stood in front of the parliament building.⁹ It had been moved to storage and now it was proposed to restore it to its former place in front of the parliament building in Chişinău. The Moldovan public then had a chance to witness and take part in the discussion in a television show.¹⁰ Both political and historiographical currents were represented at the show through the president of parliament for the Moldovanist side and with the historian and textbook writer Gheorghe Palade for the Romanianist side. While it matters little, what was actually said, it is quite illustrative that not only did both ground their claims to truth in history but both had brought historical monographs with them to the show. These books were then held up in the others face in order to convince. They were used as shields as well as weapons and did remind the onlooker of vampire movies, when the cross is held high towards the evil spirit. But in our

7 Niedermüller, Peter: Zeit, Geschichte, Vergangenheit – Zur kulturellen Logik des Nationalismus im Postsozialismus. *Historische Anthropologie* 5 (1997). pp. 245-267, her: pp. 253-254; cf. further the articles in: Brunnbauer, Ulf (ed.): *(Re)Writing History – Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism*. Münster 2004.

8 Brunnbauer, Ulf: (Re)Writing History in Southeast Europe - Introduction. In: Brunnbauer: *(Re)Writing History*, pp. 9-30; Höpken, Wolfgang: „Vergangenheitsbewältigung“ in Südosteuropa – Chance oder Last? In: Becher, Ursula A.J. und Rainer Riemenschneider (eds.): *Internationale Verständigung – 25 Jahre Georg-Eckert-Institut in Braunschweig*. Hannover 2000. pp. 253-269.

9 For the politics of post-Socialist symbolism in relation to statues and bodies cf.: Verdery, Katherine: *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies – Reburial and Postsocialist Change. The Harriman Lectures*. New York 1999. For the Moldovan case, especially in relation to public space, streets and monuments see also: Dumbrava, Vasile: Konflikte um Symbole in der Republik Moldova – Die Auseinandersetzungen um Straßennamen. *Balkan Archiv* 24/25 (1999/2000). pp. 177-190.

10 TV-Show „Buna seara!“ April 23rd 2004. (TV Moldova, 19.30-20.30 local time).

case, the other side did not vanish at the sight of the sign of what the other believed to be the ultimate truth. No, they both stayed and continued unabated with their view on history and truth. The situation in Moldova makes one wonder how far a society can get when it relies on the historians' truth and facts in relation to national identity.

Thirdly, the Moldovanist view on society has to face the dilemma that Moldovanist historiography is somewhat contaminated.¹¹ It is contaminated primarily by its use by former party ideologues in the Soviet Union.¹² And indeed, both Moldovanist concepts, Stati on one hand and Andrușceac et al. on the other,¹³ correspond to two different historiographical currents within the Soviet historiography on Moldova. Thus an attempt to write a history of the Moldovan people must suffer from a priori non-acceptance due to its form.¹⁴ Moldovanist history per se is perceived as manipulated and un-true history, whereas the Romanianist history does not suffer such a negative evaluation by the public in general and enjoys a much higher credibility. Still, Romanianism as well is somewhat discredited by its association with Romanian rule over Bessarabia from 1918 until 1940. It is further somewhat discredited because of its inherent call for "re-unification". Both –isms in the end also suffer because they are somewhat imported concepts.

The practical circumstance of history teaching and writing encompass two successes of Romanianism. The adherents of Romanianism were able to raise efficiently public protest, that the people in power were afraid that their overall grip on government would have been in jeopardy, were they to pursue their goal of replacing the history of the Romanians with that of the Moldovans. The demonstrations within the two language and history teaching crises were so large and threatening that the government - despite being elected with an agenda to change these subjects - had to give in to public pressure twice. This also hints towards the possibility that the majority received by the communist party is not so much due to their identity political agenda, but rather has to be attributed to other factors and/or to other parts of their programme.

11 Cf. Munteanu, Igor: *Moldova – Social Multipolarity and Political Violence*. In: Kolstø, Pål (ed.): *National Integration and Violent Conflict in Post-Soviet Societies – The Cases of Estonia and Moldova*. Lanham u.a. 2002, pp. 197-231; here: p.200. For the reactions to the proposed changes in history education cf. also: Anderson, Elizabeth A.: 'Don't Falsify Our History!' National Identity and History Education in Moldova. in: *Sprawy Narodowosciowe. Nationalisms Across the Globe*. The Polish Academy of Sciences, (forthcoming 2006); Anderson, Elizabeth A.: Backwards, Forwards, or Both? Moldovan Teachers' Relationship to the State and the Nation. *European Education* (forthcoming 2006).

12 Cf. Meurs, Wim P. van: *The Bessarabian Question in Communist Historiography – Nationalist and Communist Politics and History-Writing*. New York 1994. [East European Monographs].

