

MUSLIMS IN EUROPEAN HISTORY (OUR COMMON HISTORY – THROUGH THE PRISM OF HISTORY TEXTBOOKS)

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The paper presents the results of the collaborative research pursued by an international group of scholars under the aegis of European Science Foundation and Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research. The results of cross-reference analysis of the images of Islam and Muslims in European and Russian History textbooks show the neglect of Muslims presence in European history. However, these neglected parts of our common history can become a good ground for the intercultural and interfaith dialogue and can promote mutual understanding on the basis of shared history and memory. Disregard for those leads to misunderstanding of the past and creates obstacles to the construction of a peaceful and respectful future for Europe as a multicultural society. The results of the research can be used in textbooks and teaching materials development for multicultural education in Europe and Russia.

Key words: history teaching, European history, image of Muslims, history textbooks, multicultural society.

Quite often, Muslims and Islam are represented alien and dangerous to European culture and civilization. The political discourse “approved” the image of European history represented mostly as the development of “Christian civilization”. But it is based on a selective memory about European past. Entire Muslim periods in European history are now almost forgotten and neglected. They are either totally ignored (as the Muslim rule in Spain) or presented in a negative way (e.g. the Ottoman reign in Greece). The cross reference analysis of the European History textbooks makes it obvious. In this paper I present only a brief overview of the main picture based mostly on the results of the research pursued by our international group [1].

The main points of Muslim presence in European history are as follows:

800 years of Muslim reign in Iberia.

Ottoman reign in South of Europe.

The Golden Horde (the European part of Russia).

Tatars as European Muslims (Poland, Lithuania, Finland).

Islam in Italy 827-1300.

Islamic contributions to Medieval Europe 11-13th centuries (science, art etc.) [2].

Muslims and European Renaissance [3].

Crusades as the way of intercultural communication [4-6].

Personal and family histories¹.

However our long shared history includes many more examples of positive and negative relationships between Europe and Islam and none of the parts is to be ignored.

How is this common past represented in History textbooks? Let’s briefly look through Greek, Spanish, Italian, Russian and German cases.

The textbook analysis shows the Muslim period of **Spain** history is totally ignored. Traditionally the textbooks say that Reconquista starts “immediately” after the Arab invasion: “Spanish historiography barely acknowledges the existence of Muslim societies on the Iberian Peninsula between 711 and 1492. As a result, inimical old blueprints of Muslims and Islam are still being perpetuated in regional educational practices” [7; 40].

Old historiography is strongly influenced by “Maurophobia” or “Islamophobia”, and the presentation of Muslims is used to create an image of the “other” because it helps “to create one’s own image and consolidate awareness of oneself ... in the process of defining an enemy” [7; 47]. Nowadays, it is realised that this approach has not only been a hindrance for the understanding of the past but has also become a much more essential threat to the

manya–Türkiye arasında gidip gelen yasamlar) / Zuerst einmal bin ich Mensch (Lebenswege zwischen Deutschland und der Türkei). The Project is aimed at bringing out the memories and life stories of Turks in Germany. Individual recollections present a broad picture of Muslim communities in Europe.

¹ “Deutsch-türkische Biographien” the project of Anne Frank Zentrum, Berlin (Herşeyden önce insanım (Al-

construction of a peaceful and respectful future. However, this new understanding of “oneself” and “the other” has not yet become part of Spanish History textbooks.

In **Greek** history the images of Islam and Muslims are also sensitive political topics. As the influence of Orthodox Church is a time honoured practice in Greece, by tradition it plays an important role in the education of the young and the school system in general. The “ottoman fear” is a long-established part of the Greek national identity and “cruelty of ottomans” was traditionally widely presented in school History textbooks. Any kind of balanced approach (disregarding only “black and white”) to the ottoman period of Greek history can hardly be accepted.

