

Eckert. Dossiers 10 (2017)

János M. Bak and Robert Maier (eds.)

## **Mutual Images**

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# **Textbook Representations of Historical Neighbours in the East of Europe**

**GEORG ECKERT  
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**EDU | MERES**



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## **Preface**

The articles in this Dossier originate from an essay competition launched in August 2015 by the Medieval Central Europe Research Network (see <http://mecern.eu>) and the Georg Eckert Institute. We announced the competition in both English and the local vernaculars of the region through some 150 institutions and associations.

The Medieval Central Europe Research Network (MECERN), in cooperation with the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research (GEI) is announcing an essay competition on ‘The image of historic neighbours in Central European school textbooks’. Students and teachers of history (including art, archaeology and literature) are welcome to submit critical essays on the treatment of people and countries of medieval Central and Southeastern Europe in the schoolbooks of their countries. Submissions on one or more widely used book for secondary schools critically evaluating their treatment of historic neighbours (if appropriate: contrasted with contemporary research), in not more than fifteen pages, are invited from any of the countries in the region. Thanks to a grant from the Humanities Initiative at Central European University, the international jury will be able to grant a € 1000 prize for one first best essay and € 500 each for two second best essays. They (or more) will be published in a suitable scholarly journal or book. Those intending to submit essays should register (also naming the title of the book/s they intend to review and the language in which they wish to write) with [MECERN@CEU.EDU](mailto:MECERN@CEU.EDU) to receive further information by 1 November 2015. The submission deadline will be 1 February 2016. Essays in English, German or French will have priority, but it may be possible to translate those written in other languages.

Even though more than twenty historians intended to participate, only eleven essays (most of them in English) arrived by the 1 February 2016 deadline. The international jury, Anna Adamska of Utrecht, Rune Brandt Larsen of Lund, Vasco LaSalvia of Rome, and Robert Maier from Georg Eckert Institute, chaired by János Bak, selected seven of these essays for prizes and honorary mentions. Their edited versions are published here.

There were a few noteworthy features in this competition. Firstly, the geographical spread was alarmingly uneven. The three major (medieval) countries – Poland, the Czech Republic (medieval Bohemia) and Hungary – were not represented by any participant. In contrast, there was much interest from Ukraine (no prize winners), Croatia, Romania, Moldova and, unforeseen, from Russia. We admit to not having been much

surprised. Scholars and teachers in these countries tend to be satisfied with a presence in their home intellectual marketplace and are less interested than those from less centrally-located regions in achieving recognition abroad. A pity.

Secondly, most participants (except one) were younger historians, graduate students and junior academics. Only one high school teacher submitted an essay. There was even a charmingly subjective essay from a Bulgarian undergraduate, reflecting on the issue from the vantage of a future teacher. While among the textbook authors there were both experienced educators and academic researchers, only one of them was interested in presenting his critical views on the issue.

Most of the essays contrasted governmental guidelines and various ‘national curricula’ with the textbooks actually written in the past decades. (Few of them went back to the textbooks of the Communist era, though noting that some of the authorship did not change after the collapse of the authoritarian regimes. That era has now, mercifully, faded into the past.) It seems that central directives attempt to encourage less nation-oriented and more ‘pan-European’ approaches, while textbooks are not always successful in stepping out from traditional frames of reference. One author ironically refers to the bandwagon of new history onto which some authors try to jump.

It may have been the fault of the announcement that none of the authors considered neighbours other than those beyond national boundaries. We would have liked to read something about the matter of ‘us’ and ‘the Other’ within the medieval states, such as ethnic or religious minorities.

Unsurprisingly, the central issues discussed in the papers chosen are crucial historical events in the history of these present-day countries, such as the relationship between the distinct parts of modern Romania (above all, the question of Transylvania, which one essayist styled ‘the drama of Romanian history’) or the moment of the incorporation of Croatia into the medieval kingdom of Hungary. Overall, it would be perhaps too much demanded from schoolbooks not to regard the present-day states (or even nations) as eternal entities whose existence is to be seen as a more or less unbroken continuum. Such a differentiated view is often missing from more sophisticated historical monographs (mainly of the Middle Ages), as well. Sometimes, the presentation of the history of neighbouring peoples is quite petty. For example, Serbs and Croats mutually

disregard even minor episodes in their common history that do not fit into the presently perceived animosity or their position vis-à-vis Bosnia.

A deficit remarked upon by several contributors is that, owing to the preponderance of political history ('kings and battles'), little can be learned from the textbooks about the ways of life, culture, customs and so on of the neighbours, even if they are mentioned in a non-confrontational context. Exactly this topic would be conducive to building up a common past of the region.

Even if the reviewed textbooks generally avoid nationalist attitudes now considered to be aggressive, more than one essayist pointed out that they are far from the enlightened attitude that brought about cooperation between German, French and Polish historians and educators – a desideratum for the region's EU member (or future member) states.

The editors are most grateful to Kelly Miller whose linguistic editing was more than technical help. We are sure that all contributors learned much from her comments and appreciate her efforts in ensuring well presented and logical English throughout this work.

Budapest, Braunschweig

The Editors

Viktorija Antolković

**The Image of Medieval Hungarians  
in Croatian History Textbooks**

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## Summary

In the Croatian case of ‘historic neighbours’, Hungarians were the ones with whom Croatia shared history from 1102 to 1918, making this period an unavoidable part of history education. The image of Hungarians, as depicted in seven history textbooks for the second grade of high school, published from 1997 onwards, is analysed with two historical events in focus: the arrival of Hungarians in Europe and their relationship with Croats, especially during the reign of King Tomislav, and subsequently Croatia’s entering the joint state with Hungary under the Árpád dynasty in 1102.

## Introduction

The act of writing a history textbook reflects a belief that history, as well as language, is a formative element of national identity. Therefore, history textbooks play an important role in the cultural construction of the nation. Through school and history textbooks begins the process of transmitting collective memory, aimed at entrenching a specific awareness of belonging to a unique nation and at building ‘the collective identity of a nation whose roots are inseparable from those of the past’.<sup>1</sup> History textbooks also include the history of relations with other countries. Based on an attitude towards and perception of other peoples, history textbooks create a distinction between two groups – ‘us’ and ‘them’ – thus playing an important role in the creation of a sense of belonging and in the formation of national identity. In this way, history textbooks can help form national identity on two levels: awakening the national spirit through a nation’s ‘glorious moments’ and relevant historical figures, but also ascribing characteristics and values that distinguish ‘our group’ from the others.

The Middle Ages brought about the emergence of new peoples and states. One of these was Croatia. From the time of settlement (which is still debated in Croatian historiography), Croats had to learn to cope with their new neighbours, both indigenous people as well as arriving settlers. The focus of this essay will be the attitude towards Hungarians, as depicted in Croatian history textbooks, with two main points of interest. One is the Croats’ battles with the Hungarians in the time of King Tomislav, the other their entering the joint state with the Hungarians in 1102 through an alleged agreement

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<sup>1</sup> Stefano Petrunaro, *To Write History Anew: Croatian History Textbooks in 1918–2004* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2009), 5.

known as *Pacta conventa*. For the purpose of this essay, seven history textbooks for the second grade in the high school system were analysed, with the oldest dating from 1997. However, emphasis will be placed on four textbooks currently in use in high schools, while the others will be used as reference to diachronic changes in attitudes towards ‘historic neighbours’.

### **History Textbooks**

The textbooks analysed in this essay cover the last twenty years of history education in Croatian secondary schools. After the socialist period and the establishment of the independent Croatian state, the educational system fell into turmoil caused by the destruction of the old political and social system and the emergence of a new one in its place. Under those circumstances, the Croatian Middle Ages were regarded as a formative period for the nation and the development of an independent state, further used to establish a line of continuity between the medieval Croatian state and the independent Croatia of the post-socialist era. By the directive of the newly established government, earlier history textbooks were no longer admitted. Therefore, new history textbooks had to be written, revising Croatian history. Textbooks of the socialist period have been revised and re-published, some of them by the same authors, such as Ivo Makek who was active in the socialist period and went on to write the first history textbooks of independent Croatia. The new textbooks show differences in the selection and interpretation of events and historical figures, following the new ideological position of the author and the dominant ideological discourse.<sup>2</sup> Finally, in the second half of the 1990s, alternative textbooks were published for the same grade, attempting to reduce the influence of right-wing politics in the production of history textbooks.

Teaching methodology in history textbooks was not standardised until 2003 with the publication of the *Textbook Standard*, which became the basis for the development and approval of textbooks.<sup>3</sup> Preconditions for the authors of textbooks and their required qualifications were nowhere specified; the approval process was regulated by the *Law of Textbooks for Elementary and High School* from 2001. The law states that a

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<sup>2</sup> For further reading, see Dinko Župan, ‘Ideology, Power and Textbooks: Analysis of the History Textbook for the Sixth Grade of Elementary School’, in *Past Present: Signs of History in Croatia*, ed. Vladimir Biti and Nenad Ivić (Zagreb: Naklada MD, 2003), 323–355.

<sup>3</sup> Rona Bušljeta, ‘The Methodological Analysis of Approved High School History Textbooks for the Second Grade in the School Year 2008/2009’, *Kroatologija* 1, no. 2 (2010): 45.

textbook must comply with the prescribed *Curriculum* and *Textbook Standard*, which is established by a commission composed of five members: a scholar (field expert), a methodologist and three practitioners from the educational field. Approval of new textbooks is conducted according to the elements and instruments corresponding to the *Textbook Standard* educational programs and goals.<sup>4</sup> Each April, a catalogue of textbooks approved for the following year is published from which teachers choose the compulsory textbook. This can be supplemented by optional textbooks and other tools of instruction, decided upon by the teacher with the consent of the students' parents and the teaching staff, but the optional textbooks cannot act as a substitute for the obligatory textbooks.<sup>5</sup>

Out of seven history textbooks analysed, four are approved for current use by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport of the Republic of Croatia for the 2014/15 school year. Three of them, the first written by Detling and Samaržija,<sup>6</sup> the second by Bulat, Labor and Šašić,<sup>7</sup> and the third written by Birin and Šarlija<sup>8</sup>, were published in the late 2000s, while the textbook written by Gračanin, Petrić and Ravančić<sup>9</sup> was published in 2014. The remaining group of three older textbooks, written by the authors Mirošević, Šanjek and Mijatović<sup>10</sup> and Posavec and Medić,<sup>11</sup> respectively, was published in the late 1990s, with the exception of the textbook written by Petrić-Ravančić,<sup>12</sup> which was published in 2003. Authors of history textbooks come from both academic and educational backgrounds; among them are members of the Croatian Institute of History,<sup>13</sup> university professors<sup>14</sup> and primary and secondary school teachers.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia, *Textbooks*, accessed 15 January 2016, <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=2524>.

<sup>6</sup> Denis Detling and Zdenko Samaržija, *Steps in Time 2: History Textbook for the Second Grade of High School* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Damir Bulat et al., *History 2: History Textbook for the Second Grade of High School* (Zagreb: Profil, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Ante Birin and Tomislav Šarlija, *History 2: Textbook for the Second Grade of High School* (Zagreb: Alfa, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Hrvoje Gračanin et al., *History 2: History Textbook for the Second Grade of High School* (Samobor: Meridijani, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Franko Mirošević et al., *History for the Second Grade of High School* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> Vladimir Posavec et al., *The Creation of European Civilisation and Culture (V.- XVIII. Century): Textbook for the Second Grade of High School* (Zagreb: Profil International, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Hrvoje Petrić and Gordan Ravančić, *History 2: History Textbook for the Second Grade of High School* (Zagreb: Meridijani, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Gordan Ravančić and Ante Birin, who are also university professors at the Centre for Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb.

<sup>14</sup> Hrvoje Petrić, Hrvoje Gračanin.

Since the introduction of state graduation exams in 2010, necessary for the completion of secondary education, history textbooks implement educational goals required for passing the state exams: instead of pure factography, which was the case with the older textbooks, additional sections of the new textbooks aim at developing skills required for state graduation, such as analysis, synthesis and critical thinking. The best example of such an approach is a textbook by Bulat, Labor and Šašić, in which the preface draws attention to content tested on the state graduation exams, such as the critique of primary sources, and a list of expected skills. This is not surprising, as one of the authors, Miroslav Šašić, was a member of the Expert Group for the preparation and implementation of state graduation in history and is also author of the handbook *History in the State Graduation Exam*.

### **Arrival of the Hungarians in Pannonia**

Hungarians enter the pages of Croatian textbooks in the educational unit ‘Holy Roman Empire’ as raiders. Their representation has not changed from the first history textbook of 1997. Beginning at the end of the ninth century and their emergence in the Pannonian Plain, Hungarians are described as a nomadic people who endanger the European territory, until they are stopped by King Otto I and baptised. Terms such as ‘breaking’, ‘threatening’ and ‘attack’<sup>16</sup> from older textbooks are somewhat dampened in the newer textbooks. Hungarians are now ‘skilled horsemen and warriors’<sup>17</sup> whose ‘intrusion’<sup>18</sup> represents a ‘danger to German rulers’.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, Croatian military actions are never invasive: they are ‘defensive wars’, as stated in the subheading of the educational unit ‘The Croatian Kingdom in the Tenth Century’ in one of the textbooks.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, under the same subheading follows the somewhat contradictory statement that the military strength of King Tomislav enabled him to ‘expand Croatian boundaries’<sup>21</sup> at the expense of Hungarians and Bulgarians. When describing Tomislav's opponents, Hungarians are depicted as being even more brutal than when they first appeared. The same textbook states, ‘Hungarians first

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<sup>15</sup> Miroslav Šašić, Tomislav Šarlija, Damir Bulat, Šime Labor, Zdenko Samaržija, Vladimir Posavec.

<sup>16</sup> Petrić and Ravančić, *History 2*, 5; 38.

<sup>17</sup> Bulat et al., *History 2*, 22.

<sup>18</sup> Birin and Šarlija, *History 2*, 36.

<sup>19</sup> Bulat et al., 22.

<sup>20</sup> Petrić and Ravančić, 56.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

destroyed the Sclavinia of Lower Pannonia with their quick equestrian raids and killed its prince and soon began with raids on Croatian borders. However, Tomislav encountered them and skilfully repulsed their attacks, until they were completely expelled to the north.<sup>22</sup> For Mirošević, Šanjek and Mijatović, Hungarians represent an even greater threat. Because of the Hungarians and Bulgarians, the reign of King Tomislav is marked by ‘great dangers that threatened Croatia’, with the need to ‘preserve Croatian independence and statehood’.<sup>23</sup>

Even some newer textbooks that first depicted Hungarians as less brutal use the same strategy: ‘Hungarian ruler Arpad and his troops attacked and plundered the neighbouring nations during the first half of the tenth century. Crossing the river Drava, the Hungarian cavalry overran the Pannonian lowland and came to the Croatian border.’<sup>24</sup> In this way, a distinction is created between Croats who only defend their territory, on one hand, and raiding horde of Hungarians who attack Croatian borders, on the other. Thus, a manufactured (self)representation reflects the Croatian position of victim, who, before the attacks perpetrated by Others, is faced with a lack of support and understanding – a frequent (self)representation that serves as a leitmotif throughout all centuries of Croatian history.

However, this is not always the case. When describing King Tomislav's rule, Detling and Samaržija emphasise the lack of historical sources necessary for the reconstruction of that period of Croatian history.<sup>25</sup> The same holds true for the textbook by Posavec-Medić from 1997: stressing the lack of specific data, they are cautious in expressing views about Hungarians,<sup>26</sup> making this textbook an exception in the group of older textbooks.

### **Pacta conventa**

Entering the union with Hungarians in 1102 represents a traumatic moment for Croatian collective memory, following the death of two prominent figures, King Zvonimir and Petar Snačić. During the second half of the nineteenth century, especially in periods of political struggle with Hungarians over the precise terms of the union between

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Mirošević et al., *History for the Second Grade of High School*, 59.

<sup>24</sup> Bulat et al., 80.

<sup>25</sup> Detling and Samaržija, *Steps in Time*, 74/75.

<sup>26</sup> Posavec and Medić, *The Creation of European Civilisation and Culture (V.- XVIII. Century)*, 58.

the two realms, the mythical curse of King Zvonimir was widely accepted and recognised as the reason for existing discord among the Croatian people and their neighbours. According to the myth, Zvonimir cursed the Croatian people never to have a king of their own blood. This was used as justification for the centuries of foreign rule and the loss of independence. Modern Croatian historiography has rejected this legend as inaccurate, placing its origin in the fourteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

The context of the merger between the Croatian state and the Kingdom of Hungary at the turn of the eleventh and twelfth century can be sketched as follows. After Zvonimir's death in 1089 and the succession crisis, the widow of late King Zvonimir, Helen, offered her brother King Ladislaus the Croatian throne. His opposing candidate was King Petar, identified as viceroy (ban) Petar from the house of Snačić during the reign of King Zvonimir.<sup>28</sup>

In Croatian collective memory, the death of Petar Snačić on Mount Gvozd is seen as the death of the last Croatian king of national blood, marking the beginning of foreign rule as proclaimed in the King Zvonimir's curse. Consequently, the deaths of King Zvonimir and Petar Snačić are immortalised in the literary production of both the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century and are disseminated through popular folk songs, thus perpetuating the myth of the Croatian curse.<sup>29</sup> As far as image is concerned, King Zvonimir is predominantly represented during his coronation as confirmation of state and sovereignty, while the figure of Peter Snačić is regularly depicted at the moment of his death in the battle with Hungarian troops.

Following the death of Petar Snačić, the crown passed into the hands of the Árpád dynasty. The crowning of King Coloman of Hungary as King of Croatia and Dalmatia in Biograd marks the union between Croatia and Hungary. The exact terms of this union were often disputed in the political debate of the nineteenth century: the two kingdoms were united either by the choice of the Croatian nobility or by Hungarian force. The Croatian public emphasised the Croatian sovereignty embodied in King Zvonimir's crown, while Parliament advocated the free will of the Croatian people to choose a

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<sup>27</sup> Zdravka Jelaska Marijan, 'Interpretations of the Events of the Year 1102 in the History Textbooks, which Were Used in the Territory of the Present-day Republic of Croatia in the Period between World War I and the Year 2002', *Croatica Christiana Periodica* 27, no. 51 (2003): 189.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 197–200; Neven Budak and Tomislav Raukar, *Croatian History of the Middle Ages* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2006), 140.

<sup>29</sup> Divna Zečević, 'Literary Popularisation of Meaning and Destiny of King Zvonimir', in *Zvonimir, Croatian King*, ed. Ivo Goldstein (Zagreb: HAZU, Zavod za hrvatsku povijest, 1997), 328.

king. Acknowledgement of the personal union with the shared person of king led to a double crowning ceremony, one for Croatia and one for Hungary, resulting in ‘two crowns, Zvonimir's and Stephen's, reposing on one head’.<sup>30</sup> Croatian historiography supports the view of the union as a personal one in the form of a shared king, based on an agreement between Coloman and Croatian nobility. The *Pacta conventa*, the document in which King Coloman recognised autonomy and specific privileges of the twelve heads of the Croatian nobility, is today viewed as nothing more than a fourteenth-century nobility privilege. Although not an authentic document from 1102, the predominant view is that there was some sort of agreement that regulated the relations between Hungary and Croatia.<sup>31</sup>

History textbooks reflect a view of Croatian historiography that emphasises the independence of the Croatian state under Hungarian rule, marking three key points in favour of the Croatian position as a separate state: double-crowning ceremonies with the Hungarian and Croatian crown, the existence of a Croatian parliament (Sabor) and the position of a viceroy (ban).

The Birin and Šarlija textbook demystifies the period of Croatian history under Hungarian rule as a national tragedy – in contrast to Croatian collective memory under the influence of King Zvonimir’s curse – stating that foreign rule was nothing unusual for medieval states: ‘Medieval nobility did not have national consciousness in the modern sense, so their choice of rulers was not led by any national sentiment. Instead, they would choose the ruler who would have offered them more, making foreign rule in feudal society not at all uncommon. The kingdom into which Croatia entered in 1102 in the form of personal union was the best solution for the Croatian nobility, torn by internal conflicts.’<sup>32</sup> Regarding the *Pacta conventa*, the authors conclude that, although some sort of agreement between Coloman and Croatian nobility probably existed, it was not the text with the incipit *Qualiter*. Dismissing the view of older Croatian historiography, which saw the *Pacta conventa* as a legally binding contract between the two kingdoms, Birin and Šarlija state that this is a typical privilege reserved only for the nobility – namely, it is a document created in the fourteenth century with the intention

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<sup>30</sup> Agneza Szabo, 'Croatian Public of the Nineteenth Century about King Zvonimir', in *Zvonimir, Croatian King*, ed. Ivo Goldstein (Zagreb: HAZU, Zavod za hrvatsku povijest, 1997), 313.

<sup>31</sup> Budak and Raukar, *Croatian History of the Middle Ages*, 145; 153.

<sup>32</sup> Birin and Šarlija, 117.

to prove that the liberties of some major Croatian kin originated in the time of Coloman.<sup>33</sup>

The same approach can be seen in other textbooks. Gračanin, Petrić and Ravančić emphasise the ‘personal union and administrative distinctiveness of the Croatian kingdom’,<sup>34</sup> discarding the *Pacta conventa* as a later noble privilege but assuming the existence of some agreement between the two parties. Under the paragraph that quotes an excerpt from the *Pacta conventa*, students are confronted with the question: can this be considered a public contract, or is this just the creation of a senior-vassal relationship?<sup>35</sup> The Detling and Samaržija textbook shares the same view of the nature of the relationship between the Croatian and the Hungarian state, though they do not make the distinction between a twelfth-century agreement between Coloman and the Croatian nobility and the fourteenth-century *Pacta conventa*.

Similar to the textbook written by Gračanin, Petrić and Ravančić, the textbook by Bulat, Labor and Šašić integrates the work on critical understanding of primary sources as part of preparation for state graduation. This is the reason why *Pacta conventa* is not mentioned in the body of the text but singled out in a *Dossier*, a section of the textbook for students who want to deepen their knowledge, and in the section *Methods*, intended for critical evaluation of primary sources. While the *Dossier* states that the *Pacta conventa* is not an authentic document presuming the existence of an agreement between two parties in some form, *Methods* juxtaposes the text of the *Pacta conventa* with another charter on noble privilege from the fourteenth century, encouraging students to compare and analyse the two documents.

Older history textbooks offer conflicting views about Croatia entering the union with Hungary. Mirošević, Šanjek and Mijatović state in their textbook that ‘After nearly three centuries, Croatia has lost its independence. In the subsequent years, Croats will be forced to fight for the preservation and recognition of their statehood, which they have never given up. In spite of this, the size and glory of the Croatian state after 1102 gradually faded.’<sup>36</sup> In contrast, Petrić and Ravančić and Posavec and Medić, respectively, are not as negative in their evaluation of Hungarian rule: ‘The rise of the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>34</sup> Gračanin et al., 112.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>36</sup> Mirošević et al., 149.

Arpad dynasty on the Croatian throne did not present a collapse of the Croatian state, because foreign rule was nothing unusual in medieval Europe.<sup>37</sup>

### Conclusion

The image of tenth-century Hungarians remains a constant in Croatian history textbooks. These textbooks depict them as raiders who endanger Croatian and European borders, doing so with a tendency to describe them as more brutal, when confronted with the Croats during the reign of King Tomislav. Additionally, all textbooks agree on Croatia having voluntarily entered the union with Hungary, based on some sort of agreement between King Coloman and the Croatian nobility, reflecting the stand of Croatian historiography on that issue. Controversial and unresolved issues in the Croatian historiography, especially in the case of the *Pacta conventa*, are simply left out of history textbooks, which can be explained by the need to unburden the educational content. However, history textbooks diverge on the evaluation of the events following the year 1102. Mirošević, Šanjek and Mijatović are alone in their view of Croatian decline under Hungarian rule, while the other textbooks dismiss the popular belief that Croatia's entering the joint state with Hungary was a national tragedy.

Nationalist views expressed in the textbook by Mirošević, Šanjek and Mijatović are a result of the political climate in which the textbook was written. After all, Franko Mirošević was the editor of history textbooks in the main publishing house Školska knjiga from 1991 to 1998. Franjo Šanjek was a theologian and Professor at the Faculty of Theology, while Anđelko Mijatović came from the circle close to the first Croatian president Franjo Tuđman, to whom he was cultural advisor from 1990 to 1999. The return of nationalism during the 1990s is one of the characteristics of the new societies created after the collapse of communist regimes, not only in Croatia. The Middle Ages were extensively used by the political circle around president Franjo Tuđman, himself a historian by profession, for the creation of symbols of national identity, especially through prominent historical figures such as King Tomislav and King Zvonimir, recalling the glorious times of the Croatian state.

