

# CONTEMPORARY HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

ed.

Luboš Veselý



Asociace  
pro mezinárodní  
otázky  
Association  
for International  
Affairs

**PRAGUE 2008**



# CONTEMPORARY HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

ed.

Luboš Veselý



Asociace  
pro mezinárodní  
otázky  
Association  
for International  
Affairs

## CONTEMPORARY HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

**Edited by** Luboš Veselý

**Authors** Ilham Abbasov, Nino Chikovani, Ketevan Kakitelashvili,  
Sergey Rumyantsev, Tigran Zakaryan, Mikayel Zolyan

**Translation** Tamriko Bakuradze

**Proofreading** Lydia Gawa

**Technical Assistance** Marek Dvořák, Lucie Pávková

**Designed by** Side2

**Printed by** BCS, s. r. o.

The authors of the analysis are solely responsible for the content  
and any errors and omissions in their contributions.

### **Association for International Affairs (AMO)**

Žitná 27

CZ 110 00 Praha 1

Tel/Fax +420 224 813 460

info@amo.cz

www.amo.cz

© AMO 2008

ISBN 978-80-87092-08-8

Published with the kind support of International Visegrad Fund  
as a part of joint project with:

Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation, Armenia  
Institute of Peace and Democracy, Azerbaijan

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Georgian National Committee, Georgia  
and

International Centre for Democratic Transition, Hungary

East European Democratic Centre, Poland

Institute of Political Science, Slovak Academy of Science, Slovakia

- 
- Visegrad Fund
-

# CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION 07**

**Luboš Veselý**

**ARMENIA:**

**THE IMAGES OF 'SELF' AND 'OTHER' IN TEXTBOOKS ON HISTORY OF ARMENIA 11**

**Mikayel Zolyan, Tigran Zakaryan**

**AZERBAIJAN:**

**WAYS TO PERPETUATE THE PAST: ANALYZING THE IMAGES  
OF „OTHERS“ IN AZERBAIJANI HISTORY TEXTBOOKS 33**

**Ilham Abbasov, Sergey Rumyantsev**

**GEORGIA:**

**REPRESENTATION OF „OTHERS“ IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS  
SECONDARY SCHOOL HISTORY TEXTBOOKS 57**

**Nino Chikovani, Ketevan Kakitelashvili**

**AUTHORS 84**

# INTRODUCTION



The idea of this book was born during an extraordinary meeting of historians and civil society activists in Tsakhnadzor, Armenia in autumn 2007. In a situation of de facto state of war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and significant minorities from these countries living in Georgia, participants from all three states of the South Caucasus have agreed that neither older nor newer history must divide the region's nations and be an instrument of political conflict. This seemingly banal statement is not only rather exceptional in the Caucasus region, but it is also very bold for various reasons. When in the beginning of the 1990s Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia gained independence their rulers began to build new collective identities and at the same time find new sources of legitimacy of their reign. The easiest way was to choose nationalism similar to the one in Europe of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to build new identities and master narratives in a manner of defining themselves against their neighbours, often in a profoundly negative way. That has resulted in several, often open, conflicts, not speaking of widespread arguments about which nation arrived sooner in which part of the country and therefore holds the "right" to it (while all the others remain only guests that should follow the rules set by the host). The result of these debates, but especially of the armed conflicts in the nineties, and also of the recent summer war in Georgia, are many open wounds, grudges and reluctance even to just to meet and discuss. Nevertheless we have decided to relate the title of the publication to the entire region and not to name all three states of the South Caucasus. We believe that in spite of all the animosities and wars, there are more things that connect rather than divide them. Through this title we furthermore take into account also those nations which live in the region, but do not belong to the titular ones.

The importance of history textbooks during the forming of collective identities and the creation of a picture of other nations and neighbours is generally well known. Ilham Abbasov, a historian from Azerbaijan, introduces his article with a quotation from French historian Marc Ferro, which clearly points to this. Even some politicians have in the past realised the importance of the way history is taught. Almost ninety years ago, in late October 1918 in Philadelphia, United States, Central European statesmen pledged at the occasion of signing the founding documents of the Mid-European Union, that after the creation of independent states which were soon to replace Austria-Hungary, they would introduce textbooks guiding children towards friendship and respect for their neighbours. Independent states were indeed born in late 1918; however the implementation of the above-mentioned promise faltered and so within twenty years, people in Central Europe went through another war.

However, the strive for textbooks which do respect neighbouring nations and educate new generations in this spirit is not hopeless, as has been proven by the

examples of the French-German and most recently German-Czech and German-Polish process of reconciliation.

That is one of the reasons why our publication contains not only a mere analysis of current history textbooks in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, but also recommendations for change. Our goal is by no means to find a single view of history in the South Caucasus, as was the case in an unsuccessful project funded by the Council of Europe, which tried to compose one comprehensive history book for the region. In our view it is more important to promote the principles of tolerance and respect for other nations, as well as to give room to different points of view and assessments of events and history itself rather than promote efforts to find a compromise and “unified history”, which will inevitably be nothing than a mere compendium of facts.

The Russian version of this book, which we hope will primarily be read in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, is supplemented by articles which reflect the Central European experience of conflicts between countries and the modern efforts to find a common dialogue and together overcome serious and often painful events from the past. By having chosen the Russian language we do not want to suggest that the South Caucasus region belongs to the Russian cultural, linguistic or political sphere. However, we chose this language as it still is the most widespread foreign language and often the only means of communication between people from different nations in the region. Our goal is also not to compare the South Caucasus with Central Europe, no matter how much the comparison of frequently changing borders and the subsequent movement of people, the existence of numerous minorities and the vicinity of Russia and Turkey, the second strong player in this case, would suggest. Neither do we want to give any directions on how to solve or not solve the mutual relations and problems in this region. Our humble effort was just to bring closer the Central European experience which, we hope, can be both interesting and beneficial in some ways.

We would like to thank the International Visegrad Fund for its kind support as well as all those, for whom this publication will serve as an inspiration for contemplation or discussion about the current state of history textbooks and the way history is taught in the countries of the South Caucasus.

In Kyiv on 28th October 2008

**Luboš Veselý**

*Association for International Affairs*



# ARMENIA

The images of “Self” and “Other”  
in textbooks on History of Armenia

Mikayel Zolyan, Tigran Zakaryan

## RESEARCH BACKGROUND

One of the most significant components in national state building is transition from narratives of empire history to narratives of national history<sup>1</sup>. At present, South Caucasian states are precisely in that phase of development; nation-oriented narratives are replacing historical narratives that constructed the history of each of these countries in the context of Soviet history. This is the process that many Central and East European countries had been through after the fall of Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires (E. Gellner refers to these countries as Europe's "Third time zone"). The distinctive feature of the situation in the Caucasus, as in other post-Soviet Countries in East Europe, is that here the process of disintegration of the empire and formation of nation states was frozen because the states comprising the Russian Empire joined the Soviet Union – a new polyethnic country in many ways reminiscent of a multinational empire (in E. Gellner's terms – Europe's "Fourth time zone").

It should be specified that there are different points of view regarding the degree of legitimacy that should be attributed to the concept "empire" with respect to the USSR. The term "empire" has certain distinctions in socio-political discourse and social sciences regarding its semantic and value bearing. Having, as a rule, negative connotations in socio-political discourse of everyday life, the term acts rather as a neutral category within social science discourse, at least in the studies on nationalism and national identity, signifying a certain type of state as opposed to the nation state. And it is precisely in this meaning that the term "empire" is used in the present article. In this interpretation, we think the USSR was a multinational empire albeit with a number of peculiarities not quite characteristic to other empires<sup>2</sup>.

In the South Caucasus the active process of national state building did not take place in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. like in the majority of Central and East European countries, but in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> c's., i.e. in the period when the majority of European countries were facing an absolutely new challenge – regional integration. As modern societies of the South Caucasus cannot stand aloof from the European integration processes, they have to solve a very difficult task – continue building their national states on the one hand, and ensure effective integration at regional level on the other hand. In the area of conceptions of history, we have

---

1 The authors express their gratitude to Lubos Vesely, Nino Chikovani, Ketevan Kakileishvili, Ilgam Abbasov, Levon Abramyan, Nerses Geborkyan, and Anna Arutyunyan for their suggestions, remarks, and support in conducting the survey.

2 In particular, this found expression in the idiosyncrasies of the Soviet national policy, which although reacted negatively to the open expressions of nationalism, but at the same time allowed certain freedoms for "national construction" (see below about this).

to deal with a particular expression of that duality: on the one hand, the South Caucasian states have started to develop national history narratives at full speed, while, on the other hand, they are facing the increasing task of building an all-regional history, i.e. developing the narrative of the History of the South Caucasus in a broader context of general European history.

History and the way it was understood in post-Soviet Armenia has often been the subject of research<sup>3</sup>. Typically the problem was basically explored in the context of Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict around the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave. We will examine the issue from a rather different perspective: in the context of transition from an “imperial” to “national” historical narrative under a new growing challenge of developing a regional history narrative. In the present paper we will discuss one of the factors that have an impact on the comprehension of history by the Armenian society, i.e. school textbooks on history.

The role of school textbooks in forming the images of history is obvious. The contents of the textbooks greatly predetermine the future perceptions of South Caucasian peoples in terms of their regional neighbors. Therefore, we think the problem of “others” in these history textbooks deserves special attention in the context of future prospects for regional development. On the other hand, we should also remember, that history textbooks are only one of the mechanisms to develop and preserve the narrative of national history: there are other mechanisms for shaping the understanding about history, such as fiction, cinema, the Media, and Internet; their role in the present post-industrial society is in no way inferior, and may even be superior to the role that historical research proper and history textbooks have. Therefore, the general outcomes of textbook survey cannot be automatically applied to the society’s understanding of history as a whole. This should be remembered if we want our assessment of the role that textbooks have in shaping the views on history to be adequate.

Before we get down to the actual analysis of the textbooks, we should examine certain developmental tendencies of historical science and perceptions about history in the post-Soviet context. First of all it should be noted that, as a rule, the national history narratives that became dominant in the post-Soviet states haven’t emerged “out of nowhere”. In many cases, including Armenia, important features

---

3 A. Iskandaryan, B. Arutyunyan. Armenia: “Karabakhization” of national history//K. Iyermaher, G. Borduygov. National histories in the Soviet and post-Soviet states, Moscow, 1999; Astourian S., In Search of Their Forefathers: National Identity and the Historiography and Politics of Armenian and Azerbaijani Ethnogeneses // Nationalism and History: the Politics of Nation Building in Post-Soviet Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Toronto, 1994, pp 104–132; Shnirelman V., The Value of the Past: Myths. Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia. Osaka, 2001; Shnirelman V., Wars of Memeory: myths, Identity, and Politics in Transcaucasia. Moscow, 2003.

of national history narratives had already been formed in the pre-Soviet period. These narratives, or at least their separate elements, existed and were developing in the Soviet period as well, in spite of the fact that they had to “survive” under the conditions in which the official Soviet historical narrative was dominant.

The USSR was quite an unusual, if not paradoxical, empire in that the national policy of the Union center did not always prevent but sometimes even promoted, national development in the republics<sup>4</sup>. Likewise, somewhat paradoxical was the situation concerning the correlation of the Soviet “imperial” and national narratives. On the one hand, the general Soviet narrative of history was actively supported by the Center, not allowing serious deviations from that model (this concerned especially the new and modern history). On the other hand, within the framework of the dominant Soviet paradigm, it was possible to retain and form elements of parallel national narratives, provided they did not contradict the basic layout of the official narrative<sup>5</sup>. Accordingly, nationally oriented narratives existed throughout the Soviet period<sup>6</sup>. After the breakup of the Soviet Union they served as the basis for the dominant historical narratives in the post-Soviet States.

The transition from the Soviet to the national historical narrative was often accompanied by nationalistic sentiments and dominance of dilettantism in historical science. In many post-Soviet countries historical perceptions had a serious shift towards radical and “ultra-patriotic” approaches. Such developments in historiography are quite a predictable, if not natural, reaction to the situation preceding the nation state. We could call this the period of the “empire” and a time throughout which the narrative on national history had a subordinate role in relation to the general imperial narrative. Among the expressions of this tendency we find artificial ‘ancientisation’ of the history of ones’ own nation (often in combination with

---

4 On these aspects of the national policy of the USSR see Yu. Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism” in G. Elley and R.G. Suny. *Becoming National: a Reader*. Oxford, New York, 1996, pp. 203–239; T. Martin *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*, Cornell University Press, 2001.

5 For example, in the South Caucasian states historians were granted relative freedom in the issues of ancient and medieval history, this often leading to fierce debates among historians of the region some of which had underlying ethno-political reasons (e.g. debates between Armenian and Azeri or Georgian and Abkhaz historians). About these discussions see. V. Shnirelman, *Wars of Memory...*, p. 201–238, 368–385; B. De Baal. *The Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan between peace and war*, Moscow, 2005, p. 202–217.

6 On how national historical narratives preserved and developed in Armenia and Georgia in Soviet times see V. Dadrian. “Nationalism in Soviet Armenia: A Case Study of Ethnocentrism” // G.W. Simmonds (ed.), *Nationalism in the USSR & Eastern Europe in the era of Brezhnev & Kosygin*. Detroit: University of Detroit Press, 1977; S. Jones. “Old Ghosts and New Chains: Ethnicity and Memory in the Georgian Republic” // R.S. Watson (ed.) *Memory, history, and opposition under state socialism*. Sante Fe, N.M. : University of Washington Press, 1994.

the artificial “rejuvenation” of neighboring countries and nations), self-aggrandizement (often to the prejudice of other states and nations), and presenting neighbors and other states and nations predominantly in a negative light<sup>7</sup>. All this is, as a rule, combined with unscientific methodological approaches, defiance of factual data and information from primary sources, and poor knowledge of the history of other nations and states. Moreover, such approaches are linked with the activities of unprofessional historians.

The Armenian society could not escape similar revisionist tendencies either. It should be specified that some of the revisionist interpretations of history, which have been worked out by professional historians by and large, do not go beyond the framework of scientific discourse<sup>8</sup>. The emergence of conceptions that rest entirely on the historical methodology and analysis of the sources, could, to a certain degree, be considered a positive phenomenon as they predispose historians to lively discussions thus fostering the development of Armenian historiography. However, besides professional historians, works of amateur historians’ often suggesting really fantastic interpretations of the past, also have some impact on perceptions about history in society, at least in some of its circles<sup>9</sup>. Approaches of this kind have little circulation among historians, although are widely popular among amateurs interested in history. Very often, in the quest for the sensational, such pseudo-scientific theories are promulgated by the Media.

Nevertheless, in spite of the abundance and popularity of pseudo-scientific and radical nationalistic approaches, their influence on academic historical science in Armenia was fairly restricted. Such “rigidity” of the academic historiography can be explained by a number of factors, the matter of principle attitude of the older

---

7 On some examples of the kind based on the material of the South Caucasus in the late-Soviet and post-Soviet period see V. Shnirelman. Wars of memory... p. 93–97. 169–189, 434–450. Regarding analogous processes in the North Caucasus see. V. Shnirelman, To be Alanians: intellectuals and the policy in the North Caucasus in 20<sup>th</sup> c. Moscow, 2006.

8 On discussions within the Armenian historiography between the supporters of the revisionist and traditional approaches to certain issues of Armenian history, see V. Shnirelman, Wars of memory..., p. 77–100.

9 Take, for example, popular theories of P. Geruni’s, amateur historian (at the same time quite serious and widely known astrophysicist). P. Geruni. Armenians and ancient Armenia (in Armenian). Erevan, “Tigran Mets” Publishing House, 2005. Another example of similar interpretations is the theory put forward by another author – S. Aivazyan, by which, the cradle of Russians is in the Ararat valley, and Kiev, according to this theory, was founded by nobody else but Armenian Princes Kuar, Sheq, and Khurean. The same author suggested a rather original explanation of the imminence of the Russian Bolsheviks and Turkey in 1919–1920: “proximity with Turkey drives us to think that Stalin was a Mussavatist agent and was awfully afraid of his Turkish patrons”. See S. M. Aivazyan. History of Russia: Armenian trace., M., 1997, p. 254, 379; quote S. Constantinov, A. Ushakov, Conceptualization of the history of the USSR nations in Russia and historical images of Russia in the post-Soviet space// National histories in the Soviet and post-Soviet states, M., 1999, p. 99.



generation of Armenian scientists among them. Another deterrent factor was that, unlike many post-Soviet states, Armenian government, at least at the supreme level, practically did not favor revisionist tendencies<sup>10</sup>. Notwithstanding a great demand for revisionist theories among the non-professionals and the Media, the academic community, and particularly historians from the Yerevan State University and scientific-research institutes of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences, have been resisting such tendencies with different degrees of success.

The rejection of dilettantism and revisionism is manifest in the textbooks reexamined within this study. They are a product of the work of leading historians from Erevan State University and the Armenian Academy of Sciences who have a solid reputation both in Armenia and abroad. The majority of these historians represent older and middle generations of historians who support the preservation of continuity in relation to the Soviet-time Armenian historiography (which, in its turn, was in many respects based on the achievements of the pre-Soviet Armenology). The fact that the authors of the textbooks are at the same time leading scholars at the Academy of Sciences makes it possible to minimize the distance between the more ideology-based discourse of the textbooks and the comparatively more neutral academic historiographical discourse<sup>11</sup>.

## HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

In the present survey the following textbooks were subject to analysis:

“History of Armenia”, 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Ed. V. Barkhudaryan. “Luis” Publishing House. 2000.

“History of Armenia”, 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Ed. B. Arutyunyan. Erevan. MacMillan Armenia Publishing House. 2005.

“History of Armenia”, 6<sup>th</sup> grade [is used in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade]. Ed. V. Barkhudaryan. Erevan. “Luis” Publishing House. 2005.

“History of Armenia”, 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Ed. V. Barkhudaryan. Erevan. “Luis” Publishing House. 2005.

“History of Armenia”, 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Ed. V. Barkhudaryan. Erevan. MacMillan Armenia Publishing House. 2007

---

10 The detailed discussion of state policy on the issue conceptualising history in post-Soviet Armenia is beyond the frames of our present study. We would only comment that the state, to a certain degree, acted against the standardised post-imperial layout, and also even tried to fight traditional nationalistic approaches on certain issues (A. Iskandaryan, *Karabakhisation...*, p. 156).

11 To be fair, it should be noted that the authors being representatives of academic science has both positive and negative consequences for the quality of the textbooks: in some cases the texts are overloaded with information and too complex to be grasped by school aged children.

“History of Armenia in the context of the world history”, 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Ed. V. Barkhudaryan. “Zangak-97” Publishing House. 2001.

“History of Armenia in the context of the world history”, 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Ed. V. Barkhudaryan. “Zangak-97” Publishing House. 2001.

Textbook selection procedures are as follows: The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia announce a competition in which publishing houses take part, each of them cooperating with a particular group of authors. The textbooks selected on the basis of competition become mandatory for all schools of Armenia. Their list is published in “Proceedings of the Ministry of Education and Science” annually before the start of the school year<sup>12</sup>. Textbooks are written in Armenian (more precisely in east Armenian)<sup>13</sup>.

Currently, history instruction in Armenian schools starts from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade with synchronized teaching of Armenian history and the world history, each in separate textbooks. The concurrent teaching of Armenian and World history continues up to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade inclusive. At the same time, the number of academic hours allotted to Armenian history slightly surpasses that of World history: 1.5 academic hours vs. 1 academic hour per week. In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades instead of two divided subjects one subject is introduced, called “history”. It is taught with the frequency of 3 academic hours a week by the textbooks “History of Armenia in the context of the world history”<sup>14</sup>.

## CONCEPTIONS OF THE HISTORY OF ARMENIA

The traditions of national historiography are indivisibly linked with national memory. What is remembered is written and vice versa. E. Zerubavel describing the socio-mnemonic structure (the memory of the society) reveals certain plot structures of narratives, reminding that they represent social traditions of memory<sup>15</sup>. Every national historiography has its agenda in accordance with which historical facts are selected, and a link is created between historically or contex-

---

12 The information has been submitted by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia. The authors are grateful to N. Gevorkyan, the councillor of the Minister of Education, for his assistance.

13 There are two Armenian literary languages at present: East Armenian, the language of the Republic of Armenia, and West Armenian spread among the descendants of the Armenians who lived on the territory of the Ottoman Empire until 1915, the European, American, and Asia Minor communities in particular.