However, there are modern trends ready to look at the common history of Greeks and Turks free from old prejudices and preconceptions. A few years ago a new history textbook for secondary schools [8] caused a great row and became a “major national issue”. The Greek Orthodox Church and the right wing parties strongly criticized the textbook edited by Maria Repoussi, professor of Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, for the “underestimation of the role of Church in the national elaboration movement” and the “revisionist approach to the Greek – Turks relations in the past” [9]. After the active protest movements the Ministry of Education and Religion Affairs decided to withdraw the textbook from schools and suppress it, some copies were burnt by radical marchers in the streets of Athens. However, after the wide rival protests the Ministry allowed to use the textbook at schools.

Unfortunately, the demonization of Muslims and Turks is considered to be the norm rather than the exception in European textbooks. As the Council of Europe’s experts recognize: “In the great majority of [European] textbooks the Ottoman Empire is treated solely as the arch-enemy of Christendom and its cultural influence is, at least by implication, represented as evil” [10; 7].

The **Italian** case is a typical type of presenting Islam. In the majority of Italian school textbooks euro-centrism and capitalism are considered to be synonyms. Muslims, therefore, are depicted as the “favorite fear” of Italians. According to the textbooks, they are “guilty” about the creation of the Islamic world “totally different from the Roman one” and with a consequent breakdown in the “unity of the Mediterranean world” [11; 155]. The term “European” is used to prove that European identity was found in the eternal fight against its enemy, Islam: “The greatest achievement of Charles Martel

was the defeat he inflicted on the Arabs in 732 at the battle of Poitiers. ... If the Arabs had beaten the Franks, they would not have met other resistance and all Europe would have become Islamic. Charles therefore saved Western civilization” [12; 108].

As Antonio Brusa told, “it seems that intercultural stops at the door of the classroom and does not form part of the concrete teaching of any subject (history, mathematics or geography)” [11; 153]. Thus numerous “daily stereotypes” and “cultured stereotypes” [13, 14] prevail in the Italian textbooks. The current mainstream strategy addressing these stereotypes is to use euphemisms or even hide previous conflicts, for “xenophobic sweetening” [15].

In **Russian** History textbooks Islam and Muslims are also traditionally neglected, in case it is impossible – they are represented as a part of some negative phenomena, as the conflicts and wars with the enemies. Modern Russian textbooks display old prejudices against Islam and Muslims, that are shown as something alien and dangerous for Russia. Paradoxically Russians preserved such prejudices through all periods of Russian history: Imperial, Soviet and Post-Soviet.

Living with indigenous Muslim ethnic groups, Russians, paradoxically, are not much interested in learning about their Muslim neighbors but accept the old prejudiced images of Islam and Muslims from European (mostly German) orientalism. In fact, historians August von Schlegel and Gerhard Miller¹ who received their education in Leipzig and Göttingen and worked in the newly founded St Petersburg Academy, were the first to introduce in Russia the existing historical debates and the stereotypes of Islam found in German Literature and History textbooks of the time.

The very first History textbook to use in Russian schools was of German origin. In 1747, 25 years soon after its initial appearance in Berlin, “Introduction to the General History” by Hilmar Curas [16, 17], was translated into the Russian language. Curas was a teacher at Royal and Protestant Joachimthaler grammar school in Berlin. His book was well received in the reform-minded Prussian

¹ Gerhard Friedrich Miller (1705-83), Leipzig University graduate, a member of St Petersburg Academy of Sciences (1725) and the author of “Sammlung Russischer Geschichte” (1732). August Ludwig von Schlegel (1735-1809) was educated at University of Göttingen, a historian adjunct at St Petersburg Academy of Sciences (1762), a professor in Göttingen (1764-1804) and one of the founders of the “German School” of Russian Historiography.

state and soon translated into several European languages, Dutch and Russian included.

Rather than dividing the world into empires, Curas took a teleological path based on Christian salvation history. As the Turks did not belong to salvation history, they entered the narrative through the “back door” [18; 29-30]. The eight-page annex to Curas’s book entitled “On the Turks” marked the beginning of the school textbook narrative on “Islam”, producing the approach that is still used in History textbooks in German and Russian schools.

