The democratic revolution or the revolt of the masses? The building of an official memory in Kyrgyzstan from 2005 to 2010

The tulip revolution which unexpectedly brought Mr Kurmanbek Bakiev to the top of the power structure in 2005 was crucial for the regime which subsequently came into being. The memory of this, its creator primarily the president himself, was later nurtured with great care during his five-year rule. Providing legitimacy for the system, it was to support the preservation of the status quo. The article reconstructs the weave of the democratic and authoritarian threads of the President’s pronouncements, which marked the presentation of the revolution with ambivalence. It is the terms of revolution and rebellion of the masses, permeating the official discourse, which determines the main strands of the narration. They encompass the dimension in which the revolution is defined, setting out who its main leading characters are, and an assessment of the events of March and their consequences. These dimensions are considered not only from the perspective of the ambivalence of the Presidential pronouncements, either alternately or, sometimes, simultaneously, glorifying, on the one hand, the values characteristic of a populist democracy and, on the other hand, typical of an authoritarian vision of the state and society. They are also perceived from the perspective of continuity and change, their repetitive character and briefness, and what they recall and forget. Both the absence of a single position in the public appearances and their polyphony performed a functional role in the justification of Bakiev’s many, often mutually contradictory decisions and actions.