

The politics of memory in the legal regulation in a multicultural region: structure, characteristics and key management narratives¹

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ABSTRACT

A principal factor in the consolidation and harmonisation of any society is a responsible and respectful attitude towards its past. The representations of the past play a significant role in shaping the content of value orientations and the boundaries of identities of different groups. Furthermore, they serve to clarify the context and framework of their interaction. In addition to images and representations of the past, social memory encompasses the activity of their creation, reproduction, and actualisation at the level of culture, individual social institutions, groups, and communities of different levels. This aspect of social memory is referred to as 'memory politics'. For ethnic groups, the origin and sense of a shared past play a pivotal role in fostering solidarity and shaping perceptions of identity and relations with other groups. This is particularly pertinent in regions with multicultural populations, where the study of memory politics and the role of the past in shaping identities and relations with other groups is of paramount importance. This article employs two case studies – namely, the historical reserves of Sviyazhsk and Bolgar, which have been inscribed on the UNESCO Cultural

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Heritage List – to examine the characteristics and consequences of the politics of memory pertaining to the regional past in the multicultural region of the Republic of Tatarstan (Russian Federation). The article presents a conceptualisation of the notion of memory politics as a set of narratives about the past, the channels of transmission and the actors who disseminate them.

Keywords: social memory; memory policy; multiculturalism; multicultural region; regional policy.

A POLÍTICA DA MEMÓRIA NA REGULAMENTAÇÃO JURÍDICA EM UMA REGIÃO MULTICULTURAL: ESTRUTURA, CARACTERÍSTICAS E PRINCIPAIS NARRATIVAS DE GESTÃO

RESUMO

Um fator principal na consolidação e harmonização de qualquer sociedade é uma atitude responsável e respeitosa em relação ao seu passado. As representações do passado desempenham um papel significativo na formação do conteúdo das orientações de valores e dos limites das identidades de diferentes grupos. Além disso, eles servem para esclarecer o contexto e a estrutura de sua interação. Além de imagens e representações do passado, a memória social abrange a atividade de sua criação, reprodução e atualização no nível da cultura, instituições sociais individuais, grupos e comunidades de diferentes níveis. Esse aspecto da memória social é chamado de "política de memória". Para grupos étnicos, a origem e o senso de um passado compartilhado desempenham um papel fundamental na promoção da solidariedade e na formação de percepções de identidade e relações com outros grupos. Isso é particularmente pertinente em regiões com populações multiculturais, onde o estudo das políticas de memória e do papel do passado na formação de identidades e relações com outros grupos é de suma importância. Este artigo utiliza dois estudos de caso – nomeadamente, as reservas históricas de Sviyazhsk e Bolgar, que foram incluídas na Lista do Patrimônio Cultural da UNESCO – para examinar as características e consequências das políticas de memória relativas ao passado regional na região multicultural da região. República do Tartaristão (Federação Russa). O artigo apresenta uma conceptualização da noção de política da memória como um conjunto de narrativas sobre o passado, os canais de transmissão e os atores que as disseminam.

Palavras-chave: memória social; política de memória; multiculturalismo; região multicultural; política regional.

1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'politics of memory' is a term that is frequently encountered in both academic and public discourse. Nevertheless, there is still no single, widely accepted definition of this phenomenon. To illustrate, Miller (2020) conceptualises memory politics as 'various social practices and norms pertaining to the regulation of collective memory'. The concept of 'memory politics' is distinct from both 'historical politics' and the 'politicisation of

history'. This is because memory and history (as a science) are two separate and distinct concepts, despite the fact that they are related. By employing the findings of memory studies in a constructivist manner, we can delineate the most appropriate definition of memory politics for the purposes of this study. It is not, therefore, politics in the direct sense (purposeful actions of the authorities), but rather the establishment of specific frameworks of perception and representations of the past, which can be set not only by the state (Altanian, 2017). It is not uncommon for multiple frameworks to coexist concurrently.

