

Cultural Memory as Selection of the Past: Practices of Oblivion

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Abstract

The article examines the role of oblivion in the phenomenon of cultural memory. An analysis is given of oblivion as a sociocultural practice that can “reconcile” different cultural narratives regarding traumatic events from the country’s past. A theoretical understanding is given to the problem of cultural memory as a selection of the past through oblivion, as one of the ways for transforming cultural memory. The types of oblivion in the context of drastic social transformations of society are highlighted using the example of the Chechen Republic. The authors come to the conclusion that in conditions of fragmentation of the political and cultural space, such a path is an important condition for social stabilization through the creation of a common cultural metanarrative. An institution such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission can serve as a mechanism for eliminating from memory traumatic experiences that threaten to separate the carriers of different narratives.

Keywords: Cultural Memory, Oblivion, Selection, Past, Narrative.

INTRODUCTION

Rethinking the knowledge accumulated throughout history has exposed a number of challenges to society that raise questions about maintaining social and cultural stability. The new realities of post-industrial, “fluid” (Z. Bauman) society, “reflexive modernity” (E. Giddens) have called into question the most important principle of social knowledge – causal explanation (Zarubina, 2021). This process is associated, firstly, with a significant increase in access to historical sources, which creates the opportunity to revise established interpretations of events and symbols about the past, but it is also important that the principles of analysis and description of them are changing (Bearman, 2020, pp. 144-145). A change in emphasis in the interpretation of past events is not always associated with “deception” or distortion. Max Weber noted that among researchers of social reality there are “supporters of facts” and “supporters of meaning.” According to M. Weber, “the true skill of the researcher” lies in the fact that “known facts are correlated with well-known points of view and, meanwhile, something new is created” (Weber, 1999, pp. 707-735). This something new is also connected with a new public demand for interest in the past.

A new history of the past, loaded with the trauma of national communities, unknown pages of state terror towards the people and the specific destinies of individuals, poses the question of what to do with this traumatized history, the “inconvenient past” of the state, where the executioner/victim dichotomy often determines the barometer of the social and political mood of society. Under what conditions is a frank, constructive dialogue possible between state institutions, which largely strive to preserve the former metanarrative of collective memory, and society? On what basis should we look for a universal language to unite a nation? These and other questions require a deep theoretical justification based on empirical data.

The problem of cultural memory and the mechanisms of its formation increasingly began to acquire a political and mobilization character in the conditions of the current socio-political instability of society. The

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globalization of collective memory acquired significant contours in the twentieth century due to two world wars. They largely determined the traumatic social experiences of society and their interpretations, became the subject of symbolic conflicts with corresponding semantic frameworks that determined allies and enemies, perpetrators and victims, liberation and enslavement (Halas, 2021, p. 55).

The turn of the century saw an extraordinary surge in conflicts around the world. The relevance of the research and the questions raised, caused by the unique dynamics of social processes and phenomena, is evident all over the world, in particular in the North Caucasus and the Chechen Republic. Bloody battles on the territory of the Chechen Republic (ChR) brought significant suffering to people. Many researchers predicted that this wound would not heal for a long time; resentment and revenge should, in their opinion, determine the state of the entire region for many decades (Ragozina, 2013), (Tsvetkova, 2008). Several years have passed since the official completion of the counter-terrorism operation (2009), the republic is recovering at a rapid pace and is increasingly attracting guests and tourists, the high level of security allows for various international events to be held. It can be argued that the region has become an example of the active restoration of peaceful life and stabilization. Based on this, can we talk about successfully erasing the tragic (and uncomfortable) past from the memory of the Chechens? Research shows that the memories remain, but complex transformations have taken place in the life of society, which overlap with personal ones. As a result, some memories remain suppressed and new social responsibilities and roles update the entire system of the individual's cultural memory. What mechanisms are involved in the formation of cultural memory, and what place is given to oblivion?

In this article, the authors attempted to answer the identified questions based on the purpose of the study: considering the problem of cultural memory through selective perception of the past where forgetting is considered as a mechanism for creating a socially and culturally significant past that contributes to present life.