13 These both differ slightly in relation to natio-genesis. Stati's view is more primordial, while the other exhibits modernist elements. Stati, Vasile: *Istoria Moldovei*. Chișinău 2002; Andrușceac, V.E.; Bârnea, P.P.; Boico, P.A.; Ceaplighina, N.A.; Jarcuțchi, I.I.; Platon, V.P.; Russev, N.D.; Scvortova, A.I.; Stratievski, C.V.; Șcornicov, P.M.; Telnov, N.P.; Țaranov, V.I.: *Istoria Republicii Moldova din cele mai vechi timpuri pînă în zilele noastre*. Editia a doua. Chișinău 2003 [first published in 1997].

14 Meurs : *Moldova –Nationale Identität*, p. 32.

Another aspect relates to the previous process of Romanianisation of the cultural sphere. In the time up to 1994, not only were most russophone intellectuals purged from their posts at universities and research institutes, but most historians left the Republic either for Russia or for Transnistria. It thus might be possible that in order to write new history textbooks and - for that matter - to write an authoritative account of a Moldovanist history, there were just not enough experienced historians around.¹⁵

All this said, it is still striking that especially the Moldovanist narratives do not allow for an inclusion of the other ethnic groups. Not even the modernist approach of Andrușceac et al. offers the possibility of a concept of the nation, which encompasses all segments of the population of the RM. In the atmosphere in which only “historical truth” matters and the Romanianists are able to rally enough public support for their “truth”, it seems as if the Moldovanists are unwilling to venture into the direction of a more inclusive, yet perhaps even more visibly “constructed” idea of the “we” in the RM.

Thus the field of history teaching in the RM assumes the role of one of the major battlefields in the struggle for the hearts and minds of the people as well as over the future of the state as such. In the Moldovan case national identity is certainly not negotiated in a fair and open process with a gradual compromise at the end. The various actors within the wider field of educational policy such as the governing elite, the academic and cultural elites, the parliamentary majority as well as the extra-parliamentary opposition have so far interacted with the astonishing result (for the time up to 2005): that the state educational system disseminates a Romanianist attainment-nationalist vision of Moldovan society which is diametrically opposed to the ruling governments since 1994 - a vision which calls for the total abolition of the status quo. In the end, however, there is another factor in this negotiation process of the historical vision of the “self” – the teachers who actually administer the material they are provided with. Although we can never be sure of what actually happens inside the classroom, recent fieldwork carried out by E. Anderson suggests,¹⁶ that the Romanianist vision of the nation will dominate the education system even if the current material is replaced by a more Moldovanist-inclined one. Thus the enigma of identity in the RM, where a majority seems to object to the Moldovanist identity project, while at the same time a majority of voters continue to vote for parties with a clear Moldovanist platform, is likely to persist.

Alternatives and solutions

Now the Moldovan government has come up with a new alternative: to combine world with national history into an “integrated history”.¹⁷ This new concept offers many didactical

¹⁵ Meurs: *Moldova – nationale Identität*, p. 34.

¹⁶ Cf. footnote 8.

¹⁷ The first book in this new series has already been published and the remaining are to be ready for use by September 2006. Popovici, Corneliu and Angela Popovici: *Istorie. Manual pentru clasa a V-a*. Chișinău 2005.

opportunities and is in line with a general trend in Western Europe. The Romanianist now accuse the Moldovanists of pushing for victory through the back door, thus introducing a Moldovanist narrative under the umbrella of integrated history and a concept seemingly favoured by the West. However, so far the proposed texts for the new curriculum remain fairly neutral on the identity issue or to put it another way: They circumvent the identity question and remain silent on that matter. Now it could be argued that not saying something is saying enough or that this relatively neutral integrated history is just a first step towards an outspoken Moldovanist narrative. The latter remains to be seen.

In the Moldovan situation a multiperspective approach, i.e. one that relativizes the notion of historical truth and enables future generations to critically evaluate history for themselves, seems to be the obvious solution. Thus it is to be hoped that future textbooks are disseminating the idea of multiperspectivity and that the teachers of the Moldovan state are trained in this didactical approach.

However, the Moldovan case also makes us wonder, how identity-free a historical, educational narrative of the past should be and indeed can be. Because in the end, it will not serve its purpose if it confuses students and leave identity-issues totally to the extra-school world. It should be remembered that textbooks serve a dual function when it comes to the transmitting of moral and social values: They are at the same time post- and pre-structural. They transmit codes establishing “normality” in relation to which “society” agrees, however they also may plant the seeds for a future change in what is perceived as “normality” by the generations to come.