14 The information submitted by the councillor of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia.

15 Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*, Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, pp. 13–14.

tually distant events or phenomena. H. White terms this phenomenon “emplotment”<sup>16</sup>. As E. Zerubavel demonstrates, this concept of the plot is the compressed essence of the socio-mnemonic structure of a certain subject. E. Zerubavel describes several types of plotlines. Without going deep into details, we would like to note that the plotlines more typical to the Armenian history conception are conventionally called “zigzag” and “decline”. The decline period, worded as “it used to be better earlier”, is markedly expressed in late medieval history up until the beginning of the new era (14<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> cc.). After comes the zigzag period in which obvious progress is observed, however, the early 20<sup>th</sup> c. marks the period of national catastrophes.

E. Zerubavel also brings some visual evidence of the diagramization of national (collective) memory in the example of the USA and other states (socio-mnemonic density of history i.e. which periods and events are remembered better). Our survey does not envisage drawing a distinct picture of the collective memory in Armenia, however, based on the textbook data, several “hills of memory” and between them, “valleys” of relative oblivion can be identified in the history of Armenia. Such “happy” or “triumphant” ‘hills’ are the period of Tigran the Great (85–45 B.C.), adoption of Christianity (301), and the appearance of the Armenian written language (405). To these dates which pertain to the remote past, two other dates of independence can be added, which are commemorated at the national level (1918 and 1991). There are in addition two more “memory hills” totally different in historical context but similar in their meaning. These are crucial phenomena: the battles of Avarayr (451) and Sardarapat (1918). Notably in one case, Armenians, according to the national narrative, struggled for faith (= identity, = “Armenianness”), while in the other – for physical existence. Finally, there is one more “memory hill”, maybe the most important in the structure of the narrative of Armenian history, – the genocide of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey, a crucial and tragic event<sup>17</sup>.

Before analyzing the images of “others” it is necessary to bring certain clarity into the use of the terms “the history of Armenia” and “the history of Armenians”. The textbooks that fall under our survey are titled “Haiots Patmutyun”. The roots of the term “Haiots Patmutyun” lie in the old Armenian (“Grabar”) and come into

---

16 Hayden White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact”, in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978, p. 83.

17 This event is commonly called “the Genocide of 1915” however; Armenian historiography does not have a single agreed opinion on its chronology. The most accepted date is 1915–1916, although some experts as well as the society at large consider the massacres in Turkey in late 19<sup>th</sup> c. under Sultan Abdul-Hamid, massacres during the Turkish occupation of the Caucasus in 1918, and massacres in Kemalist Turkey (1920–23) as stages of genocide.

the traditional usage of the Armenian historiography as early as during the Middle Ages<sup>18</sup>. Against the common opinion that “Aioots Patmutyun” stands for “the History of Armenians”, this expression can equally be translated as History of Armenia<sup>19</sup>. The notion “Haiots Patmutyun” contains a certain ambiguity from the point of view of methodology as well. On the one hand, “Haiots Patmutyun” can be interpreted as History of Armenia, an entity with more or less distinct geographical frontiers and washed out, ephemeral political and administrative borders. On the other hand, it can be interpreted as the History of Armenians, viewed as a people, which at certain historical periods lived for a considerable part outside the borders of the historical homeland. Therefore, in our view the issue of the meaning of this notion should be decided for each historical period, depending on the context. So, approximately till the 11<sup>th</sup> c. the notions: “History of Armenians” and “History of Armenia” mostly overlap. The situation begins to change from the 11<sup>th</sup> c. with the earliest mass migration of Armenians outside the Armenian plateau. In this context, a special place goes to the history of Cilician Armenia of the Mediterranean – Armenian kingdom, which geographically was not a part of the Armenian plateau, but in which Armenians, who had migrated from the east, were the dominant element throughout the existence of the Cilician principality, which later became a kingdom.

## IMAGES OF “OTHERS”: EXTERNAL FORCES IN THE HISTORY OF ARMENIA

In the accounts of events about ancient and medieval history it is not the neighbors from the Caucasian region that appear most often in the role of “enemy” but forces external to the Caucasus – empires and/or conquerors: Persians (in different historical periods starting from antiquity to late middle ages), Romans, Byzantium, Arabs, Tatar-Mongols, and Turks. The most frequently appearing images of “enemy” are the conquerors that seize and destroy Armenia, interrupting the “natural” course of its development. Descriptions of these events often underscore that Armenians desperately resist the conquerors but because of the rival’s prevalence in force the resistance proves unsuccessful<sup>20</sup>. In a number of cases, the failure of Armenians to unite against the enemy are noted among the basic reasons of defeat,

---

18 “Haiots” is a Genitive case form of “Haik” standing for plural from “hai” – Armenian, as well as the name of the country, a phenomenon typical to many ancient languages.

19 Since both versions are equally viable, in the present text we will use the version “the History of Armenia” which is usually used in Russian translations of the works on Armenian history; it seems more appropriate to us from the stylistic point of view as well.

20 See, for instance, the description Arab, Byzantine, and Seljuk conquests (history of Armenia, 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Luis. p. 5–9, 41–44, 54–55).

while in other instances treachery and perfidy of the conquerors against the “naivety” of Armenians is emphasized. The descriptions of these events, as a rule, involve regional contexts as well and it is observed that neighboring countries were also subject to conquest<sup>21</sup>.

The fact that it is the forces external to the region and not the regional neighbors that appear in the role of “others” and especially of an “enemy”, might seem unexpected, especially in the situation with the unresolved Karabakh conflict. However, a deeper insight into the Armenian context shows that it is exactly the external forces that appear to be the bearers of basic negative characteristics within the frames of the national Armenian narrative. Mighty conquerors and subjugators arrive on the land of Armenia with the intention of vanquishing it, and subsequently expel Armenians from their own land. In some cases they are world or regional empires (Rome, Byzantium, Ottoman Empire, and Arab caliphate) and in others they are nomadic conquerors (Seljuk Turks, Tatar-Mongols). The only exception is the Russian Empire whose role in some historical situations is viewed positively (see below). Accordingly, it can be maintained that the basic plot paradigm around which the narrative of Armenia’s political history unfolds, is an unequal contest between a huge empire and a small freedom-loving nation. Significantly, this paradigm of Armenian national history takes roots not only in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> cc. “national revival” period historiography, but also in the very origin of the Armenian historiography – in the myth on Haik and Bel to which Movses Khorenatsi (Moses of Chorene), “father of Armenian historiography” alludes<sup>22</sup>.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> cc. during the struggle for “national liberation” this paradigm was enriched with a new meaning in the context of the processes taking place in Eastern Europe: the break up of multinational empires and formation of national states. The paradigm of national history reaching back into the myth on Haik and Bel appeared in demand in the context of Armenian movements for “national liberation”. Evidently, it remains vital in post-Soviet Armenia as well, with building national statehood as the basic challenge facing the Armenian society. The idea of foreign rule being “unnatural” and national independence being the natural state passes through the textbooks as a red line. The very fact that “national statehood” is one of the key concepts for the contemporary Armenian political and humanitarian discourse is not surprising. Consequently, it is manifest in the surveyed history

---

21 Struggles of the Georgian kingdom against Byzantine expansion in the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> c. i.e. when Byzantium strived to subjugate Armenia are described in detail (History of Armenia, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Luis, p. 42–43).

22 According to the legend, the founder of Armenia Haik, defying the Babylonian ruler Bel, takes his people away to the mountains of Armenia, Bel tries to punish the defiant vassal and organizes an expedition to Armenia however, he is defeated.

textbooks as well, which also emphasize “national unity” as a necessary condition for the successful struggle against the external enemy. In this respect, interesting parallels exist between the language of the textbooks and the official political discourse in which “unity” is one of the key concepts, especially in the discourse of pro-government political forces.

The main contents of the textbooks with regard to the political history of Armenia are the struggle for national “liberation” which is identical with the struggle for “national independence” or “national statehood”. Thus, one of the textbooks says: “the struggle for liberation was an all-time companion of Armenia’s history in the periods when it lost independence (by the way, these periods, excluding the pre-Christian period or the last 1000 years, greatly exceed the periods of independence)”<sup>23</sup>. It is underscored that having national statehood is a prerequisite for “normal” and “natural” development of Armenia. This idea is clearly expressed, for instance, in the way the Arab conquest is interpreted (in spite of the fact that, formally, Armenia was not independent before the arrival of Arabs): “natural development of Armenia was again interrupted and seriously delayed, this time for a century and a half... . Armenian people had again to strain every nerve and restore national independence through long-term struggle”<sup>24</sup>.

The language describing intrusions of conquerors and the “struggle for national liberation” of Armenians against external enemies is predominantly restrained, without excessive emotionalism. It is mostly an account of facts and analysis of the reasons of victories or defeats of Armenians. The image of “conquerors”, in the majority of cases, is free from an emphasis on ethnic or religious markers. Although we quite often come across negative markers in the descriptions of events, such as: “cruel”, “perfidious”, “treacherous”, they are predominantly attributed to political figures and are not related to ethnic or religious categories. Even in the description of the 1915–16 genocide in Ottoman Turkey – the key event for the Armenian national historical narrative – the authors have managed to escape the superfluous emotionality and ethnic stereotypes: “the authorities”, “young Turks”, and personally the then heads of the Turkish government are claimed responsible for the extermination of Armenians and not the entire Turkish nation (by contrast with the approaches characteristic to the radical nationalistic circles)<sup>25</sup>.

It should also be pointed out that the image of a “conqueror” on the whole, is in fact free from religious connotations. The authors do not discriminate between “enemies” on religious basis: the roles of pagan Roman and Old Persian empires,

---

23 History of Armenia, 6<sup>th</sup> grade. MacMillan, p. 5.

24 History of Armenia, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Luis, p. 6.

25 History of Armenia in the context of the world history, 10<sup>th</sup> grade. p. 146 and on.

Christian Byzantium, Muslim Arab Caliphate, the Safavid states and the Ottoman Empire are all viewed equally negatively<sup>26</sup>.

The completely negative image of the “conqueror” is not the sole factor ascribed to the external forces. At times the arrival of certain external forces on Armenian land is seen to have positive effects. This concerns Russia primarily. So, for example, one textbook in the chapter, tells about Israel Ori, an 18<sup>th</sup> c. Armenian political figure, and his quest for allies in the struggle for Armenia’s independence from Turkish and Persian yoke. It claims that thanks to the efforts of Ori, the Armenian “national independence movement circles began to see the future in the face of Russia, a reliable ally”<sup>27</sup>. The same textbook views the inclusion of Eastern Armenia into the Russian empire as a result of the wars between Russia and Persia in 1804–1813 and 1826–28 as undoubted “liberation” emphasizing that “Armenian volunteers and the local population took an active part in the liberation of Armenian lands”<sup>28</sup>.

At the same time, the textbooks are far from portraying the image of Russia and the period of Russian rule exclusively in a positive light. Thus, another textbook describing the same events has the following assessment of the inclusion of Armenia into the Russian empire: “By joining the Russian empire the Armenian nation did not acquire freedom... it became subject to national and colonial oppression”. It is also noted that “Russia too was a backward country, although more progressive than Iran”<sup>29</sup>. In fact, inclusion into the Russian empire is viewed as a relative and not an absolute good: noting its positive effect in terms of ensuring physical safety of Armenians within the empire, as well as the fact that thanks to this event Armenians in Eastern Armenia acquired a possibility to develop their culture. At the same time the authors acknowledge the colonial nature of Russian rule.

At times negative aspects of Russian policy in relation to Armenia are emphasized. Moreover, Tsarist Russia’s anti-Armenian tendencies are examined in a broader context of the Russian imperial and colonial policy at large. Thus, for example, the section headlined as “the Tsarist colonial policy” describes the suppression of anti-Russian uprisings in Poland, and Russian invasions in Central Asia, which are followed by detailed accounts of the oppression of Armenians in late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> cc., namely, seizing the property of the Armenian Church, and the struggle

---

26 This, to a certain degree, is related to the fact that Armenians belonging to an independent Armenian Gregorian branch of Christianity were not secured against religious oppressions on the part of the representatives of other branches of Christian religion: Armenian history knows instances of religious persecutions not only on the part of pagans (e.g. Persians) or Muslims (the same Persians in later periods, also Arabs, and Turks) but on the part of Christians as well (Orthodox Byzantium, Russia, and Catholic crusaders).

27 History of Armenia in the context of the world history, 10<sup>th</sup> grade. p. 47.

28 Ibid,m p. 50–51.

29 History of Armenia. 8<sup>th</sup> grade. MacMillan. p. 51.

of Armenians against these acts of the tsarist government: “Public unrests turned, in fact, into the struggle for national liberation”<sup>30</sup>. The negative role of the tsarist government is emphasized in the section dedicated to so-called “Armenian-Tatar clashes” of the 1905–1906 notifying that tsarist government was purposefully instigating inter-ethnic and inter-religious discords among the nations of the empire hoping to distract them from participating in the revolution<sup>31</sup>. Detailed account is given about the persecution of the Armenian political party Dashnaksutyun in 1907–1908 by the tsarist government, which culminated in 1912 trial over the party members<sup>32</sup>. On the whole, it can be concluded that the textbooks present a balanced appraisal to the role of the Russian empire in the history of Armenia and intend to bring out both positive and negative aspects of the Armenian-Russian relations<sup>33</sup>.

The authors, likewise, try to avoid a one-sided approach regarding the issue of the ‘sovietization’ of Armenia. In order to better understand the specifics of the Armenian experience of sovietization we should take account the fact that in 1920 the territory of independent Armenia was actually divided between the Bolshevik and Kemalist movements in Turkey, allies at that point. At the same time, in the part that went to the Bolsheviks certain elements of Armenian statehood were preserved in the form of the Soviet Republic of Armenia, while in the Turkish part Turks conducted “ethnic cleansing”: the Armenian population was either exterminated or expelled. Hence, the interpretation of sovietization in the national Armenian narrative is somewhat different from the interpretation of the events of the same period in some other post-Soviet and east European countries. For instance, textbooks describe the sovietization of Armenia as a compulsory step that the Armenian government decided to take facing its complete occupation by Turkey, at the same time, the part in the textbook examining the reasons and the “lessons” of the fall of the first republic says that in 1918–1920 Armenia which was oriented on the countries of the Entente, did not conduct flexible external policy<sup>34</sup>. The authors also note that these “lessons” are of practical and political importance demonstrating the necessity to regulate and maintain close relations with Russia, and pursue a balanced policy in relations with other countries<sup>35</sup>.

---

30 History of Armenia in the context of the world history, 10<sup>th</sup> grade. p. 131.

31 Ibid. p. 134.

32 Ibid. p. 138.

33 It should be noted that even in the Soviet period it was “allowed” to criticize certain aspects of the tsarist Russia’s policy, and its colonial nature in particular, in contrast with the Soviet “internationalist” policy.

34 History of Armenia. 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Luis. p. 31.

35 An interesting parallel is discerned with the so-called “complementarism”, the basic doctrine of the US modern foreign policy, which intends to combine strategic partnership with Russia and active relations with the Western countries.



There is one more variety of “others”, which is interesting since to a significant extent it is characteristic specifically for the Armenian narrative of national history. We are dealing, in this case, with “the Great Powers” who, in spite of the promises given to the Armenians, did not render them necessary assistance and left them one-to-one in the decisive moment when facing the enemy. The behavior of the Great Powers during the 1894–1896 massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman empire, and during the rebellion in the Sasun region and the subsequent massacres in 1904, are viewed in this very context. Russia in that period is directly blamed for undermining the Armenian liberation movement and siding with the Ottoman sultan<sup>36</sup>. Out of the European countries it is Germany (partially Austro-Hungary), who is blamed for complicity in the 1915–1916 genocide of Armenians, criticism is uttered in relation with the Entente countries as well, who gave numerous promises to the Armenian people and did not keep them<sup>37</sup>. Regarding the catastrophe of the Turkish-Armenian war in 1920, along with acknowledging the responsibility of the government of independent Armenia, it is noted that the Entente countries and the USA left Armenia unprotected face-to-face with Kemalist Turkey and Soviet Russia<sup>38</sup>. In the narrative about the 1920–21 events in Cilicia (the second expulsion of Armenians from the region) Great Britain and France are directly blamed for conspiring with the Turkish government against Armenian people: “The allies, in fact, deceived the Armenian people. Their pro-Armenian position was insincere. Hopes that the Armenian nation and its government had in the West turned out to be futile and ungrounded<sup>39</sup>. In most cases we see this same scheme in the narratives of modern history; however, similar motifs can be seen in accounts of much earlier events. Thus, in the narrative on the fall of the Cilician kingdom, the negative role of the papacy and western countries is emphasized, because they gave promises of help provided Armenians enter into Union with the Catholic Church; however their promises were not fulfilled<sup>40</sup>. In another textbook we read that defending the last Cilician stronghold, the city of Sis, “French mercenaries had been bribed and went over to the enemy”<sup>41</sup>.

Such an interpretation of the role of the Great Powers brings us to the discussions regarding the question as to what degree the hopes for outside assistance in solving problems of the Armenian people had been justified. On the whole, the dilemma concerning whether Armenians should have placed hopes in external fac-

---

36 History of Armenia. 8<sup>th</sup> grade. MacMillan. p. 97–98, 114.

37 Ibid. p. 170.

38 History of Armenia. 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Luis. p. 30.

39 History of Armenia. 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Luis. p. 25–26.

40 History of Armenia. 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Luis. p. 80–81.

41 History of Armenia in the context of the world history. 9<sup>th</sup> grade. p. 229.

tors or should have counted on their own forces, does not have a definitive answer in today's Armenian national historiography, and this can be seen in the reviewed textbooks as well. For example, this contradiction can be found in the preface to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. On the one hand, the impossibility of liberation from the yoke of "big empires" counting solely on one's own forces is emphasized, and on the other hand, charges are made against the "Great Powers", stipulating that their anti-Russian policy brought Armenia's attempts of joining the Russian empire to naught, which, as it becomes obvious in other parts of the textbook, would have been much more preferable than the Turkish yoke<sup>42</sup>. A little below we read "at the same time, [the policy of the Great Powers in reference to the Armenian issue] made it obvious that the only way to solve national problems is counting on one's own forces and not turning to strong powers, who are concerned with their own interests, with requests to install justice"<sup>43</sup>.

## THE ROLE OF THE SOUTH CAUCASIAN NEIGHBORS (GEORGIA, AZERBAIJAN)

Compared to the extent of coverage in relation to the "Great Powers" in different historical periods, the role given in the textbooks to the South Caucasian neighbors is relatively modest. In the accounts of events of ancient and medieval history this role is mainly positive or neutral. For instance, it is stressed that in the 5<sup>th</sup> c. Georgia and Caucasian Albania were allies of Armenians in the struggle against Sassanid Iran<sup>44</sup>. The idea of alliances and concurrence of interests between Armenians and Georgians is present in the sections dedicated to the struggle of these nations against Arab, Byzantine, and Seljuk conquerors<sup>45</sup>.

The predominantly positive or neutral context of references to the South Caucasian neighbors undergoes certain modification in the narratives of events of the 20<sup>th</sup> c.. After the emergence of nation states on the territories of former tsarist Russia's provinces or regions, their relations become tense mostly because of mutual territorial claims. Territorial dispute with Azerbaijan was one of the most important issues for Armenia. Against that background, territorial disagreements with Georgia were of minor importance, in spite of the fact that they lead to a short-term war.

The short war between Armenia and Georgia, which took place in December 1918 was not widely publicized in the Soviet era, as it did not fit the narrative

---

42 History of Armenia, 8<sup>th</sup> grade. MacMillan. p. 3.

43 Ibid. p. 4–6.

44 History of Armenia, 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Luis. p. 101, 105.

45 History of Armenia. 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Luis. p. 15, 42–43, 58–61.

about the “eternal friendship of the two brotherly nations” – Armenians and Georgians<sup>46</sup>. Modern textbooks give greater attention to the relations between Armenia and Georgia back in 1918–20. However, the tone of the description remains reserved: the references to Georgia concerning the events of 1918–1920 are mostly neutral. As for the 1918 territorial conflict between Armenia and Georgia, it takes up little space. Moreover, the authors of one textbook avoid using the phrase “Armenian-Georgian war”, a commonly accepted term in historiography, introducing instead the more alleviated phrase “Armenian-Georgian clash”<sup>47</sup>.