Theoretical context: main approaches to comprehension and the place of oblivion in the formation of cultural memory

The actualization of the issue of creating a new sociocultural metanarrative in society forces us to turn to the works of P. Berger and T. Luckmann, to their constructivist method, which became the key basis for our research, as well as to the works of M. Halbwachs, P. Ricoeur, J. Assmann, A. Assmann, P. Connerton and others, where issues of the relationship between individual and collective memory, the place and role of oblivion in the creation of a new narrative and a new identity are considered. Cultural memory in this paper is understood as a culturally encoded memory that is characteristic of both the individual and the (national) community to which that individual belongs. In this regard, the concept of cultural memory is close to the definition of A. Assmann (2014), as a form of translation and actualization of cultural meanings. It is preserved in various forms: orally through living speakers, in texts, as well as in material culture, often of a symbolic nature. All these forms can be gradually or immediately destroyed, replaced with one or another less similar copies, or fully recreated in a completely different form.

Active influence on cultural memory has become possible due to the development of information technology and the Internet. In this context, the value side of memory, the preservation of "important" episodes or the forgetting of "negative" ones will always be subjective from the point of view of the "memory designer", mainly the state interested in the implementation of its plans and objectives. The least accessible for transformation is cultural memory the bearers of which are people themselves. But over the course of history there are fewer and fewer of them. Texts and symbols are at risk of destruction, access to textual and other sources is strictly regulated, the interpretation of texts is delegated only to certain groups of experts, due to which a certain "canonization" of memory is achieved (as a form of protection against arbitrary interpretation (Anikin, 2013, pp. 3-7).

Important for understanding is the thesis of Maurice Halbwachs about the social conditioning of memory, where individual memory is embedded in the memories of its social group and thereby preserves social unity. For Halbwachs memory is conceived as a social construction that comes from the present. This is not the sum of individual memories but a collective cultural work that self-develops under the influence of family, religion and social stratum (Halbwachs, 2007, pp. 10-11). The cultural picture of reality in time is formed from the

everyday life of the individual and group, from social, cultural and political challenges, i.e. everyday experience, which in sociology is designated as the frame theory.

Jan Assmann, continuing the thought of M. Halbwachs, argues that a change in models of the organization of historical experience occurs when society collides with reality, which changes the framework of habitual ideas therefore requiring a rethinking of the past experience (Assmann J. , 2004, p. 9). Therefore, the term “cultural memory” represents a form of transmission and modernization of cultural meanings specific to each culture (Giri, 2005).

The problem of the relationship between collective and individual memory is posed deeper by P. Ricoeur, he asks a series of questions: “in order to come to the concept of shared experience, is it necessary to start with the idea of “one's own”, then turn to the experience of another and then perform the third operation, called the communitarization of the subjective experience? Is this chain really irreversible...? There is a point when it is necessary to move from “I” to “we” (Ricoeur, 2004, pp. 166-167). P. Ricoeur proposes to consider individual and collective memory as complementary constructs, that is, “to explore the possibilities of complementarity contained in both approaches that are antagonistic to each other...” (p. 174). In the context of considering cultural memory and oblivion, the selection of past events through conscious forgetting at the subjective level can contribute to the creation of new meanings at the intersubjective level.

Our reasoning was also based on the structured approach of the English researcher P. Connerton, his typology of oblivion/forgetting as a phenomenon of a conscious nature (Connerton, 2008). The methodology he substantiated for the formation of cultural memory and the place of oblivion in it makes it possible to realize a theoretical and practical perspective for considering the phenomenon of oblivion. Forgetting the events of the past represents a selection of cultural memory while avoiding the extremes of both empiricism and enthusiasm for establishing the correlation of facts and “adjusting” facts to the social framework of memory. It becomes part of the process of integration of those historical images inherent in various societies, social groups and the individual.

Considering the specifics of social memory, M. Halbwachs believed that “no matter how many memories pass through our consciousness, when we are looking for one, hidden one, we know that there are much fewer of them than there used to be before when they made up part of our immediate past. Perhaps we will be told that in reality these are the memories that seem most important to us at the moment? This means that we consider them from the point of view of the present. But then it is no longer the whole past that puts pressure on us trying to penetrate our consciousness. Then, not the entire chronological series of states of the past accurately reproducing ancient events can arise again but only those of them that meet our current concerns” (Halbwachs, 2007, p. 172). Our present concerns may be of a very pragmatic nature, and memories that require psychological and emotional stress may be erased from memory. New social frameworks are gradually taking shape. A change in the referential frame also leads to a change in the factological material of memory, the significance and value of this event in the context of a given time and therefore its variability. Here we are faced with the relationship between historical and social knowledge. M. Weber noted that “in the sciences of human culture, the formation of concepts depends on the place that the problem under consideration occupies in a given culture, and it can change along with the content of the culture itself” (Weber, 1990, p. 407).