The Moldovan case also shows the limits of state control regarding history writing and constitutes a very strong case for the liberalisation of history writing as well as for teacher training. The main dilemma that the Moldovan illustrates is that created by truth-focused historical rhetorics. Only with the variable of ‘one and only historical truth’ do the described dilemmas in the connection politics with academic historiography and textbook writing appear. The truth dilemma also creates further problems for various fields: How to explain within the existing historiographic narratives policy shifts as for example the fact that the Moldovanists in government turned pro-European? What about the non-willingness of Romania for unification with Moldova?

Paradoxical pleas

Paradoxically the Moldovan case is a plea for: a) the state’s and politics’ disengagement from history writing as well as b) for the state’s stronger engagement in history writing and history teaching in particular.

It is a plea for disengagement because political interference has led to the incredibility of historical concepts. And it is a plea for stronger engagement because it seems unacceptable to let official history teaching to be dominated by anti-state and anti-minority historical narratives. The only solution to such oppositional pleas again seems to be the multiperspective training of teachers and students alike as well as the pluralization of history writing. The

latter could be achieved by opening the textbook market to competition and allowing for some degree of flexibility in the approval process. The former however is a long endeavour, which needs the full and continuous support of state institutions and international organisations as well.

The question of a regional approach

It has been discussed what the two concepts narrate and what the immediate problems as well as some solutions might be. In this short and final section another thought describing a further problem and a further option is offered.

Moldova has not only not yet decided what it is – a homeland for the Moldovans or a transitory entity on the way for unification of a country inhabited by Romanians with the other Romanians of Romania – it has also not decided where it belongs within the region. Both historiographical currents focus on two different spaces: the Romanianist focuses on the wide Romanian space, while the Moldovanist narrative looks towards Russia and the CIS-space. Thus Romanianism aligns itself with contemporary trends in Romania and Romanian history textbooks and would thus view the Romanian space rather within Eastcentral Europe. Moldovanism offers a more East European spatial notion. The concept of Southeastern Europe is almost completely absent.

Perhaps, however, a much clearer display of the country's interconnectedness with the history of the wider Southeast and East European spaces can offer a further solution to the difficult identity question. It could be a viable middle way to explore the history of Bessarabia/Moldova as lying at the cross-roads of the Tsarist Empire/the Soviet Union on the one side and Romania, Southeastern Europe and the Ottoman legacy on the other side. While this itself does not pre-structure a definite identity, it offers a historically sound path to travel.

Conclusion – Rediscovering Althusser

The truth-centred atmosphere surrounding the issues of identity and history has created the perfect deadlock and a paradox situation in the RM: During most of the time since 1994 the Moldovanist parties held such a majority in parliament that they were able to change the constitution without having to worry about organising majorities - Yet, they have been unable to assert control over history teaching, over its denomination as well as over its contents. Perhaps this situation does not appear so paradoxical when we employ Althusser's theory about the distinction between the societal spheres of the plurality of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) and the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA).¹⁸ He claimed that there are a variety of ISAs: the religious ISA, the educational ISA, the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA, the trade union ISA, the communications ISA and the cultural ISA. On the

18 Althusser, Louis: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses – Notes towards and investigation. in: Althusser, Louis: *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays. Introduction by Frederic Jameson*. New York 2001, pp. 85-126.

other hand there is the singular and unified RSA, which encompasses such areas as the government, the administration, the army, the courts, the prisons etc. This part of the societal system functions by direct control, i.e. violence, while the ISAs function by and are controlled through ideology.

Control over the RSA is gained by either popular vote or other means, but is rather direct and absolute. The ISAs are much more complicated spheres to control, yet they are primarily responsible for the exercise of power (be it democratic or not) and reproduction of a given status quo. The hegemony of a certain ideology within the ISAs will thus result in a society according to this ideology. While Althusser's concept is not this automatic in its last instance, what is important for the Moldovan case is that changing hegemony in the ISAs will lead to a change in the make-up of society. While Moldovanism has established hegemony over the RSA, it has clearly failed to do so in the ISAs – at least so it seems until now. The discrepancy of hegemony can be explained through the history of the region. Given the discredit Moldovanism has received through its former use in the Soviet Union, Romanianism has achieved relative hegemony in some of the ISAs. The struggle for the hearts and minds of both –isms in the ISAs is likely to continue unabated until a workable synthesis has emerged. The ISAs are “not only the *stake*, but also the *site*” of the struggle.¹⁹ The ultimate goals are certainly to capture/maintain control over the RSA and to transform/maintain society according to the agenda of the given ideology.