In another textbook the problem of Georgian-Armenian relations is touched upon twice in the 1918–1921 period. The first time it is mentioned in reference to the conflict regarding the issue of territorial adhesion of two regions: Lori and Javakheti (Javakhk), the second time we find it in the section about the foreign policy of the Armenian republic regarding Armenian and Georgian relations in 1918–1920. The authors remind the reader that the “Armenian nation has had century-old good-neighborly relations with the Georgian people”<sup>48</sup>. They also mention the striving of Armenia to organize relations with Georgia (because of extreme need in communications) as well as the desire of the two sides to normalize relations through peaceful negotiations. About the war itself we read: “in December 1918 the fighting for Lori grew into a war between Armenia and Georgia that ended by Armenian military detachments taking control of the region”<sup>49</sup>. The excerpt telling about the conflict between Armenia and Georgia is concluded with noting that the issue of the disputed territories was solved in 1921 by adjoining the Akhalkalaki region (Javakheti-Javakhk) to Georgia and Lori to Armenia. The text is supplied with an illustration of a modern photograph depicting a statue of a famous Armenian writer D. Demirchyan (a native of the region) in the town of Akhalkalaki<sup>50</sup>.

The description of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations of the same period presents a rather different picture. The 1905–1906 so-called “Armenian-Tatar massacre”

---

46 For example, in the 1985 textbook “history of the Armenian nation” (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades) there is no mention about that war at all, there are just incidental comments that “in January 1919 on the initiatives of the Entente coalition countries Lori was declared a neutral zone” (Agayan Ts. P., Arutyunyan Sh. R., Mnatsakanyan A. N. “Hai Jogovrdi patmutyun (1900–1983)” (History of the Armenian nation (1900–1983)), textbook for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades of secondary school (in Armenian), “Luis” publishing house. Erevan. 1985. p. 86). This theme is somewhat casually mentioned even in the 8-volume edition of “The history of Armenian nation”, see Hai Jogovrdi patmutyun (History of the Armenian nation), vol. 7 (1917–1941). Ed. Ts. Agayan (in Armenian). Yerevan publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. 1967.

47 History of Armenia in the context of the world history. 10<sup>th</sup> grade. p. 195.

48 The history of Armenians (Armenian history), for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade of the schools of secondary education, (in Armenian). Ed. prof. V. Barkhudaryan. Luis publishing house. Erevan. 2005. p. 17.

49 Ibid. p. 18.

50 Ibid. p. 18.

and 1918–1920 conflicts are covered in detail, particularly the territorial conflict around Zangezur, Karabakh, and Nakhichevan. However, it should be noted that, overall, within the frames of the traditional national Armenian narrative, Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict of that period had always been of secondary importance compared to the events in the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the textbooks devote considerably greater attention to the problem of West Armenia (East Anatolia) and Armenian-Turkish relations. Besides Ottoman Turkey the other important actors are Russia and the Western countries. Compared to them Azerbaijan's part is modest; even in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflicts the responsibility is to an extent unassigned to Azerbaijanis themselves, as the external forces. Thus, the 1905–1906 “Armenian-Tatar” (Armenian-Azerbaijani) clashes, for example, are seen as a result of an intentional provocation on the part of tsarist Russia (see above), the influence of “young Turkish agents”, and the Panturkist ideology disseminated by the latter<sup>51</sup>. Likewise, when describing the events around Nagorno-Karabakh in 1918, it is emphasized that it was the British who took the decision to create the Azerbaijani Governor-General's administration on the territory of Nagorno Karabakh<sup>52</sup>, while in 1921 the decision to hand Karabakh over to Azerbaijan was taken by the Soviet leaders<sup>53</sup>.

In the section about the break up of the USSR and the “Third Republic”, Azerbaijan is seen almost exclusively in a negative context<sup>54</sup>. In the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict Azerbaijan is referred to as an “enemy”. Nevertheless, the authors have to a considerable degree managed to avoid reproducing negative ethnic stereotypes and radical nationalistic approaches that had taken roots in the Armenian society in the conflict period. Thus, for example, in the textbooks the Azerbaijanis are not identified with the Turks, though such identification is characteristic for the Armenian nationalistic discourse (and widely spread on the level of everyday life). The responsibility for the 1988 and 1990 massacres of Armenians in Sumgait and Baku is not laid on the “Azerbaijanis” as an ethnic category. It is “Moscow”, “Azerbaijan government”, “People's Front of Azerbaijan” etc., who are accused for the organization of the massacres<sup>55</sup>.

The interpretation of the role of the Union “Center” is of major interest, as it is interpreted as definitely negative. Moreover, it is exactly the “Center” that appears as the key rival of Armenians. The basic “plot-line” conflict is not that much the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Karabakh, but the one between Armenia

---

51 History of Armenia in the context of the world history. 10<sup>th</sup> grade. p. 134.

52 *ibid.* p. 195–196.

53 *Ibid.* p. 202.

54 Contemporary Armenia is commonly called “Third Republic”, the “First” is believed to be the republic that existed in 1918–1920, and the “Second” is Armenia of the Soviet period.

55 History of Armenia, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Luis. p. 109–110, 118–119.

struggling for independence and the Union “Center”. The events around the Nagorno Karabakh are situated in the context of this conflict. Thus, for example, alongside the Azerbaijani authorities the Central government is also claimed responsible for the 1988 massacres in Sumgait<sup>56</sup>. In reference to the 1991 events, when Armenia refused to participate in the referendum on the retention of the USSR, we read: “the response from the Center didn’t take long”. Further it becomes clear from the narrative that “the response from the Center” implied joint operations of the Soviet army and Azerbaijan special units against Armenian villages in Nagorno Karabakh and adjoining districts<sup>57</sup>. Azerbaijan in the given context appears not that much as a major rival of Armenia but rather as an ally of the “Center”. It would be interesting to draw a parallel between this narrative and the interpretation of corresponding events in relevant Azerbaijan literature, in which, as far as we know, the Karabakh conflict is also often interpreted as a struggle for independence against the Union “Center”, but in which the role of “Moscow’s accomplices” goes to Armenians.

As regards the phase following the break-up of the Soviet Union and the acquisition of independence, the Karabakh conflict is interpreted already as a “struggle for national liberation”. The continuation of the conflict in the post-Soviet period is described from the position of a “winner”, with little attention to the “defeated”, and hostilities are related in the spirit of classical texts describing triumphant wars – only victories, until the enemy asks for truce. Economic blockade of Armenia that started in 1989 and became permanent from 1990 is also under focus<sup>58</sup>. On the whole, notwithstanding the significance of the military conflict in Karabakh, it does not dominate the descriptions of post-Soviet events: thus, in one textbook, in the section covering the period from 1991 to 2000, only two out of eleven pages are dedicated to the war itself; Azerbaijan is mentioned in one more paragraph in the context of the blockade of the gas pipeline passing across its territory<sup>59</sup>.

## HISTORY OF ARMENIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WORLD HISTORY

As noted above, history instruction in the final years of secondary school (high school level) includes teaching the “History of Armenia in the context of world history”. Inclusion of the subject in the school program should be viewed as a significant progress in the field of history teaching. The course helps to overcome the per-

---

56 History of Armenia in the context of the world history. 110<sup>th</sup> grade. p. 257.

57 Ibid. p. 268.

58 History of Armenia. 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Luis. p. 119–120.

59 Ibid. p. 123, 131–133.

ception of Armenian history as being isolated from the world and European contexts. Accounts on world history in the textbooks basically follow the traditional Euro-centric narrative of modern European historiography, which in our days becomes subject to rethinking in many countries of the world. This regards not only specific textbooks or even specific national historiographical schools but also the entire modern historiography. Therefore, it could hardly be expected that the authors of Armenian textbooks would have bypassed that tendency. Nevertheless, the authors, in a number of cases, managed to overcome an uncritical adherence to the paradigms of European historiography: significant attention is paid to the history of regions and countries that had an important role for the history of Armenia, such as the Near East and Russia.

The most creditable feature of the textbooks for the high-school level is that they give persuasive descriptions of key events and processes in the history of Armenia as organic continuation of the global and European processes. For example, in the chapter “On the threshold of the industrial society” dedicated to the west European history, the section on the west European Enlightenment is followed by a section about Armenian political and philosophical thinking of the Enlightenment period (Movses Bagramyan, Shahamir Shahamiryan and others). Moreover, it is underscored that following the western European representatives of the Enlightenment movement, some Armenian thinkers were expressing ideas that were quite progressive for their time, such as the idea of sovereignty of the people as a source of power and law, the idea of elective appointment of heads of states, and prevalence of democracy over other forms of governance<sup>60</sup>. The fact that the textbooks dwell on Armenian liberal-democratic traditions proper, merits special attention, given the fact that debates on the “alien nature” of liberal-democratic values in the Armenian context are quite widely spread in the Armenian socio-political discourse. Similarly, after deliberating on liberalism and conservatism, the textbook, in the section dedicated to the formation of basic contemporary ideological trends, provides the opportunity to get acquainted with how these ideological movements were expressed in the Armenian social and political thinking<sup>61</sup>. In one of the closing chapters the textbook discusses the globalization issue<sup>62</sup>. On the whole, the course on “history of Armenia in the context of world history” is an important step towards integrating the Armenian national narrative into a wider European and global context.

---

60 For instance, the authors with undisguised desire to underscore the “progressive” mindset of the Armenian thinkers of that time, note, that “Sh. Shaamiryan ... put forward the idea of democratic republic ... before the USA adopted the constitution” (History of Armenia in the context of the world history. 10<sup>th</sup> grade. p. 18–19).

61 Ibid. p. 53–56.

62 Ibid. p. 265.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The place of “others” in the Armenian national history narrative presented in the history textbooks is determined by the basic plot line of that very narrative which can be characterized as “the struggle of the Armenian nation for national independence”. In the context of this struggle conquerors and empires emerge as major “enemies”, who, in different historical periods, prevent the “normal” development of Armenians (although certain nuances can possibly occur as, for example, in the issue regarding the interpretation of incorporating East Armenia into Russia). Within this “plot”, the regional neighbors are assigned the role of “supporting protagonists”: they either help Armenians in their struggle for freedom and independence (as in the period of fighting Sassanidian Iran in Early Middle Ages) or, on the contrary, emerge in the form of “foes” (as , for instance, in 1918–1920).

On the whole, in most cases the authors manage to avoid ethnic stereotypes and xenophobia in relation to the regional neighbors, even when relating the history of the periods in which the latter appear in the roles of rivals. It seems to us that this circumstance should be explained by high professionalism of the authors, who are among the leading historians of modern Armenia. At the same time, it should be taken into account that the majority of authors of the textbooks used at schools today belong to the older and middle generation of Armenian historians who, by and large, are greatly characterized by more moderate and reserved attitudes. Young historians, in contrast, display radicalism to a much greater extent, which, as we think, can in the future be reflected on the state of Armenian historical science in general and on the history textbooks in particular.

It is important to remember that the texts in the textbooks are by far not the sole factor influencing the formation of perceptions on history and relation to the “others”. Firstly, even the most unbiased and balanced text is not a guarantee that the instruction process will be equally balanced and unbiased: a lot depends on schoolteachers, and it should be born in mind that some of them are not always guided by the textbook principles. Secondly, schoolchildren start comprehending history as well as forming positive or negative images of “others” not only through studying history subjects, but also greatly under the influence of other school subjects, primarily literature. Literary pieces studied at schools most often contain glaringly negative images of “others”. Lastly, education is by far not the only channel, through which history can be comprehended. In the modern world, there are other powerful channels of influence, such as print media, TV, cinema, and Internet.

Based on the above, it becomes obvious that the South Caucasian historians working on textbooks are facing a very complex task. We think the ideal textbook must deal with histories of each South Caucasian country in at least three dimen-

sions – national, regional, and European. We should admit though that this conception in the framework of the Caucasus is fairly utopian. Given the multitude of factors complicating the attainment of this goal, such as politicized history, unresolved ethnic and political conflicts, and Soviet heritage in the field of history teaching and studying, help understand why the South Caucasian societies not only have not yet come nearer to solving this task, but are even further from understanding it as an active problem. Nevertheless, the very fact of the existence of the given publication testifies that certain work is already underway. This allows us to hope that forming a multilevel narrative of regional history, within which building non-exclusive history narratives on the national level will be made possible, and just a matter of time.

## ADDENDUM

Statistics on the textbooks of Armenian history: What history is taught?

Title of the textbook	Political history (%)	Social and Economic history (%)	Culture, Science, Religion (%)	Armenian colonies and diaspora (%)	Other (Geography, Ethnogenesis, Social and political thought etc.) (%)
„History of Armenia“, 5 <sup>th</sup> grade, ed. V. Barkhudaryan. Yerevan. „Luis“ publishing house, 2000.	59%	10%	17%	–	14%
„History of Armenia“, 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, ed. B. Arutunyan. Yerevan. MacMillan publishing house – Armenia, 2005	51%	12%	12%	–	25%
„History of Armenia“ 6 <sup>th</sup> grade. ed. V. Barkhudaryan, Yerevan, „Luis“ publishing house, 2005.	62%	14%	18%	6%	–
„History of Armenia“, 8 <sup>th</sup> grade. ed. V. Barkhudaryan, Yerevan, MacMillan publishing house – Armenia, 2007	63%	8%	11%	9%	9%
„History of Armenia“, 8 <sup>th</sup> grade, ed. V. Barkhudaryan, Yerevan, „Luis“ publishing house, 2005	60%	16%	13%	11%	–





# AZERBAIJAN

Ways to perpetuate the past:  
Analyzing the images of “others”  
in Azerbaijani history textbooks

Ilham Abbasov, Sergey Rummyantsev

**“There is no need to deceive ourselves: the image of other nations or our own image, residing inside our spirit, depends on how history was taught to us in childhood”**

**MARC FERRO**

**[How history is narrated to children in different countries of the world]**

## **INTRODUCTION: REVISING “NATIONAL” HISTORY IN POST-SOVIET AZERBAIJAN**

To criticize imperial ideology when Azerbaijan was embarking upon the route of independence meant essentially criticizing the Soviet’s version of Azerbaijani national history. At the same time, for ordinary people socializing in the USSR, it is exactly this school course and version of Azerbaijani history that becomes the object of criticism. According to the common stereotype, “our” “truthful” history can only be written in an independent national state. This tendency stems from professional historians who willingly got involved in reexamining “our” past. Thus, in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, national history underwent a certain revision in which “friendship of peoples” ceased to be its central theme and was replaced by the images of Soviet-inspired national heroes, and fighters for independence. At the same time, given the fact that building an independent Azerbaijan coincided with the Karabakh conflict, it is quite natural to expect that these events would have had an impact on the texts included in the history textbooks which, in their turn, are intended to rear patriots of their country capable of discerning “one’s own” from “others” and ready to take part in yet another conflict when and if the need arises.

A number of ethnic myths have sneaked in to the textbooks during the process of reviewing school programs and getting rid of the “dark stains” in Azerbaijani history. These myths are made up to serve the official ideology of the already independent state. The main creative group comprises professional historians, primarily specialists of the History Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, implementing the state order on developing history textbooks for secondary schools. As early as since the second half of 90’s this group of experts has been invariably headed by the director of the History Institute and at the same time deputy of the Milli Medjlis, professor Yagub Makhmudlu. In fact, we have a situation, where political authorities controlling access to the field of maximum dissemination of the ideal model of the nation’s history have delegated powers only to the “tested” experts. The latter, alongside acquiring the right to compile textbooks, get the monopoly to install this model in schools, i.e. the only possible guarantee that every single future citizen of the country will receive knowledge about the his-

tory of their nation corresponding, in the government's understanding, to its "real" contemporary status<sup>1</sup>.

As a result, alternative textbooks on national or world history approved by the Ministry of Education simply do not exist for the moment. Schools are using only one version of narratives approved by the Ministry of Education. New textbooks on national history in the post-Soviet period were first developed in the mid 90's. These textbooks underwent upgrading only once, in early 2000, and these versions were published for each grade (from grade 5 to 11, i.e. for seven grades), and which schools are using to this day. The only territory where these textbooks are not used by schools is in the Karabakh Autonomous Region of Azerbaijan, not controlled by the Azeri government.

Currently, instruction in the History of Azerbaijan is available only in two languages, predominantly in Azerbaijani, but also in Russian. This concerns even those schools in which a number of subjects is taught in Lezghin, Avar, Georgian or Talish. Historically, these two so called "sectors" – "Azerbaijani" and "Russian" have been fundamental in the elementary and secondary educational system of the republic. Out of 4, 547 schools of general education 360 have both Azerbaijani and Russian sectors; only about 20 schools have Russian as a single language of instruction. It should be noted that the Russian sector in the post-Soviet period has been constantly declining<sup>2</sup>.

Narratives on history at secondary schools are official discourses reflecting a new version of history meant to serve the already independent national state and not, naturally, Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic's role and place in the commonwealth of the Soviet nations<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, the role and place of independent Azerbaijan in the modern world is determined, above all, within the Turkish world (certain resounds of pan Turkism), while the central place among the states conventionally described as Turkish is assigned to Turkey – the major regional ally.

Another important aspect regarding the history textbooks (both national and world history) for secondary schools in post-Soviet Azerbaijan is that they are com-

---

1 See also: Rumyantsev, S.U. "The Country of Ancient States of the World": The Power of Nomination and the Map of "Historical Homeland"/school text in the Soviet school: Collection of articles/ Compiled by S. G. Leontieva, K. A. Maslinski, SPB., M., Cognitology Logics and personality development Institute, 2008, p. 104–132, p. 118.

2 I have enumerated here only the basic tendencies in school education. It should also be mentioned that new schools have appeared in the post-Soviet Azerbaijan with English or some other foreign language as the basic language of instruction.

3 "School programs are based on strict selection of historical facts and are vivid examples of National Myths". Shnirelman V. A., Myth about the Past and Nationalism, ([http://www.nationalism.ru/materials/nat\\_myths.shtml](http://www.nationalism.ru/materials/nat_myths.shtml)). See also: Yasemin K. A. The Teaching of History in Azerbaijan and Nationalism, *Ab Imperio*, № 2, 2005, page 469, 497.

piled in the state (Azerbaijani) language. Texts for the Russian sectors are practically translated verbatim from Azerbaijani. It should be remarked that in the USSR history narratives for schools were produced exactly the other way round, i.e. textbooks were written in Russian and only then translated into Azerbaijani which even in Soviet times bore the official status of the state language.

However, these are in fact the only major differences between the Soviet and post-Soviet approaches in writing history textbooks. In the post-Soviet situation, the narrative about national and/or world history is the same positivist description of the process of ethnogenesis from clan and tribe to ethnos and nation; from slave-owning and feudal empires/states to contemporary countries with a democratic system and capitalist economy. Considerable space in the texts is allotted to Political history, which, in fact, is a series of wars, rebellions and unions “in support” or “against”. The second element of the narratives is the description of a whole list of public figures belonging to arts and sciences, i.e. of the “brave heroes, geniuses, wise men” that “ennobled their Homeland, assisted it, and dedicated their lives to it”<sup>4</sup>. Each school year (history is taught from 5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grades) contains only several synoptic sections about “social and economic life”. It is only in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks that economic and social processes become rather more emphasized.

As to the time allotted for teaching history at schools, it is distributed in the following way: History of the Homeland in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade (first year of history at schools) – 2 lessons a week (68 hours). The 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades have History of Azerbaijan – once a week and the General History (Ancient World/History of the Middle Ages). Starting from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the distribution changes in favor of national history: General history (History of the Middle Ages) is taught once a week (34 hours) while the history of Azerbaijan is taught twice a week during the first half of the academic year, and once a week during the second half (51 hours). The last three years of secondary school (9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup>) witness further changes in the distribution of hours in favor of national history: 1 hour per week goes to teaching General history (32 hours per year) and 2 hours a week are devoted to the history of Azerbaijan (68 hours).

School narratives on the history of Azerbaijan are, of course, focused on constructing the images of “others”. This is the central and the most important part of the ethno-historical model of the past, around which the teaching of history at schools is organized. Its reasons should be sought in the Karabakh (Armenian-Azerbaijan) conflict which was intensifying parallel to Azerbaijan acquiring independence and finally turned into a permanent antagonism. Besides, we should bear in mind that

---

4 Mahmudlu, Y., Halilov, R., Agaev, S. Homeland. 5<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, Baku, “Takhsil”, 2003, p. 7.

the process of acquiring independence occurred at the time when different republics started to secede from the Soviet Union, the state that was a mere continuation of the Russian Empire, modern Russia being its successor. Subsequently, the “image of others” incorporates the image of Russia as well, whereas inter-allied relations between the Russian Federation and Armenia strengthen negative sentiments towards it in the post-Soviet era. Certain negative stereotypes emerge in describing the relations with Iran as well, as South Azerbaijan and a considerable number of ethnic Azerbaijanis, representing a discriminated ethnic minority, are commonly perceived as part of Iran.