Some historians also posit that "memory politics" is merely a subset of historical politics or a means of falsifying abstract "historical truth." We contend, however, that historical discourse constitutes a component of social memory, or more accurately, a constituent element of the broader phenomenon of 'social practice' that regulates it. Consequently, historical politics can be regarded as a subset of memory politics. A definition of memory politics that is limited to a subset of historical politics allows for the conclusion that this category can be applied only in the context of state-sponsored actions. Furthermore, the formation of images and interpretations of the past by other actors is not included in this field of view, for example, cultural figures, various formal and informal communities, and mass media.

Nevertheless, the politics of memory, if not a more encompassing phenomenon than historical politics, cannot be equated with it, even in the context of state-led memory politics (Wawrzyniak; Pakier, 2013). A plethora of categories have been devised to delineate the various methods and mechanisms employed in the construction of the past. These include, but are not limited to, the following: 'historical politics', 'memorial politics', 'politics of history', 'political appropriation of the past' and 'symbolic politics' (Temin; Dahl, 2017).

The term 'historical politics' was first used in Germany in the 1980s. In the context of historical politics, some authors identify the pursuit of justifications for political or economic claims as a key phenomenon. This pursuit is characterised by the use of fictitious facts, the 'silencing' of facts, and the deliberate falsification of interpretations of historical events (Miller; Lipman, 2012). However, such an interpretation is, firstly, inherently negative in its portrayal of the process of engaging with the past, and secondly, it is predicated on the assumption of the existence of an abstract, objective historical truth, which it attempts to distort. From the perspective of constructivism, the notion of determining the veracity of a particular representation of the past is inherently problematic, as the very concept of truthfulness is a social construct. It is of greater significance to ascertain why a specific notion of the veracity of the past and its content is actualised within a particular social context and

how it influences the actions and values of members of society in the present.

The term "politics of history" demonstrates the interconnection between historical research and politics. The term "symbolic politics" is similarly applicable when used in reference to the processes of constructing perceptions of the past. The growing interest in the study of symbolism in politics is linked to the emergence of M. Edelman's contributions to the field (Edelman, 1988). The concept of symbolic politics is often regarded as a distinct and autonomous domain, detached from the realm of tangible decision-making. Consequently, symbolic politics is not merely an action employing symbols; rather, it is an action that functions as a symbol in and of itself (Klatch, 1988).

Nevertheless, the practices of memory politics exert a considerable influence on the actions of political and ethnic elites in the region, whether directly or indirectly. Accordingly, the most pertinent approach for the purposes of this study is that of Malinova, which is based on the concept of 'symbolic power'. Malinova's approach was developed with reference to the concept of 'symbolic power' as put forth by P. Bourdieu (Swartz, 1996). Malinova (2018) posits that the actions of the political elite (policy) (e.g., establishing holidays and legitimizing the political regime) are not the sole determinants of political outcomes. Instead, she asserts that the activity of a broader range of political actors and the various dimensions of politics (e.g., the competition of representations and forms and mechanisms of fixing narratives in social memory) also play a significant role.

It is worthy of note that an increasing number of research projects are focusing on the politics of memory at the regional level in a growing number of regions around the world. To illustrate, the meanings and interpretations of various cultural traumas are delineated (Horsti, 2023), peculiarities of the reflection of the past in education (Fuchs & Otto, 2013), multidimensionality of narratives and representations of the past (Hałas, 2010), as well as peculiarities of the influence of representations of the past on group communication in the present (Storeide, 2019).

2 METHODOLOGY

This study employs a multi-method qualitative approach to explore the politics of memory in the multicultural region of the Republic of Tatarstan, focusing on the historical heritage sites of Sviyazhsk and Bolgar.

The authors of the article use several research methods, including:

a) the analysis of regional media publications devoted to the historical heritage of the

Republic of Tatarstan,

b) series of expert interviews with specialists involved in the processes of constructing and broadcasting images of the Republic's past (archaeologists, professional historians, museum workers, guides, local historians, representatives of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic, cultural workers and artists, n=36),

c) a series of interviews with visitors of the museum-reserves Hail Island Sviyazhsk and Velikiy Bolgar (n=33).