Materials and Data

This work is based on the authors' observations of the social dynamics occurring in the Chechen Republic at the turn of the century. Being located in this region and working on various aspects of social dynamics (social and interethnic interactions, culture, conflicts, etc.) the authors accumulated data from different aspects of reality. In addition, the group of authors represents different fields of study: from sociology to social geography. Empirical data included both our own observations and data from official sources and publications, statistical and other information about the history of the region. Numerous interviews were conducted both in the region itself and with migrants who assessed historical events in their own way.

Practices of Oblivion in the Chechen Republic

The current realities of the XXI century in Russia are characterized by worsening traumatism in society, especially in its Caucasian regions. Some of the main milestones include the Ossetian-Ingush conflict (1990-1991) and the two “Chechen wars” of 1994-1995 and 1999-2000, which give the phenomenon of cultural memory and oblivion a special urgency; they serve as certain signs indicating the need for awareness of the importance of social dialogue between the state and society. The set of contradictions that fall into the field of analysis covers the following aspects: political and legal settling of accounts with the past; criticism of official versions of history and the resurfacing of repressed memories; replacement of the ideology of oblivion with the ideology of remembrance and national cultural inheritance and continuity of cultures; active development of memorial practices and genealogical research; increased attention to the collection of archives and the discovery of “memorable places” (Kostina, 2011).

Thus, the increase in the forms of representation of the past leads to the fact that, firstly, memory ceases to be thought of as a holistic formation; on the contrary, it reveals many storylines that require adaptation of the experience of the past. Secondly, the acquired knowledge must be publicly and socially significant, this is its novelty and the specificity of the general metanarrative of society.

The English researcher P. Connerton identifies a number of types of forgetting: repressive erasure (2008), which prescribes forgetting; forgetting, which is the prescription of a new identity; structural amnesia; forgetting as annulment; forgetting as obsolescence; forgetting as “offended silence” (2008). A. Assmann (2014) distinguishes two types of oblivion: hard (selection, discarding and destruction) and softer ones - neglect, deformation, loss.

Not all of these types are equally represented in the recent history of the Chechen Republic. The very specificity of the region, and, consequently, the mechanism of memory reproduction, is characterized by rather sharp boundaries between the main actors involved in the storage and reproduction of cultural memory, primarily the state and the local community. At the same time, the remaining elements of the traditional structure of society lead to the fact that the cultural memory of individuals is not always free; it is largely subject to the influence of the local community, mainly within the framework of family and kinship relationships. Available materials on forgetting practices in the Chechen Republic allow us to distinguish two main groups of forgetting practices: 1) based on the directed selection of memorable episodes and markers of the past and 2) a relatively passive process of forgetting.

To one degree or another, controlled selection, carried out mainly by the state, is represented both by its repressive (in Connerton’s terminology) forms and by more complex ones, including a selective reading of the past and even elements of a social contract. Much has been done in the region to erase those episodes of near and distant history that are reminiscent of the bloody conflicts. Some information carriers have been forced into emigration, and there are both official and unofficial taboos on many texts by opposition authors. At the same time, there is a revival of some pages of history associated with the Caucasian war and the deportation of the Chechen people from their places of permanent residence. Hundreds of mountain villages with the remains of ancestral towers, previously alienated from the population (it was forbidden to settle in them), became objects of restoration; part of the population expressed a desire to return to their native places. In this regard, it is important to note the revival of cult religious monuments on the territory of Chechnya. These include ziyarats (translated from Arabic - *زِيَارَات* “ziyarat”) means a visit made by a Muslim to holy places. Ziyarats are tombstones, often tombs, mausoleums, built on the graves of Muslim prophets and holy people. Religious monuments and their sacralization are part of the structure of the Chechen society’s religious identity, the strengthening of which we see in the restoration of vird brotherhoods (religious movements). In the modern Chechen Republic, these include the followers of Kunta-Khadzhi Kishiev, Bamatgiri-Khadzhi (Iovda), Chimmirza, Ali Mitaev, Mani-sheikh, Yusup-Hadzhi Makhketinsky, Visit-Hadzhi (village Geldigen), Vis-Hadzhi Zagiev, Abu (Bashir-sheikh), Deni Arsanova, Solsa-Hadzhi, Sugaipa-Hadzhi, Yusup-Hadzhi, Uzun-Hadzhi, etc. Apart from Sheikh Kunta-Hadzhi Kishiev, the named sheikhs have their own ziyarat, which are periodically visited by their followers. The ziyarat of Hedi, the mother of Kunta-Hadzhi located on Mount Ertin-Kort in the village of Guni, Vedeno region of the Chechen Republic, has been restored, as well as the