## IMAGES OF “OTHERS”

And still, it is possible to single out the basic thesis, consisting of the fact that pivotal in the “image of others” is primarily Armenia and Armenians. However, as I will try to illustrate this further by specific examples from the textbooks, quite often Russians also appear in the same image. In addition, we can trace a certain collective image of Armenians and Russians, often marked out by their confessional unity. During the Middle Ages this collective image is augmented by Georgians and Byzantines. As a result, a construct appears that can be described as others/”historical enemies” vs. “Christians”, or, according to the authors of the textbooks, vs. the “Christian coalition”. In view of the fact that the contemporary Azerbaijani nation described by the authors is projected into deep antiquity and is seen as continuously existing since ancient times, the ethnic/confessional incompatibility and enmity described in the textbooks also spreads on to the whole reconstruction period of the existence of the community/ethnos, or, at least, on to a very long span of time. Finally, adding on Persia/Iran we get, in fact, the complete list of major images of “others”.

This approach to describing the regional neighbors has been identified in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade textbook (first year of history instruction at school). It is described as “History of the Homeland” and not Azerbaijan, and the contents of the textbook can be described as extremely emotional. Naturally, the texts describing confrontations and oppositions with “others” look markedly emotional. The motif of self-sacrifice for the welfare of the motherland is one of the central themes of the textbook. Thus, for example, in the section: “Those living for the Homeland add to its glory”, only a small part is dedicated to the men of art, the account being predominantly about heroes – warriors, including the personages that have been well-known to the readers since Soviet times such as: Babek, Kerogli, and Shah Ismail Hatai – leaders of the revolt against the Arab Caliphate and Ottoman Empire. Significant parts of the texts are dedicated to patriotic education. For example, events in the dastan “Dada

Gorgud” are interpreted exactly in this spirit of continuous heroic opposition with “others”. “Dada Gorgud” is by far not an exception; other legendary events and epics are similarly interpreted. Through these textbooks, the world is constructed and divided into hostile civilizations<sup>5</sup>.

Texts glorify, for example, the heroism of “our ancestor Uruz”<sup>6</sup> without ever attempting to explain the quintessence of the events in the dastan, mentioning only that he accepted a horrible death to save his mother from falling prey to the enemy. At the same time, the concepts “mother” and “Homeland” appear interchangeable (as in the Soviet construct “our Homeland is our mother”). Further on (in the textbook for the first year of history instruction), without any reasonable explanation of how the mother of the hero of this Turkish epic could still get into the hands of the enemy, the author describes the episode of her (Burla Hatun) agreeing to eat roast cooked from her son’s flesh. She did this “in order to save her reputation. ... Her heart was ready to burst out of grief, because the roast was cooked from his son Uruz’ flesh, but the reputation of the Mother, the reputation of the homeland is ever more dear. Burla Hatun personifies honour and bravery. Remembrance of that fact is also part of the concept Homeland”<sup>7</sup>.

At this point, the image of the enemy is not yet accentuated; it is still sketchy. Moreover, no reference is found in one of the central topics of that part, the story of Uruz, as to who was the cruel person treating him and his mother so brutally. Similarly, Cyrus Acaemenid’s army and Arabs are mentioned without directly ascribing to them the features of “others”/“enemies”. Likewise, instances of collisions are described, but the authors do not oblige to explain the reasons or indicate the time when they occurred. And still, the contours of discourse about the image of “others” start to show. Moreover, as the above quotation makes it obvious, we should always be aware of “others” (the images of “others” in the textbooks are, as a rule, the images of “enemies”) and expect their arrival. The image of “others” is an indivisible part of the conceptualization of the Homeland, as it is exactly “our Homeland – our Mother” that should be protected from continuous encroachments by “others”.

In the very next section of the textbook we learn more about the “others” although images are still extremely washed out and emotional. At the same time, differences between the representatives of the unified ethnic community (Oghuz Turks) are presented by the authors as a tremendous tragedy. The underlying confessional

---

5 See also: Rumyantsev, S. Heroic Epic and Constructing the Image of a Historic Enemy//Kazan, p. 466, (441–468).

6 Mahmudlu, Y, Xalilov, R., Agaev, S. Homeland. 5<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, p. 8.

7 Ibid., p. 9.

reason of the conflicts also shows itself. It should be emphasized, at the same time, that differences between “brothers”, implying all Turks, are exclusively a result of the intrigues plotted by the enemies (“conspiracy theory”). The intrigues are discernable even in the split of the Muslim Umma into Shias and Sunnis. “Malefactors – **‘the faithless dressed in black’** who had been acting against us since the times of Dada Gorgud broke our unity and split us from the inside. Then the treacherous enemies thirsting out blood started to breed strife inside our sacred faith... **Brothers in blood – children of one mother and one father started to call each other “Sunni” and “Shia”, waged a deadly religious war.** Brothers were up in arms against each other because of the intrigues and plots of the old enemies”<sup>8</sup>.

These discords are shown, for instance, through Sultan Selim’s (Ottoman Empire) collision with Shah Hatai Safavid in the 15<sup>th</sup> c. (who according to the Azerbaijani historians created the “Safavid Azerbaijan”, whereas according to the European historians Shah Hatai Safavid was head of the Dynasty ruling the Persian Empire). It should be admitted though that the antagonism between the Safavid and Ottoman Empires were really due to religious rifts. But the texts do not show clearly who those others/enemies causing the religious schisms were. Suffice it to mention that Shah Ismail Hatai was apparently a fanatical Shia. Even the Qizilbash were viewed as extreme fanatics at that time<sup>9</sup>.

Evidently, creating the image of a “perfidious enemy” was needed to avoid confusing pupils by Ismail Hatai’s criticism (the same textbook describes him as a person “who united all the lands of the country, created a unified, mighty, and centralized state, and granted the native language the right to be the state language of the Safavid Empire” ...<sup>10</sup>). But there is yet something else to it that merits attention, the textbook makes the first mention of the notorious ‘faithless dressed in black’ -one of the central moments around which the image of “others” is constructed. It is exactly this literary (“Dada Gorgud” dastan) designation of “others” that becomes pivotal for the first three years of history teaching. Not without reason is the phrase included, telling us that they had been already acting against us since the times of Dada Gorgud, which can, of course, be interpreted as a continuous antagonism lasting since the ancient times described in the dastan until the present day (post-Soviet Azerbaijan).

One of the most emotional sections in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade textbook is probably the Russian conquest of Azerbaijan. The conquerors are, however, mentioned only in

---

8 Ibid., p. 10.

9 For details on the Shia and Sunni antagonism see: Yunusov, A. Islam in Azerbaijan. Baku. “Zaman”. 2004. p. 69–88.

10 Mahmudlu, y. Halilov, R., Agaev, S. Homeland. 5<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, p. 9.



terms of territorial designates, such as: Russian and Iranian Azerbaijan. In contrast to this, so much more is said about Armenians. “With the purpose of creating a ‘reliable Christian state’ they started to resettle Armenians from all over the world onto the lands belonging to our homeland north of Arakx – in **Karabakh, Geiche, Zangezur, Erivan, Nakhchivan...** Created at first the Armenian region, and later the Armenian state on the lands of West Azerbaijan on which the Oghuz Dzhigits used to display their boldness racing on horseback...”<sup>11</sup> This is where the confessional (Christian) substance of the image of the enemy begins to appear.

Next, the 5<sup>th</sup> grade textbook gives an assessment of the events pertaining to the period of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan (1918–1920) – tragic events in Baku in March 1918 about 10 000 people died in the city because of the opposition between Musavatists and Dashnaks that turned into an ethnic massacre of Turks/Muslims. The events of the latest Armenian-Azerbaijani opposition – the Hodzhala city tragedy – are sited in the same row. Both tragedies are referred to as genocide. However, more important and interesting is not the appealing to facts but the manner in which the information is presented. Word combinations such as “treacherous aliens”, “conspirators and traitors”, “choked with blood”, “a new massacre”, “the lost pleasures of freedom” are actively used. This part is a kind of introduction to the history course that brings insight into who is “other” “to us” and who is “our own”.

Nevertheless, the logic behind the use of such designates can be understood through the search of the phenomenon of wars in the New time. “Our powerful imagination, like the imagination of our ancestors, remains limited when it comes to mobilizing people for killings and self-sacrifices. The necessary condition is still the dehumanization of the group defined as “enemy”. Biology uses a concept of pseudo-classification of species: inside one species, in our case the human species, the adversary is so portrayed that he becomes the enemy to his own species. This brings us eventually to justifying killing the enemy using methods that used to be unlawful and anti-humane before”<sup>12</sup>. Such is the case with the present poignant outcome of the antagonism following the truce in the Karabakh conflict.

The first detailed story describing the heroic resistance of the “ancestors/Azerbaijani to the “others” is linked with Cyrus Acaemenid’s story. In this case, we have Massagets (Scythian tribe by origin) acting as ancestors and the central part of the whole story is devoted to the legendary Queen Tomyris. All events are transferred from Central Asian territory, where, it seems, they really occurred, to

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Langevishe Diter. What does War Mean? Evolution of the phenomenon of war and its legitimacy in the New time. <http://abimperio.net/scgi-bin/aishow.pl?state=showa&idart=299&idlang>.

the Northern part of the present-day Azerbaijan. Massagets, according to the author of the textbook, lived on the “West coast of the Caspian Sea, to the North of the river Kura”<sup>13</sup>. We can skip the description of the events, but it would in no way be justified to sidestep the astonishing explanation and illustration depicting the moment of lowering Cyrus’ head into the wine-skin filled with blood. “The end of the sire, the blood-sucker, who dared dream so high as to conjugate our country”<sup>14</sup>.

This passage is a good testimony of how emotionally charged the textbooks are. It should be noted that the whole story about Cyrus II Acaemenid is, in fact, a legend. All we know about him is that he died around 530 B.C. and that this happened at the moment when he clashed with one of the Scythian tribes – Massagets. All these events are interesting due to the only fact that Cyrus, the creator of the first empire had, in fact, engineered his own death. The fighting was an ordinary boarder skirmish and dying under those circumstances for a person who had created the first empire in the world looks quite absurd. The story of Cyrus’ death very soon reached the Greeks who embellished the story with details that, very likely, had nothing to do with reality. But the authors of the textbooks, nevertheless, thought it important to allot the event considerable space. We think this serves two causes: to demonstrate what patriotism is and to add to the textbook a little of the gender balance showing that not only men but women heroes as well, continue the line of opposition against “others”.

It is absolutely natural that the images of “others” should also require a precise indication of how to treat those heroes that oppose them. From what was said above, it is obvious that very often we have, in such cases, to do it with identifying sacrificial motifs. Apparently, to bring at least a small sense of optimism into this sequence of unending sacrificial victims the authors sometimes resort to remarks like: “**Those who sacrificed their lives for the Homeland and the freedom of the nation, and died for the right cause shall not be forgotten**”<sup>15</sup>. The cited phrase refers to Babek, the leader of the rebellion against the Arab Caliphate that took place basically on the territory belonging to Iranian Azerbaijan in the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> c. His struggle against Arabs/Islam is demonstrated as a movement for freedom and independence for the country, implying, naturally, the present-day Azerbaijan.

It can be said, that the authors display uncertainty as to how to deal with some “heroes” of the Middle Ages. An example of this is Djavanshir, the ruler of Cau-

---

13 Mahmudlu, Y., Halilov, R., Agaev, S. Homeland. 5<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, p. 34.

14 Ibid., p. 36.

15 Ibid., p. 57.

casian Albania (formerly part of the present-day Azerbaijan) who was opposing Arabs<sup>16</sup>. They prefer to make no mention about his confessional adherence, even more so as the description of his death is followed by the account of the Arab conquests and, subsequently, of Islam. Religion (Islam) is described in exclusively tolerant tones, in agreement with the contemporary trends. Although, it should also be noted in favor of the authors that they do not assign the spread of Islam in Azerbaijan excessive space. However, they, in fact, translate contemporary terms into the 7<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> cc. usual practice.

Moreover, they are not at all confused by the incongruity of the assimilations of the kind and even commend recklessly with the minds and thoughts of those long sunk into oblivion. Not confused at all, they explain: “wise people understood that the spread of Islam in Azerbaijan could be a guarantee of political stability and national unity”<sup>17</sup>. Above their freedom to place the conceptualization of such a community as a nation at the close of the first millennium, they simply sidestep the explanation of how the actions of, say, the same Babek be interpreted. Because their logic suggests that he, being an indefatigable rival of Islam, followed the path of political stability and national unity. The authors eschewing to mention this fact, note, that Khurramites who struggled against the Arab Caliphate rejected only “some of the dogmas of Islam”<sup>18</sup>.

The very dogmas of Islam, by the way, are naturally not criticized. The narrative irrevocably follows the line aimed at separating Arabs (conquerors of Azerbaijan) from religion (Islam). It is probably from the necessity to somehow determine the place and role of Christians (because Albanians previously residing in the present Azerbaijani lands and considered as ancestors of the present-day Azerbaijani pe-

---

16 Djavanshir was one of the most significant representatives of the Mihranid Dynasty. The founder of the Dynasty is considered to be Mihran who was related in kinship with Sassanides, i.e. the dynasty itself was of Persian provenance. The authors of the textbook, however, in compliance with the line of their narrative, ascribe the dynasty to Sabir Turks, although not denying the kinship of its founder with the Shah Khosrov. He, according to Moses of Kalankatui had perfidiously murdered the rulers of 12 regions and obtained dominance over the country. The authors make no mention of Djavanshir's (616–681) perfidiousness, however, gladly inform about his heroism indicating the same author in the footnote. He (continuation of the footnote) became known for his participation in the struggle against the Arabs. His detachments were among the Sassanidian army of Iezdigerd III. He himself was Christian, but Christianity is something the authors eschew to speak about stressing that it wasn't widely-spread and that the majority like “all Turks” worshiped the Sun, the Moon, Water etc., and the common “God of Turks the Great Tanra” (Mahmudlu, Y., Yusifov, U., Aliev, R., Godjaev, A. History of Azerbaijan. 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. p. 40). In 681 he fell victim to the conspiracy plotted against him by local, Albanian, evidently pro-Byzantine Princes.

17 Mahmudlu, Y., Yusifov, U., Aliev, R., Godjaev, A. History of Azerbaijan. 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. TAHSIL, Baku. 2001. p. 67.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

ople are recognized as followers of that religion) in the constructed system of historical narrative that compels the authors to single out the passage: “Disloyalty of the privileged and, most importantly, treachery on the part of the representatives of the high nobility professing Christianity, and their support for Arabs brought about the defeat in the war”<sup>19</sup>. Only this reason is formulated very strongly and uncompromisingly from among many reasons of the defeat listed, among them: Caliphate winning Turks over to its side and inequality of forces. Subsequently, the image of “others” is being constructed all the time, even when this is done indirectly, through confessional adherence as one of its most important features.

And still, the central image for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks is linked with those notorious “faithless dressed in black”, which we are going to discuss at length. As noted above, ethno-linguistic grounds for this image are not laid from the very outset. However, the authors comment about the strange enemies already in the sections of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade textbook dedicated to the “Dada Gorgud” epic: “Pages of this saga abound in descriptions of the heroism of the Azerbaijani people. It is a clear depiction of the struggle of our people against Armenian and Georgian feudal lords and their patrons. In the saga, Armenian and Georgian feudal lords and their patrons are alluded to as **‘faithless dressed in black’**”<sup>20</sup>. The authors of the textbook not baffled at all by the legendary character of the events described in the epic (a really wonderful mediaeval piece of literature), allow themselves to bring it as a justification of the virtually permanent enmity between Christians and Muslims (how then should we understand the dichotomy “we Turks – they faithless”) not seeing any disconnection whatsoever between the two notions: Turks and Muslims.

As to who those faithless are in terms of Turks remains undisclosed, as the notion – Muslims is not yet introduced as the marker of Oghuz Turks, the protagonists in the epic. Nevertheless, the “Dada Gorgud” epic proves, according to the authors, “that at that time the Georgian and Armenian rulers and other “faithless” hoped that Turks would weaken themselves by exterminating each other. Therefore they sought out to set Turk brave men against each other”<sup>21</sup>. Then the authors finally bring the entire understanding of the situation to confusion by noting “when the Oghuz people would find themselves in a difficult situation they would resort to Tanri, linking their hopes with Allah – “the one who created the world out of nothing”. In the dire days they would “carry outside the Sacred Book” – Koran, put their hands on it and swear. This shows the Oghuz people had already been converted to Islam”<sup>22</sup>.

---

19 Ibid., p. 86.

20 Mahmudlu, Y., Halilov, R., Agaev, S. Homeland. 5<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, p. 66.

21 Ibid., p. 67.

22 Ibid., p. 69.

No explanation is provided as to how the simultaneous reference to Tanri, on the one hand, and Allah with the Koran, on the other, could be interpreted. Next, it is asserted that, finally, on the basis of Islam, religious unity was formed. Now other, non-Turk, Muslims also fought alongside Turks. Still sticking to the narrative style of the epic, the authors note with relief that **“Finally a unified Azerbaijani Nation had been formed”**<sup>23</sup>. And, finally, having explained that the customs of the Oghuz people became the norm for all the Azerbaijanis, they bring as an example only one adage, albeit, very eloquent: **“An old enemy cannot become a friend”**<sup>24</sup>.

The faithless dressed in black appear in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade textbook in the form of a collective image several more times until they completely blend with Armenians alone. For example, the authors note that the mutiny of the “Armenian bandits” in Karabakh in 1920 pursued one goal: to cause the Azerbaijani to pull their army from the Northern borders and leave the country unprotected right before the invasion of the 11<sup>th</sup> Red Army. “Consequently, the Armenians reached their goal – an Azerbaijani army was forwarded to Karabakh, which resulted in the Northern borders of Azerbaijan being left unprotected. “The faithless dressed in black” committed their black deed again...”<sup>25</sup>.

At last the image is finally shaped and we see it as a version of the “conspiracy theory” – “the conspiracy” against the Azerbaijani people, “its statehood”, and “the Turk-Muslim unity”, an organization of which goes deep into centuries. “Throughout many centuries the hostile to us “faithless dressed in black” – Armenians and their patrons have been contriving all kinds of base schemes”<sup>26</sup>. And only in 1995 through the adoption of the Constitution that secured the name of the country and the status of the Azerbaijani language as a state language, something that was made possible only thanks to the genius of the president Heidar Aliev, the plans of these “faithless” awarded already by an almost mystical power were ruined. “In that way the plans of the “faithless dressed in black” wanting to bring a rift in the Turkish-Muslim unity of the peoples of Azerbaijan were crashed”.

As noted above, that dreadful enemy emerges once again before the 7<sup>th</sup> grade pupils, which is easily explained as the textbook describes the period in which the famous epic was created. This textbook devotes it a whole section headlined as: “Depicting the struggle of our nation against the “giaours dressed in black” in the epic”<sup>27</sup>. Certain transformation of the signifier attracts attention: now they are no longer “faithless” but “giaours”. The authors observe again that this is what

---

23 Ibid., p. 69.

24 Ibid., p. 69.

25 Ibid., p. 211.

26 Ibid., p. 295.

27 Mahmudlu, Y., Yusifov, U., Aliev, R., Godjaev, A. History of Azerbaijan. 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. p. 173.

Byzantine, Armenian, and Georgian feudal lords were called back then, who in those times (apparently we are dealing with the period when the epic was created) “tried to set Turks against each other, conducting the policy of their self-extermination”<sup>28</sup>.