Control within the ISAs is fluent and relative; majorities never perfect but relative. Perhaps the current struggle within the ISAs is in the end an adaptation process. The conflict thus would present a process within which both ‘imported concepts’ are adapted to the internal and present-day situation of the RM. While it is understandable that conflicts between political views assume absolute rhetorics, the very possibility that this may be an adaptation process already points out the relativity of the notion of “truth” in this context. In the end it seems likely, that, whatever the outcome of this struggle, “truth” will experience a strong relativization and perhaps even further devaluation in the Moldovan context.

¹⁹ Emphasis in the original. However, Althusser refers here to class struggle. Ibid., p. 99.

Bibliography

Althusser, Louis: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses – Notes towards and investigation. in: Althusser, Louis: *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays. Introduction by Frederic Jameson*. New York 2001, pp. 85-126.

Anderson, Elizabeth A.: ‘Don’t Falsify Our History!’ National Identity and History Education in Moldova. in: *Sprawy Narodowosciowe. Nationalisms Across the Globe*. The Polish Academy of Sciences, (forthcoming 2006).

Anderson, Elizabeth A.: Backwards, Forwards, or Both? Moldovan Teachers’ Relationship to the State and the Nation. *European Education* (forthcoming 2006).

Andrușeac, V.E.; Bârnea, P.P.; Boico, P.A.; Ceaplighina, N.A.; Jarcuțchi, I.I.; Platon, V.P.; Russev, N.D.; Scvorțova, A.I.; Stratievski, C.V.; Șcornicov, P.M.; Telnov, N.P.; Țaranov, V.I.: *Istoria Republicii Moldova din cele mai vechi timpuri pînă în zilele noastre*. Editia a doua. Chișinău 2003 [first published in 1997].

Brunnbauer, Ulf: (Re)Writing History in Southeast Europe - Introduction. In: Brunnbauer, Ulf (ed.): *(Re)Writing History – Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism*. Münster 2004, pp. 9-30.

Cașu, Igor: Some Considerations on Ethnic Identity and Nationalism in Bessarabia in the 19th – 20th Centuries. In: Tomulets, Valentin (ed.): *In memoriam professoris Mihail Muntean - Studii de istorie moderna*. Chisinau 2003, pp. 253-259.

Dumbrava, Vasile: Konflikte um Symbole in der Republik Moldova – Die Auseinandersetzungen um Straßennamen. *Balkan Archiv* 24/25 (1999/2000). pp. 177-190.

Ghimpu, Gheorghe: *Conștiința națională a Românilor Moldoveni. Lucrare de sinteză cu texte antologice, ediția a II-a, revăzută și completată de autor*. Chișinău 2002.

Höpken, Wolfgang: „Vergangenheitsbewältigung“ in Südosteuropa – Chance oder Last? In: Becher, Ursula A.J. and Rainer Riemenschneider (ed.): *Internationale Verständigung – 25 Jahre Georg-Eckert-Institut in Braunschweig*. Hannover 2000. pp. 253-269.

Ihrig, Stefan: *Welche Nation in welcher Geschichte? Eigen- und Fremdbilder der nationalen Diskurse in der Historiographie und den Geschichtsschulbüchern in der Republik Moldova, 1991-2005*. Stuttgart/Hannover (forthcoming 2006).

Meurs, Wim P. van: *The Bessarabian Question in Communist Historiography – Nationalist and Communist Politics and History-Writing*. New York 1994. [East European Monographs].

Meurs, Wim P. van: Carving a Moldavian Identity out of History. *Nationalities Papers* 1 (1998). pp. 39-56.

Meurs, Wim P. van: *History Textbooks in Moldova. Expert Report – Update for the Moldova Seminar of the Georg-Eckert-Institute for International Textbook Research*, Braunschweig, June 26th – 27th, 2003.[unpublished report].

Meurs, Wim P. van: Moldova – nationale Identität als politisches Programm. *Südosteuropa-Mitteilungen* 4-5 (2003). pp. 31-43.

Munteanu, Igor: Moldova – Social Multipolarity and Political Violence. In: Kolstø, Pål (ed.): *National Integration and Violent Conflict in Post-Soviet Societies – The Cases of Estonia and Moldova*. Lanham u.a. 2002, pp. 197-231.

Niedermüller, Peter: Zeit, Geschichte, Vergangenheit – Zur kulturellen Logik des Nationalismus im Postsozialismus. *Historische Anthropologie* 5 (1997). pp. 245-267.

Popovici, Corneliu and Angela Popovici: *Istorie. Manual pentru clasa a V-a*. Chişinău 2005.

Stati, Vasile: *Istoria Moldovei*. Chişinău 2002.

Verdery, Katherine: *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies – Reburial and Postsocialist Change. The Harriman Lectures*. New York 1999.