ziyarat of Tashu-Hadzhi, Dokku-sheikh, Ali Mitaev. According to approximate data, the total number of ziyarats existing in the Chechen Republic now exceeds 150 sites (Akaev, 2023). Almost all of them were restored during the post-Soviet period. Reanimation of religious memory in the public consciousness with the disappearance of the pressure of Soviet ideology that considered the names of sheikhs, their followers, as well as monuments as costs of backwardness and ignorance of society, indicates that forced oblivion is a strategy of deferred memory. Forced oblivion “nests” in the memory of society in anticipation of the possibility of its legitimation, it feeds the society, forms the role of the victim in the public consciousness and adds meaning to unrealized cultural experiences, adding illusions and myths to the time when these religious practices were possible and legitimate.

The restorative process of cultural memory and its “reboot” has wider boundaries. Being in a hierarchical system of state reproduction and revaluation of information, the Chechen community is also affected by the processes of reformatting cultural memory throughout the Russian space. These processes concern both spatial markers of cultural memory, such as monuments, memorial plaques, toponymy, etc., and those related to the ordering of time, for example, the establishment of holidays (the so-called business calendar). Thus, the current business calendar of the Chechen Republic contains 11 regional holidays, including such important ones for Muslims as Eid al-Fitr and Eid-al-Adha, and 8 all-Russian ones. The practices of oblivion in this case are based on the mechanisms of repetition and consolidation of new social frameworks and events (Table 1).

Table 1. Holidays: all-Russian and the Chechen Republic-specific.

Holidays in Russia (days off)	Dates	Additional Holidays in the Chechen Republic	Dates
New Year	As a rule, the first week of a new year	Day of Honor of Evliya Ustaz Kunta-Hadji Kishiev	3 January
Christmas	7 January	Constitution Day of the Chechen Republic Day of State Symbols of the Chechen Republic	23 March (Day off)
Fatherland Defender's Day	23 February	Day of Peace in the Chechen Republic	16 April (Day off)
International Women's Day	8 March	Uraza Bayram (Eid-al-Fitr)	Set annually (Days off)
Spring and Labour Day	1 May	Chechen Language Day	25 April
Victory Day	9 May	Day of Remembrance and Sorrow of the Peoples of the Chechen Republic	10 May
Russia Day	12 June	Kurban Bayram (Eid-al-Adha)	Set annually (Days off)
Peoples' Unity Day	4 November		

Source: <https://gogov.ru/working-calendar/che>, <https://base.garant.ru/35903636/>

It is demonstrated in the tables that some holiday dates have been moved (for example, 23 February to 10 May) - the ideological subtext of the transfer is so that the Fatherland Defender's Day and the day of deportation of Chechens and the Ingush (23 February) do not coincide. The date of the eviction of the Chechen people on 23 February is commemorated outside of formally recorded documents. One of the authors of this paper studied at Chechen-Ingush State University at the Faculty of History in the 70s of the last century. Students were forbidden to mention on the day of the Soviet Army holiday the tragedy of the deportation of Chechens and the Ingush, which occurred on this very day, 23 February, 1944.

If for the entire country the celebration of victory in the Great Patriotic War (WWII) is an absolute priority, then for the Chechen community the memories of the period of this war are more than tragic. It was these years that became the period of alienation of the people from the land, its centuries-old culture. The understanding and assessment of historical events related to the deportation of Chechens (and other peoples)

to Central Asia has not yet been completed. Even after the adoption of the Law on Repressed Peoples, all the “i’s” have not been completely dotted.

New ideological frameworks also form new holidays. The calendar of regional holidays has been updated, they did not exist in Soviet times, most of them have a national or religious component. The ratio of all-Russian and regional (at the republican level) holidays can become an indicator of the correspondence or inconsistency of trends in the transformation of cultural memory at the level of the country and individual people.

It is noteworthy that in the 1990s, when the self-proclaimed Ichkeria existed on the territory of the Chechen Republic, the set of holiday dates differed significantly from both Soviet times and the present. Similar to the current times is the celebration of Eid al-Adha and Kurban Bayram. Secular holidays included:

1-2 January — <i>Tolaman Denosh</i> (Victory Days) in honor of 1994-1995 New Year’s battles;
27 January — Day of Honor (in honor of the 1997 free presidential and parliamentary elections);
23 February — Day of Chechen Nation Revival;
12 March — Day of Chechen Republic Ichkeria Constitution (ChRI);
21 April — Martyrs' Remembrance Day (in honor of the killed Dzh.Dudaev);
12 May — Day of the End of the War between Russia and the ChRI (signing of a peace treaty in Moscow in 1997);
21 May — Day of Caucasus Revival (in memory of the 21 May 1864 events);
6 August – Victory Day in honor of the military operation to seize Grozny;
6 September – Ichkeria Independence Day (on this day in 1991 independence was declared at the national congress of the Chechen people).