Until the beginning of the 20th century many authors of Russian textbooks thought that non-Russians of Muhammadan origin – “Muhammadan inorodtsy”¹, in fact all non-Russians of Muhammadan origin of the Volga area – “all inorodtsy of the Volga area had no historical past” [19; 18]. Russian textbooks both ignore the periods of coexistence of Christians and Muslims in Russian history and emphasize the “*incompatibility of Muslims and intellectual culture*” (“nesovmestimosti musul’manstva s umstvennoi kul’turoi”) [20; 10]. Around 1900, the dominant image of Islam in the textbooks was that of aggression and fanaticism. The educational system ignored the former experience of Russia as a frontier between cultural and religious zones of influence. Communist education regarded all religions “reactionary” and judged Islam and Muslims as such. Paradoxically, it was continued since the Russian Orthodox tradition of perceiving Islam as “alien” to Russia.

In the Soviet period, the positive role of Islam in Tatar history² could not be mentioned and the textbooks that “incorrectly explained” such topics became forbidden. The regional committee of the Communist Party discredited one of such textbooks describing it as “harmful, counter-revolutionary, propagandizing obscurantism, and inadequate for the requirements of communist education”. The authors were blamed for having “wrongly estimated

the Jadidism³ movement, which must be ruthlessly unmasked as a reactionary ideology of pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism and its counter-revolutionary essence must be revealed to pupils” [21]. As a result, the Minister of education issued the following statement: “In evaluations of social movements around 1900, emphasis is based on the fact that the bourgeois-nationalistic Jadidism movement was, since the outset, a reactionary counter-revolutionary movement and that Jadidists were the worst enemies of the working people” [22].

The positive aspects of the Muslim rule were ignored, and the ancient and medieval periods of its history were lapidary narrated basically to show how they hindered the progress of Tatar and other “Eastern peoples”. The Communist ideology, being dominant in the textbooks, negatively evaluated the role of Islam in Tatar history.

In the post-Soviet period, ideological restrictions and bans on the study of Islam and ethnic history were temporarily removed. Nonetheless, the Russian Federation continued the Soviet tradition of teaching a strict history curriculum. The authors of Russian textbooks, though mentioning the cultural diversity of peoples in Russia, concealed the ethnic histories of any peoples other than Russians. Creating the impression that Islam and Muslims were practically non-existent in Russia, the federal textbooks were able to promote the ideology of the Soviet period, which sought to mould different peoples into one uniform – “*the Soviet nation*” (“Sovetskiy narod”). They also reproduced imperial historiography, which russianized ethnic minorities, all non-Russians, the so-called inorodtsy. The analysis of the most recent federal history textbooks – History of Russia and History of Motherland – proves and confirms the allegation [23].

All these fit with the concept of multiculturalism being a harmful thing unnecessary in Russia: “Multiculturalism has been the compelled recognition of the fact that America cannot integrate the influx of immigrants anymore and can’t unite them in the one nation of “White”, “Black”, Latin Americans, etc. This process of disintegration of American nation to separate ethno-cultural groups and associations of different groups of “non-White” population against the “White” is known under the name of “Cultural

¹ Inorodtsy = “*strange people*”, “*the others*”, “*dissimilar others*”, “*foreigners*”. The term was officially used in the Russian Empire to identify ethnic and religious minorities or “non-Russian peoples”.

² Resolution (Postanovlenie) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party “On conditions and measures to improve the political and ideological work in Tatar party organization” (1944), the decisions of Tatar regional committees of the Communist Party: “On mistakes and shortcomings in the work of Tatar Research Institute of Language, Literature and History” (1944), and “On Preparing Essays on the history of Tatar ASSR” (1946).