So, the course of advancing the century-old theory of “others” conspiring against the Azerbaijani people set forth from the very first year of history instruction continues. At the same time, the authors announce further, neglecting the absurdity of rendering information in such a way, that “In order to bring their sinister goals to fruition they set Kipchak Turks against Oghuz Turks and even tried to bring Oghuz Turks against each other”<sup>29</sup>. Apparently, wanting to go beyond a merely descriptive account of the material, the authors freely continue to build the line of “conspiracy” into the future. “This policy of “giaours” subsequently expanded and became more systematic. West European rulers managed to set Timur against Ildyrym Bayazit; Uzun Hasan against Sultan Mehmet Fatekh; Shah Ismail against Sultan Selim; and, Shah Takhmasib against Sultan Suleiman Ganuni. As a result, mutual antagonism of the great Turkish monarchs declined the overall power and might of the Turkish world”<sup>30</sup>. Thus, secondary school pupils have before their eyes a picture of a gross century-old antagonism of the great Turkish empires as a result of the conspiracies organized against them by “Christian Rulers”. Driving these observations to a logical end, it can be confidently assumed that all those sultans and shahs were toys in the hands of the “perfidious” (this adjective is so loved by the authors of the textbooks) and “ill-intentioned” Armenians, Georgians, and other Christians who were in alliance with them. All this is not reproduced through critical and thorough selection of material and retrospective repositioning of the present-day Armenian-Azerbaijani opposition in the realm of events occurring in the Middle Ages.

Opposed to this, it should be noted that “giaours” or the notorious “faithless dressed in black” – are Kipchaks about whose antagonism with Oghuz the authors remember only once and exclusively to illustrate treacherous acts of the representatives of the “Christian alliance”. Oghuz people, whose origins are traced in Central Asia, from where they moved to Anatolia and to the territory of the present-day Azerbaijan, created the epic as a verbal tradition that describes enemies of the Oghuz people of that particular period. Only later, when the Oghuz people’s relations with the outer world changed to some extent as a result of their long-term presence in the territory of Asia Minor as well as the change in “others”, Kipchaks were replaced by Christians, notably, primarily Georgians and not Armenians.

---

28 Ibid., p. 176.

29 Ibid., p. 176.

30 Ibid., p. 176.

However, the authors, in line with the present political realities, still recall the antagonism with Georgians and still prefer to speak about the collision with Armenians. Legendary events are presented as occurring in reality. A long-term study of the epic that has reached our days in the form of a sole 16<sup>th</sup> c. manuscript brought the experts to the conclusion that the events pertaining to the political history described in it are for the most part mythical. The epic deserves interest more as a work of literature and a source that is colorfully reproducing a society basically patriarchal although with some elements of feudalism, as well as nomadic life of the Oghuz people, rather than a source of political history. Consequently, interpretations of myths and epics can have an obvious impact on the construction of the ethnocentric version of Azerbaijan's history.

As to other aspects of the image of the enemy, it is markedly Russians and Iranians that constitute it. The former disturbed the peace of the Azerbaijani people in the 10<sup>th</sup> c. when several raids of the Slavs and the Russ (Vikings) really took place (in 910, 914, and 944) on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan. The authors give preference to Slavs, of course, with whom modern Russians are immediately associated. In order to achieve the desired effect the authors operate with big numbers. Twenty thousand is the number of the killed though an absolutely unreal figure for it was by far not the biggest mediaeval city. Moreover, if the 5<sup>th</sup> grade textbook lists the Slavs in a smaller number, in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook they appear to exceed in number the defenders of the city itself. In the same exactly way, the textbook initially tells only about the seizure of Barda in 944, while the 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook informs about the "Barda tragedy".

Finally, in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, the images of "others" acquire completely contemporary meaning. Russians and Armenians interlock into one force encumbering the prosperity of Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani Turks. According to the authors, in order to resist Peter the I's expansionist plans, the local population asked for assistance from the Osmanli, both the Shia and the Sunni. But there was some force that prevented the Osmanli in their striving to assist. That force, naturally, was Armenians. Exactly from this point and on, Armenians in the images of "others" are seen already as akin to "the fifth column". This is yet another contradiction in terms, as the authors deny the existence of massive Armenian communities on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan until it joined the USSR. Actually, at this point they are quite close to the truth. So "...Armenians as mates of the Tsarism had immediate relations with Russia and promised it their assistance in subjugating the South Caucasus, including other regions of Azerbaijan as well"<sup>31</sup>.

---

31 Mamedov, S., Valiev, T., Godjaev, A. History of Azerbaijan. 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Baku. Bakhsil. 2002. p. 52.

The authors maintain that the conspiracy plots against Azerbaijan were planned exactly in those years. From Peter the Great's time, who for some reason in terms of this is alluded to as a "reactionary King", Armenians had been resettling on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan under his personal order. This resulted in the expulsion of the local population from their places of residence. But at that time, the Russian army was ordered to leave and the mass resettlements didn't take place. Sometimes and somewhat casually, the authors feel bound to inform that the semi-independent Khanates formed in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. had special relations with Russia, very often in the form of unions. But attention, naturally, is not accentuated on this. If in the Soviet period every reason was sought to underscore the voluntary basis for joining the USSR, now everything is described in the opposite direction.

The whole rather complex spectrum of relations between the Khanates and Russian, Persian, and Ottoman Empires is markedly simplified. In general terms everything looks like this: Iran and Russia sought out to divide the territories among themselves, by the way, that was the case in reality; Iran had no chances to establish its dominance (prior to this, joining Russia was considered to be the lesser evil) – this argument looks to be a rather "weak link" in the chain of judgments; only friendly Turkey (Ottoman Empire) could have helped us and it would have done so if not for the "fifth column" (Armenians). "Iran and the Ottoman Empire under the existing circumstances did not represent a serious threat to the independence of Azerbaijan"<sup>32</sup>. At the same time, the authors state with a certain bitterness that Agha Muhammed Khan Qajar (1742–197), who wanted to expand the Persian Empire by adding to it the Azerbaijani khanates "... was from the Turkish tribe of Qajars by origin and Turkish tribes played a leading role in his career. His state encompassed the lands of Iran and he struggled for the creation of the Iranian state"<sup>33</sup>.

Finally, in the advent of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. the first personage whom the authors decided to bring to the pupils' attention was a Russian commander-in-chief inciting their extreme resentment. "In order to implement its plans of subjugating the whole South Caucasus, Russia appointed prince Tsitsianov, a wicked and ruthless enemy of the Azerbaijani people, as Commander-in-chief of its army in the Caucasus"<sup>34</sup>.

It is interesting that at the moment of the seizure of Gyanja, to which the textbooks devote many emotional lines, correspondence was exchanged between Tsitsianov (ethnic Georgian) and Djavad Khan regarding the issue of the city for-

---

32 Ibid., p. 171.

33 Ibid., p. 156.

34 Ibid., p. 174.



merly belonging to Georgia. Djavad Khan and his army, by the way, showed real heroic resistance to the Russian army. However, “local Armenians, always notorious for their “deceitfulness” emerge again...”<sup>35</sup>. Their horrible treachery consisted of the fact that two Armenians captured by the Russian troops shortly before the seizure of the city informed them that the city was waiting impatiently for the Russian army to arrive. How this fact could have helped Russians to seize Gyanja is not explained. The explanation is given only after the description of the seizure of the city. “Armenians displayed their meanness until the last moment. A historian N. Dubrovin notes that “... up to 500 Tatars (Azerbaijani) stayed in the mosque... but one Armenian told our soldiers that several Dagestani Lezghins were among them. The very mentioning of Lezghins signaled death to all those sheltering in the mosque”<sup>36</sup>. And again we cannot see any explanation of the reasons for the pathological hatred of the Lezghins. We could only imagine what pupils’ minds could be construing after reading those lines, especially those identifying themselves as Lezghins.

Considerable space is taken up by the relationship between “close friends A. P. Ermolov and the Armenian General V. Madatov” – an Armenian and not Russian. At times we derive an impression that it was exactly him who had the key role in subjugating Azerbaijan. At the same time, it is exactly in this specific case that the characteristic feature of the narrative is displayed. Facts or events are mentioned extremely reluctantly, casually, waxed, in such a way that they don’t fit in to the authors’ construct, something that makes us think that the authors were experiencing a certain internal struggle with themselves. They would probably be happy not to mention those events but their professional consciousness does not allow them to act otherwise. And they make mention of Madatov’s trial for illegal annexation of Karabakh lands. However, history does not stand still, and the authors easily find a substitute to Madatov in the face of the Armenian population as a whole. “The Azerbaijani community of Erevan struggled fiercely and courageously. But again the betrayal of Armenians had its part in deciding the fate of the battle. They opened the Northern gates of the fortress and let the Russians in”<sup>37</sup>. Thus, “Russian” dominance was installed and looting Azerbaijan began. Since then Armenians have played a noticeable role in the history of Azerbaijan, and whole sections in the textbook are allotted to their resettlement on these territories.

It should be said, nevertheless, that mass resettlements did take place. As a result, the 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook describes these events as follows: “Formation of the

---

35 Ibid., p. 179.

36 Ibid., p. 181.

37 Ibid., p. 214.

Armenian state on the territory of Azerbaijan was a plan Russia had long cherished. Therefore resettlement of Armenians from Turkey and Iran in the occupied regions of North Azerbaijan was not accidental”<sup>38</sup>. It is emphasized that Griboedov, a central figure in the story with the resettlement, demanding the abolition of punishments for those who “... committed acts of treason in favor of Russia. The thing is that almost all who helped the Russian army and served it as guides during the occupation of Azerbaijani lands by the Russian army were, as a matter of fact, Armenians”<sup>39</sup>. Naturally no mention is made of Azerbaijani Turks serving in the Russian army, this fact apparently hiding behind a very meaningful “almost”. But this is not of primary concern, what really matters most in this case is a very clearly expressed retrospective transposition of what the authors as great supporters of primordial ideas perceive as patriotism and feeling of national solidarity into the essentially feudal society. The heroic Khan of Ganja, heading the defense of the city, becomes Azerbaijan’s national hero, and not a Khan struggling to retain his power. Attention is constantly turned to the demolition of the institution of statehood, but only in Azerbaijan with the present-day implication and not in every single khana-  
te as a separate unit.

We should add to the discussions about patriotism and treachery the description of the life and work of, for example, Bakihanov A. A., a person whom we would normally list among professional historians and who, apparently, thanks to the academician Zia Buniatov’s benevolence, is commonly considered as father of Azerbaijan historiography, something that looks paradoxical in the background of the general ethnocentric hermeneutic model. “Invited by A. P. Ermolov in 1829 he started his service in the Russian Army. As a military man, Bakihanov took part in the wars with Iran and Turkey in 1826–1829 (i.e. subjugation of Azerbaijan, author.), and served as a translator at peaceful negotiations in Turkemenchai”<sup>40</sup>. Bakihanov is undoubtedly a positive image whose service to the Russian Empire the authors, however, prefer not to emphasize.

Overall, the material is so presented as to show that Azerbaijani scientists and artisans of that time (19<sup>th</sup> c.) had obtained all their achievements in spite of the actions of the tsarist Russia. The idea that we would, unquestionably, have attained immeasurably greater success in this field if we hadn’t lost independence, is vaguely conveyed. “As seen from above, – the authors state with a certain amount of pride, – in spite of the burdensome colonial regime, science in Azerbaijan in the first

---

38 History of Azerbaijan. 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook for schools of general education. Gen. ed. Tofik Veliev. Baku. Chashioglu. 2004. p. 10.

39 Ibid., p. 12.

40 Ibid., p. 103.

half of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. had made a step forward, the ground was created for its further development and towards greater achievements”<sup>41</sup>. In reality, the appearance of the first scientists in the contemporary sense of the term was made possible exactly as a result of Azerbaijan’s inclusion in the Russian empire. This reflects the entire complexity of the process. European education became available after joining the Empire, when, albeit slowly, the stratum of intellectuals started to emerge; they were later called the representatives of the national intelligencia. In terms of this, it is interesting that the culture of South Azerbaijan is viewed as completely isolated from the Iranian culture, of which it undoubtedly was part.

Out of two other aspects that merit our attention, the first is related to the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan (DRA) in 1918–1920. One of the most interesting moments of this period is a massacre of the Azerbaijani, or more precisely of Muslims, in Baku in late 1918 organized by Bolsheviks headed by Stepan Shaumyan. The fact that the military formations that conducted the operation aimed at spreading havoc among Muslims, and that had cost the lives of thousands of Azerbaijani citizens were to a great extent made up by ethnic Armenians is undeniable. By president Aliev’s decree of 26.03.1998, March 31 was declared the day of the Azerbaijani people’s genocide. The 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook cites the full text of the decree (pp. 17–18). However, what attracts our attention is not this fact but the words belonging to one of the DRA leaders M. E. Rasulzade dedicated to genocide.

But at that time nobody was assessing the tragedy as genocide. This case of placing Rasulzade’s name next to the term genocide is another lucid example of the retrospective transposition that the authors are invariably practicing. They state: “M. E. Rasulzade characterized the 1918 genocide as a national and political factor...”, but in the cited abstract of his speech the events are not termed as genocide. It was even impossible to do so. Many interesting episodes can be linked with the DRA period but our attention goes to one more fact. The authors are listing the reasons that caused the collapse of the republic, and, surprisingly enough, the uprising of the Armenian community of Karabakh is only the fifth out of seven factors leading to the collapse. “Losing defense capability at the North borders of Azerbaijan was caused by the fact that parts of the National Army were moved to Nogorno Karabakh right before the assault of the 11<sup>th</sup> Red Army in order to suppress the “ordered” (wonderfully selected and quite up-to-date term) uprising and fight the military expansion of Armenia which claimed Azerbaijani lands”<sup>42</sup>. The authors speak about the DRA national army capacity; describe the suppression of the

---

41 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

42 History of Azerbaijan. 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook for schools of general education.// Group of authors, Gen. Ed. Seifeddin Gandilov and Isaak Mamedov. Baku. Chashioglu. 2002. p. 75.

uprising in Mugani (1919) and fighting Armenian formations. Everything is presented as though the DRA army was capable of successfully resisting the subjugation of the country. Naturally, there is no mention of General S. Mekhmandarov's (minister of the Military at 25 December 1928) clear-cut remark addressing people in front of Parliament shortly before the occupation. When asked a question by Rasulzade about the military capacity of the army he answered that it would not be able to repulse even one single Russian battalion. There was no chance of warding off the attacks of the Soviet army. And the reason should be sought not in the uprising in Karabakh but in the weakness of the first Republic.

The 1998 official commemoration, nonetheless, terms these events on behalf of the President as genocide; and it is this motif that the authors bring out in the textbooks. The textbook for the first year of history instruction builds the narrative around 10 or 15 Azerbaijanis having a conversation. One of them says something that doesn't seem radical enough to another and the latter pronounces the following tirade:

“One of the young men angrily interrupted the speaker: – But how can we tolerate seeing Armenians dawdling in the city and doing whatever they want? Armenian government is disarming you on your own land and is ready to exterminate the whole nation. What name could be given to this? The man who spoke before responding to the young man said: – This is genocide. If the government is deliberately killing people living on its own territory, it is called **genocide**<sup>43</sup>. They want to put an end to the existence of our nation”<sup>44</sup>.

Subsequently, pupils get the explanation of genocide in a playful manner. Children may have some confusion as to why the Armenian government is mentioned. However, in the context of the current conflict, the 5<sup>th</sup> grade pupils may be capable of understanding the overall situation in simple terms and, it may well be, that they simply would not even have any unnecessary questions.

The theme recurs again in the pages of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook dealing with the same period. In it, the whole section 2 is dedicated to the March 1918 events marked as “Genocide of the Azerbaijanis in March 1918”. With the exception of several extraordinary instances that go to casuistics, like “Armenian Dashnaks” (maybe the authors are aware of the existence of non Armenian Dashnaks) otherwise it is a reproduction of the discourse we are already familiar with. The novelty concerns explicit allusion to the fact that “Having declared at the Baku session held on March 15

---

43 It should be noted that the term “genocide” was first used in 1844 by a lawyer Raphael Lemkin. Later in 1948, the Convention on Genocide Prevention and the Measures Against it was unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly. Therefore, the precise definition of the event as genocide by a mediocre citizen of Baku in 1918 looks extremely made up.

44 Mahmudlu, Y., Halilov, R., Agaev, S. Homeland. 5<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. Baku. “Tahsil”. 2003. p. 201–202.

that “The Baku Soviet should become the major stronghold in the South Caucasus”, Shaumyan, in fact, issued the command to start the genocide of the Azerbaijanis”<sup>45</sup>.

As to N. Narimanov, an ethnic Azeri and member of the same Soviet, his depiction is, of course, positive; he is seen filled with indignation that Armenians – the Dashnaks “do not spare not only males but also pregnant women”<sup>46</sup>. The final outcome of the events was the massacre of the Azerbaijanis not only in Baku but also in a significant part of its territory. “As a result of the March genocide 12 000 people were killed only in Baku. The brutality of the Bolshevik-Dashnak units spread beyond Baku. They continued to massacre Azerbaijanis in Gubinsk, Salyansk, and Lenkoran districts (uyezds). Dashnak groups headed by S. Lalayan and T. Amirov had been committing bloody crimes against the peaceful population of Shemahi from the 3rd until the 16<sup>th</sup> of April. In the Baku province the genocide of the Muslims (Azerbaijanis) persisted until mid 1918. Throughout that time over 20 000 Azerbaijanis were exterminated”<sup>47</sup>. The authors consider it necessary to bring the estimate of victims and finalize the picture, as noted above, by The decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan: “On the Genocide of the Azerbaijani People”<sup>48</sup>.

Apparently, it should commonly be thought that the official decree, singling out the March events from among the rest, creates, at its mentions, the sensation of a universal verdict. It is no longer a subject of discussion, but an official law. This might be attempting to explain the fact that citing the whole text of a decree, as in several instances when we find them inserted in the texts dedicated to the commemoration of the events of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, is almost perceived to be a good form.

Descriptions of the resistance in the early 20<sup>th</sup> c. are good examples for a historian describing the present state of affairs to show how events from the past are retrospectively reflected in interpretations. Hence, Armenia, the present rival, is attributed a great deal of attention and the relations appear, as a rule, in the imagery of “The struggle against Armenian aggression” when “the necessity to determine the borders of the newly formed states arose”<sup>49</sup>. At the same time, relations in the field of foreign policy as regards other neighbors in the region represent either the “Treaty with Turkey on Peace and Friendship” (major regional ally at present) or the “Peaceful settlement of territorial disputes”, e. g., with the neighboring Georgia (another ally)<sup>50</sup>.

---

45 History of Azerbaijan. 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook for schools of general education. p. 11.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 14–15.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 17–18.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

The second aspect brings us back to the events of the recent years. We think it worthwhile to quote a whole abstract from the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook headlined “Azerbaijan on the verge of the 21<sup>st</sup> c. Outcomes and lessons”. That abstract in a way sums up all the endeavors of the authors questing for the most important “other”. All empires seeking to subjugate Azerbaijan used “Armenian nationalism” as a means to the end. It was exactly the Armenian nationalists, as we find out, that “... were sparing of offering everyone their services. Supported by Russians and European protectors (who the latter are is absolutely not clear, up to this point not a word was said about them. Author), Armenians who settled on the lands of the Azerbaijani people as early as in the 19<sup>th</sup> c. (earlier the authors alluded to their migration in Peter the Great’s time. Author) started to implement the policy of “national massacre” and the like (the last word combination, undoubtedly, looks like an innovation. Author).”

Summing up the analyses of the images of “others” in Azerbaijani history textbooks, it should also be noted that throughout the whole course of history these constructs are invariably accompanied by the perception about the Azerbaijani people as being autochthonous and having contributed substantially to culture. Following the path of the authors’ thoughts, one should cherish homeland above life “Because our homeland is not just some patch of land, some territory, but one of the most ancient cultural centers on our planet”. The ancient origins of the Azerbaijani “ethnos”/ nation are extrapolated back as far as the Paleolithic period. So, immediately after mentioning the findings of the remains of primitive man in the Azykh cave, the present-day Azerbaijan territory, without specifying the exact date, just stating that the age of the “Azykh man” amounts to “hundreds of thousands of years” follows meaningfully that “My own, my own, my great Azerbaijani nation is one of the ancient residents of Europe, one of the most ancient nations of the world! Live and prosper, my land – my first and eternal ancient homeland – Azerbaijan, the land with hundreds of thousands of years of history!”