As can be seen from this list, almost all dates are associated with episodes that were put forward as reference points in the formation of cultural memory. Nowadays, most of these dates are not articulated in any way in the public space for various reasons: there is an element of natural displacement from the memory of society due to the lack of their actualization in the public consciousness, another reason is the change in ideological paradigms of the functioning political system both in the center and in the region .

A special place is occupied by visually well-recognizable symbols - monuments, inscriptions, as well as names of populated places, streets, etc. Currently, on the territory of the Chechen Republic the formation of a unique cultural and toponymic palimpsest is observed - a combination of monuments and names from different historical periods (Table 2).

Table 2. Changes in monuments and toponymy on the territory of the Chechen Republic, affecting the formation of cultural memory

Historical Period	Significant elements of cultural and toponymic palimpsest (examples)	Contemporary attitudes towards monuments of different periods
Pre-Revolution (19th and early 20th centuries)	Old tower complexes, mosques, ziarats, fortresses. Industrial architectural structures and some monuments to military administration figures appear.	Restoration of ziarats, mosques, restoration of pre-revolutionary toponyms and the emergence of new names in the local toponymy dedicated mainly to religious figures, renaming of streets in the names of religious figures and even their family members (Mata Kishieva St., Subra Kishieva St., Hedi Kishieva St.)
Soviet pre-war (before 1944)	Monuments from the previous period began to be destroyed. Monuments and toponyms dedicated to revolutionaries appeared, detailed toponymy appeared on topographic maps	Restoration of tower complexes. Particular attention to places of tragic death during the eviction process (for example, the Khaibakh complex in the former Galanchozhsky district)
Soviet (until 1990s)	Monuments to those killed during the Second World War, monuments and toponyms dedicated to Lenin, other figures of the revolution and the Soviet period, honored figures of culture and art, museums and museum complexes	Great Patriotic War’s monuments are largely preserved and maintained, the revolutionary heritage is mostly being destroyed, old names are being restored or new ones are being used
War years - 1990s	Active construction of mosques, renaming of settlements and other toponyms associated with the Soviet era, partly due to	Improvements of Orthodox cemeteries in those villages that were abandoned by the Russian-

	the presence of the Russian-speaking population. Return to former names on the territory of traditional residence of the Chechens. Most Soviet monuments in cities have been destroyed. Some monuments about military actions (memorable crosses installed at the places of death of Russian soldiers)	speaking population, in some cases, the construction of churches
Modern	Memorial buildings and toponyms associated with the names of A.A.-Kh. Kadyrov, R.A. Kadyrov, V.V. Putin.	The spread of toponyms associated with Kadyrov to some other settlements in Russia (mainly in the North Caucasus) and even abroad

Quite a lot of monuments from the pre-revolutionary period have been preserved on the territory of the Republic. They are represented by both tower complexes and ancient cemeteries. Active restoration and construction of mosques is underway. In 2023 alone 33 of them were built in the Chechen Republic, and in total there are 1,406 mosques, 81 shrines are currently under construction (Grozny, 2023). The historical landscape is replenished even with tower complexes - new constructions that well reflect the cultural specifics of the people's relationship to the territory. Changing the names of streets, squares and parks - during the second half of the 20th and early 21st centuries - is the result of a change in ideological values and meanings of state institutions in the formation of national identity using history as a tool of influence. These processes were reflected in profound changes in the cultural landscape of the region. The tragic 1990s, again, as in the 1940s, almost completely "reformatted" cultural memory expressed in the destruction of objects of material culture and toponyms. Currently these changes continue. Thus, the city of Grozny is getting rid of symbols of Soviet identity (Marx, Lenin, etc.), labor symbols (Stakhanovtsev St., Subbotnikov St., etc.), the Revolution and the Civil War (Kirov, Mayakovsky, Dzerzhinsky, etc.), the presence of Russian symbols is reduced to a minimum (Tkhakanov, 2019, pp. 40-49). Mechanisms reflecting the processes of restoring cultural memory or forgetting events of the past often represent attempts to form a state, national community, or social group of a metanarrative that communicates the general meanings of the past shared by it introducing a legitimate language for describing these events.