The construction of historical narratives in the republic does not occur solely in relation to these two sites. The study examines the dynamics of memory construction at multiple levels – cultural, scientific, tourism, and religious spheres – offering a holistic understanding of how memory politics intersects with ethnic identity, cultural policy, and the regional tourism economy. A constructivist lens was applied to analyze the interplay between social actors, the creation of historical narratives, and the actualization of these narratives in contemporary contexts.

This allows us to study the strategies and mechanisms of social actors at different levels regarding the construction of the image of the past and its actualisation in connection with ethnic identity, ethnic and cultural politics, as well as the tourist economy of the region. The combination of different methods of data collection and analysis enabled the results obtained during the course of the research to be verified.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The most appropriate definition of memory politics in the context of this study can be formulated as a purposeful activity to represent a certain image of the past, demanded in the political context, through various textual (politicians' speeches, history textbooks) and visual (monuments, state symbols) practices. The multidimensionality of meanings and values, a defining feature of social memory, is also pertinent to the analysis of memory politics. Memory politics may originate from a multitude of actors and pertain to diverse historical periods, individuals, or events. Additionally, it can be situated within the context of a specific group and social space, such as a region, country, city, or any particular sphere of society. It is possible that the ultimate social consequences of memory politics may deviate from the original expectations of its principal actors (Lebow *et al.*, 2006).

It is our contention that the concept of memory politics is most effectively considered within the framework of E. Hobsbawm's concept of "the invention of tradition" (Foster,

2013), in other words, the politics of memory can be defined as a process of fixing or constructing a particular way of actualising and interpreting past events and phenomena. This is done with the intention of changing the present. The extent of these alterations encompasses tangible entities and methodologies, in addition to the sensory and emotional assessment of contemporary occurrences and the formation of identity.

Given that the politics of memory is inherently a process, it is subject to a specific direction and temporal and spatial framework. From this perspective, the politics of memory aligns with A. Assmann's conceptualisation of memory as 'political memory'. This is defined as a specific 'temporal orientation' that 'creates meanings by presenting the present as an intermediary of a motivating narrative that encompasses both the past and the future' (Assmann, 2008). It can be argued that the most significant feature of the politics of memory is its tendency to evaluate present-day phenomena and encourage specific evaluations and actions through an appeal to the past.

In accordance with S. Hall's conceptualisation, the politics of memory can be defined as the production and reproduction of representations. Representation is a distinctive phenomenon, whereby actors utilise it to construct novel interpretations of pre-existing concepts and phenomena (Hall, 1980). The initial lack of precise meaning or significance inherent in represented objects is not intrinsic to them; rather, it emerges when the object is represented by the subject, who interprets its essence. The ultimate representation of the object is largely contingent upon the cultural context in which it is situated.

Furthermore, the politics of memory encompasses not only the creation of symbols and meanings, but also the initiation of the production of specific tangible and intangible objects that serve to fix them. By employing the metaphor of production, we can conceptualise both 'hard' and 'soft memory', in addition to objectified and symbolic 'memory places', as outcomes of memory politics. By way of illustration, a regional history textbook that presents a selected historical narrative, an erected monument, and the rhetoric of socio-political movements that appeal to past events can be considered products of the politics of memory.

Moreover, the field of memory politics is not a unified entity. It is plausible that multiple forms of memory politics exist concurrently, pursued by diverse social actors for their respective agendas within a specific social context. The outcome of memory politics, therefore, is the formation of representations and practices that are informed by and made manifest through the use of images of the past. These images may take the form of narratives, actions, feelings, identities, evaluations, and concrete material objects. The concept of social

memory, as understood within the sociological tradition, is understood to be the result of a process of social construction, including the role of the politics of memory in this process. The process of remembering in a social context is not merely a matter of preservation and retrieval; rather, it is an enduring process of transmission (Olick & Robbins, 1998). Nevertheless, the mere fact that representations of the past are constructed does not, in and of itself, render them fictitious, inauthentic, or manipulated. This is because the status of "constructedness" (whether pertaining to the distant past or to more recent times) extends to all cultural artefacts (Olick, 2009).