³ Jadidism – derived from the Arabic Usul Jadid (zhe-did) (*new method*), the movement that changed the attitude of Tatar society towards modernity (in the spheres of culture, education, policy and daily life) and set into motion a process of modernization of the entire Tatar society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Wars". Some politicians and sociologists consider that this process will lead to internal weakening and final decay of the USA, which, in their opinion, will mean the "death of the West" [24; 71]. This point of view is already recognized on the highest official level: "Russia cannot and will not mindlessly copy foreign models: we do not accept the political correctness reduced to an absurdity, the Western-style of multiculturalism and the ultra-liberal market" [25]. After over 20 years of heated debates between Tatarstan and Federal authorities of Russia, Tatar and Russian historians agreed that the concept of a new Russian History textbook should contain the history of all peoples of Russia (not only Russians) and "the course of national history should combine the history of the Russian state and its peoples, history of regions and local history" [26]. But it is still a declaration not a practice as the decision makers are neither historians nor educators but politicians and high rank authorities. Even in the project, the Golden Horde time is characterized not as an integral period of Russian history, or Tatar (Muslim) period in Russian history but the time of "political and economic weakness of Russian lands" when they became "dependent on alien power, ... joined the states with different ethnical origins" [26].

However, in Tatar [27-29] and Russian "World History" textbooks Islam and Muslims are represented in a completely different way.

Ignored in federal textbooks the old Tatar statehood is specially emphasized in modern Tatar History textbooks. The modern Tatar textbooks demonstrate more positive aspects of ethnic history ("peaceful coexistence of different peoples and cultures", "tolerance policy of the Golden Horde", "blossoming of culture" etc.), trying to provide complete explanations of the negative moments, which are comprehensively represented in federal textbooks. The Tatar authors also criticize federal textbooks for the negative image of Tatars and prejudiced representation of the Golden Horde and all Russian-Tatar relationship in the history ("atrocities of the Mongol-Tatar conquerors", "savage hordes of Tatars", "cruel slanting eye riders") [30].

In turn, the federal centre strongly criticizes regional textbooks: "The achievements of old national statehood in new History textbooks are overestimated, the historic personalities are shown excessively heroic as an exaggerated result of russification policy, thus creating a negative attitude to Russians and to Russia ... the long established problem of interethnic relations ... in its common state are either ignored or tendentiously interpreted As a result, it can lead to separatist ideas, ex-

treme nationalism, ethnic mobilization The ethnically oriented representation of the historic data [in the textbooks] contributes to dissociation of pupils of different ethnic origin, and disintegration of the Russian Federation unity ..." [31].

The World History and History of Russia ("History of Motherland") were traditionally two different research fields in Russia, each with its own historiography and methodological approaches, which do not always coincide. The Departments of Russian History and World History are still separate in most Russian universities. And to combine the above mentioned approaches at the moment are next to impossible. The idea of integrated school courses – "Russia in/and the World" – is still a declaration not implemented in the new concept of the Common History textbook either.

The Russian World history textbooks still portray a rather specific image of Islam: they traditionally briefly represent the origin and distribution of Islam around the globe in one or two paragraphs. As for Muslim culture (literature, architecture, science) it is represented explicitly. Even the Ottoman Empire is represented differently in world history textbooks – not as a permanent enemy of Russia as it is the case in "History of Russia" textbooks. The latest editions of Medieval History, however, offer a more balanced view by depicting Islam as one of the world religions that created an original civilization and, as such, forms a part of the world cultural heritage. The Modern History textbooks, by contrast, frequently mention Islam only in the context of "new threats", and link it with migrants, separatism, "the clash of civilizations" and terrorism. In addition, the explanations of important principles and concepts (like interpretations of the Koran, sunnah and jihad), as well as some social aspects of Islam (such as polygamy, equality and human rights) contain numerous mistakes and misconceptions. For example, "Shiites rate high those chapters of the Koran (surah) where Ali, cousin of Muhammad, is glorified, than the chapters rejected by Sunnites" [32; 269]. Or, alternatively, "On the sixth day ... Man (Adam) was created. On the seventh day – it fell on Friday – Allah had a rest. Therefore, for the Muslims, Friday is a day of rest" [33; 93]. As we can see, the author of the quoted lines does not only confuse the story about Sabbath from the Torah with the Muslim concept of Jumah (*Friday* as a day of collective prayer), but acknowledges Sunnis being authorities in rejecting or accepting parts the Koran.