Among the mechanisms of directed selection, revaluation of events and practices of oblivion, a special place is occupied by social agreements (contracts by Connerton) reflecting a multilateral consensus on the forgetting of individual, most important episodes of history. In their modern form they are presented by the Reconciliation Commission. The potential of this mechanism is underestimated, the resources of society in the context of this institution have not become the subject of close attention of state institutions. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is important for the political and legal background of the appropriate social framework necessary to reduce the severity of the perception of historical grievances and traumas. This applies not only to the latest wars in Chechnya, but also to deportation, and also, to some extent, to the Caucasian War. It should be taken into account that in the context of the recently developed discourse of decolonization issues of the formation of cultural memory, oblivion and, conversely, the revival of episodes from history (sometimes extremely speculative) are becoming an important factor in the information war.

Another type of oblivion mechanisms is based on the relatively passive dynamics of socio-cultural processes, leading to the gradual erasure of vivid episodes from life just yesterday. Research conducted by one of the authors among Chechen migrants in Belgium who relocated there in the 90s due to the military action showed a high degree of respondents' involvement in the memory of the war, the loss of home, family and friends. In the interview, the theme of pain and trauma of war was central, along with problems of adaptation in the country of residence, difficulties in finding a job, mastering the language and fear for children losing their national identity (Kurbanova, 2012, pp. 202-203). In studies conducted in 2019 (Kurbanova, L., et al., 2021) among second-generation Chechen migrants who had already grown up in a new country, the problem of war and migration was not central. According to respondents, parents were reluctant to share with them memories of military events; they were more concerned with the problems of their children's studies and their future life in migration. The young people themselves touched on the problem of war through the prism of law, preserving national and religious identity, and they commented on their parents' memory of military events in such political and legal terms as "state responsibility", "humiliation of the nation", "infringement of rights and freedoms" without plunging into specific events. Thus, the social framework of memory of two generations is constructed

differently, the consciousness of witnesses to events can remember a vivid traumatic episode, and to that is attached a holistic picture of past reality, which is also in the consciousness of a group of witnesses. When transferring this memory to another generation, the memory is generalized, crystallized, and fragmented.

This type of oblivion practices should also include the influence of modernization associated with an overabundance of events, information and, in the words of Auger (Auger, 2017, p. 136), “excess space.” The transformation of cultural memory has entered the fields of Telegram channels the administrators of which are the current interpreters and transformers of cultural memory of the new generation. To do this, they do not have to be in Chechnya to gain popularity.

Practices of Oblivion in the Triangle “State - Local Community - Individual”

History, imposed by the state narrative, played a significant role in the content of the cultural memory of Soviet reality. In the post-Soviet reality, history has been replaced by politics. Through the media and television, a discussion is being built into the public consciousness not about modernity and its problems but about the past (Epple, 2022, p. 26). At the same time, the authorities found a fairly convincing language for uniting the nation around the heroic past in the history of the state. Historical memory began to shift towards political ideology. Halbwachs emphasized the difference between historical knowledge and collective memory (Halbwachs, 2007, p. 32). If the history of Russian victories and their greatness in the past can only cause a discussion regarding the ambiguity of the official narrative, then the language of state propaganda using events common to the country, for example, about the Second World War, cannot always lead to the unity of the nation. Groping for a unifying language, the authorities stumbled upon common pain; they aimed at sensitive points of the “nation’s body” but ended up in “places of trauma” (Epple, 2022, p. 32). However, the activation of the state narrative about the Great Patriotic War may provide a “window of opportunity” for reassessing the traumatic past of this war with its deportation of entire peoples, inadequate losses of human resources during the war, the tragedy of the besieged Leningrad, the memory of Soviet terror, etc. To parts of these problems a superficial assessment was given, and some of the problems received practically no political assessment from the state.

It is important to work through common pain not for the purpose of endlessly mourning the victims and branding the executioners but for the awareness in society of the need to form a social framework of memory. This is where the selection of memory would not be reduced to erasing the tragic and sorrowful facts of one’s history and protruding only its heroic pages but to accepting the past in all its diversity through multilateral dialogue. In the words of the French philosopher M. Blanchot, “Oblivion cannot be comprehended but is aimed at dialogue, a meeting of meanings” (Blanchot, 2019).

In this regard, it is important to note that modern concepts point to the social conditioning and social functions of historical knowledge, its ambiguous connections with collective memory and the relativity of interpretation. Forgetting, like remembering, conveys a narrative about the past and carries a moral message. Commemoration is fragmentary and selective. The choice of what will be immortalized is accompanied by what should be forgotten - this is part of the politics of memory. The created symbolic construction tells us the general meanings of the past, forming a legitimate language of description acceptable to society.