In the 6<sup>th</sup> grade textbook (the second year of instruction) the authors turn to the problem of linguistic affiliation of Azerbaijanis to antiquity. This is by far not spontaneously done since the linguistic (“Turkish”) component is an extremely important factor in modern Azerbaijani nationalism. “People of Azerbaijan speak different languages. But since ancient times the indigenous and basic population has been Turkish-speaking”<sup>51</sup>. The history of the “Primitive Society” is drawn out into a permanent process of the making of a one-and-a-half-million population, in the coun-

---

51 Aliev, V., Iusifov, Y., Babaev, I., Djafarov, I., Mamedoba, A. History of Azerbaijan. 6<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. Baku. “Tahsil”. 2003. p. 7.

try's territory. "The formation of the contemporary human being i.e. "thinking man" in the territory of Azerbaijan was completed in the Upper Paleolithic period"<sup>52</sup>.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above analysis of the textbooks, we persistently recommend reexamining the images of "others" described in them. The images or concepts of "others" in Azerbaijani history textbooks can often be characterized as rather aggressive dividing the world strictly between "our own" and "alien". Similar hermeneutic models noticeably diverge from the policy of integration into the unified European space declared by the political regime of the country, which, apparently, should be accompanied by the processes of regional integration. Unfortunately, for the moment, the textbooks remain oriented on forming fixed perceptions about the world as divided by virtually impenetrable borders. The images of "others" apparently serve the purpose of consolidating the resources for mobilizing the country's citizens in conflict situations (including potentially military conflicts), rather than focusing their activities on real democracy, peaceful development, and striving to integrate into European space.

Subsequently, the texts in the textbooks need drastic revision. The revision must require lifting the monopoly on the development and use of textbooks, which are written by only one group of authors comprising employees of state institutions (predominantly of the Academy of Sciences). A support program should also be worked out for different groups of experts (including representatives of non-governmental organizations) who could compile a series of alternative textbooks on the Azerbaijan history. The board of expert on school textbook selection should also comprise representatives of both state institutions and the civil society. The existing monopoly on the use of one textbook approved by the Ministry of Education, most likely should be abolished and the teachers should be granted the right to choose from among the alternative narratives that would have undergone expert evaluation.

## CONCLUSION

Summing up the analysis, it should be noted that the whole course of this history should be ascribed, as the authors assert, to the endeavors of the preceding president Heidar Aliev. It was him who started to pay special attention to "... consolidating the historical memory of the Azerbaijani people"<sup>53</sup>. Not sparing efforts for

---

52 Ibid., p. 18.

53 Ibid., p. 335.

this cause, “The president Heidar Aliev set the history scientists a goal to study Azerbaijan’s history, especially that of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries objectively and multilaterally”.

Our analysis shows how successfully the authors have dealt with the mission. As a closing note, we could only say that in the light of the examined images of “others”, the French researcher Francois Etien’s phrase: “Choosing a way to perpetuate the past the nation simultaneously chooses its own future....”<sup>54</sup> may sound prophetic. The future that the authors of the textbooks suggest is a state of permanent rivalry with the “olden” enemies. This is exactly what generations of pupils are fated if they study from these textbooks.

## THE LIST OF THE TEXTBOOKS

Mahmudlu, Y., Halilov, R., Agaev, S. Homeland. 5<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, Baku, “Takhsil”, 2003.

Aliev, V., Iusifov, Y., Babaev, I., Djafarov, I., Mamedova, A. History of Azerbaijan. 6<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. Baku. “Tahsil”. 2003.

Mahmudlu, Y., Yusifov, U., Aliev, R., Godjaev, A. History of Azerbaijan. 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. TAHSIL, Baku. 2001.

Mamedov, S., Valiev, T., Godjaev, A. History of Azerbaijan. 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Baku. Bakhsil. 2002.

History of Azerbaijan. 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook for schools of general education. General Editor Tofik Veliev. Baku. Chashioglu. 2004

History of Azerbaijan. 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook for schools of general education.// Group of authors, General Editor Seifeddin Gandilov and Isaak Mamedov. Baku. Chashioglu. 2002

---

54 Francois, Etien. “Places of Memory” in German: How to Write History? Round table materials: “Reflections on Memory, Empire and Nation”, Ab Imperio. <http://abimperio.net/scgi-bin/aishow.pl?state=showa&idart=893&idlang=2&C>.





# GEORGIA

Representation of “others”  
in the South Caucasus secondary  
school history textbooks

Nino Chikovani, Ketevan Kakitelashvili

In April 2005, Georgia adopted a new law on Education. Among other objectives it envisages unification of teaching history and geography of Georgia, as well as other social sciences throughout the country. This has led to working out new programs and creating new textbooks covering the above subjects.

What has brought about the necessity to reform the educational system in Georgia, and instruction in humanities and social sciences in particular?

It is generally known that teaching history in the Soviet era was based on the unified Soviet program. Corresponding textbooks were created in Moscow and then translated into the languages of the Soviet Union, the principle subject being the “History of the USSR”, although, World History was also taught. The only acceptable discourse at that time was Karl Marx’ Historical Materialism with an emphasis on class struggle and the ascending line of social and economic formations. Teaching History of Georgia was also allowed – indeed, according to the textbook approved by the Ministry of Education of the Soviet Union. However, the materials on the history of the USSR were so voluminous that only insignificant numbers of hours were allotted to national history. The quality of teaching, in fact, largely depended on the disposition and professionalism of the teacher. New textbooks on the history of Georgia were compiled during “Perestroika”. Their authors were renowned historians and the textbooks contained much more factual material, albeit, embodying again and again the same line of consecutive change of social and economic formations.

After attaining independence, Georgia came to face the need of compiling new textbooks of national as well as world history. Several textbooks were produced, all of them, however, seasoned in the spirit of positivist historiography, abounding in facts and heroic rhetoric. But there was yet another problem facing polyethnic Georgia: the methodology of teaching history in such countries, and the issue of how the roles that different ethnic groups played in the history of the country should be reflected. Seeking out answers was hard. The situation was compounded by post-Soviet era conflicts. Meanwhile, in the regions with compact ethnic minorities, teaching history was based on the textbooks supplied from ethnic homelands. As a result, the history of Georgia was, in fact, not even taught in those regions.

At present, Georgia has 2462 schools, of them 2215 public (state run) and 247 private. The number of pupils amounts to 576,619 for public and 38,449 for private schools, with overall 615, 068. The number of teachers is 68, 779 in public and 6, 713 in private schools, the overall number of teachers being 75492<sup>1</sup>.

Alongside Georgian schools, making up the majority, there are non-Georgian and mixed schools with several languages/sectors.

---

1 Based on the data of the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science for 2008. [www.mes.gov.ge](http://www.mes.gov.ge).

## Educational sectors



## Number of schools per capital city and regions

Regions	Public	Private	Total
Tbilisi	191	122	313
Ajara	236	21	257
Guria	98	3	101
Imereti	384	31	415
Kakheti	195	12	207
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	104	3	107
Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti	69	1	70
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	256	20	276
Samtskhe-Javakheti	208	1	209
Kvemo Kartli	272	17	289
Shida Kartli	183	16	199
Abkhazia – refugees	16		16

The number of non-Georgian and mixed schools with non-Georgian language sectors is 396. Pupils make up 124, 683, and teachers – 13,351. The majority of these schools is in the regions with compact ethnic minorities (Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli), although, schools with Ossetian sectors function outside the Tskhinvali region, namely in Kakheti, which has a considerable number of residents of Ossetian origin. It is also noteworthy that Georgia has several schools with mixed Ajerbijani-Armenian sectors.

## Distribution of non-Georgian and mixed schools according to regions<sup>2</sup>

### Tbilisi

68 schools (59/12)<sup>3</sup>, of them

Georgian-Russian	56
Russian	6
Armenian	2
Armenian-Russian	2
Georgian-Armenian-Russian	1
Georgian-Armenian-Azerbaijani	1

Pupils – 39 394

Teachers – 3 185

### Ajara

13 schools (10/3), of them

Georgian-Russian	12
Georgian-Armenian	1

Pupils – 9 756

Teachers – 992

### Guria

3 schools (3/10)

Georgian-Russian	3
------------------	---

Pupils – 1 827

Teachers – 168

### Imereti

7 schools (7/10)

Georgian-Russian	7
------------------	---

Pupils – 5 024

Teachers – 479

---

2 The authors are grateful to representatives of Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia Nino Gordeziani for her kindness to supply us with this information and Giorgi Zedginidze for his support throughout the work.

3 The brackets indicate the ratio of public schools to private schools.

## **Kakheti**

### **93 schools (93/0)**

Georgian-Russian	8
Russian	2
Azerbaijani	3
Georgian-Armenian	1
Georgian-Azerbaijani	7
Georgian-Ossetian	1
Georgian-Russian-Ossetian	2

Pupils– 8 400

Teachers – 819

## **Mtskheta-Mtianeti**

### **4 schools (4/0)**

Russian	3
Georgian-Russian	1

Pupils – 801

Teachers – 112

## **Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti**

### **5 schools (5/0)**

Georgian-Russian	5
------------------	---

Pupils – 3 855

Teachers – 367

## **Samtskhe-Djavakheti**

### **112 schools (112/0)**

Georgian-Russian	6
Russian	5
Georgian-Armenian	6
Armenian	95
Armenian-Russian	2

Pupils– 15 842

Teachers – 2 616

## **Kvemo Kartli**

### **154 schools (153/1)**

Georgian- Azerbaijan-Russian	2
Georgian- Russian	14
Georgian- Azerbaijani	12
Azerbaijani	90
Armenian	22
Russian	8
Azerbaijani-Armenian	2
Armenian-Russian	2
Azerbaijani- Russian	2

Pupils – 37 381

Teachers – 4 310

## **Shida Kartli**

### **2 schools (2/0)**

Georgian-Russian	2
------------------	---

Pupils – 1 235

Teachers – 114

## **Abkhasia – refugees**

### **1 school**

Georgian-Russian	1
------------------	---

Pupils – 319

Teachers – 28

The reform started in 2006 and initially covered the first grades (1<sup>st</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup>) of all the three levels of general education in Georgia<sup>4</sup>. Non-Georgian schools were engaged in the reforming process a year later. Therefore, the reform in Georgian schools is practically nearing its end (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> forms remain), while non-Georgian schools are running the third year of the reform.

The reform on teaching history involves the following goals:

Establishing a multi-perspective approach;

---

4 General education in Georgia includes primary (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade), basic (from 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade), and secondary (from 10 to 12 grade) levels.

Presenting history as an interpretation;  
Overcoming traditional national discourse;  
Shaping civic consciousness (inclusion of ethnic minorities in the history of Georgia).

History as a subject is at present taught in the grades from 5 to 12. The number of reformed Textbooks approved by the National Curriculum and Assessment Centre of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia amounts to 15<sup>5</sup> (grades from 7 to 12). The criteria require that textbooks be compiled in conformity with the national standard and then submitted to the above center for approval. Approval can be granted to more than one textbook and teachers are entitled to choose one from among them. The textbooks bearing the signature stamp are translated into all instruction languages.

Textbooks are published in Georgian by several publishing houses («Logos Press», «Sakartvelos Matsne», «Bakur Sulakauri publishing house», «Diogene»), 4 textbooks (for the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grades) have been translated into Russian, Azerbaijani, and Armenian. Textbooks are also compiled in Abkhazian and Ossetian. The latter are used in the conflict regions where local Ministries have been set up, including the Ministries of Education, which are not accountable to the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia but are controlled by the Separatist governments and eventually by Moscow. Since no dialogue is held between historians representing the conflict regions and the rest of the country, these textbooks are practically inaccessible for us.

### **The methodology of selecting textbooks for analysis**

Textbooks were selected on the basis of the following principles:

As several textbooks were available for the same grade, we selected those textbooks that had already been translated into the instruction languages of schools of Georgia (Russian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani); other textbooks of the same grades were analyzed with the purpose of comparison.

If translated textbooks were not available by the time of our analysis, we picked up those written by the authors of the pre-reform period; we then compared them with the textbooks compiled by the authors of the new generation.

Subsequently:

The textbooks for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades were not subject to analysis, as the reform did not concern them at that point.

There is only one 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook translated into Russian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani.

---

5 In some grades teachers can choose from among a variety of textbooks.



Three textbooks are available for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, out of which we selected two: one – translated into the aforementioned three languages, and the other written by the authors of the new generation.

For the 9<sup>th</sup> grade two textbooks were selected out of three available: one belonging to the authors of the pre-reform period, and the other – to the authors of the new generation.

Likewise, we selected two 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks out of three available: one translated into the noted languages, the other for the purpose of comparison.

The same with the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks – two selected out of three: one translated into Russian, the other – compiled by the pre-reform period authors.

Out of two textbooks available for the 12<sup>th</sup> grade the selected book belongs to the authors of the new generation who at the same time work as teachers at schools of general education.

As a result, the selected textbooks were either compiled or recast after the reform and translated into other instruction languages.

### **The principles of teaching history**

History falls within the subject group of social sciences. This group combines disciplines with similar objectives, content, and teaching methods, such as history, geography, and civic education. The primary objectives of this subject group are to provide knowledge and information enabling one to find his/her place in the world with regard to geographic, historical, religious, political, cultural, and ethnic realities; nurturing love for homeland; justice and respect for the law; developing adherence to principles and civil courage; assisting teenagers in working-out the ability to provide historical interpretation; respect and tolerance to one's own as well as others' cultures and their representatives; fostering respect for dignity and human rights.

“The National goals of general education” stipulate that the purpose of general education in Georgia is to create favorable conditions for shaping a free personality embodying national as well as universal human values, cultivating civic consciousness based on liberal and democratic principles. It is also pointed out that in the today's dynamic, ethnically and culturally diverse world the skills for mutual respect, mutual understanding, and mutual comprehension acquire a special significance vital for the society to function. Schools should nurture the feeling of respect for human rights and virtues which youngsters will avail themselves of in protecting their own as well as others' individuality<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>6</sup> National goals of general education. Decree No. 84 of the Government of Georgia from 18 October 2004. Tbilisi.

It is interesting to note that according to the schoolchildren themselves (specifically the 10<sup>th</sup> grade pupils); one of the national objectives of general education is to work out tolerance including respect for others, for their rights, religion, and ways of life, providing the pupils with the knowledge of how to make use of their rights without infringing others' rights.

The subject group comprises: compulsory subjects, such as History of Georgia, Geography of Georgia, and Civic Education; and selective subjects, such as Economics, State and Citizenship, Law, and History of Religion.

History of Georgia and World History are among the compulsory subjects for the grades from 5 to 12; History of Georgia, World History, Geography of Georgia and Civic Education are included in the integrated teaching as a unified subject in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades; History is taught as a separate subject in the grades from 9 to 12.

The corresponding subjects taught are:

In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades – «History and Geography of Georgia and the World»;

In the 9<sup>th</sup> grade – History of Georgia;

In the 10<sup>th</sup> grade – Introduction into History;

In the 11<sup>th</sup> grade – History of Georgia since ancient times until the 19<sup>th</sup> century inclusive;

The 12<sup>th</sup> grade is completely devoted to teaching the History of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The existing per hour scale for the 2008–2009 academic years at public schools of general education (both Georgian and non-Georgian speaking<sup>7</sup>):

subject/grade	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
History of Georgia and the World	5 (180) <sup>8</sup> (integrated with Geography and Civic Education )	5 (180) (integrated with Geography and Civic Education)	4 (144) <sup>9</sup>	5 (60) <sup>10</sup>	3 (108)	3 (108)

(National curriculum for schools of general education. 2008–2009. p. 59).

At the **basic school** stage (grades from 7 to 9) pupils should get information on political, social, cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity both in Georgia and worldwide. Based on that information, they should be able to analyze the most important

7 For 2008–2009 academic years, the non-Georgian sector covers only the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grades.

8 Brackets indicate compulsory number of hours throughout a year.

9 2 hours per week are allotted to teaching History in non-Georgian schools.

10 The 10<sup>th</sup> grade has intensive History course during a trimester. Total number of hours throughout the trimester equals 60.

historical and geographical phenomena pertaining both to the past and present, as well as determine the common and the distinctive in the course of different epochs and societies. Pupils should acquire skills and aptitudes of thinking in terms of history: expose the reasons of a historical event independently and analyze its consequences; view historical processes from different standpoints; explain what brings about the existence of different interpretations of a historical event or personality, correlate and estimate different interpretations; look through historical sources and assess them critically; compare and analyze historical material (written historical sources, archaeological or ethnographical material, fiction on history, photography etc.)<sup>11</sup>.

At the **secondary school** stage (grades from 10 to 12), History remains a compulsory subject for all the three grades. One of the main reasons leading to this decision is that knowledge of the history of Georgia and the World is a prerequisite towards shaping a pupil into a patriot and politically enlightened citizen<sup>12</sup>.

In the textbooks with History of Georgia integrated with World History and Geography (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades), the major part of the sections is allocated to World History. For example, out of 150 lessons in the textbook for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade 16 are allotted to Georgia and 90 to World History. The textbooks designed for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade depict the same picture (2/43 and 3/14 accordingly).

Political history has substantial prevalence in the textbooks, coming next are: the history of Technologies and Economics, ethnographical data, and the History of Religion and Culture. Thus, the textbooks basically represent an account of the political history of the country; political history continues to be the axis of the narratives, although certain time and attention is devoted to teaching the History of Economics, the History of Culture and Social History. In our opinion, these textbooks cover these issues better than the pre-reform period textbooks in which they did not blend with the general context and abounded with statistical data and terms that were difficult to understand (e. g. the names of the categories of peasants).

New textbooks have sections that are hard to be attributed to any of the aforementioned spheres, the examples of these include: «Archaeological findings in the Mtisdziri village: chronology of archaeological sources», «On the Portrait of David the Builder», «Colchian phalanx as viewed by Xenophon», and «Navigation in Georgia».

Change in the approach to the material exposition is noticeable: in the majority of cases narrative is replaced by fragments from the sources supplied with introductory information or small commentaries. Questions and assignments at the

---

11 National curriculum for the schools of general education. 2008–2009. p. 60–61.

12 Ibid.

end of the sections facilitate the acquisition of the material<sup>13</sup>. In the textbooks with integrated teaching of History of Georgia and the World, instead of the traditional narrative representing an account of facts and events in a chronological order the emphasis shifts onto the social order and types of government with corresponding examples taken from a broader world context. The history of human development since ancient times until our days follows the same line<sup>14</sup>.

At this point, it is hard to judge about the efficiency of such an approach since only little time has passed. Besides, the results have not yet become subject of special analysis.

One more distinctive feature of the new textbooks is the abundance of maps and illustrations.

Let us now move on to examining the issue of how “others” are represented in the history textbooks.

### **1. “Others”: international actors in the Caucasus**

In different periods “others” appear to be: the Assyrian state, Urartu, Scythians, Cimmerians, Sarmathians, Greeks, Alexander the Great and his army, Rome, Parthia, Achaemenid Persia, Byzantium, Arabs, Turk-Seljuk, Mongols, the Ottoman empire, Iran, Russia, and European countries (the Catholic world, France, England, and Germany). In the majority of cases, Georgia in particular and the Caucasus as a whole is seen as an arena of their struggle and opposition (e.g. in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cc. A.D. Georgia and Armenia appear to be a showground onto which the interests of Rome, Kingdoms of Parthia and Pontus collide<sup>15</sup>). All the aforementioned nations and states are perceived as «others».

As to the role of «others» for the country's history, of them one part is perceived to be unquestionably conquerors (the Assyrian state, Urartu, Scythians, Cimmerians, Sarmathians, Alexander the Great, Rome, Parthia, Achaemenid Persia, Arabs, Turk-Seljuk, Mongols, the Ottoman empire, and Iran of the late Middle Ages), another part is sometimes seen as conquerors and sometimes as allies or protectors (ancient Greeks, Hellenistic world, Rome, Byzantium, Western Christian world, Russia, and

---

13 In this respect, the textbooks compiled by the “pre-reform” authors are an exception, e.g. the textbook “History” designed for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade (N. Asatiani et al.). They stick to the old approach of material exposition in terms of both the form and heroic pathos. In the above textbook we come across examples of accusing “others” for the failures and defeats of the country (p. 168), although in other instances defeats are caused by e.g. centrifugal ambitions of Georgian feudal lords (p. 169). Declaring the Assassins (Ishmaelites), on the other hand, as founders of the contemporary political terrorism seems a little inconsiderate and lacking in validation (p. 135).

14 Kiknadze, Z..., 2006.

15 Akhmeteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, lesson 14, 15; Anchabadze, G..., lesson 32.

European countries), but still remaining «other» in essence. The sources adduced at the end of corresponding paragraphs underline the distinction between Georgians (both the Kartlian and the Laz) and Byzantines (see, for example, excerpts from the work of Procopius of Caesarea<sup>16</sup>), while juxtaposing Byzantium and Iran the divergence from either of the two, however, proximity to Byzantium come to the foreground (see the polemics among the representatives of Laz nobles following the murder of King Gubaz committed by Byzantines<sup>17</sup>). Textbooks repeatedly highlight the common threats facing the peoples of the Caucasus constantly reminding them of their common enemies. E.g. the 5<sup>th</sup> c. Iran was a common enemy to Georgia, Armenia, and Albania abolishing their kingdoms and conquering their lands<sup>18</sup>.