Despite the numerous mistakes [34], there is an important difference between old and new Russian

History textbooks: most of the mistakes in the latest editions of the World History textbooks arise from misunderstandings or from the authors' lack of knowledge on Islam rather than intended ambivalent style of writing.

The **German** case is one of the most difficult ones to research since there is no single federal curriculum. The constituent states (Länder or Bundesländer) are fully responsible for all educational issues and have their own Departments of Education elaborating their own curricula and programmes. Thus it is rather difficult to tell about the general situation with teaching History in Germany since it is radically different in different States.

Many German textbooks include chapters on Muslim world and Culture of Islam. Some of them are based on the concept of Intercultural Dialogue and represent quite a positive image of Islam and Muslims [35]. But their approach is traditionally limited mostly by Turks and Arabs. German and European Orientalism and Islam Studies have a long established history of focusing on Africa, Middle and Central Asia. The historical maps represent Islam abundant in the area of only Asia and Africa – neither in Western and Eastern Europe or in Russia [36].

The presence of Islam (Tatars) in Europe is ignored and Tatars are excluded from the Muslim World. The European Islam is represented not as the internal phenomenon but as the culture brought from abroad, originated in the experiences and histories of the so called “Gastarbeiter” (guest workers).

Only recently a group of German researchers initiated a number of research projects [37-39] and held conferences¹ on the topic of the place of Muslims and Tatars in German history. However, they are still sidelines, not the mainstream of European Islam Studies.

Another trend of modern times is the exclusion of Crusades from school curricula for “tolerance

reasons”. But Crusade and Crusaders are still a part of the vocabulary of both European and Muslim communities: “General Henri Gouraud (1867-1946) was the commander of the French army in the Middle East during the First World War and the first governor of Syria and Lebanon under the French mandate. It runs that when he arrived in Damascus in 1920 he went directly to the Omayyad Mosque and stood at the tomb of Salah ad-Din (died 1193). He announced: ‘*Nous revoilà, Saladin!*’ – ‘*We’re back, Saladin!*’ or ‘*Here we are again!*’ Then he added: “My presence here consecrates the Cross over the Crescent” [33].

The images of Crusades and Crusaders are very different: strictly negative and barbaric on the one hand and heroic and romantic on the other [40-44]. But the time of Crusades was not only the time of wars and struggle but the period of active intercultural contacts, co-influence and cooperation [45, 46].

The textbooks of those States (Bavaria, Lower Saxony) which decided to keep the Crusade topic, always mention the capture of Jerusalem not as one of the “Islamic-Christian conflicts” but as “Encounters of Occident and Orient”, “Conflicts and contacts with the Arab world” or “Religious conflicts and cultural encounters during the time of the Crusades”. But the cultural transfer according to these textbooks was mainly directed to Spain and Sicily, less to Palestine or Syria [47]. However, there are some positive examples such as “What medieval peoples knew about each other?” “West and East – two worlds – meet each other”, “Contacts – Conflicts: the image of others” [35].