And yet, despite the efforts of historiography to shed light on mystified events and historical figures, they still persist in public discourse and collective memory. Although

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<sup>37</sup> Posavec and Medić, 126.

the history textbooks currently in use may try to present a differentiated picture of the centuries common to both Croats and Hungarians, the perspective of the general public seems to have remained rather narrow-minded. Whereas in the school system one cannot bypass the historical ties between Croats and Hungarians, awareness of the eight centuries of common history has almost completely disappeared from the national memory of both sides.<sup>38</sup> This kind of amnesia is clearly visible in Croatian collective memory: for example, through the naming of public spaces; there is no reference to this period and deserving Hungarian kings – and therefore also Croatian kings – on Croatian streets or squares. The case is more surprising considering, for example, that King Ladislaus founded the bishopric of Zagreb, while King Bela IV was instrumental in the development of Gradec, part of Zagreb and the future Croatian political centre, as well as Slavonia.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The workshop ‘Hungarian Legacy in Southeastern Europe’, held in Budapest in 1999, analysed the way in which the states that had been under Hungarian rule represent this part of their nation's history in history textbooks. Although they all share an equal amount of poor memory of events, it is evident that the Croatian history textbooks on the common history with Hungarians seem less averse to this history than other educational systems; Neven Budak, ‘Croatian Identity and History’, in *Identity as Educational Value*, ed. Valentina Blaženka Mandarić and Ružica Razum (Zagreb: Glas Koncila, 2011), 115.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 115/116. See also: Borislav Grgin, ‘An Example of Selective Memory: Croatian Medieval Rulers in the Names of the Streets and Squares of the Most Important Croatian Cities’, *Povijesni prilozi* 32 (2007): 283–295.

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Sergej Filipović

## **The Image of Croatia's Medieval Neighbours in History Textbooks**

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**Abstract**

This article investigates how Central European neighbours are presented in history textbooks handling medieval history from a Croatian perspective – that is, how Croatian textbooks depict Croatian medieval neighbours, specifically Hungary, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and vice versa, and how Croatia is depicted in the textbooks of Serbia, Bosnia and Slovenia. There are many discrepancies to be found, which can be attributed to the different perspectives but also the needs of everyday politics.

**Introduction**

History and politics intertwine and are often inseparable from each other. At the same time, history influences politics, and politics influences history. This is particularly noticeable in history textbooks. While scholarly research is intended for small groups of people and for experts, history textbooks are written for a broader group. They serve as a basis for the transfer of ideology that is to be instilled in the mind of every citizen of the country for which the textbook is written. Moreover, history textbooks often lack a methodological basis and a scientific apparatus, which allows for a manipulation of their content, in accordance with already-established educational goals. In a way, every new textbook is history written all over again. To substantiate this, we can look at the history books written over the last hundred years. They often view the same event in diametrically opposed ways (for example, the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Croatian textbooks). The question is, how far does the adjustment of history to contemporary political and social circumstances go? In this paper, I will try to illustrate how Central European neighbours are presented in the history textbooks dealing with medieval history from a Croatian perspective – that is, how Croatian textbooks depict Croatian medieval neighbours, specifically Hungary, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina with whom Croatia shares a great part of its history. I will also try to show how Croatia is presented in the history textbooks of its neighbours, and how Croatia's neighbours exhibit different views on the same territories.

For the purpose of this study, nine high school textbooks were studied, five of them Croatian, two Serbian, one Bosnian and one Slovenian.

***The Textbooks***

All Croatian textbooks were published in Zagreb; the first, *History 2*,<sup>1</sup> was published in 2009 by Alfa and written by Ante Birin, member of the Croatian Institute of History, and Tomislav Šarlija, a secondary school teacher. The second Croatian textbook<sup>2</sup> with the same title was written by a group of history teachers, Damir Bulat, Šime Labor and Miroslav Šašić. It was published in 2012 by Profil. The third textbook,<sup>3</sup> also of the same title, was written by professors at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, Hrvoje Gračanin and Hrvoje Petrić, and by Gordan Ravančić, researcher at the Croatian Institute of History. It was published by Meridijani in 2014. The fourth textbook<sup>4</sup> is titled *Steps Through Time II* and was written by Denis Detling and Zdenko Samaržija, both history professors and researchers, published by Školska knjiga in 2014. The impression is that, of these textbooks, the first and second are influenced strongly by politics, while the third and fourth are under little influence. The last textbook used is *Historical Review for Vocational Schools*<sup>5</sup> by Željko Holjevac and Hrvoje Petrić, both from the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, published by Meridijani in 2013. This textbook, unlike those previous, which are used for gymnasium (four-year high school), is intended for history classes in two-year high schools and contains little information about medieval Croatian neighbours.

From Serbian high school textbooks the first two to be analysed were, firstly, the textbook<sup>6</sup> from the researcher and Byzantine studies scholar, Srđan Pirivatrić, and, secondly, the textbook<sup>7</sup> from the professors on the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, Smilja Marjanović-Dušanić and Marko Šuica. Both textbooks are titled *History II* and were published in Belgrade in 2014 by Klett and Textbooks Bureau, respectively.

The only Bosnian textbook used was *History II*<sup>8</sup> by Esad Karić and Samir Hajrulahović, published in Sarajevo in 2007 by Sarajevo Publishing. The Slovenian textbook *History II*,<sup>9</sup> by Dušan Mlacović and Nataša Urankar and published in Ljubljana by DZS in 2014, was also studied. All of these textbooks were approved by the Ministries of Education of the relevant countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Ante Birin and Tomislav Šarlija, *Povijest 2* (Zagreb: Alfa, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Damir Bulat et al., *Povijest 2* (Zagreb: Profil, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Hrvoje Gračanin et al., *Povijest 2* (Zagreb: Meridijani, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Denis Detling and Zdenko Samaržija, *Koraci kroz vrijeme 2* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Željko Holjevac and Hrvoje Petrić, *Povijesni pregled za strukovne škole* (Zagreb: Meridijani, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Srđan Pirivatrić, *Istorija II* (Beograd: Klett, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Smilja Marjanović-Dušanić and Marko Šuica, *Istorija II* (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Esad Karić and Samir Hajrulahović, *Historija 2* (Sarajevo: Sarajevo Publishing, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Dušan Mlacović and Nataša Urankar, *Zgodovina 2* (Ljubljana: DZS, 2014).

### **Croatian History Textbooks about the Neighbours**

Croatian history textbooks, as might be expected, are mostly concerned with countries with which Croatia formed a common state for the longest period of time or, related to the current political situation, with countries where the largest number of Croats live today.

#### **Hungary**

Hungarians are often mentioned in the textbooks simply because Croats and Hungarians lived from 1102 until 1918 in the same kingdom. Therefore, a great part of the work written is related to Croatian-Hungarian relations. Regarding stereotypes used when describing Hungary and Hungarians, they are much more present in textbooks concerned with the nineteenth century and the question of national formation. However, a few points for the period of the Middle Ages can be gleaned from the text. The first point is the depiction of Hungarians upon their arrival to the Pannonian Plain in the ninth century. This depiction can be viewed positively, when they are described as skilful horsemen and warriors,<sup>10</sup> or it can be viewed negatively, when they are described as robbers whose looting raids contributed particularly to the general disarray of the West in the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>11</sup>

The next important moment is the depiction of the first conflicts between Hungarians and Croats during the reign of King Tomislav (910–28). All textbooks report that Tomislav successfully defeated the Hungarians and expanded the territory of the Croatian state. However, the textbook by Birin and Šarlija further calls attention to Croatian supremacy in the conflict, citing a source saying, ‘Tomislav has fought many wars with the Hungarian King Arpad, but he was such a powerful warrior that he always put him to flight’.<sup>12</sup> The reason for such opinion can be found, if we remember that for a long time, Croats were often in a subordinate position or were even oppressed by Hungarians. Therefore, there is a need to emphasise the historical moment when Hungarians were the weaker.

As was already mentioned, Croats and Hungarians entered into a mutual common state in 1102 with the contract *Pacta conventa*. This leads us to the next crucial point in

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<sup>10</sup> Bulat et al., *Povijest 2*, 22.

<sup>11</sup> Birin and Šarlija, *Povijest 2*, 35.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

the depiction of Hungarians in Croatian textbooks: is the *Pacta conventa* a real contract or a forgery, and what was the position of Croats in the Hungarian-Croatian Kingdom? The majority of textbooks deny the authenticity of the *Pacta conventa* and consider it a forgery or a charter made in the fourteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Only one textbook does not question its having been signed in 1102.<sup>14</sup> What all five textbooks have in common is the attempt to demonstrate that the position of Croatia in this common state was not a subordinate but an equal position, and that it was a special part of the country, related to Hungary only through personal union, which becomes important for later Hungarian-Croatian relations.<sup>15</sup>

The reign of the Hungarian Arpad dynasty is depicted quite neutrally and realistically. Later, King Matthias I (Matija Korvin) is mentioned as an extremely positive ruler, as Hungary bloomed both economically and culturally during his reign, as did Croatia.<sup>16</sup>

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

One of the Croatian neighbours most often mentioned in the textbooks is Bosnia and Herzegovina. The reason for its frequent mention, even the dedication of whole chapters to it, lies in the contemporary political situation, as well as in the fact that many Croats still live there. Most of them consider Croatia their homeland, rather than the country where they live. Besides, during the First World War, the so-called Independent State of Croatia, a Fascist satellite of Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy, existed on the territory of present-day Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This makes Bosnia part of Croatia in recent historical memory.

The mere fact that four textbooks contain chapters about Bosnia and Herzegovina,<sup>17</sup> with two of them containing two whole chapters on the region,<sup>18</sup> points to the importance of Bosnia in the programme of history teaching. Chapters about Bosnia are mostly included in sections concerned with Croatian history and not with the history of other countries. As to the contents, the chapters include the traditional territory of the first Bosnian state, its most significant rulers, and the religious, social and cultural image of medieval Bosnia. In all textbooks, connections to Croatia are shown. One text-

<sup>13</sup> Gračanin et al., *Povijest 2*, 112; Birin and Šarlija, 119; Bulat et al., 163.

<sup>14</sup> Detling and Samaržija, *Koraci kroz vrijeme 2*, 72.

<sup>15</sup> Holjevac and Petrić, *Povijesni pregled za strukovne škole*, 55; Birin and Šarlija, 120; Gračanin et al., 111–112; Bulat et al., 158–159; Detling and Samaržija, 120. For a more detailed discussion, see the essay of Viktorija Antolković above.

<sup>16</sup> Birin and Šarlija, 135; Detling and Samaržija, 140.

<sup>17</sup> Gračanin et al. 134–141; Birin and Šarlija, 141–148.

<sup>18</sup> Detling and Samaržija, 133–136; Bulat et al., 134–139.

book states that ‘medieval Bosnians have a common origin with the Croats’.<sup>19</sup> Another states that Cyrillic script, adapted to Bosnian circumstances, is also called ‘Bosnian Cyrillic script’ or ‘Croatian Cyrillic script’ (in another textbook, it is called ‘Bosnian Cyrillic script’),<sup>20</sup> considering that ‘Bosnia was mostly ruled by and under the cultural influence of the medieval Croatian state’.<sup>21</sup> The third textbook also talks about the Croatian character of Bosnia, mentioning that Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos regarded the western parts of Bosnia as Croatian. The textbook goes on to state that the Croatian King Michael Krešimir IV acquired the whole territory of Bosnia and that this territory was under Croatian rule at the time of Peter Krešimir IV and Demetrius Zvonimir.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, it mentions the impact of the Franciscans through which the Catholic population of Bosnia was marked as Croats, because it is claimed that the Franciscans’ ‘merit in the preservation of Croatian national identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina was priceless’.<sup>23</sup>

As for the cultural image of medieval Bosnia, it is positively portrayed, and the most famous monuments, such as Stećak or Kulin’s Plate, are highlighted. Kulin, who was a Bosnian ruler before Bosnia became a kingdom, is also mentioned in the context of good relations with Dubrovnik. During the reign of Ninoslav, Croatia and Hungary attacked Bosnia to put an end to Bosnian heresy. Moreover, the authors declare Bosnia during the reign of King Stephen Tvrtko I to be ‘the leading force in Southeast Europe’.<sup>24</sup>

The only textbook not trying to exhibit the Croatian character of Bosnia and the only textbook that seeks to be completely neutral is the Gračanin-Petrić–Ravančić textbook. There is no evidence that the authors try to highlight Croatian influence on Bosnia, in contrast to the others, as seen in previous examples.

## **Serbia**

The third neighbour of Croatia that may be expected to receive significant exposure in the textbooks is Serbia. The Serbs are, even today, the largest minority in Croatia, and for the almost the entire twentieth century, Croatia and Serbia lived in a common state – first in the kingdom and then in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. However,

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<sup>19</sup> Detling and Samaržija, 133.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>21</sup> Bulat et al., 93.

<sup>22</sup> Birin and Šarlija, 141.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

the textbooks mention Serbs only briefly, using only political history. It also seems that the significance of the country of Serbia is understated. The reason for this is surely the tense relations between the two nations over the last century, culminating in the war of the 1990s.

Most textbooks mention the founding of the Serbian state, Raška, and its first rulers, Stefan Nemanja and Stefan Nemanjić. Yet, while the importance of Croats in the Hungarian-Croatian State is emphasised, the importance of the Serbs is minimised – for example, by pointing out that the Byzantine Empire and Bulgaria appointed their candidates to the throne of Raška.<sup>25</sup> The negative attitude towards the Serbs is apparent, when Birin and Šarlija do not at all mention the most powerful Serbian ruler, Dušan, while others refer to him without any value judgement.<sup>26</sup> Only one textbook refers to him in a positive sense, introducing an excerpt from Dušan's Code.<sup>27</sup>

Examples where the Croats acted positively towards the Serbs can also be found, but no examples for the reverse. How Croatian King Tomislav received the Serbian prince Zaharije, who fled from Bulgarians, is mentioned in all gymnasium textbooks. It is also mentioned in all gymnasium textbooks that, in the end, it was Tomislav who defeated the Bulgarians, not the Serbs.<sup>28</sup> While it was a minor episode, it is characteristic that this event is elaborated upon, as Tomislav's aiding the Serbian prince documents Croatian good will towards the Serbs (in contrast to their behaviour towards Croats in Yugoslavia). It also documents that they were better warriors: Zaharija is forced to flee from the Bulgarians, and Tomislav defeats them. One might say that this is farfetched, but in combination with the brief reference to the significant Dušan, mention of the insignificant Zaharije becomes significant. Also mentioned in every high school textbook is the defeat of the Serbs by the Ottomans in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, which is again characteristic, considering that many Serbian historians deny their defeat in this battle. This story is also well known to the Croatian public.

### **Slovenia**

Slovenians and Slovenia, Croatia's neighbours with whom Croatia also spent the twentieth century in a common state, is hardly mentioned in Croatian medieval textbooks. Detling and Samaržija address them to some extent, more when they give a brief over-

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<sup>25</sup> Birin and Šarlija, 84.

<sup>26</sup> Bulat et al., 139; Detling and Samaržija, 110–111.

<sup>27</sup> Gračanin et al., 79, 82.

<sup>28</sup> Birin and Šarlija, 53; Gračanin et al., 47; Bulat et al., 80; Detling and Samaržija, 64.

view of the states that ruled over Carantania.<sup>29</sup> The textbook from Bulat, Labor and Šašić<sup>30</sup> also writes about Carantania, while other textbooks refer to the Slovenians only in the context of the Counts of Celje,<sup>31</sup> who also had estates in Croatia.

### **Other Central European Countries**

Other Central European countries mentioned in Croatian medieval textbooks, even though they do not share a border with Croatia, are the Holy Roman Empire, Great Moravia, Bohemia and Poland. All of these countries are presented without value judgement, though the overall image of the German-Roman Empire is generally positive, because it is shown as a developed and powerful country. Detling and Samaržija write positively about Bohemia, especially about the founding of the University of Prague and Prague itself as 'one of the intellectual centres of Europe',<sup>32</sup> while Bulat, Labor and Šašić call it one of the most liberal countries of the Christian world in the Middle Ages.<sup>33</sup> As for Poland and Great Moravia, one gets the impression that they were weaker countries, more dependent on the strength of their neighbours than on their own strength. However, I believe that value judgements expressed towards these Central European countries in the Middle Ages are not interesting enough to be further analysed here. The reason is that these countries are presented in a manner of pure fact of political history.

### **View of Croatia from Its Neighbours' Textbooks**

Two Serbian textbooks, one Bosnian and one Slovenian, were analysed. Serbian textbooks hardly make reference to Croats and Croatia. Croats are mentioned in the context of common immigration from their original homeland, as a response to the call of the Emperor Heraclius, to the area they inhabited between the river Cetina and the mountains of Velebit, and between the rivers Sava and Drava.<sup>34</sup> The only additional aspect related to Croatia mentioned in both textbooks is Croatia's inclusion in the common state with Hungary. Yet, unlike the Croatian textbooks, the personal union goes unmentioned. What is mentioned is that Croatia has become part of the Hungarian Kingdom. Pirivatrić also gives the inaccurate information that the Croatian nobility acknowledged

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<sup>29</sup> Detling and Samaržija, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Bulat et al., 24.

<sup>31</sup> Birin and Šarlija, 134; Gračanin et al., 46.

<sup>32</sup> Detling and Samaržija, 109.

<sup>33</sup> Bulat et al., 126.

<sup>34</sup> Pirivatrić, *Istorija II*, 96; Marjanović-Dušanić and Šuica, *Istorija II*, 67.

Ladislav Arpadović (King St. Ladislav I) as king.<sup>35</sup> Even though both textbooks deal with Slavic countries, such as Great Moravia, Bohemia and Poland (though without expressing value judgement), they do not deal with Croatia separately. The Croats in the Serbian medieval history textbooks are mentioned even less than the Serbs in the Croatian textbooks, where Serbia is presented more or less as with other Central European Slavic countries, albeit with perhaps more value judgement. The act of not including Croatia says a lot. Furthermore, the negative relationship towards Croatia can be seen in Pirivatrić's omission of the Croatian kings, whereas Marjanović and Dušanić and Šuica, respectively, refer only to Tomislav as a successful warrior against the Bulgarians,<sup>36</sup> also making mention of the fact that, during his reign, Croatia reached its full power. It is interesting that the Serbian prince Zaharije depicted in the Croatian textbooks is not mentioned in the Serbian textbooks. Is this because he was not that important to the authors, or was it because Tomislav helped him? This is up for debate. Also, though the Battle of Kosovo is described in detail, the participation of the Croats, led by Ivan Horvat as allies of Prince Lazar of Serbia, has been left out.

In addition to the above, a serious problem in Serbian and Croatian textbooks of medieval history is that they have different views on the same territories. A very good example of this is the Neretva principality or Pagania. While Croats consider it to be Croatian,<sup>37</sup> Serbs consider it to be Serbian.<sup>38</sup> It is very obvious in Serbian textbooks that they consider some territories to be theirs, especially in the textbook from Pirivatrić, who demonstrates that this is the case with *sclavinias* Zahumlje, Konavle, Travunija, etc.<sup>39</sup> The same occurs with Bosnia, which he, without any doubt, considers to be part of Raška, also adding that the Bosnian rulers called their subjects Serbs.<sup>40</sup> Marjanović and Dušanić and Šuica, respectively, are more careful, citing that Bosnia changed many masters, among others Duklja, Hungary and Byzantium. Croatia, however, is not mentioned,<sup>41</sup> even though it is quite certain that some Croatian kings ruled Bosnia. A special case is Dubrovnik, now part of Croatia, which Croatian textbooks regard, without question, as one of the cradles of Croatian culture. Both Serbian textbooks have a chapter

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<sup>35</sup> Marjanović-Dušanić and Šuica, 184; Pirivatrić, 188–189.

<sup>36</sup> Marjanović-Dušanić and Šuica, 67, 69.

<sup>37</sup> Birin and Šarlija, 48.

<sup>38</sup> Marjanović-Dušanić and Šuica, 67; Pirivatrić, 49.

<sup>39</sup> Pirivatrić, 49.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 96, 216, 218.

<sup>41</sup> Marjanović-Dušanić, 72.

that concerns Dubrovnik,<sup>42</sup> but they more or less openly suggest that Dubrovnik is a Serbian town, especially when they call it the centre of Serbian culture and fail to mention it in the Croatian context.<sup>43</sup>

The Bosnian textbook analysed, unlike the Serbian and the majority of the Croatian textbooks, seeks to reconcile all sides, taking into account that present-day Bosnia-Herzegovina consists of three ethnic peoples, equal under the constitution: Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. In order to please everyone, the textbook is written partly in Latin and partly in Cyrillic, which already sends a certain message. Croatia and Serbia are also considered to be Bosnia's most important neighbours of the Middle Ages.<sup>44</sup>

As for Croatia, the textbook mentions the territorial area, without going into detail about the dispute between Croatian and Serbian historiography. The Croatian rulers referenced are only the most important: Tomislav, Petar Krešimir IV and Demetrius Zvonimir. Additionally, the Bosnian textbook recognises that Bosnia was part of Croatia, though also that parts of Croatia were Bosnian, as well. The case is the same for Serbia. Moreover, Croatian cultural influence on Bosnia is also recognised, as it transferred Croatia's own culture, as well as the culture of Western Europe, the Mediterranean and Central Europe, permeated by Catholicism, to Bosnia.<sup>45</sup>

In the Slovenian textbook, Croatia is non-existent, barring the conflict between the Croatian noble Frankapan family with the Counts of Celje.<sup>46</sup> The reason for this probably lies in contemporary Slovenian politics, which is more focused on Slovenia's northern and western neighbours.

## Conclusion

From the nine examined history textbooks concerning the Middle Ages, we can draw the conclusion that the image of one's neighbour is often associated with the image of oneself – that is, the image of the neighbour is viewed from one's own perspective, not by objective indicators from an impartial point of view. On the other hand, those neighbours who are less important from the perspective of the history of politics are given less space, but also a less biased presentation. Moreover, most textbooks are under the influence of the contemporary political situation and the events of recent history. Thus

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<sup>42</sup> Marjanović-Dušanić and Šuica, 192–195; Pirivatrić, 223–230.

<sup>43</sup> Pirivatrić, 228.

<sup>44</sup> Karić and Hajrulahović, *Historija 2*, 150.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 150–151.

<sup>46</sup> Macović and Urankar, *Zgodovina 2*, 154–155.

we encounter a paradox in which the events that happened twenty years ago influence the events from a thousand years ago. Nevertheless, the medieval chapters are somewhat less concerned with the politics of history than the sections covering the last two centuries.

In comparison, Croatian textbooks try to be neutral and to avoid stereotypes. They occasionally fail, however – especially the textbooks by Birin and Šarlija and by Bulat, Labor and Šašić. On its way to excluding politics from history textbooks is the textbook by Gračanin, Petrić and Ravančić, even though the influence of politics can also sometimes be detected in its content. Serbian textbooks are slightly behind Croatian textbooks on this point, because they are under the more powerful influence of politics – in particular, Pirivatrić's textbook – while also trying to be unbiased. The Bosnian textbook attempts an impartial look at history, but even this attempt of neutrality is affected by the politics that seek to calm the situation between the three ethnic constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Slovenian textbook ignores its southeastern neighbours and, as such, is also in the service of the politics that try to turn towards Western and Central Europe and away from Southeastern Europe completely.

All in all, it will be a long road to create more realistic and unbiased textbooks, without stereotypes and prejudices. Controversial issues have to be solved by detached, scholarly research. Textbooks could at least point out the possible solutions. For this, textbook authors (and official curricula) must get rid of political pressures that want history to be in the service of everyday politics. Maybe, sometime, such cooperation as there once was between Germans and Poles would lead to joint textbooks in the north-western Balkans.

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## **Competing Historical Narratives in Russian Textbooks**

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## **Abstract**

This essay argues that the history of neighbours in Russian history textbooks is presented mainly from the point of view of the Russian state. In the beginning, Scandinavia is featured; later, it is largely the western territories that appear, annexed by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. While the handbook for teachers is formulated in a more patriotic vein, the textbooks reflect the various views of their authors.

## **Introduction**

Russia is a country located at the crossroads of ancient trade routes from north to south (the trade route from the Varangians to the Greeks) and from west to east. At the same time, it is a border state, straddling both Asia and Europe. In historical perspective, this fact has affected the cultural formation of Russia and the Russian people, as well as of Russia's neighbours.

Special relations developed between Russia and her European neighbours. In Russia, Europe is regarded as something distant, even something of an alternative to Russia. This point of view can be seen most clearly in the works of the leading Russian philosophers –for instance, in *Russia and Europe*, by Nikolay Yakovlevich Danilevsky, who considered the ‘young’ Slavic civilisation to have its own special path, as an alternative to the ‘old’ Roman-Germanic world.<sup>1</sup> Russian popular consciousness still regards everything situated beyond the European borders of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldavia (i.e., to the west of the Commonwealth of Independent States [CIS]), as ‘European’.

## **Textbooks and Handbooks**

### **Russia and Its Neighbours**

History, as an academic discipline, emerged in Russia in the eighteenth century, when a professional approach toward studying the past of the Russians and other people of the Russian state, as well as of other states and nations, first appeared. Beginning with the first Russian historian, Vasily Nikitich Tatishchev, the history of Russia was studied primarily as the history of the Russian nation and the Russian state. Russian history began to be studied separately from world history, the history of other states.

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<sup>1</sup> Nikolai Yakovlevich Danilevskij, *Россия и Европа: Взгляд на культурные и политические отношения славянского мира к Германно-Романскому* [Russia and Europe: An Inquiry into the Cultural and Political Relationship of the Slavs to the Germano-Latin World] (Sankt-Petersburg: N. Strahov, 1895).