Any perceptions of the past are social constructs created on the basis of selected facts that may or may not correspond to historical reality. This discrepancy may be due to conscious manipulation or other factors such as lack of information, unpopularity of the topic, etc. The concept of 'historical reality' itself, as a set of true facts about the past, arranged in chronological order, is merely an ideal model. The concept of 'politics of memory' is not inherently negative; ascribing negative connotations to this category limits its analytical usefulness. Instead, memory politics should be regarded as a construction of social reality. The assessment of the social effects of a specific memory politics requires separate, in-depth studies.

This text is predicated on the assumption that the term "politics" can be employed not only to elucidate the actions of the state, but also as a metaphor to characterise any purposeful action of any social actor with the objective of establishing a link between the interpretation of the present and representations of the past.

In this context, the concept of 'memory politics' can be employed as an effective analytical tool to elucidate the mechanisms underlying the formation of social memory (as a series of representations of the past) and individual images and meanings within it, exemplified by representations of ethnic identity. In this way, it is possible to identify the existence of specific social fields within which the politics of memory with regard to a particular period, group or society as a whole is conducted. Within the confines of a given field, numerous actors engage in diverse forms of memory politics, pursuing a multitude of objectives and affecting disparate social groups. The rejection of a singular subject and object of memory policy permits the utilisation of this category to elucidate not only the actions of the state and its structures, but also to analyse the influence of other actors on social memory at disparate levels.

The concept of social memory and its constituent elements are not inherently objective in their intrinsic form. However, they become objectified when they are represented as 'places

of memory', as texts, as institutions and practices, and in other forms at the cultural and communicative levels. The politics of memory is shaped by social memory, yet it also generates and perpetuates it, giving form to both enduring and evolving representations of the past in relation to the prevailing social context (through the cultural level of memory to a greater extent).

The politics of memory should be considered at the level of a particular social space, or field, as it produces representations of a specific period of the past (both images and explanations of meaning in the present) through multiple channels and within a number of social fields.

The model of the politics of memory, derived from the data collected during the course of our research, focuses on elucidating the mechanism of social memory formation in terms of the connections and relations between the principal actors involved in the production, reproduction, and dissemination of meanings and symbolic practices. From a constructivist perspective, social memory can be understood as a process whereby communication and practices of representing the past play a pivotal role in influencing the members of a community.

However, social memory in the sociological sense is not regarded as the ultimate outcome of social construction; rather, it is viewed as an ongoing process of this construction. The analytical model presented in this paper examines the phenomenon through the lens of memory politics within the structure of social memory. The algorithm of any process within the framework of memory politics can be represented by analogy with the process of communication. This allows the actor, content (symbolic product, meaning, representation), transmission channel and target group or audience to be distinguished.

The term "actors" can be applied to a number of different groups within the context of social memory. The term "actors" can be applied to any social subjects, including individuals, organisations, institutions, and various associations. In the majority of sociological, historical and political science research, the actions of state institutions and/or individual figures are considered. However, it should be noted that memory policy can also be carried out by public individuals, public organisations, religious communities, professional communities, and so forth. This indicates that the actions of the state are not the only factor that can be considered in this context. The term "target group" is used to describe the audience that is influenced by the policy of remembrance. The target group may be constituted by specific local communities, groups selected on the basis of a specific criterion (for example, young people, journalists, intellectuals, etc.), or by more general categories of addressees such as "society,"

"people," or "descendants." It is frequently the case that the audiences of memory politics are ethnic groups.

Consequently, it is not feasible to ascertain which actors wield greater influence in a manner that is free from subjectivity. This is due to the fact that the formation of historical perceptions is characterised by a non-linear process, whereby a specific target group may simultaneously be influenced by numerous actors utilising diverse channels and strategies. Concurrently, the audience of a specific memory policy comprises those members of the community who are linked to the social milieu in which the construction of past representations and related practices occur.

The actors who initiate a given memory policy can be categorised in a number of ways. Firstly, by the sphere of activity to which they belong (state, religious, business circles, academic community, social movement, etc.), secondly, on the basis of their social status, thirdly, in relation to their localisation (national, regional or belonging to a small local community). Furthermore, actors can be distinguished according to their level of authority and recognition. This ranges from those who are perceived as reliable sources of information to those whose arguments are regarded as deliberately false or even as espousing an opposing viewpoint.