The social nature of forgetting in modern Russian society is associated with the need to build a dialogue between state institutions and society, therefore, of all the listed types of forgetting, we are interested in the types of forgetting initiated “from above” by the state, first of all, repressive erasure and forgetting as “offended silence.” Nikolay Epple in the book “An Inconvenient Past” already mentioned by us, notes that crimes for which the state itself is to blame and not external forces are usually called the “difficult past” (Epple, 2022, p. 14). The ability to take responsibility for a difficult and tragic period in one’s history is difficult from all sides: psychologically, legally and politically. Russia is not the only country that cannot cope with its difficult past. The past and its tragic pages become the subject of a moral assessment of the state when the political situation uses this memory as a resource, as a legitimation of certain forces within the country.

If the tragic pages of history have not become the subject of a moral and political assessment of the state itself, then the trauma of society remains unprocessed and unreflected. In this case, the local political situation can use this memory as a resource to legitimize their ideological sentiments. This happened in 1994 on the territory

of the Chechen Republic. The separatist sentiments of the region's political leaders were framed as the fault of the federal center for the terrible tragedy of the deportation of Chechens and the Ingush in 1944. This event found a lively response among a significant part of society and beneficially fell on the psychological trauma of the people, which had not received an exhaustive moral, political and legal assessment by the state. The confrontation escalated into two bloody clashes called the “two Chechen wars.” The drama of these wars and their consequences carries within it a memory that correlates with a special type of oblivion - “offended silence.” P. Connerton believes that “forgetting is not always a failure of memory but can be of a conscious nature” (Connerton, 2008, p. 59). At the same time, social memory is a process of communication in the public sphere where various social groups, in dialogue with the political elite, recreate their roots in the past without domination and pressure from above. “Memory... is famous for its ability to quietly but sincerely resist when political authorities roughly treat history and manipulate the past” wrote M. K. Lavabra (Lavabra, 1996). The author describes cultural memory as a selective simulacrum, as the concept of a certain mythologized legend reflecting the emotional and evaluative attitude of any actor: state, individual or community to the experienced past. This attitude is formed based on “today,” that is, on the demands and attitudes of the dominant ideology in a specific historical period. Hence the selectivity to past historical events: memories can either be embellished, or forgotten, or act not so much as a historical fact but as the conceptual core of those aspirations that those in power bring to life (Abdulaeva, E., Kurbanova, L., 2023).

The selective attitude towards the past in the history of the country is associated with another factor: the desire of all interested parties to “agree” on the past, and this process is often similar to bargaining in which something has to be sacrificed. The “truth” that would suit everyone is almost always full of compromises. The more prone to negotiation the participants, the more successful this model is. This has been shown by the practice of countries where institutions of reconciliation were formed to solve the problem of understanding the tragic pages of the history of state crimes in relation to their citizens. In the process of political, psychological, material rehabilitation on the part of the state, victims acquire subjectivity, realize themselves as a community and socio-political force. This approach moves from the moral to the political and pragmatic plane; it makes the situation more instrumental. This idea was first expressed by American political scientist Elazar Barkan in his book “The Guilt of Nations (Barkan, 2000). It is the change of ideological frame to a pragmatic one that allows participants to change the context from conflict and endless mutual claims to the desire to find points of intersection and reach an agreement.

Memory in general and its set of memories at the micro level is what an individual and a social group remembers about events that are significant to them, which often become key in their lives. A. Schutz considered small groups as the subject of social memory (Schultz, 1994, p. 178) formed on contact with each other: friends, relatives, neighbors with whom they share a certain set of memories. As interviews conducted with different generations of Chechens showed, knowledge about past events in the process of transmitting memories from generation to generation gradually loses the unique features inherent in the personal memories of an eyewitness to these events and acquires a universal character (Anikin, 2013, p. 14).

Cultural memory undergoes significant transformations within the same human life - at different stages of growing up and socialization. P. Berger, T. Luckman introduced into scientific circulation the concepts of primary and secondary socialization, which differ in their content and the significance of the volume of memories (Berger, P.; Luckmann, T., 1995, pp. 111-112). As is known, the postmodern program has largely focused attention on the variability of ideas about the past, on the search for “new paths” due to the constant change in the questions that we ask the past from our present. We must also not forget that the choice of an individual at the intersection of identities is made every time in a specific situation, and social memory “grows” from shared or contested meanings and values of the past, which are “woven” into the understanding of the present (Repina, 2016).