The medieval Russian state (*Kievan Rus*) gave birth to the modern states of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus; later, the Russian imperial state (initially in the form of the empire governed by the Romanov dynasty, and later as the USSR) encompassing almost all the territories of medieval *Rus*, appeared on historical stage. The common political space shared by the Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian nations found its way into the system of teaching of history in Russia. As a result, following the same logic, the histories of Baltic nations, including the Lithuanian state, appear in the context of Russian history.

The history of Poland (most of whose territories belonged to the Russian Empire for a time), in the context of the history of the foreign Slavic nations, is regarded as being a more distant neighbour of the contemporary Russian Federation. Moreover, the period before the partition of *Rzeczpospolita* (the Polish-Lithuanian state) by Russia, Austria and Prussia is considered to be the medieval history of Poland. Medieval history of the ancestors of modern Finns is viewed only in the context of relations between the Russians (and their ancestors, the Slavic tribes) and the Finno-Ugric tribes, and only within the limits of Russian history. The history of the most northern neighbour of the Russian Federation, Norway, finds its way into the textbook only in the context of global history and the history of the Scandinavian nations, beginning with the Great Migration.

### **General Principles of Russian Textbooks**

Since modernity, the knowledge of national history – understood as the history of certain lands and peoples within territorial borders – dominates the methods of history teaching. Just as in his book *Nationalism and Modernism*, Anthony Smith writes that ‘in history, for example, the standard textbook by Lavissee was circulated for all French schoolchildren at various grades, and its message of French grandeur and territorial integrity became an important element in French national consciousness for succeeding generations’.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in Russian textbooks, the earlier best practices became the basis for subsequent developments, and even the very structure of the presentation of material continued to be formed in Soviet textbooks. The Soviet patriotism of history textbooks, presented in Stalin’s times, was in fact rooted in the traditions of the textbooks created during the epoch of the Russian Empire.

Russian history textbooks are based on the didactic approach to the teaching of history. In other words, the student's age-related cognitive and psychological capabilities

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<sup>2</sup>Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 39.

are taken into consideration while forming an educative discourse. Simultaneously, the methods of popular science in the representation of history clarify and ease mastery of the material, while the use of appropriate artistic illustrations imprints vivid images of important historical events in the minds of students.

### **Time Allocation for Medieval History Classes in Russian Schools**

Presently, instruction in history in Russia is divided into two parts, general or world history and the history of Russia. History is taught for seven years, but the same topics are covered twice, during this period: initially, in the framework of the basic course, lasting from fifth to ninth grade (i.e., under the compulsory educational program), and for a second time in the last two grades, tenth and eleventh. The teaching of Russian history begins in the sixth grade after passing a course on ancient history (from the origins of human civilisation to the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476) in the fifth grade.

Starting from the sixth grade, general history focuses on the history of European states and nations, though the history of the rest of world is not omitted. Judging by the number of class hours, a considerable part (sometimes even a greater share of classes) is dedicated to the history of Russia. The size of the country and its geographical location between East and West makes it possible to consider Russia as a special historical civilisation. For instance, in Europe, it was predominantly nation-states that emerged throughout history, while Russia remained a multinational entity. Therefore, it is the state's borders that define the borders of history in Russia.

Medieval history is taught in sixth and seventh grade and once again in the tenth year of the curriculum. Furthermore, in the high school years, much more attention is paid to the history of Russia, as this discipline is included in the mandatory subjects of the Common State Examination.

The aim of this study is to analyse the image of the history of Russia's neighbours on the basis of textbooks on Russian and world histories. We have analysed the textbooks included in the list of the school textbooks recommended by the Russian Ministry of Education<sup>3</sup> – namely, *The History of Russia: From Ancient Times to the End of the*

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<sup>3</sup>Ministry of Education and Sciences, *The Order on Amendments to the Federal List of Textbooks Recommended for Use in the Implementation of State-Accredited Educational Programs of Primary General, Basic General, and Secondary Education No. 327*, 31 March, 2014, accessed 3 January 2016, [http://www.roipkpro.ru/images/stories/docs/biblioteka/normativka/2015/pr\\_576.pdf](http://www.roipkpro.ru/images/stories/docs/biblioteka/normativka/2015/pr_576.pdf).

*Sixteenth Century* by Alexander Danilov and Ludmila Kosulina;<sup>4</sup> *The History of Russia to the End of the Sixteenth Century* by Alexander Kiselev and Vasily Popov;<sup>5</sup> *Global History. The History of the Middle Ages* by Yekaterina Agibalova and Grigory Donskoy;<sup>6</sup> *The History of the Middle Ages* by Michail Boitsov and Rustam Shukurov;<sup>7</sup> and *The History of Russia. Textbook for Teachers* by Vardan Bagdasaryan.<sup>8</sup>

It is worth noting that the section on medieval history in *The History of Russia: From Ancient Times to the End of the Sixteenth Century* was prepared by the medievalist Ludmila Kosulina, while the similar section of the textbook by Alexander Kiselev and Vasily Popov was written by Vladimir Popov. Therefore, the present study refers to the positions expressed on certain issues by one of the two co-authors.

## **The Image of Russia's Neighbours in Russian History Textbooks**

### **Scandinavians and Slavs**

The central subject in early medieval history of Rus' is the creation of a unified state by the Eastern Slavs. The approach of historians to this is quite varied. Since it is intrinsically connected to the role of non-Slavs (Scandinavians), its discussion can be seen as that pertaining to neighbours. Thus Ludmila Kosulina adheres to the so-called Normanist theory, connecting the association of the East Slavic tribes into a single state with the advent of the Varangian Rurik dynasty. In her opinion, the Rus' people were a part of the Normans who had settled in the lands of the Eastern Slavs.<sup>9</sup> Evgenij Pchelov also considers the Variangians to be 'ancestors of the Swedes, Danes and Norwegians',<sup>10</sup> while Vasily Popov firmly takes the Anti-Normanist position, regarding the Variangians

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<sup>4</sup>Alexander Anatol'yevich Danilov and Ludmila Genad'yevna Kosulina, *История России с древнейших времён до конца XVI века, 6 класс* [The History of Russia, from Ancient Times to the End of the Sixteenth Century. Textbook for the Sixth Grade] (Moscow: Prosvesh'enie, 2012).

<sup>5</sup>Alexander Fedotovitch Kiselev and Vasily Petrovitch Popov, *История России до XVI века. 6 класс* [The History of Russia to the End of the Sixteenth Century. Textbook for the Sixth Grade] (Moscow: Drofa, 2012).

<sup>6</sup>Yekaterina Vasil'yevna Agibalova and Grigory Markovich Donskoy, *Всеобщая история. История средних веков. 6 класс* [Global History. History of the Middle Ages. Textbook for the Sixth Grade] (Moscow: Prosvesh'enie, 2012).

<sup>7</sup>Michail Anatol'yevich Boitsov and Rustam Muhammadovich Shukurov, *История средних веков. Учебник для 7 класса* [The History of the Middle Ages. Textbook for the Seventh Grade] (Moscow: Moskovskij Institut Razvitiya Obrazovatelnykh Sistem, 1995), accessed 10 January 2016, [http://www.gumer.info/bibliotek\\_Buks/History/boic\\_istr/04.php](http://www.gumer.info/bibliotek_Buks/History/boic_istr/04.php).

<sup>8</sup>Vardan Ernestovich Bagdasaryan, *История России. Учебник для учителя* [The History of Russia. The Textbook for Teachers] (Moscow: Nauchnyj Expert, 2013), accessed 10 January 2016, <http://rusrand.ru/files/history/03-XIII vek.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup>Danilevskij, *Россия и Европа* [Russia and Europe], 26.

<sup>10</sup>Evgenij Vladimirovich Pchelov, *История России с древнейших времён до конца XVI века. 6 класс* [History of Russia, from Ancient Times to the End of the Sixteenth Century. Textbook for the Sixth Grade] (Moscow: Russkoye Slovo, 2012), 36.

to be Slavs arriving from the Southern Baltic Region.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, from the point of view of Evgenij Pchelov, the state of the Eastern Slavs emerged, irregardless of the Rurik dynasty.<sup>12</sup> It is noteworthy that the modern Russian historian, Anton Gorski, believes that a single state of the Eastern Slavs (not two or more states) was formed due to the presence of the prince's retinue (*druzhina*), consisting mainly of Norsemen (Variangians or Vikings).<sup>13</sup>

These debates are the reason why Russian historians are interested in the early medieval period in Scandinavia, the so-called Viking Age. Nonetheless, the medieval history of the Scandinavian region is poorly represented in school textbooks, presented as just an external factor affecting mainstream European history, particularly the Carolingian Empire. The narratives focus on the adventurous expeditions of the Vikings, the large scale of which is supported with a passage from the *Saga of Leif the Lucky* discovering Vinland, associated by modern historians with North America. In addition, the textbook by Boytsov and Shukurov provides readers with a passage from the Icelandic saga concerning the Vikings meeting the Skrellings, the aboriginal population of Vinland.<sup>14</sup>

The textbooks provide almost no information on the internal development and formation of the Scandinavian people themselves and the emergence of their early states, however – in particular, the Norwegian kingdom. Relatively little attention is paid to the Norman conquest of England or the emergence of the Duchy of Normandy, and only scattered pieces of information on the further development of the Scandinavian states are included. The textbook by Vedyushkin contains the following: ‘By the end of the eleventh century, in Scandinavia, several states whose population converted to Christianity emerged. The Vikings who settled in other countries had also established their own kingdoms. The era of the invasions and long voyages had been completed.’<sup>15</sup> After the end of these naval campaigns, the history of the Scandinavian people and their states disappears from the textbooks to return only in the course on modern history.

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<sup>11</sup> Kiselev and Popov, *История России до XVI века. 6 класс* [History of Russia...], 46.

<sup>12</sup> Pchelov, *История России с древнейших времён до конца XVI века. 6 класс* [History of Russia...], 38.

<sup>13</sup> Anton Anatol'yevich Gorskiy, *Русское Средневековье* [The Russian Middle Ages] (Moscow: Astrel, 2010), 35.

<sup>14</sup> Boytsov and Shukurov, *История средних веков. Учебник для 7 класса* [History of the Middle Ages...].

<sup>15</sup> Vladimir Alexandrovich Vedyushkin, *Всеобщая история. История средних веков. 6 класс* [Global History. History of the Middle Ages. Textbook for the Sixth Grade] (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2012), 46.

### **Mongols and Crusaders**

The thirteenth century became a decisive epoch for Russia and its principalities, governed by members of the Rurik dynasty. The *Textbook for Teachers* names the following circumstances among the main factors of ‘foreign aggression against Russia’: 1) onset of the Little Ice Age (from the second half of the twelfth to the second half of the seventeenth century), 2) struggles for the reunification of Eurasian geopolitical space (the Mongolian factor), 3) religious and ideological factors (eschatological apprehensions in Russia, after the fall of Constantinople in 1204, and the fight of Western Christianity against Eastern confessions), and 4) struggles to control geo-economic resources.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the climatic and religious factors (setting in motion the Mongol tribes and embodied in the opposition between the Catholic and Orthodox worlds, respectively) are considered to be the main causes of the eruption of severe wars in Russia. It is worth noting that by this many-factored explanation (presented in quite complicated tables, well above the head of pupils of that grade), the emotional-subjective term of ‘aggression’ is to a certain extent relativised.

The appearance of Christianising missionaries of the chivalric orders on the territories of the Baltic tribes is represented in all the reviewed textbooks as hostile – not only towards the pagan tribes, but also towards the Russian population. However, the activities taking place within the Baltic countries are rarely provided in connection with the general papal policies and the conquest of Constantinople, as well as with European demographic and social factors (overpopulation and efforts to expand influence over the less populated east, as well as the custom of the indivisibility of the fief, which resulted in the younger children of lords remaining on the sidelines, as well as recruiting for the chivalric orders, among other institutions). Generally, Baltic countries are represented as the historical territories of Russian interest, and Kosulina points out that the Crusade against ‘the Livs and Estonians’ was completely unjustified, since ‘they were simply declared to be pagans, even though many of them had been baptised in the Orthodox rite’.<sup>17</sup> The conquest of the town of Yuriev (Tartu) is considered to be the first attempt to invade the territory of Rus’. Similarly, all the authors regard the invasion of the Swedes to the territory of today’s Finland – an area of Novgorod’s interest, for example – as a hostile act aimed at the Russians. Sometimes, historians not only consider members of

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<sup>16</sup> Bagdasaryan, *История России. Учебник для учителя* [History of Russia...].

<sup>17</sup> Danilov and Kosulina, *История России с древнейших времён до конца XVI века. 6 класс* [History of Russia...], 114.

certain chivalric orders among the intruding knights, but also point out their national belonging, such as ‘Danish knights’, in order to underline a great number of countries participating in acts of aggression towards Rus’. In this case, Evgenij Pchelov limits his definition to the term ‘Crusade’,<sup>18</sup> underlining the official motivation behind the so-called invasion of Russian territories.

In the wider context of ‘neighbours’, a certain attention is given to explaining why Alexander Nevsky assessed the threat from the West to be greater than that from the East. The danger of converting Russia to Catholicism was greater than the Mongols’ religious pluralism. As an interesting side note, little is said about the Mongols themselves being, for centuries, major neighbours. The discussion of the Catholic threat helps to explain the loss of independence of western Russian lands. Prince Daniel, ruling the most-western Russian territories of Galicia and Volhynia (present-day western Ukraine) set a course of cooperation with the Western Roman Catholic world, and though he accepted the terms proposed by the pope, the prince received no military help, whereas his heirs lost their independence (the principality became a part of Poland).

### **Lithuania, Poland and Other Slavs**

An important point stated by the *Textbook for Teachers* is the consideration of Ivan IV (the Terrible) and his son Fedor as the nominees for the Polish-Lithuanian throne, reflecting a crisis of power in the Rzeczpospolita.<sup>19</sup> A further history of Poland and Lithuania appears to be an external factor in the seventeenth century for Russian history (Europe had already entered the period of early modernity), which caused the Time of Troubles, followed by the Russian-Polish wars.

The history of the emergence and development of the Lithuanian state occupies an important place in Russian historical narrative. The coverage of this problem, expressed by the authors from various points of view, determines their different chronological frameworks for those periods of Lithuanian history considered by the authors to be important for the history of Russia. The starting point for all chronologies is, however, the same – namely, the association of Lithuanian tribes escaping the attacks of the

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<sup>18</sup>Pchelov, 133.

<sup>19</sup> Bagdasaryan, *History of Russia*, accessed 10 January 2016, [http://rusrand.ru/files/history/06-Ivan\\_Grozny.pdf](http://rusrand.ru/files/history/06-Ivan_Grozny.pdf)

Mongols under the Lithuanian Duke Mindaugas with the emergence of the Duchy of Lithuania.

Nevertheless, Kosulina titles the paragraph dedicated to Lithuania *Russia and Lithuania*,<sup>20</sup> in this way defining Russia as something distant from Lithuania. In her opinion, this period ends in the year 1377, together with the death of Prince Algirdas (under his rule, the Lithuanian state reached its peak), which resulted in strife with his heirs and the coming to power of Jogaila/Jagiello and Vytautas, who concluded a dynastic union with Poland. The author does not explain why she chose this chronological framework, but her reasoning can be partially understood from the placement of the section dealing with Lithuania in the chapter dedicated to the Russians confronting the invaders. A similar approach is chosen by Pchelov. His section titled *The Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Russian Lands* is also included in a chapter analysing Russia as it faces external military threats (*Russia between East and West*).<sup>21</sup> Pchelov sees the year 1569 as the date marking the end of the period, since, in that year, Lithuania and Poland sign the Union of Lublin, uniting the two countries into a single Rzeczpospolita. Moreover, Pchelov defines the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as the period when the ‘medieval Rus’ ethnos’ split into Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian nationalities.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to Ludmila Kosulina and Evgenij Pchelov, Vasily Popov presents the history of Lithuania in a chapter entitled *Association of Russian lands around Moscow* and, in this way, defines the Russian lands subjected to Lithuania as temporarily conquered by the political entity neighbouring the Moscow Rus’. However, Popov chooses the year 1430 as the final date of the period, the death of the Grand Duke Vytautas.<sup>23</sup> Both Pchelov and Popov consider the Battle of Grunwald (1410) to be an important historical event, demonstrating the unity of Russians, Lithuanians and Poles, joining their forces to defeat the Teutonic Knights.

However, as a drawback and as is common with all the textbooks analysed, Lithuania as well as western Russian lands that recognise the Lithuanian supreme power ruling over them are generally represented as something that exists apart from the influences of Poland and Hungary.

The textbook of Vladimir Vedyushkin contains the most information on the early history of Poland, but even this textbook merely points out that the most important rul-

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<sup>20</sup>Danilov and Kosulina, 128.

<sup>21</sup>Pchelov, 147.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 150.

<sup>23</sup>Kiselev and Popov, 164.

ers belong to the first Polish Piast dynasty. This textbook also pays no attention to the social structure of Polish society. Yet, the author does quote a passage from the chronicle of ‘Gallus Anonymus’, which describes the admiration of the German Emperor Otto III after his visit to the Polish King Boleslav, the unifier of the Polish tribes into a single state.<sup>24</sup>Next, Vedyushkin concentrates on the fourteenth century in the history of Poland and, in particular, on King Casimir III the Great, a strong ruler whose main merit was ‘further unification of the country’.<sup>25</sup>Although the author distinguishes a particular group of three countries (Poland, Bohemia and Hungary), he does not emphasise the dynastic marriages linking these states, especially after the extinction of their native dynasties.

Russian historians return to the history of Poland and Lithuania, as well as to the people of the Baltic region, while dealing with the Livonian War during the time of Ivan IV (the Terrible). In connection with this war, one can find information about the Union of Lublin (1569) unifying the Poles and Lithuanians into the Rzeczpospolita, since the emergence of a new state on the western borders of Russia is a fact essential for understanding Russian history. However, such important issues as the question of the basis for the union and its effect on the Russian population of the Rzeczpospolita, as well as the question of its relations with Russia, are omitted.

While the early period, in which Russian lands were brought into the realm of Lithuania and the Russian population constituted about nine-tenths of the total population of the Grand Duchy, is represented as an occupation, it is admitted that it was beneficial for the Russians. The textbook of Kiselev and Popov reads: ‘the Lithuanian dukes stated, “we do not inveigh against the old times and do not introduce the novelties”’,<sup>26</sup> underlining the favourable conditions that existed for the Orthodox Russian population in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This period of well-being is contrasted with the epoch of the Grand Duke Jagiello, who became the Polish king and converted to Catholicism, intending to extend it throughout all Lithuania. The rule of the Grand Duke Vytautas is considered to be the last period of Lithuanian independence. The textbook by Danilov and Kosulina states that ‘the Lithuanian people had sought to cooperate with the popula-

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<sup>24</sup>Vedyushkin, *Всеобщая история. История средних веков. 6 класс* [Global History...], 75–76.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>26</sup>Kiselev and Popov, 162.

tion of the Russian lands being part of Lithuania. And the Russian people have never considered the Lithuanians as foreigners or invaders'.<sup>27</sup>

Relatively little space is left for the history of the Other, the Slavs (Southern and Western), no more than for the Arabic world or other Eastern civilisations. At the same time, the most attention to the Slavs is paid to those from the South and to the Czechs connected both to the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition and the creation of the first, large Slavic state, Great Moravia. And while Poland is considered a peripheral part of this Christianised, Slavic world, the history of the Polabian-Baltic Slavs, who lived on the territory of what is present-day eastern Germany, is completely disregarded.

All authors of the textbooks analysed uphold patriotic views on the issues of foreign policy (required from them by the *Textbook for Teachers*), and therefore the Rzeczpospolita is represented as an aggressor, which tried to subdue the Russian state and to deprive its people of independence. At the same time, the textbooks often do not mention the fact that the Polish and Lithuanian kings had a real chance to unify Russian Lands (especially, because western Russian lands had already been incorporated into Rzeczpospolita) by means of dynastic and political unions. The *Textbook for Teachers* represents the most patriotic sentiments; therefore Rzeczpospolita is regarded as a military champion of the interests of the Vatican and the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation planning to destroy Russia as a political entity and as the last stronghold of Orthodoxy, with aims to convert the Russian population to Catholicism.

## Conclusion

In the early 1990s, the geopolitical shocks in Eastern Europe led to a rather unsettled image of the history of the countries belonging to this region. With the emergence of newly independent states on the western borders of the Russian Federation in the 90s, as well as with the fall of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe, all the countries in the region felt a burst of nationalism, manifested in a more patriotic interpretation of their histories. As a result, the overall picture of history, which has been shared by all countries in the region and which existed within the Marxist-Leninist historical framework dominant in the socialist states, had disintegrated. In Russia, an evolution of a methodological approach to history took place only after the transition from the Soviet epoch to the post-Soviet period.

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<sup>27</sup>Danilov and Kosulina, 134.

The Russian historiography of the 1990s demonstrated a pluralism of historical conceptions, ousting to a great extent the earlier monopoly of Marxist-Leninist theory. This pluralism of opinions has been passed on to school textbooks, as well, and, as a result, every author could express his or her own historical vision. The effects of this epoch are still visible in the same, widely used textbooks.

Thus, the most widespread textbook in Russia, by Alexander Danilov and Ludmila Kosulina, as well as the work of Alexander Kiselev and Vasily Popov, reflect this period of pluralism in regard to national history – when every collective of authors could set their own focus and hold different views on a particular issue. In his textbook, Evgenij Pchelov tries to present different views on controversial historical problems, though he also included his own position as author in the text. The textbook by Michail Boytsov and Rustam Shukurov stands apart, developed in accordance with the standards of Moscow State Lomonosov University and presenting the history of Russia in a more academic manner. At the same time, the *Textbook for Teachers* establishes a patriotic discourse in the teaching of history as a school subject, as well as in the conceptual framework of the textbooks.

In general, one can state that the historical image of Russia's neighbouring countries is not yet fully formed in the textbooks dedicated to Russian medieval history, and the current trend of creating a single history textbook for schools (as was the case in the Soviet era) is aimed at solving this problem.

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**Abstract**

The main goal of this work is to analyse the treatment of neighbours in history textbooks from the Republic of Moldova. In order to achieve a better understanding of history instruction and textbooks in Moldova, changes made to the curriculum during last two decades are briefly discussed. At the same time, a few elements concerning public and political debates on history education and history textbooks will be presented. The second part of this paper is dedicated to textbook analysis and the role and place of neighbours during ancient and medieval times. This paper will close with some conclusions and suggestions for future improvement.

**Introduction**

The textbook is more than a didactic tool; it represents a major medium. John Issitt observed that, today, the word ‘textbook’ often elicits negative associations,<sup>1</sup> because during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, school textbooks became ‘the ideal field for the construction and reproduction of images of the national ‘us’ and the national ‘other’, the latter usually selected from among the neighbouring peoples’.<sup>2</sup> Hence, UNESCO and the Council of Europe urged the nations of the world over the past decades to encourage cooperation in textbook development, with an eye to contemporary realities, and to ensure a multidimensional and transparent approach to one’s cultural past, based on scholarly research. The international initiative to revise textbooks has become a new scholarly subject – namely, ‘textbook research’ or ‘analysis’.<sup>3</sup> The most active institution in this field is the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, Braunschweig, Germany. The main purpose of its projects is to identify a textbook’s strengths and weaknesses, and to eliminate ‘negative’ features (errors, distortions, prejudices, clichés, etc.).<sup>4</sup> This is why textbook analysis ought to become an integral part of the reform and development of educational systems.

The discourse of the Other and the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘natives’

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<sup>1</sup> John Issitt, ‘Reflections on the Study of Textbooks’, *History of Education* 33, no. 6 (2004): 683.

<sup>2</sup> Panos D. Xochellis and Fotini L. Toloudi ed., *The Image of the ‘Other’ Neighbour in the School Textbooks of the Balkan Countries. Proceedings of the International Conference, Thessaloniki, 16-18 October 1998* (Athens: Tipothito George Dardanos, 2001), 44.

<sup>3</sup> Philip G. Altbach, ‘Textbooks: The International Dimension’, in *The Politics of the Textbook*, ed. M. Apple and L.K. Christian-Smith (London: Routledge, 1991); B. Schmidt, *Internationale Schulbuchforschung: Aufgaben, Probleme, Beispiele* (Münster: GRIN Verlag, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> K. Peter Fritzsche, ‘Prejudice and Underlying Assumptions’, in *History and Social Studies: Methodologies of Textbook Analysis, Report of the Educational Research Workshop Held in Braunschweig (Germany) 11-14 September 1990*, ed. H. Bourdillon (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1992), 52–59.