Russia, on the one hand, acts as a coreligionist ally and patron, in whom certain hopes are reposed («Russian sovereign is our coreligionist Christian king and a very strong one»<sup>19</sup>). However, frustrations are a frequent phenomenon, especially when Russia violates the provisions of the treaties entailing punitive measures on the part of Iran or Turkey<sup>20</sup>. After taking possession of the Georgian territories, Russia implements the policy of Russification<sup>21</sup>. The textbooks for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade have a detailed account of the policy directed towards changing the existing demographic balance, reflecting Muhajirs in Abkhazia, resettlement of colonists on the liberated territories, religious and educational policies (e.g. it is noted that «founding a university in Georgia did not go well with the interests of Russia»<sup>22</sup>), the history of the Georgians and other Caucasian nations fighting against Russia's colonialist policy<sup>23</sup>. The 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook contains an assignment set to assess the outcomes of the relations between Russia and Georgia from 1801 to 1918. The question is constructed in the following way: «Does this period of Georgian history display only negative tendencies, or could it be assessed from the positive side as well?»<sup>24</sup> Regarding the issue of establishing Soviet power, only sources are brought based on which pupils should determine their attitude to estimating Russia's role in Georgia in the 20's of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. It should be interesting to note that the 9<sup>th</sup> grade textbook devotes this issue a section headlined «Georgia's occupation» which consists of two parts, while 12<sup>th</sup> grade pupils are suggested to write an essay on «Georgia's occupation»<sup>25</sup>.

---

16 Akhmeteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, lesson 31, p. 80.

17 Ibid., p. 81.

18 Anchabadze, G..., p. 124.

19 Akhmeteli, N. 9<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 256.

20 Asatiani, N..., p. 322.

21 Ibid., p. 333.

22 Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 277.

23 Anchabadze, G..., chapter 3.

24 Akhmeteli, N..., 12<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 34.

25 Ibid., p. 91.

And now, about Europe. Europe is viewed as the sole potential ally, albeit still «other», although not as distanced as the Muslim world. In the Middle Ages several Georgian kings tried to win the support of Catholic Europe against Iran and Turkey, even at the expense of converting to Catholicism<sup>26</sup>.

It is worthy of note that textbooks also show Georgia and Georgians as viewed by foreigners, this being reflected in the excerpts from the works of foreign authors.

Textbooks register general information regarding any new international actor appearing in Georgia/the Caucasus, with maps displaying the territory of their settlements or the location of the state, as well as illustrations, containing information about the way of life, attire, arms, and war tactics. If the actor remained in the region throughout centuries the maps reflect the changes taking place during that period.

Humiliating epithets towards «others» do not occur, with the exception of several cases in the excerpts from the medieval sources (e.g. 'vicious tribe of Tatars' – implying Tatar-Mongols<sup>27</sup>, 'unbelievers' – regarding Ottoman-Turks<sup>28</sup>). Very rarely, religious differences are accentuated when describing some political events<sup>29</sup>. Comparing the new textbooks with those compiled in the period preceding the reform we would like to add that expressions such as «wild tribes started to descend from the mountains» have disappeared from the texts. In places where phrases like «people of a wild tribe» are cited from a source the authors provide special explanation<sup>30</sup>. There is one exception, however: in the part dedicated to the World history, the author uses a phrase «culturally underdeveloped nation» referring to the Madagascar tribes<sup>31</sup>.

On the whole, great attention is devoted to the international context. Ethnographic peculiarities and historical events of Georgia are presented in the background of world history. Sections are supplied with maps. The World context is emphasized through numerous fragments from the works of the western and eastern authors, as well as questions at the end of separate sections that turn pupils' attention to the importance of interacting with the outside world (e.g. two out of the five questions at the end of lesson 11 deal with the significance of external relations for the formation and development of the Kingdom of Kartli<sup>32</sup>). Such a layout enables seeing the facts from the Georgian history in one context, correlating them with the

---

26 Akhmeteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, lesson 63.

27 Ibid. p. 162.

28 Ibid. p. 193.

29 Kiknadze, Z..., p. 224.

30 Ibid. p. 253.

31 Ibid. p. 156.

32 Akhmeteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 34, question 4, 5.

facts and processes from World history, and building a perception about the path that the Georgian nation followed in the course of its historical development.

## **2. "Others": neighbors (Armenians and Azerbaijani, peoples of the North Caucasus in the textbooks on Georgian History).**

The basic principle for teaching history and geography in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade as stipulated in the national school curriculum is singling out the regions of the world and examining a set of distinctive features characteristic to the peoples of the Caucasus (demographic, ethnic, and religious diversity). Also recommended is to help pupils acquire the skills of comparing similar regions based on the above features<sup>33</sup>. Guided by this purpose, one textbook singles out the Balkans describing its peculiarities<sup>34</sup>.

In conformity with the National curriculum, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks, which integrate World history, History of Georgia, and Civic Education, place emphasis specifically on the Caucasus in historic, ethnographic, and geographic senses, examining both common and distinctive features of South Caucasian nations. The material is distributed in the following proportion: one textbook has 11 lessons on the South Caucasus, 14 on World history, and 4 on the history of Georgia (one of them is specially devoted to the national minorities in Georgia)<sup>35</sup>; the other textbook allots 12 lessons to the Caucasus, 43 to World history, and 2 to the history of Georgia<sup>36</sup>.

Separate lessons are devoted to the following topics: «Formation of the political map of the Caucasus», «Peoples and ethnographic districts of the South Caucasus», «Caucasian village», «South Caucasian peoples' attire», «Wedding in the Caucasus», «New Year celebrations in the South Caucasus», «South Caucasian cultural monuments», «South Caucasus and the UNESCO catalogue of monuments: cultural monuments of Georgia, cultural monuments of Azerbaijan and Armenia», «Caucasian cities», and «Belief systems of the peoples of the Caucasus». One section each is devoted to the general overview of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Maps of the Caucasus and explanations of the proper names are provided.

The Caucasus is viewed as standing out for its ethnic and religious diversity, but unified historically and culturally into a single region: «Peoples of the Caucasus have had very close cultural and economic ties and this preconditioned their rap-

---

33 National curriculum for schools of general education. 2008–2009, p. 77.

34 Neidze, N., Surguladze, M., Anchabadze, A., Bakhia-Okrushvili, S., Bokeria, M., Eremashvili N., Mshvenieradze G., Uzunashvili T. History/Geography of Georgia and the World. 8<sup>th</sup> grade. "Logos Press" Publishing House, 2007, topic 1.5.

35 Elizbarashvili, N...., 2007.

36 Neidze, V...., 2007.

prochement»; «alongside their ethnic and religious diversity the Caucasian peoples have much in common»<sup>37</sup>.

The fact «that ethnic and religious variegation sometimes created serious political problems in the region» does not passed unnoticed<sup>38</sup>. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook has an interesting chapter 5: «Geographic location. History of the conflicts»<sup>39</sup>. This chapter gives a definition of *stereotypes* which are found among the factors causing eruptions of ethnic and religious conflicts.

As noted above, only insignificant amount of lessons deals with the History of Georgia proper as it is viewed in a greater context of the Caucasus and the world<sup>40</sup>.

The textbooks examine, on the one hand, the South Caucasus and, on the other hand, the international actors in the Caucasus (e.g. we come across such sections as: «Rome and the Caucasus», «The Caucasus amidst three empires»). United position of the South Caucasian peoples is shown in relation to the external forces present in the region (a characteristic phrase being: «The 5<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of a new stage in the history of Iran and the countries of the South Caucasus»)<sup>41</sup>.

All textbooks assign a special place to the account of facts testifying the shared history of the Caucasus and its joint struggle against foreign invaders. Dynastic marriages among Caucasian nations are also noted. An excerpt from Strabo's Geography presents the Caucasus as a uniform geographic locale; it contains descriptions of roads linking Armenia and Albania<sup>42</sup>. An excellent subheading merits special attention: «Common ancestors – common history»<sup>43</sup>. It relates the attempt of the 9<sup>th</sup> c. Georgian historian Leonti Mroveli to reveal the common origin of Caucasian nations underscoring by so doing their common history. Questions supplied at the end of sections also intend to direct pupils' attention to the problem of mutual history<sup>44</sup>.

Thus, for example, Kartli's king Parnavaz gathering an army against Azo, Alexander the Great's protégé who ruled Kartli in Parnavaz's early childhood, urges Ossetians, Lezghins, and Armenians to be his allies<sup>45</sup>. Textbook materials depict the joint struggle of Georgians, Armenians, and Albanians against Iranians during King Vakhtang Gorgasali, as a result of which Albania restored the regal power abolished by Iranians<sup>46</sup>. The rulers of all three nations combined their efforts to resist

---

37 Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 142–143.

38 Ibid. p. 119.

39 Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 170–227.

40 Elizbarashvili, N..., 2007; Neidze, V..., 2007, p. 46.

41 Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 128.

42 Ibid., p. 35–36.

43 Anchabadze, G..., lesson 36.

44 Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 133.

45 Ibid., p. 31. Ramishvili, P..., p. 43–44.

46 Akhmeteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 72; Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 126–129; Ramishvili, P..., p. 70.



the Iranian Shah Iezdigerd's attempts to spread Mazdeism. Caucasian nations lead a joint struggle against Arabs<sup>47</sup>, and Mongols as well<sup>48</sup>. Excerpts from Georgian, Arabic, and Armenian sources tell about the liberation of Ani and Shirvan from Turk-Seldjuks by David Agmashenebeli (David the Builder)<sup>49</sup>, with Polovtsians and Allans among his warriors. David the Builder is presented as a Caucasian scale politician who struggled for the liberation and unification of the region. After the formation of the unified Georgian state North Caucasian nations had an important role in the Georgian armed forces; Georgian kings would invite them as auxiliary detachments to supplement their armies.

We would like to call attention to one assignment: “Recall the examples of friendship and mutual assistance among Caucasian nations; examine how important it was for the Caucasus to be united in the Past and how important it is at present”<sup>50</sup>.

Excerpts from Armenian sources describing the resistance against Tamerlane's invasions notify that Georgian kings helped Georgians and Armenians to save their lives, sheltering them in the fortresses of Kartli<sup>51</sup>. Pupils learn about the plan of Kartli's King Vakhtang VI and Peter I (of Russia) campaigning jointly against Iranian provinces, something Armenians had long been looking forward to and therefore took part in it hoping to restore the Armenian state<sup>52</sup>. Working on a new edition of «Kartlis Tskhovreba» (History of Kartli) the commission of scholars set up by Vakhtang VI collected Georgian as well as Persian and Armenian material to supplement the existing text<sup>53</sup>.

The 9<sup>th</sup> grade textbook examines a project of a Georgian-Armenian state worked out by Armenian public figures Israel Ori and Tigran Manasyan on the verge of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to the project, the new state would have been headed by a Georgian king. The textbook discusses one more project of another group of Armenian public figures. The latter implied the creation of an independent Armenian-Albanian state supported by Russia. In 1763 Joseph Emin paid visit to Tbilisi bringing with him a plan envisaging the creation of a united Georgian-Armenian kingdom; the plan was supported by Erekle II. Chakhmiryan sent Erekle II a sketch of the flag of the future united state – it too a Russian protectorate<sup>54</sup>.

---

47 Anchabadze, G..., lesson 25.

48 Akhmeteli, N..., lesson 64.

49 Ibid., p. 133; Anchabdze, G..., p. 161; Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 134.

50 Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 133.

51 Akhmeteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 187.

52 Ibid., p. 256.

53 Ibid., p. 250.

54 Asatiani, N..., p. 307.

Evidence describing the Caucasian war and Shamil's resistance against Russians reveals facts of joint struggle as well as antagonism. As an example of antagonism "Gangster forays of Lezhins" on Georgia in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> cc. are indicated<sup>55</sup>. But, on the other hand, mutual respect of Georgians and mountaineers is also testified<sup>56</sup>.

We think it is worthwhile to discuss the section on «Georgian-Ossetian Relations»<sup>57</sup>. This part relates about Mongols destroying the Ossetian state formation in the South Caucasus after which Ossetians started to settle apart in different countries and lands. Ossetians appeared in Georgia on the verge of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> cc. and tried to gain a foothold in Shida (Central) Kartli with Mongolian support. King Giorgi the Brilliant defeated them and compelled them to leave Kartli. Since then there is no mention of Ossetians in the Georgian sources. Only later on Georgian feudal lords allowed them to start settling in Georgia. This is when Ossetians adopted Christianity and became actively engaged in the Political life of the country. They were quite successful in cultural pursuits as well, e.g., Ioan Ialguzisdze (Gabaraev)<sup>58</sup>. Much earlier, during King Vakhtang Gorgasal's reign, Ossetians penetrated Kartli through Derbent ridge and started ravaging the territory. Having returned from his campaign against the Iranians, King Vakhtang decided to fight them and made a union with the Rani Prince who by that time was already quite disturbed by their raids. Joint forces of King Vakhtang and the Rani Prince attained a victory over Ossetians and banned both Ossetians and Polovtsians from moving across Derbend pass<sup>59</sup>.

So, pupils can construe from the above that political oppositions and internecine dissensions occurred both inside the country and between neighbors, in other words, they did not represent ethnic enmity.

Separate sections in the integrated textbooks are dedicated to describing the belief systems and ways of life of the Caucasian as well as neighboring nations (Iran, Turkey, and Russia)<sup>60</sup>. In spite of ethnic and religious diversity, the unity of the region is emphasized. We come across such interesting headings as «Caucasian knot», «The multiethnic Caucasus», and «Ways of life of the Caucasian nations»<sup>61</sup>.

### **Polyethnicity and the attitudes towards ethnic minorities**

Textbooks present Georgia as a multinational and multiconfessional country the shaping of which had lasted throughout centuries. Starting from Leonti Mroveli

---

55 Akhmeteli, N., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 259–261.

56 Ibid., lesson 76.

57 Anchabadze, G..., lesson 62, p. 248.

58 Ibid., p. 247.

59 Akhmeteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade. lesson 62.

60 Elizbarashvili, N...

61 Ibid., 117–120, 121–122, 143–147.

reflecting on the biblical story about common ancestors of Caucasian nations the picture of a polyethnic country begins gradually to develop. Written sources on the spread of Christianity in Georgia have a story about Jewish people appearing and settling in Kartli<sup>62</sup>. Later, after the Arabic conquest, Muslim population appeared in Georgian cities, notably in Tbilisi, and started to build mosques; extracts from the works of Arab writers depict the polyethnicity of the Tbilisi population, their good disposition towards foreigners, and freedom of religion<sup>63</sup>. Arab authors (such as al-Jauzi and al-Farik) tell about King David the Builder granting privileges to the Muslim population of Tbilisi after liberating the city from foreign Muslim conquerors<sup>64</sup>; this attitude was preserved during his heir Demetre I, and after the disasters that Georgia experienced as a result of Tamerlane's assaults at the time of Alexander I (Egyptian Sultan's letter to Alexander I)<sup>65</sup>. Armenian and European authors (travelers and missionaries) also provide information about the polyethnic and multi-confessional population of Tbilisi and about Armenian settlements around Gori<sup>66</sup>. Special emphasis on the coexistence of Christianity and Islam is made. Pupils learn about the striving of King Erekle II to restore the villages devastated by numerous raids for which he not only made it possible for Georgian peasants to return to their homes but also favored the resettlement of Armenians, Ossetians, and Greeks granting privileges and diminishing their taxes<sup>67</sup>. Quotations from A. Pushkin's *A Trip to Erzurum* and A. Dumas' *The Caucasus* inform about Armenians, Circassians, Greeks, Persians, Germans, and Jews living in Tbilisi together with Georgians; about traders arriving from all parts of the world: Turks, Armenians, Persians, Arabs, Indians, Chinese, Kalmyk, Turkmen, Tatars, Circassians, and Siberians<sup>68</sup>. Textbooks note that the 19<sup>th</sup> c. Tbilisi was a very important cultural center in the Caucasus. It was in Tbilisi that Ossetian and Abkhazian alphabets were created, textbooks were printed in Abkhazian, and the work of a Kabardian historian Shora Nogmov *The History of the Adygei Nation* was published<sup>69</sup>. Armenians, Azerbaijani and other ethnic groups were actively involved in the cultural life of the city<sup>70</sup>.

Special sections provide information about the essence of nationalism; a story with a special subheading "Zionism and the Creation of the Jewish State"<sup>71</sup> descri-

---

62 Anchabadze, G..., lesson 24.

63 Н.Ахметели..., IX класс, урок 38, с.98.

64 Там же, с. 133; Н.Элизбарашвили..., с. 152.

65 Akhmeteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 191.

66 Anchabadze, G..., lesson 65.

67 Akhmeteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 274; Kiknadze, Z..., p. 271.

68 Akhmeteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 279.

69 Asatiani, N..., p. 338.

70 Ibid., p. 339.

71 Anchabadze, G..., lesson 80.

bes how «Jewish people, deprived of their homeland, felt persecuted and oppressed throughout centuries – a minority in the majority of the European countries. Periodic outbursts of anti-Semitism and ruthless massacres of Jewish Diasporas added to the situation. In spite of all that, Jewish people managed to preserve their religion – Judaism, and retained their national values and spiritual links with the lost homeland. In 1897 at the Basel congress of European Jews the foundation was laid for Zionism, the Jewish national movement that set a goal to restore the Jewish state in their historical homeland... This goal was achieved in 1947 with the establishment of the state of Israel»<sup>72</sup>.

The section headlined as «The National Idea and the 19<sup>th</sup> c. Georgia» is impressive. It cites Niko Nikoladze's letter about the necessity of joint efforts for the neighbors to attain economic growth and prosperity<sup>73</sup>.

Textbooks focus extensively on the issue of ethnic minorities in present-day Georgia. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook has a separate lesson «Ethnic minorities in Georgia», and a map with the title «Ethnic composition of the population of Georgia»<sup>74</sup>. It includes an article from the Act of Independence dated from 26 May 1918 containing a phrase «people of Georgia» (not «Georgian People») <sup>75</sup>, and article 129 from the first constitution of Georgia guaranteeing the rights of the ethnic minorities. It also points out the protection of the rights of all residents of Georgia under the 2005 Constitution<sup>76</sup>. The 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook cites article 129 of the first Constitution in greater detail stating the unacceptability of impeding free social and economic as well as cultural development of any ethnic minority in Georgia<sup>77</sup>. In addition, it refers to a fragment from the address of the Supreme Soviet of Georgia to the peoples of the world (1991): «We do not intend to compete with any state or ethnic group living in Georgia... Protection of human rights, citizen rights, and ethnic minority rights in Georgia shall be guaranteed»<sup>78</sup>.

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook has a lesson, dedicated to ethnic minorities of Georgia: Jews, Ossetians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Kurds, and Assyrians. About Ossetians it is noted: «in the 10<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> cc. they had close relations with the Georgian kingdom. In the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> cc. Ossetians, oppressed by Mongols in the North Caucasus, started to move to Georgia. They began to settle in Georgia in great numbers in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> cc. and found refuge in Georgian villages.

---

72 Ibid., p. 328.

73 Ibid., lesson 81.

74 Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 149.

75 Axmeteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 116.

76 Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 150.

77 Ahneteli, N..., 12<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 90.

78 Ibid., p. 286.

Georgian feudal lords invited them to work in their estates seeing in them a cheap working force.... [In the 20<sup>th</sup> c.] Ossetians alongside all the other ethnicities residing in Georgia were granted the opportunity to develop their cultural life, and their native language through establishing national theatre, a university, and schools»<sup>79</sup>.

As for Abkhazians, they are not referred to as an ethnic minority of Georgia. Information about them can be found in the lesson “The Polyethnic Caucasus” which says: “Abkhazians live in the South Caucasus, in the north-west part of Georgia. Alongside Georgians, Georgia is considered to be the homeland for Abkhazians as well. Abkhazians call themselves ‘Apsua’, and their country ‘Apsni’. The Abkhazian population of Georgia is around 94 thousand. A small part of Abkhazians reside in Turkey where they were resettled by the order of the Russian emperor in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> c”<sup>80</sup>.

