

Pamět – národ – menšiny – marginalizace – identity I

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Marginalization of identity and reduction of memories affected every minority all over the world at some point in history.

A team of authors around Blanka Soupová focused in their research on various aspects of this process of marginalization of memories, on the identity of minorities and on their historical situation in the region of Central Europe.

The book is published as collective monograph and it comprises articles and studies by authors with affiliations to research centres in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland. The monograph is divided into five parts: 1 – historical tradition, historiography, memory and marginalization; 2 – memory, area and marginalization; 3 – marginalized remembers and their memories; 4 – minorities, marginalization and identities and 5 – language and marginalization.

The range of research methods employed in the monograph is rather broad, including classical historiographical research of

books, archive documents and written evidence, terrain research based on photographic material, mind-mapping and also interviewing witnesses of particular historical events and periods. The studies cover a wide period of time, starting with the Middle Ages in Bohemia and continuing up to the present. The authors reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the particular research methods they employ and sometimes advocate their advantages / merits and usefulness. What may be slightly problematic in some articles is the absence or a very limited space for theoretical introduction, but this could be connected with the nature of historiography itself.

What I consider the most interesting and useful studies in the whole volume focus on the historical position of the Hussite movement and related traditions, and on the employment of this phenomenon in modern Czech history, mainly during the period of the communist regime. Other revealing articles discuss the testimonies and memories of children living in the border regions of the Czech Republic. The first one employs the more traditional research of books, documents and archival evidences, while the second one combines modern methods of mind-mapping, and the evidence and data-sets were gained from photos made by the children themselves.

In many articles, the main research method consists in interviewing eyewitnesses, especially in the study of memories of Gypsies about their migration from Slovakia to Czech Republic. The set of interviews includes not only the

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migrating workers themselves, but also their wives and wider families, in order to present a verifiable framework of their memories.

What is nowadays considered one of the most sensitive issues of Czech history is the period after the Second World War, between the years 1945 - 1955. This time is connected with the deportation of ethnic Germans and other minorities from the regions close to the borders of Czechoslovakia and the re-settlement of these areas engineered by the communist regime. These events were also studied through interviewing eyewitnesses and analysing their memories. In this study, the process of self-censorship and intentional forgetting of violent events and negative aspects of life is clearly observable.

The other possibility how to study reduction of memories and marginalization of identities, which does not require living witnesses, is a research method used by one of the authors. His study focuses on small sacral objects in the region of southern Slovakia, near the borders with Hungary. The terrain research carried out by the author focused on the design and form of small memorials, calvaries, chapels and statues. A detailed study of these objects reveals the intentions and attitudes of their authors and owners, their personal and historical background and also the strength of their ties to their homeland.

In general, the articles in this monographs show how important collective memory and identity are for the minorities and their members, especially when they were forced to emigrate. The process of emigration but also the process of

internal migration within the borders of one state are connected with marginalization of memories, mainly related to work and everyday life, but on the other hand there are more necessary memories from the period of growing up and connected with family. From this point of view, many authors also reflect on the psychological aspects of their theories and on the background of their analysis.

In contrast to the majority of studies in this volume which focus on history, one study analyses the process of building a memorial to Ferdinand Porsche in the region of North Bohemia. The issue here is the life and legacy of the famous inventor and industrial engineer, but also the extent of his collaboration with the Nazi regime. The main aim of this article is however not the judgement of Ferdinand Porsche as a person, but a discussion of the effects of his life up to the present. It is very interesting to observe how the situation around the construction of his memorial divided the inhabitants of the village where it was supposed to be erected.

What seems to be one of the most valuable aspects of the monograph is its multidisciplinary and the variety of research methods and approaches the authors employ in the individual articles. Although some of the studies were clearly intended mainly for expert readers with a background in historiography, sociology and ethnology, the majority of the articles is accessible to a broader readership and should be of use and interest not only to the academic community.

The Annual of Language & Politics and Politics of Identity

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