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and ‘foreigners’, and between neighbours has been long since discussed. How these relationships are treated in a school textbook become especially important after the political changes following the collapse of totalitarian regimes. In most cases, the ‘us’ are treated from a dominant position, as a majority, a heroic group or in some other way as victims of the Other. The notion of the Other is often presented as a state, a powerful army, an ethnic, religious or cultural group and so on.<sup>5</sup>

Under new democratic circumstances, it is very important to learn about each other and to cultivate tolerance and better understanding between different cultural, religious, social and political communities. Through better education, it is possible to diminish prejudices, stereotypes, violence, racism, xenophobia and nationalist attitudes. This is because ‘the image of the Other or of the neighbour as formed through the school textbook contributes to the evolution of the self-image and the national consciousness of a people, determining to a great extent the relations and the quality of coexistence and cooperation among peoples, especially among neighbours’.<sup>6</sup> Thus, history remains an important aspect in international affairs and particularly in the regions with divided memories. Further, history could help younger generations perceive that, though we may be different, we all have the same rights and duties.<sup>7</sup>

The research question of this paper is as follows: how does the Republic of Moldova present ancient and medieval neighbours in history textbooks?

The dissolution in 1991 of the Soviet Union favoured the consolidation of the Republic of Moldova as a state, a political independent entity. It allowed, its political, economic and cultural identity, as well as the structure of its relationship with other states, organisations and international institutions. Placed in the southeast of Europe, the Republic of Moldova, traditionally named Bessarabia, occupies the greatest part of the territory between Dniester and Prut, as well as a small part of land on the left side of the river Dniester. In the west, it is bordered by Romania and in the north, east and south with Ukraine. Its territory, with the longitudinal dimensions from north to south of 350 km and lateral dimensions from west to east of 150 km, assumes an area of 33,800 km<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Stefan Ihrig, ‘The Construction of the “Other” in Moldovan History Textbooks’, in *Educația multiculturală ca mijloc de management al diversității și de integrare în societatea polietică*, ed. Tatiana Stoianova (Chișinău: Vector, 2005), 168–174; N. Yakovenko, ‘The Image of Self – the Image of the Other in School History Textbooks’, *School History through the Eyes of Scholars-Historians (the Materials of the Working Meeting on Monitoring the School Textbooks in History of Ukraine)*, ed. Natalia Yakovenko (Kiev: Olena Teliha Publishing House, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Xochellis and Toloudi, *The Image of the ‘Other’*, 13–14.

<sup>7</sup> Rui Gomes et al., ed., *Education Pack. All Different, All Equal* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, Youth Directorate, 1995).

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The republic has just two neighbouring countries: Romania and Ukraine. Both have many common historical and cultural connections. During the Middle Ages, the area between the Dniester and Prut rivers was part of the medieval Principality of Moldova. During the nineteenth century, Bessarabia was annexed to the Russian Empire and Bukovina to Austro-Hungary. As a result of the unification process during second half of nineteenth century, Moldova and Walachia became parts of the modern state of Romania. After the Bolshevik revolution and the collapse of the Russian Empire, Bessarabia declared its independence in December of 1917 and established the Moldovan Democratic Republic. On 27 March 1918, the *Sfatul Țării* (the local parliament) proclaimed the unification of Bessarabia with Romania. But, as a result of the Hitler-Stalin Pact in 1940, Bessarabia was annexed by the Soviet Union, and the southern and northern regions were transferred to Ukraine. The main region of Bessarabia, including some territories from Transnistria, became the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (1940–41, 1944–91). Considering this eventful and complex history, the relationship with neighbouring countries, which share many common values and problems – from the Greeks and Romans to Byzantium, Hungary, the Lithuanian Kingdom and Poland, through to the Ottoman, Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Soviet Empires – needs careful discussion.

**Sources**

Curricula and textbooks for each discipline are somehow linked with subjects concerning ‘us and them’ or ‘relations with neighbours’. History teaching and textbook production is now influenced by various issues, not only conventional, such as educational policies, educational ideas, academic knowledge, editorial exercise, production quality and costs, but also ever increasing teachers’, parents’, pupils’ expectations and media pressure, and public requirements as to what kind of history should be taught in schools. The main research sources for this paper were the school history curricula and textbooks (fourth, fifth, sixth and tenth grades, where the Antiquity and the Middle Ages are studied), approved by Moldova and published and used during last two decades.

**Methodology**

A variety of methods regarding textbook analysis are used in practice. A combined approach is frequently used, which ensures a higher level of objectivity of the results. Textbook analysis should include all the components of a textbook – not only its textual

side, since the didactic or pedagogical, pictorial, graphical and technical aspects of textbooks represent a whole and thus a message the textbook communicates to students and teachers. The quality of textbooks depends on a number of factors, which are part of the development, selection, approval and recommendation of a textbook to be used, disseminated, analysed etc. Thus, the quality of a textbook is dependent on the quality and attitude of the people involved in the process. Two main methods were used for this research: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative method includes data and statistical analysis. In this context, questions based on deduction – trying to find the answer as to how often neighbours are presented in history textbooks – will be discussed. The qualitative methods search for meaning, understanding and an interpretation of various historical facts, events, actions, phenomena or descriptive parts, pictures, maps, documents etc. – for example, how the concepts of ‘hostile’, ‘neighbour’, ‘alien’, nation, minority, etc. are presented or how controversial issues (unresolved political problems: borders, minority rights, wars, ethnogenesis, statehood etc.) are discussed.<sup>8</sup>

### **Curriculum Reforms**

Following the collapse of the USSR, history education in Moldova has been characterised by permanent public debates, including street protests focused on history teaching (1995, 2002, 2006).<sup>9</sup> The national movement (1989–91) culminated in the declaration of independence of the Republic of Moldova, the transition to the Latin alphabet, and the replacement of *History of the USSR* and *History of the MSSR* courses with *World History* and *History of the Romanians*.

Education in Moldova is now divided into two parts: one is the national education system, according to the Republic of Moldova’s legal framework, and the other is organised in Transnistria under the rules of the separatist regime. In this paper, I will discuss only the history education and textbooks approved by Moldovan official bodies.<sup>10</sup> The educational system in the republic is based on three main stages: elementary

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<sup>8</sup> Some details about research methods and criteria are discussed in my work S. Musteață, *Cum să elaborăm și analizăm manualele școlare* [How to Analyse and Write School Textbooks] (Chișinău: Cartdidact, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> See the detailed analysis of the debates around history teaching in the Republic of Moldova in: S. Musteață, *Educația istorică între discursul politic și identitar în Republica Moldova* [History Education Between Political and Identity Discourse in the Republic of Moldova] (Chișinău: Editura Pontos, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> See more details about history teaching in the separatist region in S. Musteață, ‘Predarea istoriei în școlile din regiunea separatistă nistreană’ [History Teaching in Schools from Transnistrian Separatist Region], in *Probleme actuale de istorie națională. Studii în onoarea profesorului Pavel Parasca* [Ac-

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school (first through fourth grades, six/seven through ten/eleven years of age), secondary school/gymnasium (fifth through ninth grades, eleven/twelve through fifteen/sixteen years of age) and high school/lyceum (tenth through twelfth grades, sixteen or seventeen through nineteen to twenty years of age). The first two stages, up to the ninth grade, are compulsory.<sup>11</sup>

During the 1990s, the school curriculum was established with support of the World Bank. The history curriculum was an integral part of this process, and it was developed by a team of researchers, university professors, and school teachers. After long discussions, including street protests in 1995, the history teaching in Moldova at that time was taught within two disciplines: national history (*istoria românilor*) and world history (*istoria universală*). The Ministry of Education approved the history curriculum of 1999 to 2000. With the support of the World Bank, textbooks were published for all disciplines for primary and secondary schools.

Following the February 2001 general elections, the Communist Party came to power, reigniting the debate about history education between historians and the government and bringing this issue again into public view. The communist government has been trying hard to change the name and content of the *History of the Romanians* course into a *History of Moldova course*, which provoked new street demonstrations (January to February 2002). After a long process of discussions and seminars (in 2002 and 2003), organised by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Council of Europe, the idea of an *Integrated History* course, which would include a balanced representation of national and world history in a single discipline, reappeared. Civil society, in general, and the academic community, in particular, have opposed political involvement in history education. In 2005, the Ministry of Education excluded final exams in the subjects of *History of the Romanians* and *World History* from the list of exams for Moldovan high schools. The Ministry proposed that high schools conduct an exam in Geography instead and that other schools offer an exam in history as optional. These changes, once again, led to public outcry. In 2006, the Ministry of Education approved the decision to introduce the *Integrated History* course and textbooks into pre-university education, starting that September. Hence, following 1 September 2006, the Ministry of Education

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tual Problems of National History. Studies in Honour Professor Pavel Parasca], ed. A. Galben and Gh. Postică (Chișinău: ULIM, 2009), 335–345.

<sup>11</sup> Natalia Odobescu, 'Moldova', in *The Education Systems of Europe*, ed. W. Hörner, et al. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 520–540; R. Hanneschländer, 'Republik Moldau (Moldawien)', in *Die Bildungssysteme Europas, Grundlagen der Schulpädagogik*, ed. H. Döbert et al. (Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengerhren GmbH, 2010), 476–486.

introduced new curricula for history education in all secondary schools, with one course titled *History*,<sup>12</sup> excluding the two previously taught courses on *History of the Romanians* and *World History* from the curricula. Also, the Ministry of Education distributed new history textbooks in all schools and demanded that schools stop using other textbooks. This situation again generated opposition from teachers, professional organisations and NGOs. And opponents pointed out multiple mistakes in the content of the new books.

As a result of the double general elections in 2009, the new democratic parties (Alliance for European Integration) came to power with the program of integrating the Republic of Moldova into the European Union. This, however, did not end the public debate on history education. In 2010, the Ministry of Education approved a new, modernised curriculum for a single subject called *History*.<sup>13</sup> This decision did not satisfy some historians, who asked the Ministry to reinstate the two history courses taught in Moldovan schools until 2006 – *History of the Romanians* and *World History*. After long debates and a new commission, established in March 2012, the Ministry of Education decided to maintain one course, but with a different title, changed from *History* to the *History of the Romanians and World History*, for two hours per week, compulsory from the fourth grade to graduation.

## Neighbours in the Textbooks

### Primary School

*Fourth grade.* The 1999 edition of the history textbook for the fourth grade is focused more on national history; it includes more themes on patriotic issues dating from ancient times to today.<sup>14</sup> From the very beginning, the authors provide a wrong definition of history, describing it as a ‘source of knowledge about the past of one people...’<sup>15</sup> In my opinion, from an early age, children must understand that history is the past of all peo-

<sup>12</sup> Maia Dobzeu et al., ed., *Ghid de implementare a curriculumului modernizat în învățământul liceal* [Guide for Implementing Modernised Curriculum in High School] (Chișinău: Știința, 2007); Stefan Ihrig, ‘Moldovan Nightmares or “Historiographic Deadlock at Birth” – History, Identity and History Teaching in the Republic of Moldova (1991–2008)’, in *‘Transition’ and the Politics of History Education in Southeast Europe*, ed. Augusta Dimou (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2009), 357–396, esp. 384.

<sup>13</sup> Pavel Cerbușcă and Maia Dobzeu ed., *Istorie. Ghid de implementare a curriculumului modernizat pentru treapta liceală* [History: A Guide for Implementing Modernised Curriculum for High School] (Chișinău: Cartier, 2010); C. Lungu et al., ed., *Istorie. Ghid de implementare a curriculumului modernizat pentru treapta primară și gimnazială* [History. A Guide for Implementing Modernised Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Schools] (Chișinău: Lyceum, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Pavel Cerbușcă et al., *File din istoria românilor. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a* [Sequences from the History of the Romanians: Textbook for the Fourth Grade] (Chișinău: Știința-Cartier, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

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ple, regardless of their ethnicity religion, or cultural heritage – understanding that it is a common past. The first information about the Other is about the Greeks; Herodotus is mentioned as the ‘father of history’, as the person who wrote the first work on history, and Homer as author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Then, the textbook briefly presents ‘Apollo and muses’, but I am not sure if children of that age would understand either the role of the muses or who Apollo was.<sup>16</sup> The first contact with the map is on page 17, which represents today’s Europe with links to four ancient monuments: the Verona Amphitheatre, the Roman Coliseum, Athena’s theatre and a ‘Dacian fortress’. The task is to ‘Find on the map the source that belongs to our ancestors’. I wonder whether the pupils would be able to understand the question about ‘our ancestors’. The notion of neighbours is addressed in the context of the theme ‘historical map’ with the following question: ‘Find the Republic of Moldova and Romania on the map of Europe. Observe which neighbouring countries there are.’<sup>17</sup> The question is situated in today’s perspective, but by explaining the meaning of *Europe*, the authors are writing that the Ancient Greeks called all countries west of Greece as *Europe*. On the topic of a ‘family coat of arms’, it is suggested: ‘Will draw Trajan’s Column, because all we need to know is that my people come from the Daco-Romans ....’<sup>18</sup> Without any explanation as to who the Dacians or Romans were or what Daco-Roman means or what Trajan’s Column is, it is hard to imagine that kids in the fourth grade would be able to understand the role of historical symbols and the sense behind family coat of arms. In the second part of the textbook ‘Sequences from the history of the Romanians’, authors briefly present various themes from ancient to contemporary times. The information provided to support the Thracians as ancestors of Romanians and other European peoples appears only on page 40, while the how and why behind this assertion is not mentioned. On the page 41, it is a question referring to the neighbours of the Thracians. From the map, we also see the Illyrians and Greeks.<sup>19</sup> The Roman Emperor Trajan is mentioned in context of wars against Dacia and transformed it into Roman province. He is presented as one of the famous Roman emperors (98–117), and Decebal is presented as a skilled local ruler. The conclusion of this section is that ‘Dacians and Romans are ancestors of the Romanians’,<sup>20</sup> while there are few pages on the role of other people<sup>21</sup>: on the map on page 49,

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 22–23.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 40–41.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 45.

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attempting to show the area of the formation of Romanians, Slavs, Bulgarians and Hungarian as migrants. Nomads are presented as ‘Barbarians who had no houses and lived in carts. There they sleep, eat and raise their children’.<sup>22</sup> The Tatars (Mongols) are presented in the same style: ‘In the mid-thirteenth century, the Romanians were attacked by Tatars who invaded from the East, causing much damage to our ancestors.’<sup>23</sup> The creation of the medieval states of Walachia and Moldova is seen as the result of battle with the Hungarians and Tatars. In the context of the military, the fourteenth-century Hungarian King, Charles Robert, is discussed. Stephan the Great is presented as one of the most important medieval rulers of Moldova, who managed to strengthen the power of defence against invaders from the neighbouring states, primarily from the Ottoman Empire. The same approach is used for Michael the Brave, ruler of Wallachia, described as ‘the first unifier of the Romanians’, who fights against the Ottoman Empire, Transylvania and Moldova.<sup>24</sup> In most cases, neighbours are presented as enemies or invaders who intended to rule over Moldova and Wallachia. The wars of Stephan the Great and Michael the Brave are ‘just wars’. This kind of self-victimisation and the presentation of all neighbours as enemies is the wrong approach and a big mistake for a textbook.

The 2006 textbook differs from the previous, because it was written according to a different curriculum more focused on the history of the Republic of Moldova. Some episodes are linked with the history of the Romanians but not to the same extent as before. The neighbours of the Republic of Moldova could be observed on the maps of Europe on pages 24, 69 and 71.<sup>25</sup> A similar situation and treatment of neighbours is affirmed in the history textbooks for the fourth grade from 2005 and 2007.<sup>26</sup> For example, P. Cerbușcă, in his recent teacher’s guide for fourth grade history classes, mentions that ‘Moldovan and Romanian medieval states gained independence around the same time in the first half of the fourteen century, following a long conflict with their neighbours’, but he does not mention them further and does not specify the historical context of these

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<sup>21</sup> ‘Romania was formed from the mixture of Geto-Dacians and Romans, being influenced by other people.’ Ibid., 49.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 60–61, 64–65, 68–71.

<sup>25</sup> Galina Gavriliță et al., *Istorie. Manual pentru clasa a IV-a* [History. Textbook for the Fourth Grade] (Chișinău: Univers Pedagogic, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Elena Negru, *Istoria românilor. Material complementar pentru clasa a IV-a* [History. Additional Material for the Fourth Grade] (Chișinău: Epigraf, 2005); P. Cerbușcă, *Istorie și patrimoniu cultural. Clasa a IV-a, Material complementar pentru elevi, cadre didactice și părinți* [History and Cultural Heritage. Fourth Grade. Additional Material for Pupils] (Chișinău: Cartdidact, 2007).

events. The situation is somewhat confusing, because Moldova's present-day neighbours, Romania and Ukraine, appear in the maps of the textbooks and pupils' copybook, although the neighbours of medieval Moldova were Walachia (Muntenia), Transylvania and the Tatars.<sup>27</sup>

From the perspective of a presentation of neighbouring groups, the 2012 fourth grade history textbook, based on the modernised curriculum, does not differ so much from the previous publications. At the very beginning of the textbooks, we can see the neighbouring countries of the Republic of Moldova on the map of present-day Europe.<sup>28</sup> Concerning Antiquity, the Greeks are occasionally mentioned as are the Romans in the context of the war with Geto-Dacians, the occupation of Dacia, the creation of the Roman province and the Romanisation process, all of which lead to the formation of the Romanian people and the Romanian language. The Middle Ages are presented in a parallel discourse of two rulers, one from Wallachia and the other from Moldova: Basarab I and Bogdan I, Mircea the Old and Alexandru the Good, Stephen the Great and Michael the Brave, Vasile Lupu and Matei Basarab. It is likely that the authors used this approach from the perspective of a common ethnic Romanian background. The discourse of conflict with one's neighbours and self-victimisation is maintained in this edition, as well. Wallachia and Moldova were created as a result of fighting with the Hungarians and Tatars. But, on the map on page 27 ('Romanian states in the fourteenth century'), one can see other neighbours – Poland, Hungary, Transylvania and the Lithuanian Kingdom – without any explanation.

The authors present ancient history solely from the national (Romanian) point of view; other opinions remain absent. Thus, the ancient and medieval periods should be treated with much greater perspective, and interaction with neighbours should be presented better.

### **Secondary School**

*Fifth grade.* The fifth grade history textbook, published by Lumina Publishing House in 2000, includes prehistory and Antiquity. The first part of the textbook focuses on world

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<sup>27</sup> Cerbușcă, *Istoria românilor și universală. Ghidul învățătorului*, 61. Cerbușcă, *Istoria românilor și universală. Caiet*, 21; Cerbușcă, *Istoria rumyn i vseobščaja istorija*, 12, 27, 43, 68, 72–74.

<sup>28</sup> Pavel Cerbușcă, *Istoria rumyn i vseobščaja istorija*. Učebnik dlja 4 klassa [History of Romanians and World History. Textbook for the Fourth Grade] (Chișinău: Știința, 2012), 12.

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history, while the second part focuses on national history.<sup>29</sup> Prehistory and Antiquity do well in including the knowledge of actual territories of Romania and Moldova, in some cases also Ukraine (e.g., Cucuteni-Tripolie Culture). The first part of the textbook is dedicated to the ancient Middle East (Egypt, Mesopotamia, Babylon), ancient people (Phoenicians, Jews), and India and China. Ancient Greece and Rome are presented in special chapters. Greek colonisation and contact with the Barbarians are treated detailed comparatively with other topics. In some cases, the textbooks present more facts on regions that are now parts of Romania rather than territories of the Republic of Moldova. The eastern neighbours are presented only in the context of migration: Sarmatians, Germanic tribes, Huns, Avars, Slavs and Bulgarians.<sup>30</sup> The neighbours, in most of cases, are presented indirectly, and the discussion on the neighbourhood could be carried out based solely on maps. Generally, this textbook is considered very complicated for the fifth grade. A similar situation was noted for the Croatian history textbooks, where ‘authors often simply carry their articles published in scientific journals or parts of their books into textbooks’.<sup>31</sup> The difference is that, in Croatia, those textbooks are meant for higher grades than in Moldova.

The alternative textbook for the fifth grade is better appreciated by teacher than the textbook mentioned above, but the issue concerning neighbouring territories and peoples brings similar problems.<sup>32</sup> The authors of the textbooks recognised that the theme of life in ancient times is better presented in the fifth grade textbook than in the fourth grade textbook.<sup>33</sup> G. Gonta and N. Petrovski wrote in 2000:

In the Republic of Moldova, beside the Moldovans, live the representatives of other nationalities. They make up 35 percent of the population: Russians, Ukrainians, Gagauzians, Bulgarians and others. That is why the acquaintance of the pupils with all these peoples’ everyday lives is of particular importance in the Republic of Moldova.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ion Niculiță et al., *Istorie. Epoca străveche și antică. Manual pentru clasa a V-a* [History. Old Epoch and Antiquity] (Chișinău: Editura Lumina, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 210–213, ‘Theme 18. Daco-Roman Population and Their Relations with Migrants’.

<sup>31</sup> Jure Krišto, ‘The Image of the Other/Neighbour in Croatian History Textbooks for Highschools’, in *The Image of the “Other” Neighbour in the School Textbooks of the Balkan Countries. Proceedings of the International Conference, Thessaloniki, 16-18 October 1998*, ed. Panos D. Xochellis and Fotini I. Toloudi (Athens: Tipothito George Dardanos, 2001), 117–126.

<sup>32</sup> Gheorghe Gonta et al., *Istoria universală. Istoria românilor. Manual pentru clasa a V-a* [World History. History of Romanians. Textbook for the Fifth Grade] (Chișinău: Știința, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> Gheorghe Gonta and Nina Petrovski, ‘Problemy povsednevnoj zizni v novykh ucebnikach Respubliki Moldova’ [The Problems of Everyday Life in the New Textbooks of the Republic of Moldova], in *Gistorija stozennasci i pravy calaveka*, ed. P. Sadoycki and M. Telus (Minsk: Technologija, 2000), 150.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 153.

The content of this textbook is based on history curriculum and presents topics from two perspectives, in chronological order: world history and history of the Romanians. World history covers the subjects related to prehistory, ancient civilisations (Middle East, Greece, Rome) and national history – prehistory and antiquity (Geto-Dacians and Daco-Romans). This textbook is better appreciated by teachers than is the case with the textbook from the Lumina Publishing House. However, the question related to neighbours remains untouched. The presentation is done for each region separately, assuming that pupils have a working knowledge of geography and are able to understand the problems discussed. The History of the Romanians section begins with a contemporary map of Europe, which helps pupils understand the place of Moldova and its neighbours in the world. A good point is made on page 122 about the border changes across the centuries, suggesting a comparison between ancient and present-day maps. The prehistoric maps do not contain borders, presenting just the rivers and archaeological discoveries, which is a very good approach.

*Sixth grade.* The Middle Ages were presented in the textbooks for the sixth grade before 2006 in two separate courses: *World History* and *History of the Romanians*. After 2006, the Middle Ages were presented in one integrated course. The textbook published by Știința Publishing House contains various pieces of information on neighbouring territories from the Middle Ages, such as Western and Southern Slavs, Kievan Rus', Mongols etc.<sup>35</sup> In the second section, among themes surrounding medieval Moldova, events and facts on Walachia, Transylvania are dealt with, but nothing is written about relations between Moldova and the eastern regions. On some maps, we can see that Moldova bordered Lithuania during Stephan the Great's rule and later bordered Poland and Crimean Khanate, but no details are given about the historical context of these realities.<sup>36</sup> The textbook published according to the integrated history curricula from 2006 contains twelve chapters focused on the Middle Ages.<sup>37</sup> The quality of this textbook was debated by various scholars, but it includes some themes on neighbouring peoples: Hungary, Kievan Rus' and Walachia. Thus, even if the Antiquity and the Middle Ages are treated

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<sup>35</sup> Demir Dragnev et al., *Istoria medievală universală, a românilor* [World Medieval History, the Romanians] (Chișinău: Știința, 2001).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 174, 188, 193, 202, 206, 210, 214.

<sup>37</sup> Corneliu Popovici and Angela Popovici, *Istorie. Manual pentru clasa a VI-a* [History. Textbook for the Sixth Grade] (Chișinău: Editura Lumina, 2006).

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within two years of secondary school (fifth and sixth grades), the subject of neighbouring regions and peoples is very modestly presented.

*High School.* High school (lyceum) in Moldova is three years long and covers tenth to twelfth grade. The history is a compulsory discipline at this level, and it is one of the final baccalaureate exams (for ‘humanist’ classes it is mandatory and for ‘realist’ classes it is optional). The former contain three hours per week, the latter two hours. History teaching should be based on a global approach, dating from prehistoric times to today. Ancient and medieval times are discussed in the tenth grade, modern times in the eleventh, and contemporary history in the twelfth grade.

*Tenth Grade.* The textbook on the ancient world and medieval history for the tenth grade treats the eastern and southeastern European regions very poorly. Russia is briefly presented in two sections only – namely, the formation of Kievan Rus’ and the centralisation of Russia.<sup>38</sup> National ancient and medieval history is treated in two separate textbooks, published by Prut International and Civitas Publishing Houses.<sup>39</sup> Both textbooks are structured according to the 1999 school curriculum and are (thus) similar in structure. Antiquity is presented as a Romanian narrative and includes mostly the Carpathian-Danube regions, without much mention of neighbouring territories. The Slavs are mentioned in the context of migration and their contribution to the ethnogenesis of the Romanians. The same situation is found in the chapters on the Middle Ages, where we discover information about Transylvania, Walachia, Moldova, Bulgaria, Dobrogea, the Ottoman Empire, Poland, but very little about Hungary and Russia. The Great Lithuanian Duchy is mentioned only on the maps.<sup>40</sup> There is an exception represented by a case study on ‘Cossacks campaigns in Moldova during the second half of the sixteenth century’ and a synthesis of ‘the settlements of Moldovans on the left side of the Dniester during the Middle Ages’. The narrative throughout these themes is different: the Cossacks are treated as invaders and Moldovans as the victims of different foreign pow-

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<sup>38</sup> Adina Berciu-Draghicescu et al., *Istoria universală. Epoca antică și cea medievală. Manual pentru clasa a X-a* [World History. Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Textbook for the Tenth Grade] (Chișinău: Prut Internațional, 2007), 121, 127–128.