In the words of Jean Le Goff, “New History” proposes the development of the science of history on the basis of the study of collective memory (Le Goff, 1992, p. 95). We are faced not with the collective memory of a conventionally unified society but with the concept of collective memories of the state, national community and individual. There is a clash of different narratives. There is no consensus in society regarding unambiguous

cause-and-effect relationships between the events of the past and the present in favor of a new model that offers equality of diverse, and even opposite, experiences and interpretations of the connections of the present with the past. In the absence of direct contact with past reality we are deprived of the opportunity to cognize any situational experience of the past separately, but it can be understood in a broader temporal context, in a complex picture of historical experience, including a variety of its interpretations over time (Halas, 2021, p. 56). In this regard, it is important to note another aspect of the problem of memory and oblivion - temporality where postmodernity constructs relationships with the past creating new accents in understanding. As E. Halas points out, "postmodernity appears to be precisely an era of many heterogeneous temporalities, different ways of experiencing and assessing time" (Halas, 2021, p. 55).

The increase in forms of representation of the past makes it clear that memory is no longer thought of as a holistic entity. Memory reveals many storylines that require the accumulation of past experience, generalizing it and raising knowledge to a new level, shared by many, making it public and socially significant. It is important to highlight not only the ways and reasons for preserving historical memory over time but also the types of forgetting in the context of drastic social transformations of society.

CONCLUSION

In recent decades, the processes and mechanisms of oblivion have come under close analysis by sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists. Oblivion as a selection of the memory of the past needs theoretical understanding so that the complex, traumatic historical past, colored by the emotional memory of a particular community, can be spoken about, overcome, reflected on and forgotten. It is important to highlight not only the ways and reasons for preserving historical memory over time but also the types of forgetting in the context of drastic social transformations of society.

Cultural memory in the context of current globalization processes and excess space-time is becoming an important social resource. Access to this resource is contested by various actors on the world stage. The state is trying to monopolize this access within its territory. However, cross-border information flows are eroding this monopolization. One way out is the development of competitive oblivion mechanisms based on dialogue and mutually beneficial agreements between the state and society. Such mechanisms of oblivion become important factors that reduce the level of social tension. The development of such mechanisms requires the formation of social conditions for the formation of cultural memory containing the mobilization resource of society, which can only be achieved on the basis of dialogue between interested parties. Finding the basis for such a dialogue is a key issue. At the same time, it is important to ensure equal rights for its participants. Here it is necessary to take into account that the fragmentation of the global political space, the processes of its fragmentation and the strengthening of conflict-generating tendencies, pose a fundamentally new task for the participants in the dialogue: not to "remember" the background of their dialogue, but, on the contrary, to eliminate the traumatic experience of interaction, which is in need not of maintenance but of oblivion (Anikin, 2013, p. 5).

What method can be used to organize the study of Russia's difficult past? The creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the country is a path and a model followed by many states with similar traumatized memories and histories. The end of the 20th century in Russia, marked by the events of the Ossetian-Ingush conflict and bloody wars in Chechnya, has still not received an adequate legal and political assessment, but, on the contrary, has enriched the field of social trauma associated with the repressions of the Stalin era. At the same time, it should be noted that pain "most clearly associated with the Stalinist period of history is, perhaps, the only truly common experience that unites and can unite not only Russians, but also all residents of the post-Soviet space" (Epple, 2022, p. 34). Understanding this pain can become the basis for discussing the prospects for a future life together. This approach involves examining a moral problem through the prism of politics and pragmatics. Outside of a comparative perspective, talking about the pragmatics of overcoming the past, about the benefits of this process for all interested parties may seem unacceptably cynical (Epple, 2022, p. 36). A conflict of orientations is inevitable but the degree of its dominance decreases provided that the prospect of accepting a socially and historically significant metanarrative of society is realized.

Oblivion as a phenomenon of cultural memory and selection of sociocultural experience cannot be reduced to amnesia of historical events. This is not the antipode of memory but its "other side". Oblivion is considered as a reserve, as a joint agreement of all social actors on non-remembering and on this basis - the creation of new social frameworks for the memory of the past as a stable cultural narrative of the entire society with a language of description shared by all participants.

The problem of memory and oblivion as an instrumental mechanism that creates the possibility of dialogue between bearers of different narratives (state, social group, individual) about the difficult past in the history of the country through the selection of real sociocultural experience becomes relevant and requires further scientific and social understanding. The study of effective ways of forgetting includes a careful study of local practices as well as interdisciplinary interaction of scientists from different directions.

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