The distinctions between the actors of memory politics with regard to their respective roles in the representation of the products of memory politics are considerable. It is evident that multiple actors may engage with a single product of memory politics. For instance, a narrative concerning the influence of Stalin's totalitarian regime on individual autonomy in contemporary Russia may be utilized by various stakeholders. Consequently, a historian may conduct research and publish an article, the Ministry of Education may include or exclude the discourse from the history textbook, and a school teacher may teach it in a history class at school. The manner in which each actor engages with this representation of the past will vary. Some actors are responsible for the creation of meanings and interpretations, as well as the formulation and interpretation of their relationship to modernity. The remaining component entails the transmission of these meanings to disparate target groups or the non-directed dissemination of them to a vast audience.

Although the categorisation of actors within memory politics as 'creators' and 'conductors' of representations of the past may appear straightforward, it is important to consider that the same actor may act in both capacities, even if we are discussing the same product of memory politics. In the aforementioned example, the work of an actor-historian can be defined as either the creation of a novel interpretation of Stalin's role or the translation

of an academically sound discourse that is accepted as true within the academic communities to which the scholar belongs. In the first instance, the author of the article is engaged in the act of meaning-creation; in the second, he is merely a conduit.

The generation of meanings and interpretations is an inherently non-linear and dynamic process, whereby even the audience itself plays a role in the dissemination and construction of meanings (this phenomenon is precisely captured by the concept of 'communicative memory'). It is also possible for one actor to fulfil both roles simultaneously. To illustrate, when reviewing a chapter of a textbook with the class, the teacher, on the one hand, transmits the meanings and images of the past, fixed in the school curriculum, and, on the other hand, can supplement them with his or her own interpretations, created on the basis of his or her own professional and personal experience. One illustrative example is a teacher's commentary on their personal recollections of the Brezhnev era as a period of economic prosperity and stability, in contrast to the textbook's portrayal of it as a period of stagnation.

The term 'symbolic content' is used to describe the products of memory politics. The core concept of memory politics is the content that its actors are committed to disseminating. Symbolic products are both elements of 'soft' and 'hard memory' (for example, politicians' speeches, history textbooks, curricula, poems, films, monuments, state symbols, etc.) and various practices and events aimed at producing and reproducing images of the past and assessing its relationship with the present (for example, festivals, symbolic marches, thematic meetings, rallies, flash mobs, etc.). Such products may be considered both the result of memory politics and a conduit for its implementation.

In this context, an explanation of the symbolic content of memory policy can be provided by reference to the concept of representation as proposed by S. Hall. In accordance with Hall's theory, any given object will be imbued with meanings that can be integrated into the preexisting system. The foundation for representation is limitless, as any message has the potential to be created and conveyed to a specific audience (Hall, 1980).

In this way, the politics of memory produces, disseminates and interprets an individual image, as well as a style of interpreting the past, its evaluation, and sometimes generates not single meanings, but entire symbolic complexes. To illustrate, we may cite a section of an article presented by the Government of the multicultural republic within the framework of the Internet portal 'Heritage of Tatarstan': 'Modern Tatarstan and Volga Bulgaria are separated by centuries, but the Bulgar culture seems close and very familiar even now.' The Bulgarian state was wealthy and exerted considerable influence over neighbouring territories, while also developing a sophisticated culture of its own. This laid the foundation for the subsequent

development of the entire Volga region. The study of Bulgar heritage enables us to gain significant insights into past and present events'.

The initial observation that can be made regarding this passage is the distinct delineation of Volga Bulgaria as a prosperous state that exerted a profound influence on the surrounding regions and was distinguished by a sophisticated culture. The second aspect is of particular relevance in the context of the politics of memory. It directly implies the significance of the Volga Bulgaria period for the development of the entire Volga region and for understanding the present circumstances. The concept of Volga Bulgaria is essentially applied to the modern region of Tatarstan.