<sup>39</sup> Parasca Parasca et al., *Istoria românilor. Epoca antică și cea medievală. Manual pentru clasa a X-a* [History of the Romanians. Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Textbook for the Tenth Grade] (Chișinău: Prut Internațional, 2007); D. Dragnev and Gh. Postică, *Istoria românilor. Epoca antică și medievală. Manual pentru cl. a X-a de liceu* [History of the Romanians. Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Textbook for Lyceum, Tenth Grade] (Chișinău: Civitas, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> P. Parasca et al., *Istoria românilor*, 53, 71, 75.

ers.<sup>41</sup> In the context of the culture and art theme at the end of the textbook, the well-known Kievan Metropolitan of Moldovan origin, Petru Movila, is mentioned.<sup>42</sup>

The integrated history textbook for the tenth grade includes various aspects of Antiquity and the Middle Ages.<sup>43</sup> Getae-Dacians are presented briefly and in wide perspective, including the Carpathian-Danube regions. The Greek colonies are only accounted for but not discussed as a large phenomenon. Christianisation and Romanisation are handled in wide perspective, and the impact of these phenomena on the territories between the rivers Prut and Dniester is not clear. The Sarmatians and Goths are mentioned briefly as migrators who settled on the Carpathian-Danube territories. Moldova is discussed among other medieval entities of Walachia and Transylvania, but nothing is mentioned about medieval Russia. A special passage is dedicated to other ethnicities living in medieval Moldova, but the information is very general and not so much about everyday life and relations between groups/between one another.

## Conclusions

For more than two decades, the Republic of Moldova has been searching for its national identity. Indeed, as society is divided over this issue, this problem is difficult to tackle. The problem of identity still remains central in this context: some people see themselves as Romanians and thus support the teaching of Romanian history and Romanian language, while others consider themselves Moldovans, embracing the idea of a Moldovan language and Moldovan history.

The curriculum and textbook production in Moldova remains centralised. Textbooks are produced by state and private publishing houses. All textbooks are curriculum-based and are developed according to the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education. Through the textbook publishing policy, the Ministry of Education controls the content and quality of textbooks. It is impossible to have an ideal textbook,<sup>44</sup> but textbook writers should try harder to produce textbooks that take into account actual needs and opportunities. Nonetheless, there are certain circumstances, conditions and characteristics that influence the development and quality of textbooks. In most cases, the quality of textbooks depends on the general political, social and economic situation from each

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<sup>41</sup> Dragnev and Postică, *Istoria românilor*, 151, 181–182.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>43</sup> C. Popovici and A. Popovici, *Istorie. Manual pentru clasa a X-a* [History. Textbook for the Tenth Grade], (Chișinău: Editura Lumina 2008).

<sup>44</sup> Jörn Rüsen, 'Das Ideale Schulbuch. Überlegungen Zum Leitmedium Des Geschichtsunterichts', *Internationale Schulbuchforschung/International Textbook Research* 14 (1992): 238.

country. T. Hunt in his report on textbook development in Romania, Macedonia, Sri Lanka, Azerbaijan, and China observed that three main, broad areas are necessary for a successful outcome:

- a. funding, policy and management;
- b. publishing, curriculum design and textbook development;
- c. textbook manufacture and distribution.

The history curricula and textbooks in Moldova have progressed, but we still encounter many problems. Among them, are the following general aspects:

- the content of curricula and history textbooks places too much emphasis on national aspects to the detriment of universal, regional and local dimensions of history;
- there is too much reflection on the history of wars and violence, rather than providing more space to periods of peaceful coexistence, cooperation and cultural exchange, of mutual enrichment between different groups, as well as between nations;<sup>45</sup>
- the regional history and cultural and historical links with neighbour countries are neglected;
- there is a problem in history teaching and ethnic identity, as well as in the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (the Other).

The problem of the presentation of neighbours in history textbooks also remains an open question. It is not underlined by any rules, curricula or official documents. The information presented above demonstrates this attitude and situation. In most of the textbooks, the information about the Other is very general and vague. The Moldovan history textbooks, includes more information on Romania and Romanians, because our common past as well as events. But, facts or heritage concerning Ukraine, Bulgaria and Turkey are very poor.

History textbooks play an important role in the process of collective identity formation, relation with the past and the creation of the image of the Other. The content of textbooks determines, in many cases, students’ attitudes towards their neighbours. Thus, in order to improve the situation of history teaching and to develop a tolerant approach towards one another in history textbooks, there is a great need for a common effort

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<sup>45</sup> UNESCO, *Disarming History. International Conference on Combating Stereotypes and Prejudice in History Textbooks of South-East Europe. Visby, Gotland (Sweden), 23–25 September 1999* (Paris: UNESCO, 1999), 11.

among politicians, professionals and civil society from Moldova. It may be that, in this way, this common effort will attain one of the objectives established by the UNESCO International Commission on Education in the twenty-first century of ‘learning to live together by developing and understanding others and their history, traditions, and spiritual values’<sup>46</sup>, as well as the recommendations of the Council of Europe and the European Union, which encourage us to fight against intolerance and stereotypes about the Other through intercultural learning.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> UNESCO, *Learning: The Treasure Within*. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Paris: UNESCO, 1996), 22.

<sup>47</sup> Lene O. Mogensen, ‘Learning to Be of Culture or Learning to Increase Participation?’ in *The Politics of Diversity in Europe*, ed. G. Titley and A. Lentin. (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2008), 155.

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**A Bandwagon Effect: Following the Lead of  
'New' History in Romanian Textbooks**

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### **Abstract**

History textbooks currently used in Romanian secondary schools make a virtue out of going against the nation-centric bias of the communist history schoolbooks. Accordingly, their relationship to classic Romanian historiography should be one of conflict. However, I find that post-communist textbooks merely downplay a resilient strand of Romanian nationalism: they only hint that the current discourse of history brings about change. In other words, they bear testimony to the outstanding success of the nationalist textbook genre over the past several decades, irrespective of the regime change in 1989. Since 2001, there has been another twist in the master story of the nation as recorded in the language of history textbooks. Gradually, their authors have jumped on the 'new' history bandwagon. Factually, specific rhetorical commonplaces and sweeping statements that convey the idea of the multicultural past of the nation have made their way into Romanian history. They have gained momentum from one textbook to the next. Used somewhat indiscriminately, they impact the likely future of the genre: the story of the past features the same momentous events and iconic heroes of the nation. However, they amount to less myth-making, less jingoism and less national purpose in schoolbooks.

### **A Hotbed of Dispute: The History Textbook Genre Over the Last Seventeen Years**

History textbooks have always played a major role in how Romanians view the study of their past. For example, the textbook genre is deemed to be at the heart of 'the need to rewrite history books [that] have been kept in the public's eye and on the government's agenda'.<sup>1</sup> This has definitely been the case for history books, ever since the regime change in 1989. Seventeen years ago, in the fall of 1999, the so-called 'Mitu scandal' broke out. National history was subjected to an unprecedented degree of critical distance, in order to make this history fit the profile of constructivist theories of nation building. New historians pointed out notions of overlap and negotiations in the 'making' of the nation, much to the dismay of the average Romanian and nationally-minded academics. The now old scandal of the 'anti-Romanian' history taught in public schools is a landmark in the immediate past of the textbook genre. It highlights the rift between 'the

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<sup>1</sup> Lavinia Stan, *Transitional Justice in Post-Communist Romania: The Politics of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 204.

legacy of the national-communist discourse<sup>2</sup> and the mainstream of late twentieth-century Western historiography.<sup>3</sup>

In hindsight, it is safe to say that the now old scandal tipped the balance in favour of the new trend. I contend that the strife between the supporters of 'old-school' textbooks and those who defend a 'new' take on history has everything to do with the genre of the history textbook, alongside a number of ideological issues. The issue of 'old' and 'new' history in Romania is a contentious one, with the former referred to as 'event-centred history (*histoire événementielle*)'.<sup>4</sup> The latter is an attempt to bring 'historical writing in Romania into accordance with Western methodological standards'.<sup>5</sup> Currently, three post-communist textbooks that fall under the category of the latter rather than the former help me make the point that, although event-centred history survived, these textbooks are closer than ever before to Western standards. These and other widely used schoolbooks tell a story to Romanian secondary school pupils about uneasy neighbours in Southeastern Europe.

My diachronic comparative approach should prove that their perspective on the past is that of a country that has already made it into the fold of the European Union. Two of them<sup>6</sup> were published prior to Romania's EU accession; only the third was released in the aftermath of becoming a member state.<sup>7</sup> Presently, they seem to be lagging behind. Instead of the tentative probing of European self-identification (dating back to more than a decade), Romania's full membership of the EU would require a better appreciation of 'Europeanness'. My subjects are caught in between tipping points in the systems that undergird Romanian nationalism and European citizenship. To my knowledge, there are currently no Romanian history textbooks that meet these two criteria: (1) to

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<sup>2</sup> Răzvan Pârâianu, 'National Prejudices, Mass Media and History Textbooks: The Mitu Controversy', in *Nation-Building and Contested Identities: Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi et al. (Budapest: Regio Books; Iasi: Polirom, 2001), 98.

<sup>3</sup> By Western historiography I mean an approach to the past that moves beyond the teleological story of the ethnic group and accommodates conjunctures and disruptions in the narrative of the nation.

<sup>4</sup> Cristina Petrescu and Dragoș Petrescu, 'Mastering vs. Coming to Terms with the Past: A Critical Analysis of Post-Communist Romanian Historiography', in *Narratives Unbound. Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, ed. Sorin Antohi et al. (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2007), 311.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

<sup>6</sup> Ovidiu Bozgan et al., *Istorie. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a* [History. Twelfth Grade Textbook] (Bucharest: All Educational, 1999), hereafter 1999; Nicoleta Dumitrescu et al. *Istoria Românilor. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a* [History. Twelfth Grade Textbook], fourth reprint (Bucharest: Humanitas Educațional, 2002), hereafter 2002; unless stated otherwise, all quotations from Romanian are my translation.

<sup>7</sup> Valentin Băluțiu et al., *Istorie. Manual pentru clasa a XII-a* [History. Twelfth Grade Textbook] (Bucharest: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 2007); hereafter 2007.

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have actually made the leap into the European present of the country (i.e., to tell the story of the past from the perspective of the post-accession era, now in full swing) and (2) to be as widely used as primary sources are used in Romanian public schools.

I have chosen to tackle these textbooks, in order to point out how the original reasons, which caused heated debate in post-communist Romania, seem to have lost their politically contentious edge.<sup>8</sup> One way or another, their widespread usage in Romanian public schools settled the dispute once and for all. They provide a snapshot of the way history has been taught in Romanian schools ever since the 2000s (i.e., they were released from 1999 to 2007). At the same time, they are likely to shape the future standard for the study of history over the coming decades.

The use value of the newer textbooks poses a number of questions. Do history teachers approve of the changes? Are the new schoolbooks of more help in the classroom than the old ones? Is their approach to history more than a formal write-up of the European credentials of the nation? Whatever the answer, the overlap between older and newer history textbooks makes for an awkward transition for the reader – a transition that is now well under way. This has everything to do with the entrenched patriotism customarily found throughout the stories told by the Romanian literary culture, associated with teaching and learning history in the country's public schools. This well-defined, previous stage in the genre's development is resilient enough to shape the direction in which the new textbooks seem to be heading. By dissociation, the history written in the spirit of the new-found conformity to European standards aims to leave behind the ethnic and cultural divisions entailed 'by the nation-centric discourse of modern historiography'.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, the European perspective on the past becomes dependent on denying some of the tenets of classic historiography, which have already seeped into the popular culture of Romania (e.g., the competition for resources with historical neighbours, the highly distinctive Romanian identity, etc.).

A definitive answer to the above-mentioned questions about the value of textbooks as teaching aids is not easy to provide. History teachers use several rather than only one at a time.<sup>10</sup> I am tempted to conclude that, for the most part, the answer is in the nega-

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<sup>8</sup> Lavinia Stan, 'Rewriting History Textbooks'. in *Transitional Justice in Post-Communist Romania: The Politics of Memory*, 183–204.

<sup>9</sup> Sinisa Malešević, *Nation-States and Nationalisms: Organization, Ideology and Solidarity* (Cambridge, Malden MA: Polity Press, 2013), 48.

<sup>10</sup> According to recent interviews I conducted at a handful of Romanian secondary schools in Suceava (the seat of Suceava county, Northeastern Romania).

tive, as no single history textbook is in consistent use throughout the school year. Most teachers look back at new and older textbooks simultaneously. They do so in order to find a less disjointed historical account of the past, which comes with the territory of the multidimensional history favoured by the post-2001 textbooks. Much like in the Western world, the focus on several narrative strands and on placing some well-known local events in wider, continental contexts means that 'large swaths of history are simply going untaught'.<sup>11</sup>

Although I find there is agreement among Romanian history teachers on the need to emancipate history from the bind of nationalism and, generally, from the bind of teleological bias, joining in what should have been a successful enterprise has led to some unexpected side effects. Regardless of their good intentions, the authors of history schoolbooks seem to have jumped on the bandwagon of heaping praise indiscriminately on most historical neighbours (with some notable exceptions to which I will return shortly), as well as on the Romanians. Factually, specific rhetorical commonplaces and over-generalisations, which convey the idea of the multicultural past of the nation, have made their way into Romanian history, gaining momentum from one textbook to another. The textbook genre credits European thinking for the multicultural spin in the classic tale of national history. However, there is plenty of work to be done in order to come up with a coherent approach to teaching history. Everything boils down to the classic story of 'blood and belonging'<sup>12</sup>, which forged a Romanian identity on battlefields, where natives clashed with their historical neighbours. Conclusively, the notion of varied ethnic and cultural groups (Hungarians, Saxons, Greeks, etc.) living together with the indigenous population on the territory of modern day Romania is at odds with the task of defeating them in battle.

#### *On the Bandwagon of Rewriting History*

Getting rid of event-centred history in textbooks was meant to put an end to what was deemed an obsolete, if not alarming, manner of teaching the subject of history. Inescapably, the primacy of nationalism in historical thought led to nation-state building, which was the last consequence of Romanian agency in history. The attempt to align the values

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<sup>11</sup> Donald A. Yerxa and Richard J. Evans, 'On the Current State of History: An Interview', in *Recent Themes in Historical Thinking: Historians in Conversation*, ed. Donald A. Yerxa (Columbia, South Carolina, U.S.: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 26.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 1993).

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of textbooks with Western standards succeeded at least to some extent. On the one hand, the new titles of the textbook genre, which shifted the stress from ethno-nationalism to a set of implicitly more cosmopolitan assumptions, have not been replaced so far, as one might have expected, considering the public uproar they initially caused. On the other hand, they are highly representative of the same change that had already occurred quite some time ago in the West. For example, in 1960s U.K., 'the national history taught in schools is more selective, less authoritarian and monolithic than it used to be'.<sup>13</sup> Effectively, these textbooks try to go against the nation-centric bias, not to mention the political agenda, of communist history. Specifically, they are miles apart from the 1980s historiography that increasingly relied on the 'besieged fortress' myth.<sup>14</sup> The paranoid attitude of the country's political elite assumed the hostility of the outside world in order to mobilise support for the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Essentially, the history textbooks released at this time delivered a narrative version of ethno-nationalism, while the post-communist texts moved on to a relational understanding of former patterns of national self-identification.

Since 2001, Romanian historians have set out to change the teaching of history. Considering that all of the textbooks reviewed are still in use, there is not much doubt that patriotic fervour is gradually being replaced with a (more) Eurocentric worldview in the mainstream of Romanian life. If one is to trust what 'new' history has to say, the good citizen of Romania has always been European, rather than the subject of a national polity. This is a choice that goes against the grain of the past 30 years of communist historiography and is a choice that results in a notion of multi-level citizenship.<sup>15</sup> Factually, the textbooks keep a familiar sequence of events but, at the same time, shift the focus to the European commitment of the nation. They testify to the outstanding success of the history textbook genre in the past, which is the framework of history for a vast majority of ethnic Romanians. The new trend in writing history demonstrates the success of the textbooks used at the time of the former communist regime. In an attempt to counterbalance the ethno-national reading of the past, the textbooks now in use rely on political arguments that have gained appeal ever since EU accession. However, the frame of ref-

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<sup>13</sup> Ann Low-Beer, 'School History, National History and the Issue of National Identity', *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research* 3, no. 1 (2003): 3.

<sup>14</sup> Ioan-Marius Bucur and Crina Capota, 'Defining the Enemy: The Profile of the Bourgeoisie in Romanian Communist Textbooks', in *Imagining Frontiers Contesting Identities*, ed. Steven G. Ellis and Lud'a Klusakova (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2007), 403.

<sup>15</sup> Willem Maas, *Multilevel Citizenship* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 1.

erence is unmistakably the same world of nations in which every state has to fend for itself.

Much like the bandwagon effect of opinion polls,<sup>16</sup> I find that particular rhetorical commonplaces of recording national history have gained momentum. When it comes to cashing in on the opportunities presented by European membership, there is something of an exuberance that recalls that of stock market investors.<sup>17</sup> In any case, classic bandwagon effects should provide a clue about the urge to follow the trend of the moment, which is the same irrespective of circumstance. What I mean by the bandwagon effect in writing history textbooks is not exactly the same, however, as following topical questions in the politics of European enlargement: neither political science nor the stock market give a glimpse into the cultural politics of the nation. First, the 'trend of the moment' for the schoolbook genre spans decades. Second, history writing is not bottom-up communication. On the contrary, the school curriculum is all about top-down decision making. Currently, the subject of history in schools is called upon to deliver on the country's promise to reject national communism. Thus textbooks are expected to counter the ethnic culture promoted by the former regime. It follows that schoolbook authors are invited to join the bandwagon with the identity narrative promoted by Brussels. They seize the opportunity with the conviction that it is highly desirable to come to a new understanding on the issue of Romanian history. Likewise, everyone knows what the consequences should be, such as the newly found consensus towards entertaining neighbourly feelings for fellow European nations. Tentatively, the story of the past conveys a fresh sense of anticipation about the future of Romania's membership of the EU. In conclusion, in the mainstream of Romanian life, the image of neighbouring nations and ethnic groups undergoes a paradigm shift, which seems to have reached secondary school textbooks. In the words of the authors, 'always pointing fingers at others, in order to account for our failure, is of no use anymore'.<sup>18</sup>

Explicitly, I feel that history textbooks offer a view of Romania's friends and foes to downplay a resilient strand of Romanian nationalism in history.

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<sup>16</sup> Sibylle Hardmeier, 'The Effects of Published Polls on Citizens', in *The Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research*, ed. Wolfgang Donsbach and Michael W. Traugott (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Robert J. Shiller, *Irrational Exuberance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> 'condamnarea permanentă a celorlalți pentru neputințele noastre nu ne mai poate fi de nici un folos' (1999), 6.

### **The Ethnic Other as the European Neighbour**

The story of the post-communist textbooks unfolds against the backdrop of Western European civilisation. In the words of the authors, 'throughout this book, we have tried to emphasise the drive of Romanians to be a part of European history'.<sup>19</sup> What prompted the shift in position by the Education Ministry of Romania was the EU.<sup>20</sup> This is, in fact, a narrative quite unfamiliar to the average consumer of Romanian history. As for what they actually say, the authors are overly keen to foster a sense of belonging to Europe. Consequently, their relationship to classic Romanian historiography is one of conflict. Regardless, the Romanian 'textbooks themselves are profoundly reticent to change'.<sup>21</sup> The world of nations from which Romanians must carve out a place for themselves is self-evident, despite the formal adjustment to the language of Brussels.

The perennials of teaching Romanian history are easy to spot: the Roman conquest of Dacia that led to the ethnogenesis, the uninterrupted continuity of ethnic Romanians on the territory of the nation-state (preferably at the time when Romanian borders expanded to their greatest extent), and the making of modern Romania. Ever since the regime change, some of the national communist commonplaces have been expunged from recent history. Instead, a number of other concerns pertaining to recent history – namely, the nation at the time of the socialist regime, the fall of communism in 1989, or the aftermath of the revolution – gradually came into the limelight. However, a rather patchy approach to teaching history leaves uncovered entire swathes of the past. The textbooks I have selected deal with specific episodes from two different angles, nationalism versus Europeanisation, leading to a tangled web of twists and turns, overlapping in nature. Consequently, the history textbooks keep secondary school pupils guessing about the purpose of the historical narrative that, for the most part, interweaves national history with the Ottoman Empire (as well as with the Phanariot Greeks), Hungary, Germany (better said, the Germans) and Russia.

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<sup>19</sup> 'pretutindeni în manual, este subliniată dimensiunea culturală a încercărilor Românilor de a se înscrie în istoria Europei' (2002), 3; the schoolbook authored by Nicoleta Dumitrescu et al. was also approached by previous studies of Romanian history textbooks; see Simona Szakács, 'Now and Then: National Identity Construction in Romanian History: A Comparative Study of Communist and Post-Communist School Textbooks', *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 29, no. 1 (2007): 23–47.

<sup>20</sup> Textbooks sanctioned for use in Romanian public schools carry the stamp of approval of the Education Ministry. Although none of them is compulsory, teachers are instructed to take their pick from the Ministry's list of available schoolbooks.

<sup>21</sup> Anamaria Dutceac Segesten, *Myth, Identity, and Conflict: A Comparative Analysis of Romanian and Serbian History Textbooks* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2011), 248.

The account of events leading up to the landmark union of Wallachia and Moldova in 1859 is all about the birth of and journey through centuries of the Romanian people, 'from the ethnogenesis to the making of the state'.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, the geopolitical map becomes more crowded, as the focus shifts towards Western Europe. The German-born kings of modern Romania, the traditionally Francophile elite, the growing concerns about Russia: all are used allusively with reference to the prospective European self-identification of Romanians and, finally, to actual membership of the EU. The chronological recording of events is, nevertheless, able to delineate the same framework of history. Despite renewed stress on the familiar milestones of history, the gap between the insular worldview of classic Romanian historiography and a more cosmopolitan outlook on yet another member state of the European family (i.e., Romania) has continued to widen over the years (from 1999 to 2007).

All three textbooks are less concerned with the history of indigenous ethnic statehood – something that used to define national identity according to the policy customarily pursued by the Romanian state in education. The more the storyline unravels, the more inconsistencies the narrators must cover up, in order to keep together widely differing views on the evidence of design in history. The question secondary school pupils face is a tough one: was the making of the nation a pit stop on the road to Europe or was it the terminus of historical development? Whatever the answer, it feels safe to say that ethno-national self-identification in Romania is under strain. More than ever before, the literary image of the neighbour in history textbooks may be regarded as the litmus test of the progress that Romania is making on the European path.

As I will try to prove in the following section, the tradition of the history schoolbook genre nonetheless shows the way out. This jumping on the bandwagon of new history is also bound to result in a change of mindset.

### **From Ethnogenesis to Modern Romania**

Up to the Aurelian retreat from Dacia in the third century AD, the issue of historical neighbours does not pose much of a challenge to the authors. Once the Romance-speaking nation on the north bank of the Danube is left to fend for itself, the benchmark against which everyone else is to be measured is established: the neighbour. Whoever

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<sup>22</sup> 'De la geneza etnică la geneza statală' (1999), 5. Have left this form of citation in this form for the sake of clarity in citing original quotes throughout the footnotes from the two aforementioned sources. Author denotes the years 1999 and 2002 as signifiers for both sources for the remaining footnotes.

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came over 'faced a material culture recognizably Romanic in most details, throughout the land. Consequently, all of the newcomers blended with the larger native population'.<sup>23</sup> All three textbooks share the view that the Germanic tribes, the Turkic people – mainly the Avars, the Turanian newcomers or the Slavic-speaking groups – were assimilated into early medieval Romanian society. As a matter of principle, 'the Romanic people was unlike all other neighbouring nations (the Bulgarians, the Hungarians, the Russians etc.)'.<sup>24</sup> The assumption is that they must have preserved their identity at the expense of the 'multi-ethnic reality'<sup>25</sup> of the time. However, the majority of the pre-Christian Slavic population living north of the Danube was brought into the nation as late as the tenth century, the moment they converted to Christianity. Their relatively late assimilation should account for the Slavic borrowings that made their way into the Romanian language.<sup>26</sup>

The conquest of Dacia, the birth of the nation, and the long absence of Romanians from the history written by their neighbours, ever since the Roman retreat, are the cornerstones of the most conservative episode featured in schoolbooks. The point made by the authors is that 'old records (the *Gesta* of Anonymus) document the presence of the Romanian people in Transylvania at the time of the Hungarian arrival'.<sup>27</sup> It is safe to conclude that since the foundation of the nation-state, the 'belief in the indigeneity and nativeness of one's group'<sup>28</sup> has been successfully instilled in most, if not all, Romanian schoolchildren.