However, it would be wrong to say that ignoring the common past and present of Muslims in Europe is the only prevailing trend in European discourse. Such international professional organizations of History educators as EUROCLIO and International Society of History Didactics focus on different aspects of teaching common history. The official recommendations for the educators elaborated by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and supported by Council of Europe and UNESCO suggest that: “Teaching about world history and cultures, in addition to teaching about religions, should include lessons on the diverse history and cultures of Muslims both within a specific country and globally. Such lessons should provide information on Muslim artists, writers, politicians and scientists that disproves the negative stereotypes held about Muslims. To this end, teachers should help students to realize that – just as in the case of their own cul-

¹ The Ongoing Project “The Change of Tatar Images in MidEastEurope – Between Traditional xenophobies and Discrete Integration” by Mieste Hotopp-Riecke, Institute for Caucasia-, Taurica- and Turkestan Studies, Berlin / Magdeburg; Fur wen kämpfte Jusuf? 200 Jahre Volkerschlacht Leipzig – 200 Jahre Tatarenggrab Kleinbeucha. Interkulturgeschichte im regionalen Kontext. Conference in Borna (Germany) 06-07.04.2013; Interkulturkontakte im regionalen Kontext: 200 Jahre Napoleonkriege – Tataren, Baschkiren, Kalmüken in Deutschland als semantisches Reservoir in Historiografie und interkultureller Bildung. Panel on Deutsche Orientalistentag (DOT), Münster. 2013; Tatar Culture and Research. Conference in the University of Helsinki, May 2013.

tural identities – Muslims’ cultural identities are not monolithic, but are dynamic and diverse. Teachers ... should help students to strike the right balance between the individual and the collective, and to prevent exclusion” [48; 30]. And representatives of all OSCE and CoE member countries agreed with this. It should be noted that Tatarstan’s experience in writing a new textbook on History of Religions [49] was mentioned in this Guideline among the examples of best practices all around the world [50; 29].

Conclusion

The positive examples of coexistence of Muslims, Christians and Jews in Andalusia, Sicily, the Golden Horde, etc. can contribute to the change of negative and prejudiced images of Muslims in Europe. On the contrary, the neglect of the common past in History textbooks creates a negative image of Muslims as the “others” for young Europeans. Bilateral or multilateral projects of textbooks analysis and textbook writing (Euro-Turkey, Muslims-Europeans, Russian-Turkish) can be used to change these old prejudices. We can learn from our common past, that Muslims can be an integrated part of European culture and civilization and still keep up their own cultural and religious identity. The Tatar case can be a good example of it (especially the history of Tatars in Finland and Poland). Not only textbooks but also Memorial Sites (lieux de mémoire) of common history – monuments, cemeteries, etc. should mark our common history in order to make the history of European Muslims evident.

The long history of coexistence, Muslim influence on European Renaissance and cultural interactions can become good grounds not only for the identity of European Muslims but also for a new idea of “Europeanness” based on the dialogue of cultures and civilizations with Muslims as a part of it.

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МУСУЛЬМАНЕ В ЕВРОПЕЙСКОЙ ИСТОРИИ (ОБЩАЯ ИСТОРИЯ ЧЕРЕЗ ПРИЗМУ УЧЕБНИКОВ ИСТОРИИ)

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Анализ европейских и российских учебников истории показывает, что в большинстве случаев мусульманский период в истории рассматриваемых стран или полностью игнорируется, или изображается в негативном ключе. Подобная избирательность обусловливается не только традициями, сложившимися в историографии рассматриваемых стран, но и в немалой степени политическими мотивами. История, тесно связанная с национальным самосознанием, и учебники, в которых эта история излагается, нередко оказываются в центре дискуссии. Создаваемый в учебниках образ исторического прошлого может разделять людей, но может и способствовать их объединению вокруг общего прошлого. Изучение опыта мирного сосуществования и взаимодействия мусульман, христиан и иудеев в Андалусии, Сицилии и Золотой Орде, а также вклада мусульман в развитие европейской истории и культуры будет способствовать не только развитию межконфессионального диалога и взаимопонимания, но и формированию новой европейской идентичности мусульман. История татар (прежде всего – татарских мусульманских общин в Польше, Литве и Финляндии) может послужить хорошим примером интеграции мусульман в европейское общество без потери собственной культурной и религиозной идентичности.

Ключевые слова: преподавание истории, история Европы, образ мусульман, учебники истории, поликультурное общество.