The other textbook has the following information about Abkhazians: “Abkhazians live in the western part of Georgia. In ancient times they occupied only the extreme northwest of Georgia (up to Anacopia). Their language is of northwest Caucasian (Abkhazian-Adygei) origin. Present-day Abkhazians are a merge of the peoples of the northwest Caucasus – Circassians, Abazgians, and Adige – with the Georgian population. As to their religion, Abkhazians are heathen, although the Bzyb gorge Abkhazians had been under the influence of Islam, while Christian religion dominated among Abkhazians of Abjua gorge. Throughout centuries Abkhazians had been actively involved in the formation of Georgian culture”<sup>81</sup>.

Subsequently, textbooks state different attitudes towards Ossetians and Abkhazians. The former are portrayed as migrants from the North Caucasus – their historical homeland, while the homeland of the latter is Georgia. We would advise the authors to acquaint pupils additionally with other perspectives on these issues, namely, with the opinions of Abkhazian and Ossetian historians. Especially as the authors of these new reform-time textbooks do not eschew offering opposing points of view on different problems.

The Authors are careful when describing the complications that occurred between the newly formed states of the South Caucasus during the short period of independence prior to the establishment of the Soviet Regime. So, military confrontations between Georgia and Armenia in December 1918 and deterioration of relations with Azerbaijan in January 1919 are described and interpreted in one of the textbooks as borderline conflicts<sup>82</sup>.

---

79 Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 151.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

81 Neidze, V..., p. 47.

82 Anchabadze, G..., p. 385–386.

In related events pertaining to the beginning of 1921 (the Red Army invasion of Georgia, war with Soviet Russia, installation of Soviet power, annexation and occupation of Georgia) no mention is made about the ethnic composition of the «insurgent» districts. The interests and intentions of international actors, particularly that of Russia, are brought forward rather than emphasizing the non-Georgian composition of the local communities<sup>83</sup>. The other textbook notes that the establishment of the Soviet power was preceded by revolts that took place among ethnic minorities instigated and supported by Russia: «Both Bolshevik Russia and the White Guard general Anton Denikin fighting against that very Bolshevik Russia were trying to capture Georgian territories in the direction of Abkhazia»<sup>84</sup>; «In 1917–1920, an Ossetian separatist movement started to develop in Shida (central) Kartli. First the White Guard and then Soviet Russia supported that movement supplying it with weaponry and armed detachments»<sup>85</sup>.

Special sections are assigned to the issue of Georgia's national composition with brief accounts about how different ethnicities came and settled in Georgia. The pathos of the narrative is positive<sup>86</sup>.

It would be useful if the current conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia were touched upon and examined separately. It should be noted from the very outset that textbooks do not devote a lot of space to this issue. Thus, in one textbook the conflicts are not mentioned directly, we read instead: «ethnic groups with common religious and cultural links often unite to gain independence. World abounds with such examples, they are known under the name of minority conflicts»<sup>87</sup>. The other textbook cites the words of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the first president of Georgia (1991): «International Fronts inspired by communists are being created in the republics; they are trying in every possible way to kindle ethnic conflicts and eventually create a pretext for the Kremlin's interference. The examples are numerous: in Moldova – the creation of the republic of Gagauz people and Transnistria (Pridnestrovie), ... in Georgia – open military support of Abkhazian and Ossetian separatists, «regulating» Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and many others»<sup>88</sup>.

The lesson describing Georgia in the 90's of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. contains an excerpt from the Georgian Government's official web-site that says: «In 1993 one more territory was added to the already de facto lost Tskhinvali region (Samachablo) – the auto-

---

83 Akhmeteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, lesson 117. Anchabadze, G..., lesson 91.

84 Anchabadze, G..., p. 383.

85 Ibid., p. 384.

86 See e.g. lesson 131 in: Ahneteli N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade; topic 4.9 in: Elizbarashvili, N...

87 Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 181.

88 Akhmeteli, N..., 12<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 287.

nomous republic of Abkhazia which, under support and direct assistance of the Russian military detachments and the Confederation of North Caucasian Peoples, broke off every relation with Georgia and declared its independence, although, like in the case with South Ossetia, has not received international recognition”<sup>89</sup>.

No description of the perpetua of the conflicts, or reflection on the culprits or victims can be found in any textbook.

### **On Religion**

Some textbooks allot separate chapters to the issue of religion. They lay out the material on an equal footing thus demonstrating the respect for all religions. The integrated textbooks highlight the fact that almost all religions practiced in the world can be found in the Caucasus<sup>90</sup>. Christianity takes up greater space in the Georgian history textbooks (which is not surprising, given its role in the history of the country), but it does not suggest prevalence over other religions<sup>91</sup>. It is stipulated that Georgia has been home to the representatives of different religions since very old times. «Alongside Orthodox Georgians Israelite Jews, Catholic Christians, Monophysite Armenians, and other relatively small religious groups have been contributing to the development of the Georgian state and its culture»<sup>92</sup>. Textbooks list religions practiced by different ethnic groups in Georgia and the date of their arrival. Illustrations display cult architecture as well as the apparel of the members of different religious communities. A plan of the locale of Tbilisi center shows different religious buildings situating next to each other.

As a suggestion we would recommend to highlight the common virtues of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam i.e. the fact that they all preach goodness, love, and justice. We would also like to pay attention to one question included in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook: «To what extent can national and cultural differences encumber dialogue and mutual relations?» This should be an extremely difficult question for pupils of that age to fathom. On the other hand, what they can really remember is that such differences can stand as an obstacle for mutual relations and dialogue. Especially as the textbook does not say a word about the years of mutual coexistence as though these peoples lived each on their own without ever communicating with one another.

More abounding in details is the story about the spread of Islam among Georgians. One textbook even has a separate section – «Muslim kings in Georgia»<sup>93</sup>.

---

89 Ibid., p289.

90 Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 147–148.

91 Kiknadze, Z..., p. 129–162.

92 Ibid., p. 158.

93 Anchabadze, G..., lesson 60.

We would like to discuss the 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks at length as they are intended to develop pupils' critical outlook towards history.

One of the purposes of teaching history in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade as stated in the National curriculum is to develop the pupils' ability to analyze and assess different interpretations of one and the same historical event. "Pupils should be able to: reason about the hypothetical nature of different historical interpretations and be aware that any interpretation can be reassessed if new historical materials come to the surface; tell historical fact from historical interpretation; argue about how closely they are related (e.g. annalists are independent in choosing facts that they would like to preserve for the future generations. Therefore, chronicles are not solely documents containing only historical facts, they, at the same time, are interpretations – i.e. historical facts preserved to our days that acquaint us with the annalists' evaluations of what they denote)"<sup>94</sup>.

In compliance with the curriculum, the 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks adhere to the line of explicating the subject, goals, and the impact of history, as well as the methods of historical research. They present a special interest as they help pupils to look at history not viewing it as a story or a narrative about the past, but as a science that can contain contentious and controversial information. It is confirmed that history is written based on sources, and sources «bear the footprints of the epoch that created them»<sup>95</sup>. Pupils come to understand that the quest for «true history» is futile and doomed to failure. Historical facts become the subject of interpretation; one and the same fact can be presented differently in different sources. As illustrations we would like to bring out two sections from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook: «The siege of Jerusalem – clash of viewpoints», and «The fall of Constantinople as seen with the eyes of Byzantine and Turkish annalists»<sup>96</sup>. Hence, pupils can clearly see why «histories» containing the same facts can essentially differ from each other in substance. Subsequently, their attitude to history in general, and national history in particular is emotionally less colored, while, on the other hand, their deliberations on historical problems become more coherent.

Textbooks of other grades also serve the same purpose of fostering this attitude. Alongside the traditional account of facts, they provide information not typical to Georgian historiography. For example, the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook has an excerpt

---

94 National curriculum for schools of general education. 2008–2009, p. 82.

95 Nikuradze, N., Pirskhalava, L., Chikvaidze, Ts. History. 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Bakur Sulakauri Publishing House, 2007, p. 62.

96 Kiknadze, Z., Pataridze, L., Surguladze, T., Uzunashvili, T. History. 10<sup>th</sup> grade. "Logos Press" Publishing House, 2006, p. 108, 115.



from the work of an Armenian historian Lazar Pharpetsi about the Georgian king Vakhtang Gorgasali who is reputed in Georgian history as an undeniably prominent figure and positive personality. However, his description by Lazar Pharpetsi essentially contradicts the traditional Georgian view<sup>97</sup>. As a result, pupils understand that history does not afford simple and indubitable assessments; a lot depends on the disposition and interests of the interpreter.



Summing up the review of the textbooks, it can be concluded that achievements on the path of implementing reforms as regards teaching history in schools of general education are noticeable. These achievements had a special impact on the subject of our inquiry into how “others” were depicted in the history textbooks:

The new textbooks present history not as a fixed narration of the past that had been set so once and forever but rather as a science based on interpretation. Related materials allow comparisons, which brings pupils to comparativist outlooks on history;

Context – both regional and worldwide – is presented more comprehensively than in the textbooks compiled in the period preceding the reform;

Ethnic, religious, and other stereotypes are, in fact, absent;

Ethnic minorities are relatively widely represented;

Unlike the textbooks of the pre-reform period, that were accentuating ethnic identicalness, the emphasis has moved to shaping civic consciousness. The tone of the narrative is dispassionate.

General remarks and recommendations:

Greater watchfulness is required when using modern ethnonymes, toponymes, or designates of present-day political formations when relating the facts and events of the past. Let us take as an example and analyze the legitimacy of the phrase: “Urtu inscriptions tell us about the second big unification of **the population of South-West Georgia**”<sup>98</sup>. It would probably be better to have instead: “South-West territory of present-day Georgia”. Or elsewhere: “From 11<sup>th</sup> c. B.C. iron production starts to develop **in Georgia**”<sup>99</sup>; it should have: “on the territory of Georgia”. The same can be said about the use of the term “**South Russian steppe**” in relation to 8<sup>th</sup> c. B.C. period.

---

97 Akhmeteli, N...., 11<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 80.

98 Ahneteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 15.

99 Anchabadze, G..., lesson 8; See also Asatiani, N..., p. 8.

On several occasions textbooks (texts or maps) refer to “**Transcaucasia**”, a term rarely encountered in modern scientific literature. We would advise to use the modern conventional term “**South Caucasus**” instead.

8<sup>th</sup> grade students are suggested to write an essay on “Tolerance – guarantee of the well-being of Caucasian nations” without preliminarily explaining the meaning and essence of the term tolerance<sup>100</sup>.

Not all textbooks display the Caucasian context with equal clarity. In this respect, the authors belonging to the new generation (reform-time) prove to be more successful, while those who had been engaged in compiling textbooks in the pre-reform period as well are not moving ahead fast in this direction.

We think there is no need to teach the 8<sup>th</sup> grade pupils such complex and controversial problems as the issue of ethnogeny. However, it should be said in all fairness that the discussion of the problem of ethnogeny involves not only Georgians but its neighbors as well. Moreover, the information is not intended to compare the neighbors in terms of the lead in origin but merely for the sake of informing pupils<sup>101</sup>. And still, we would advise the authors to avoid discussing such controversial issues as the formation of nations.

Greater attention should be paid to the problem of shaping citizens of such a polyethnic and multiconfessional state as Georgia. It is common knowledge that shared history of nations plays an important role in developing the feeling of unity and belonging to one state. In this respect, textbooks need improvement. Texts reflecting common interests of Caucasian nations take up a bigger space than those describing the shared destiny of the nations living on the Georgian territory and their joint contribution to the history of the country. It would be appropriate to emphasize that the history of Georgia is the making of all nations living on its territory throughout centuries. A number of examples could be brought as illustrations, like that of the participation of mullah Zaman, Bali-Ali-Emin Ogli and Kadim – Muslims from Borchalo in the conspiracy plotted against the Russian regime in 1832<sup>102</sup>, which is reflected in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. The other 9<sup>th</sup> grade textbook has an excerpt from a work of a prominent 20<sup>th</sup> c. Georgian historian N. Berdzenishvili describing the formation of the uniform Georgian feudal society: «All the men representing Georgian feudal culture were 'Georgian' in spite of the fact that someone of them could have been Ossetian «by origin», someone else from Dvali, or Kartli, or Tao or elsewhere. Georgia was one united feudal world with one common language, and one common feudal culture, counteracting with equally important worlds: Greece,

---

100 Elizbarashvili, N..., p. 147–148.

101 Ibid., p. 123–125.

102 Akhmeteli..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 271–272.

Armenia, and the Muslim world of Turks»<sup>103</sup>. Thus, all ethnicities, different in origin but living and working together on Georgian political and cultural walks of life, had their part in the formation of the Georgian state. The same textbook devotes a separate section to the «Autonomous units and ethnic minorities in Georgia in the period of the First Republic»<sup>104</sup>. Nevertheless, it can be observed that ethnic minorities in the textbooks do not appear as an integrated part of the society and its history, and the way the material regarding this topic is introduced does not foster the feeling of involvement among the representatives of ethnic minorities.

As regards to conflicts: we derive the impression that the authors try to avoid this topic. On the one hand, it is good that pupils are not taught lessons of enmity and irreconcilability, but on the other hand, it may be better to provide them with at least minimum information, teaching them that such facts did occur in recent history (they will anyway learn about them from other sources of information); turning conflicts into tabooed themes does not seem justified, while offering pupils versatile interpretation of the conflicts would only enhance their insight into the problem.

We have noted above that the authors of the textbooks have turned away from the traditional narrative form trying, in so doing, to overcome the Marxist tradition of positivist historiography. And yet, its basic principle of restoring “real”, “true” history, the principle that had been criticized already by the founders of the school of “Annals”, is not yet overcome. As a lucid example of this we could refer to question 4 at the end of lesson 42: “What do you think is needed to understand the events the way they occurred in reality, i.e. establish historic reality?”<sup>105</sup> Or: «Being aware of the author's partiality, reconstruct the historical reality»<sup>106</sup>. We understand that the given approach can be useful in countering the one-track understanding of the past, but it does not guarantee that pupils are becoming aware of the fact that history is interpretation. The contradictory nature of such an approach becomes obvious if we go back to the assignments in which pupils were asked to correlate the information provided by different authors, or compare «what was in reality with the author's version»<sup>107</sup>; we come across a phrase: «Historical research often implies expressing thoughts»<sup>108</sup>.

---

103 Anchabadze, G..., p. 153.

104 Ibid., lesson 91.

105 Akhmeteli, N..., 9<sup>th</sup> grade, p. 68.

106 Ramishvili, P..., p. 203.

107 Ibid.; Kiknadze, Z..., p. 219, 253.

108 Kiknadze, Z..., p. 171.

## REVIEWED TEXTBOOKS

Kiknadze, Z., Neidze, V., Pataridze, L., Surguladze, M., Laoshvili, Z., Uzunashvili, T., History/geography of Georgia and the world. 7<sup>th</sup> grade. “Logos Press”, 2006 (translated into Russian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani).

Neidze, V., Surguladze, M., Anchabadze, G., Bakhia-Okruashvili, S., Bokeria, M., Eremashvili, N., Mshvenieradze, G., Uzunashvili, T. History/Geography of Georgia and the World. 8<sup>th</sup> grade. “Logos Press”, 2007 (translated into Russian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani).

Elizbarashvili, N., Kereselidze, D., Bliadze, N., Samushia, J., Kupatadze, B., Kvitaishvili, N., Januashvili, K., Meipariani, T., Mikiashvili, L. History and Geography of Georgia and the World, Civic education. 8<sup>th</sup> grade. “Sakartvelos Matsne” (Georgian Messenger), 2007.

Anchabadze, G., Gamkrelidze, G., Kiknadze, Z., Surguladze, M., Shvelidze, D. History of Georgia. 9<sup>th</sup> grade. “Logos Press”, 2008.

Akhmeteli, N., Lortkipanidze, D. History of Georgia. 9<sup>th</sup> grade. “Diogenes”, 2008.

Kiknadze, Z., Pataridze, L., Surguladze, M., Uzunashvili, T. History. 10<sup>th</sup> grade. “Logos Press”, 2006.

Kighuradze, N., Pirtskhalava, L., Chikvaidze, Ts. History. 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Bakur Sulakauri publishing house, 2007 (translated into Russian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani).

Asatiani, N., Kighuradze, N., Sanikidze, G., Pirtskhalava, L. History. 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Bakur Sulakauri publishing house. 2007.

Ramishvili, P., Akhmeteli, N., Sartania, D., Chkhikvishvili, G. History of Georgia and the World. 9<sup>th</sup> grade. “Diogene”. 2007 (translated into Russian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani).

Akhmeteli, N., Murghulia, N. History of Georgia and the World. 12<sup>th</sup> grade. “Diogene”. 2008.

## AUTHORS

**Ilham Abbasov** is candidate of philosophical sciences science researcher at the Institute of Philosophy, Political and Legal Research of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences.

**Nino Chikovani** is Dr. of Historical Sciences, Professor, Institute of Cultural Studies, Head of the UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Dialogue, Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia. Deals with the problems of the history of Georgian culture, Cultural and religious developments in the Caucasus, Questions concerning intercultural dialogue in the region, Georgians' cultural identity issues – historical and modern perspectives.

**Ketevan Kakitelashvili** is Ph.D. in History, Associate Professor, Institute of Cultural Studies, member of the UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Dialogue, Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia. Deals with the issues of the history of Georgian culture, namely formation of Georgian cultural identity, identity in general and difference as factors for intercultural dialogue, role of stereotypes in intercultural communication.

**Sergey Rumyantsev** is candidate of sociological sciences, Science researcher at the Institute of Philosophy, Political and Legal Research of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences.

**Tigran Zakaryan** graduated from the Brussov Institute for Foreign Languages (currently University of Foreign Languages) with specialization on English and History. In 2000-2001 completed the Central European University (Budapest) MA program in history. Since 2001 is aspirant (doctoral student) in Armenian history at the Armenian National Academy of Science. Has authored a number of scholarly articles on Armenian new/modern history.

**Mikayel Zolyan** received his bachelor's degree from Yerevan State University, and his master's degree from Central European University in Budapest (Nationalism studies program). In 2005 M. Zolyan defended his thesis at the Department of Ethnology of the Faculty of History of Yerevan State University and received a Ph.D. degree in history. The main spheres of his interests are studies of nationalism, ethnicity and ethno-political conflicts, in particular issues of historical memory and national identity.

**Luboš Veselý** graduated from Charles University in Prague. Currently he is Senior Research Fellow at the Association for International Affairs' Research Centre in Prague, Czech Republic. Previously he worked for the Foreign Policy Department of the Office of the Czech President (2000–2002) and the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy by the People in Need Foundation (2003–2005).



# ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Association for International Affairs (AMO) is a preeminent independent think-tank in the Czech Republic in the field of international affairs and foreign policy. The mission of AMO is to contribute to a deeper understanding of international affairs through a broad range of educational and research activities. Today, AMO represents a unique and transparent platform in which academics, business people, policy makers, diplomats, the media and NGO's can interact in an open and impartial environment.

## **IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE ITS GOALS AMO:**

- formulate and publish briefings, research and policy papers
- arrange international conferences, expert seminars, round tables, public debates
- organize educational projects
- present critical assessment and comments on current events for local and international press
- create vital conditions for growth of a new expert generation
- support the interest in international relations among broad public
- cooperate with like-minded local and international institutions

## **RESEARCH CENTER**

Founded in October 2003, the AMO's Research Center has been dedicated to carrying our research into and raising public awareness of international affairs, security and foreign policy.

The Research Center strives to identify and analyze issues important to Czech foreign policy and the country's position in the world. To this end, the Research Center produces independent analyses; encourages expert and public debate on international affairs; and suggests solutions to tackle problems in today's world. The Center's activities can be divided into main areas: First, the Center undertakes research and analysis of foreign policy issues. Second, the Center fosters dialogue with the policy-makers, expert community and broad public.





When in the beginning of the 1990s Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia gained independence their rulers began to build new collective identities and at the same time find new sources of legitimacy of their reign. The easiest way was to choose nationalism similar to the one in Europe of the 19th century to build new identities and master narratives in a manner of defining themselves against their neighbours, often in a profoundly negative way.

Thus our publication contains not only a mere analysis of current history textbooks in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, but also recommendations for change. Our goal is by no means to find a single view of history in the South Caucasus, but to promote the principles of tolerance and respect for other nations, as well as to give room to different points of view and assessments of events and history itself.



Asociace  
pro mezinárodní  
otázky  
Association  
for International  
Affairs