The goal of the approach is to downplay a strand of nationalism that 'turns neighbours into strangers'.<sup>29</sup> However, before an emphasis on solidarity among European neighbours, the military side of history is displayed: 'The many wars the Turks, the Russians, the Austrians or the Poles waged against each other throughout the Romanian

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<sup>23</sup> 'Pretutindeni întâlnesc o cultură materială de factură romanică relativ uniformizată. Pe acest temei, sunt asimilați de către romanici, mult mai numeroși' (2002), 15.

<sup>24</sup> 'popor romanic distinct de alte popoare vecine (bulgarii, ungurii, rușii ... )' (2007), 11.

<sup>25</sup> 'realitate polietică' (2002), 14.

<sup>26</sup> (1999), 13.

<sup>27</sup> 'Izvoare vechi (precum *Cronica lui Anonymus*) confirmă prezența populației Românești în Transilvania la venirea ungurilor' (2007), 11.

<sup>28</sup> Asteria Brylka et al., 'National Identification and Intergroup Attitudes among Members of the National Majority and Immigrants: Preliminary Evidence for the Mediatonal Role of Psychological Ownership of a Country', *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 3, no. 1 (2015): 24–45, doi:10.5964/jspp.v3i1.275..

<sup>29</sup> Michael Ignatieff, 'Nationalism and the Narcissism of Minor Differences', in *Theorizing Nationalism*, ed. Ronald Beiner (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 96.

principalities caused great damage to the urban areas.<sup>30</sup> The benefits enjoyed by ethnic Romanians, mainly because of their ability to secure the long-term existence of their medieval polities, become self-evident as the facts of history play out. The focus on the medieval principalities (Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania) gives structure to the manner in which the story is told. The image of the 'stranger-neighbour' and, particularly, of the danger posed by neighbours conveys the sense of long-standing commitment to strong group loyalty, which runs very deep in the genre of the Romanian history textbook.

The symbolic ownership of the homeland is the lens through which schoolbooks see everyone else who settled in the country. Most of the newcomers are one and the same with the historical neighbours of the nation. They are the ethnic Other, always at hand when it comes to Transylvania and Bessarabia.<sup>31</sup> Particularly Transylvania, as the bone of contention between neighbours, helps the textbooks devise a practical approach to the issue: on the one hand, the Hungarian community, whose lineage is linked to the Turanian nomadic population already mentioned, on the other hand the German-speaking community, also known as the Saxons of Transylvania, provide causal explanations as to why things turned out the way they did. The Romanians, the Hungarians and the Germans fall into their place: 'as the settlements of the Székely and of the Saxons grew, the Hungarian crown curbs the power of the local ruler. At regular intervals, the king appoints the chief for each ethnic group [...] Their lands taken away from them, pushed to the margins of Transylvania, [...] the Romanians hold on to some of their traditional ways.'<sup>32</sup> The Magyars are the customary target of criticism over the human rights record in Transylvania. 'Over the three centuries following the Hungarian conquest in the ninth, the Romanian civilisation in Transylvania underwent great change.'<sup>33</sup> The presence of the Székely and the Saxons made a tremendous amount of difference to the indigenous Romanians. Romanian history textbooks honour the Germans as 'the makers

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<sup>30</sup> 'Numeroasele războaie purtate de turcii, ruși, austrieci, polonezi pe teritoriul Țărilor Române, au produs mari pierderi târgurilor și orașelor' (2007), 66.

<sup>31</sup> Bessarabia is the eastern half of the historical principality of Moldavia. The name 'Bessarabia' surfaced on the map of Europe in 1812, when the Russian Empire annexed this region, which lies between the rivers Dniester and Prut.

<sup>32</sup> 'Pe măsura colonizării secuilor și sașilor, regalitatea limitează puterea voievodului. Regele desemnează periodic un comite pentru fiecare din aceste grupuri etnice. ... Depoședați de proprietăți funciare, rețrași spre zonele marginase ale Transilvaniei ... Românii își păstrează unele instituții anterioare' (2002), 29.

<sup>33</sup> 'Această lume [românească] ... va suferi mari transformări în cele trei secole ale cuceririi Transilvaniei de către unguri (sec. IX-XII)' (1999), 15.

of urban civilisation throughout virtually the whole of Hungary'<sup>34</sup> and point out the military purpose served by the Székely, 'whose ancestry is still under debate'.<sup>35</sup>

According to the textbook, if the Romance-speaking Transylvanians had an actual army at the time of the Hungarian offensive, they would have resisted the alien invasion. Instead, they failed to resist, and the Romanian historian cannot refrain from making use of counter-factual conditionals: 'Transylvania could have been the first Romanian medieval principality ... Unfortunately, at decisive moments, the Romanians did not have an army to match that of an expansionist state.'<sup>36</sup> Such counter-factual scenarios are developed in order to reinforce the unifying theme of Romanian indigeneity and legitimate ownership of the land. The purpose is to make secondary school pupils familiar with the untold story of their ancestors. Strangely enough, they are asked to come to terms with what has not actually happened but could have happened under entirely different circumstances.

Particular neighbouring countries are not openly portrayed; most of the time, their description with regard to recent history remains noncommittal. The polite engagement of the neighbour as a benchmark against which historians judge the past is plain to see: 'At the beginning of the Middle Ages, military action was commonly resorted to as a means to attain political aims, while, after the 1600s, the Romanian princes customarily relied on diplomacy.'<sup>37</sup> Despite the fact that all three textbooks examine subjects in isolation, the evidence of purpose in Romanian history is overwhelming: 'the idea of the modern nation has grown from the people, from the traditions, the history, the language and the identity that all transgress political, social and cultural boundaries.'<sup>38</sup> Consequently, it is somewhat misleading to argue that countries in Romania's close proximity, particularly the ones that prevented national self-determination, have always been neighbourly to the Romanians: 'Eastern Europe was at the mercy of big players like Hungary, Poland and the Ottoman Empire, and, later on, like Austria and Russia.'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> '[saşii sunt] principalii autori ai civilizaţiei urbane, practic în întreaga Ungarie' (1999), 15.

<sup>35</sup> 'de o origine încă controversată' (1999), 15.

<sup>36</sup> 'Transilvania ar fi putut fi primul stat medieval românesc. ... Din păcate, în momentele hotărâtoare ea [populaţia româna] nu a dispus de structurile militare ale unui stat în plină expansiune' (1999), 16.

<sup>37</sup> 'Mijloacele domnitorilor români au fost, la începuturile Evului Mediu, militare, iar apoi, cu precădere după 1600, diplomatice' (2002), 35.

<sup>38</sup> 'Ideea de naţiune modernă se afirmă pornind de la popor, de la tradiţiile, istoria, limba şi specificul acestuia, care se manifestă peste graniţele politice, peste diferenţele sociale şi culturale' (1999), 37.

<sup>39</sup> 'Zona Europei răsăritene era un spaţiu dominat de mari puteri precum Ungaria, Polonia şi Imperiul Otoman, şi, mai târziu, Austria şi Rusia' (2007), 199.

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However, the European nations give rise to conjectures that go hand in hand with the statement that the country's 'intelligentsia has always looked at Europe with *Romanian eyes*'.<sup>40</sup> Paradoxically, the fellow Europeans who historically happened to live on Romanian soil (for example, the Greeks) somehow deserve to be shut off from the otherwise 'normal' relationship between Romania and their homeland. Although the armed conflicts between the Romanian principalities are briefly mentioned, the authors go to great lengths to point out instances of their concerted action. For example, 'the reigns of Matei Basarab in Wallachia and of Vasile Lupu in Moldavia set an example for the fight against the Greeks. Together with Transylvanian princes, the two of them ... laid the foundation for a pan-Romanian alliance.'<sup>41</sup>

The attempt to advance the agenda of national interests is associated with iconic characters (Stephen the Great, Michael the Brave, etc.) and recognizably Romanian institutions (the Orthodox Church). The national underpinnings of worship in Transylvania are duly mentioned:

The Wallachian and the Moldavian princes had feudal tenure over lands in Transylvania. In these lands, the vast bulk of the inhabitants were ethnic Romanians who welcomed the rule of our medieval states. After the Magyar kings had ousted the Orthodox faith, the ruling families of Wallachia and Moldavia, Basarab and Muşatin, took under their wing our ancient church, thus renewing the confessional unity of all Romanian people.<sup>42</sup>

I find that, up to the making of the modern nation, the literary image of Hungary is shaped to displace national indifference, when it comes to the claims of Romanian nationalism. Furthermore, it carves out a place for the Russian Empire/the Soviet Union, which takes over from medieval Hungary in modern and recent history. The Hungarian and the Russian neighbour, who have to be kept at bay, drive the story of widespread concern for the nation among ethnic Romanians. Ultimately, the bias in reporting about ethnic minorities, as well as historical neighbours, has everything to do with whether or not they lay claim to the land of the ancestors.

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<sup>40</sup> 'urmaşi ai acestor generaţii de cărturari au privit Europa dintr-o *perspectivă Românească*' (2002), 4.

<sup>41</sup> 'Domnia lui Matei Basarab în Țara Românească și cea a lui Vasile Lupu în Moldova au fost un exemplu de luptă împotriva grecilor. Cei doi domni ... au pus bazele unei alianțe pan-românești împreună cu principia Transilvaniei' (2002), 43–44.

<sup>42</sup> 'domnii Ungro-Vlahiei și Moldovei au stăpânit feude în Transilvaniei. Aceste teritorii locuite în majoritate de Români s-au bucurt de administrația statelor noastre medievale. După ce ortodoxia a fost marginalizată de regii maghiari, Basarabii și Mușatinii au patronat străvechea noastră biserică, asigurând astfel unitatea confesională a tuturor românilor' (1999), 29.

### **Modern Romania and Its Many Neighbours**

Much of the discourse around modern history is geared toward defusing tensions with neighbours, particularly with fellow and prospective members of the EU. The making of the modern nation-state brings the geopolitical neighbourhood of the Danubian principalities (Wallachia and Moldavia) into the limelight more than ever before. Their union in 1859 is reason for optimism and translates into confidence in the country's standing in the world. As a result, the take on the issue of adjacent countries is more straightforward. From the beginning of the twentieth century to the First World War, Romania itself is more assertive. Unlike in previous times (prior to the 1859 union), the scene of history now teems with new actors. For example, the newly independent state finds a comfortable friend in Serbia: 'Romania was in very good terms with the young Serbian state.'<sup>43</sup> If the Balkan wars (1912-13) prevented the emergence of the same neighbourly feelings in relation to Bulgaria, the ethnic Bulgarians make up for the loss: 'Likewise, Romania helped the Bulgarians who came to live in our country. They received financial benefits from the Romanian state and had the opportunity to study in universities.'<sup>44</sup> Essentially, the foundation and the independence of the nation-state mean that the concern with the Ottoman Turks is relegated to the past. In its place, the uneasiness about Russia, which is deep-seated in modern Romanian culture, spills over into history textbooks. Everything started with the war of Romanian independence (1877-78), if not earlier. The Russian-Turkish war is a case in point of widely felt anxiety among Romanians: 'Much to the surprise and delight of the entire world, although the Romanian army had not fought in a war for two centuries, our men showed great bravery and sacrifice ... Russia failed to keep her part of the agreement and annexed the South of Bessarabia.'<sup>45</sup> From this moment on, the dangers posed by neighbouring countries return with a vengeance. The climax is Romania's territorial losses to Russia, Hungary and Bulgaria in the summer of 1940.

Instances of territorial disputes come to show the overlap between Russia and Hungary in modern Romanian history. Truth be told, Bulgaria is also acknowledged as one of the many 'stranger-neighbours' of Romania. Yet, the Soviet Union's return to Bessa-

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<sup>43</sup> 'România a avut relații foarte bune cu tânărul stat sârb' (2007), 227.

<sup>44</sup> 'De asemenea, [România] a sprijinit imigrația bulgărească care beneficia de ajutor material din partea statului român și de posibilitatea de a urma studiile de învățământ superior' (2007), 227.

<sup>45</sup> 'Spre surprinderea și admirația întregii lumi, deși armata română nu mai luptase într-un război de două secole, militarii noștri au dat dovadă de curaj și spirit de sacrificiu. ... Rusia, încalcându-și propriile angajamente anexă sudul Basarabiei' (2007), 232.

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rabia and the occupation of Bucovina are given ample coverage. Moreover, compared with the retreat from Bessarabia and Bucovina, less emphasis is placed on the short-term loss of northwestern Transylvania to Hungary. According to history textbooks, this is a war of neighbours. The fact that the political elite of the time did not stand up to the enemies who surrounded the nation and 'relinquished without a fight the control of the national territory, which was deemed shameful and especially so for the crown. Under these circumstances, Charles II was forced to abdicate.'<sup>46</sup> In history textbooks, Transylvania and Bessarabia turn out to be functionally alike: the narrative on the ethnic and cultural continuity of the Romance-speaking population is built around a cast of hostile neighbours (either the Hungarians or the Russians) always eager to seize the opportunity and take control of Romanian lands. Consequently, the image of Hungary/Hungarians is mirrored by that of Russia/Russians. Explicitly, the Tsarist Empire/the Soviet Union and the Slavic-speaking community of the present-day republic of Moldova stand for the familiar world of medieval Transylvania at the time of the Magyar conquest. Looking back to the genre of history textbooks, it seems that Hungary and Russia come in pairs, with the latter privileged throughout recent history as the most relevant threat to the security of Romania. The former is now (for example, in 2002) one of the neighbours with whom Romania has settled border disputes:

Good neighbour treaties were signed with Ukraine, Hungary, Bulgaria and Moldova. Currently, negotiations are taking place between Romania and Russia. On the threshold of the third millennium, the attempt of Romania to follow the European path is under way; this is what will decide the fate of a country lying between an increasingly unpredictable Russia and the overly cautious Western world.<sup>47</sup>

By and large, the historical picture of how the Russian settlement of Eastern Moldavia came to pass is nothing but a retelling of the medieval colonisation of Transylvania. Moreover, it is a scenario that has been repeated again and again throughout the history of the nation. Romanian history is all about the clash between the stranger-neighbour

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<sup>46</sup> 'Abandonarea fără lupta a teritoriului național a fost considerată o soluție dezonorantă pentru clasa politică, și în special pentru monarhie. În aceste împrejurări, Carol al II-lea a fost silit să renunțe la tron' (2002), 160.

<sup>47</sup> 'au fost încheiate tratate de baza cu Ucraina, Ungaria, Bulgaria și Moldova. Se află în curs de desfășurare negocierile pentru semnarea tratatului cu Rusia. În pragul mileniului trei, încercarea României de a se apropia de Europa Occidentală se află în plină desfășurare și ea va decide soarta unei țări așezate între o Rusie din ce în ce mai imprevizibilă și Occidentul care este foarte prudent' (2002), 228.

and the indigenous, Romance-speaking population. This pattern gives structure to several episodes in national history. Namely, the Hungarian takeover of the westernmost province of Romania (i.e., Transylvania) or the so-called theft of Bucovina (the north-western tip of the Moldavian principality, which was incorporated into the Habsburg Empire in 1775 'as compensation for the growing Russian influence in the Romanian principalities'<sup>48</sup>) display the same level of neighbour stereotyping. Furthermore, the stranger-neighbours operate as the country's worst enemy at one time or another, even if they do not lay claim to the land of Romania. With no Romanian province at stake, the almost 100 years of Greek administration in the Danubian principalities have come to be known as the Phanariot age. Alongside other examples of white-collar immigration, the Greeks rank high among those who have never delivered on the neighbourly promises they made the moment they set foot on Romanian soil. The Phanariot Greeks, the Jews or the Armenians are blamed for pushing the natives down the social and economic ladder. In other words, although 'the new anti-Semitic policy of Stalin who wanted to oust leadership of Jewish descent from various communist parties across Eastern Europe'<sup>49</sup> was a ploy of Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, the chairman of the Romanian Worker's Party, he had actually won popular support as result of his (perceived) nationalist moves. Throughout the twentieth century, the Greek community goes unmentioned, yet the ethno-national heritage of the neighbour is the staple of the political dramas played out on the stage of Romania prior to the First World War: 'The democratic commitment of the Romanian state had to allow the elite of the various national minorities to set up ethnically-based parties ... the Magyar/German/Jewish Party.'<sup>50</sup> No matter the province (Transylvania, Bessarabia or Bukovina), the exact wording of the text remains virtually unchanged. For example,

by the end of the nineteenth century, the policy of the Russian Empire was to enforce the Russification of Bessarabia. Slavic-speaking people were forcibly brought into the region and the language of education, worship and administration switched from Romanian to Russian.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> 'Bucovina a fost o compensație pretinsă de austrieci față de creșterea influenței rusești în Țările Române' (2007), 61.

<sup>49</sup> 'noua politică antisemită a lui Stalin care urmărea eliminarea comuniștilor de origine evreiască de la conducerea diverselor partide comuniste din Europa de Est' (1999), 120.

<sup>50</sup> 'Soluțiile politice democratice datorate de statul român au permis ca liderii minorităților naționale să înființeze partide entice ... Partidul Maghiar, German, Evreiesc' (1999), 97–98.

<sup>51</sup> 'Spre sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea, în teritoriul basarabean politica de rusificare s-a manifestat atât prin aducerea forțată a unor populații rusofone, cât și prin asimilarea și promovarea limbii ruse în școală, biserică și în instituțiile statului' (2002), 92.

If Transylvania remained Romanian to a large degree, the Russian colonisation of Bessarabia proved to be more of a challenge. As far as Bukovina is concerned, the declining number of ethnic Romanians and the present-day partition of the region between Ukraine and Romania follow from 'the main consequence of the Habsburg conquest, which was the Romanians' loss of ethnic pre-eminence, as the Ukrainians and the Ruthenians settled in the region'.<sup>52</sup> The case studies and the closely-focused storytelling of the textbooks show that the primary allegiance of iconic Romanians is to one's own ethnic group. In spite of growing awareness of the current European commitment of the nation, the defining nationalism of the history textbook genre makes the best out of the new circumstances in which Romania has found itself.

### **Conclusions**

Currently, the history textbook genre in Romania is on its way to becoming European, rather than remaining true to the home-grown rhetoric of nationalism. The new schoolbooks are conservative enough not to stir controversy, yet are able to set themselves apart from the textbooks in use throughout the 1990s, not to mention the schoolbooks of the former communist regime. They show that the best practice of teaching history in present-day Romania paves the way to multi-level citizenship, which should help secondary school pupils grasp what is expected from them in the future. Nevertheless, I find that the emerging European self-identification among average Romanians must catch up with Euro-centric solutions to the issue of nationalism, which has always belonged to the mainstream of modern Romanian life.

History teaching in Romanian public schools has fostered patterns of self-identification ever since the foundation of the modern nation-state. Particularly so, the socialist schoolbooks provided the background against which present-day historians endeavour to come up with a fresh perspective on history. Studying history at school reflects the policy of the school patron. Like almost all of its European counterparts across time, the Romanian government established the teaching of history on a political basis. This is to say, at 'patriotic high points',<sup>53</sup> the literary culture of the nation articulated the curriculum to address the needs of the nation-state. As a result, European accession

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<sup>52</sup> 'cea mai importantă consecință a fost pierderea statutului de populație majoritară în favoarea rutenilor și ucrainenilor' (1999), 61.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Phillips, *History Teaching, Nationhood and the State: A Study in Educational Politics* (London: Cassell, 1998), 1.

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helps to place Romanian nationalism in context through the textbook genre. From 1999 to 2007, national history was taught in order to place ethnic Romanians next to other (Western) Europeans, rather than debating their superiority over historical neighbours. Furthermore, a more diverse understanding of Romania comes about by learning more about the multicultural past of the Romanian principalities. The indigenous achievements are increasingly presented against the backdrop of Western European history. Consequently, maintaining the unbroken flow of information between the landmarks of ethnic identity is close to impossible. Using more than one textbook is the answer to the question as to the value of the learning aids employed to teach history in present-day Romanian schools. The nation-centric bias of older schoolbooks bridged the gaps of history with a sense of national purposefulness. In contrast, post-communist textbooks downplay a resilient strand of Romanian nationalism in a feeble attempt to change the mindset of society at large. However, the decision as to what content is to be covered in textbooks seems to be a deal made between the nation and historians. Since the readers in history of the late nineteenth century have become professional historians on the payroll of public schools, they have been the guardians of the Romanian master story. The success of the top-down change of perspective on teaching history in public schools has everything to do with the insights provided by the textbook genre. Judging from the responses of the history teachers working in Suceava County (a long way from where change has always come in past Romanian historiography), the trickle-down effect of change is well under way, although not running as quickly as possible.

Undoubtedly, the formal adjustment to the Eurocentric conception of history is here to stay. Eventually, this may even result in a paradigm shift, yet there is no conclusive proof to support such a statement now. At present, the underlying current of nationalism still comes to a head each time the momentous events of national history are mentioned in Romanian secondary schools. Altogether, the writing of history amounts to a puzzling sequence of events meant to accommodate the need for a sequel to Romanian history. The causal relationship reads like it always did, yet it points to a somewhat different outcome. Explicitly, the setting and the characters have not changed, but they serve to prove the opposite of their usual purpose. Namely, that although history necessarily led to the making of modern Romania, the accession to the EU brings a new twist to the tale of the past. What previously seemed to have already reached its last and only possible consequence is suddenly subject to dramatic revision: the Romanian nationals are sud-

denly called upon to find new meaning in their past. This is likely to impact the future of the genre, due to the obviously questionable consequences in writing school history brought about by nation-centric accounts of the past, recorded in the language of multiculturalism. The new choices add up to less myth making, less jingoism and less national purpose in schoolbooks.

There is a challenge inherent in the design of the history textbooks currently in use in Romanian secondary schools. The disciplinary tensions between the nation-state ideology (at work in classic Romanian historiography) and the cosmopolitan language of 'Europeanness' (now gathering momentum) hinder the development of a coherent view on the nation in history. So far, the writing of new history has not delivered on the promise of consistent concept development able to replace whatever is perceived as distinctive from nation-centric history. Rather than thinking of the paradigm shift in progress as yet another attempt to rewrite schoolbooks, I feel that the current state of affairs opens conversational spaces that disprove the claim that the historical narrative taught in classrooms is all about teleology and purpose.

In conclusion, history teachers face the opportunity to build on the strengths of both new and old history. Jumping back and forth from one textbook to another is effective in revealing the inconsistencies and the unquestioned assumptions of mainstream history in school. The aim is to have secondary schools that produce students endowed with the capacity to hold less extreme beliefs about themselves and others.

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***Kerli Kraus***

**Depictions of Medieval Neighbours in Contemporary  
Estonian Secondary School Textbooks.  
Competing Approaches to History Writing from the Perspective of  
Value-based Education**

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## Abstract

This paper analyses the portrayal of historical neighbours in two contemporary Estonian secondary school textbooks. The medieval period of the region (ca. 1200–1560, i.e. from the beginning of the Christianisation of Estonia until the fall of the Livonian Confederation) is the focus of this short study, most notably with a focus on the depiction of the pivotal events and processes of Estonian medieval history. Drawing parallels with current historical research and pedagogical thought, the author also explores modern textbook writing within the framework of value-based education, evaluating and challenging the current concepts of textbook writing in the scope of the changing requirements for history education.<sup>1</sup>

*‘In Wahrheit gehört die Geschichte nicht uns, sondern wir gehören ihr’*

*Hans-Georg Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode*

During the turbulent course of Estonian history, medieval history in particular has been subject to the whims and wishes of the changing political winds. Medieval and early modern chroniclers, influenced by their political and religious sympathies, painted pictures of a glorious golden era or of a measly Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> For the Baltic Germans, the period paved the way for their ‘founding legend’. The period of Enlightenment employed the Middle Ages to the service of the construction of Estonian national identity.<sup>3</sup>

The radical thinkers during the Estonian national awakening went even so far as to adopt the concept of three historical cycles – the Ages of Light, Darkness and Dawn of the Estonian people. In this discourse, the medieval period symbolises the loss of the mythical golden age and ancient freedom with the invasion of German crusaders.<sup>4</sup> After a few decades of independence, the Soviet regime turned yet another drastic page to Es-

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to express my sincere thanks to AS Bit, Maurus Kirjastus OÜ and the Institute of History and Archaeology of University of Tartu for kindly sharing the sources for this research. I am also grateful to professor János M. Bak and Dr Robert Maier for their insightful comments and constructive criticism on the early drafts of this paper. The comments from the anonymous reviewer and editor have also been gratefully appreciated.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Katri Raik, ‘Ajaloikirjutuse kõrgaeg Eesti- ja Liivimaa’ [The High Points of Historiography in Livonia and Estonia], *Ajalooline Ajakiri* 115, no. 4 (2001): 5–26.

<sup>3</sup> Linda Kaljundi and Kaspars Kļaviņš, ‘The Chronicler and the Modern World: Henry of Livonia and the Baltic Crusades in the Enlightenment and National Traditions’, in *Crusading and Chronicle. Writing on the Medieval Baltic Frontier. A Companion to the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, ed. Marek Tamm et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 409–456, quotation 410.