The creation of an image of a great ancestor and its subsequent transferral to oneself represents a strategy for the generation of a 'genealogical' or ethnohistorical myth. In general, the content of the symbolic 'work', the representation, may be conveyed in the form of a narrative or may be associated with the meanings attached to an object, a 'place of memory' (such as a museum, artefact or work of culture). Nevertheless, it invariably interprets the relationship between the disseminated concept and the occurrences of the contemporary era. This connection may be indicated directly or indirectly, through appeals to logic and facts or, conversely, to emotions. A salient feature of symbolic products of politics is the proclivity towards unambiguity and simplicity. The semantic content is distilled, mythologised, and transformed into theses. This illustrates the potential for diametrically opposed interpretations of the same historical material to emerge within a single memory field. Furthermore, the content of the symbolic product within the context of memory politics is largely contingent on the motives and values of the actors involved, as well as the methods of transmission employed.

This paper examines the various channels and strategies that shape the politics of memory. This paper employs the concept of memory transmission channels to elucidate the specificities of the processes through which images and meanings are conveyed within the context of social memory. This definition enables us to identify both the mode of transmission and the extent to which it is institutionalised. The transmission of representations of the past can occur through a number of channels, including educational institutions, mass media (including internet resources such as social networks, blogs, forums, etc.), religion, and cultural elements. Furthermore, performances, events and practices (festivals, symbolic processions, thematic meetings, rallies, flash mobs, etc.) can be considered additional channels of memory politics.

The function of different channels of transmission varies. To illustrate, a museum and a politician's speech are both modes of transmitting memory, yet they exert disparate influences and construct divergent interpretations of the past. A museum, in contrast, is not merely a physical space; it is a social entity comprising a complex network of interactions between the institution, the meanings it conveys, and the individuals who engage with it. The means of transmission are not merely a static entity, isolated from the social relations that shape it; rather, they are a dynamic relationship in themselves. It is not possible to have the experience of encountering most historical events. Our experience as audiences of the politics of memory is only related to representations and the means of transmission of memory. J. Olick (2009) notes: The absolute truth of an event is inevitably altered by the means of its transmission and representation. The past is always conveyed to us through a specific mode of transmission.

Consequently, within the context of diverse strategic approaches, the same channel can be employed in a variety of ways and exert influence over the meanings and interpretations associated with the symbolic product. The channels of memory transmission are not merely incidental; they exert a significant influence on the message, as evidenced by the particular actions of the actors within a given strategy. To illustrate, channels such as textbooks and academic articles imbue the narratives expressed in them with greater authority for the audience. In contrast, art imbues a specific representation of the past with emotion and establishes a framework for evaluating the past and its contemporary significance.

The representation of the past and the fields in which they circulate are multiple. The residents of the Republic of Tatarstan are influenced simultaneously by several strategies originating from different actors and conveying different representations of the past. The efficacy of a specific strategy of memory politics is largely contingent upon the channels that serve as conduits for narratives pertaining to the relationship between the past and the present, as well as the sources of information that are preferred by the audience. In essence, any given object cannot be imbued with a single meaning; rather, it is endowed with a multitude of meanings. This is why there is a plethora of meanings attributed to the same object, and thus, there is always more than one way to represent these objects.

In general, the memory policy in relation to its initiator can be presented as a certain algorithmic process. This process begins with the actor initiating the creation and transmission of a symbolic product. The actor then chooses a strategy for promoting this product to the intended audience. In accordance with the strategy, the most appropriate channels are selected and the content of the symbolic product is adapted accordingly.

4 CONCLUSION

The politics of memory is a process that is initiated by a variety of social actors, including the state, social movements, individual artists, scholars, and others. Such actors mobilise the full range of institutional and symbolic resources at their disposal, disseminating representations of the past in order to advance their own agendas in the present. However, the content of social memory is not determined solely by the deliberate actions of memory policy actors; it is dynamic and susceptible to a multitude of cultural, political, and other influences, many of which are unpredictable.