<sup>4</sup> For a summarising publication on the topic, see Jaan Undusk, ‘Kolm võimalust kirjutada eestlaste ajalugu: Merkel – Jakobson – Hurt’ [Three Alternative Ways to Write the History of Estonians: Merkel – Jakobson – Hurt], *Keel ja Kirjandus* 11/12, (1997): 721–734; 797–811; see also Kaljundi and Kļaviņš, ‘The Chronicler and the Modern World’, 425, and Linda Kaljundi, ‘Muinasmaa sünn’ [The Birth of the Ancient Homeland], *Vikerkaar* 8–9 (2008): 98–112.

tonian medieval research, interpreting all associated events in the framework of the prevalent ideology of the time.<sup>5</sup>

All these past vagaries do not characterise the current state of historical research in present-day Estonia. Most notably, the academic historical discourse has gradually adapted the concept of the Baltic Crusades as the main initiator for the social, political and economic processes of the German conquest.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the medieval history of Estonia is heavily interwoven into the narrative generally interpreted as ‘the making of Europe’.

However, the incorporation of these concepts into recent academic publication of Estonian history<sup>7</sup> has led to such wide debate in both academic circles and the general public that, as Finnish historian Seppo Zetterberg succinctly concluded, ‘it seemed as if every proper Estonian must have considered it a civic duty to have an opinion about the medieval history of the country’.<sup>8</sup> To a certain extent, the debate as to whether the Estonian national narrative can – and should – be viewed in a larger, pan-European context, and if so, to what extent the events leading to what was previously considered *the loss of ancient freedom* should be viewed in the framework of wider events and processes of the time (i.e., the Crusades), is still ongoing in present-day historical research.<sup>9</sup>

The building and dismantling of the national narrative,<sup>10</sup> the desperate search for Estonian national identity, and the question if and when Estonia was ‘Europeanised’ have transformed Estonian medieval history from a field of research to a subject of research in itself. Whether understanding the past, when all its interpreters seem to be unaware of

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example: Ants Viires, ‘Eesti ajalugu stalinlikus haardes’ [Estonian History in the Grips of Stalinism], *Tuna. Ajalookultuuri ajakiri* 1 (2003): 32–47.

<sup>6</sup> See esp. Nils Blomkvist, *The Discovery of the Baltic: The Reception of a Catholic World-System in the European North (AD 1075–1225)* (Boston: Brill, 2005), esp. 3–34; see also Nils Blomkvist, ‘Culture Clash or Compromise? The Medieval Europeanisation Process of the Baltic Rim Region (1110–1400 AD): Problems for an International Study’, in *Culture Clash or Compromise? The Europeanisation of the Baltic Sea Area 1100–1400 AD*, ed. Nils Blomkvist, *Culture Clash or Compromise? The Europeanisation of the Baltic Sea Area 1100–1400 AD* (Visby: Gotland Centre for Baltic Studies, 1998), 9–36.

<sup>7</sup> Anti Selart et al. ed., *Eesti ajalugu II. Eesti keskaeg* [Estonian History II. The Middle Ages] (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli ajaloo ja arheoloogia instituut, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Seppo Zetterberg, ‘Eesti keskaja uhke panoraam’ [The Grand Panorama of the Estonian Medieval Era], *Vikerkaar* 6 (2013): 109–112.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example: Tiit Rosenberg, ‘Eesti ajalugu – kas rahvusajalugu, maa-ajalugu või regionaalajalugu?’ [Estonian History – History of a Nation, Country or a Region?], in *Rahvusvahelised rahvusteadused rahvusülikoollis. Artiklikogumik rahvusülikooli 95. juubeliks*, ed. Tiit Hennoste (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2014), 19–39.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example: Eva Piirimäe, ‘Ajalootüli peegeldab praegust Eesti rahvusliku identiteedi muutumist’ [Dispute over History Writing Mirrors the Current Developments in Estonian National Self-determination], *Postimees* 6 February 2013: 13.

their prejudices, is possible at all, can resemble to an impartial observer more a textbook case from Gadamerian hermeneutical philosophy than a modern academic discipline.

### **History Textbooks as Intermediators of Ethical and Moral Values**

The research into aforementioned problems in the context of Estonian history textbooks poses a multitude of questions. How should medieval events and processes be depicted in Estonian textbooks? Can the Baltic area in general and medieval Estonia in particular be regarded as having always belonged to the wider intellectual and cultural sphere, or should its native inhabitants be considered politically too weak to be anything more than the mere bystanders of important contemporary events and processes?

These questions, among many others, can be analysed in the framework of several linguistic and cultural theories,<sup>11</sup> or, more particularly, in the context of political ideologies of different regimes<sup>12</sup>. In addition to these approaches, contemporary academic educational research strongly emphasises the role of general education as one of the key factors in introducing and instilling the younger generation with the moral and ethical values preminent for their success in a modern, pluralistic society.<sup>13</sup>

Current pedagogical thought, teacher training and curriculum building in Estonia has adapted the concept of value-based education – that is, the understanding that the educational system in general and teachers in particular should not be merely the providers of new facts and knowledge, but rather the essential mediators and systemic educators of young people on moral and ethical values.<sup>14</sup> Involving professionally trained teachers, this concept encourages pupils to become more aware of their own values, to formulate them, and, in theory, raises the pupils' awareness of those values prevalent in society.

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example: Marek Tamm, 'Truth, Objectivity and Evidence in History Writing', *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 8, no. 2 (2014): 265–290.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the description of the Baltic crusades and the causes leading to Livonian war in Soviet history textbooks: Gustav Naan ed., *Eesti NSV ajalugu kõige vanemast ajast tänapäevani* [History of Estonian SSR from Ancient Times until the Present Day] (Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, 1952), 30–52 (esp. 30–32); Artur Vassar ed., *Eesti NSV ajalugu I köide. Kõige vanemast ajast XIX sajandi 50ndate aastateni* [History of Estonian SSR, Part I. From Ancient Times until the Fifties of the Nineteenth Century] (Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, 1955), 110–162.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example: Margit Sutrop and Halliki Harro-Loit, 'Hea kooli mõõdupuud – miks ja kuidas?' [The Criterion for a Good School – Why and How?], in *Väärtuspõhine kool. Eesti ja maailma kogemus*, ed. Gea Kangilaski et al. (Tartu: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2013), 216–246.

<sup>14</sup> See esp.: Margit Sutrop, 'Can Values Be Taught? The Myth of Value-free Education', *Trames: Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 19, no. 2 (2015): 189–202; Margit Sutrop and Inger Kraav, 'Koolinoorte väärtused ja väärtuskasvatust' [Pupils' Values and Values Education], in *Eesti Inimarengu Aruanne 2009*, ed. Veronika Kalmus (Tallinn: Eesti Koostöö Kogu, 2010), 122–127; Margit Sutrop, 'Otsides väärtuspõhise kooli võtit' [Seeking the Key for a Value-based School], in *Väärtuspõhine kool. Eesti ja maailma kogemus*, ed. Gea Kangilaski (Tartu: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2013), 15–40.

Applying this theory to textbook writing, history textbooks should not be regarded as mere presentations of past events, but as the tools communicating essential values to the younger generation.

Should the foreign occupation be presented in the form of facts and sources, or as a horrific story, a narrative, a warning for the future? How should textbook writing balance the narratives of victims and perpetrators,<sup>15</sup> especially when it can be argued that history itself is written by the victors? These problems, customarily considered inherent to modern history, are also omnipresent in Estonian medieval history writing.

Estonian medieval history can literally and figuratively be regarded as written by the victors – it is a period that begins with one conquest and ends with another, while being documented almost exclusively by and about the conquerors. Therefore, the importance of the presentation and assessment of the events and processes (including the depiction of the neighbouring nations) in history textbooks should not be underestimated. The quality of current education is considered key to the outlook of the future society;<sup>16</sup> thus, arguably, the quality of textbooks also contributes significantly to the pupils' development in general comprehension of the world and its values.

### **The Textbooks**

The following analysis concentrates on two Estonian medieval history (national history) textbooks for the upper secondary school level. Both have received formal approval from the Estonian Ministry of Education and have been regarded as complying with the requirements stipulated in the national curriculum of the time.

The first, published by Maurus Kirjastus OÜ in 2013,<sup>17</sup> is a collective work of two historians – Mart Laar and Lauri Vahtre. Although generally known for their position in public affairs and politics – the authors have, since 1991, continuously served in the Estonian Parliament or held positions in the public sector – and not considered academic scholars, both have published extensively on specific topics of Estonian history, including having written several textbooks. However, it should be emphasised that the focus

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<sup>15</sup> In the context of Estonian modern history textbooks, see, for example: Karl Kello, 'Vormilt rahvuslik, sisult sotsialistlik?' [Nationalistic Cover, Socialist Content?], *Haridus* 10 (2004): 6–8.

<sup>16</sup> Margit Surop, 'Eesti ühisväärtused: mis need on ja kuidas neid hoida?' [Collective Values in Estonia: What They Are and How to Protect Them?], in *Mõttestatud Eesti – ühiseid väärtusi hoides*, ed. Margit Sutrop and Triin Pisuke (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli eetikakeskus, 2008), 28.

<sup>17</sup> Mart Laar and Lauri Vahtre, *Eesti ajalugu I gümnaasiumile* [Estonian History I for Secondary School] (Tallinn: Maurus Kirjastus OÜ, 2013).

of both Laar's and Vahtre's research is mainly on modern history, not the medieval period.

The second textbook is the collective work of academic historians. Published in 2014,<sup>18</sup> it was written by five academics – archaeologists Aivar Kriiska and Ain Mäesalu, medievalists Anti Selart and Inna Põltsam-Jürjo, and Pärtel Piirimäe, researcher of early modern and modern history. The parts of the book analysed here are written by Selart and Põltsam-Jürjo. Authored by the leading scholars on the subjects, all active researchers in their field, the content of the book should, theoretically, reflect the most current state of historical research.

Apart from the two textbooks mentioned above, this paper draws some comparison with older history textbooks (all published after 1991). These are used as illustrative examples – a full-scale research, interesting though it may be, is beyond the scope of this study – to draw either general conclusions or illustrate, if necessary, the changes and continuity in historical thinking and textbook writing. Although valuable for supplementing the textbooks with additional information, auxiliary teaching materials (e.g., atlases, handbooks and dictionaries) are deliberately excluded from the comparison.

The following analysis, rather than examining the text within the framework of different theories (e.g., the popular dichotomy of the self and the Other), concentrates on comparing the representation of Estonian medieval neighbours as participants in the key events of Estonian history, then compares the aforementioned findings with current historical research. The angle of this study leans heavily towards assessing the depiction of Germans. However, such an approach was not chosen due to partiality for one particular neighbour, nor is it based on the author's personal preferences: until the beginning of the Early Modern period, the depiction of other foreign neighbours and institutions can be considered as either too vague or too generalising for use as a source for analysis (e.g., the papal curia or the Hanse).

It should also be emphasised that, although an omnipresent force in Medieval Estonia for several hundreds of years, the language and the culture of the indigenous people and the Germans existed in separation from one another. Curiously, the Germans, although forming the upper classes and influencing the local economy and culture, were

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<sup>18</sup> Aivar Kriiska et al., *Eesti ajalugu I. Esiajast Rootsi aja alguseni* [Estonian History I. From Ancient Times until the Beginning of the Swedish Era] (Tallinn: Avita, 2014).

always considered to be ‘the Other’ by both the Estonians and themselves.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the concept of the neighbour may also emanate from the complicated dualistic relations between the two groups, where one never really fully integrated with.

## A Comparative Analysis

### On the Brink of the Middle Ages – the Formation of Self?

One of the most controversial questions in Estonian medieval history has been the debate about state-formation and power structures in prehistoric (*resp.*, Late Iron Age, pre-Christianisation) Estonia. The written sources of the period – scarce, fragmentary and irrefutably polemical – even when compared and contrasted with relevant archaeological research, have given rise to extraordinarily different interpretations of Estonian prehistoric society, ranging from the notion of egalitarian power structures to the concept of socially and economically stratified society.<sup>20</sup>

Interpretations of the source material, controversial to such an extent, have historically given foundation to heated debates about the (im)possibility of the political unification and national self-determination of the population of present-day Estonian territory, prior to the Baltic Crusades. Without denying that the term ‘Estonians’ can be encountered in contemporary written sources, current medieval research – as opposed to the concept of the ‘loss of ancient freedom’, formed by romantic nationalistic ideas – strongly advises caution against considering such linguistic examples in modern nationalistic terms and against regarding the local population of the time as having a unified, ethno-political view of the world.<sup>21</sup> However intricate the early medieval reality might

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<sup>19</sup> See, for example: Selart et al., *Eesti ajalugu II* [Estonian History II], 79–80.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Andris Šne, ‘The Emergence of Livonia: The Transformations of Social and Political Structures in the Territory of Latvia during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries’, in *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier*, ed. Alan V. Murray (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 53–71; Andris Šne, ‘The Medieval Peasantry: On the Social and Religious Position of the Rural Natives in Southern Livonia (Thirteenth and Fifteenth Centuries)’, *Ajalooline Ajakiri* 1/2 (2008): 89–100; Priit Ligi, ‘Ühiskondlikest oludest Eesti alal hilispronksi- ja rauaaajal’ [On the Social Situation in Estonia in the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age], in *Eesti arheoloogia historiograafilisi, teoreetilisi ja kultuuriajaloolisi aspekte (Muinasaja teadus 3)*, ed. Valter Lang (Tallinn: Teaduste Akadeemia, 1995), 182–270 (esp. 213); Valter Lang, ‘Vakus ja linnusepiirkond Eestis. Lisandeid muistse haldusstruktuuri uurimisele peamiselt Harjumaa näitel’ [The Vakus and Fort District in Estonia. Appendices to the Study of the Ancient Administrative Structure with Special Reference to Harju County], in *Keskus – tagamaa – ääreala. Uurimusi asustushierarhia ja võimukeskuste kujunemisest Eestis (Muinasaja teadus II)*, ed. Valter Lang (Tallinn, Tartu: Ajaloo Instituut, 2002), 125–168; Marika Mägi, ‘Corporate Power Structures as Indicated in Archaeological Evidence: The Case of Estonia in the Middle Iron Age and Viking Age’, *Fennoscandia Archaeologica* 30 (2013): 107–125.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example: Eva Eihmane, ‘The Baltic Crusades: A Clash of Two Identities’, in *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier*, ed. Alan V. Murray (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009): 37–52.

have been, it is the first time that written sources introduce the local population with a tangible neighbour that soon becomes an omnipresent force in medieval Livonia – the German missionaries and crusaders.

The older textbooks<sup>22</sup> have been heavily criticised in their approach to the subject. The analysis conducted by the archaeologists<sup>23</sup> highlights the outdated archaeological information presented in a nationalistic-romantic prism,<sup>24</sup> deliberately reducing archaeology to a state of a mere ancillary science, resulting in an incoherent narrative<sup>25</sup> and unfounded use of socio-ethnological terminology (e.g., Estonians in the context of the Roman Iron Age).<sup>26</sup> All the textbooks mentioned were found to cultivate the idea of the mighty Estonians fighting for their ancient freedom against the evil oppressors.<sup>27</sup>

The new textbooks are much more cautious in this regard. Although the authors of the textbook published in 2013 are partial to the term ‘fight for ancient freedom’, and the common term used for describing the local population is ‘Estonian’,<sup>28</sup> the narration suggests that the authors’ preference for the aforementioned terminology does not demonstrate an archaic understanding of the historical research. Laar and Vahtre briefly explain the scarce and ambivalent sources regarding the ancient political structures of the land, concluding that the primary written source of the period – the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia – refers to Estonians mainly by their corresponding provinces.<sup>29</sup> However, the authors still strongly argue against the prevalent denial of a pre-Christianisation Estonian collective identity. In claiming some diplomatic events, depicted by Henry of Livonia, and a common language as the binding factor of the provinces suggests otherwise.<sup>30</sup>

The facts and events, especially the neighbours and enemies (i.e., the Germans), are

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<sup>22</sup> Ain Mäesalu et al., *Eesti ajalugu I* [Estonian History I] (Tallinn: Avita, 1997); Lauri Vahtre, *Eesti ajalugu gümnaasiumile* [Estonian History for Secondary School] (Tallinn: ILO, 2004); Andres Adamson and Toomas Karjahärm, *Eesti ajalugu gümnaasiumile* [Estonian History for Secondary School] (Tallinn: Argo, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> Valter Lang and Aivar Kriiska, ‘Muinasaja käsitlest meie ajalooõpikutes’ [The Depiction of Ancient Times in our History Textbooks], *Sirp*, 22 October 2004: 12–13. Cf.: Andres Adamson, ‘Re: Muinasaja käsitlest meie ajalooõpikutes’ [Re: The Depiction of Ancient Times in Our History Textbooks], *Sirp*, 29 October 2004: 20.

<sup>24</sup> Mäesalu et al. *Eesti ajalugu I* [Estonian History I].

<sup>25</sup> Adamson and Karjahärm, *Eesti ajalugu gümnaasiumile* [Estonian History for Secondary School].

<sup>26</sup> Vahtre, *Eesti ajalugu gümnaasiumile* [Estonian History for Secondary School].

<sup>27</sup> Allan Kasesalu, ‘Ajaloõpik – patriootiline katekismus või tõleksikon’ [History Textbook – Patriotic Catechism or a Lexicon of Truth?], *Sirp*, 22 October 2004: 11, 14. See, for example: Mäesalu et al., 28–29, 35.

<sup>28</sup> See Laar and Vahtre, *Eesti ajalugu I* [Estonian History I], ch 1.1–1.6.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 47–48.

presented in the context of the Crusades and the concept of the expansion of Europe. The authors briefly describe the crusading movement of the period, the papal claims for supremacy over secular rulers and the origins of the medieval colonisation process.<sup>31</sup> Laar and Vahtre accentuate that the violent Christianisation of the area must not be considered an Estonian-specific phenomenon, but a common concept at the time.<sup>32</sup>

The authors of the newer book have chosen a different approach in both the usage of the terminology (the authors prefer the term ‘Livonian Crusade’)<sup>33</sup> and the depiction of prehistoric Estonian society. In comparison with the book by Laar and Vahtre, the textbook compiled by the university scholars sets the focus not on Estonian society but on the political forces in the Baltic Sea region (the Hanse, the Scandinavian countries, Lithuania, Prussia, Kievan Rus’) and explains the relationships between them.

Before offering hypotheses about the power structures of the pre-Christian society and the common national identity of the Estonians, the authors give a brief overview of the political tensions, important diplomatic events and emerging powers in the region.<sup>34</sup> For example, the textbook gives an overview of the contemporary events that had either imminent or indirect effect on the entire Baltic region (e.g., the description of medieval society, the expansion of Europe). The authors also offer a definition for the terms and concepts used when explaining the events (e.g., colonisation, the Crusades, canon law, the Hanse).<sup>35</sup> This approach, depicting the events in a broader perspective than the predominant general discourse of the formation of Europe, which tends to focus on Christianisation, emphasises the multifaceted transcultural processes related to the entire Baltic region. Therefore, this textbook links general medieval history and national history inextricably into one coherent synergy.

The same approach characterises the depiction of Estonian collective identity. Comparing contemporary sources about Prussians and Estonians, the authors exemplify and advise caution against drawing parallels between the terminology used to describe the ethnic, social and political groups in medieval sources and the modern concepts of national identities.<sup>36</sup> However, in contrast with the first textbook, the leap to the Middle Ages is rather sudden – the political administration of the land is explained in the chap-

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 31, 41ff, ch. 2.1.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 42ff.

<sup>33</sup> See Kriiska et al., 54.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 48ff.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 47–52.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 51.

ters depicting the pre-Christianisation (*resp.*, the Late Iron Age) period, and the problem regarding the re-construction of the pre-medieval society is not mentioned.<sup>37</sup>

### **Fight for Ancient Freedom or the Baltic Crusade?**

As explained above, the current historical research studies the medieval Christianisation of the Baltic area in the context of the Northern (*resp.*, Baltic) Crusades. In retrospect, events leading to the German conquest are analysed through the paradigm of the general narrative of European history. The term ‘fight for ancient freedom’, born in the tidal waves of nationalistic thought, is considered the relict of its time.

When presenting the aforementioned events, both textbooks differ considerably in their depiction of the concept of the neighbour. In the first case,<sup>38</sup> the Germans are portrayed as the enemy: dangerous intruders who need be met with equally fierce opposition. Stating that the Livonian Crusade was ‘successful from the perspective of the crusaders’,<sup>39</sup> the authors set the polarity of the following narrative: it is a story about the conquering of Estonia that resulted in the loss of ancient freedom.<sup>40</sup> It is also noteworthy that, although both textbooks explain the terminological background of the term ‘ancient fight for freedom’, curiously when Laar and Vahtre have found one sentence to be adequate for illustrating the term,<sup>41</sup> the authors of the newer textbook have dedicated an entire subchapter to explaining the historical background of this terminology.<sup>42</sup>

When depicting the events, both textbooks rely – inevitably – on retelling the events described in the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia. However, the first textbook, when detailing the battles, coalitions and military tactics, strongly prefers to tell the story from the perspective of the Estonians,<sup>43</sup> while the latter has favoured a focus on a general overview of the events.<sup>44</sup>

The narration by Laar and Vahtre offers an exceptionally vivid interpretation of Henry of Livonia. The Estonians fight against the crusaders, forge and break alliances, and demonstrate ingeniousness in military tactics; they ‘act, unified and eagerly’, sometimes their ‘hopes for peace’ take a ‘decisive hit’, but after a successful battle, their

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 38ff.

<sup>38</sup> Laar and Vahtre.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>40</sup> Laar and Vahtre, 89. Cf. Mäesalu et al., 37–48.

<sup>41</sup> Laar and Vahtre, 71.

<sup>42</sup> Kriiska et al, 60–61.

<sup>43</sup> Laar and Vahtre, 72–87.

<sup>44</sup> Kriiska et al., 56–59.

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in Contemporary Estonian Secondary School Textbooks*

‘self-awareness’ or ‘fighting spirit’ gets a new boost. Although the Estonians ultimately lose their fight for ancient freedom – mostly due to the reason that they had to fight against the whole of Western Europe and the papacy – the ‘fact that the land that once belonged to the Estonians was taken from them with force and injustice, was preserved for centuries’.<sup>45</sup>

The authors of the other textbook have chosen a different approach. When depicting the same events, the book refers to different regions and people of Estonia (e.g., Estonians from Läänemaa), illustrating how the ancient provinces did not act as a unified force unless compelled to cooperate as a consequence of military losses.<sup>46</sup> The text is accompanied both by excerpts from the contemporary sources (different chronicles, legal documents) and their modern interpretations, which give the reader an opportunity to draw critical conclusions from different approaches towards the depiction of the key events and processes of the time.

### **Daily Life in the High Middle Ages**

As previously described, the contemporary written sources – scarce and fragmentary and, customary to their time, abundant in bias towards the upper classes – tend to neglect and obscure the common people. This problem, inherent not only to Baltic historiography but to medieval studies in general, renders the task of constructing the medieval reality, especially the specific elements of the life of the local population, extremely difficult. In the past, this has led from the extremely arbitrary, exaggerated interpretations of the sources to accusations of hypercriticism against them.<sup>47</sup> Current medieval research, aware of these problems, has chosen an interdisciplinary approach. Aspiring to study all possible aspects of the Middle Ages, traditional academic historical research (usually concentrating on written sources) is conducted in close collaboration with the neighbouring disciplines (e.g., archaeology, art history, cultural studies and semiotics).<sup>48</sup>

Both textbooks serve as excellent examples for the aforementioned approach. Although the neighbour is now the omnipresent entity in medieval Estonia – the force that dominates the land with both the erection of impressive visual landmarks and the en-

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<sup>45</sup> Laar and Vahre, 72–89.

<sup>46</sup> Kriiska et al., 56.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example: Marek Tamm, ‘Jüriöö-tekst eesti kultuuris’ [The Depiction of St. George’s Night Uprising in Estonian Culture], *Looming* 3 (2003): 401–411.

<sup>48</sup> Ivar Leimus, ‘Eesti medievistika paradigmade kütkes’, *Tuna. Ajalookultuuri ajakiri* 1 (2004): 151–153; Selart et al., 11–24.

forcement of its laws and customs<sup>49</sup> – the narrative of the German conquerors, admittedly filled with more exciting events than the everyday lives of the native people, does not become predominant in either of the textbooks. Nevertheless, the different styles of textbook writing result in a slightly different picture of the medieval reality.

As aforementioned, the book by Laar and Vahtre has chosen a typical textbook way of presenting the events: the narrative. Consequently, although factually accurate, it is inevitably prone to more (un)intentional observations and depictions of the events. On the occasion that the newer book limits its descriptions with the quotation of the sources, the first textbook tells a story of the Estonians. Although the narrative of the textbook shifts slightly from the history of the people to the history of the land in the context of the daily life in the Middle Ages, the emphasis is still strongly on Estonia in the context of Europe, not on the intertwinement of the two narratives.