The defining features of social memory are its multidimensionality, encompassing a multitude of meanings and values, and the existence of temporal and spatial boundaries, which are shaped by the limits of practices associated with the actualisation of the past. The dissemination of a specific memory policy coincides with the boundaries of the 'social field', which can be defined as a specific spatial and temporal set of social agents, practices and meanings that they produce and are guided by. The politics of memory represents not so much an image of a particular period of the historical past as an interpretation of its meaning for the present within a specific social field. It is not possible to consider the process of constructing cultural memory in isolation from the specific social framework in which it is carried out. This is because the politics of memory (including its products) is an element of cultural memory.

The politics of memory can be defined as the ways in which the past is represented. This representation is shaped by the actions of specific actors, the stylistic choices employed in portraying the relationship between the past and the present, and the characteristics of the channels through which narratives are disseminated.

Strategies of memory politics are invariably oriented towards the creation of representations of the past that are contingent upon and intertwined with the evaluation of present phenomena and the motivation for social activity.

The consolidation of memory politics occurs through the process of institutionalisation, which is evident in the work with physical places of memory and in the creation of formal and informal institutional structures engaged in the construction of the past. The key elements of memory politics are reproduced at the institutional level. This includes narratives, actors (for example, through the training of representatives of a specific school of historical research and the licensing of tour guides) and channels of memory politics (such as museums, conferences and texts).

The utilisation of the past within the context of memory politics serves a number of purposes, including the actualisation of ethnic identity and the regulation of interethnic relations. Cultural memory elements, such as museums, films, music, and so forth, which represent the characteristics of the ancestors of a regional group, serve to maintain the collective imagination of the existence of this group and its defining characteristics. In many ways, social memory serves to define current social situations for members of a regional group, as well as to inform their decision-making processes in response to the actions of other groups or their own members.

The pervasiveness of historical representations and explanations of their relevance to the contemporary identity of Tatarstan in the region's social space has the effect of reinforcing the salience of these issues for members of the group in their everyday lives.

The formation of identity is contingent upon the establishment of a symbolic connection between group members and their ancestral figure, which is typically manifested in the emphasis placed upon the perpetuation of traditions and the advancement of collective development. Specific characteristics are ascribed to the mythologised ancestor, which are then projected onto group members in the present. Concurrently, the image of the ancestor is imbued with sacred significance and employed as a moral and ethical reference point. Those engaged in memory politics are presented with a pre-existing interpretation of how the past should inform their assessments of contemporary political and cultural events, as well as the characteristics of group identity.

In a multicultural region, memory politics serves as a mechanism of ethnic identity formation, whereby the identity of group members is interpreted for themselves and the external image of the group is worked through. This process involves the neutralisation of negative stereotypes and cultural traumas. The content of ethnic identity within the framework of memory politics is inextricably linked to the representation of the relations between group members and other ethnic groups, both past and present. The formation of such evaluations is based on the concept of 'historical conditioning'. The policy of memory concerning the ancient history of Tatarstan serves to construct the identity of the region's contemporary inhabitants around the traditions of peaceful inter-ethnic and inter-confessional interaction.

The politics of memory employs visual representations of the historical past to underscore the distinctive characteristics of the republic with regard to tolerance and religious tolerance. In this context, the appeal to the monuments in Bulgar and Sviyazhsk represents a phenomenon of the early 21st century. Earlier representations of the period were more politically oriented and related to the aspirations of the region's ethnic elite for greater

autonomy. In this context, it is possible to discuss the transformation of the 'genre' (in accordance with J. Olic's process-relational theory) of the utilisation of the image of Tatarstan's ancient past. There has been a transition from the political context of actualisation to the context of tourism and culture in the broad sense of the term. In the modern Republic of Tatarstan, the sphere of tourism has become one of the most influential areas of policy concerning the remembrance of Bulgarian heritage. This influence is determined by the extensive audience that the tourism sector caters to, comprising residents of Tatarstan and tourists from other regions of Russia and abroad.

The construction of economic attractiveness on the basis of cultural heritage occurs through the utilisation of the image of development and the special cultural value of historical heritage, with the objective of improving the image of the region and increasing the popularity of tourist sites such as Sviyazhsk and Bulgar. The value of historical sites in the region is represented as an economic resource in the sphere of tourism using a simplified, mythologised image imbued with emotion.

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