The authors depict the persistent rivalry between the two main overlords of the land – the archbishop of Riga and the *Landmeister* of the Teutonic Order in Livonia – for the hegemony over the territory, describe the formation of towns and medieval corporations, and exemplify the relations between the native people and the Germans. Analysing the economic and social processes of the time, the authors conclude that the development of medieval Livonia was important to ‘Europe’, because ‘several Europeans regarded Old Livonia as a defensive barrier between civilised, Latin Europe and the terrifying East’.<sup>50</sup>

While Laar and Vahtre draw parallels and comparisons with the general developments in the economic and social sphere in Estonia (*Old Livonia*) and Europe, the newer textbook emphasises medieval Livonia’s (cf., *Old Livonia*) role in contemporary trade relations and exemplifies the cultural transfer between the different parts of Western Europe.<sup>51</sup>

### **Medieval Estonia on the Threshold of the Early Modern Period**

By the mid-sixteenth century, medieval Livonia – that is, the territories constituting modern Latvia and Estonia – had become a region organised into a decentralised and religiously divided Livonian Confederation. With its weak and divided political administration subject to internal rivalries, its lack of both powerful defences and foreign al-

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<sup>49</sup> Laar and Vahtre, 96–167; Kriiska et al., 62–111.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example: Kriiska et al., 86.

lies, its different laws and customs and its religious endeavours, it was, as has been noted by both the contemporary chroniclers and modern historians, ripe for plucking by the powerful, neighbouring monarchies in pursuit of expansionistic policies.<sup>52</sup> This politically turbulent time brings new neighbours into the picture – Denmark, Sweden, Russia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – the monarchies who, in the course of the Livonian war, would become the new overlords of the land.

Both textbooks<sup>53</sup> consider the events that finally led to the demise of medieval Livonian political structures to be in the context of the political events and changes to the social and economical structures of the time. When narrating the events leading to the collapse of the Livonian Confederation,<sup>54</sup> Laar and Vahre concentrate heavily on emphasising the external factors (e.g., Russian aspirations for hegemony in the region and the rapidly strengthening kingdoms in Scandinavia and Poland-Lithuania), concluding that Livonia, with its internal weakness and archaic power structures, posed in itself an attractive prey for its more powerful neighbours.<sup>55</sup> Of all the neighbours, special attention is paid to describing the Tsardom of Russia. However, the descriptions of the events (e.g., the deportation of the local population during the Livonian war) and the overall narrative are neutral and not emotionally polarised (cf., the depiction of the Baltic Crusades).

The newer textbook<sup>56</sup> also regards the events in question as the combination of both the aforementioned internal problems of medieval Livonia<sup>57</sup> and as the territorial-expansionistic tendencies and aggressive foreign policies inherent to the strong, newly emerging neighbouring powers of its neighbours. The exceptionally convoluted diplomatic relations between the neighbours of medieval Livonia – Sweden, Muscovy, Polish-Lithuania and Denmark – are explained in detail (e.g., the conflict between Sweden and Poland and Russian claims to superiority over other rulers). Although the contemporary diplomatic reality was, without a doubt, more complicated, the overview of

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<sup>52</sup> For a general overview of the events and the political rhetoric of the time, see, for example: Margus Laidre, *Domus belli: Põhjamaade Saja-aastane sõda Liivimaal 1554–1661* [*Domus belli: Hundred Years' War in Livonia 1554–1661*] (Tallinn: Argo, 2015); Anti Selart, 'Livland, ein russisches Erbland?', in *Russland an der Ostsee. Imperiale Strategien der Macht und kulturelle Wahrnehmungsmuster (16. bis 20. Jahrhundert)*, ed. Karsten Brüggemann and Bradley D. Woodworth (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 2012), 29–65. Alexander Filjushkin, *Ivan the Terrible. A Military History* (London: Frontline Books, 2008), 142ff.

<sup>53</sup> Cf.: Mäesalu et al., 93.

<sup>54</sup> Laar and Vahre, 156–157.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Kriiska et al., 112–123.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 116–122.

the political relations can be considered sufficient. It becomes unambiguously apparent that the neighbours did not just ‘come, see and conquer’, but that the fall of Livonian political structures was the result of several concurrent factors. Consequently, the neighbours are depicted not as the evil conquerors, but as typical political power-players of the era. The relevant chapters focus heavily on introducing the primary sources of the general history of the Baltic Sea area, thus intertwining the narratives of the neighbouring countries into one coherent discourse.

### **Writing History Textbooks: Narrative Versus Ad Fontes?**

Textbook writing does not, as already briefly explained above, exist separately from other disciplines, namely from philosophical and educational ideas. Both textbooks analysed, although having chosen a slightly different approach towards addressing certain concepts, are written in accordance with the state of current historical research. Their principal difference lies in a contrasting approach between the forms with which the authors have presented the facts. While the first textbook offers a coherent narrative, a story, where the native people, the Estonians, are ever-present (albeit undoubtedly not in the contemporary sources), the other has chosen to tell the exact same story in the form of a commented edition of a medieval sourcebook.

Analysing the findings within the framework of the theory of value-based education, the aforementioned conclusion raises an intriguing question. Should history textbooks be presented in the form of a narrative, a text that inevitably embodies the values of its authors (and, ideally, the ethical and moral values appraised by the present), or is it more advisable to compile history textbooks as a collection of contemporary sources, which, rather than setting out to shape the virtues of the modern society, reflect the moral and ethical ideas of the past?

Insofar as the research of this kind has yet to be carried out, such a problem can, in theory, be analysed within the context of the ideas and concepts prevalent in the current discourse of the philosophy of history. However, approaches that are extremely diverse in defining terms like ‘truth’, ‘narrative’ and ‘objectivity’<sup>58</sup> – all essential for analysing the values embedded in the history textbooks and for investigating their history-specific

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<sup>58</sup> In the context of Estonian historical thought, see, for example: Tamm, ‘Truth, Objectivity and Evidence in History Writing’; Siobhan Kattago, ‘Memory, Pluralism and the Agony of Politics’, *Journal of the Baltic Studies* 41, no. 3: 383–394; Enn Tarvel, ‘Kas ajalugu saab kirjutada objektiivselt?’ [Can History Be Written Objectively?], *Tuna. Ajalookultuuri ajakiri* 3 (2005): 4–9 (esp. 4).

peculiarities<sup>59</sup> – lead to exceptionally different results. Depending on the preferences of the historian (i.e., the textbook author), finding a theory – ranging from how history should be written to how to justify the chosen approach<sup>60</sup> – that fits the personal values of the narrator may be relatively easy.

Interestingly, the researchers of secondary school education and textbook writing differ considerably from their academic counterparts in this regard – while, as noted above, historical thinking provides a multitude of approaches and solutions for the problem in question, the scholars of didactical research tend to hold a strong preference for a narrative-based approach. A history textbook concentrating mainly on sources has been expected to provide comprehension of the course of the past events, otherwise too difficult to follow.<sup>61</sup> Some scholars have gone as far as accusing putting the emphasis on evidence destroying history as a narrative, claiming ‘it is the narrative that helps people make sense of their lives and solve its practical problems’.<sup>62</sup> In contrast, David J. Forbes advocates that a textbook, presented as a neat, matter-of-fact narrative, makes ‘history appear to follow a set path, as if guided by an invisible force’. According to Forbes, this approach, often deliberately removing controversies and providing unambiguous answers to the problems of the past, does not encourage critical evaluation for past events.<sup>63</sup>

History textbooks are and presumably will always be written by historians. This raises the question as to the extent to which a historian can, without risking compromising the impartial depiction of sources and events and, moreover, without being subjective in the task of historian, instil any pre-suggested moral or ethical values to one’s

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Cf.: Eva Piirimäe, ‘Immanuel Kant ja ajaloodilemma’ [Immanuel Kant and the Dilemma of History], *Akadeemia* 3 (1998): 547–572; Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit I, II* (Riga und Leipzig: Hartknoch 1784, 1786); Paul Ricoeur, ‘Objectivity and Subjectivity in History’, in *History and Truth* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 21–40; Quentin Skinner, ‘Retrospect: Studying Rhetoric and Conceptual Change’, in *Visions of Politics (vol. I)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 175–187. In the context of Estonian history textbook writing, see also: Tõnis Lukas, ‘Ajaloõppe roll XXI sajandil’ [The Role of Teaching History in the Twenty-first Century], *Sirp* 11 November 2011: 5; cf.: Terry Haydn, ‘History’, in *Rethinking the School Curriculum. Values, Aims and Purpose*, ed. John White (London: Routledge-Falmer, 2004), 87–103.

<sup>61</sup> Haydn, ‘History’, 95.

<sup>62</sup> James Fitzgerald, ‘History in the Curriculum: Debate on Aims and Values’, *History and Theory* 22, no. 4 (1983): 100.

<sup>63</sup> David J. Forbes, ‘Make History Textbook Writing “A Puzzlement”’, *The History Teacher* 29, no. 4 (1996): 455–461 (quotation: 456).

work.<sup>64</sup> In the context of the subject matter in question, it also raises the sensitive issue of the objective depiction of the neighbours, especially when the neighbour, subjugating the native population to its rule, becomes an overlord of the land. The Estonian historian (*resp.*, the textbook writer) is therefore tasked not only with the difficult challenge of finding a counterbalance between the narratives of the native people and its neighbours (i.e., national history and general European history), but also with a responsibility to ensure the impartial, objective representation of all groups in question.

To some extent, these problems have been analysed in the context of the tensions between Europe and the Arab and Islamic worlds,<sup>65</sup> the divided or contested societies<sup>66</sup> and the pursuit to intertwine the narratives of national histories and world history.<sup>67</sup> Owing to the growing concern for global security and thereby considering the need to promote intercultural dialogue, pluralism and tolerance (i.e. democratic values among the pupils), the researchers have proposed several solutions. Their central claim is to contextualise the opposition between ‘us’ and the Other, and to emphasise the importance of positive encounters (e.g., cultural transfer), while still providing a balanced view of historical events.<sup>68</sup>

It has also been proposed that providing the pupils with a range of competing interpretations helps to develop historical literacy and a multi-perspective approach towards the past.<sup>69</sup> This approach, favoured by several scholars, is considered as helping the pupils understand different ways of representing and interpreting the past and distinguishing facts from opinion, which is also a common concept in value-based education.

The book by Laar and Vahtre presents a narrative, a tale about Estonians in the world. The story, albeit sometimes seemingly deliberate in its exaggeration of the patriotism of the native people, is factually correct. The textbook authored by the academic

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<sup>64</sup> For example, the current trends in feminist philosophy and educational theory have presented medievalists with a perplexing problem: how to accurately portray the role of women in the Middle Ages, when the modern educational curriculum presupposes the equal depiction of both genders? See also ed. Jaan Mikk, *Soorollid õppekirjanduses* [Gender Roles in Textbooks] (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2002), esp. 11–81.

<sup>65</sup> UNESCO, ‘On a Common Path. New Approaches to Writing History Textbooks in Europe and the Arab and Islamic Worlds: The Case of the Mediterranean’, UNESCO document, accessed 7 July 2016, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002270/227041e.pdf>.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example: Alan McCully, ‘History Teaching, Conflict and the Legacy of the Past’, *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice* 7, no. 2 (2012): 145–159.

<sup>67</sup> Carmel Gallagher, *History Teaching and the Promotion of Democratic Values and Tolerance: A Handbook for Teachers* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1996), 21ff.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–15; UNESCO, ‘On a Common Path’, 10ff.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example: Gallagher, *History Teaching*, 11; Peter Lee, ‘History Education and Historical Literacy’, in *Debates in History Teaching*, ed. Ian Davies (New York: Routledge, 2011), 63–72.

scholars offers a selection of sources that interweave the history of Estonia with the history of Europe. The question as to which approach can be regarded better poses a difficult puzzle, even in the context of value-based education.

None of the textbooks analysed emphasises the values and principles esteemed by modern society (e.g., gender equality, freedom of thought and expression or cultural and religious plurality). However, the development of these values is apparent in both textbooks. Although methodologically different, when depicting the medieval neighbours, all the authors emphasise contemporary cultural, political and social processes, enabling the reader to analyse the values of the past in context and assess their development in time. Both textbooks serve as an example for providing a source for analysis and discussion as to how the concept of the enemy and neighbour has changed over time. On a more general scale, they offer a source for examining and assessing changes in general values in society (e.g., if and how the concepts of patriotism, war and justice have changed and evolved).

Therefore, as modern textbook writing and didactical thought advocates, this kind of ‘inclusive’ national history that combines ‘the influence of colonisation, migration and religion ... which recognises and respects the rights and legitimacy of all its constituent members’,<sup>70</sup> helps the pupils to become aware of the cultural heritage that comprises a significant part of their national history. When analysed in the context of value-based education, this approach – inciting the pupils to seek explanations behind historical events and processes – broadens their understanding about both their past and present.

The answer to a quality medieval history textbook, therefore, cannot be in lie in forcibly introducing the values and concepts esteemed by modern society to a period that justifiably distances itself from modern terminology, while providing the pupils with an unbiased selection of sources, which help them draw conclusions as to how different values have evolved over time. Historians and researchers of value-based education both agree that history is a story that can be told in several ways.<sup>71</sup> As long as the chosen way aspires to critical and source-based, balanced representation of all social and political groups and analyses events and processes in their historical context, the form of the textbook should not be regarded as important.

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<sup>70</sup> Gallagher, 23.

<sup>71</sup> In the context of value-based education, see, for example: Olga Schihalejev, *Väärtuskasvatus õpetajakoolituses* [Value-based Education in Teacher Training] (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2011), 36.

However, until modern historical writing has analysed the pros and cons of each approach within the framework of the main principles of value-based education, a thorough assessment of not only their strengths and weaknesses as the intermediaries of contemporary/current values, but also consideration as to how the concept of value-based education can affect the depiction of historical facts and events, the appropriateness of the methodology chosen by the textbook author shall remain up for debate.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This short analysis on two contemporary Estonian secondary school textbooks examined the representation of medieval neighbours in the context of value based-education. The results demonstrate, convincingly, the concordance between modern textbook writing and modern historical research. Although different in their methodological approaches, the authors neither present competing narratives, nor do they challenge the concepts and ideas prevalent in current historical thinking.

When examining the findings within the framework of the theory of value-based education, the aforementioned conclusion raised an intriguing question: should history textbooks ensure their compatibility with modern educational ideas and be compiled in a customary form – as a narrative? Or is it more appropriate to avoid ‘telling a story’, favouring a properly commented edition of primary sources?

The analytical discussion impresses upon the unimportance of the form (narrative versus source-based) of the textbook in question and proposes a solution: a critical, inclusive national history, which aspires to a balanced representation of contemporary, key events and processes. However, before drawing any fundamental conclusions from this paper, it must be emphasised that the concept of value-based education is only one albeit important element of the equation of the quality textbook.

Therefore, until the completion of thorough interdisciplinary research, comprising an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the debates and concepts relevant to textbook writing (e.g., philosophical, historical and educational in nature), neither of the analysed textbooks can be regarded as having any superiority over the other, as far as embedding any ethical or moral values into medieval history textbooks is concerned.

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## **The Image of Historical Neighbours in Bulgarian Textbooks**

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During the Middle Ages, Bulgaria was surrounded by many neighbouring countries, among which Serbia, Wallachia, Moldova, Hungary and especially Byzantium – as well as, for a time, other smaller states – had the strongest influence on the development of the Balkans. The image presented of them in history textbooks is the subject of this essay.

Current history textbooks are approved by the Ministry of Education as appropriate for the students' comprehension level and age and are consistent with the aims and tasks set by the school curriculum. The first textbook I analysed was the one for the eighth grade, published by the Anubis Publishing House in 1998, written by Georgi Kazakov and Mariya Donkova.<sup>1</sup> The authors are little known historians and most likely teachers. Another textbook was published by Prosveta Publishing House in 2002.<sup>2</sup> Its authors are mostly well-known academics: Plamen Pavlov (a historian, poet, publicist and television anchor who graduated from St. Cyril and St. Method University of Veliko Tarnovo) and Professor Aleksandar Nikolov (Head of the Department of History of Byzantium and Other Balkan Peoples at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski). The third textbook is from the World and Science Publishing House, published in 1995.<sup>3</sup> The authors include Hristo Matanov (Professor of Medieval Balkan History at Sofia University) and Georgi Sotirov (a historian and linguist).

All three textbooks are widely distributed to the middle comprehensive schools, the primary comprehensive schools, the vocational schools, high schools – that is, they are used by teachers and students all across the country. The textbook published by Anubis had also an English edition, for use in foreign language high schools with an English module. For the past five years, however, it was no longer used, as a new version has been released, conforming to new standards and prescriptions. I left it aside.

I believe that history education can create a spiritual and civic identity in the contemporary individual. It plays a major role in preparing and orienting young Bulgarians for and to a modern democratic society. It also plays a role in forming their active participation in social life.

The primary objectives of history education for the eighth grade – the subject of my essay – are to strengthen the understanding of early-Christian culture, to trace the active role of the individual and to present the place of the Bulgarian state in medieval Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Georgi Kazakov and Mariya Donkova, *History. Eighth Grade*. Sofia: Anubis, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Aleksandar Nikolov et al., *History for the Eighth Grade*. Sofia: Prosveta, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Georgi Sotirov et al., *History. Eighth Grade*. Sofia: World and Science, 1995.

The aim is to contribute to the development of Bulgarian identity in the younger generation; for this reason, the neighbouring Balkan countries and their respective development are underrepresented in these textbooks.

Browsing through the textbooks I have analysed, a sentence by Robert Hutchins came to mind: 'Education is not to reform students or amuse them or to make them expert technicians. It is to unsettle their minds, widen their horizons, inflame their intellects, and teach them to think straight, if possible.'<sup>4</sup> This applies entirely to the history textbook. Not focusing on the neighbouring Balkan countries does not mean that most of the facts that concern them should be passed over in silence.

Although only those directly related to Bulgarian history are included, they do still offer students more or less information about these countries. For example, the authors of the Anubis textbook seemed to believe that the first Serbian-Bulgarian War of 839 or Tsar Simeon's conquest of 923 are events that can be omitted. In my opinion, however, they should be seen as a clear sign that in the ninth century, this nation was an active participant of the history of the Balkans. Thus, students can understand that, during that period, Bulgaria had other neighbours apart from Byzantium that claimed to establish their territories and even expand them. However, the authors of *History and Civilisation for the Eleventh Grade*<sup>5</sup> by Prosveta do not share this opinion and give an extensive record on these topics.

It is noteworthy, however, that the lesson about Khan Krum contains a historical map, connected to his campaigns – and there we see the Croats. It is not mentioned, however, who they are and how they arrive on the peninsula. According to the Anubis textbook, King Samuel 'permanently settled the relations with Serbs and Hungarians',<sup>6</sup> but does not explain how this happened. Was it done through a peace treaty or by a dynasty marriage, or how? Apparently, they believe that it is not for the students to know it at this stage of their education. In *The Bulgarian Middle Ages*,<sup>7</sup> Professor Peter Angelov states that 'in 993, King Samuel captured the Serbian prince Ivan Vladimir and

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Hutchins, quoted in '33 велики мисли за знанието, училището, учителите и книгите', Ladyzone, 2014, <http://ladyzone.bg/article/semestvo/33-veliki-misli-za-znanieto-knigite-uchilishteto-i-uchitelite.html?p=315>, last access 15 July 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Vasil Gyuzelev et al., *History and Civilisation for the Eleventh Grade*, Sofia: Prosveta, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Kazakov and Donkova, *History*, 116.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Angelov, *Bulgarian Middle Ages*, Sofia: Polis, 2013.

reinstated him on the throne, by marrying him to his daughter, Kosara'.<sup>8</sup> This is more informative.

In cases like this, the teacher has to take matters into his or her own hands. Aware of certain omissions, he or she should provide students with additional information. If I were to use this particular textbook, I would provide some more background for the pupils, eager to get to know the world around them. For example, for this task, I would use the information on page 131 of Peter Angelov's book. I would copy it, and all of the students would receive the text and the illustration on Prince Ivan Vladimir. Or, instead of an illustration, I might insert a documentary source about the subject. However, one must be careful when handing out additional tasks. Overburdening the students with too much information could lead to a negative attitude, turning them away from the subject.

Let me get back to our textbooks. In Plutarch's words, 'The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled'.<sup>9</sup> The textbook issued by Prosveta attempts to do just that. Here, the Serbian kingdom is mentioned, as well as its disintegration following Stefan Dušan's death. In the lesson entitled 'The Orthodox East in the XI-XV Century',<sup>10</sup> in which the Serbian state, the emergence of Wallachia and its first ruler Basarab, as well as the foundation of Moldova by Bogdan, are mentioned. It includes a historical map on which all Balkan principalities are shown. In the same lesson<sup>11</sup> are two documents: 'The Bulgarian Community in the Mid-fifteenth Century' and the second, 'Stefan Dušan, Emperor of Serbs and Greeks'. The fate of these states is also described in the lesson 'The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans'. There we have a map and a document: 'Legacy of the Moldavian Prince Stefan III, The Great (1457–1504) for His Son, Bogdan'.<sup>12</sup> I believe that using this textbook would spark the learner's interest in their origins and fate and would contribute to their knowledge about the medieval Balkan states surrounding Bulgaria.

In my opinion, the best formulated textbook is the one by World and Science.<sup>13</sup> Its authors, Hristo Matanov and Georgi Sotirov, take great care to provide information about the history of neighbouring countries. It discusses the origins of the Serbian and Croatian states, who these peoples were, where they came from, and so on. Also, even

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<sup>8</sup> Angelov, *Bulgarian Middle Ages*, 131.

<sup>9</sup> Plutarch, quoted in 'Plutarch', Wikipedia, <https://bg.wikiquote.org/wiki/Πλυμαρξ>, last access 14 April 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Nikolov et al., *History*, 2002, 171.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 176-9

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>13</sup> Sotirov et al. *History*.

before any special attention is given to them, the Serbs are introduced in relation to Khan Presian, where it is mentioned that this was ‘the time of the formation of the Serbian principality’ (i.e., a hint is given to the pupils that, at that time, new Slavic states emerged in Central and Southeastern Europe).

The authors also remember to mention the Serbian expansion into Macedonia. For better orientation, a map is also provided. In relation to the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, here we have the most complete information about the battle at Ormenio and its consequences, as well as the battle at Kosovo Field in 1389. The authors do not forget to mention that Serbia and Bosnia lost their independence, and in small print, much additional information about these events is provided. There are also footnotes on additional facts and events, which make the textbook suitable for extracurricular activities such as an elective training module in history.

John Locke rightfully claims that ‘the great art of learning much is starting with a little’.<sup>14</sup> By giving students the basic information about these states, the author provides them with a foundation from which they can proceed to learn more.

There is one country whose development is thoroughly described in all the textbooks analysed, starting from its emergence and continuing right up until its end: Byzantium. The biggest shock to the entire Balkan population seems to have been the Crusades, especially the Fourth Crusade. As a consequence, Byzantium was crossed out from the map of Europe for about half a century. All textbooks mention these events, but the most detailed description is provided by the textbook from World and Science. In it, the fate of all the newly emerged successor states is also described.

None of the textbooks forgets to mention the kingdom of Hungary. The most detailed account of its fate is given in relation to the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans. The reason for this is that its kings were the instigators of and participants in the battles, alliances, and crusades against the expansionary policy of the Turks, including the fateful battle of Varna in 1444, in which the Polish-Hungarian king, Władysław Jagiello fell.

History is a field of learning that is constantly developing, and so, in order for history textbooks to be useful to students in the eighth grade, textbooks had to undergo certain changes after 2009. The information contained in them, in regards to the Balkan

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<sup>14</sup> John Locke, quoted in ‘33 велики мисли за знанието, училището, учителите и книгите’, Ladyzone, <http://ladyzone.bg/article/semeistvo/33-veliki-misli-za-znanieto-knigite-uchilisheteto-i-uchitelite.html?p=3>, accessed 15 April 2016.

countries, despite being synthesised, matches the information given in *The Medieval Balkans*,<sup>15</sup> which came out in 2014 and follows the period between the fourth and fifteenth centuries. These textbooks are in full compliance with the policy of the contemporary Bulgarian government. First of all, a very strong emphasis is placed on Christianity: on the essence of the religion and the fact that it was the cause for a new line of cultural development in all European countries, creating new institutions like schools and even universities. There is also a significant amount of attention devoted to the Western countries – they are part of Europe too, are they not? The new textbooks, while scientifically accurate, are written in a way accessible and understandable for all students. In addition, they include illustrations and a sufficient amount of tasks to develop the thinking of future citizens of a democratic society.

We, as future teachers and historians, have to select a way to fulfil our mission of providing knowledge. Whether we present as much information as is suitable for our pupils to think about the past and the present or simply retell a story, using a textbook lacking essential facts and events, is a matter of choice. However, I believe that using different aids as sources of additional information to spark our students' interest is the proper way to fulfil our calling. And you, dear reader, what kind of teacher would you like to be? In the words of Robert Frost: 'There are two kinds of teachers: the kind that fill you with so much quail shot that you can't move, and the kind that just gives you a little prod behind, and you jump to the skies.'<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Hristo Matanov, *The Medieval Balkans*, Sofia: Paradigma, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Frost, quoted in '33 велики мисли за знанието, училището, учителите и книгите', Ladyzone, 2014, <http://ladyzone.bg/article/semiestvo/33-veliki-misli-za-znanieto-knigite-uchilishteto-i-uchitelite.html?p=3>, last access 20 June 2016.

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